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Writing the History of Ukrainian Culture before, under, and after Communism

Students of nationalism have spilled much ink discussing the codification of a modern national culture by patriotic intellectuals as one of the main components of nation-building. Ernest Gellner has proposed that nationalists create modern high cultures for their nations by selecting and developing certain components of folk tradition. Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm analyzed the cultural mechanisms involved in the ‘invention’ of modern nations – traditions, museums, novels, newspapers, etc.¹ Ukrainian specialists, like historians elsewhere, have published works applying these conceptual models to their country’s case. Yet they, and students of nationalism in general, have focused on social practices, such as the transformation of a peasant costume into a national symbol, the use of ancient first names or even the spread of reading rooms throughout the countryside.² National cultures and national identities, however, have also been constructed discursively, and never in more coherent form than in histories of a national culture.

Vague interest in folk culture and historical tradition was present in Eastern European national movements from their origins in the age of Romantic nationalism during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

¹ See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London: Verso, 1991); Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

² See John-Paul Himka, *Galician Villagers and the Ukrainian National Movement in the Nineteenth Century* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1988); John-Paul Himka, ‘The Construction of Nationality in Galician Rus’: Icarian Flights in Almost All Directions’, in Ronald Grigor Suny and Michael D. Kennedy, (eds), *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 109-66; Iaroslav Hrytsak, ‘Iakykh-to kniaziv buly stolytsi u Kyievi? Do konstruiuvannia istorychnoi pam’iati halyts’kykh ukraintsiv u 1830-1930-ti roky’, *Ukraina moderna* 6 (2001): 77-95; Serhy Yekelchyk, ‘The Body and National Myth: Motifs from the Ukrainian National Revival in the Nineteenth Century’, *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* 7, no. 2 (1993): 31-59.

centuries.³ Systematic narratives of how a national culture developed, however, appear late in the nation-building process at an advanced stage of popular mobilization, when patriotic intellectuals have more or less completed the codification of national culture and need textbooks to help with ‘nationalizing’ the masses. Not surprisingly, such textbooks reflect the general fallacy of the nationalistic view of culture. As Gellner points out, although national high culture is a relatively recent invention, nationalists always insist on its primordial character and folk roots.⁴ Getting national culture wrong, presenting it as ancient, authentic, and cohesive is, therefore, a common trait of modern nation-builders.

In this article I will briefly analyze the most important surveys of the history of Ukrainian culture published in Ukraine between 1918 and 2005 as texts in which national identity is negotiated through interpretation of the country’s rich cultural past. The present-day Ukrainian state, which gained independence as a result of the Soviet Union’s collapse in 1991, brought home the significance of this topic by introducing in all colleges and universities obligatory courses on the history of Ukrainian culture (in the faculties of Arts and Humanities) or the history of world and Ukrainian culture (for students of other faculties). As millions of students in this young state go through the identity-shaping exercise of studying their national culture, it is time for scholars to examine the versions of national identity propagated in Ukrainian cultural history surveys.

Neither Russia nor Poland

It is significant that the oldest surveys of Ukrainian culture, those published ninety and seventy years ago, respectively, have been reprinted in independent Ukraine and are still widely used as textbooks. Although their coverage and interpretations are badly outdated, their notion of Ukrainian identity is essentially the same as today. These earliest systematic narratives focus on separating Ukrainian culture from those of Ukraine’s former imperial masters (and Slavic cultural powerhouses), Russia and Poland.

³ See Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁴ Gellner, 57.

For Ivan Ohiienko, the author of the 1918 survey *Ukrainian Culture*, Ukraine's principal 'other' is Russia. This short book appeared in the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR), an independent state that emerged after the collapse of the Russian Empire and existed until the Bolsheviks established control in 1920. A former instructor in Slavic languages at Kyiv University and soon-to-be UNR Minister of Education, Ohiienko gave the lectures on which this text is based in the autumn of 1917, before the proclamation of Ukrainian independence. But the question of Ukraine's cultural separateness and its right to self-rule is central to the book, which the UNR Minister of War ordered printed in 100,000 copies as a reader for his soldiers.⁵ Ohiienko begins his survey with two questions that in his view are related: 'Do we have the right to live in freedom and the right to autonomy, which we have been demanding staunchly for more than two centuries? Do our people constitute a separate nationality; do they have their own original and distinctive culture?'⁶ Ohiienko's answer is, not surprisingly, affirmative, but more interesting is his book's structure.

Unlike present-day historians of Ukrainian culture, Ohiienko de-emphasizes the nineteenth century, when a modern Ukrainian culture developed, based on the peasant vernacular. His focus is instead on the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, when Ukrainian culture was allegedly superior to the Russian. The first part of the book begins with the exaltation of Ukrainian folk songs, which even Muscovites love; the Ukrainian language, which is said to be the richest and most expressive of all the Slavic languages; and even Ukrainian handwriting of the Cossack period, which was much prettier than the Russian one and which the Muscovites adopted in the eighteenth century.⁷ Ohiienko claims for Ukrainian culture the literature of

⁵ See Mykola Tymoshyk, 'Lyshus' naviky z chuzhynoiu...' *Mytropolyt Ilarion (Ivan Ohiienko) i ukrains'ke vidrodzhennia* (Kyiv: Nasha kul'tura i nauka, 2000), 53-59; Halyna Hrinchenko and Valentyna Kudriashova, 'Pedahohichna diialnist' Ivana Ohiienka', in M. V. Levkivs'kyi (ed.), *Ivan Ohiienko i utverdzhennia humanitarnoi nauky ta osvity v Ukraini* (Zhytomyr: Zhurfond, 1997), 11-12.

⁶ Ivan Ohiienko, *Ukrains'ka kul'tura* (Kyiv: Nasha kul'tura i nauka, 2002), 54. The original edition was subtitled 'A Short History of the Ukrainian People's Cultural Life'. See Ivan Ohiienko, *Ukrains'ka kul'tura: Korotka istoriia kul'turnoho zhyttia ukrains'koho naroda* (Kyiv: Ie. Cherepovs'kyi, 1918).

⁷ Ohiienko, 61, 69-70, 73.

medieval Kyivan Rus that had long been presented as ‘Russian’. He then traces the continuous development of the Ukrainian cultural tradition to the seventeenth century, ‘the golden age of our literature and our culture’, when among the Slavic nations Ukraine was second to Poland in terms of cultural development. As Ohiienko’s main ‘other’ is Russia, he glosses over Polish social oppression and cultural assimilation to claim that, unlike Russia, ‘Ukraine has never been afraid of Western culture, and Western influences have flowed to us like a broad river’.⁸

Much of the first part and the entire second part of the book, entitled ‘The Influence of Ukrainian Culture on Muscovite Culture’, are devoted to proving Russia’s cultural inferiority before the nineteenth century. Ukrainian scholars brought modern orthography, theatre, singing, and syllabic poetry to Russia. Muscovites travelled to Ukraine to study at Kyiv’s Mohyla Academy, and transplanted Ukrainians created Russia’s modern educational system. Ohiienko claims that even the Russian literary language was based on the ‘Slavonic-Rus’ bookish language that had developed in Ukraine during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁹ This line of argument helps explain why Ohiienko gives short shrift to the nineteenth century, when writers using the peasant vernacular laid the foundations of present-day Ukrainian culture. Switching from a Slavonic literary language to peasant speech undermined claims of cultural continuity from Kyivan Rus and cultural superiority over Russia. Indeed, the first published work in the Ukrainian vernacular, Ivan Kotliarevsky’s *Eneida* (1798) was, for Ohiienko, ‘a cross on the grave of our old literary language’.¹⁰

The author thus devotes only two pages to the development of Ukrainian literature during the nineteenth century – a period that most present-day cultural historians would consider central to their subject. The long fourth part of the book is instead entitled ‘On a Thorny Path (About the Injustices Committed against the Ukrainian People)’. It deals in great detail with tsarist repressions against Ukrainian culture during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Ohiienko does not offer any rationale for the assimilationist drive

⁸ Ohiienko, 85, 89.

⁹ Ohiienko, 166, 317-18.

¹⁰ Ohiienko, 319.

other than that ‘Moscow hated everyone who was not Russian’.¹¹ His choice to frame nineteenth-century Ukrainian culture as a story of persecution rather than perseverance fits well with his stated intention – to prove with cultural arguments Ukraine’s right to self-rule.

The publication of Ohiienko’s *Ukrainian Culture* provoked an interesting response from a prominent Ukrainian patriot of the older generation, Vasyl Naumenko. A representative of the so-called Ukrainophiles, who for decades conducted semi-legal cultural work under the tsarist regime, Naumenko attacked Ohiienko’s survey in a long review, which appeared as a separate booklet under the title *How the History of Ukrainian Culture Should Not Be Taught*. The older Ukrainian activist found many faults with the book, most of them related to Ohiienko’s exaggeration of the nation’s achievements: the claims that Ukrainian language (and not Polish, Czech, or Russian) is the richest Slavic language, that modern Russian is based on a literary language developed in Ukraine, and that nineteenth-century Ukrainian literature was ‘on a par with the great literatures of the world’. Ultimately, though, most of Naumenko’s critiques relate to his stated uneasiness about ‘irritation and hatred’ towards Russian culture displayed in Ohiienko’s text: ‘[u]nfortunately, there is no objectivity in the author’s book and instead everywhere you will find minor and often uncertain proofs of Russian oppression against Ukrainians, and even more often, quotations about how savage and uncultured Muscovites were’.¹² Naumenko’s harsh appraisal reflects his generation’s apprehension of an open break with Russia and Russian culture. The Ukrainophiles did not extend their vision beyond a regional status for Ukrainian culture in a Russian-dominated federation – the very reason why their generation did not produce a history of Ukrainian culture.

Ohiienko’s survey, meanwhile, reflected the cultural policies of a Ukrainian state born from the revolutionary turmoil of 1917-20. After the Ukrainian People’s Republic fell, the Bolsheviks and restored Poland divided up the Ukrainian ethnolinguistic territories, with smaller parts ending up in Romania and Czechoslovakia. *Ukrainian Culture* became a popular textbook among Ukrainians living outside the Soviet Union, although its anti-Russian

¹¹ Ohiienko, 189.

¹² V. Naumenko, *Iak ne treba vykladaty istoriiu ukrains’koi kul’tury* (Kyiv: Petro Bars’kyi, 1918), 1-9. The longer quotation is on page 9.

focus did not fully reflect the cultural concerns of readers. For most Ukrainians in interwar Eastern European states, the cultural past was represented by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which allowed education and publishing in Ukrainian, while the present was marked by assimilationist pressures in Poland and Romania. Ohiienko's work, however, all but ignored cultural developments in western Ukrainian lands.

In 1937 Ohiienko's book was superseded by a much more detailed and balanced survey, *The History of Ukrainian Culture*, which was published in Lviv (then part of Poland) under the editorship of the prominent historian Ivan Krypiakevych. Originally appearing as a series of fifteen separate booklets, this collection featured a thematic approach to Ukrainian culture, with areas such as everyday life, literature, art, theatre, and music assigned to different authors. In contrast to Ohiienko, Krypiakevych and his collaborators were not concerned with establishing the separateness of Ukrainian culture from Russian. In Poland during the 1930s this question was decidedly passé. The cultural borders in need of demarcation included those with Polish culture (conveniently separated by a different religion and alphabet, but based on a related Slavic language and historically an attractive imperial culture for Ukrainians) and with socialist Ukrainian culture inside the Soviet Union.

The collection's authors answered these challenges by stressing the combination of Western and Eastern influences in Ukraine's past – the symbiosis separating Ukrainian culture from Polish, which, due to the dominant role of Roman Catholicism, was seen as belonging fully to the West. In writing about the twentieth century, they, on the contrary, emphasized the common dynamics of cultural processes in Ukrainian lands outside the Soviet Union and Western Europe, thus making Soviet Ukrainian culture look like an aberration. Finally, to remove any doubts about Ukraine's distinctiveness from Russia, the authors clearly claimed Kyivan Rus for Ukrainian culture by calling it 'ancient Ukraine' and discussing the earliest chronicles under the very modern subheading 'Scholarship and Ukrainian Studies'.¹³ After the fourteenth century, the narrative focuses more on the western Ukrainian lands, thus making the book more relevant for its potential readership.

¹³ Ivan Krypiakevych, 'Pobut', in I. Krypiakevych (ed.), *Istoriia ukrains'koi kul'tury*, 4th edn (Kyiv: Lybid', 2002), 36 ('Ancient Ukraine'), 48 ('Ukrainian Studies').

Typical of the book's general approach is its appraisal of the seventeenth-century Mohyla Academy in Kyiv, a great cultural centre for Ohiienko and most of today's historians. Because the academy was modelled on Polish Jesuit colleges and emphasized the study of Latin, Krypiakevych sees its cultural role as largely negative:

The Academy opened the doors wide to Western, Catholic influences, but at the same time did not continue Ukraine's old links with the East, with Byzantium. Even the study of the Greek language decreased with every decade. Because of this, Ukrainian culture began losing the comprehensiveness that distinguished it in ancient times, as well as its originality and distinctiveness; instead, it fell under the overwhelming influence of Western Europe represented for us by Poland.¹⁴

In this scheme of things, the Cossack revolt and the liberation of eastern Ukraine from Polish domination restored Ukraine's traditional role as a cultural mediator and heir to both Eastern and Western traditions. Although it increasingly controlled Ukraine politically after 1654, Muscovy was allegedly no competitor on the cultural scene:

When Moscow, stagnating in its religious formalism, covered up its cultural backwardness with an artificial foreign veneer, Ukraine, this true and worthy heir of ancient Eastern and Greek culture, accepted only those Western forms and only in such an application that did not contradict its established aesthetic worldview.¹⁵

Having established the separateness of Ukrainian culture from those of Poland and Russia, the collection's authors had to position themselves in relation to Soviet Ukrainian culture and especially its Stalinist version, which had been emerging during the 1930s. Volodymyr Radzykevych, who contributed the chapter on literature, stresses that all major Ukrainian writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, including Ivan Franko, Lesia Ukrainka, Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky, and Olha Kobylianska 'based their work on modern Western European literary trends and implanted in Ukrainian soil new artistic achievements of Western European writers'. Such a strong statement devalues the Ukrainian authors' originality, but Radzykevych needed it as a lead-up to his conclusions: 'Ukrainian culture should part company with

¹⁴ Krypiakevych, 125.

¹⁵ Mykola Holubets', 'Mystetstvo', in Krypiakevych, *Istoriia ukrains'koi kul'tury*, 500.

the Muscovite one. Mykola Khvylovy gave his life for this idea. If Ukrainian literature is to serve the people, it should follow in the footsteps of Western Europe'.¹⁶

Since this is a political position as much as an aesthetic one, it comes as no surprise that the western Ukrainian authors disapprove of certain 'European' avant-garde artistic trends that were associated with the Bolsheviks. The prominent Ukrainian writer Volodymyr Vynnychenko, whose early work featured Nietzschean motifs, is criticized for justifying 'savage' human instincts – an approach allegedly 'far removed from the psychology and thinking of Ukrainian society'.¹⁷ Although Vynnychenko fits nicely into 'Western European' cultural trends of the early twentieth century, what made him less acceptable was his long association with the political left, which included periods of closeness to the Bolsheviks. In painting too, Cubism and Futurism receive a negative evaluation because of their prominence in early Soviet art, although they were on the rise elsewhere in Europe as well. Mykola Holubets, who wrote the chapter on art, speaks warmly of the resistance from Ukrainian post-impressionists and expressionists to officially sponsored 'Cubo-Futuro-Primitivism'. Only the turn to Socialist Realism in Soviet Ukrainian art during the early 1930s removes the need for western Ukrainian commentators to sort out modernist trends into 'safe' European and not-so-European. From then on, Soviet Ukrainian art parts company with modernist Europe and is dominated by 'illustrators, who with greater or lesser success imitate the old and forgotten [Russian] Wanderers'.¹⁸

Yet the Soviet model of Ukrainian culture was soon imposed on western Ukrainians, when Stalin absorbed their territories into the Soviet Union during 1939-40. Ohienko's survey and Krypiakevych's collection continued to be used by the Ukrainian diaspora in Western Europe, North America, and

¹⁶ Volodymyr Radzykevych, 'Pys'menstvo', in I. Krypiakevych, *Istoriia ukrains'koi kul'tury*, 411, 423. Mykola Khvylovyi was a leading prose writer in Soviet Ukraine, who during the 1920s advocated a cultural orientation towards Western Europe or, as he put it in his famous slogan, 'Away from Moscow'. After a prolonged campaign of denunciation in the official press, he committed suicide in 1933.

¹⁷ Radzykevych, 414.

¹⁸ Holubets', 575-76. The Wanderers were a Russian school of realist painting during the last third of the nineteenth century.

Australia, but were withdrawn from public circulation in Soviet Ukraine.¹⁹ Stalinist bureaucrats, however, did not replace these texts, which they branded ‘bourgeois nationalist’, with ideologically sound Soviet surveys of Ukrainian culture, because they saw no need for such books. Previous popular narratives of the history of Ukrainian culture were written as textbooks for the general reader and moreover, for a readership discovering or affirming its sense of Ukrainian identity either during the revolutionary turmoil or under oppressive Polish rule. In Soviet Ukraine, where Ukrainian language and literature constituted the core of school curricula and universities offered more specialized courses on literature, history and the arts, there were no academic niches for a one-volume introduction to Ukrainian identity. Perhaps more importantly, during the early 1930s Stalin’s regime was abandoning the promotion of non-Russian cultures characteristic of the 1920s ‘nativization’ policy in favour of a renewed Russification drive.²⁰ Under the circumstances, a patriotic history of Ukrainian culture would have been inappropriate.

Thus, there was no replacement for a brief survey published at the high point of ‘nativization’, Antin Kozachenko’s *Ukrainian Culture: Its Past and Present* (1931). In any case, the author interpreted cultural processes in crude class-analysis terms typical of Soviet social science during the 1920s. He insists on class labels for each epoch, which resulted in Shevchenko, for example, being stuck in the middle of the ‘gentry’ period. Modernism in Ukrainian architecture is qualified by the term ‘bourgeois’, and contemporary Ukrainians could fully identify only with ‘Ukrainian proletarian culture’, best represented by the proletarian poets of the 1920s – Vasyl Ellan-Blakytny, Vasyl

¹⁹ Both books were repeatedly reprinted abroad, as was a similar but somewhat less influential survey, which did not have a chapter on literature, *Ukrainian Culture*, edited by Dmytro Antonovych and first published in 1940 in Czechoslovakia, then under Nazi occupation. See a modern edition: Dmytro Antonovych (ed.), *Ukrains’ka kul’tura* (Kyiv: Lybid’, 1993). In 1985, a more up-to-date survey appeared in the Ukrainian diaspora. The book by Myroslav Semchyshyn was written along the same lines as its interwar predecessors and ended the story of Ukrainian culture with an examination of cultural processes in the diaspora, rather than in Soviet Ukraine. See Myroslav Semchyshyn, *Tysiacha rokov ukrains’koi kul’tury*, 2nd edn (Kyiv: Druha ruka/Feniks, 1993); originally published in New York in 1985.

²⁰ See Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

Chumak, and Volodymyr Sosiura.²¹ What made Kozachenko's book outdated, however, was not so much its unsophisticated sociological labels, which went out of fashion during the early 1930s, as its harsh critique of tsarist policies in Ukraine. Statements about Muscovy's 'colonial oppression' and cultural repression resulting from the Russian government's drive 'to fully absorb Ukraine'²² were beginning to sound odd after the mid-1930s. As Soviet ideologues embraced the concept of the 'friendship of peoples', they also increasingly rehabilitated the tsarist regime and its nationalities policy.²³

With the partial rehabilitation of Ukrainian patriotic rhetoric as a mobilization tool during World War II, scholars at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences planned the preparation of a survey of the history of Ukrainian culture,²⁴ but this project was abandoned after the Kremlin denounced 'nationalist deviations' in Ukrainian culture in 1944, 1946, and again in 1951. The next Soviet history of Ukrainian culture appeared only during Khrushchev's 'thaw'. In 1961, Mykhailo Marchenko published his *History of Ukrainian Culture: From Ancient Times to the Mid-Seventeenth Century*, intended as a supplementary text for teachers and university students specializing in history. The author criticizes Ohienko's and Krypiakevych's texts as 'bourgeois falsifications', without, however, naming Krypiakevych, who had repented of his past indiscretions and emerged after the war as a prominent Soviet academic. He also pays due attention to the contacts between the 'fraternal' Ukrainian and Russian cultures during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.²⁵ But at the same time Marchenko stresses Ukrainian

²¹ Antin Kozachenko, *Ukrains'ka kul'tura: ii mynuvshchyna i suchasnist'* (Kharkiv: Proletar, 1931), 42, 76, 96, 122.

²² Kozachenko, 14, 59.

²³ On the ideological change in the Soviet Union in general, see David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). On the implications for Russian-Ukrainian relations, see Serhy Yekelchuk, *Stalin's Empire of Memory: Russian-Ukrainian Relations in the Soviet Historical Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

²⁴ V.A. Smolii, (ed.), *U leshchatakh totalitaryzmu: pershe dvadtsiatyrichchia Instytutu istorii NAN Ukrainy (1936-1956 rr.)* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy, 1996), Vol. 1, 119, 121.

²⁵ M.I. Marchenko, *Istoriia ukrains'koi kul'tury: z naidavnishykh chasiv do seredyny XVII st.* (Kyiv: Radianska shkola, 1961), 6, 270-75.

national culture's cohesiveness over class distinctions: 'The class character of a culture does not contradict the fact that a people's culture reflects the unity of the psychological makeup of this given tribe, nationality or nation'. Moreover, he obliquely repeats the point about the innate democratic character of Ukrainian culture, determined by the fact that the upper classes were mostly foreign, an idea found in the works of nineteenth-century Ukrainian ideologues and in Ohiienko's book, but considered a nationalist heresy in the Soviet Union. According to Marchenko, '[t]he culture of those peoples and nations that experienced oppression by foreign conquerors is the one that is penetrated by the spirit of the common people'.²⁶

Yet no sequel treating the period after the seventeenth century ever appeared. The short-lasting thaw gave way to the Brezhnev period, when patriotic non-Russian intellectuals were reined in and studies of cultural contacts with Russia became more important than analyses of Ukrainian culture as such.²⁷

The Universal and the National in Culture

The situation changed with the disintegration of Soviet ideological controls during the late 1980s. In 1989 the Ukrainian Ministry of Higher Education began cancelling the previously obligatory social science courses at the university level: History of the Communist Party, Marxist-Leninist Philosophy, Scientific Communism, etc. Among their replacements was an equally compulsory course, The History and Theory of World and Ukrainian Culture, which was phased in during the academic year 1990-91. Reforms in higher education continued after Ukraine became independent in 1991, as the young state was searching for a new official ideology. Most political leaders in the republic simply changed colours in 1990-91 by switching from communism to moderate nationalism, and college departments went through a similar transformation. The Ministry of Higher Education first renamed the departments of Communist Party history as departments of political history, but late in 1990 recommended their conversion into departments of Ukrainian

²⁶ Marchenko, 4.

²⁷ See, for example, A. D. Skaba (ed.), *Vinok družhby*, Vol. 3: *Dukhovnyi rozkvit ukrains'koho narodu* (Kyiv: Polityvydav, 1972) and Iu.Iu. Kondufor, (ed.), *Družhba i bratstvo russkogo i ukrainskogo narodov* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1982), 2 vols.

Studies. Thus, former historians of the Communist Party ended up teaching the history of Ukrainian culture. At some smaller or specialized colleges, however, instruction in cultural history was assigned to departments of philosophy, previously known as departments of Scientific Communism, while former party historians took responsibility for Ukrainian history.²⁸ The last reorganization came in 1993, when the ministry introduced an obligatory course entitled The History of Ukrainian Culture for Students in Faculties of Arts and Humanities, while all others studied The History of World and Ukrainian Culture.²⁹

In order to support these courses, within a decade Ukrainian academics had published dozens of textbooks. Most of them are written in Ukrainian, but some are in Russian, as many institutions of higher education in eastern Ukraine continue offering instruction in this language. The majority of textbooks cover both world and Ukrainian culture, but many are devoted only to Ukrainian. Of the former, a significant number are tailored towards the specific profile of the college where the authors teach, for example, the Aviation University, the Institute of Military Engineers, the Academy of Internal Affairs, with special emphasis on the history of aviation, military technology, or social order. Yet all textbook authors share the same conceptual and methodological problems, none of them more challenging than defining Ukrainian culture.

The textbook on world and Ukrainian culture used at Kyiv University well illustrates the nature of this difficulty. Written by fourteen academics,

²⁸ See B.A. Holovko, 'Spetsyfika vykladannia filofs'kykh dystsyplin u natsionalnomu ahranomu universyteti', in M.I. Bletska (ed.), *Humanitarna osvita: dosvid i problemy* (Uzhhorod: Grazhda, 1999), 97-98; E.P. Polishchuk, 'Pro mistse kursu istorii kul'tury v systemi humanitarnoi osvity', Bletska, 486-88; L.V. Kuznetsova, 'Problemy vykladannia teorii ta istorii natsional'noi kul'tury v osvityakh zakladakh Ukrainy', in A.K. Bychko (ed.), *Ukrains'ka kul'tura. Zmist i metodyka vykladannia* (Kyiv: Navchalno-metodychnyi kabinet vyshchoi osvity Ministerstva osvity, 1993), 100; and A.I. Pavko, 'Chy potribno vyvchaty politychnu istoriiu Ukrainy u vyshchii shkoli?' *Ukrains'kyi istorychnyi zhurnal*, no. 2 (2005): 205.

²⁹ S.M. Klapchuk and V.F. Ostafiichuk (eds), *Istoriia ukrains'koi kul'tury: zbirnyk materialiv i dokumentiv* (Kyiv: Vyshcha shkola, 2000), 5; L.M. Malysheko, 'Pro deiak aspekti vykladannia ukrains'koi natsional'noi kul'tury v tekhnichnomu vuzi', in Bychko, *Ukrains'ka kul'tura*, 122.

most of them former instructors in Communist Party history, the text begins with a section on theory and methodology, in which old dogmatic Marxism and new doctrinaire Ukrainian patriotism blend into a confusing theory of national culture. The Marxist interpretation of history was based on so-called Historical Materialism, emphasizing the evolution of the means of production, while nationalist theoreticians defined the (ethnic) nation in terms of psychological unity. The authors claim to be able to combine the two methodologies into a ‘psychological approach based on the principle of Historical Materialism’.³⁰ In reality, as in most other surveys, the forces of production and production relations are replaced in their role as history’s moving force by an organic development of an ethnic nation, with the nation’s struggle for its own state often understood as dogmatically as the class struggle had been in Soviet times.

Most textbooks define Ukrainian culture as the sum of material and spiritual values produced by the Ukrainian people, including the diaspora.³¹ The last qualification indicates that this understanding of culture is based on the ethnicity and language of the cultural producers rather than on territory. In this understanding, ‘Ukrainian culture’ does not include the rich cultural heritage of Ukraine’s significant national minorities, such as Russians, Poles, and Jews, or much of the present-day mass culture in Ukraine, which functions mostly in Russian, the language of preference for half of Ukraine’s population. Even the sophisticated textbook on the history of Ukrainian culture written by top specialists from the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences features the concept of Ukrainian culture as a ‘system of thought and creativity’ generated by the Ukrainian people and reflecting their ‘ethical ideals’, together with the specific features of ‘national mentality’.³² To better explain what ‘mentality’ is, one of the collection’s authors reaches back to the conceptual apparatus of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century nationalists, long discredited in the West: ‘This

³⁰ S.M. Klapchuk and V.F. Ostafiichuk (eds), *Istoriia ukrains'koi ta zarubizhnoi kul'tury*, 4th edn (Kyiv: Znannia-Pres, 2002), 12. As is the case with many other textbooks published in Ukraine, it remains unclear who wrote which chapter(s), because the fourteen authors are not listed in the table of contents.

³¹ Klapchuk, Ostafiichuk, 10; M.M. Zakovych (ed.), *Ukrains'ka ta zarubizhna kul'tura: navchal'nyi posibnyk*, 3rd edn (Kyiv: Znannia, 2002), 296-97.

³² M.V. Honcharenko, ‘Kul'tura i natsiia’, in V.M. Rusanivs'kyi (ed.), *Kul'tura ukrains'koho narodu: navchal'nyi posibnyk* (Kyiv: Lybid, 1994), 5, 7.

notion had as its historical predecessors the spirit of the people, the nation's spiritual make-up, and the national character'.³³

Such an understanding of Ukraine's culture as the culture of ethnic Ukrainians does not make sense for authors of textbooks published in eastern Ukraine, where most of Ukraine's sizeable Russian minority lives and where the majority of ethnic Ukrainians also embrace Russian culture. Some of these textbooks are even published in Russian. Their authors often prefer to speak of the 'history of culture in Ukraine' defining their subject, for example, as the 'historical conditions of spiritual life of contemporary Ukraine's population'.³⁴ Another writer from the same region observes (in Russian) that 'today, the culture of each ethnic group is characterized by a combination of components specific to the national culture in question and those common to all humankind'.³⁵

Irrespective of how authors define their subject matter, however, all of them face the same methodological problem – how to structure their narratives of Ukrainian cultural history. This issue, of course, is not simply a structural question, but relates to the search for the inner dynamics of Ukrainian culture. Did it go through the same change of styles and schools as Western Europe, or was its development determined by political events specific to this corner of Eastern Europe, such as foreign domination, assimilation, and attempts to regain statehood? The first decision authors have to make, however, *is* structural. In surveys of Ukrainian culture, it is the division into chapters, and in surveys of world and Ukrainian culture, it is the division, if any, between the two.

In the overwhelming majority of textbooks on the history of world and Ukrainian culture these two subjects are treated separately, world culture first and Ukrainian second. An obvious theoretical difficulty that authors encounter is where to discuss Russian culture, both the one produced in Russia (but consumed in Ukraine) and the one produced in Ukraine by ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians. One solution popular with textbook authors

³³ M.P. Kozak, 'Rytmy kul'tury i arytmiiia epokhy', *Rusanivs'kyi*, 214.

³⁴ Ie.T. Ievseev, S.A. Kanavenko, V.I. Kovalov, and V.V. Hrebeniuk, *Istoriia kul'tury Ukrainy* (Kharkiv: Kharkivs'kyi natsional'nyi avto-dorozhnyi instytut, 2001), 4.

³⁵ K.V. Zablotskaia (ed.), *Istoriia mirovoi i ukrainskoi kul'tury: uchebnoe posobie* (Donetsk: Ukrainskii kul'turologicheskii tsentr, 1999), 218-19.

from eastern Ukraine is to feature Russian culture prominently in the section on the world. Thus, the reader sees Russian culture as equal to the best achievements of the West, with the names of Russian writers and artists mentioned next to those of Western cultural figures. Rokotov appears next to Goya, Fonvizin follows Lessing, Zhukovsky is in the same sentence as Byron, Tchaikovsky is grouped with Verdi, Favorsky is paired with Picasso, and Andrei Tarkovsky follows Ingmar Bergman. Ukrainians who wrote in Russian or worked in Russia are also listed there: Gogol is discussed together with Balzac, Repin on the same page as the Impressionists, and the Ukrainian-born Russian Mikhail Bulgakov is mentioned alongside Thomas Mann and James Joyce. The Winter Palace in St. Petersburg is a popular example of Baroque architecture, while one author calls Moscow ‘one of Europe’s architectural centres during the twentieth century’.³⁶ Although later chapters in such textbooks duly discuss the development of Ukrainian culture, in such a context its separate treatment makes the culture of ethnic Ukrainians sound less prestigious and less developed.

The majority of textbook authors realize the danger of excluding Ukrainian culture from world culture, but their ways of getting around this problem differ. Most prefer to keep separate the narratives of world and Ukrainian culture because of the different criteria employed in periodization: world culture develops from primitive art to postmodernism, while Ukrainian culture proceeds from this ethnic group’s origins to state independence. (This contradiction is discussed below.) The easy solution is to include some Ukrainian examples, together with Russian ones, in the story of world culture, while treating Ukrainian culture fully in the second part of the book. Thus, the reader finds Pavlo Rusyn and Stanislav Orikhovsky listed among Renaissance writers, Taras Shevchenko’s paintings discussed as examples of Romanticism in art, and the poetry of young Pavlo Tychyna mentioned in the same sentence as that of Verlaine and Rilke.³⁷ Ironically, Ukrainian inserts into universal

³⁶ See Zablotskaia, 157, 178, 183, 206; and A.M. Vorobev, G.A. Lisovik, L.I. Branitsa, D.N. Vepriniak, A.A. Prikhodko, Ie.N. Iatsenko, *Ukrainskaia i zarubezhnaia kul'tura: uchebnoe posobie* (Kyiv: Natsional'nyi aviatsionnyi universitet, 2002), 145, 150, 152, 163, 170, 183, 185 (Moscow).

³⁷ See A. Iartys, V. Mel'nyk (eds), *Leksii z istorii svitovoi ta vitchyznianoi kul'tury*, 2nd edn (Lviv: Svit, 2005), 233, 286; V. Hrechenko, I. Chorny, V. Kushneruk, V. Rezhko, *Istoriia svitovoi ta ukrains'koi kul'tury* (Kyiv: Litera, 2005), 162, 233; V.T. Zhezherun,

cultural history, apparently written by specialists on Western culture, are often more sophisticated than the discussion of the same topics in 'Ukrainian' chapters penned by narrow specialists. One textbook intended for the education of military engineers features in its world culture section a discussion of differences between the European and Ukrainian Enlightenment during the eighteenth century (in Ukraine philosophy was not yet separate from theology, and natural sciences were slow to develop) which is superior not just to its Ukrainian sections, but to other surveys of Ukrainian culture for humanities students.³⁸

Another, less popular, solution is to combine in a single chapter a discussion of world and Ukrainian culture during the same period. The difficulties there, illustrated well in the survey edited by S. M. Klapchuk and V. F. Ostafiichuk, include incorporating Ukrainian material into early chapters and synchronizing the development of Ukrainian and Western cultures in later chapters. Some patriotic Ukrainian scholars cannot resist the temptation to claim that the ancient Slavs built Stonehenge, the prehistoric Trypillians (who lived in what is now Ukraine in 4,000-2,500 BC) spoke Ukrainian, and the famous Sumerian civilization (in the Middle East) was also possibly Ukrainian.³⁹ It is easier to fit the history of Ukrainian culture into chapters on 'Medieval Culture', 'The Age of the Renaissance', and 'The Age of the Enlightenment', although the Ukrainian section of the latter is called 'Ukrainian Culture during the Period of National Revival' and has little to do with the European Enlightenment either thematically or chronologically. In the titles of later chapters, artistic styles and philosophical trends give way to simple chronology: mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries (encompassing Realism, Modernism, and the national school in Ukrainian culture), the interwar period, and, in a throwback to the awkward-sounding Soviet term for post-war society, 'Foreign and Ukrainian Culture during the Development of the Scientific-Technological Revolution'.

V.H. Rybalka (eds), *Ukrains'ka ta zarubizhna kul'tura* (Kharkiv: Slobozhanshchyna, 2003), 191, 285.

³⁸ Zhezherun, 256-65.

³⁹ Klapchuk and Ostafiichuk, *Istoriia*, 39 and 53. See also 60 on the proto-Ukrainians bringing Sanskrit to ancient India.

The problem of matching developments in Ukraine with the established periodization of Western culture is not limited to textbooks that do not treat world and Ukrainian culture separately. Rather, it is a theoretical difficulty apparent both in double-bill textbooks and in separate surveys of Ukrainian culture. Most authors do not address this problem directly, although it is not new and may be traced back to Dmytro Chyzhevsky, who in his *History of Ukrainian Literature* divided his material into periods that correspond almost exactly to Western literary styles.⁴⁰ Yet the authors of present-day textbooks do not follow in Chyzhevsky's footsteps, opting instead for the history of ethnic Ukrainians as a basis of periodization. The period of Kyivan Rus, which is interpreted as 'Ukrainian' in some textbooks but as 'East Slavic' in most, and especially in those published in eastern Ukraine, is followed by the cultural stage to which all authors apply the adjective 'Ukrainian', the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, when the Ukrainian language developed. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be lumped together or treated separately, but their main theme is the Cossacks. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, even when split into two or three chapters, focus on the development of modern high culture based on the peasant vernacular. Independent Ukraine is almost always discussed in a separate chapter.

In one textbook, the entire period from the late eighteenth century to the 1980s is divided into the following two phases: 'From the Destruction of the [Cossack] Hetmanate to the Early Twentieth Century' and 'Ukraine's Renewed, Interwar and Post-war Subjugation by Her Eastern and Western Neighbours'.⁴¹ The vision of the entire nineteenth and early twentieth century as a single cultural stage is common, but when authors want to break it up into smaller time periods, they openly follow the periodization of the Ukrainian national movement, not that of artistic movements. Thus, they speak of stages of academic interest in folklore, development of literature and education, and political mobilization, or, according to another book, the cultural-educational

⁴⁰ See D.I. Chyzhevs'kyi, *Istoriia ukrains'koi literatury* (Kyiv: Akademiia, 2003) and Hryhorii Hrabovych [George Grabowicz], *Do istorii ukrains'koi literatury: Doslidzhennia, ese, polemika* (Kyiv: Osnovy, 1997), 453-542.

⁴¹ Zakovych, 298-304.

period (until the 1890s), the political period (1890s-1910s), and the period of state-building (1910s-1920s).⁴²

Of course, Ukrainian scholars do not completely ignore the history of worldwide literary styles and artistic trends, but for them these are secondary analytical tools, unless they are seen as related to the development of a distinctive Ukrainian national identity, as are the so-called Cossack Baroque and Romanticism with its interest in folklore. In some cases, however, authors apparently regard the differentiation of Ukrainian cultural history as a matter of national prestige. This is particularly true of the Renaissance. Some authors claim the existence of a fully fledged 'Ukrainian Renaissance' between the fifteenth and mid-seventeenth century, complete with the 'formation in Ukrainian culture of a humanistic worldview putting humans' earthly lives and work at the centre of attention'.⁴³ Others agree that Italian architects working in the part of Poland that is now western Ukraine left numerous examples of Renaissance buildings, but acknowledge that Renaissance humanism did not develop in Ukrainian literature, dominated as it was by ecclesiastical writings. Instead of 'Renaissance humanism', they find 'Renaissance classicism' with its renewed interest in antiquity in the work of Ukrainian authors writing in Latin (again, in what was then Roman Catholic Poland).⁴⁴ Yet others realize that the use of Latin and references to classical humanistic tradition were at best marginal in Ukrainian culture, based as it was on Church Slavonic as the language of scriptures and learning. If they want to apply the term Renaissance (meaning 'revival' of ancient learning and humanism) to Ukrainian culture, such authors rethink it as 'our national Renaissance'.⁴⁵ This 'Renaissance' refers to the revival of the legacy of Kyivan Rus and covers the flourishing of Ukrainian education, religious thought, and publishing during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Ultimately, such creative use of terminology confirms the primacy of Ukrainian nation-building over pan-European artistic trends as the basis for cultural periodization.

⁴² Iartys, 473-78; Zhezherun, 321-30.

⁴³ Iartys, 416, 419.

⁴⁴ S.O. Cherepanova (ed.), *Ukrains'ka kul'tura: istoriia i suchasnist* (Lviv: Svit, 1994), 134-35, 227.

⁴⁵ Zhezherun, 190.

More interesting yet is the evaluation in Ukrainian textbooks of more recent cultural phenomena, such as mass culture and postmodernism. The divergence between narratives of foreign and Ukrainian cultures is at its greatest in the discussion of the contemporary period. The survey edited by Klapchuk and Ostafiichuk once again provides the most telling illustration of general trends, with its last chapter, 'Culture at the Turn of the Century', featuring two sections: 'Western Relativism' and 'The Cathedral of Ukrainian Spirituality'. The first denounces the propaganda of violence in Western mass culture and uncovers postmodernism's 'commercial bent', while the second discusses the inculcation of Ukrainian patriotism, state support for Ukrainian culture, and the restoration of the Ukrainian language's proper position in society.⁴⁶ In the world-culture sections of other textbooks, there are occasionally detailed and sophisticated treatments of Western postmodernism and pop-art. One author notes perceptively that today's mass culture is a direct successor of 'low culture' that has always existed parallel to 'high culture'.⁴⁷

But both 'low' and 'high' culture of the postmodern age receive largely negative evaluations in surveys of Ukrainian cultural history. Chapters on the late Soviet and post-communist periods focus so much on the reversal of assimilation, the (insufficient) state support for Ukrainian culture, and the return of forbidden works that the reader is left wondering whether there is a Ukrainian postmodernism. For some reason, the Ukrainian-born theatre director Roman Viktiuk is mentioned time and again as a native representative of cutting-edge trends, who has gained worldwide fame.⁴⁸ However, in contrast to Ukrainian postmodernists, such as the literary group Bu-Ba-Bu and its most famous member, the poet and novelist Yuri Andrukhovych, Viktiuk grew to prominence while working in Russia and is usually known as a Russian cultural figure. Perhaps postmodernism, with its subversion of cultural certainties and national mythologies, goes against the scheme most textbook authors embrace, the Ukrainians' centuries-old struggle against foreign

⁴⁶ Klapchuk and Ostafiichuk, *Istoriia*, 331-44.

⁴⁷ See Zhezherun, 342-59, Iartys, 319-38. The comparison with 'low culture' is in Hrehchenko, 251-52.

⁴⁸ Volodymyr Bokan, Leontii Pol'ovyi, *Istoriia kul'tury Ukrainy*, 2nd edn (Kyiv: MAUP, 2001), 233; Cherepanova, 286.

oppressors, for the free development of their (cohesive and patriotic) national culture.

A similar tension between the national ideal and the reality of popular taste explains the diatribes against mass culture found in the majority of surveys, sometimes even in Ukrainian sections of books that in their world-culture sections approve of mass culture and pop-art. The authors are hostile towards mass culture in Ukraine primarily because it is a foreign mass culture. According to one textbook, 'Americanization, Westernization, and the assault of mass-culture kitsch have resulted in their almost complete conquest of our national film distribution network, as well as television'. The domination of Western mass culture 'began suppressing the interest in national culture that has only just woken up' and, moreover, the ideas that universal mass culture propagates 'are often alien to our morals and our mentality'.⁴⁹ Some textbooks see the threat of mass culture to Ukrainian national identity as emanating from both the West and Russia: they speak of the 'dominance on television and in mass-media of low-quality and openly hostile output (*vidverto vorozhoi produktsii*) from the US, Western Europe, and Russia'.⁵⁰ But even the authors of Russian-language textbooks, who are not opposed in principle to cultural products generated in Russia, sometimes denounce mass culture as 'based on sex, adventure, and thoughtless enjoyment'.⁵¹ Apparently, they do not see such culture as fulfilling the traditional role of the foundation of national identity, regardless of what this identity is.

In fact, open defence of the de facto bilingualism that exists in Ukraine is extremely rare in the textbooks under consideration. Only in one textbook published in Ukrainian in Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine do the authors criticize the official rhetoric about the forced assimilation of Ukrainian in Soviet times and decry the present-day break-up of cultural ties with Russia.⁵² But equally as rare are balanced and informed discussions of what modern Ukrainian mass culture is and why much of it functions in Russian. Only one textbook in our sample explains that some 'foreign' authors of fantasy and romance (popular in Ukraine) whose books are published in Russian in Russia actually live in

⁴⁹ Zakovych, 541.

⁵⁰ Klapchuk and Ostafiichuk, *Istoriia*, 344.

⁵¹ Vorobev, 196.

⁵² Ievseev, 147-48.

Ukraine: D. Hromov and O. Ladyzhensky write as Henry Lyons Oldi while N. Havrylenko uses the pen-name Simona Vilar. Market forces, namely access to a large Russian-speaking market common to Ukraine and Russia and the general public's fascination with foreign fantasy and romance, are responsible for the choices these Ukrainian writers have made.⁵³ The overall lack of discussion in textbooks of Ukrainian popular culture is even more conspicuous because there is an excellent collection of articles on this topic, *Essays on Ukrainian Popular Culture*, edited by Oleksandr Hrytsenko. This 1998 book is structured as an encyclopaedia and features entries on subjects as diverse as Anecdote, Bazaar, Poetry, Female Ideal, Soap Opera, Song, Advertisement, Sport, and Dance.⁵⁴

Yet there are signs in Ukrainian scholarship of overcoming the distrust of popular culture and the obsession with the identity-shaping function of high culture. Philosophers and literary critics have long presented in specialized publications a much more complex view of culture as a system combining diverse elements.⁵⁵ The Ukrainian Academy of Sciences has begun the publication of a fundamental five-volume *History of Ukrainian Culture*; the three volumes that have appeared so far cover the period from ancient times to the end of the eighteenth century. The bulky multi-authored volumes offer a much too detailed narrative to be used as textbooks, and they are priced out of the reach of most students and professors, yet the project is very promising in certain respects. Although superficial patriotic rhetoric occasionally spoils the conclusions to this or that volume, the Introduction to Volume I specifies that the authors did not agree on any common concept or methodology, deciding instead 'to be guided in their texts by the philosophical and methodological principles each of them considered appropriate'.⁵⁶ Such an open declaration of methodological pluralism may sound strange but is actually refreshing for the

⁵³ Hrechenko, 461-62.

⁵⁴ See Oleksandr Hrytsenko, (ed.), *Narysy ukrains'koi populiarnoi kul'tury* (Kyiv: Ukrains'kyi tsentr kul'turnykh doslidzhen', 1998).

⁵⁵ See V. Shynkaruk and Ie. Bystryts'kyi (eds), *Fenomen ukrains'koi kul'tury: Metodolohichni zasady osmyslennia* (Kyiv: Feniks, 1996); Oksana Zabuzhko, *Dvi kul'tury* (Kyiv: Znannia, 1990); Ivan Dziuba, 'Chy usvidomliuiemo natsional'nu kul'turu iak tsilnist?' *Ukraina: nauka i kul'tura* 22 (1988): 309-325.

⁵⁶ 'Peredmova do p'iattytomnyka', in B.Ie. Paton (ed.), *Istoriia ukrains'koi kul'tury u p'iaty tomakh* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2001), Vol. 1, 19.

Ukrainian reader, who has grown tired of the ‘psychological approach based on Historical Materialism’ propagated in other books on Ukrainian culture. Precisely because the volumes are so large and the narrative is so detailed, the authors pay much more attention to material culture and everyday life than histories of Ukrainian culture usually do. After the five-volume *History* is completed, college instructors will have an excellent reference tool that will also be a source for well-informed and balanced textbooks.

Another source of optimism is the popularity in Ukrainian colleges and universities of a textbook that has been excluded from the preceding analysis: Myroslav Popovych’s *Survey of the History of Culture in Ukraine* (1999; 2nd edition, 2001). Written by a leading philosopher and public figure, this book defies the stereotypes of a Ukrainian cultural history. The book’s title promises an analysis of cultural life in Ukraine as opposed to the development of ethnic Ukrainian culture, but Popovych also makes his readers think of the latter in inclusive terms. He achieves this aim by asking provocative questions about whether the Bible and Beethoven’s music are part of modern Ukrainian culture.⁵⁷ Alone among textbook authors, Popovych refuses to define Kyivan Rus in ethnic terms as Ukrainian, Russian, or East Slavic. He sees it as a society in which there could be no ‘ethnic’ consciousness because the common high culture functioned in Old Church Slavonic (shared with Bulgarians and Serbs), while the population spoke a host of dialects. Popovych also stands out in not applying the term ‘Renaissance’ to Ukrainian culture, denying any conflict between the Ukrainian and Russian aspects of Gogol’s identity as a writer, honestly discussing anti-Semitism in nineteenth-century Ukraine, and emphasizing, instead of the Ukrainian movement’s unity against its ‘enemies’, an artistic conflict between modernists and realists in fin de siècle Ukrainian literature.⁵⁸

According to Popovych, ethnic Ukrainian culture functions in present-day Ukraine as a centre of gravity in a cultural system that also includes the layers of Russian-language Ukrainian culture and what he calls imperial or common post-Soviet culture.⁵⁹ Thus, ethnic culture of the titular nationality is important

⁵⁷ Myroslav Popovych, *Narys istorii kul'tury Ukrainy*, 2nd edn (Kyiv: ArtEk, 2001), 3-4.

⁵⁸ Popovych, 66, 160-190, 362, 413-17, 505.

⁵⁹ Popovych, 723-24.

for the maintenance of the state's identity, but does not equal a modern national identity in a civic, multinational state.

Ever since the appearance of Ivan Ohienko's survey in 1918, histories of Ukrainian culture have served as important ideological statements on what Ukraine was or should be. Unlike the Western discipline of 'cultural history', with its focus on texts and their readings, most surveys of Ukrainian culture concentrate on the role of culture in the historical development of ethnic Ukrainians into a modern nation. Because even today textbooks often disagree in their interpretations, cultural histories of Ukraine still constitute the discursive site where the debate about modern Ukrainian identity is ongoing. Their authors are struggling to reconcile their narratives of how an ethnic Ukrainian culture developed over the centuries with the domination of Western and Russian mass culture in present-day Ukraine. Ultimately, they are searching for a new definition of a Ukrainian identity fit for the post-modern age, an identity anchored in ethnicity but at home in the global world.