

Ola Hnatiuk. *Odwaga i strach* [Courage and Fear]. 2nd ed., Wydawnictwo KEW, 2016. 720 pp. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. PLN 39.00, paper.

The list of scholarly works dealing with the history of Lviv is impressively long. Even the period of World War II, which had been neglected for some time, is now fairly well analyzed and described. However, most of these works are based on an ethnocentric interpretation of the past. While the individuals in these books and articles are introduced primarily as Poles, Ukrainians, or Jews, their narratives are frequently homogenized. And their motivations are usually explained as deeply rooted in their national identities, which leads to representations that often contain stereotypes.

Ola Hnatiuk, in examining the history of Lviv's intelligentsia during and after World War II, abandoned traditional methods and chose a different approach. A brief look at the author's biography shows several reasons for this academic change of pace. Hnatiuk, as a professor at the University of Warsaw and a researcher at the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, published numerous scholarly works devoted to Ukrainian identity and culture. She also translated several literary and scholarly books from Ukrainian into Polish. Between 2006 and 2010, she served as a counsellor at the Polish Embassy in Kyiv. Her contribution to Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation was recognized by Polish cultural foundations and the Polish authorities. The latter decorated her with the prestigious Order of Polonia Restituta (Commander's Cross). However, it was not only Hnatiuk's professional experience that led her to cross national boundaries. Her mother was a Catholic Pole who came from a mixed, Polish Ukrainian family in Lviv. Her father was a Ukrainian who was an unfortunate victim of Operation Wisła (Akcja "Wisła"). Hnatiuk, because of her parentage, does not want to classify herself as having a single national identity, be it Polish or Ukrainian. Consequently, she writes that *Odwaga i strach* (*Courage and Fear*) is her "most personal book" and that it might seem to be "free of a convention usually known as 'scholarly objectivity'" (my trans.; 9).

Hnatiuk's work, published simultaneously in almost identical Polish and Ukrainian editions, abandons a chronological order and uses a "nest structure" (my trans.; 13). Most of the book's chapters are devoted to particular milieux of Lviv's multinational intelligentsia. They show how people behaved while facing death and terrifying pressure at the hands of both Soviet and German occupiers. Hnatiuk demonstrates that human decency, personal friendships, and professional solidarity sometimes prevailed over national loyalties. She also conveys that a "national narrative" often distorts historical realities, which can be presented more realistically from an individual, personal point of view.

The book is divided into seven chapters, each of which features a different intelligentsia backdrop of mid-twentieth-century Lviv. The first chapter, devoted to Hnatiuk's family, describes her grandparents' contributions during the war. They participated in a network of friends that helped the Jews in the Lviv ghetto, and they themselves even hid a Jewish woman. In 1946, Hnatiuk's grandmother and mother left Lviv for Poland, while her grandfather died during the conflict. The second chapter tells the story of Lviv medical circles. Before the war, and even more before 1941, it was sometimes difficult to know a person's ethnic background. Hnatiuk introduces the notion of a "Jew of Polish [or European] culture" (my trans.; 54) and applies this term to numerous Lviv doctors of that time.

The book's third chapter describes the academic circles of the city. The Soviets remodelled all institutions of higher education but concentrated particularly on Lviv University; it went through a painful Ukrainization. For instance, most Polish and Jewish academics could not lecture. Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński used to say that he taught Jews the history of French literature in Polish at a Ukrainian university. The number of Ukrainian scholars employed by the university grew dramatically, as did the number of enrolled Ukrainian and Jewish students. The Soviets favoured Ukrainians and tried to gain the support of the Jews. At the same time, however, the NKVD persecuted all three ethnic groups of the city. Initially, after September 1939, some Ukrainians hoped that the "unification of Ukraine" would herald some positive effects. They were quickly disappointed, as they witnessed the Soviets execute a diabolical plan: de-Ukrainization through (a peculiar) Ukrainization (330). Yet some groups of scholars, such as mathematicians, enjoyed privileged treatment and Soviet trust. The famous Polish mathematician Stefan Banach became the dean of the Department of Mathematics and Physics and a member of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

The promotion of local Ukrainian scholars to Lviv's leading academic positions antagonized the Poles. They frequently put their Ukrainian colleagues in the same category with the Soviet Ukrainians sent to Lviv by the new authorities. The latter "barbarians" (a topic of the fourth chapter) irritated the prewar Polish Ukrainian intelligentsia as well. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, a third category of Ukrainians appeared in the city—those from the General Government (Generalgouvernement). Groups of prewar Polish Ukrainian scholars and professionals were sometimes intellectually and culturally closer to their Polish colleagues than they were to their co-nationals from Kharkiv and Kyiv. The Soviets, with their policy of *divide et impera*, atomized the multinational society of Lviv—they terrorized and controlled it—and encouraged the Ukrainians to hate the Poles (267). These policies were also applied to the theatrical circles of Lviv

(see chapter 5), journalists and writers (see chapter 6), and painters (see chapter 7).

Every section of the book focuses on one, two, or three people, whose stories, told in greater detail, illustrate broader aspects of the Soviet and German occupations. The first, “family” chapter centres on Hnatiuk’s mother and grandmother. The second, “medical” chapter looks at hematologist Irena Lille (1903-89) and her family and friends. The third, “academic” chapter follows the life of Hugo Steinhaus (1887-1972), a famous Polish mathematician of Jewish background. The fourth chapter has two protagonists: Mykhailo Marchenko (1902-83), the first Soviet president (*rektor*) of Lviv University, who was arrested by the NKVD in September 1940; and Kyrylo Studyns'kyi (1868-1941), a specialist in Slavic studies, a deputy president of the university, and a member of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union in Moscow, who was murdered by the NKVD. The main topic of the next chapter is the life and tragic death of Eugeniusz Bodo (1899-1943), a famous Polish actor. Here, one can also read about the outstanding Polish Jewish composer Henryk Wars (1902-77) and about actress Renata Bogdańska (1917-2010), who later became the wife of General Władysław Anders. The penultimate chapter concentrates on Mykhailo Rudnyts'kyi (1889-1975), a writer and leading literary critic, while the last chapter focuses on Iaroslava Muzyka (1893-1973), a painter friend of Hnatiuk’s grandmother.

Hnatiuk supplements the stories of specific milieux and individuals with general historical remarks. She demonstrates how different people understood the concept of collaboration and how ethnic backgrounds contributed to this phenomenon. She rejects the theory that only Ukrainians welcomed the Germans in 1941 and participated in anti-Jewish pogroms. She emphasizes that, to the contrary, there were quite a number of Poles in the welcoming and murdering crowds (98-99, 448). Hnatiuk also shows how the Soviets destroyed the achievements of the prewar Ukrainian intelligentsia in Lviv (273). At the same time, she explains that the “barbarians” (my trans.; 330) coming from the Soviet east to Lviv were not always “barbarian” (330-31).

Odwaga i strach offers numerous fascinating stories, and it is like an encyclopedia of mid-twentieth-century Lviv. However, this makes the book at times difficult and overwhelming to read. There are too many names, tales, and anecdotes in the text. The book should be translated into English, but only after a substantial re-editing. One can enjoy the presented stories if one has a solid knowledge of Polish and Ukrainian history. Even for an educated Western reader, however, the text might be too complex. The “nest” construction of the book also leads to numerous repetitions. Certain chapters read like independent essays and could be presented in a different order

(except for the introductory, “family” chapter). Finally, the book has no conclusion. The many arguments and counter-arguments presented by the author could, in the end, confuse readers.

Odwaga i strach won several prestigious literary and scholarly awards, and its presentation became an intellectual event. Amid this, Hnatiuk gave numerous interviews. In a conversation with Michał Sutowski, a journalist with *Krytyka Polityczna* (*Political Critique* [Warsaw]), she said, “There will never be a common story accepted by Poles and Ukrainians—not only about [the] Volhynia [crime] but also about the [Nazi] occupation and numerous other historical events” (my trans.). Is that so? I understood the book differently!

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Works Cited

Sutowski, Michał. “Tygiel lwowski [rozmowa z Olą Hnatiuk].” *Krytyka Polityczna* [Warsaw], 21 May 2016, www.krytykapolityczna.pl/swiat/tygiel-lwowski-rozmowa-z-ola-hnatiuk/. Accessed 13 May 2017.