Review Essay
Tackling Iaroslav Hrytsak's Magnum Opus Fifteen Years On[1]

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Yaroslav [Iaroslav] Hrytsak. *Ivan Franko and His Community*. Translated from the Ukrainian by Marta Daria Olynyk, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies P / Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard U / Academic Studies P, 2018. Peter Jacyk Centre for Ukrainian Historical Research Monograph Series 8. Ukrainian Studies, edited by Vitaly Chernetsky. xxiv, 564 pp. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $39.95, paper.

I. Introduction: Contextualizing the Interpretation of a Historical Figure

I read the book under review in Polish translation some ten years ago. When I returned to it in autumn 2021, this time in English, I remembered only that it had represented an important undertaking that reinforced my decision to focus on pre-twentieth-century Ukrainian history in my academic career. Other than that, I had only vague memories and shades of apprehension. I wondered at that time, Would this work prove to be equally stimulating and satisfying after ten years of personal and academic development? I thought, Would I risk enduring a painful embarrassment—what German speakers call *Fremdscham*, that is, a sense of shame for another person's actions? I worried, Would I be forced to execute an ugly written *Vatermord* ("parricide")?

Admittedly, it is in bad taste to start a review of someone else's book by writing about oneself. But I believe that my personal experience of revisiting Iaroslav (Yaroslav) Hrytsak's monograph gives a good illustration of how powerful and transformative the work actually is. Upon rereading the volume, I was able to appreciate the changes that had taken place in several fields of historical study from the time that the book was first published, in

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2006. More importantly, however, I realized how many of the reflections and observations that I considered to be my own had in fact been borrowed from Hrytsak. And I discovered how he had presaged historiographic trends that came to full bloom only later, in the past decade.

How can we best characterize the book under review? It is certainly not a biography of Ivan Franko, although the author presents it as such, and it is true that readers can learn much from it about the early years of this renowned writer. Hrytsak focuses on the first three decades of Franko's life, that is, the period in which Franko was still struggling to establish himself as an author and an activist. This temporal framework is reminiscent of the structure of Anthony J. La Vopa's biography of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, which concludes at the point when its protagonist is thirty-seven years old and on the verge of losing his first professorship. There are other noteworthy similarities as well. Both projects were facilitated by the canonical status of their protagonists and the fact that virtually all of their writings have been available in high-quality academic editions. Both subjects were prodigies who rose from rural poverty to the heights of public life, becoming icons of radical progressivism in their respective environments. Each biographer goes to great lengths to explain his hero's controversial views (for example, on Jews) by embedding those perspectives in the intellectual context of the time. Last (and perhaps most importantly), the central theme of each book revolves around a prominent actor's efforts to forge a masculine subjectivity.

At the same time, a wide gulf separates these two monographs. La Vopa aims to show how Fichte's life, both inner and social, can help us understand his philosophy of selfhood. As such, his book is focused on its protagonist's thought, which is extremely complex on every level (let us not forget that we are talking about the key figure of German Idealism); thus, readers need to brace themselves for some exhaustingly convoluted ruminations. Hrytsak's work represents a completely different kind of analysis. He labels his volume a microhistory, by which he seems to mean that he tries to pay attention to details that are usually overlooked by biographers of "great men." But his monograph also fulfills another requirement formulated by the classics of Franco-Italian microhistory (Carlo Ginzburg, Emmanuel Bernard Le Roy Ladurie, and Giovanni Levi)—in my opinion, a much more important dimension that uncovers and meticulously analyzes individual (often unusual) cases not for their own sake but in order to illuminate wider social trends and structures. The author uses Franko's unlikely life path and his literary oeuvre as a pretext for, and window into, other phenomena, rather than seeing it as a topic in its own right. A similar technique is adopted by Timothy Brook, to give just one example, in his relatively recent monograph—a concise and readable work that offers close readings of Johannes Vermeer's celebrated paintings in an effort to highlight the process

of seventeenth-century globalization in the Netherlands. Hrytsak also structures his narrative on his protagonist's social ascent, political choices, and literary achievements as a series of triggers for far-reaching reflections on the transformation of the Eastern Galician peasantry into a modern citizenry, with nation building enjoying pride of place. Franko's oeuvre is exceptionally well suited for this type of treatment, not only because it is unusually extensive but also because Franko was involved in many diverse matters where he dealt and socialized with members of virtually all social strata.

Ivan Franko and His Community was originally released in Ukrainian, in 2006. Understandably, much has changed in the humanities and social sciences since the book's conception, especially in the fields of nationalism studies and Habsburg history—both of crucial importance to Hrytsak's argument. Although Hrytsak turned out to be a pioneer of many successful research avenues, today his work may seem much less daring than it actually was at the moment of its publication. From our current, temporally distanced vantage point, many of the author's most original insights appear one-sided, or even banal. It is precisely for this reason that Hrytsak's monograph deserves an uncomprising critical assessment: only in this way we will be able to properly explore this indispensable work. In the next sections, I will offer a critique that is based largely on the scholarly acquis subsequent to the publication of this book in Ukrainian. I will also draw attention to Hrytsak's undeniable achievements, which have certainly withstood the harsh test of time.[2]

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[2] I would like to say a few words about the book's English translation. Generally, it is up to the task, but some minor problems are apparent. First, "plainsmen" is not the most apt label to describe the Polish ultra-conservative faction *podolacy* (5). This name refers to the Polish choronym *Podole* (the Ukrainian *Podillia*), an upland region. Also, in the context of the Eastern Galician countryside, *diak* is not a "deacon" but a church cantor (45). Finally, Hrytsak analyzes Franko's short story "Bat'kivshchyna" ("Fatherland," 1904 [78–79]), and there is a comment to be made here. Franko is clearly playing with two meanings of the word *bat'kivshchyna*—'family inheritance' and 'fatherland'—but in the English text, it is rendered consistently as "fatherland." Moreover, one crucial sentence containing Hrytsak's clarification about how the main protagonist used to affectionately refer to his father (*bat'ko*) as *bat'kivshchyna* has been taken out altogether! This simplification seriously obscures the short story's plot and Franko's political message. On the whole, however, these are only minor blunders in an otherwise faithful and readable text. And we should view its shortcomings within the wider context of the current crisis in the sphere of academic translation into the English. For example, in the English version of Wolfram Siemann's monumental biography of Klemens von Metternich (which was recently published by

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II. A Bridge Too Far: On Intellectual Courage and Bravado

The work under review is, without question, an academic monograph, but at the same time, it is a deeply personal—even passionate—book. This is a precious bonus for its readers, but it comes at a cost. Hrytsak has a propensity for bold hypotheses and generalizations that are hard to verify. Usually, his approach pays off—without such intellectual courage, he would never be able to leave a lasting mark. Occasionally, however, this analytic path results in judgments that are quite problematic. An example of the latter is Hrytsak's claim that Eastern Christianity hindered the development of modern nationalism and, more generally, of mass politics. He explains this by pointing out the low levels of literacy among Eastern Christian communities, which in turn would have slowed down political mobilization helped along by the printed word (16–19). It is not my intention to launch a full-scale polemic on this topic, as the question is too complex to be addressed in a review essay of this ilk. My point here is, rather, that Hrytsak readily delivers some sweeping generalizations seemingly without giving much thought to possible objections (such as questions regarding other factors at play and concerning cause and effect) or the tenor of the historical evidence.

The historical evidence is especially condemning for Hrytsak's thesis. Nationalism was already flourishing among the Orthodox Greeks early in the nineteenth century, and its achievements served as a model for several other national movements throughout Europe and the Middle East. Of course, the explanation of the relative success of the Greek national mobilization lies in the specific circumstances of the Ottoman Balkans and the nation-state created at the end of the 1820s, both of which were very different from those of Franko's Galician environment. But this is exactly the point here. History as an academic discipline is most successful when it provides explanations that centre on contingency and detail, respectful of Möserian *Lokalvernunft*.[3] If we are to believe Hrytsak himself (397), he is not unsympathetic to this scholarly approach.

Closer to home, in Western Galicia, Polish-speaking Latin Catholic peasants converted to Polish nationalism quite late in the nineteenth century, as Michał Łuczewski's important book clearly shows. At the moment, we have no reason to believe that the Western Galician rural masses became

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The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), we occasionally encounter convoluted German syntax, as well as, for example, the Germanized toponyms *Weichsel* (referring to the Vistula River) and *Friaul* (referring to the Friuli region).

[3] I am following Geraint Parry in defining Justus Möser's Lokalvernunft as "a deep knowledge of the nuances of the local situation—its traditions and its present condition" (Parry 189).

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nationalized significantly earlier than their Greek Catholic counterparts. Moreover, the introduction of Polish nationalism into village life was pioneered by Reverend Stanisław Stojałowski. Although he was a Latin clergyman himself, he originated from a Greek Catholic priestly family (his brother became a Greek Catholic priest, and his sister—a Latin Catholic nun). If we were to anachronistically ascribe modern-day national labels to historical actors, we could assert that only in the last decades of the nineteenth century, an ethnic Ukrainian priest started to convert Galician Polish peasants to the Polish national cause. Does this mean that we are dealing here with the exact opposite of the standard *ex Occidente lux* ("light from the West") narrative, where modernity gradually expands eastward? Is it that Ruthenian-Ukrainian nationalism mobilized Eastern Galician peasantry earlier and more efficiently than the Polish one was able to reach the Western Galician rural masses? And did the Ruthenian mobilization in fact serve as a model for the Polish initiatives, with Stojałowski as a crucial intermediary? These are exciting hypotheses, but the matter rests there. Determining whether or not these ideas are valid would necessitate years of painstaking research and scholarly debate. Even so, the question resolved in this way would have more modest parameters—limited to just one Austrian Crown land—than the one addressed by Hrytsak's thesis regarding the negative influence of Eastern Christianity on the spread of national allegiances.

III. The Calm Danube Never Stops Rushing: New Tendencies in Habsburg History and Nationalism Studies

Ukrainian nation building is the central theme of Hrytsak's book. Hrytsak's declared goal is to explain the eventual victory of nationalism without presenting it as predestined to succeed (xiv–xvi). This is a laudable ambition, but the author does not fully deliver on his pledge. The very construction of his narrative and his system of references make nationalism a central presence that simply cannot be avoided; thus, despite the historian's best intentions and express disclaimers, nationalism appears as an inevitable telos of history. This is not so much Hrytsak's fault as it is a reflection of the time in which he wrote and published his work—a period when Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, and Eric John Hobsbawm still reigned supreme as a holy trinity in nationalism studies and were challenged primarily by scholars introducing more or less convincing evidence of the presence of some form of national identification in Europe prior to the nineteenth century. It was a rather sterile discussion in which each side could claim to have academically vanquished its opponents basing its claims on definitions adopted in advance. But no one really knew what was at stake beyond the

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mere recognition or rejection of nineteenth-century myths regarding national continuity. At the same time, both positions had much more in common than their proponents cared to admit: both tacitly agreed that nationality is a politicized form of ethnicity; that the latter is some sort of ill-defined cultural life force concocted by collective historical actors; that modernity is fundamentally different from the *ancien régime*; and that modern history cannot be understood outside a national framework.

Hrytsak's work on Franko seems to be boiling with frustration regarding such a state of affairs, but in the final analysis, Hrytsak does not succeed in liberating himself from this muddle. His world is one in which some sort of nationalism must win. The question is only which one—Ukrainian, Polish, or perhaps that of Holy Rus' (instrumentalized by Russian empire builders but not exactly identical with a Russian national identification). Around the time of the release of Hrytsak's book, Pieter M. Judson published his *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria*; it was followed in 2008 by Tara Zahra's *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948*. Both of these authors describe the indifference of modern Austrian citizens of Czech, German, Italian, and Slovenian ethnicity toward the efforts of their respective nation builders. Of course, there is much that can be debated about the work of these historians, but they have clearly succeeded in creating a critical mass of scholarship that documents how fragile various nationalist movements have been despite the complicity of the Austrian state in the cultivation of national identifications. As a result, it is much easier now than it was in 2006 to produce accounts of the late Habsburg Monarchy not focused on nation building. Of course, Hrytsak cannot be faulted for writing his monograph too early. We should, rather, appreciate how difficult it must have been for him at that time to think outside the box. In hindsight, we can see that the book under review, although written at a completely different juncture in academic thought, contains the kernels of the debate that helped decompress early-twenty-first-century concepts in nationalism studies.

A more notable shortcoming of Hrytsak's volume is his portrayal of Austria. The Habsburg Monarchy is shown as an outdated polyethnic empire—a dynastic living fossil—whose inertia hinders the development of the already backward Central European lands under its control. There are few benefits of Austrian rule in Galicia, and they all result from the fact that the imperial regime imported and implemented some elements of Western European state building, if only in an outdated and fragmentary fashion. Another positive aspect of the Austrian presence is that it counterbalanced Polish influence, thus creating room for Ruthenian emancipation and nation building.

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This was an uncontroversial, if not very original, vision at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and in its main outlines, it coincided with opinions that had been prevalent in Franko's radical milieu. Since then, however, the field of Habsburg history has undergone a major reconstruction, as a result of which our understanding of Austrian statehood has become much finer and less pessimistic. Austria certainly did have its share of weaknesses and problems—some of them existential—but they did not stem from backwardness or a lack of vitality; rather, they developed in response to the rapid pace of political, administrative, and economic change—or what most historians and social scientists like to call "modernization" (Hrytsak's chapter on Boryslav [245–71] details this process well). Regardless of whether we ultimately assess the Austrian balance sheet in Galicia as positive or as negative, one thing is clear: the Habsburg state constituted a collective of actors who kept doing and changing things in the Crown land throughout its entire 146-year existence, and not only in 1848. In contrast, in Hrytsak's story, Austria is barely noticeable in local life; it is solely in the sphere of high politics that the Austrian central government makes a difference. The author, addressing this, indulges in very tenuous geopolitical (Hrytsak's choice of word) ruminations—ones that seem to be an extrapolation of concerns from the Soviet period (see 8–12).

IV. Spectral Affinities: Franko in the Polish context

Hrytsak grasps the Polish context much better than the Austrian one, but here as well, one can detect some substantial knowledge gaps. The two monographs of greatest import in his subject area were released only after the completion of his work: Nikodem Bończa-Tomaszewski's *Źródła narodowości: Powstanie i rozwój polskiej świadomości w II połowie XIX i na początku XX wieku* (*Genealogy of Nationhood: The Emergence and Development of Polish National Consciousness in the Second Half of the Nineteenth and Beginning of the Twentieth Centuries*, 2006) and Łuczewski's *Odwieczny naród: Polak i katolik w Żmiącej* (*Primordial Nation: Being Polish and Catholic in Żmiąca*, 2012). It goes without saying that Hrytsak cannot be faulted for not possessing divining powers that would have enabled him to take into account unpublished research from another country. I mention these two works not in order to accuse Hrytsak of passing them over but because I believe that their arguments may enrich our understanding of *Ivan Franko and His Community*. Both of these works have shortcomings of their own, but this is not the place to review them in detail. I will only briefly outline how these studies intersect with Hrytsak's volume.

Bończa-Tomaszewski's point of departure is Charles Margrave Taylor's analysis of the gradual emergence of individualistic subjectivity. He presents

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nineteenth-century nationalism as another stage in this process that enabled the crystallization of the modern self as masculine and nationalized. To this end, he draws heavily on evidence produced by writers and artists, that is, people whose life trajectories and goals were quite similar to those of Franko: among others, Wojciech Kętrzyński (né Adalbert von Winkler) and Artur Grottger, both of whom were active in Galicia. This is a story about elite men who invented themselves as individuals and as members of the Polish nation and thus created new myths and models for society at large. The similarities with Hrytsak's account of Franko's political vacillations and eventual resolve are striking. Bończa-Tomaszewski also exhibits similar weaknesses—the *ex Occidente lux* approach and a domineering teleology of progress.

Łuczewski, in turn, can be viewed as a forerunner of the current popular turn of Polish history writing—a flurry of works that attempt to remedy the dominance of nobility-centric narratives in Poland's popular memory and academic historiography. More importantly, Łuczewski proves to be much less deterministic and Western-centric than Bończa-Tomaszewski. His story concerns one village in Western Galicia that was repeatedly visited and researched by Polish social scientists, starting with Franciszek Bujak at the beginning of the twentieth century and ending with Łuczewski himself. His focus, like that of Hrytsak, is on nation building among the peasantry, and he shows that it is a continuing, open-ended process: inhabitants of Żmiąca are still reassessing and redefining their understanding of self and of the Polish nation, even in the face of their firm belief that this nation is primordial.

Łuczewski successfully applies tools taken from the sociology of social movements to the study of nationalism in nineteenth- and twentieth-century rural Galicia. This allows him to assess the degree to which nationalist proposals were realistic—meaning, internally coherent; convergent with the world views and material needs of their target audiences; and championed by individuals who could be perceived as trustworthy. And in this way, Łuczewski manages to strike a balance between the agency of external nationalist activists and the villagers themselves. In his story, the peasants are not merely passive recipients of ideologies forged elsewhere; rather, they are rational actors who mould ideas according to their own needs and world views. Although Łuczewski clearly demonstrates that Żmiąca is not necessarily representative of trends prevalent throughout Galicia, his findings are mirrored by those of Andriy Zayarnyuk in his important book on the political mobilization of the Ruthenian peasantry in the second half of the nineteenth century. Apparently, the differences between Latin and Greek Catholic peasants were not as profound as nationalist activists would have us believe.

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V. The Bogeyman in the Closet: Franko and Roman Dmowski

The above-described works either confirm Hrytsak's own findings and intuitions or expand on and systematize them. This convergence illustrates well how scholars operating in varying environments were required to tackle similar challenges and thus gravitated toward similar solutions. As already noted, Hrytsak was not able to draw on the works of Bończa-Tomaszewski, Łuczewski, and Zayarnyuk when preparing the Ukrainian original of his book. However, there is one Polish figure whose absence is much more difficult to justify. I am referring to Roman Dmowski, who was eight years younger than Franko and one of the founding fathers of the Polish national democratic movement (Narodowa Demokracja, or ND [Endecja]). Hrytsak mentions this political current only in passing—as a paragon of anti-Semitic chauvinism (307). Indeed, Endecja and Dmowski remain powerful *lieux de mémoire* in contemporary Poland—synonyms of *bigotry* for the liberal mainstream and venerable totems for xenophobic conservatives. This stems mostly from the image of young radicalized national democrats (NDs) who became prominent in the 1930s (not without old Dmowski's active support). But the national democratic movement was a rather different animal at the beginning of the 1890s. Early NDs often blended with socialists, and they can be seen as representatives of the wider European radicalization of former liberals. The spectrum of this process extended from Karl Lueger's Christian Socials (CSs) to Franko's Ukrainian Radical Party (URP) to the French Radical Party. I can give one suggestive example illustrating the difference between the early Endecja and the late, interwar one: in 1903 Dmowski himself was the best man of Bujak (the peasant-born Galician scholar who researched the village of Żmiąca) for Bujak's marriage to Ewa Kramsztyk, who was from a prominent Jewish family based in Warsaw. (As an interesting side note, this cross-border and cross-class marriage in certain ways resembles Franko's union with Ol'ha Khoruzhyns'ka.)

The point here is not to whitewash the early NDs or to absolve them of their responsibility in the violent anti-Semitism that they fomented for decades; rather, the idea is to underscore that some of their ugliest views were quite typical at the end of the nineteenth century. They were not considered an anathema, although of course, a meticulous historian could surely name individuals and groups who resisted them for various reasons. Some views that are repulsive to us were even part of the scientific consensus of the time. Who today does not feel awkward perusing the writings of Volodymyr Antonovych (of all people) on the diameters of skulls, eye- and hair-colour percentages, and the innate servility of the Great Russians?

Hrytsak devotes an entire chapter to Franko's views on the Jewish question in Galicia, taking substantial pains to show that in accordance with

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the standards of the period, his protagonist was not an anti-Semitic zealot. To this end, the author compares Franko's opinions with those of several other figures, including Austrian Jews. But neither Dmowski nor Lueger (nor any other prominent ND or CS of the time) are ever mentioned. Overall, Hrytsak's argument is convincing. At the same time, however, one gets the strong impression that he is genuinely bent on persuading the reader that Franko was a fine fellow—a likable progressive—and therefore, he carefully avoids comparing his protagonist with any individual whom our twenty-first-century sensibilities would be prone to condemn as an evil bigot.

In a quote presented by Hrytsak as a mature summary of Franko's thought on the Jewish question, we find the following statement: "At the same time—and this must be emphasized!—it is not length of settlement, not land, not capital that makes one a citizen of a land, but only feelings of solidarity with the people's ideals and the work to translate them into reality" (321). Hrytsak, most likely bearing in mind the horrors that were brought upon our region by crude ethnic nationalisms, promotes the expressed idea as representing an innocuous and diluted form of assimilation, which I find very one-sided. It all depends on how one defines the national ideals in question, who the arbiter of the solidarity being demanded is, and what tools are applied to discipline those who deviate from the prescribed path. There is clearly an authoritarian potential in this intellectual device, although it does not seek to banish anyone on the basis of their birth certificate. Let us now compare this statement with a thought from an article on the Jewish question published by none other than Dmowski himself at the very beginning of the twentieth century: "No one has the right or need to analyze another's blood! A Pole (we are referring here to educated, nationally conscious people) is anyone who speaks Polish and unites with the Polish society in its strivings for the benefit of the nation and who is always ready to share in its fortune, for better or for worse" (Narodowiec 282; my trans.). I find it difficult to see a substantial difference between Dmowski's formulation and Franko's statement on "solidarity with the people's ideals and the work to translate them into reality."

On the one hand, the early Polish NDs were not as one-dimensionally racist as they are thought of today (which is not to say that they were not racist at all). In fact, they were quite progressive in many respects; many of them, for example, leaned toward anticlericalism. On the other hand, dedication to progress was not an entirely innocent pursuit at the time, as this idea was based on nineteenth-century positivist science. You do not need to be a Michel Foucault or Bruno Latour to be aware of the prominence of social Darwinism and other forms of essentialist determinism espoused by academics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Juxtaposing Franko with Polish ND intellectuals (his close intellectual peers from Galicia)

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would probably make him somewhat less palatable to us, but at the same time, it would allow us to better understand the complex origins of our own political beliefs.

VI. Myron and His World

It is impossible to do justice to this extraordinary book in just one essay—there are seemingly endless scholarly avenues and historical ramifications to explore. Up to this point, I have focused my attention on issues that, in my opinion, need to be supplemented, debated, or even resisted. But Hrytsak's undeniable scholarly achievements are a far more important topic of discussion.

The most seminal finding of Hrytsak's study may seem trivial to some readers. The author reassesses his protagonist's social background and his early years spent in the countryside and arrives at the conclusion that contrary to the traditional view created and promoted by Franko himself, Franko was not a peasant (26–31). Although Franko was born and raised in a modest rural environment, his family members were not typical peasants: his father was a blacksmith—a social status in its own right—while his mother was a petty noblewoman. Moreover, the young Franko spent his formative years with his maternal grandmother, among the landless nobles, many of whom identified with the Polish national cause (47–52). Why is this so important? Is Hrytsak not simply rephrasing in a slightly different way what specialist scholars already knew about Franko's life? Certainly not—especially if we keep in mind that the objectives of this book are much more far-reaching than those of typical biographies of individual writers or political activists.

First, Hrytsak manages in this way to complicate our understanding of the Galician countryside of the late nineteenth century. Franko's case allows Hrytsak to demonstrate that the rural society was heterogeneous, stratified, open, and dynamic—and thus that it cannot be reduced to a binary oppositional system of noble landowning exploiters versus oppressed peasants. The countryside was never this type of inert locus of tradition completely isolated from the stimuli of the urban world (as Gellner so suggestively imagined in the 1980s). Second, there are many more collective actors in this story (Jews, Greek Catholic and Latin Catholic priests, Austrian state functionaries, and so on), and they do not form monolithic groups. Not all of the nobles owned land, while many of those who did still had to work their tiny plots themselves; some peasants were quite affluent, whereas most were struggling to keep afloat and to avoid sinking to the status of homeless labourers; Greek Catholic parish priests were financially secure and acculturated to all-Austrian civic values and models, but their sextons and

cantors remained close to the level of rural paupers; and county functionaries were extremely powerful figures, but corner scribes (the German *Winkelschreiber*; the Ukrainian *pokutni pysari*)—not at all. And the list goes on.

In Galicia, this socio-economic complexity and dynamism overlaid ethnic differences. And this should not be reduced to a simplistic vision of cohabitation between the two main groups—Poles and Ruthenians—imagined as rigid and clearly delimited entities. Was Franko's mother a Polish or a Ruthenian noblewoman? The very way in which we pose this question suggests the kind of answers that can be provided. In fact, such individuals may have been neither Polish nor Ruthenian in the national sense of these terms. Perhaps they were both at the same time, or something else entirely. Maybe people simply had to navigate their allegiances depending on their circumstances. It was only during the century following the events of 1848 that two fully separate nations emerged in Galicia. Often the phrase *gente Rutheni, natione Poloni* is used to describe this ethnoconfessional hybridity, but in fact, it does not describe the situation very well, for at least two reasons. First, this is not a neutral description; rather, it is a political label that carries a very specific understanding of the Polish political and cultural hegemony, which relegated Ruthenianness to a lower rank within the overarching national community defined by the historical legacy of the partitioned Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Second, it reifies dynamic phenomena that are better described with the help of verbs rather than nouns. In fact, we still do not have a language flexible enough to handle these topics succinctly and in a fully satisfactory manner. The above-mentioned term *hybridity* is equally problematic, as it implicitly insinuates that there was something unusual and liminal in the realities of the time; these realities were indeed complex, but they were not necessarily viewed as extraordinary by the actors on the inside.

Of course, none of these findings are completely new. We can observe many similar observations and reflections in earlier works, especially in the classic studies of John-Paul Himka and Roman Rosdolsky (Rozdol's'kyi). Still, most of those nuanced interpretations could be largely ignored by students of nation building sensu stricto owing to their propensity for formulating neat sociological explanations in which cultural, economic, and political stratifications can be persuasively aligned. Hrytsak's book, instead, is a book on nationalism that makes a genuine effort to bring all of this complexity to the fore. Moreover, the author also tries to demonstrate the dynamic character of the macro and meso levels of his story by way of a gripping narrative detailing micro-level developments—that is, the life of Franko and his associates. Especially illuminating is the section describing the emergence of a new kind of peasant activist based on the case of Hryhorii

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(Hryn') Rymar (225–34), which could be read together with Zayarnyuk's account of Ivan Mykhas' from his *Framing the Ukrainian Peasantry in Habsburg Galicia, 1846–1914*. The latter monograph, although not as readable as the one under review, could serve as a complement to Hrytsak's work as well, inasmuch as it carefully uncovers the fundamentally political character of earlier peasant struggles, especially those surrounding the commons (*servituty*). In this way, it makes clear that we cannot pinpoint the start of modern mass politics—that it is impossible to neatly separate modernity from the *ancien régime*.

Hrytsak is very careful not to let that complexity blur the crucial picture of the dire circumstances of the Galician Ruthenian peasants, who experienced material destitution and the disdain of the elites on account of their ethnic and religious heritage. Following the death of Franko's father, his family was clearly underprivileged, and Hrytsak very plainly describes how young Ivan's opportunity to secure a full education was a lucky strike (47–50)—comparable to the miraculous sponsorship of Fichte by Baron Karl von Miltitz. Franko's siblings never got the chance that he had acquired; thus, they were fated to remain in the countryside and work the land.

Overall, there is a discernible tension in Hrytsak's book that is never fully resolved (and perhaps it cannot be). On the one hand, the author strives to present a larger image encompassing the whole of Eastern Europe—that is, to capture the overarching economic conditions and resultant similarities. On the other hand, the author seems to be uneasy about such problematic generalizations, aware that the realities on the ground in Franko's lifetime were far more complicated, as is always the case with deeply individualized and unique life trajectories. This observation should lead us not so much to quietist musings about the unpredictability of fate (this is not exactly the purview of academic historians), but rather to the question of how to appropriately narrate modernity and modernization.

Modernity is a rather abstract concept that has proven to be extremely useful in historical reflection over (at least) the past half-century. The Eastern European countryside and its inhabitants (most often conflated under the caption *peasantry*) have been presented as modernity's classic others—as the rampart of premodern tradition to whom a new order had to be brought from the outside by Promethean heroes who were either philanthropic urban activists or ruthless capitalists; rarely, they were intermediaries, like Franko, who originated from the countryside but because of their extraordinary talents were able to master foreign energies and hand down their knowledge to their rural brethren. Such a picture remains intact so long as we maintain a bird's-eye view and adhere to the resultant macro narratives. But when we descend to the micro level, as Hrytsak does, things become much messier. By focusing on the local, we gain a vision of history that is much less

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deterministic: historical contingencies and individual actors with their unpredictable choices count for much more here. There are constant changes, but they do not necessarily lead in a discernible direction. Civilization, progress, and modernity can be studied as important ideas of a specific age, but they no longer seem useful as explanatory tools. And in turn, we risk getting lost in a muddle of anecdotes and missing the wider significance of our story, retaining only the bliss of being able to tear down modernization's reigning master narrative. There is no simple way out of this quandary, and Hrytsak's struggle with it is evident: although he does not specify the issues that pose the greatest challenge for him, he confesses that at one point, he was unsure whether he would finish this book first or the book would finish him (vii). Ultimately, he opts to remain loyal to the familiar story of overarching epochal change and places uncovered complexities within the traditional framework of modernization. This is a valid choice, but it is not the only one possible. Thus, the reader should watch for the latent tension between the various potentialities of this monograph. It is a hidden *spiritus movens* pressing the entire narrative forward.

VII. A Room of One's Own

Hrytsak informs his readers that Franko was not a peasant—at least not in the strict sense of the word. This affords the historian an opportunity to demonstrate that holistic models falter when they gloss over the complicated and dynamic nature of Eastern Galicia's rural society. The usual task of social scientists is to look beyond individual cases in order to arrive at an understanding of fundamental tendencies. It is understandable, therefore, and perhaps even justifiable, that they overlook factual subtleties. But when it comes to Franko the man and his biography, Why have we not taken the obvious facts about his origin and upbringing seriously? Hrytsak does not need to uncover any secrets in order to arrive at his conclusion; he simply takes a fresh look at the old evidence. The answer to this question widens our understanding of the processes of nation building—Hrytsak's central theme—perhaps even more than his nuanced depiction of Galicia's rural realities.

First and foremost, we think of Franko as a peasant because he crafted this type of image for himself; he presented it to his contemporaries and left it for posterity. And rather than assuming the persona of a poor, cross-class noble boy, he chose to enter the world as a peasant prodigy who is consistently proud of his Ruthenian commoner stock. Franko was the initial and most influential author of his own biography—perhaps, rather, of his own myth. We can analyze and deconstruct it, but we cannot ignore or circumvent his account of a peasant childhood—the powerful story of a small

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Myron (the name traditionally given to boys who were born out of wedlock; this was Franko's alter ego), a village outcast with vampiric (*upyrni*)[4] traits who survives and eventually excels to become a leading intellectual for the benefit of his oppressed people. Here, Hrytsak's analysis bears a striking resemblance to that of Bończa-Tomaszewski, for whom nation building is as much about the building of a new community as it is about the creation of a new selfhood for publicly active males. But Franko's path is much more complicated than the one undertaken by Bończa-Tomaszewski's actors: Franko, as a poor young man from the countryside, had a much harder job carving out a room of his own within the modern public sphere.

It is quite notable that Bończa-Tomaszewski has almost nothing to say about the Polish-speaking Latin Catholic peasants. The nationalized Polish public sphere had precious little to offer those inhabitants of the countryside who were not fortunate enough to be born into landowning families (or to become their most trusted associates). This explains (at least in part) why despite all of the political advantages enjoyed by the Polish nationalist elites in Galicia, the Polonophone rural masses did not become Poles earlier than the Ruthenian-speaking Greek Catholics had assumed a Ruthenian-Ukrainian national identity. As Łuczewski shows, for a very long time, Polishness remained an unrealistic proposition for Galician peasants, regardless of which language they spoke and which church they attended. Hrytsak explains in the same way Franko's flirtation and eventual breakup with the so-called Russophile movement. Initially, its concern for the welfare of the peasants who were perceived as part of Holy Rus' appealed to this young man boiling with rage at the haughty Polish nationalists of noble stock epitomized by Bronisław Trzaskowski, the headmaster of the Drohobych gymnasium.[5] Later, however, the Russophiles disappointed Franko owing to their rejection of the ideas of progress and modernity. Their version of Slavophilism was tantamount to a utopian conservatism—an ideology that must have seemed gullible and sterile to a young man who knew the problems of the Galician countryside all too well.

Franko could have become a Pole or a Russophile Ruthenian (and eventually a Russian). Both of these choices would have been understandable

[4] In the Galician countryside, a social phenomenon existed by which children were treated as natural-born *upyri* ("vampires"; for a contextualization of this concept, see Kozak).

[5] Anecdotally, one might mention that Trzaskowski's great-grandson is Rafał Kazimierz Trzaskowski, the current mayor of Warsaw and a leader of the pro-EU liberal opposition in present-day Poland—a fact that is quite representative of the complexity of the process of the evolution of elites in that country over the past two centuries.

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in his context, and they could have afforded him significantly better material prospects. Instead, he chose to fashion himself as a Myron and to become a Ruthenian-Ukrainian writer and politician. Was it because the rules of modernization forced him to align his ethnicity with his political allegiance for the sake of improving industrial production and the circulation of printed news? Did the long dormant ethnic soul within him perhaps spur him to stand up for its political rights? Hrytsak has a different answer. Franko's choice of national allegiance was inextricably connected with his political ideals. Under the influence of Mykhailo Drahomanov and Mykhailo Pavlyk, Franko embarked on a struggle for a democratic, egalitarian, and modern Galicia. For a number of reasons, the Polish and Russophile national identifications could never be realistic (this is Łuczewski's understanding of the term) factors in the social progress of people with Franko's social background and social ideals. Individuals championing such national labels would never be fully trusted by the Ruthenian peasants; indeed, even if they were genuine democrats, they would never be able to completely understand peasants' needs. Franko, as a native of the countryside himself, knew that only an ideology that allowed the rural masses to conflate their own traditions and material concerns with progressive egalitarian ideals had the potential of guaranteeing the successful transformation of the Eastern Galician peasantry into an empowered modern citizenry. Only one such ideology existed at that time in Galicia—Ruthenian-Ukrainian nationalism. In other words, it is impossible to detach Franko's nationalism from his social radicalism. Social radicalism was not a haphazard pursuit for Franko; rather, it was at the very core of his sense of identity. Franko crafted himself as a Ruthenian-Ukrainian because he was a democrat as well as a socialist (191–212, 383–89).

Franko's national identification and the peasant biography that he invented for himself were an integral part of his political dream—a dream revolving around a charismatic male hero liberating the masses and teaching them how to live in peace and equality. Nowhere is this idea more evident than in his historical novel *Zakhar Berkut* (1883). Hrytsak provides a detailed analysis of this work, even though it is no longer considered one of Franko's best pieces (see 378–82). Its historical plot deals with the successful thirteenth-century struggle of the Carpathian Ruthenian peasants against the Mongols and local noble collaborators. In accordance with today's standards, the novel is annoyingly formulaic, and I doubt that contemporary readers would find it particularly appealing. But this fact does not deter Hrytsak, inasmuch as he understands that a scholar today must set aside contemporary aesthetic judgments and treat such texts as historical sources. The author argues convincingly that *Zakhar Berkut* should be read as a political treatise and an advertisement for peasant

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socialism. The book was apparently very successful in Franko's time, which suggests that despite all of his failures as a political activist, his socio-political vision was indeed a viable proposition for the Ruthenian rural masses. In *Zakhar Berkut*, Franko manages to fuse together elements that do not generally go well together: ethnic nationalism, socialism, and individualism. At the end of the nineteenth century, Ruthenian-Ukrainian activists (rural and urban; male and female) willingly united under these banners.

This brings us to another important dimension of Hrytsak's narrative. The Franko whom we know from history and tradition is an image that was engendered by Franko the prolific writer and politician who lived in Galicia in the second half of the nineteenth century. No man is an island, however. Both Franko the man and Franko the self-creation did not exist in a vacuum. The English-language title of the book under review—*Ivan Franko and His Community*—patently signifies the notion that Franko, in reinventing himself, also reinvented the society in which he lived and worked. But the title can be read differently as well—that Franko created himself together with his community, in constant exchange with other people: those whom he knew; potential readers he conjured; individuals he sought to persuade; and those he confronted. His oeuvre and persona were not the product of his direct desire and force of will; rather, they were spawned by his interactions with countless individuals of different classes, genders, faiths, languages, and national allegiances.

Generally speaking, "great men" are attractive subjects of study for historians because there are so many primary sources documenting their "great" lives. In the case of Franko, for example, we have dozens of volumes of his collected works. There is such an abundance of accessible material documenting the thoughts and actions of these "great men" that it is very easy to give oneself reign to analyze their legacy in isolation from their context. But Hrytsak's path is steady. In three fascinating chapters (chapters 13 [271–99], 15 [327–44], and 16 [345–65]), he explores Franko's relationships with his male and female followers and readers. Through this, he convincingly demonstrates that Franko's charisma was only somewhat self-shaped—first and foremost, it was the product of the expectations of those with whom he interacted. It could be said, in the spirit of František Palacký's famous dictum about Austria (which harks back to Voltaire's dictum about God), that if Franko had not existed, Ruthenian-Ukrainian activists from Galicia would have had to invent him. Hrytsak shows that this was exactly what happened: progressive Ruthenians invented a Franko who was the embodiment of their collective dreams and aspirations. Initially, the mortal Franko was one of the most active creators of the cultural hero Franko. But after his death, the mythopoeia never concluded—the image of Franko is still evolving.

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VII. In Lieu of a Conclusion

On a fundamental level, outside the confines of Ukrainian studies, this monograph represents a balancing act between a portrayal of modernization theory and the faithful documentation of the extent to which individuals shape the world in accordance with their own needs and make their own rational choices (although not always based on premises that we would deem rational today). Hrytsak shows that individuals, like Franko, were not the only ones who changed history. Masses of nameless peasants also made a mark—the people who resisted his political screeds but enjoyed *Zakhar Berkut*.

The book under review is not a biography. However, its main argument is firmly embedded in the biographic legacy passed down by Franko and his like-minded contemporaries. Hrytsak never hides the fact that his protagonist fascinates him. As often happens in similar cases, the author may have transgressed somewhat by too uncritically accepting the world view of his protagonist and his closest peers—for example, their very negative assessment of the Austrian Monarchy's potential for change and improvement. Of course, historians should not turn a blind eye to such eyewitness accounts, but they should also not take their accuracy for granted. We, as readers, should empathize with historical actors, such as Franko, but we should also critically engage with their opinions in order to arrive at a better understanding of their circumstances and motivations. Having said that, I will return to qualities of this book mentioned earlier—ones that are especially difficult to appreciate in an academic review. Hrytsak's volume is passionate, and it is personal. Poring over this monograph affords us the opportunity not only to learn about Franko and Ruthenian-Ukrainian nation building under Austrian rule but also to get to know one of the most charismatic public intellectuals of present-day Ukraine. Hrytsak carves a very strong presence in his text, which I consider to be an honest and commendable writing method. It is *his* work. And he readily takes full responsibility for everything encountered in it. Every good scholar should pursue a similar goal.

Ivan Franko and His Community does not pretend to make a conclusive statement on either Franko or Ruthenian-Ukrainian nationalism in Galicia (xxiii). This book will long endure not because it expounds ultimate truths but because it pushes us to rethink some of the most important questions of Eastern European history. It is a liminal work, inasmuch as it was written during the twilight of one paradigm in nationalism studies, just prior to the hatching of its successor; as such, it does not offer any clear-cut answers. Perhaps precisely for this reason it resonates as a rich and stimulating voice

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in the historical debate on its topic—a debate that is nowhere near completion.

I cannot conceal that I am at variance with Hrytsak on any number of specific points. However, this does not change my overall assessment of his work. Hrytsak's monograph is a major achievement—one that I can only envy. Readers should tackle this volume individually and in their own way, as it has a proliferation of themes that I could not fully address within the space of this review essay. Thus, I encourage those interested in the history of Galicia (or Austria more generally) to reach for Hrytsak's book and discover its value for themselves.

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