Introduction. Ukraine's Many Faces

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Ever since the start of Russia's war on Ukraine in 2014, western commentators have attempted to explain events in the country through the lens of linguistic and regional divide. Maps of Ukraine split between a presumably Russian-speaking south-east and Ukrainian-speaking north-west inundated the Internet and were used by political analysts across the ideological spectrum.[1] Moreover, this linguistic heterogeneity was also used to justify Moscow's occupation of Crimea and Russia's support for the two breakaway regions in Ukraine's east. As such, the ongoing war in Ukraine had been framed as a confrontation, or competition, between the Ukrainian majority and the large Russian minority, to which Russian-speaking Ukrainians would often be uncritically ascribed.

Ukraine's heterogeneity fed into Vladimir Putin's aspirations to recreate the might of the Russian Empire. It is no surprise than that immediately prior to Russia's unprovoked full-scale aggression of Ukraine February 24th 2022, the president called for the use of armed force in defence of the rights of Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine, and "to denazify" the country itself.[2] Rather than an anticipated groundswell of support, the Kremlin's military campaign promptly saw the Ukrainian population, regardless of their everyday spoken language, rally around the central government in Kyiv, effectively neutering further efforts by Moscow at manipulating its neighbour's ethnic differences.

On the contrary, in 2022 no region welcomed the invading forces of the Russian Federation. As a full-scale ethnic conflict under the Russian banner failed to materialize, western pundits once again turned to Ukraine, this time seeking to comprehend the strength of its unexpected national resilience. This concise yet wide-ranging volume of articles offers readers a possibility to do exactly this – to look beyond simplistic binaries and demonstrate how Ukraine's differing historical experiences, regional diversity, and compound identities

have contributed to an indomitable Ukrainian national character, the shaping of which is happening in front of our eyes.

The essays comprising this volume cover a vast historical period extending from the 16th century to the present, as such they will help the readers navigate the complex history of the Ukrainian lands, divided for centuries between belligerent empires and nationalizing governments. Unsurprisingly, it was these varied historical experiences that determined the disparate character of the regions that now form contemporary Ukraine.[3] Equally, this collection accounts for various ethnic communities who had populated the Ukrainian lands and whose presence is deeply ingrained into the country's cultural landscape. Its contributing authors, however, also seek to move beyond the simple provision of ready-made answers and confront more complicated questions concerning Ukraine's entangled history and identities. Each of the collection's three chronologically organized sections is supplemented by a set of primary sources, as well as conversational pieces with highly esteemed scholars and experts on the history of Ukraine and the region more broadly. In this regard, the aim of this volume is to encourage readers to form their own conclusions about Ukraine, its culture, and its people.

The volume opens with an essential essay by Olesya Khromeychuk, who poses the question of how, historically, a lack of wider international interest in Ukraine has perpetuated numerous myths about the country and its people. Khromeychuk particularly highlights how, prior to 2022, the majority of western academics had continuously omitted, or downplayed, Ukraine as a separate subject in much of their research. As a result, despite having been an independent sovereign state since 1991, Ukraine itself has been missing from Western mental maps or was presented simplistically as part of a wider Russophone cultural sphere, or even as a "lesser Russia". This collection of essays, therefore, takes its cue from Khromeychuk's motion to ensure Ukraine's subjectivity, making the country a fully-fledged subject of historical analysis.

The first section, *Modernity at the Crossroads of Empires*, traces the origins of Ukraine's compound identity between the 17th and 19th centuries. The section opens with three equally important primary sources. The first of these include excerpts from the *Pereiaslav Agreement* of 1654, widely construed by Russian propagandists as a formal unification agreement between Russia and the Ukrainian lands. Its inclusion looks to establish how this treaty was in fact a pact of military alliance between two equal parties – Cossack Ukraine and Muscovy, representing an agreement through which the Muscovite Tsar had offered military assistance to Ukraine in the latter's on-going war of liberation

against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This is followed with an *Epistle* by "the father of Ukrainian literature", Taras Shevchenko. The poem, written in 1845, is directed "to my fellow-countrymen, in Ukraine and not in Ukraine, living, dead and as yet unborn" and attempts to rally the territory's inhabitants against Russian authoritarianism, its dominance over Ukraine, and highlight the need for national unity and fraternity to overcome ordeals which are yet to come. The final source is a painting by the artist Mykola Ivasiuk, entitled *The Entry of Bohdan Khmelnytsky to Kyiv in 1649*, depicting the renowned Cossack hetman's triumphant entry into Kyiv, where he was celebrated as a national hero by the Patriarch Paisius of Jerusalem and Kyiv metropolitan Sylvester Kosiv, along with a crowd of several thousand residents.

These primary sources are followed by two expert interviews that focus on Russia's imperial legacy. Professor Ewa Thompson at Rice University discusses the origins of the Russian imperialist project. Despite its explicit expansionist nature, Thompson maintains that most western scholars continue to shy off those complex topics, ignoring Russian imperialism's detrimental impact on Ukraine and non-Germanic Central and Eastern Europe more generally. The second expert interview is with Professor Tamara Hundorova at the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, who presents the history of Ukrainian literature in the *long durée*, with a particular emphasis on the development of Ukrainian modernism. Hundorova underlines the unique role of literature in dealing with multiple traumas, including the legacies of colonialism or the memory of inter-ethnic violence committed in the Ukrainian lands.

The next four essays tackle different aspects of Ukraine's imperial past. Oleksii Sokyrko starts by examining socio-economic and political changes in the region following the disintegration of the Kyivan Rus, when parts of today's Ukraine were incorporated into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and later the Russian Empire. In particular, his essay provides an overview of the history of the Cossack Hetmanate, an early iteration of the Ukrainian state encompassing the provinces of today's Central Ukraine between 1648 and 1764. Fabian Baumann follows up with an exploration of the 19th century, when the Ukrainian lands were split between the Habsburg Monarchy and Romanov Empire. Special attention is devoted to the emergence of the Ukrainian national movement and choices for self-identification available to 19th-century intellectuals. Vladyslava Moskalets offers an intimate account of Jewish life in Eastern Galicia during this same period. Following the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the province was incorporated into Habsburg Austria while remaining home to one of Eastern Europe's largest

Jewish communities. Lastly, Boris Belge evaluates the economic role that the Ukrainian lands came to play as part of the Russian Tsardom and how this economic potential shaped the territory's political status within a unitary and highly centralised empire.

The second section, *Ukrainian Selfhood in the Soviet Era*, problematizes the role of Ukraine as part of the Soviet Union, with particular attention given to the USSR's formative early decades. The documentary block includes the *Fourth Universal of the Ukrainian Central Rada* (Council), which proclaimed full state independence for the Ukrainian People's Republic on January 22nd, 1918, only for it to be crushed by the Bolsheviks later that year. The second source is a letter from a collective farmer to Joseph Stalin depicting the horrors of the man-made famine the devastated Soviet Ukraine from 1932 to 1933. Lastly, the visual source is a triptych by Fedir Krychevsky, entitled *Life* (1925), and is considered to be one of the finest examples of Ukrainian modernism, incorporating elements of the European *art nouveau* and traditional Ukrainian religious painting. These primary sources are followed by an expert interview with Professor Olena Palko at the University of Basel, who discusses the relationship between Russia and Ukraine in a historical perspective. Highlighting examples of how such experiences had been widely abused within Russian propaganda, Palko argues that this distorted historical legacy has led to widespread misconceptions of Ukraine's past and present, especially during the Soviet period.

The seven essays that form the rest of the second section collectively undertake the important task of shifting the readers' perspective away from Moscow and invite them to learn more about its so-called peripheries. These diverse contributions show how important decisions were often influenced by developments and conditions on the ground. The section opens with an essay by Hanna Perekhoda, which analyses political debates regarding a future soviet Ukraine during the Russian Civil War, and the various forms of statehood which were proposed or established on Ukraine's territory during the early years of Soviet rule. Stephan Rindlisbacher reconstructs the chronological process of modern Ukraine's territorial delineation, starting with 1919, the year when the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was established. Particular attention is devoted to the formation of Russo-Ukrainian border, including the transfer of Crimea in 1954. Olena Palko and Roman Korshuk follow on by examining the challenges Ukraine's linguistic and ethnic heterogeneity posed for the early Soviet authorities, outlining key strategies for managing ethnic diversity employed at the official level.

Matthew Pauly's discussion of early Soviet efforts to sovietise street children in the southern city of Odesa sheds light on Soviet experimentalist practices in early education, and the state's attempts to mould children into model citizens. Soviet social interventionism is also the focus of Oksana Klymenko and Roman Liubavskyi's chapter that evaluates Soviet approaches to create a "New Soviet man" as a prerequisite of the future construction of socialism. Discussion of the interwar Soviet period continues with Daria Mattingly's important essay on the Holodomor, the manmade famine of 1932–33, when some 4 million people died as a consequence of excessive grain requisitioning to aid Stalin's accelerated industrialization drive. Martin-Oleksandr Kisly turns our attention to Crimean Tatars, the indigenous people of Crimea, who's community were subjected to mass deportations from the peninsula in 1944, and the challenges they would subsequently face when seeking to return to their homeland. Lastly, Iuliia Buyskykh explores the evolution of religious identities across the Polish-Ukrainian border, discussing aspects of belonging and self-determination among the Ukrainian Greek Catholic community, which was declared illegal under Soviet rule. Taken together, these essays contribute to the epistemological need to decentre Soviet studies, and allow Ukraine, as well as other former Soviet republics, to reclaim the Soviet past, moving out of the shadows of Russian nationalist ideology and propaganda.

The third section, *Sovereignty Regained: Ukraine in the Post-Soviet Age*, considers the main challenges Ukraine has faced since 1991, paying particular attention to the war which the Russian Federation has been waging since 2014. The section opens with the *Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine* from July 16th, 1990, which determined the supremacy, independence, integrity, and indivisibility of Ukraine's authority within the boundaries of its territory, and its independence and equality in foreign relations. This is followed with a 2014 poem by the author Kateryna Kalytko that intimates the feeling of those displaced by war and sporadic memories which are often used to reclaim the lost home. Finally, our collection features a painting from Kyiv-based Matvey Vaisberg's *The Wall* (2014) cycle, in which the artist, himself an eyewitness, reflected on the tragic events that transpired during the Maidan Uprising, which centred on a series of violent clashes in Kyiv's Independence Square in early 2014.

The conversational block includes two expert interviews on historical and political developments in Ukraine since 1991. Professor David Marples at the University of Alberta exposes the links between historical memory and identity building. Marples considers the contemporary history of Ukraine and how the tragic events post-2014 have changed the face of the country and its peo-

ple. The subsequent conversation with Professor Maria Popova at McGill University touches upon questions concerning the rule of law, political corruption, and the legal repression of dissent in post-Communist Eastern Europe and Ukraine in particular. Popova evaluates the actions taken by the Ukrainian government in anticorruption and law-enforcement efforts and suggests that the popular mobilization against corruption and electoral fraud witnessed in Ukraine post-2014 has created an important precedent in which political elites have come to accept that they cannot simply resort to autocratic measures in order to maintain power.

The analytical section comprises six essays illustrating the many challenges faced by independent Ukraine. Anna Chebotarova's analysis of the changes that followed the Maidan protests, and the subsequent annexation of Crimea and war in Donbas, detail the impact of a protracted and acute Russian military aggression against Ukrainian society. Volodymyr Kulyk traces the evolution in self-identifications among Russian-speaking Ukrainian citizens, showing how the experience of war contributed to a gradual shift in their sense of allegiance with the Ukrainian government in Kyiv, and identification with the Ukrainians as the country's dominant ethnic group. Oleksandr Zabirko focuses on Ukraine's most eastern industrial region known as Donbas, suggesting how international and domestic perceptions have been heavily influenced by the so-called "Donbas myth", constructed through local politics and literary works, and evaluates the role this region came to play within Ukrainian national politics and the country's future. Tamara Martsenyuk turns our attention to issues of gender equality in Ukraine, examining the origins and evolution of the feminist organisations and their role in ensuring visibility for Ukrainian women in the contemporary era, especially given the large number of female personnel serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine during the Russian invasion. Finally, Kateryna Botanova challenges the commonly held perspective that reconciliation represents the ultimate purpose of creative culture, unravelling the difficult position many Ukrainian artists and cultural managers found themselves during the 2022 aggression amidst growing pressure from Western observes for expressions of solidarity with their Russian counterparts.

The volume concludes with a historiographical essay by John Vsetecka, listing key works on Ukraine and by Ukrainian scholars which can help overcome the challenges underscored by Khromeychuk's opening discussion. Although his original essay's primary objective was to suggest ways for educators and teachers to make Ukraine more visible in their classrooms, these reading sug-

gestions could help anyone wishing to better understand Ukraine and its entangled history. We agree with Vsetecka that studying Ukraine is more important than ever. While the country's history remains hostage to Russia's ideologically-loaded official narratives, this volume privileges Ukrainian authors so they may be better heard and allowed to speak with their own voice.

Notes

1 For instance, Al-Jazeera, in its report from February 22nd 2014, showed a map of Ukraine divided between a largely Ukrainian-speaking west and a predominantly Russian-speaking east. URL: https://youtu.be/_0RNrZOx5Wc . Accessed on 02 December 2022. A similar image of "nationalist west" vs. "pro-Russian east" featured in the Guardian on 21 February 2014: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/21/ukraine-western-pro-european-cities-lviv

2 For the transcript of Putin's address from February 21st 2022, see: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/67828. Accessed on December 2nd 2022.

3 Olena Palko and Constantin Ardeleanu (eds.) *Making Ukraine: Negotiating, Contesting, and Drawing the Borders in the Twentieth Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022).