Tarik Cyril Amar. *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv: A Borderland City Between Stalinists, Nazis, and Nationalists.* Cornell UP, 2015. xii, 356 pp. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. $35.00, cloth.

In spring 2016, during a class of Ukrainian history that I was teaching at Columbia University, my students approached me with an unusual concern—raising points that left me feeling awkward—about a book that I had assigned to them for a discussion about post-World War II cities of Soviet Ukraine. My intelligent students, having read various studies in English, German, Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian about the historical transition of the city of Lviv from Polish to German and then to Soviet rule, failed to find "anything new or original" in a monograph by Tarik Amar about "the paradox of Ukrainian Lviv." With the intention of defending this book, which I had recommended for my Columbia course and which was written by my colleague, against the provocative questions of my Columbia students, I began rereading it, because as far as I could recall, I had earlier been impressed by the wide variety of archival documents used by Amar for his study of Lviv. However, after my second reading of the book, I was left posing more questions about it than were initially asked by my Columbia University students.

First of all, I was struck by the fact that the official reviewers of Amar's *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv* for Cornell University Press were not specialists in Ukrainian history or experts in the history of the city of Lviv. One of those reviewers, Amar's academic advisor from Princeton University (Jan T. Gross), is a historian of Polish Jews. Then, I realized that many facts (well-known to any serious student of Ukrainian history) concerning the history of Lviv during and after World War II, which are presented by Amar in his original analysis of archival materials—including in his main thesis about the transformation of Polish Lwów into Ukrainian Lviv by the Soviet administration—had already been discussed (prior to Amar) in detail and in more nuanced, better-documented, and less politically biased interpretations by Halyna Bodnar, Włodzimierz Bonusiak, Sofiia Diak, Iaroslav Hrytsak, Mykola Il'nyts'kyi, Iaroslav Isaievych, Iuliia Kysla, Roman Lozyns'kyi, Christoph Mick, Mikhail Mitsel, Eleonora Narvselius, William Risch, and many other Ukrainian, Russian, and Western scholars.

Another alarming element of the book, in my opinion, is Amar's demonstration of obvious anti-Ukrainian political bias in his portrayal of the role of "angry young" Ukrainian nationalists in Lviv's history. From the outset of his narrative, Amar uses negative and politically charged labels to describe Ukrainian "nationalist military leaders" as "terrorists," "collaborators with the Germans," "ethnic cleansers," and people who followed "fascist models" (11, 42). Ironically, Amar does not emulate the well-balanced historical

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approach of his own mentor from Princeton University, Stephen Kotkin, who in his magnificent new biography of a young Stalin, avoids labelling his main character as "a Communist terrorist" or as "a collaborator and secret agent of Okhranka" preceding his meticulous analysis of the facts.

Instead, Amar, in his narrative, tries to separate the legacy of the pre-World War II nationalists from the process of Lviv's "Ukrainianization," which for him is "inseparable" from its "Sovietization." According to Amar (and many scholars who wrote about this before him), "Soviet Lviv was not Russified but Ukrainianized, while the Soviet idea of Ukrainian identity presupposed a subordinate relationship to a Soviet version of Russian culture" (13). Moreover, the entire main thesis of Amar's book seems like an awkward repetition of an idea, found in Risch's earlier book, about methods of Sovietization in Lviv that "produced the local as a permanent category" (Risch 4): "The intentional Soviet making of the local—in the form of a distinct but transitory type of not-yet-Sovietized western borderland Ukrainian—had the unintended effect of shaping and solidifying a special and persistently Western Ukrainian identity, which was distinct from the eastern, pre-1939 variant of Soviet Ukrainian identity" (19).

After a second reading of Amar's book, my most disappointing discovery was its sloppy, inconsistent, sketchy, and very confusing chronology and structure. Presenting material familiar to those who have already read Mick's study of Lviv (published in German in 2010 and in English in 2015), the first three chapters of the book cover, chronologically, the historical development of Lviv from the pre-1939 Polish control of the city through the Soviet, Nazi, and then, again, Soviet (post-1944) occupation of Lviv, with a focus on the tragic stories of the Holocaust and the collaboration of Ukrainian nationalists with the Nazis (130-35). However, after this, chronological consistency in the book is lost. Chapter 4 provides a vague and sketchy treatment of the transitional period of Soviet administration, when Lviv's Polish population was expelled from the city between 1944 and 1947. Chapter 5 concentrates on "Lviv's postwar industrialization and the creation of a large population of workers from two kinds of immigrants: locals from the western Ukrainian countryside and easterners" (20). Chapter 6 focuses on the transformation of Lviv intellectuals into Soviet intelligentsia. Chapter 7 (the best chapter in the book) covers the story of the closing of the last synagogue in Soviet Lviv. Chapter 8 discusses the role of Lviv in "Soviet historical imagination" (20-21).

Unfortunately, in his story of postwar Lviv, Amar ignores some important studies, which could help place his narrative in the context of existing historiography that discusses the problems of the modern Soviet transformation of Ukrainian cities after World War II under Stalin and Khrushchev. I am referring, especially, to Gennadii Kostyrchenko's research

about Stalin's anti-Semitic campaigns, which also affected postwar Lviv, as well as to studies of postwar Soviet urban modernity in Sevastopol (by Karl Qualls) and Dnipropetrovsk (by Sergei Zhuk). Amar's book is missing not only the recent historiography of postwar urban modernity in Soviet Ukraine but also a wider analysis of the archival collections and files that he used in his study of Lviv. Had Amar engaged this recent historiography and provided a detailed analysis of his archival sources, his book would be more attractive to readers and his arguments would have seemed more original and convincing to my students at Columbia University.

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