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Rethinking Ukrainian Modernism

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An international conference entitled "Ukrainian Modernism in Context, 1910–1930" and sponsored by the Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, took place 14–15 April 2007 at Harvard with thirteen (note the number!) participants from North America, Europe, and Ukraine, as well as Harvard University. It came at the end of a traveling exhibition presented in Chicago (Chicago Cultural Center, 22 July–15 October 2006) and New York (The Ukrainian Museum, 4 November 2006–11 March 2007). After an unexpectedly long hiatus (Ecclesiastes 12:12 warns us that "of making many books there is no end," but does not specify with what intervals they may appear—which gives substance to the notion of *sub speciae aeternitatis*), and much editorial effort (most of the articles needed to be translated), *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* is pleased to present the final journal version of our labors. Appearing in early 2020, as vol. 36, no. 3–4 of *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, the journal will follow the original conference by some thirteen years. As with other recent conferences held by HURI, a separate, potentially broader, book version of this conference is also anticipated—and its appearance, presumably, shall be more speedy.

An unintended by-product of the delay between the initial conference and the present articulation of the proceedings is that the intervening period can—if we allow it, and if we make the effort to reread and rethink what is before us—cast further light on the path traveled. The delay, in short, may not be all bad. Presumably, our knowledge of the field of Ukrainian studies and our sense of the challenges facing it will have expanded. In Ukraine, for example, discussions about the state of the humanities have now begun to galvanize growing sectors of the intelligentsia and have even attained a certain political currency, raising hopes in the world of academia that reform may be in the air. (One should not hold one's breath, however.) At the same time, the concrete field of interdisciplinary studies—which our focus on Ukrainian

modernism implies—does not provide boundless cause for optimism. The fields of art history and literary history are still firmly entrenched in their own domain or niche: the coordinating of topics, let alone approaches, is not all the rage; rather, it is hardly in evidence. As always, it is a question of comparing the comparable—and being conversant with the field. Let me thus start with what I'm somewhat more versed in.

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In the literary historiography of Ukraine, as in various other national traditions, the concept and frame of modernism has undergone considerable expansion and reassessment in the course of the last several decades. In the Ukrainian context, moreover, this has been part of a fundamental, dramatic, but still unfinished reconfiguration of the canon. In effect, after independence, or more broadly after the late 1980s (the process is still ongoing), the various canons of twentieth-century Ukrainian literature (the Soviet, the émigré, and the dissident) and in some measure the canon of the earlier periods as well, particularly the nineteenth century and the premodern periods, were reconsidered and unified—after a fashion. This unification, however, particularly as regards the twentieth century, was largely mechanical and additive; a coherent synthesis is still in the future. Within this process the now expanded idea of modernism as a formative value and presence has been given a compensatory emphasis equal to and indeed exceeding the disfavor in which it was held in communist ideology and in the socialist realist canon. As in the West, modernism is now taken to include literary developments from the late nineteenth century to virtually the middle of the twentieth century, particularly including in the Ukrainian case the émigré or MUR period.[1]

1. In her *Dyskurs modernizmu v ukraïns´kii literaturi* (Kyiv: Lybid´, 1997; 1999), Solomiia Pavlychko includes within her purview the turn of the century, the Soviet 1920s and 1930s, the post–World War II period, and indeed extends her argument to encompass the New York Group of poets of the 1960s and 1970s. (The term MUR stands for the Mystets´kyi ukraïns´kyi rukh [Ukrainian Artistic Movement] prominent in the 1945–1950 D.P. camp period.) To some extent, this expands on ideas that I had voiced at the start of the 1990s (see my "Exorcising Ukrainian Modernism," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 15, no. 3/4 [December 1991]: 273–83): that the notion of modernism has to be expanded to include the period of the 1920s and 1930s. See also the discussions of Danylo Husar Struk, Oleh S. Ilnytzkyj, and Maxim Tarnawsky in the same volume of *HUS* and Myroslav Shkandrij's *Modernists, Marxists and the Nation: The Ukrainian Literary Discussion of the 1920s* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1992), ch. 10.

Since independence, writers who fall into the now expanded category of modernism, and were in their time seen as avant-garde or experimental—Mykola Khvyl´ovyi, Valeriian Pidmohyl´nyi, Maik Iohansen, V. Domontovych (Viktor Petrov), Iurii Kosach, Ihor Kostets´kyi, and others—have been the object of significant recent study, with scholarly publications as well as new editions of their works.[2] In effect, the bulk of the work relating to revising and renewing the canon of twentieth-century Ukrainian literature has been focused on them, and this, of course, reflects the fact that the Soviet Ukrainian canon was so implacably hostile to them: some, like Kostets´kyi, were never published in the Soviet Union, and the others, generally speaking, were never republished in the period after their "purging" in the early and mid-thirties and before the onset of perestroika. These writers may also be considered as forming the "high modernist" version of twentieth-century Ukrainian literature. Other writers, primarily some Western Ukrainian "nationalist" authors (the term itself still requires elucidation and consensus), who did not share an unambiguous modernist poetics (most prominently Ievhen Malaniuk, Iurii Lypa, and Olena Teliha), were also published in this period.[3] Of special interest in this regard are the so-called Prague school poet Oleh Ol´zhych and the writer who epitomizes the period of revolution (the "*vyzvol´ni zmahannia*"), Volodymyr Vynnychenko: the work of each coincides with the paradigm of modernism and in some crucial respects falls outside of it; their cases deserve separate attention, as do those of Ivan Bahrianyi, Vasyl´ Barka, Oleksa Stefanovych, and various other writers. In the field of Ukrainian literary criticism and theory there has also been a parallel (albeit restrained) "rediscovery" of a suppressed canon—especially with respect to Ukrainian formalist criticism of the 1920s.[4]

A more complete rediscovery of Ukrainian literary modernism is

2. In a recent and highly promising project the Chair of Ukrainian Studies (Katedra Ukrainistyki) of the Jagiellonian University proposes to translate and examine the legacy of Viktor Petrov-Domontovych (1894–1969); cf. the first of two planned international conferences (with a predominance of Ukrainian participants, but with Polish funding), "Wiktor Petrow-Domontowycz—mapowanie twórczości pisarza / Viktor Petrov-Domontovych: Mapuvannia tvorchosti pys´mennyka," Kraków, June 6–7, 2019.

3. See Myroslav Shkandrij, *Ukrainian Nationalism: Politics, Ideology, and Literature, 1929–1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

4. See the book of essays Svitlana Matviienko, ed., *Dyskurs formalizmu: Ukraïns´kyi kontekst* (Lviv: Litopys, 2004). Titled after Matviienko's opening essay, it includes eight more full-length essays (along with my "Aporiia ukraïns´koho formalizmu"), three short commentaries, and a foreword, all dealing, largely for the first time, with Ukrainian formalism.

still before us, if by "rediscovery" we mean a synthesizing notion of the paradigm, the period, and the multiplicity of its phenomena, especially as to the ways in which the various modernist literary moments, such as symbolism, impressionism, futurism, constructivism, and so on, and above all the various ideological moments, the Literary Discussion of 1925–1928, the notion of proletarian art, and even the early phase of socialist realism fit into the mix—because clearly modernism and socialist realism overlapped by several years. This forced and strained coexistence was and remains extremely revealing. Solomiia Pavlychko implicitly notes this in her book, but hardly resolves it. It is an issue that requires further attention, and—as I argue in my contribution to the present volume—its most prominent (and tragic) component is provided by the poetry and the reception of Pavlo Tychyna.

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The historiography and much of the scholarship on Ukrainian art, particularly painting, occupies, of course, its own special rubric and frame; as does that of the other arts. A particularly dramatic and formative role, however, is played by exhibitions and the catalogues that fix their trace and establish the very concrete markers that then proceed to define the field and serve as milestones of its rapid evolution. Anticipating the onset of Ukrainian independence and the sea change it would signal is the exhibition *Ukrajinska Avangarda, 1910–1930*, that was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb, Croatia, 16 December 1990–2 February 1991, and a catalogue published soon thereafter under the same name. The cast of authors (Dmytro Horbachov, Myroslava Mudrak, Valentine Marcadé, Liudmyla Koval′s′ka, and others) and topics (Bohomazov, Exter, Burliuk, Iermilov, cubo-futurism, etc.) would recur with insistent regularity and subtle variations in numerous subsequent exhibitions and catalogues.[5] That same year an exhibition and catalogue on five hundred years of Ukrainian painting—with a strategic, final focus on the newly rediscovered avant-garde period—also appears in Winnipeg, Canada.[6] The first postindependence phase is concentrated around 1993. It is marked by two exhibitions and catalogues a year or so

5. *Ukrajinska Avangarda, 1910–1930* (Zagreb: Muzej suvremene umjetnosti, 1991). In an essay that is included there, "Avantgarde in the Ukraine" (pp. 56–60), the Croatian Slavist and theorist Aleksandar Flaker programmatically casts the rediscovery of the Ukrainian avant-garde as an important intellectual and historiographic breakthrough.
6. *Spirit of Ukraine: 500 Years of Painting / Dukh Ukraïny: 500 rokiv maliarstva* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1991).

apart: *Avantgarde & Ukraine*, an exhibition presented at the uniquely impressive Villa Stuck in Munich, Germany (6 May–11 July 1993), and *L'Art en Ukraine*, held at the Musée des Augustins in Toulouse, France (28 October 1993–17 January 1994).[7] Both were inspired by the tireless advocate, researcher, and promoter of Ukrainian modernism Dmytro Horbachov, who also wrote the introduction to the French catalogue and an extensive overview of the Ukrainian avant-garde for the German one. Both catalogues are marked by a special diplomatic/political cast, featuring the patronage of, and/or short statements by, local officials and cultural representatives (for example, the deputy mayor of Toulouse, the mayor of Kyiv, and the Ukrainian minister of culture, Ivan Dziuba, for the French catalogue; the mayor of Munich for the German one). The latter catalogue is largely the more substantial and scholarly and features articles by Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, for the Villa Stuck, and by Dmytro Horbachov, Jean-Claude Marcadé, and Evgenia Petrova (to which we shall return).

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In 2006, and then spilling into 2007, there occurred the second phase, as it were, of the presentation (the Ukrainian term *prezentatsiia*, borrowed from the English and suggesting both ritual and show, all suffused with hope is somehow more telling) of Ukrainian modernism now to a presumably still broader audience. The bilingual Ukrainian-English catalogue *Ukraïns´kyi modernizm, 1910–1930 / Ukrainian Modernism, 1910–1930*, published by the National Art Museum of Ukraine and featuring numerous essays, biographical material, glossaries, and so on, also served as the catalogue for the exhibitions in Chicago (2006) and New York (2006–2007), which in turn led to the Harvard conference a month later.[8] Shortly after the publication of that catalogue, in 2007, Dmytro Horbachov, indefatigable in his promotion of Ukrainian modernism, published along with several colleagues a large coffee-table edition of Maik Iohansen's comic and experimental novel *Podorozh uchenoho doktora Leonardo i ioho maibutn´oï kokhanky prekrasnoï Al´chesty u Slobozhans´ku Shvaitsariiu* (Kyiv: Rukh, 1932). Now well known and much commented on, Iohansen's work was suppressed

7. Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, Igor Jassenjawsky, and Joseph Kiblitsky, eds., *Avantgarde & Ukraine* (Munich: Klinhardt & Biermann, 1993); and *L'Art en Ukraine: Musée Des Augustins* (Toulouse: Le Musée, 1993).

8. *Ukraïns´kyi modernizm, 1910–1930 / Ukrainian Modernism, 1910–1930*, exhibition catalogue (Kyiv: Natsional´nyi khudozhnii muzei Ukraïny, 2006).

immediately after its publication, and Iohansen was murdered by the Soviet regime in 1937. Horbachov's edition is richly illustrated with all possible (both pertinent and often just tangential, at times seemingly random) Ukrainian modernist art works of this period, as well as posters, photographs, stills from films, and so on, and with additional biographical material that shows Horbachov's convoluted path to becoming the leading authority on modernist art in Ukraine.[9] That same year saw the appearance, again under the auspices of the National Art Museum of Ukraine, and now with serious support not just from Ukrainian but from European and Israeli sources, of a major exhibition and a bilingual English and Ukrainian catalogue, with important articles by various scholars, and with a wealth of original material in Yiddish, on the Kultur-Lige, the Jewish artistic avant-garde of the 1910s and the 1920s.[10] The formulation of the history of this cultural and avant-garde entity, especially its role in the newly reborn Kyiv of 1918, is actually all-important for understanding the larger, all-Ukrainian context, and the fundamental breakthrough in understanding identity that was occurring then, and again in 1990–1991, when Ukraine was becoming independent. In order to do so, however, we must take a step back and see the unresolved issues occluding that process. What were the aporias and how were they being "negotiated"?

* * *

In the 1993 catalogue *Avantgarde & Ukraine* both the paradigm shift and the tensions around it are on full display. On the one hand, there is the seemingly genuine (or at least diplomatic) enthusiasm for the new country, Ukraine, and its attempts to foster culture and examine a long-suppressed and obviously fascinating heritage, and, along with it, a readiness to eschew earlier mandatory formulas. In his opening preface the mayor of Munich, Georg Kronawitter, notes that

> the exhibition *The Avant-garde and the Ukraine*, in drawing our attention to the historical role of the Ukraine as a bridge between West and East, has set itself a worthy goal. It is only since the recent opening of the former Soviet Union to the West that it has been possible to discover new insights into its former republics, and to come to know them better. The festival *Days of the Ukraine in Bavaria*,

9. Dmytro Horbachov, ed., *Avanhard Iohansena* (Lviv: Nautilus, 2007).
10. Hilel´ Kazovs´kyi [Hillel Kazovsky], ed., *Kul´tur-Liga: Khudozhnii avanhard 1910–1920-kh rokiv / Kultur-Lige, Artistic Avant-Garde of the 1910s and the 1920s* (Kyiv: Dukh i litera, 2007).

> and especially this exhibition, is an important step towards a deeper understanding of the Ukraine and of Munich's Partner City, Kiev.
>
> *The Avant-garde and the Ukraine* turns its back on the globalizations inherent in our current concept of the "Russian" Avant-garde.[11] Many of the key artists who transformed our understanding of art at the turn of the century, including Kazymyr Malevych, were either born in Ukraine or considered themselves Ukrainian.

He then proceeds to draw on the usual arguments, that considerable artistic activity and "revolutionary breakthroughs" were made in "provinces" that were not at all provincial, that "in the Ukraine, Kazymyr Malevych, Oleksandra Ekster and their colleagues discovered the indigenous folk art as a source of inspiration for their innovations, enriching their work with astounding colours and unusual materials."[12]

The issue of what to do when the "Sammelbegriff," or the conventional cover term of "Russian avant-garde," is jettisoned is addressed in a wholly forthright way by Villa Stuck director Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker both in her foreword and in a long article "The Avant-garde and the Ukraine," in which she traces the abbreviated but still spectacular history of the phenomenon over roughly two decades. In the foreword, her point is direct and not so much politically correct (although that, too) as reality-oriented, or empirical if you will:

> Since August 24, 1991 the Ukraine has been a sovereign state. One of its key priorities has been the de-russification and re-writing of its cultural history. This exhibition, an intensive collaboration between many partners—in Russia, France, Germany as well as in the Ukraine—is a celebration and a "naming" of the Avant-garde in and from the Ukraine. Many of the artists, well known in the West as key figures in the "Russian" or even French Avant-garde, have been given back their Ukrainian names—and their distinctive cultural roots—providing new insights into their work. This is particularly true of one of the key figures of twentieth century art, Kazymyr Malevych (Kazimir Malevich).[13]

11. In the German original it is the more concise and somehow more serious "Im Bereich der Kunstgeschichtsschreibung ist es das besondere Anliegen der Ausstellung *Die Avantgarde und die Ukraine*, Abschied vom Sammelbegriff der 'Russischen Avantgarde' zu nehmen." Quote from Georg Kronawitter, preface to Danzker, Jassenjawsky, and Kiblitsky, *Avantgarde & Ukraine*, 7.

12. Ibid.

13. Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, foreword to Danzker, Jassenjawsky, and Kiblitsky, *Avantgarde & Ukraine*, 10.

She goes on to speak of the difficulty of reconstructing a history devastated "both by Stalinist agents and fearful families" and, *faute de mieux*, being obliged to rely on "surviving fragments and oral history." And then mentions, as we must too, the committed scholars (the Ukrainian word *oderzhymi* is the better qualifier here) who have kept this issue alive and center stage: Dmytro Horbachov, Jean-Claude Marcadé, Valentine Marcadé, Myroslava Mudrak, and Liudmyla Koval´s´ka of the then State Museum of Ukrainian Art.[14]

In the article that follows, however, she focuses directly on the difficulties of effecting this essential paradigm shift, of transiting from the notion of a "Russian" avant-garde when speaking of various artists to that of a "Ukrainian" one. At the outset this is hardly a mechanical substitution, as she puts it in her opening questions:

> Any attempt to describe the cultural/art history of the newly-independent nation of Ukraina (the Ukraine) is immediately muddled by fundamental questions of definition. Are the artists Sonia Delauney and Kazymyr Malevych Ukrainian because they were born there? Or are the "real" Ukrainian artists those like Vadym Meller who, born elsewhere, spent most of their life working within its borders. Is Ukrainian art defined by the place of its production—or the place of its inspiration?[15]

She proceeds at some length to argue for a multifaceted answer, referring to formative conditions, personal choice—that is, one's own self-definition, subtle consideration of the complex Ukrainian historical process, and within that such moments as

> shared formal qualities, distinctive "Ukrainian" qualities of colour and space, which Jean-Claude Marcadé argues can be inferred from the work. Dmitri Horbachov, on the other hand, suggests that the elements common to the work of many of the artists in our exhibition can be traced to a Baroque and folk art which is distinctly Ukrainian.[16]

Particularly telling in this context is the attempt on the part of the organizers to facilitate dialogue, and to allow contending views to meet

14. Ibid.
15. Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, "The Avant-garde and the Ukraine," in Danzker, Jassenjawsky, and Kiblitsky, *Avantgarde & Ukraine*, 13.
16. Ibid., 14.

and perchance elicit a new consensus. To this end the contents of the catalogue also include an article devoted to “Mutual Influences in Ukrainian and Russian Art,” which presumably is meant to encourage Russian reflection on the paradigm shift. The author is the prolific and much-decorated scholar Evgenia Nikolayevna Petrova, deputy director of the State Russian Museum and a specialist on Russian art, particularly of the early twentieth century—now after the fall of the Soviet Union newly rehabilitated as “the modernist period.”[17] Her essay is telling. Its first takeaway is that its title was projected or commissioned first, as an underlying desideratum for stimulating dialogue, and the actual content was supplied later. In the event, for Petrova the “mutual influences” are largely Russian influences on the Ukrainian process, reflecting institutional resources and of course the political reality, particularly of imperial centralism and the ingathering of talent and premier educational resources in the two capitals. The tropes, in general, are standard and somewhat shopworn: Anton Losenko, Dimitri Levizky [that is, Dmytro Levyts´kyi] and Vladimir Borowikovsky [Volodymyr Borovykovs´kyi], all from the eighteenth century, can hardly be regarded as “genuine Ukrainians” because they basically spent their whole lifetimes in Russia; “can they legitimately be called Ukrainian artists? Probably only if there are traces of a specific Ukrainian style in their oeuvre”—but on this the author has nothing to say.[18] However, she goes on:

> In relations between the Ukraine and Russia one encounters paradoxes of this kind wherever one turns. In what cultural sphere—the Ukrainian or Russian—should one slot Nikolai Gogol? He was Ukrainian but his sympathies were equally divided between the Ukraine and Russia, and he wrote exclusively in Russian.[19]

17. Only twenty years earlier, when socialist realism was already losing its clout, in the second edition of *Modernizm: Analiz i kritika osnovnykh napravlenii* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1973), 7, the definition given to modernism (conceived as existing “в зарубежном искусстве” insofar as “Эти направления сложились в художественной культуре капиталистических стран в период перехода капитализма на империалистическую стадию развития”) was as succinct as it was severe: “Под модернизмом подразумевается искусство, порожденное кризисом духовной культуры загнивающего капитализма и эстетически выражающее этот кризис. Модернизм характеризуется своей враждебностью к демократическим традициям искусства, к реализму и гуманизму.”

18. Jewgenja Nikolajewna Petrova, “Mutual Influences in Ukrainian and Russian Art,” in Danzker, Jassenjawsky, and Kiblitsky, *Avantgarde & Ukraine*, 52.

19. Ibid.

And then there is Taras Shevchenko,

> who became a symbolic figure for the revival of the Ukrainian language and art, although he spent the greater part of his life in Russia. Shevchenko studied in the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts and representatives of Russian culture like the poet Vassily Shukovsky [that is, Zhukovsky—GG] and the artists Karl Brjullov and Alexei Venezianov provided the ransom to get him out of prison.[20]

As far as Ukrainian painting in the nineteenth century is concerned, it developed with the support and under the auspices of Russian institutions ("Gennadi Ladychensky, Kiriak Kostandi and other Russian painters came to the Ukraine at the instigation of the St. Petersburg Academy to encourage the development of an independent school of painting"; in a word—*Kulturträger*). More generally as far as the exhibition as a whole is concerned,

> the artistic profile of almost all the painters exhibited here was fashioned in Russia, despite the fact that they received their training in Ukraine. As a rule their experiments were carried out against the background of European and Russian Avant-garde tendencies at the beginning of the 20th century.[21]

And the Ukrainian influences or contributions? They were prominent. The land and the people themselves were the players and the draw:

> Generally Russian artists have always had a partiality for the Ukraine. The Ukrainian countryside is almost Italian. Ukrainian customs, the language, even the sense of humor are familiar and understandable for the Russians. Thus Russian Painters like Ilja Repin quite naturally took up Ukrainian motifs.[22]

And, finally, if one is impelled to be very analytical, there is always folklore (for example in connection with Oleksandra Ekster [Alexandra Exter]) or generally the way "The Ukraine" was attractive by dint of its

20. Ibid. This is somewhat confused: the money to buy Shevchenko's freedom from serfdom (not prison, but not much better) was indeed put up by Zhukovsky, Briullov, and the musician and composer Count Mikhail Vielgorski; the painter Venezianov may have also been involved.
21. Ibid., 53.
22. Ibid.

"landscape," "national peculiarities," "local color," and "those special characteristics of a 'natural' mode of life."[23]

This inability to go beyond imperial shibboleths and talking points going back to the time of Vissarion Belinsky to examine, let alone deconstruct, the inherited historical narrative is dismaying, to be sure (for some of us), but not altogether surprising. The ability, on the other hand, to talk about the mutual influences in the Russian-Ukrainian interface in the nineteenth and early twentieth century and somehow omit to note that that relationship is also fundamentally colored in this equation by the state—the Russian Empire—and its policy between approximately 1847 and 1905, but specifically between 1863 (and then 1876) and 1905, of declaring the Ukrainian language officially nonexistent and subversive as such, and repeatedly banning and curtailing Ukrainian activities, the use of Ukrainian in public discourse, in public theater, indeed prohibiting the public use of the word "Ukraine," the publishing or importing of Ukrainian books, and so on,[24] is, not too put too fine a point on it, unscholarly; not exactly *comme il faut* in what purports to be honest, intellectual discourse. Imperial hegemony, pride in empire, et cetera, turn out not be good prisms for looking at art, or literature, especially when they entail glossing over key historical policies (not just attitudes but official *policies*) that shape the Russian-Ukrainian cultural and political relationship in this period. The paradigm shift we speak of is obviously not easy to handle; unfamiliarity with or reluctance to engage in self-reflection and such methodologies like colonial theory obviously also compound it. A closer examination of the issues raised here, however, is clearly desirable, and at the same time clearly requires more space than is available here. One can only note that in the realm of literary history the interface of Russian-Ukrainian literary relations in the course of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth does indeed show both mutual influences and even a kind of interpenetration of different historical experiences and perspectives (like Russian Ukrainophilism or Cossackophilism that animated the Decembrists and left a strong legacy in later Ukrainian literature or the mutual interest in both literatures in revolutionism) on the one hand, and also, on the other, the kind of systemic "deafness" that prevents one from hearing, let alone understanding the "language" of the other

23. Ibid., 54.

24. See especially the aftereffect of the suppression of the Brotherhood of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in 1847, the Valuev Circular of 1863, and the Ems Ukase of 1876. This is all standard fare in Ukrainian and Western history books; presumably it also figures in Russian histories of Ukraine.

(exemplified by the unabashed contempt of a Belinsky not only for Shevchenko but for *all* of Ukrainian literature of the time, from Hryhorii Kvitka-Osnov'ianenko to Panteleimon Kulish).[25] An examination of this interface, including the blind spots and aporias, remains a clear priority.[26]

What also bears noting is that this resistance to accepting the "Ukrainian modernism" paradigm is not confined only to post-Soviet Russia circa 1993—it also appears to surface in the United States, as late as in 2006. For example, a panel discussion entitled "Ukrainian Modernism: Identity, Nationhood, Then and Now" was held at the Chicago Cultural Center concurrently with the already mentioned exhibition *Crossroads: Modernism in Ukraine, 1910–1930* that was on view from 22 July to 15 October 2006. In his comments, Andrew Wachtel of Northwestern University suggests that while a formulation like "modernism in Ukraine" might make sense, the notion of "Ukrainian modernism" is vitiated by its ethnic essentialization and says more about the revisionist (self-promoting?) intentions of the people using it than about the phenomenon as such. In effect, he avers, the term "Ukrainian" in the present designation was not cleared with various other ethnicities, for example, the Jewish or the Russian, that make up the Ukrainian polity then and now and thus seems to fold in (or indeed "encroach" on) their identities while putatively constructing a "Ukrainian" one.[27]

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25. This, of course, did not prevent the Soviets from casting Belinsky as the paramount teacher and *Kulturträger* of the period—especially for Ukrainian literature; see, e.g., Ivan I. Bass, *V. H. Belins´kyi i ukraïns´ka literatura 30–40-kh rokiv XIX st.*, 2nd ed. (Kyiv: Derzh. vyd. khudozhn´oï literatury, 1963) or the no less mendacious, but with a greater patina of scholarship, study by F. Ia. Priima, *Shevchenko i russkaia literatura XIX veka* (Moscow-Leningrad: Izd-vo AN SSSR, 1961).

26. See my "Teoriia ta istoriia: 'Horyzont spodivan´' i rannia retseptsiia novoï ukraïns´koï literatury (Prologomena)," in Hryhorii Hrabovych, *Do istoriï ukraïns´koï literatury* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2003), 46–126.

27. "As we know from most recent elections in Ukraine, there is a very strong divide in Ukraine between Russian speakers and Ukrainian speakers who sometimes think of themselves as the only Ukrainians in Ukraine. The Russian speakers might dispute that. I'm not going to get into the question of who is right. It really doesn't matter who is right. What matters is that two different visions exist for what it means to be Ukrainian. Suppose you live in Kiev and do not want to speak Ukrainian. Are you allowed to call yourself Ukrainian? The organizers of this exhibition would implicitly say yes; that's okay. You can be Rodchenko, who almost certainly did not speak Ukrainian, and certainly did not spend a lot of time there, but had a Ukrainian last name. You can be Rozanova who had a Russian last name, didn't spend any significant time in Ukraine, but you count. The two titles of this exhibition point out that question. Is it Ukrainian modernism, which implies that somehow all these modernists have something in common that makes them Ukrainian modernists? Or is it modernism in Ukraine, which means that anyone

An answer to this will come rather quickly, however, and specifically from the Ukrainian side, but a new, reconfigured one.

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The immediate and intrinsic answer comes in two catalogues published in 2006 and 2007; the broader, more definitive, political and existential answer comes somewhat later with the events of the Euromaidan of 2013 and 2014—and its trajectory lasts to this day. But it is significant and heartening that the former events anticipate and well antedate the latter. And this is as it should be: it is the spirit that moves the action. Or as Schiller put it so beautifully (the words grace Harvard's Busch-Reisinger Museum, a block up from HURI): "Es ist der Geist der sich den Körper baut."

The two catalogues in question are in various ways a continuation of the discourse begun in the 1993 publications, but at the same time are also significant departures. The first, *Ukraïns´kyi modernizm, 1910–1930 / Ukrainian Modernism, 1910–1930*, appearing in Kyiv in 2006 with the support of the Foundation for the International Arts and Education and sponsored and published by the National Art Museum of Ukraine, is an impressive work, largest of the catalogues so far to deal with Ukrainian modernism, and one which marks out a new phase whereby the Ukrainian state, through its key institutions, lays claim to its cultural and artistic legacy. This was of course in place, and inferred earlier (it was, as we saw, noted by Villa Stuck director Danzker in the *Avantgarde & Ukraine* catalogue),[28] but now it is accompanied by a quantum jump

who happened to be in Ukraine and was a modernist counts and is essentially part of our citizenship group? Pretty clearly the exhibition is modernism in Ukraine. It's not Ukrainian modernism. I don't even understand what this title 'Ukrainian Modernism' could possibly mean in the context of this show, insofar as I have in mind what the people creating these works cared about. But I do understand what it means when I think about who has created this exhibition and what they want to get out of it. Whether or not the exhibition, in fact, reflects the actual political realities of Ukraine today is an open question and how you deal with the fact that certain groups, culturally inside Ukraine today might feel themselves rather marginalized and yet here play an important role, is a question that the exhibition doesn't answer. It just kind of implies that there is no problem, when we know politically there are some serious problems. It's a very strange tension then between what the exhibition seems to be trying to do and how it seems to be trying to do it with various concepts of what it could mean to be a Ukrainian artist at any period, but in the modernist period in particular." Andrew Wachtel, transcript of the panel "Ukrainian Modernism: Identity, Nationhood, Then and Now," https://artmargins.com/ukrainian-modernism-identity-nationhood-then-and-now/.

28. See note 13 above.

of newly found confidence, new resources and substantial Western support, and perhaps most tellingly, the workings of a broad and inclusive vision, where, as in other normal states, all the art produced on the territory of the state is now under the care of that state. As Anatoliy Melnyk, director general of the National Art Museum of Ukraine notes in his statement, such figures as Alexander Archipenko, Kazimir Malevich, David Burliuk, Mykhailo Boychuk, Oleksandr Bohomazov, Oleksa Hryshchenko, Alexandra Exter, Vasyl´ Iermilov, and Viktor Pal´mov show the workings both of tradition and of a nurturance of creative, contemporary modernity and an active presence in the world today.[29] Implicit in this articulation is a newfound institutional duty to redress the communist (Bolshevik) distortions of the past and to reach out both to the native (often dissident) traditions that were so often vilified and persecuted by that totalitarian past, and to the various other national/ethnic works and traditions in Ukraine itself and in the world at large. These new criteria, directions, desiderata, and indeed imperatives are spelled out forcefully and eloquently in John E. Bowlt's fundamental contribution "National in Form, International in Content: Modernism in Ukraine," which provides a blueprint, so to speak, of the new mandate that has now been embraced by the curators of Ukrainian modernist art. As he concludes his overview of the multiform elements involved in Ukrainian modernism—the classical heritage and its various, international interpretations (often occurring precisely on Ukrainian territory), the many-faceted and often neglected Ukrainian secession and variants of symbolism, the extremely dynamic and productive futurist and cubist dimensions and projects, the interaction with Russian and Jewish avant-garde traditions, the late phase of constructivism, and the fraught interface with socialist realism—are all now being resuscitated from "years of oppression, ridicule and neglect." And in this the Ukrainian and the universal, the international as such are creatively and indelibly fused: "In rediscovering these errant forces, public exhibitions such as 'Crossroads' are helping to return a lost mosaic of shining fragments to the Pantheon of international Modernism."[30]

Among the many fascinating and groundbreaking articles in this catalogue, one that stands out by virtue both of its inner force and logic and its congruence with the overall visionary and revisionist thrust of

29. Anatoliy Melnyk, introduction to *Ukraïns´kyi modernizm, 1910–1930 / Ukrainian Modernism, 1910–1930*, 71, see also p. 3.

30. John E. Bowlt, "National in Form, International in Content: Modernism in Ukraine," in *Ukraïns´kyi modernism, 1910–1930 / Ukrainian Modernism, 1910–1930*, 75–97, here 82.

the catalogue is Dmytro Horbachov's "Kazimir Malevich and Ukraine," which makes a compelling case—on the basis of close biographical readings, Malevich's own statements on the subject as well as those of his surviving sister, and the irrefutable evidence of his active, creative involvement in the artistic and literary scene of Ukraine in the late 1920s—that he identified with the country and art and its people with as much force and passion as with any other. Does it deny and obviate the claims that Russian art and culture and, respectively, Polish art and culture have on Malevich/Malewicz? Not at all. Are these claims mutually incompatible, or contradictory, like the force and behavior of matter and antimatter? Not to my mind. Artists, and writers, as I have had occasion to write earlier, are not like generals or diplomats who are by definition, by force of duty bound to be loyal to one state or country—on pain of treason, and with nemesis waiting in the wings to turn them into a Benedict Arnold if they waver, to be marked for all time as a "притча во языцѣхъ." They are instead more like saints whose icons can be placed on the iconostases of various faiths and the more ardent the worshippers (in our case, the better the writing about these icons, the analyses the faithful offer) the more persuasive is their story, their role in history. Our understanding of Gogol/Hohol depends on the discourse around him, be it in Russian, Ukrainian, or English. All we have are the narratives, and God Himself is present for us mainly (though not entirely) through and in such stories.

The other catalogue, also already mentioned, and paradoxically or not, more revisionist than the preceding larger one by virtue of the issues broached, was on the Kultur-Lige, the Jewish social and cultural organizations founded in Kyiv in early 1918 under the Hetmanate of Pavlo Skoropads´kyi and existing there until 1921, subsequently branching out from Kyiv in various directions: Moscow, Warsaw, Chernivtsi, Chişinău, Kaunas, Vilnius, New York, and Chicago.[31] The catalogue encapsulates and richly illustrates a key if brief phenomenon: the way in which Yiddishist Jewish artists in Ukraine proceeded to radically rethink their Jewishness, their relation to assimilation, to culture and to the avant-garde and in the process created a new and vibrant model of active and mass-oriented identity formation that also resonated much beyond the borders of Jewish art and culture. What is particularly striking in this effort is the confluence of various indispensable ingredients: the assiduously collected archival material, conceptual or theoretical, artistic and historical; the intellectual and creative record,

31. Kazovs´kyi, *Kul´tur-Liga: Khudozhnii Avanhard 1910–1920-kh rokiv*; full citation given in note 10 above.

the quality of the many-faceted original deliberations in the process and then the scholarly commentaries on it; and finally the energy, collaborative goodwill, a sense of inclusiveness, and a deep understanding of its historical importance on the part of the organizers and sponsors. As project director and Director of the Center for Studies of the History and Culture of East European Jews at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy Leonid Finberg notes,

> The actions of the Kultur-Lige…highlight [the best] of Jewish culture in Ukraine. Although its achievements were forgotten and neglected we must revisit these memories. Jewish educational organizations, theaters and publishing businesses holistically served millions of people who quenched [their thirst] for knowledge and self-awareness in their culture. This historical phenomenon calls for more serious research.…We discover the brilliant works of prominent masters, who are not presently associated with Kyiv and Ukraine. However, most of the following worked in Kyiv, Marc Chagall, El Lissitzky, Mark Epstein, Sarra Shor, Joseph Chaikov, Isaac Rabinovich, Issachar-Ber Ryback and David Shterenberg. In 1918 40% of all books in Yiddish that were circulated through the Russian Empire were published here.[32]

Writing for the National Art Museum of Ukraine, which in 2003 agreed to sponsor the exhibit and then published the catalogue, the director general, Anatoliy Melnyk, speaks of it as a major contribution to Ukraine's artistic, avant-garde experience:

> Works of Kyiv-based and Moscow-based Kultur-Lige artists represented a variety of styles—from Cubism, Futurism and Expressionism to Neo-Classicism—and were renowned for their originality and refinement. To this day they were known only to specialists; they remain an unknown phenomenon to the wide circle of admirers of art. Our exposition…will extend our cultural horizons regarding the artistic processes of [the] post-revolutionary decade. Ukrainian culture of this period shone with diversity and was enriched by national traditions of different peoples who lived on this land and found embodiment in it. The art of Ukraine demonstrated tolerance toward [the] coexistence of various ethnic styles.…The purpose of our project is to reveal the phenomenon of the Kultur-Lige in the context of Ukrainian cultural development. Art does not exist in

32. Leonid Finberg, introduction to Kazovs´kyi, *Kul´tur-Liga*, [6].

> [an] enclosed space, it aspires to mutual enrichment. Members of Kultur-Lige—talented painters and sculptors—constituted a separate layer of culture in which an appeal to traditions and a search of new Avant-garde forms [were] united.[33]

This programmatic highlighting of inclusiveness, of seeing Ukrainian culture as open to and enriched by other traditions and nationalities, is notable and answers some ambient questions (as noted earlier) and again shows that the notion of a *Ukrainian* modernism is also predicated on a political and not merely ethnic understanding of the new Ukrainian nation. That a sense of this emerges well before the political upheaval of 2013–2014 which cemented such a consensus also suggests that the process was broad, and that cultural and even artistic articulations contributed to it.

* * *

The papers presented here, while fewer in this version than those of the original 2007 conference (our subsequent book edition, as noted, will hopefully flesh this out) do cover much of the range of Ukrainian modernism, in terms both of chronology, the broad stylistic gamut—from the varieties of symbolism to constructivism and the onset of socialist realism and the various, ever more stringent restrictions that followed—and of historiography, which becomes particularly pronounced and problematic in the figure of Pavlo Tychyna. All of the papers reflect the state of thought and conceptualization in play not only at their presentation at our conference, but also in the intervening years. This is particularly true, if I may note, of the conceptualization of Tychyna. Not least of all, all of the authors of this volume (with the exception of this author who has been occupied with literary matters, although also often focused on modernism) have been contributing steadfastly to the revitalization of this field, often in the very catalogues discussed above. The paradigm shift we speak of here is the work of many people, spanning several decades.[34]

Two conjoined issues that are presented in the very first paper,

33. Anatoliy Melnyk, introduction to Kazovs´kyi, *Kul´tur-Liga*, [4].
34. Two further contributions to this process, postdating our initial conference, should also be noted here: Myroslava M. Mudrak, curator, *Borys Kosarev: Modernist Kharkiv, 1915–1931 / Borys Kosarev: Kharkivs´kyi modernizm, 1915–1931* (Kyiv: Rodovid, 2011); and Myroslava M. Mudrak and Tetiana Rudenko, curators, *Staging the Ukrainian Avant-garde of the 1910s and 1920s / Instsenizatsiia ukraïns´koho avanhardu 1919–1920-kh rokiv* (New York: Ukrainian Museum, 2015).

Jean-Claude Marcadé's "Kyiv: The Capital of Modernity at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," relate to the early history and prehistory of Ukrainian modernism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and to the more complex and not always adequately addressed issue of the special role in the history of both art and of literature of the city, especially if it is the major city of the country, Ukraine, and in the case of Kyiv, also the third most important city in the Russian Empire. A few other Ukrainian cities—Lviv, Kharkiv, Odesa—also occupy positions of prominence, but Kyiv surely stands out, particularly in the history of Ukrainian modernism. Rather striking in this connection is how seemingly seamlessly such, as Marcadé notes, "leading representatives of the future avant-garde"—Oleksandr Bohomazov, Alexandra Exter, Abram Manevich, Volodymyr Burliuk—emerge from under the wings of the leading Ukrainian realist genre painter Mykola Pymonenko (1862–1912). Aspects of this kind of "natural," though intergenerational, *estafeta*, where iconic Ukrainian scenes are as fascinating for the modernists as they were for the earlier realists, are also suggested by the autobiographical reminiscences of Malevich that Marcadé adduces. Curiously, this affection for and fascination with the archetypical forms and colors in the art of the Ukrainian peasantry is something that characterizes various modernists—Marcadé also mentions Archipenko in this connection—and seems to be a defining feature of this period. In light of this fact the general assumption, particularly among literary historians, that the general, ambient fascination with the life of the *narod* is a legacy of Ukrainian populism (*narodnytstvo*) may need some emendation: it also appears here to figure prominently in the modernist frame.

On the apparent polar opposite of this, in the realm of high culture, there seems no doubt that the cultural life of Kyiv, particularly in the prewar years, was eminently attuned to and involved in what was occurring in the two capitals of the Russian Empire and indeed in the various centers of European art. A welcome reconsideration of this is also provided in Myroslava Mudrak's "Incidental Modernism: Episodes of Symbolism in Ukrainian Art."

One central point that is made early in her paper and is especially worthy of recapitulation and some further attention is that at the turn of the twentieth century, Ukrainian society and its culture were split between, or, to put it less dramatically, were part of two different empires—the Romanov and the Habsburg, the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian. In short order, both empires became history and borders were redrawn, but the opposition between a western and an eastern frame for conceptualizing Ukrainian modernism remained and is essen-

tial for understanding its features and dynamics.[35] That western frame or component includes Austria proper—that is, Vienna, and its powerful influence (still particularly marked in today's Western Ukraine)—but in even greater measure it includes Polish culture, which after 1918 was incarnate in a resurgent Polish state; the political relations between that state and the Ukraine that emerged after World War I, and especially that part of Ukraine that remained part of Poland in the interwar period, were extremely fraught, while the cultural and artistic contacts were less fraught, but still highly complex and unquestionably important.

The general "western front" and specifically the dominant Polish influence in the context of Austrian Galicia provide a logical starting point here:

> For those living in the Western Ukrainian lands, the vibrant Polish cultural revival directly informed their aesthetic choices. Specifically, the Młoda Polska (Young Poland) movement, which gained currency at the end of the nineteenth century, personified the enduring spirit of Poland in various hypostases—from nostalgic melancholy to a contemporary ideal of a unified nation.[36]

In turn this leads to a discussion of Stanisław Wyspiański, a key Młoda Polska writer and painter whose paintings (and even more so his dramatic works)[37] molded the artistic culture of this period, and in turn also had a clear impact on Ukrainian art, specifically, as Mudrak argues, on the Ukrainian painter Mykhailo Zhuk, who studied in Krakow with Wyspiański.

The issue of influence, especially along the highly asymmetrical interface of Polish and Ukrainian art and literature in Galicia at the end of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century, raises a number of interesting questions which the traditional Polish and Ukrainian national historiographies were not programmed to examine, let alone

35. See also my "Exorcising Ukrainian Modernism."

36. See Myroslava M. Mudrak, "Incidental Modernism: Episodes of Symbolism in Ukrainian Art," in this volume, 308.

37. See especially his *Wesele* (The Wedding, 1900), in which inter alia a straw-man (*chochoł*) (echoing a whole group of them in Wyspianski's *The Planty Park by Night: Straw-Men* [1898–1899]; see fig. 1 in Mudrak's contribution to this volume) is mentioned several times in the play. For *Witkacy* (Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, to whom Mudrak alludes in passing), the chochoł reappears in his remarkable surrealist play *Szewcy* (The Shoemakers, 1934) to serve as a kind of running joke on Wyspianski's theatrical devices and actually materializes at the very end to immediately shed its straw covering and emerge as a "jackass" (*bubek*) in coat-and-tails (*we fraku*).

deconstruct, and which are also not entirely addressed here, largely because not all the relevant cultural moments can be quickly examined and because of the symbolist frame that defines the focus here. In the case of the literary interface, the issue is perhaps most stark. Thus Ivan Franko, who exemplifies the Ukrainian literary revival, wrote very much in Polish (something approximating 20 percent of his enormous belletristic, journalistic, and scholarly output, the equivalent of perhaps some ten sizable volumes) and, what is more interesting, had for his symbolic father-figure, against whom he had to struggle, clearly not Shevchenko but Adam Mickiewicz.[38] But Franko, of course, was never treated by Polish criticism as a Polish writer, which is something of a shame since a fresh and contentious look here might have been quite useful. But his somewhat younger Ukrainian contemporaries Vasyl´ Stefanyk and Bohdan Lepkyi were included in one turn-of-the-century critical review of the "local literature" focused on the mountain people, their life and poverty, and so on, as Polish writers, along with such clearly Polish writers as Władysław Orkan and Józef Jedlicz.[39] While the issue of Ukrainian writers emerging from "the shadow of their Polishness" has not been addressed in Soviet or post-Soviet Ukrainian scholarship, it is now being addressed by Polish Ukrainianists as an issue reflecting various power relationships—political, social, sexual, and of course postcolonial—and the process of Ukrainian nation formation.[40]

In a curious way an echo (but also an obverse one) of this influence-that-appropriates is seen in the reception of Oleksa Novakivs´kyi, perhaps the most prominent Ukrainian painter of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Western Ukraine, who in his youth was a student of such prominent Polish artists as Jan Matejko and the already mentioned Wyspiański and who created in Lviv in the interwar period his own artistic school, but who was still often identified (particularly perhaps in Polish art criticism) as a continuator of the Młoda Polska traditions. More discussion of this might be useful. Novakivs´kyi, to be sure, was not technically defined by his symbolist moments, but he certainly should be noted here by virtue of his prominence and the way he exemplifies the question of Polish influences and various attendant identity issues.

38. See my "Vozhdivstvo i rozdvoiennia: 'Valenrodyzm' Franka," in *Teksty i masky* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2005), 95–139.
39. See my "Pol´s´ko-ukraïns´ki literaturni vzaiemyny: Pytannia kul´turnoï perspektyvy," in *Do istoriï ukraïns´koï literatury*, 150.
40. See Katarzyna Glinianowicz, *Z cienia polskości: Ukraińska proza galicyjska przełomu XIX i XX wieku* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2015).

On the other hand, at the Russia/Ukraine interface, Mudrak's discussion of "the Black Sea or Hylaean futurists" is a valuable examination of the Ukrainian roots of what leads up to Russian futurism:

> In keeping with the universalizing nature of modernism as a whole, Hylaean futurism freed up the image to become an exotic combination of legend, myth, and Oriental material inheritance. That this form of modernism found its inspiration not in the city, but in the biocentrism of rural life and the refined craft of Byzantine goldsmithing, harnessing every primordial energy—geological, organic, cosmic, and biological—and that these connections are traceable on the canvas through textural execution (i.e., *faktura*), suggests an even closer connection of Ukrainian futurism to the generative ideas of symbolism than is ordinarily acknowledged. On the one hand, the symbolist underpinnings of primitivism adopted the visceral and vulgar as visual metonymy; on the other hand, crude and spirited imagery of futurism was served up synecdochically to reflect, symbolically, the immutable character of Ukraine's alluring steppelands and local artists' attachment to it.[41]

In its literary form Russian futurism is admittedly broader and more robust in its talents than the Ukrainian one, which largely came to be represented by Semenko and some other minor figures. But then the figure of Mykola Bazhan, who emerges from Ukrainian futurism but stakes out a separate path more than compensates for many of the disproportions here.

* * *

Olga Lagutenko's contribution on Vasyl´ Iermilov places the artist, as she puts it at the very outset, in "the multistylistic character of Ukrainian art in the first third of the twentieth century." The frame, she continues, is comprehensive, involving both European and Ukrainian moments:

> Various European avant-garde trends—expressionism, cubism, futurism, neoprimitivism—left their trace in his works. No less pronounced was the influence of such unique Ukrainian phenomena as the Mykhailo Boichuk and the Heorhii Narbut schools that at different times, or on occasion even simultaneously, inspired the artist.[42]

41. Mudrak, "Incidental Modernism," in this volume, 322.
42. See Olga Lagutenko, "Vasyl´ Iermilov in the Context of Ukrainian and European

Iermilov's turn to constructivism provides, moreover, a kind of natural summation of this extraordinarily rapid flow of movements, styles, and experiments.[43] Most striking here is that the European and Ukrainian styles become fully commensurate: in the course of two decades, particularly as demonstrated by Iermilov, the distance between the European and the Ukrainian articulations is reduced virtually to zero. Even more, it now can be said to reflect, as Halyna Hryn put it concisely, one of those rare moments in history when the flow of ideas and creative solutions was in many ways coming from East to West, not the other way around.[44]

Iermilov's training and practice, beginning with his studies at the Kharkiv Applied Art Workshop (1905–1909), reflect, as Lagutenko notes, the primacy of functionalism, and an implicit focus on a mass audience. In time this will clearly resonate with other artistic and literary developments—for example, the general goals of the Kultur-Lige at the end of the 1910s and the eventual mobilization of literature for the First Five-Year Plan that is so strikingly reflected a decade later in Tychyna's *Chernihiv*. Thus, too, Iermilov's larger-than-life reputation so well conveyed by Valer'ian Polishchuk's hyperbole ("Every building on every street screamed with paint, slogans, flowers, billboards, and arches made by Iermilov"), and Lagutenko's own comment that "it is no accident that the postrevolutionary period of Kharkiv art was called 'the Iermilov period.'"[45]

With all this, however, his creative trajectory also reveals a continuing and unstinting commitment to the purely aesthetic, an evident fascination for impressionism, the painting of Van Gogh, Picasso, and expressionism; his intimate contacts with the Russian avant-garde (Maiakovskii, Burliuk, Goncharova, Larionov, Mashkov, and others) also stand out; and, not least of all, his familiarity with and broad interest in such Ukrainian artists as Boichuk, Krychevs´kyi, and Narbut underline his search for a native Ukrainian idiom.

Particularly telling is Lagutenko's evocation of Iermilov's ontology, as one may call it, of his fascination for the ordinary, for everyday objects:

Art of the First Third of the Twentieth Century," 351n1, in this volume for her recapitulation of her published research on this topic.

43. Lagutenko, "Vasyl´ Iermilov in the Context of Ukrainian and European Art," 351–55 and passim.

44. See Halyna Hryn, "*Literaturnyi iarmarok*: Mediation between Nativist Tradition and Western Culture," in *Ukraine and Europe: Cultural Encounters and Negotiations*, ed. Giovanna Brogi Bercoff, Marko Pavlyshyn, and Serhii Plokhy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 374–89, here, 375.

45. See Lagutenko, "Vasyl´ Iermilov in the Context of Ukrainian and European Art," in this volume, 358.

> He proclaimed the value of the ordinary by revealing the architectonic principles of everyday objects, their simplicity and authenticity. When he puts a knife or a matchbox into a composition, he is being thoroughly concrete, but as we perceive the close, familiar, "ready-at-hand," he activates our senses and our intuition. He reawakens the feeling that behind an object something unknown is hidden—the unknown of matter itself, its structure, its "flesh," and the very uncontrollability of its being.[46]

This also corresponds, I believe, to Tychyna's predilection for found poetry (as in his collection of sayings from the lips of the *narod*: its "zoloto i musor"). Both artists, in fact, were drawn to formal experimentation with their matter, with the object as such: for Iermilov it was the stuff things, art, were made of—wood, brass, oil, and so on; for Tychyna it was language. Iermilov's use of collage as well as photomontage is particularly telling, and the parallel poetic phenomenon is a particular focus in my examination of Tychyna. Clearly each artist articulates these matters in his own way and with the possibilities that the material he has to work with allows. But the openness to a catholic, in effect *functional* approach to style, indeed the readiness to engage a multiplicity of different styles is something they both share, and this sets both of them apart from many of their contemporaries. When at the end of her paper Lagutenko notes that Iermilov's stylistic range "reflects such diverse movements as expressionism, cubism, cubo-futurism, neoprimitivism, constructivism, and art deco," her comment should also call to mind the range of stylistic manifestations in Tychyna's poetry, from the symbolism in *Soniachni klarnety*, to the *plakat* (and essentially futurist inflections) in *Pluh*, to Dadaist and futurist moments in *Zamist´ sonetiv i oktav* and to constructivist elements in *Chernihiv* and beyond. The ways in which this insight is to be processed is, of course, a significant challenge both for the overall Tychyna reception and the canon of Ukrainian literature.

* * *

Georgy Kovalenko's short but concise and thought-provoking paper "Constructivism in Ukrainian Theater" continues with an examination of Ukrainian constructivism, but now with a specific focus on stage design and scenography; the artists he discusses are Anatol´ Petryts´kyi, Vadym Meller, and Oleksandr Khvostenko-Khvostov, each of whom sig-

46. Ibid, 373–74.

nificantly varied the content and nature of the constructivist aesthetic. Behind them as a formative influence is Alexandra Exter, demonstrating the power of her personality and of a vision of constructivism *in statu nascendi*, but also introducing a key moment in Kovalenko's overall conception of constructivism as both an international and a national style. As he notes,

> Alexandra Exter and her relationship to the Ukrainian avant-garde is an extraordinarily important topic that has not been fully considered to this day or studied in detail.…
>
> In postrevolutionary Kyiv, Alexandra Exter's studio was a kind of laboratory for new art—new painting and new scenography. What is important here is that during this period, the artist devoted herself almost completely to the problems of abstract painting. Constructivist ideas were still being intuited and would not become a permanent feature of her art until two or three years later. For the time being, Exter was painting abstracts exclusively, calling them "color structures," "color dynamics," and "color constructions." Without going into a review of those works now, I will merely note that according to their pictorial qualities, they differ fundamentally from everything that can be observed in similar types of explorations pursued, for example, by Liubov´ Popova, Nadezhda Udal´tsova, and Alexander Rodchenko, who were also focused on abstract art at this time. The differences lie, above all, in the area of color content. The foundation for Exter's color was the canons of Ukrainian folk art: its color patterns and compositional principles. *Moreover, she used them consciously and programmatically: in Exter's view, the new painting was not at all an "international style" but rather art that logically developed the national traditions of art of the preceding epochs. What is more, it was precisely in that kind of continuity that she saw both the viability of the new forms and prospects for their development.*[47]

In his subsequent discussion of Petryts´kyi, Meller, and Khvostenko-Khvostov, Kovalenko subtly but concisely examines the way in which their respective variants of constructivism adhere to or diverge from a "general" or "standard" version (which, as he points out, may only be a critical consensus at a particular historical moment); thus, regarding Petryts´kyi he notes that

47. Georgy Kovalenko, "Constructivism in Ukrainian Theater," in this volume, 391. The italics are mine.

> critics in the 1920s understandably called Petryts´kyi's constructivism a "compromise"; at that time it was not possible to call it by any other name. Today, when the postulates of the movement are already part of history, it is more correct to speak not about this or that degree of conformity to the line of orthodox constructivism, but about the artists' search for their own way amid general explorations and programs.
>
> Indeed, much of Petryts´kyi's work goes beyond the bounds of the constructivist aesthetic. One gets the impression that he did not even strive for purity or strict implementation. On the contrary: in every possible way he blurred and supplemented this aesthetic, and included in the constructivist image elements of a completely nonconstructivist nature. What is curious is that, all the while, the constructivist foundation of his works never collapsed; it never became something secondary, a purely utilitarian device, or simply a tribute to the ideas of the time.[48]

But whether constructivist, or "not completely constructivist," or indeed at times "completely nonconstructivist" in the case of Petryts´kyi (and similar qualifications are also noted for Meller's stagings at the Berezil´ Theater which under Les´ Kurbas was strongly committed to an expressionist aesthetic,[49] while in the case of Khvostenko-Khvostov he explicitly notes that the constructivist aesthetic was often "quite intentionally violated" and his constructions "always colored," "always decorative"[50]), the continuing, fundamental, and overarching issue for Kovalenko is how these various strategies of constructivism for these artists in the heady 1920s are themselves stages or moments in a larger search for a national style. This is how his paper began, when he amended Nikolai Punin's assessment of the breakup of the international (and in one version, one should add, programmatically "analytical," too) style of cubism as being "broken by national, and then individual traditions" to read that "Ukrainian constructivist theater design" was "colored, reorganized, and transformed by the traditions of Ukrainian

48. Ibid., 395–97.

49. Ibid., 403ff. His diaries, published in 1986 during perestroika, when the empire that murdered Kurbas was in its death throes, reveal the passion of his commitment to expressionism and his skeptical take on constructivism; see ibid., 403n3.

50. Thus, too, "As regards the economy of expression, it is certainly difficult to name another artist who was so generous in his means, so extravagant, and so indefatigable in his strivings to create an endless world of forms and colors on the stage." Ibid., 413.

art."[51] Now, as he concludes, he can make this claim again, having drawn not only on the work of Petryts´kyi, Meller, and Khvostenko-Khvostov, but Exter herself:

> Let us refer once again to Alexandra Exter in order to note another general quality that appears in many works of the above-mentioned artists. Just as the visual register of Ukrainian folk art was always present in Exter's abstract painting and purely experimental artistic explorations, so too did the world of peasant festivals, fairs, folk rites, and, finally, the very "aestheticism of Ukrainian folk life," sooner or later make itself known in Ukrainian constructivism. It was impossible not to sense this even in the most rational constructions, as it burst through all the constructivist prohibitions and invested this art with high emotionality, a lack of inhibition, and freedom.
>
> Ukrainian theatrical constructivism is not limited to the works of the three artists discussed above. In the 1920s it literally flooded the theater. We have yet to fully apprehend this phenomenon, which was crushed and destroyed at the moment of its ascendance, its bloom, at the moment of triumph of its ideas, and, most importantly, at the very moment that Ukrainian constructivism was becoming a truly national style.[52]

The fact that that style was doomed does not make it any less clear or impressive.

Kovalenko's short paper is long on methodological import and on implications for future work. In general, his focus on theater design and scenography brings his work closer to the orbit of literature than any of the preceding authors, but the issue is not so much the art form itself and its proximity to literature—that is, drama—as the insights one can draw from his approach and his conclusions. Because the fact of the matter is that in Ukrainian literary criticism, already in the immediate postwar period (we are speaking, of course, of the emigration, not Ukraine under the Soviets, where the wait for a reawakening would take another forty-five years or so) there were various attempts to try to come to grips with the notion of a Ukrainian national style. This is what animated the historiographic thinking (in actual practice it was more like retrospective critical reflections on the period, or even a form of bearing witness, than purposeful and comprehensive history) of such critics as Iurii (George) Shevel´ov, and his slightly older colleagues Iurii

51. Ibid., 389.
52. Ibid., 413.

Lavrinenko and Hryhorii Kostiuk. By far the more analytical, erudite, and academically trained (though as a linguist, not as a literary scholar) Shevel´ov indeed postulated in the MUR period of émigré literature (roughly 1945–1950) the notion of a Ukrainian "nationally organic style" (*natsional´no-orhanichnyi styl´*), and wrote with enthusiasm on writers who in his view epitomized this style,[53] but later disowned it.[54] A closer analysis of the concept, its context and uses is much needed, but here, clearly it can be noted only as an interdisciplinary priority. As seen in the work of our art historian colleagues, here particularly Kovalenko, the notion of a "national style" (one may forgo for the moment the "organic" qualifier) is not necessarily primordialist or essentialist but may indeed provide the focus through which we can, perhaps, see the common stylistic denominators for a whole generation and a whole period. It seems equally evident, even at what is still a preliminary stage, that stylistic, aesthetic, and formal features may provide much more persuasive tools than ideological and political constructs and inferences. And yet in Ukrainian postwar émigré literary historiography the latter clearly predominated.[55] In the decades that followed, the "national paradigm" may have become less strident but was hardly replaced by a formal or aesthetic one.

53. See, e.g., his essays on Todos´ Osmachka and Vasyl´ Barka in Iurii Sherekh, *Druha cherha: Literatura, teatr, ideolohiï* ([Munich]: Suchasnist´, 1978), and especially his programmatic "Styli suchasnoï ukraïns´koï literatury na emigratsiï," in Sherekh, *Ne dlia ditei* (New York: Proloh, 1964), 182–225. A theoretical grounding, as it were, is provided in his "Etiudy pro natsional´ne v literaturakh suchasnosty," in *Literaturno-naukovyi zbirnyk*, vol. 1 (New York: UVAN, 1952), 148–61.

54. The actual renunciation of this notion is more implicit and drawn out than sudden and direct; see his foreword, "Pro zbirku, pro avtora," to Iurii Sherekh, *Tretia storozha: Literatura, mystetstvo, ideolohiï* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1993), 27.

55. George S. N. Luckyj's influential *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917–1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956) is overt in its focus on the political. It was preceded by a year by Bohdan Krawciw's anthology of Ukrainian poets killed by totalitarian regimes, above all the Soviet, but also the Nazi—i.e., his *Obirvani struny: Antolohiia poeziï poliahlykh, rozstrilianykh, zamuchenykh i zaslanykh, 1920–1945* (New York: Naukove tov. im Shevchenka v Amerytsi, 1955). Iurii Lavrinenko's much larger and influential anthology *Rozstriliane vidrodzhennia* (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1959) sets the paradigm of the "executed Renaissance"—i.e., of a political, Stalinist destruction of Ukrainian literature. It is to Shevel´ov's credit that he would take issue with various crude political interpretations of repressed Ukrainian writers—for example, of Valeriian Pidmohyl´nyi's novel *Misto* in Hryhorii Kostiuk's edition (New York: UVAN, 1954); see Iurii Sherekh, "Liudyna i liudy ('Misto' Valeriiana Pidmohyl´noho)," in *Ne dlia ditei*, 83–96; but his was largely a situational response, not an articulated historiographic position. The problem was much larger than the occasional riposte could handle.

* * *

Vita Susak's paper "The Swiss Secrets of Alexander Archipenko" more than lives up to its title: it not only tells us something about secrets (big and small, from biographical details to art-historical mythologies) but does so in an utterly engrossing way, casting her research as a compelling detective story. As important as the pace and the suspenseful narrative may be, there are also, of course, some basic issues that periodically need to be rethought and properly addressed, and this is done here both subtly and with panache. One such basic task is to remind the reader that the world of art is part of the real world in which a genius may be down and out, in a foreign city, let's say Paris, with no patriotically prescient compatriots around to help, as in this passage:

> During his first years in Paris, Archipenko was in dire straits, a detail worth noting when considering the conditions under which he made his most important discoveries. Archipenko established a close friendship with Fernand Léger when they both had studios in La Ruche. Without a sou in their pockets, they would wander Paris together, from rue de Vaugirard to boulevard de Belleville. Jacques Chapiro remembers that Léger played a musical instrument and Archipenko sang with his "deep and warm" baritone. From time to time, Léopold Survage accompanied him on the guitar. In the spring of 1909, Archipenko became a member of the Ukrainian Hromada (Community) in Paris, hoping for their support. However, his conservative compatriots, immersed in politics and mostly distant from art, appreciated neither his creative work nor his bohemian behavior. Ievhen Bachyns´kyi, at that time a member of the Hromada, wrote: "I would go to Archipenko's studio, but I didn't like his works, they were ugly, and I didn't want to pay even ten francs for the thing he offered to sell me!…Archipenko was a drunk, and amused himself 'at the bottom' with Parisian lowlifes. He wandered door-to-door playing the violin, being thrown coins. This was his livelihood, poor wretch."[56]

Susak goes on to draw the proper contrast: neither Archipenko nor history would care much about those who had no knowledge of, or commitment to art, or indeed the ability to affect its reception. But Apollinaire was one of the few who did care and could affect it, and "gave a lecture about modern sculpture [in Archipenko's studio] in order to

56. See Vita Susak, "The Swiss Secrets of Alexander Archipenko," in this volume, 417.

attract attention to his friend's work."[57] Patrons appeared in Germany and an Italian artist bought three of his works. And then came solo exhibitions in Geneva and Zurich and the whole involved story of how Switzerland became Archipenko's second, or is it really first, home and his international reputation was secured. Apollinaire did not live to see it, but his task was accomplished.

The point, of course, is reception—peculiar to all forms of art, but particularly telling for the fine arts, where it involves patronage. That patronage, as Susak brings out dramatically, involves not only money but also something in much shorter supply—namely, artistic vision. Archipenko's rise from mocked artiste-manqué to international celebrity, which is reconstructed here with remarkable detail, is in many respects a testament also to the vision of such as Guillaume Apollinaire and the Swiss collector Sally/George Falk who saw and pursued what others could not see.

In the second half of her paper Susak brings in two further moments that also cast light on two peculiar "secrets" of Archipenko's oeuvre. One relates to Archipenko's "sculpto-paintings" that he made during his stay in Nice. The differing interpretations between the American scholar Donald Karshan and the Parisian critic Maurice Raynal may bear recapitulating:

> The sculpto-paintings attracted the greatest attention. Archipenko had begun creating these art objects before the war and continued to make them during his stay in Nice. Raynal considered these works to have their inspiration in Egyptian bas-reliefs and bright Roman mosaics. Later, Karshan would point to a source closer to the native Ukrainian sculptor—the icon. The images of saints on icons, covered with gold and silver settings, must have been a vivid memory for the grandson of an icon painter who had grown up in "Kiev—the center of icons." But Raynal was right as well. Archipenko did not show a preference for any particular national tradition; he absorbed all world traditions and synthesized his own. Karshan emphasizes the sculptor's audacity in translating "these obvious cultural roots into not only a secular subject but one of female privacy." Also, Karshan subtly observes that Archipenko had simultaneously entered into a provocative dialogue with the French eighteenth-century tradition of Boucher and Fragonard.[58]

57. Ibid, 420.
58. Ibid., 428–29.

The other relates to the question of novelty and the process of the artist's dating and (especially in the absence of originals) of reconstructing his own work, tracing the development of an idea through its various physical incarnations, which has caused multiple problems for both art historians and exhibit curators.[59] At the same time, this capacity to see the archetypical form, to travel back through countless intertexts, presumably to the very origins, to what is possibly the ur-model is Archipenko's essential strength, as shown by his *Bather*.

> The *Bather* is emblematic of this stage in the artist's oeuvre. Archipenko, along with Brancusi, was among the first to understand the value of physical material in and of itself and began experimentation in this area of sculptural problems. Without trying to imitate Rodin in any way, Archipenko nonetheless appropriated from the French sculptor the idea that a fragment can be a complete work. His early sculptures reminded Sviatoslav Hordynsʹkyi of the "idols which once adorned the barrows of the Ukrainian steppes." In Archipenko's hands these archaic idols came to life and began to move: "strongly anti-realistic, shaped in rude blocks of geometrically composed forms. From there it was only one step to Cubism, of which Archipenko was one of the principal creators."[60]

* * *

My paper on Tychyna and modernism presumably speaks for itself, and matters relating to his later work, to his "negotiating" of socialist realism, will be treated at length in my ongoing monograph on his poetry. But the interdisciplinary frame of this introduction still compels a few further comments, particularly since it provides a rare opportunity to examine some methods, or more generally, some practices in the contiguous fields of art history and literary history. It should come as no surprise that the latter—particularly in its Ukrainian hypostasis—is in many respects still curiously constrained, almost quaint in its discussion of modernism. In effect, behind both terms (the euphemisms "constrained" and "quaint") lies the recidivism of Soviet or crypto-Soviet thinking as well as the still potent sway of a populist instrumentalization of literature seeing itself as uniquely dedicated to the collective projection of national honor, propriety, patriotism, and so on.

59. See the section "Hero and Bather," in ibid., 436ff.
60. Ibid., 441–43.

Vita Susak's last citation above is most telling in this connection. She speaks, matter-of-factly, of Archipenko and his experimentation—an experimentation, obviously, that goes to the core of his art and his co-discovery of cubism—that is, the ability to see the archetypical, the form within the form, that which is invisible for the naturalist or conventional perspective. In all the preceding papers, whether speaking of Malevich or Picasso, of Iermilov or constructivism in the Ukrainian theater in the 1920s, experimentation and the experimental are either tacitly or overtly taken as essential components of the modernist style, as key parts of being modernist. And yet not so long ago experiment and experimentation were all but proscribed in Soviet literary practice, after modernism was officially supplanted by socialist realism. But it was also the case in the pre-Soviet period, when the general overdetermination of Ukrainian literature in most of the nineteenth century, precisely in its historically inevitable role of carrier of national identity, as the collective's primary *lieu de memoire*, indeed its voice of patriotism and so on, made it entirely normal for various sociocultural tendencies in the literary discourse to marginalize if not proscribe the experimental: as with the adage about generals and war, literature was too important to be left to individual writers with their individualism and propensity to errors of judgment! Where needed, the school curriculum could always rectify matters. In many ways, despite the inglorious end of the Soviet system, the onus placed on the experimental, particularly in the paraliterary mode, is still in place. To be sure, a range of other outstanding Ukrainian writers of the 1920s and early 1930s—particularly Khvyl´ovyi, Iohansen, and Petrov, and Bazhan among the poets—are still not perceived as programmatically committed to the experimental. (The academic discourse is more circumspect in this regard, with younger critics more prone to acknowledge this mode without a priori bias, but the Soviet-trained older establishment is still hostile to it.) Tychyna's place in the canon is still probably the most skewed: the most experimental and most modernist of early twentieth-century Ukrainian poets was the object of a stultified process of reception where the very inventiveness that made him outstanding was proscribed in the Soviet period (the emigration had its own inherent, ideological difficulties in prioritizing formal values for literary scholarship and historiography), and, in independent Ukraine, a reassessment of the poet's role has had little traction in the climate of academic inertia and the state's general neglect of the humanities. In a sense he still exemplifies the unfinished and largely glacial process of rethinking the modern Ukrainian literary canon.

From an interdisciplinary standpoint the presence of Tychyna in a volume of deliberations framing Ukrainian art history should hopefully serve both as a special stimulus and possibly as a corrective. As noted above, in the discussion of Lagutenko's paper, Tychyna's fascination for found poetry and his implicitly functional approach to style (apparently shifting from one early collection to another and extending this style-shifting well into his middle period) echoes the stylistic openness presumably not only of Iermilov but also other avant-garde artists of this period.

More generally, his presence may stimulate further consideration of the complex and drawn-out transition from modernism to socialist realism. In my discussion of Tychyna's use of collage and montage techniques, the question of mixing elements from entirely disparate realms—epitomized in the cited fragments from the first chapter of his epic-dramatic poem "Shablia Kotovs´koho"—suggests that the poet is juxtaposing the ideologically proper and sanctioned thematics (the revolutionary struggle against external and internal enemies; the historically necessary victory of the Bolsheviks, et cetera) with narrative moments (his hero's confused sense of the dialectical being picked up by the chirping of birds, which then blends with the wind and the rustling of leaves) which by their very extension suggest parallel, incommensurate realities. But the nature of that parallelism is essentially unknowable, insubordinate to reason or any syllogisms. Is this comparable to various paintings, for example Viktor Pal´mov's *May Day* (1929) (fig. 1, at right) or his *For Soviet Power!* (1927) (fig. 2, below), which meld moments of the identifiably ideological and the strongly un-rational (or irrational, ineffable) *tsevotopis´* that sets up an opposition, but to what effect and with what purpose is not given or even intimated? Analogous to this is Semen Ioffe's (a student of Iermilov's) *At the Shooting Gallery* (1932) (fig. 3, below), which depicts two women, armed, fit, presumably utterly determined to defend the revolution—but the meaning of everything else in the painting, including their stilted (or is it histrionic?) poses tends to conceal meaning rather than revealing it. For me, a still more telling work is the Russian artist Iurii Ivanovich Pimenov's 1927 painting *Bring on the Heavy Industry!* (now in the Tretyakov Gallery) (fig. 4, below), which depicts workers presumably in a steel foundry dragging something into what seems like a fiery furnace, or is it their own immolation (because the first three are already well-singed)? The picture has all the industrialization thematics in place, but its action and dramatic colors, as in the Ukrainian works, defy submission to any simply ideological message. Is that their message? Or is a title itself, like

Figure 1. Viktor Pal´mov. *May Day*. 1929. Oil on canvas. 161 x 161 cm. Collection of the National Art Museum of Ukraine.

Figure 2. Viktor Pal´mov. *For Soviet Power!* 1927. Oil on canvas. 177 x 142 cm. Collection of the National Art Museum of Ukraine.

Figure 3. Semen Ioffe. *At the Shooting Gallery*. 1932. Oil on canvas. 200 x 150 cm. Collection of the National Art Museum of Ukraine.

Figure 4. Iurii Ivanovich Pimenov. *Bring on the Heavy Industry!* 1927. Oil on canvas. 260 x 212 cm. Collection of the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. © 2020 Estate of Yuri (Georgiy) Ivanovich Pimenov / UPRAVIS, Moscow / ARS, NY.

Malevich's *Red Cavalry* (1932) enough to make the work socialist realist? (Because nothing else in the painting suggests ideological directness.) Tychyna's poetic examples provide further resonance here, but hardly any direct answers, other than confirming that his works from this period are also more fraught and obscure than we may have expected.