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Mapping the Field

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Abstract

Drawing from the new trends in the inter-ethnic and cross-cultural studies, this paper points to several major lacunae in the research of Jewish Ukrainian relations and in the contextual religious, economic, and multilingual literary history of Jews on the Ukrainian lands, the study of which the author considers the major scholarly desiderata. Unlike most of the historiographical studies of Ukrainian Jewish relations published so far, this essay suggests heretofore underexplored or neglected themes, sub-fields, documentary collections, and methodologies, thus, “mapping the field” for the next generation of young scholars and researchers interested in exploring Ukrainian multi-cultural legacy.

Key Words:

Ukraine, Jews, historiography, inter-ethnic and cross-cultural studies, research program.

In his memoirs, written in Ukraine and published in Canada, Danylo Shumuk relates an episode of his stormy career. In the 1930s, Shumuk spent several years in a Polish prison for his communist sympathies and, in 1942, he escaped from a Nazi POW camp somewhere near Kharkiv. He decided to walk from Kharkiv district to his native village in Volhynia and join the Ukrainian underground resistance there. On his journey across Ukraine, Shumuk met a Jewish girl, Fania, from Warsaw, who was also walking to Volhynia seeking to find her relatives there.

Shumuk was not a great admirer of the Jews. But for several weeks these two unlikely companions walked together, ate together, hid together, and starved together. Their chances for survival were minimal. Most likely the girl's Warsaw Jewish family had been deported, murdered or put in the ghetto. Her own fate would be no different from that of her family. In turn, Shumuk would spend about forty years in the Soviet

Gulag: first for his participation in the Ukrainian national resistance, and later, for his dissident activities as a human rights activist.

Shumuk's memoir presents this brief, yet significant experience. For several weeks, a member of the Ukrainian nationalist resistance and a Jewish girl shared the road, the meagre food they could get, and shelter. They had no documents; they risked being arrested and imprisoned on the spot; they had mutual bias against one another; and they both had a dim future. They had not met before and they had little chance of meeting after. But for a certain period of time, Danylo Shumuk and his Jewish companion walked together through the side roads and forests across Ukraine, from east to west, avoiding urban centres, troops on the march, and main highways. Shumuk called Fania *podruhoiu nevoli* (a friend in slavery).¹

For some twelve centuries, Ukrainians and Jews walked together through history. Whatever their attitudes toward one another; whatever names they were called, Jews or Yids, Ruthenians or Ukrainians; whatever their past perfect and future indefinite, still it is incumbent upon us to study their historical itinerary as they walked together.

This type of examination explores when and how Jewish history crossed paths with Ukrainian history and how that of one people became the context for another. This type of examination also helps to meld the story of one of the biggest early modern and modern Jewish communities within its specific East European context and places Ukraine firmly on the European map. Take, for example, the Jew who taught the Slavic alphabet and elementary language to a twelfth-century English scholar. This was perhaps one of the first attested encounters of a Western European scholar with the Slavic language, and a Jew named Isaac from Chernihiv facilitated it. By the same token, it was a Jewish inmate Arye (Iury) Vudka, released from the Gulag who smuggled the poetry of Vasyl Stus out of a Perm region correction colony to the west and published it there in a Ukrainian diaspora forum. It would have taken years for the

1 Danylo Shumuk, *Perezhyte i peredumane* [*What I Lived and Thought Through*] (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo Oleny Telihy, 1998), 88–92.

Diaspora Ukrainians to realize the significance of Stus, if not for this risky act of a bona fide cultural intermediary. These and other similar examples prove that while Ukraine integrates Jews within Slavic culture, Jews make Ukraine part of Europe.

Therefore Ukrainian scholars should seek to master aspects of East European Jewish history and culture as much as Jewish scholars must learn about Ukraine. From this perspective the subfield of Ukrainian Jewish studies paves the way for a radical reassessment of established stereotypes and provides a plethora of opportunities for understanding the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic character of Ukraine. Thus the study of Jews in Ukraine and Ukrainian-Jewish interaction achieves an important goal. It fosters the creation of a new, complex, dynamic, and interactive model of Ukraine, applicable far beyond the narrow Ukrainian-Jewish field.

Once you look at the growing number of new monographs, dissertations, and masters theses, you will discover that young scholars use Ukrainian-Jewish interaction not only as a complex problem in and of itself but also as a methodological tool that can be applied to the study of comparative nationalisms, empires and stateless ethnicities, comparative violence and genocides, economic and cultural borderlands, multiethnic and gender studies etc. It is a relatively young, vibrant, growing, and fascinating field that, of course, requires some basic knowledge of Ukrainian and Yiddish, Polish, Russian, and Hebrew, of Ukrainian religious, economic, political, and cultural history, and, of course, of the artistic, scholarly, religious, and literary pursuits of Ukrainians and Jews.

New recently published monographs on Jewish history in Ukraine and on Ukrainian-Jewish relations do not imply that all issues have been resolved, the field is sealed and those interested in contributing should look for inspiring themes elsewhere. The opposite is the case. Whatever has been done so far should be treated as a point of departure, yet where we go from there depends primarily on new generations of younger scholars, immune to inherited stereotypes and free of ideological blinders. If so, what should their to-do list entail? Let me share with you here the research directions I would consider immediate desiderata – to be

conducted, recorded, defended as a dissertation, or published and introduced to scholarship as a book.

History is one of the fields where heretofore unanswered questions will keep us busy for quite a while. Jews settled in what were known as private Polish towns in Galicia in the 14th–15th centuries and in central Ukraine in the 15th and 16th centuries. Several key studies of Adam Teller, Gershon Hundert, and Moshe Rosman explored the 18th century socioeconomic history of these towns.² Jacob Goldberg came out with a solid collection of early modern Latin- and Polish-language *privilegias* legalizing early Jewish settlement in what would become the stronghold of the magnate economy.³ New studies of the crown towns in central Poland point to the role of the *De non tolerandi Judeaos* (the crown-protected right to banish the Jews from the city) privileges in removing Jews from the large Polish cities and triggering Jewish eastward migration and resettlement.

We have a pretty good idea of what made Jews move from the central to the eastern territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the time, yet we know very little about the function Jews performed in establishing the manorial economies of the Polish magnates and in creating the urban infrastructure of such towns as Berdychiv, Polonne, Nemyriv, Zovkva (Zolkiew), Tulchyn, Uman, and Dubno. There is a significant socioeconomic, cultural, and religious lacuna between the 15th century Latin privileges allowing Jews to settle in what would be later called the shtetls and the 17th century Hebrew chronicles outlining the destruction of these settlements in the mid-17th century. We need to leave the realm

2 See Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Moshe Rosman, *The Lords' Jews: Magnate-Jewish Relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press for the center for Jewish studies, Harvard University and the Harvard Ukrainian research institute, 1990); Adam Teller, *Kesef, koah, ve-hashpa'ah: ha-Yehudim be-ahuzat bet Radz'ivil be-Lita ba-me'ah ha-18* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2006).

3 Jacob Goldberg, *Jewish Privileges in the Polish Commonwealth: Charters of Rights Granted to Jewish Communities in Poland-Lithuania in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1985).

of the prescriptive and memory documents and attempt to answer the question of when and how Jews settled on Ukrainian land in early modern times. Of course, one needs to master Polish and Latin in order to be able to make sense of the corresponding primary sources.

Religious history also requires further exploration. In the second half of the 18th century, a group of Judaic mystics in Podillia and Volhynia who called themselves Hasidim abandoned the ascetic worldview of previous groups of elitist Kabbalists and began preaching a form of pietistic exaltation, parallel to what is found among other contemporary movements of religious enthusiasm such as the Methodists at the other end of Europe. By the end of the 18th century, some of these Hasidic Jews became spiritual masters, gained mass popularity, built pompous courts, established dynasties and shaped the movement we know today under the name of Hasidism. Dozens of theological works have been published on them, including Moshe Rosman's study of the legendary founder of the movement known as the Baal Shem Tov, Mordecai Wilensky's two-volume collection of sources on Hasidim and their opponents, the *Mitnagdim*, Arthur Green's study of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, David Assaf's book on Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin and many others.⁴

Some curious yet unconvincing and methodologically problematic attempts were made to integrate the history of Hasidism into broader East European history, tracing parallels between Hasidic sects and Eastern Christian schismatics, also religious enthusiasts, and between Hasidic masters and Eastern Christian elders, the *tsadikim* and the *startsyt*.⁵ Yet

4 See Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1996); Mordecai Wilensky, *Hasidim u-mitnagdim: le-toldot ha-pulmus she-benehem ba-shanim 532–535* (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1970); Arthur Green, *Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 1992); David Assaf, *Derekh ha-malkhut: R. Yiśra'el me-Ruz'in u-meḳomo be-toldot ha-Ḥasidut* (Yerushalayim: Merkaz Zalman Shazar le-toldot Yisrael, 1997).

5 Igor Turov, *Rannii khasidizm: Istorია. Verouchenie. Kontakty so slavianskim okruzheniem* [*Early Hasidism: A History of Faith. Contacts with the Slavic Environment*] (Kyiv: Dukh i literatura, 2003).

still today there has been no convincing answer to the key question: why did Hasidism emerge in Ukraine and how did the Ukrainian context shape its rise and define the peculiarities of this Judaic movement of religious enthusiasm? What was so special about the Ukrainian Jews who produced Hasidic masters – and followed them, transforming the movement into a full-fledged socio-cultural movement with its Hasidic courts, philanthropy, pilgrimage, new type of leadership, new liturgical and study texts, and mystical worldview? Ukraine was not only the epicentre of the budding movement, it also informed a distinct Ukrainian form of Hasidism, different from its Polish and Lithuanian derivations. How it was different and why it happened is precisely what new research should answer.

Intellectual history is also a fruitful field to explore, regardless of the suspicions of social historians such as myself. One could do excellent research on the history of national-democratic thought and of social resistance by studying the Ukrainian dissident movement of the 1960s–1970s. Several surveys have already appeared, yet they all miss the point since they do not address one of the most amazing aspects of the Ukrainian anti-Marxist resistance: namely, the encounter and intensive exchange between Jewish and Ukrainian participants in this movement. Consider the case study of Jewish and Ukrainian inmates in the Brezhnev Gulag and the impact of Ukrainian dissidents from Viacheslav Chornovil and Myroslav Marynovych to Ievhen Sverstiuk and Vasyl Stus on profoundly russified Jewish inmates such as Mykhailo Heifets, Semen Hluzman, Iakiv Suslensky, and Arye Vudka. There were preliminary attempts at portraying the new ideological bonds created by these inmates – and tracking their parallel itineraries, national-democratic loyalties and mutual assistance.

For example, the inmate Mykhailo Kheifets, a prominent literary critic in his own right, recognized the poetic genius of Vasyl Stus in a correction colony and taught himself Ukrainian to better understand it.⁶ Or

6 For the first time Mykhailo Kheifets' memoirs about Ukrainian inmates appeared in the edition Mykhailo Kheifets, "V ukrainskii poezii teper bilshoho nema..." ["There is Nobody Greater in the Ukrainian Poetry..."] *Suchasnist* 7–8 (1981), reprinted in the book: Roman Korohodsky, comp., *Pole vidchaitu i nadii* [*The Field of Despair and Hope*]

take Ievhen Sverstiuk, whose groundbreaking essay on Ukrainian-Israeli solidarity turned several Jews into staunch Zionists. Over the last twenty years, the participants in this unparalleled “dialogue behind bars” published their memoirs (about forty altogether), and the Ukrainian security organs opened their archives (and now closed them again), allowing for some short period of unrestricted access to the documents of this period. A monograph study of Jews and Ukrainians in the human rights movement of the Shcherbytsky-Brezhnev era would be a formidable contribution to the field of Ukrainian-Jewish history, to the study of non-violent resistance in modern Europe, and to the intellectual dialogue between Jewish and Ukrainian Diaspora nationalisms in the framework of imposed Russification, Russian chauvinism, and the imperial treatment of national minorities aspiring to statehood.

The influence of nationally-aware Ukrainians on assimilated Jews is only part of the story. Some Ukrainian national-democratic thinkers drew their national revivalist inspiration from Jewish sources, first and foremost from the writings of Zeev Jabotinsky. A small book of Jabotinsky’s feuillets from the early 1900s–1910s included his essays on Taras Shevchenko’s jubilee, suppressed by the imperial authorities; on Jewish integration into the imperial Russian language culture, which Jabotinsky did not condone; and on the significance of Ukrainian cultural and national revival.⁷ Himself a Russian writer, translator and journalist of the highest caliber, Jabotinsky despised his proud place in the pantheon of Russian literary glory, sacrificed his phenomenal talents as a writer and poet, and chose to fight with rifle in hand for the liberation of Palestine from the Ottoman Turks. Jabotinsky’s stance on the issues of Ukraine, Ukrainian independence, and Ukrainian language and culture won the sympathies of individuals such as Ivan Dziuba, whose classical work

(Kyiv: n.p., 1994), 137–392. See Nadia Svitlychna feedback to these memoirs in *Suchasnist* 7–8.247–248 (1981): 76–79 and Oksana Zabuzhko’s observation in her book *Khroniky vid Fortinbrasa* [*The Fortinbras Chronicles*] (Kyiv: Fakt, 1999), 232–33.

7 See: V. Jabotinsky, *Vybrani statti z natsionalnoho pytannia* [*Selected Essays on the National Issue*] (Kyiv: Republican Association of Ukrainian Scholars, 1991).

Internationalism or Russification? showed a serious engagement with and a thorough knowledge of Jabotinsky.⁸

The fascination of Jabotinsky, the future leader of Revisionist Zionism, with Ukrainian topics and national revivalism was the focus of articles by Olha Andriewsky, Colin Shindler, Natalia Panasenko and a book by Israel Kleiner, who in 1991 also published the first collection of Jabotinsky's essays in the Ukrainian language.⁹ A pioneer in the study of this subject, Kleiner lacked methodological rigor and the comparative framework of the study of nationalisms; his articles and a book only superficially touched upon some key points of this subject matter. Given that Simon Petliura considered Jabotinsky a political ally, Ivan Dziuba a methodological and intellectual inspiration, and Larysa Skoryk a thinker whose ideas were applicable to post-communist Ukraine, the study of Jabotinsky in the context of Ukrainian national revivalism is a high-priority scholarly desideratum.

The study of Ukrainian nationalism also brings us to painful issues. For years, Soviet propaganda brainwashed the public with the help of a host of servile scholars who made a formidable effort to prove that both the Bandera and Melnyk factions of the UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) volunteered in the mass murder of Jews, initiated by the Nazis. Volodymyr Viatrovykh, in his thoroughly documented monograph based on mostly prescriptive sources, did a huge service to the UPA by flatly denying its involvement in any kind of anti-Jewish atrocities.¹⁰ His well-intended yet unbalanced approach had been criticized by several

8 For more detail see: Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern and Antony Polonsky, ed. *POLIN: Jews and Ukrainians*, vol. 26 (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013), 391–92.

9 Natalia Panasenko, "Zhabotynski i politicheskie partii," ["Jabotinsky and the Political Parties,"] *Moriya* 12 (2011): 6–20; Izrail Kleiner, "Volodymyr Zhabotynskyi i ukrainska natsionalno-politychna problematyka," ["Volodymyr Jabotinsky and Ukrainian National-Political Problem,"] *Jews of the Left-bank Ukraine* 3 (2006): 17–34; Colin Shindler, "Jabotinsky and Ukrainian nationalism: a reinterpretation," *East European Jewish Affairs* 31.2 (2001): 122–31; Olga Andriewsky, "Medved' iz berlogi: Vladimir Jabotinsky and the Ukrainian Question, 1904–1914," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 14.3–4 (1990): 249–67.

10 Volodymyr Viatrovykh, *Stavlennia OUN do ievreiv: formuvannia pozystsii na tli katastrofy* [*The Attitude of the OUN to the Jews: Forming a Stance Against the Background of a Catastrophe*] (Lviv: Ms, 2006).

top-notch scholars of 20th century Ukraine – yet it does not mean that Viatrovych was entirely wrong. Taras Kurylo proved that antisemitism was very much on the UPA agenda, drawing from a wide array of UPA interwar publications, most of them also prescriptive.¹¹ Alexander Motyl proved beyond reasonable doubt that Jews and the Jewish question (with all its pejorative connotations) was not a top issue on the UPA agenda, whereas anti-Russian and anti-Polish paragraphs certainly were.¹² And of course Timothy Snyder convincingly demonstrated how the pre-war ethnic and social-group cleansings taught all the future belligerent parties that genocidal agendas worked perfectly well, proved to be practical and therefore commendable.¹³ We are dealing with a highly charged and controversial topic.

Any scholar well versed in historical methodologies knows that the language of ideological hatred was not immediately and not momentarily translated into action. Berlin might have been the citadel of Nazi ideology, but it was precisely in Berlin that 10,000 Jews went into hiding (*in Versteck*) from 1940 to 1945, and 4,000 lived to see the end of the war.¹⁴ These Jews would not have been able to survive if not for the Germans who in public readily cheered Nazi antisemitism. Counter-intuitively, some people who supported the ideology in public, acted against its principles in private. Without offering any kind of preliminary assumptions, we should apply historical scepticism to our understanding of World War II Ukrainian nationalist resistance. Important studies of what the leadership of the UPA units thought and wrote have already been published. Yet we need

11 Taras Kurylo, “The ‘Jewish Question’ in the Ukrainian Nationalist Discourse of the Inter-War Period,” in *POLIN: Jews and Ukrainians*, vol. 26, edited by Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern and Antony Polonsky (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013), 213–58.

12 Alexander Motyl, “The Ukrainian Nationalist Movement and the Jews: Theoretical Reflections on Nationalism, Fascism, Rationality, Primordialism, and History,” in *POLIN: Jews and Ukrainians*, vol. 26, edited by Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern and Antony Polonsky (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013), 275–95.

13 See Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), see the Ukrainian edition of the book: Kyiv: Hrani-T, 2011.

14 Richard Newton Lutjens, “Jews in Hiding in Nazi Berlin, 1941–1945” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2011).

to go grassroots, and explore German, Russian, and Ukrainian sources in a comparative perspective. This needs to be done, not to whitewash the UPA from antisemitism nor to label it a guerillas group who single-handedly conducted mass murder. We need to carefully reconstruct the (quite horrible) context of war and ethnic purges, and clearly differentiate between what was written and what was actually accomplished, and have an insightful discussion of why things turned out the way they did. Until this task is carried out, any optimistic descriptions of the UPA and its treatment of the Jews as well as any ideology-driven vicious insinuations against the Ukrainian nationalist guerillas should be put to rest.

Of course, there are dozens of questions left unanswered, and each of them deserves an entire book as an answer. If the pogroms first hit the Russian empire in the nineteenth century in the south-eastern provinces of Ukraine – in Ekaterinoslav and Kherson provinces – why then were Jews in Ukraine the *last* among East European Jews to join the big wave of two-million-strong Jewish migration from the Russian Empire? Whatever traditional scholarship says about the contentious relations between Jews and Ukrainians in Galicia; why did Galician Zionists join ranks with the social democratic Ukrainian (called “Ruthenians” in the Habsburg Empire) movement against the empowered Polish aristocrats and assimilationists to create the first Ukrainian and Jewish club in the Austrian parliament? If Petliura was such a Jew-hater and perpetrator of anti-Jewish violence as traditional Jewish and Russian historiographies portrays him, why did he defend Jews before 1917 and after 1921 and why did he try to continue creating cultural bridges between Jews and Ukrainians after 1921? How did the Jewish independent artisans, hundreds and thousands of them, manage to survive the curtailing of the NEP (New Economic Policy), and what did it mean to join the small units of *kustari*, people in the margins of the Soviet economy, disenfranchised yet indispensable participants in everyday urban life? Take a look at the reports of the local collective farm directors and heads of regional administrations from Rivne to Kharkiv districts, many of them of unquestionably Jewish origin: why did they appear among the first who tried to alert the central administration in 1932

to the catastrophic situation in the rural areas of Ukraine? And what kind of lethal epidemics hit these administrators in 1937–1938?

There is also plenty of work for those who feel we have not yet achieved a level of sophistication at which we can advance sweeping generalizations and create new overarching narratives. Those who maintain that more field work needs to be done and more documents challenging the grand historical narratives be put into circulation have excellent local opportunities to get their hands dirty by working in the library collections and archives. For example, Maximilian Goldstein's collection at the Lviv Museum of Ethnography has been catalogued only partially, predominantly its material artifacts, while its documentary part has never been processed. Moreover, after the unfortunately brief attempts of the late Faina Petriakova, nobody ever tried to integrate the material culture amassed by Goldstein within the socio-economic, political and religious history of the Galician Jews.¹⁵ Archives in Vynnytsia, Ternopil and Zhytomyr, not to mention that exuberantly rich depositories such as TsDIAU have massive collections containing Jewish documents not yet put into circulation. The DAKO, f.e., has in its possession dozens of rolls of microfilms containing files on mass Jewish emigration from Ukraine in the wake of the first Russian revolution – statistics, demography, passport requests, family information, travel itineraries, etc. New research into this subfield and a meticulous study of these documents might considerably change our concept of the reasons behind, motives for, and the unfolding of turn-of-the century Jewish migrations, very different from what the key experts in Jewish migrations ranging from Jacob Leshchinsky and Simon Kuznets to Shaul Stampfer and Gur Alroey have argued.¹⁶

15 Faina Petriakova, "The Collection of Jewish Art of the Museum of Ethnography and Crafts in Lvov," *Treasures of Jewish Galicia* (1996): 75–81; idem., "Maximilian Goldstein and Jewish art and crafts in Lvov," *Shvut* 4.20 (1996): 138–63.

16 Jacob Lestschinsky, *Ha-tfutsah ha-yehudit* (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1966); Simon Kuznets, "Immigration of the Russian Jews to the US: Background and Structure," *Perspectives in American History* 9 (1975): 35–124; Shaul Stampfer, "Patterns of internal Jewish migration in the Russian Empire," in *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. by Yaakov Roi (Ilford: Essex: Frank Cass, 1995), 28–47; Gur Alroey, *Bread*

By exploring new sources available in Ukraine, one can hone one's Hebrew skills too. Hundreds of Hebrew manuscripts at the Vernadsky Library would satisfy the most demanding young researcher looking for a challenge. Let me mention, for example, nine Hebrew-language *pinkasim*, record books of Jewish voluntary societies and synagogues, from late 19th – early 20th century Kyiv: they contain significant data on Jewish settlement, philanthropy, financial elites and the religious life of the Jewish urban and suburban community. I published a translated version of just one Kamianets-Podilsk *pinkas*, yet someone needs to prepare, for example, a bilingual Hebrew-Ukrainian edition of these Kyivan documents (let alone of the remaining 90 from other towns and shtetls across Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania).¹⁷ And if you chose to explore the sources at the Vernadsky Library, you will find many more inspiring Hebrew manuscripts awaiting publication: unidentified and fragmented manuscripts from the Firkovich and Antonin II collections, marginal notes made by the disciples of Eliyahu ben Zalman, the Gaon of Vilna, on copies of his manuscripts, and a huge collection of correspondence of Yaakov Reifmann, one of the key Polish Jewish enlightened scholars of the nineteenth century. A commented edition of any of these selected manuscripts is already half a dissertation or a solid competitive master thesis.

Most serious scholars today shun writing biographies. They do so for good reason. Cutting-edge historical methodologies privilege an in-depth context and a broad comparative framework, something the genre of biography does not allow. Yet we still need good readable biographies of some outstanding Jewish figures who lived and worked in Ukraine. Consider the biography of Natan Neta Hanover, an early modern Jewish writer, historical chronicler, rabbinic figure and Kabbalist. Think about the life story of the

to Eat and Clothes to Wear: Letters from Jewish migrants in the Early Twentieth Century (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011); idem., *Imigrantim: ha-hagirah ha-Yehudit le-EretsYisrael be-reshit ha-me'ah ha-'esrim* (Jerusalem: Makhon Ben-Tsevi, 2004).

17 Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, "Russian Legislation and Jewish Self-Governing Institutions: the case of Kamenets-Podol'sk, essay, and The Minute-book of the Kamnits (Kamenets) Burial Society," *Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe* 56.1 (2006): 107–30.

famous Hasidic master Levy Itshak of Berdychiv, the first Hasidic leader to become a chief rabbi and head of the rabbinic court in a Ukrainian town. Consider a literary biography of the founding father of modern Yiddish literature, Sholem Aleichem (we do not yet have a decent biography of him!). These kinds of books should be among the top priorities.

In this biographic subfield I would encourage young scholars to think first and foremost about those individuals who contributed to the anti-imperial and national-democratic trends in Ukrainian politics, culture, and society. Take, for example, Solomon Goldelman, a talented economist, a leading figure in the *Folkspartei*, one of the Jewish democratic parties of the 1910s. Goldelman became a top economist in the ministry of labor in the Ukrainian People's Republic, served as a vice-minister in the cabinet of ministers, consistently supported Ukrainian autonomy, taught himself the Ukrainian language, contributed dozens of essays on Jews in Ukraine and Ukrainian-Jewish relations of the UPR, daily published in Kamianets-Podilsk, and left with the Ukrainian government when the latter was forced into exile. Goldelman subsequently became one of the leading professors at the Ukrainian Agricultural Academy in Podebrady, Czechoslovakia, where he, perhaps for the first time in history, taught economics in Ukrainian, published his Ukrainian lecture courses, and developed a new vocabulary to help modern economics speak Ukrainian. Goldelman escaped to Palestine just after the Anschluss and until his death corresponded with the promoters of Ukrainian diaspora nationalism. He also spared no effort trying to convince the new independent Israeli government to revisit its policy toward Ukraine and Ukrainians and change its external geopolitical predilections. Goldelman is an astonishing figure who deserves a solid biographical study in four different contexts – Jewish political life after 1905, the short-lived Ukrainian independence, the rise of the European Ukrainian Diaspora institutions, and the slowly emerging Ukrainian-Jewish dialogue in Israel.¹⁸

18 For more detail see: Lev Bykovs'kyi, *Solomon I. Goldelman, a Portrait of a Politician and Educator, 1885–1974: A Chapter in Ukrainian Jewish Relations*, edited by Lubomyr R. Wynar (New York: Ukrainian Historical Association, 1980).

But why do we focus only on historical and literary issues, however broadly we conceive of them? Of course, we should also turn to other fields – for example, music, theatre, and arts, where very few serious studies have been published so far. Mila Sholokhova prepared a formidable catalogue of the S. Ansky and Moisei Beregovsky collection;¹⁹ selected parts of Beregovsky's five-volume study of Jewish folk music, which appeared in Russian, English and Ukrainian, yet Beregovsky's contribution to the study of musical folklore has not been integrated within 20th century Ukrainian ethnomusicology nor has he himself become the focus of a biographical and comparative study – in any language. Ihor Shamo is another example. The composer of Kyiv's anthem, Shamo was born to a Jewish family during the era of indigenization and grew up hearing Yiddish songs, and perhaps even some traditional Jewish melodies. He had little to no chance of using any Jewish melos in his songs and orchestral works, but he craftily embedded it into his Carpathian symphonic pictures, arranging it either as Hutsul or as Romanian themes. This productive music interference has never been studied – nor has the impact of the *klezmer* style and melodies on Soviet Ukrainian music ever been the focus of researchers. Sadly enough, particularly if one takes into consideration that some prominent conductors and musicians in Ukrainian variety theatres started in the 1920s at various Yiddish theatres and began their careers writing pseudo-folk and *klezmer* music for popular Jewish musical melodramas. Did they discard all that baggage once they moved from the Jewish to the Ukrainian scene? Hardly, but this is a question one needs to answer professionally, substantiating it with a comparative study of musical styles, genres, and themes.

We move from history to the arts, and here, too, the opportunities for innovative study and research are immense. Suffice it to mention one example. The Kyiv-based *Judaica* Institute, if I am not mistaken, amassed a collection of documents belonging to or generated by Zinovy Tolkachev,

19 Ludmila Sholokhova, *Fonoarkhiv ievreiskoi muzychnoi spadshchyny* [*Fonoarchive of the Jewish Musical Heritage*] (Kyiv: National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2001).

a painter who was born in Belarus but spent most of his life in Ukraine. Tolkachev's fate is the tragedy of a person who grew up in the impoverished family of a Jewish locksmith, became inspired by leftist socialist utopianism, remained loyal to Jewish visual themes and motifs, was the first Soviet painter to portray Majdanek and Auschwitz, and after World War II in the wake of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign became a victim of the racist persecution unleashed by those who otherwise preached proletarian internationalism. Tolkachev's fate sheds light not only on the treatment of a Jewish artist in the Soviet Ukraine, but also tells the story of Ukraine and Ukrainians. Tolkachev was at the very epicenter of Ukrainian cultural life from the 1920s to the 1960s, he knew Boichuk and Petrytsky, was friendly with Savva Holovanivsky and Leonid Pervomaisky. He was perhaps the only Ukrainian Jewish painter who managed to publish his works on Jewish themes, not only his illustrations of Sholem Aleichem and his renowned series such as the *Flowers of Auschwitz* but also his series of etchings *Dos Shtetl*, in which he bemoaned the vanished world of Jewish life in Ukraine. The Israeli Yad Va-shem Museum reprinted Tolkachev's album on the Holocaust, his etchings reappeared as reprints in English and in French, but his life story – and his legacy in general – has not yet been studied.²⁰

The literary, philological, and sociolinguistic aspects of Ukrainian-Jewish interaction have been even less explored. Let me remind you that out of four Yiddish literati considered founding fathers of the modern Yiddish prose narrative – Israel Axenfeld, Mendele Moykher Sforim, I.L. Perets and Sholem Aleichem – two were born and bred in Ukraine, three lived in Ukraine most of their lives, and those three portrayed, mostly in a satirical and realistic manner, the life of Jews in Ukraine and Jewish interaction with Ukrainian peasants and Russian administrators.

20 Yehudit Shen-Dar, *Ṭurai Ṭolkats'ev be-sha'are ha-gehinom: shiḥrur Maidanek'ye-Oshyits: 'edutosheloman* (Jerusalem: Yadva-shem, 2005); Zinovy Tolkachev, *Tvory z muzeinykh i pryvatnykh zbirok [The Works of Arts from the Museums and the Private Collections]* (Kyiv: Dukh i litera, 2005); idem., *Kwiaty Oświęcimia* (Kraków: n.p., 1946); idem., *Dos shtetl* (Warsaw: Dos nayelebn, 1946).

For example, Berdychiv entered the works of Axenfeld under the name of Loyohopoli, the novels of Sholem Aleichem as Kasrilevke and the works of Mendele Moykher Sforim as Glupsk.²¹

Much more important is that all three writers resorted to the Ukrainian language, Ukrainian ethnographic notions, and Ukrainian idioms to portray everyday life in the shtetls. Furthermore, Moykher Sforim and Sholem Aleichem inserted into their prose narrative entire dialogues in Ukrainian, which they transcribed, of course, into Yiddish. Nobody has ever studied this aspect of the classics of Yiddish literature. Nobody has ever noticed that these and other Yiddish towering figures – Dovid Bergelson, born near Uman, Perets Markish, born in Polonne, and Der Nister, born in Berdychiv – were at home in the Ukrainian language, most likely read Ukrainian poetry and prose, and sometimes, if we can trace their early itinerary, started writing in Ukrainian before they switched to Yiddish. Had these Yiddish writers ever read Panas Myrny or Marko Vovchok? No doubt they knew of Taras Shevchenko, but had they actually read him? Had they ever seen the plays of Nechui-Levytsky or Volodymyr Vynnychenko on stage?

If we accept Ukraine as a context, we should remember that context is never a neutral constant but rather an influential variable that shaped and modified whatever elements came into contact with. Ukrainian literature could have been this kind of a highly productive context for the study of Yiddish literature, but there is no study of the impact of Ukrainian literature and culture, Ukrainian literary themes and genres, on the Yiddish literature, produced, published and consumed in Ukraine. Of course, research on this issue requires a first-hand knowledge of Yiddish literature in the original, plus of the Ukrainian literary sources, apparently a daunting task, yet in the long run this kind of research would generate a path-breaking study, and perhaps even several studies, of comparative literary issues, sociolinguistics, and cross-cultural fertilization.

21 Mikhail Krutikov, "Berdichev in Russian Jewish Literary Imagination: From Israel Axenfeld to Friedrich Gorenshtein," in *The Shtetl: Image and Reality*, ed. Steven Katz (Oxford: Legenda, 2000), 91–114.

The study of Jewish themes, motifs, images, and voices in Ukrainian literature is a yet another grandiose theme.²² Myroslav Shkandrij has published a pioneering monograph on this subject matter but I urge you to treat his contribution as a successful yet not all-encompassing attempt to map the field of Ukrainian-Jewish literary encounters. Dozens of other sources should be taken into consideration, particularly if we consider Ukrainian literature as that created by individuals born in Ukraine who wrote in languages other than Ukrainian in addition to Ukrainian. It would be no mistake to treat Bruno Schulz from Drohobych as a Ukrainian Jewish writer who happened to write in Polish, Paul Celan from Chernivtsi a Ukrainian Jewish poet who wrote in German, Isaac Babel from Odesa a Ukrainian Jewish writer who wrote in Russian, and Piotr Rawicz from Lviv a Ukrainian Jewish writer who wrote in French. Consider also the novel *The Jew who was Ukrainian* recently published by Alex Motyl in English. Is this an English novel? Based on Joycean parodies, the novel brings together the spiritually torn fictional character Volodymyr Frauenzimmer and the notorious Sholom Schwartzbard, murderer of Symon Petliura.²³ The two characters delve into a charged dialogue in which they discuss dozens of issues related to Ukrainian Jewish history, Ukraine and Russia and Poland, inter-ethnic violence, antisemitism, communism and Nazism, and so on. One can call this book an American novel, but it would not be wise to take this book out of the canon of Ukrainian and particularly Ukrainian Jewish literature, whatever the language in which it was produced. This multi-lingual Ukrainian literature would immediately put Ukraine on the map as a genuinely European country contributing to cultures far beyond its linguistic boundaries. And then one can explore and explain the fixation of these writers and poets on Jewish themes.

Should you prefer to stay within the established monolingual concept of Ukrainian literature, you would find more than enough understudied

22 In 2014, this book will be published in Mykola Klymchuk's Ukrainian translation.

23 Alexander Motyl, *The Jew Who Was Ukrainian or How One Man's Rip-Roaring Romp through an Existential Wasteland Ended in a Bungled Attempt to Bump off the Exceptionally Great Leader of Mother Russia* (Somerville, MA: Cervena Barva Press, 2011).

and underexplored Ukrainian novels and short stories dealing with Jews. Let me share with you one concluding example. This example opens up dozens of questions rather than wraps up the subject matter – I am afraid, this might be the very essence of the field of Ukrainian Jewish studies as a subject matter.

Iury Shcherbak wrote his novel *Causes and Consequences* about 1982–1983, long before perestroika and the collapse of communism. In this novel, he portrays a young scientist who visits his senior colleague, Savely Markovych Shulha, a retired scholar of biochemistry, the former director of a chemical lab in Kyiv. Happy to welcome an unexpected visitor, Shulha shares with the young scientist his memories of the lab. He complains about his former colleagues, negligent toward him and his scholarly contribution. The conversation, which starts as a polite exchange suddenly turns into a confession. The old professor recalls Sara, his wife, a Jewish woman, with whom he lived in Kyiv since the 1930s. When in August, 1941, the Nazis approached Kyiv, he and his wife did not manage to move eastward with the departing Soviet army. As an ethnic Ukrainian living under German occupation, Shulha was relatively safe, but his Jewish wife was not. To save her from being identified and shot or transported to a concentration camp, Shulha hid her in a closet in their apartment and told his neighbors that she had escaped to the mainland before August, 1941.

His wife Sara spent two and a half years in that closet, leaving it for just a couple of minutes, very rarely, only at night and under great risk. For two and a half years, the closet was her shelter, bedroom, dining room, living room, and bathroom. Her husband took care of all her needs. She left the closet only when the Nazis fled, just in time to find out that her husband, after all those humiliating months, felt nothing but aversion toward her. In 1945, he had an affair with a young lady from his lab. His wife learned about this affair but said nothing. She suffered silently, never reproached her husband, and silently allowed her melancholy and depression to consume her three years later. At that point in his confession, the old Shulha paused and said: “You know, sometimes when I recall Sara

and when shame overwhelms me, I get into this closet and sit there the entire day.”²⁴

Iury Shcherbak, a Ukrainian writer, a doctor of epidemiology, who was a member of the Ukrainian parliament in the 1990s, and a former ambassador of Ukraine to Israel, Canada, and the United States had every reason not to include this episode into his novel. The novel was written in the late 1970s – early 1980s, in the darkest years of the Brezhnev regime, strangling Soviet censorship and state-orchestrated antisemitism. Words such as “Holocaust,” “Sho’ah,” or “Katastrofa” – as well as the Holodomor – were never used in the USSR at that time: Soviet propaganda did its best to obliterate Jewish victimhood during World War II, imposing instead the sole acceptable concept of the “suffering Soviet people.” To include that episode, which has the Holocaust as an unquestionable frame of reference, was risky if not reckless. Besides, the professor’s confession involving his Jewish wife was nothing but a two-page insignificant episode in the life of a minor character in the novel. The 300-page novel could easily exist without it. The episode was subversive, or, as Soviet censors used to say with a pejorative connotation, “suggestive.” It would have been much easier to get the book published without it.

And yet, Shcherbak insisted on including this episode and made sure it appeared in the novel once it was issued by a major Ukrainian publisher *Radiansky pysmennyk* (The Soviet Writer) under the Shcherbytsky regime. What was Shcherbak’s point? Did he seek to convey the sense of guilt of a Ukrainian husband before his Jewish wife, whom he redeemed and whom he betrayed? Did Shcherbak try to emphasize with the belated repentance of a person who had failed to show empathy toward the suffering Other? Perhaps the whole episode was merely a modernistic attempt to portray the ambiguity of the closet, simultaneously a redemptive and a segregationist habitat – an image reminiscent of Kenzaburo Oe, Kobo Abe, Albert Camus, and Franz Kafka, Shcherbak’s favourite writers.

24 Iury Shcherbak, *Prychyny i naslidky: Roman* [*The Causes and the Consequences: A Novel*] (Kyiv: Radianskyi pysmennyk, 1987), 161–64.

It is also likely that Shcherbak, a biochemist, identified with his Ukrainian character, also a biochemist, who decided to personally experience the fear, the despair, and the helplessness of a Jew hiding from the Nazis. Be that as it may, Shcherbak took a highly sensitive subject out of the closet – Ukrainian attitudes to Jewish victimization during the Holocaust, a topic carefully purged from post-war Ukrainian literature.

Many fascinating and controversial topics have been taken out of the closet. It is incumbent upon us to consider them from different perspectives, create for them a meaningful context, and make them part of the new *Weltanschauung*. Let me return to the metaphor I used from Danylo Shumuk's memoir. In the course of their "walking together," Jews and Ukrainians went through bitter quarrels and physical violence. These periods all together account for less than one per cent of their shared historical experience. More often than not, Ukrainians and Jews interacted peacefully and learned from one another. It is incumbent upon us to study how they got along.

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