

nated by its provenance. It seems that Wodehouse never grasped the quality of his sin. The moral baby who had confidently predicted just before the war that nothing seemed less likely was apparently incapable of accepting that it had indeed been fought. The language in which he conceded wrongdoing—"I made an ass of myself"—was the innocent apple sauce-argot of his books, this time turned outward to a world that had lost, for the second time in a century, its innocence. Nowhere in McCrum's biography does Wodehouse make a single reference to the genocide; but his internment camp had been located in Upper Silesia, which was not so far from Auschwitz. For Wodehouse, World War II does seem to have been an enormous game, a Dulwich rugby match against a rather thuggish, if always proper, visiting school.

The British establishment rightly punished Wodehouse; perhaps less rightly, for the rest of his life. A government report, which absolved Wodehouse of being a traitor, was deliberately never released to him, so that he was always uncertain that he could safely return to Britain. And he never did. After making his way to Paris, he sailed to America in 1947. The war had shifted the old pyramids. The kind of arcadia that Wodehouse's fiction visited and revisited was now remoter than ever, though he kept on publishing books (tellingly, none was serialized in a magazine after 1950). He and his wife lived in soft exile on Long Island. He died on the evening of February 14, 1975, sitting at his desk with his pipe and a bag of tobacco in his hands, having retired, of course, to do a spot more work.

McCrum ends his fine book with the kind of exhortation that must come naturally to a biographer who has invested years of labor in his subject. He implores us to take Wodehouse's work more seriously, to see it as all about "the quest for human connection": "Coded more tightly than an Enigma cryptogram, the theme that animates Wodehouse's work, and gives it a moral purpose, is the quest for sweetness and light in the daily transactions of humanity." But "moral purpose" is surely too much; half of his obsessed readers would wilt away if they suspected the Master of such sweaty seriousness. What makes Wodehouse "serious" in a literary sense is the singularity of his achievement; and this singularity was owed not to moral serious-

ness, the possession of a thousand earnest scribes, but to the absolute absence of it. That the work can march so easily, morally speaking, on an empty stomach; that it can achieve so many traditionally literary things without ever daring the scandal of meaning; that it

can be bottomless—ungrounded, unmoored by reality—but threaten no abysses whatsoever, is completely fascinating, because it seems so fatly happy with what, for most of us, would be hardship and starvation—a cosmos of eternal and relentless frivolity. ■

## Stephen Kotkin Teenage Country

THE UKRAINIANS:  
UNEXPECTED NATION

By Andrew Wilson  
(Yale University Press, 380 pp., \$17.95)

DEAD SOULS

By Nikolai Gogol  
Translated by Robert A. Maguire  
(Penguin Classics, 464 pp., \$12)

I.

AGES HAVE PASSED SINCE Isaac Babel's Jewish mobsters in crimson vests ran Odessa's neighborhoods in the shadow of the Black Hundreds. Nowadays, if Sergei Eisenstein's baby carriage in *Battleship Potemkin* were to tumble down the seaside steps in Odessa, now in Ukraine, it would fall into one of Eurasia's busy narco-ports. Drug trans-shipments on the Black Sea got a boost from the overthrow of Afghanistan's sometimes opium-averse Taliban. Ukraine also traffics in its own and other countries' women. These commodities have been tricked to European hotels and other market venues with the help of criminal Kosovars, whose outlaw statelet was created by the ousting of Slobodan Milosevic. Who knew that actions directed at Afghanistan and Serbia would reverberate in Ukraine? Who knew Ukraine at all? Observers of the former Soviet lands who looked up from the goings-on in Russia might have noticed, say, that police officers in Kiev's organized-crime unit went into business themselves as a criminal organization. Ukraine, as

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George Soros once remarked, "gives corruption a bad name."

Here as elsewhere in the haunted houses of Eastern Europe, humans metamorphosed into insects—like the cockroach in the 1930s short stories by Bruno Schulz, native son of Drohobycz. That town moved from Poland to Ukraine after the Nazis were evicted—too late for Schulz, who was shot dead on the street in 1942, probably in a Gestapo spat ("You killed my Jew, I killed yours"). In 2001, some of Schulz's murals, which had been commissioned by a Gestapo officer for his requisitioned villa, moved, too. They were taken, some say abducted, to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, in a preservation operation "arranged" with the Ukrainian mayor. Polish officials voiced dismay, staking their own claim to the writer and artist. (Schulz wrote in Polish.) But it had taken a German, a documentary film-maker, to discover the forgotten frescoes under whitewash. Inevitably, the site of the Drohobycz ghetto, now a park, sports a statue of Stepan Bandera, the Ukrainian fascist-leaning nationalist guerrilla who initially saw allies in Hitler's SS and is venerated as an implacable anti-Soviet hero. "We got used to it," Schulz's narrator says of the father-turned-cockroach. "We ceased to recognize him; he merged completely with that black, uncanny tribe."

For once, though, the prediction of the national anthem—"Ukraine Is Not Yet Dead"—came true: "Luck will smile on us brother-Ukrainians." The syndicate that misgoverned the country decided to rig a presidential election in front of several thousand international observers (two-thirds of them from Poland), whom the authorities had granted permission to come. It seems, well, ill-advised. But the ruling cliques

had already embezzled nearly the whole country in plain view. And they had not suffered a whit. Beyond the devices of stolen elections past—controlled media, rent-a-thugs, monitors-cum-ballot-box-stuffers—the gamblers had deployed expensive “political technologists” from Russia and, above all, a state-of-the-art computer system that “processed” vote counts. The problem was that their forebears, those true-believing communists, had ripped out old churches and market stalls to create roomy public spaces for the masses to parade; and in late November 2004, out came the Ukrainian people by the hundreds of thousands, determined not to accept the latest fraud. The inspirational citizens of Ukraine seized such plazas as Independence Square—formerly October Revolution Square—and, with no apologies to Christo, wrapped them in orange, the color of the opposition’s campaign.

To everyone’s profound surprise, Ukraine erupted in another surge of the new democratic wave, and in a place far larger than Serbia or Georgia. “People power” in Ukraine! But try discussing “people power” with the nearly one million Chinese who occupied Tiananmen Square in that heady summer of 1989 before they were violently dispersed at little political or economic cost to the Chinese leadership. True, China had not held elections to be upheld against the dictatorship. But Iran has had elections and ample brave civic activism, and its theocratic regime has only stiffened. (In the late 1970s, “people power” not only dispatched the shah but brought the theocrats to the throne.) The successful demonstrations of defiance in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine have in common not just the scale and the savvy of the protests, led by charismatic figures who had broken off from the ruling gangs. They also share the rather decisive circumstance that, at crunch time, secret police and army brass betrayed their own regimes. When demonstrators took over the streets in Ukraine, violence was not staged among them and broadcast on television, so that internal order battalions could crack heads. On the contrary,

the SBU, or State Security of Ukraine, the local successor to the KGB, proclaimed its “neutrality,” setting off the political equivalent of a bank run. Autocratic states that shatter, though, have a way of re-assembling faster than you can say “amnesty.” Will Ukraine be different?

## II.

**P**OSSESSING BOTH AN ANCIENT culture and a thirteen-year-old country, Ukraine’s forty-seven million people—perhaps thirty-seven million of them ethnic Ukrainians—are, in the apt phrase of Andrew Wilson in his tour de force of a book, an “unexpected nation.” Despite having been the site of the early medieval Rus, progenitor of all eastern Slavs, Ukraine has mostly served as one of history’s hallways. Varied state projects have been through the place—Byzantium, Genghis Khan’s Mongols, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Rus, the Crimean Khanate, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Royal Sweden, the Ottoman Empire, the Hapsburg Empire, the Russian Empire, Wilhelmine Germany, Greater Poland, Czechoslovakia, Greater Romania, Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union. Each left baggage behind. Ukraine is nowhere near as diverse as India, the world’s largest democracy, but Ukraine does have multiple sides. Kiev’s heart, Independence Square, is called in Ukrainian the *Maidan*, the word for “urban commons” in Tatar-Turkic. The notion that Ukraine is split in two, East and West, is, as we shall see, an artifact of electoral politics, reinforced by outside intervention. But Ukraine is sturdier than its manipulators, or we, imagine. “An unexpected nation,” Wilson points out, “is still a nation—no more and no less than many others.”

Lviv was founded on a hill in 1256. Its patron, Danylo of Halychyna (Galicia), one of the rulers of the ancient Rus principalities, sought to turn his Western enemies into partners against the invading Mongols of the East. But Danylo was forced to drink *koumiss*, the fermented milk of the mare, in the presence of Genghis Khan’s son, thereby acknowledging the latter’s overlordship. Danylo’s dynasty, as Wilson narrates, lasted not much beyond his son Lev, the Lion, after whom Lviv was named. In 1349, the town was captured by troops loyal to the Polish king, who held it until 1772, when it was annexed by Austria

in the first partition of Poland. During the great Austrian fin-de-siècle of Freud and Klimt and Schoenberg, the Hapsburgs gave Lviv (they called it Lemberg) an opera house, whose rooftop figure of Winged Glory was flanked by the Geniuses of Music and of Tragedy.

In 1918, Lviv became Lwów, the third-largest city in the reconstituted Polish state, which John Maynard Keynes dismissed at Versailles as “an economic impossibility whose only industry is Jew-baiting.” In World War II, multi-sided ethnic cleansing accompanied Hitler’s occupation, Ukrainian separatists’ crusade, and Stalin’s victory, when the city changed hands again, becoming Soviet Lvov. By dint of its relatively late and nasty Sovietization, post-Soviet Lviv has come to be seen as somehow more authentically Ukrainian. Never mind that the Ukrainian national awakening inspired by Romanticism arose first in Kharkiv, which opened a university in 1805, deep in eastern Ukraine; or that in Hapsburg Galicia, as Lviv’s foremost historian, Yaroslav Hrytsak, has stressed, many defenders of Ukrainian speakers amid Polonophone nobles’ rule were conservatives, not proponents of an ethnic Ukraine; or that in pre-1941 Lviv Jews outnumbered Ukrainian Christians two to one, and Polish Christians outnumbered both. Hadn’t West Ukrainian nationalism brought down the Soviet Union? Anyway, Viktor Yushchenko, who won 51.99 to 44.20 overall in the third-round runoff on December 26, garnered almost 94 percent in Lviv province—a margin not always seen in Soviet times, when there was a single candidate.

**A**DJOINING RENAISSANCE-ERA residences serve as Lviv’s historical museum, but the city is an astonishing open-air museum. The cobblestone Market Square, a vast ensemble of fine masonry unique in Ukraine, retains its Enlightenment-era fountains graced by Greco-Roman gods. Lions greet visitors on seemingly every cornice and door knocker, from the town hall (called the Rathaus) to the former Venetian consul’s house. The university, founded in 1784, occupies the grand premises of the former Galician provincial legislature, built between 1877 and 1881 in Neoclassical style and painted the inevitable Maria Theresa yellow. Surviving churches, abundant by Soviet standards and mostly restored, include Roman Catholic, Armenian Orthodox,

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Russian Orthodox, and Uniate or Ukrainian Catholic (which marries Eastern rites with papal allegiance). Lviv's old Golden Rose synagogue is a ruin. The opera house, restored after damage during the Nazi New Order, still stands, in front of the bazaar that was built on top of the Jewish cemetery. No statue was ever erected for the scion of a local police chief, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, whose erotic tales joining pleasure and pain lent his name to a particular sexual taste. A wanderer in the town can still stumble upon a German-language manhole cover.

A worn jewel box not on the level of Prague but comparable perhaps to Cluj in Transylvania, Lviv seems scarcely "Ukrainian" at all. The street names, though, are a dead giveaway. So is Ivan Franko National University, re-christened for the Ukrainian writer who studied here and was among the finalists for the Nobel Prize in 1916. (It was won by Verner von Heidenstam, a Swedish poet.) Everything may be "national" now, but that frame breaks down at each turn. Past Franko's statue, across the street, lies the Ivan Franko National Library. Its rare and valuable books are chiefly in Latin, German, and Polish; Ukrainian-language materials are heavily communist-era, while overall Russian-language books predominate. The historical museum exhibits the polyglot city from the fourteenth through the twentieth centuries as under six centuries of foreign "occupation." Hapsburg-era portraits were thrown in a bonfire. The monuments to Polish dignitaries were cleared from the boulevards, with one exception: thanks to the communist notion that he was a "revolutionary democrat," and therefore close to Marxism, a statue of Adam Mickiewicz was spared. That fits oddly in this jumble, for the Polish national poet was born in Lithuania, in what now happens to be Belarus, and endured czarist exile in Odessa, and never set eyes on Warsaw.

However ambiguous the setting, Ukrainian nationalism in Lviv is strong, and strongly ethnic, though it is more modulated than its caricature, let alone compared with its rabid incarnation in the 1940s. Sovietism and its after-effects in Lviv are evident, too—bureaucratic strangulation, fatally inefficient factories, SUV-driving university chairmen who earn minimal salaries but "oversee" selective admissions processes and whose departments receive foreign "research" grants. For some locals,

their Westernism has little to do with the rule of law or the market and is simply the obverse of their anti-Russianism.

Still, what I have felt most keenly in Lviv is the city's apartness and impoverishment. It evokes those grade-school depictions of the formation of the continents: chunks of land breaking off in each direction, leaving an island. Most of Lviv's eight hundred thousand inhabitants remain cut off not only from their city's rich past and its richer European neighbors, but even from Kiev. During the Orange Revolution, however, an estimated one hundred thousand supporters rallied in front of the neglected opera house. Many were students, Lviv's young lions and lionesses, barely cognizant of Soviet times. These youth travel often to neighboring Poland, a short car ride away, reviving some of the intercultural experience of Galicia, and taking in a messy, troubled, but real democracy. Ukraine's drama is not nationalism but governance.

### III.

**I**N LONELY PLANET'S HUGE TRAVEL guide *Russia, Ukraine, & Belarus* (a stand-alone edition for Ukraine is fortuitously due this summer), the city of Lviv claims more than twenty pages, but the town of Donetsk gets less than one. "There's not much to attract tourists," the guide informs, "unless you're interested in seeing a model Soviet city." How true. But connoisseurs of the caketown circuit—Katowice in Polish Silesia, Kemerovo in Russia's Kuznetsk Basin—know that Donetsk comes across as among the least ghastly. Urban slag heaps, in dim light and at a distance, can be mistaken for natural hills. Flooded collieries have given the city lakes. And Donetsk is the hometown of Nikita Khrushchev, the party boss of Ukraine and then the Soviet Union, who wrote that he needed stilts to rise above the muck, and of Natan Sharansky, the Soviet dissident and Israeli politician. In 2004 Donetsk was added to the "romance tours" of Ukraine, and travelers hoping to purchase companionship among the miners' and steelworkers' daughters get to reconnoiter nearby Mariupol, the Rimini for Ukraine's working class, at no extra charge. Coal still fires Ukraine's thermal power stations (Chernobyl having cast a cloud over the nuclear alternative) and metallurgical plants, which have found new customers in Asia.

Viktor Yanukovich, the Kuchma-appointed former governor of Donetsk, won almost 94 percent here—nearly the same total as Yushchenko obtained in Lviv province. With Donetsk's one million inhabitants, Yushchenko could not overcome the circumstance that his coalition encompassed the small Freedom Party (known until 2003 as the Social-Nationalist Party), whose slogans include "Ukraine from the San to the Don," that is, from deep in Polish territory to deep in Russian territory, as well as "Kikes and Muscovians [Russians] Out." Donetsk media poured out propaganda against "West Ukrainian fascists," meaning everyone in western regions, and their supposed schemes to force Ukrainianization and risk Russian energy and factory shutdowns by sealing the border, across which many people have family or work. Ukraine's biggest-budget film ever, *A Prayer for Hetman Mazepa* (2002), which received government funding when Yushchenko was prime minister, enthusiastically relates the story of the Cossack swashbuckler who sided with Sweden against Russia in the eighteenth-century Great Northern War. The film opens with Peter the Great raping a soldier. To discredit Yushchenko, the media hyped the dreamlike film's sexually explicit and anti-Russian scenes.

**B**UT AN EXPLANATION FOR THE vote must go beyond media manipulation. Donetsk street hawkers compete with monuments to absurdly brawny proletarians as reminders of the heroic effort, wastage,



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fakery, and survivalist artistry—known as the planned economy. Donetsk is where Alexei Stakhanov engaged in rigged norm-busting at the coalface, forcing fellow workers into speed-ups and generating the Stalinist encomium “Stakhanovite.” At the same time, the local technical university, which began life in barracks in the 1920s, grew to be Ukraine’s largest institution for turning out engineers. Soviet tourist guidebooks to Donetsk proudly enumerated each of its mines and factories, down to the toy plant founded in the 1970s that was the Soviet Union’s largest, its dolls and model planes amusing children throughout the second world. True, Soviet life is commonly mocked. (For example: day after day a worker leaves the state factory with a covered wheelbarrow, but the guard who lifts the cloth finds nothing inside. Exasperated, he exclaims: “I know you’re stealing, but what?” “Wheelbarrows,” the worker replies.) And yet the Russians who staff the mines and factories are Soviet people still, just like Donetsk’s Yanukovich-voting Ukrainian majority. The Soviet era means not only famine and the Gulag, but a way of life and thought centered on industry and company-town benefits; open internal borders but suspicion of the outside world.

With its concentration of what constitutes national wealth, Eastern Ukraine as a whole has had a virtual lock on rule in Kiev. But if Ukraine is a borderland, Donetsk (no less than Lviv) is a borderland within the borderland. Situated in the Wild Field captured from Tatar horsemen in 1739, Donetsk’s prefabricated-concrete massif suddenly ends and the open steppe begins. Over the centuries, the lure of escape drew all kinds—outcasts and con artists, religious sectarians and fugitives. The Wild Field served as a refuge during Stalin’s time, too, as the Japanese scholar Hiroaki Kuromiya shows in his original book *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas: A Ukrainian-Russian Borderland, 1870s–1990s*. No matter what your background, no matter what documentation you lacked, insatiable

## Spartacus

*Back to the Spartacus, whose plushy womb  
is cozier than a European evening*  
—Joseph Brodsky

Spartacus, good night, your battle scene  
Over the threshold and your snow white crunch  
Of ice cream, good night, your candelabrum  
Of polynomial in the ticket booth

Good night—how damp and grey,  
Magnificent it was, last picture show  
Good night forever, you’re so far away  
That only Giovagnoli’s book is further,

With shield and sword still on its fraying cover...  
O warrior, half-naked, muscular,  
The victory is yours, you’ve made a breach  
In this, in Leningrad’s decaying air

By sailing like a pirate between schools  
To the third bell across the lucent screen,  
Where in the mist my idol Andrzej flashed  
Kawalerowicz and Antonioni,

No one can buy your ticket any more  
But, by its blue and validating tear,  
I swear to love you always, by the booze  
I downed in your dear buffet, I do swear

To cherish you. Now rain is slashing down  
Where the captain would have stood, below the mast.  
O forgive me, Spartacus, we never said  
Good night like soldiers parting in the shade.

**VLADIMIR GANDELSMAN**

*(translated from the Russian by Glyn Maxwell)*

demand for labor meant that you would be hired, and that you could re-invent yourself. The resulting political culture, Kuromiya argues, combined militant autonomy and frontier violence, anarchy and terror. Today Donetsk’s crime rate is roughly double that of Lviv. Unusually for presidential candidates, but not for Donetsk toughs, Viktor Yanukovich served two jail terms (for robbery and “severe” assault), and he may get a third. It remains to be seen whether two-term president Leonid Kuchma also gets a “third” term alongside his ill-chosen successor. Kuchma might have heeded Trotsky, the Bolshevik leader and Ukrainian Jew, who advised those venturing into the Wild Field to don “a [political] gas mask.”

## IV.

**T**HE EXTREME EAST OF Soviet Donetsk and the extreme west of Ukrainophone Lviv are just that: extremes. Each of Ukraine’s regions is distinct—there is honky-tonk Odessa, old Romanian-German Bukovina, Ruthenian-Hungarian-Slovak-Gypsy Transcarpathia, Cossack Zaporizhia, Russo-Tatar Crimea, increasingly Ukrainophone Kiev; but the country as a whole is shockingly unextreme. In polls over the years on the binary of Europe versus Russia, a majority of Ukrainians have generally opted for “do not care,” “am not interested,” “undecided,” or “refuse to respond.” When forced to choose, some people confounded the pollsters by checking supposedly mutually exclusive answers, such as simultaneously supporting a Slavic Union and Ukrainian independence. This is what the Ukrainian literary critic Mykola Riabchuk calls, in a phrase seconded by Wilson, the “Third Ukraine,” the one that can be found to a degree inside each person. Such ambivalence has been derided as schizophrenic, but Riabchuk affirms that in light of Ukraine’s savage past and variegated current makeup, it is positively normal.

Ambivalent the populace may be, but not over sovereignty. And that goes for the Russian minority, too. In much of the country, it is not easy to distinguish Ukrainians and Russians, given the prevalence of Russian-language use (perhaps half of self-identified ethnic Ukrainians speak Russian as their primary language) as well as the incidence of intermarriage (which many brides and grooms do not view as intermarriage). Since 1991, the ethnic Russian population of Ukraine has declined, from about one-fifth to about one-sixth; some have emigrated, and others, products of mixed marriages, have switched their self-identification. More importantly, as Russians who have been to Ukraine and as Ukrainian Russians who have been to Russia will tell you, each country’s Russians are a different people. Those in Ukraine might better be called not Russian but Russophone. Outsiders seem to

believe that Russophone inhabitants of Ukraine could not possibly be “nationalist”; that because Russophones mostly reject ethnic nationalism, they are supporters of Russia. But only Ukraine’s communists, whether ethnic Russian or ethnic Ukrainian, advocate abolition of the country by rejoining Russia, and they draw only about 20 percent. The broad underlying patriotism in the country means that if push comes to shove and the country appears threatened, the ambivalent Third Ukraine will take sides.

**A**SHOVE CAME FROM VLADIMIR Putin’s self-initiated campaign stops in Ukraine, and from the Russian president’s summoning of President Kuchma to a Moscow airport for a televised harangue. Persistent rumors of Russian troops landing in Kiev were a regular feature of opposition gatherings. And another shove emanated from Western involvement, especially USAID, Soros, and EU democracy assistance, which frequently took the form of funding the opposition. The state media, which enjoy a near monopoly, cast this as a plot to subsume Ukraine under a sphere of influence. In Crimea, Ukraine’s only region with a majority-Russian population, alongside its Tatar minority, newscasts insisted that the peninsula would be saddled with American military bases, like Central Asia. Now the people in Yalta were ready to claim betrayal.

But the ugly truth is that long before outside intervention, the playing of the ethnic and geopolitical cards has served as a winning strategy for Ukrainian politicians. A campaign of “divide and rule” brought Kuchma success in 1994 and again in 1999, when he stage-managed the electoral winnowing to get into a runoff against the communist candidate who advocated merger with Russia—that is, an end to Ukraine. The 2004 election, too, was plotted as a referendum on sovereignty, splitting the country between choices most people would prefer not to have to make: Western “subversion” or Russian “domination.”

The political incitement of division, using apocalyptic scenarios, produced the mirror-image voting of the east and the west, but finally it backfired, because one factor cut across the entire country: Ukraine’s sullied reputation. The revulsion went far beyond grasping oligarchs and crony capitalism. In 2000, a presidential bodyguard, Nikolai Melnychen-

ko, surfaced in the West with secret tape recordings, since authenticated, suggesting that the state and the underworld overlapped like a Venn diagram. Ukraine had become a place where ruling circles banked crooked fortunes selling military contraband to the likes of Saddam Hussein and an honest journalist (Georgy Gongadze) turned up headless. Revulsion at the profanity of state gangsterism was well understood by Yushchenko, who kept insinuating that his dioxin poisoning occurred over dinner with the chiefs of State Security. And Yanukovich’s criminal record spoke for itself. So the winning message—*Pora*, or “Enough” (literally “It’s time”), as the protesters christened their movement—resonated throughout urban Ukraine, including in some major eastern enclaves such as Kharkiv. Feelings of humiliation, as history shows, often spur horrific massacres, but sometimes they can elicit civic activism, in the streets and in the corridors of power.

Eavesdropped phone conversations—an unmistakable sign of SBU expertise—turned up as evidence in Yushchenko’s winning fraud petition with Ukraine’s Supreme Court. Other insiders acted to thwart the swindle as well. Lyudmyla Hrebenyuk, the chief consultant to the presidential administration on information technology, fell “ill” and disappeared right after the dubious results of the original runoff voting were announced, but she submitted written testimony to the court revealing that the presidential administration had a parallel computer system, built up over the years, that received data from the country’s 33,000 polling stations faster than the server of the Central Electoral Commission. “Speaking on television on 29 November [2004], the Ukrainian President stressed that the executive bodies had not in any way intervened in the election process,” Hrebenyuk told Ukraine’s *Zerkalo nedeli*, or *Weekly Mirror*, on December 25, 2004. “So I decided to forward my statement to the Court.” She added that “I only wanted the Court to reach a well-founded decision—a decision not in favor of either of the candidates, but in favor of the law.” Self-preservation, payback, and ambition, too, triggered what became an elite stampede to the protesters’ tent city, which was logistically facilitated by Kiev’s municipal authorities, and eventually broadcast on oligarch and state television.

**T**HEIR KHAKI TENTS AND BRAZIERERS dismantled, Ukraine’s popular forces (divided between Yellow Pora and Black Pora and factions yet uncolored) are continuing their political work, including on the Web, where they are combating scam sites that have popped up to solicit donations for the cause—an indication of the wider challenges. Reliable and affordable credit is scarcely to be had in Ukraine, while courts are for sale. Tax police are a cudgel; traffic police are freelance tax collectors. Ukraine’s military is mired in destitute decay, while some of its chiefs enrich themselves through weapons sales. The SBU retains the capacity for domestic surveillance and rogue operations. Qualifying for the European club is a long way off, but a Western integration of sorts—by means of prime real estate acquisitions, bank accounts, children in boarding schools—long ago took place among well-greased individuals, the very interests that backed the “pro-Russian” candidate Yanukovich. In a tiny economy by European standards, where vital job-creating small and medium businesses are painfully few and often underground, a small knot still controls an outsize share of GDP as well as private television. Some defected to Yushchenko late. Some repaired to villas abroad to wait things out. The chairman of the Ukrainian Credit Bank and the transport minister committed suicide. The rest of state officialdom must decide whom to hold accountable for the falsification, the culprits—that is, themselves—or scapegoats. Welcome to office. President Yushchenko!

Ukrainian politics is less about reformers and anti-reformers, our preferred categories, than about failures and wily survivors. When the Soviet Union disintegrated, Leonid Kravchuk became

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independent Ukraine's first president. He somersaulted to that post by lifting the slogans of the nationalist movement. As the top communist ideologue of Soviet Ukraine, Kravchuk had been responsible for persecuting Ukrainian nationalists. Leonid Kuchma, the boss of a missile factory, served under Kravchuk as prime minister—until Kravchuk forced him out in 1993. The next year, Kuchma defeated Kravchuk for the presidency. Kuchma came to power as an economic reformer, aiming to bring Ukraine into the ranks of civilized nations. In October 1994, as Wilson reminds us, Kuchma duly launched liberalizing reforms; but these were soon chewed up in the maw of competing "clans," whose rivalrous animosities Kuchma tirelessly fostered as a method of personal control. (That's *Autocracy 101*.) The president also encouraged acts of corruption among officials, who were under surveillance, thereby generating evidence of misdeeds that could be used to compel loyalty or to bring people down. In sum, chocolate-slayered hookers popping out of cakes notwithstanding, the crackup had yielded an independent Soviet Ukraine, with a familiar politics of intrigue and blackmail (*kompromat*).

The first major rival to Kuchma—his own prime minister Pavlo Lazarenko, from the same Dnipropetrovsk "clan"—was politically annihilated in 1997–1998. (He was convicted of money-laundering charges in the United States.) In December 1999, Yushchenko, then the ambitious chairman of Ukraine's National Bank (his predecessor had been whacked in a contract killing); decided against trying to unseat Kuchma. But when Kuchma won re-election, he named Yushchenko the country's eighth prime minister in eight years. A second stab at economic reform ensued, this time more effective. But sixteen months later, in April 2001, Yushchenko lost a parliamentary vote of no confidence sponsored by the oligarch clans. In his departing speech before the deputies, he said: "I am going, in order to return."

How seriously Ukraine's swells took this bravado is hard to say. But Yushchenko scored a comeback with the parliamentary elections of March 2002, when his newly formed bloc, "Our Ukraine," thumped Kuchma's "party of power" coalition, winning 25 percent of the vote against the latter's 11 percent. Presidential elections loomed in 2004, and Ukraine's constitution, adopted in

1996, allowed only two presidential terms. That limit acquired urgency amid the accusations linking Kuchma's crew to arms smuggling and decapitation. The plotting began.

A SUPREME IRONY OF THE Orange Revolution is that it accomplished Kuchma's antic scramble to alter Ukraine's political system. In April 2000, Kuchma forced a plebiscite to increase the presidency's already substantial prerogatives at the expense of parliament. Not long after his referendum passed, Melnychenko's tapes surfaced, so parliament got a reprieve. The next twist came in 2003, when Ukraine's Constitutional Court ruled that Kuchma could run for a third term because he had served his two terms under different constitutions. But that scenario smacked of Belarus, and threatened Ukraine with pariah status (that is, no European visas for the elite). In early 2004, Kuchma called rewrite. Now he sought to appropriate parliamentarians' initiatives to increase their branch's powers vis-à-vis the president, bills that he had repeatedly vetoed. Taras Kuzio, the indispensable workhorse scholar of Ukrainian politics, surmised that the term-limited and exposed chief executive might re-base himself in the Rada. But needing to cajole or bribe a two-thirds majority for a constitutional overhaul, the presidential initiative to castrate itself fell short by six votes. And so the last trick in the bag appeared to be fixing the presidential elections on behalf of a handpicked successor, but the pickings were Moe, Larry, and Curly. The stooge variant hit the orange wall. Stymied, Kuchma still groped for advantage, and found it in his adversaries.

Unlike in Georgia, the opposition in Ukraine restrained itself from storming government buildings that it blockaded. Whereas the leader of the Georgian democrats took over an autocracy, a recurrent event in that country, in Ukraine a negotiated compromise institutionalized democratic power-sharing: after the parliamentary elections in 2006, the prime minister and cabinet, apart from the foreign, defense, and (perhaps) interior portfolios, will be appointed not by a super-presidency but by parliament. President Yushchenko will have his wings clipped, to Ukraine's advantage. For some, the victorious mantra is therefore hurry-up "radical reform"—as if it were a matter of presidential will. To

move off the page into people's lives, decrees and laws need stakeholders, powerful vested interests that will fight for their implementation, as others struggle tooth and nail. Such a course also necessitates the maintenance of an electoral majority, no mean feat when even success will generate abundant losers.

The battleground is not geopolitics, it is institutions. We can only hope that this youthful society, nurtured by education, information technology, and proximity to Europe, a society that was able to paralyze a government and rectify an election but that owns little property, can stay organized to compel a sustained governmental transformation. Even with Ukraine's breakthrough to a pending balance of powers between executive and legislature, the country lacks a civil service and professional judiciary. How a kleptocratic police state becomes an impartial regulatory one is still the central post-Soviet conundrum. This is what makes Ukraine's quest for membership in the European Union, however distant, so important. What Kuchma set in motion out of raw self-interest the EU could help Ukraine to carry through because of the precondition of harmonizing institutions for entrance. Everything, though, can be tripped up by the usual dirty tricks and the deeply ingrained politics of clientelism and blackmail. Ultimately, Ukraine's pitfalls and possibilities originate from within, not from Europe or Moscow.

## VI.

MYKOLA HOHOL (1809–1852), without a drop of Russian blood, invented the great Russian novel. In *Dead Souls*, in 1842, out now in a worthy new translation by Robert A. Maguire, Hohol immortalized provincial life in the Russian empire, while himself living in Rome. "We all came out of Hohol's overcoat," Dostoyevsky said, punning on Hohol's short story of that name conjuring a topsy-turvy world full of clerks and bereft of logic. Nabokov called Hohol's *Government Inspector* (1836), a looking-glass drama of mistaken identity, "the greatest play ever written in Russian." Only Babel dissented. "Petersburg defeated Poltava," he wrote of Hohol's native province (in a sly dig at empire's ascendancy). Hohol, whose name means "golden-eyed duck," set some of his tales in Ukraine, but he wrote in Russian,

imparting to it various Ukrainianisms. "I myself do not know whether my soul is Ukrainian or Russian," he wrote in 1844, adding that "both natures are too richly endowed by God, and, as if by design, each of them separately contains within itself what the other lacks—a sure sign that they complement each other." Mykola Hohol is better known, of course, in Russian pronunciation, as Nikolai Gogol.

The intimacy between Ukraine and Russia has for too long obscured the former. I do not have in mind the "Russian" mafia in Budapest, the "Russian" girls at Tokyo hostess bars, or the "Russian" Jews of Brighton Beach and Israel's coastal town Netanya, many of whom are from Ukraine. Nor do I mean the farmers in Canada who, having fled from some of the world's best black soil, started from scratch and exported millions of tons of wheat back to Brezhnev's Soviet Union. Russians bristle at the inclusion of Vasily Kandinsky as a German Expressionist, as well they might: the artist grew up in Odessa. Kazimir Malevich, the originator of the Russian avant-garde, was born in Kiev, and in the 1920s he rediscovered the city of his birth. Mikhail Bulgakov was born and raised in Kiev, too. Anton Chekhov grew up near the Sea of Azov on the southern steppes. Sergei Prokofiev came from Donetsk. If you were limited to figures born in Ukraine and Ukrainians, you could write a pretty substantial history of "Russian" culture.

Empire offered Ukrainian-born artists, film-makers, novelists, and playwrights what was made available to their counterparts in tiny Latvia or Azerbaijan, Moldova or Kyrgyzstan, as well as the Russian intelligentsia: deportation to camps in the permafrost or a bullet in the head. But to many of them Russia and then the Soviet Union opened a continent-wide cultural mixing, and an imperial audience covering one-sixth of the earth. Gogol took supreme advantage of this historical circumstance to draw the wittiest of unsentimental portraits. Others resisted. Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861), born into serfdom, attended St. Petersburg's Imperial Academy of Arts, but he composed verse in Ukrainian, demonstrating its worthiness as a literary language to the naysayers in the imperial capital, where he developed his ardent Ukrainian consciousness. He mourned Ukraine's absorption by Poland and Russia, but he caught an eye-fel witness of the 1830 Polish revolt against the Russian empire. Shevchenko's *The Dream* paro-

died Pushkin's Russian epic *The Bronze Horseman*, daring to denounce Peter the Great as a "perfidious serpent." Internal exile followed. But Shevchenko became the Ukrainian national poet, a status that even Soviet censors recognized.

A separate Ukrainian identity, Wilson notes, had in fact been secured through attempts at religious unity. In the late sixteenth century, Orthodox churchmen in Ukrainian lands initiated a move to reunite Eastern and Western Christianity, but they ended up establishing a third church, the Uniate, which recognized the authority of the pope while preserving Eastern rites. Uniates were distinct from their Austrian Catholic and Polish Catholic rulers. In parallel, the metropolitan of Kiev, Petro Mohyla, a Moldovan who had studied in Paris, founded an Orthodox Collegium modeled on the Jesuits, using Latin and Polish culture to leaven Orthodoxy. Mohyla, too, aimed at a synthesis of East and West, but his brief experiment ended up distinguishing Ukrainian from Russian Orthodoxy. After Russia absorbed much of the Ukrainian-speaking lands in 1654, Mohyla's Collegium, which became the Kiev Academy, transmitted civic humanism, secular book printing, and Western elements in music, painting, and architecture. The Kiev Academy served as a window to the West before Peter the Great and after. Such a role could be no less valuable now. "Ukraine," President Kuchma said back on November 11, 1999, "should remain an independent country and God help Russia resolve its own problems." God, and maybe Ukraine.

Neither a quarantine of Ukraine's example nor some new eastern boundary is possible in any case. As Ukraine contemplates the deeper revolution required to integrate with Europe, it is already economically integrated with Russia. Kiev hauls in an estimated \$1.5 billion in transit fees on pipelines that carry Russian fossil fuels westward. Russia is also an essential supplier of many Ukrainian industries, an employer of millions of Ukrainian guest workers, and the biggest market for Ukrainian goods. Sure, many wish that history had been different—Wilson makes instructive use of what-ifs. Not least among the regretful are Ukraine's Jews, down from more than three million before 1939 to half a million in 1989, and now just over one hundred thousand, according to the admittedly disputed 2001 census. There is a blind spot about the Holocaust in Ukraine, which if raised tends to elicit a fixation on minor factual

errors in demonstrations of complicity and refrains that "we suffered too," and that some Ukrainians helped Jews. And very striking in its own way is the construal of seventy-odd years of communism as something that happened to Ukraine, victimizing it without its participation.

The bright spot is relations with Poland, Ukraine's other intimate partner and the other half of Gogol's mixed-gentry ancestry. Polish rule's mistreatment of Ukrainians—repaid in kind whenever possible—frequently outdid Russia's; but today Poland is Ukraine's closest ally. What Ukrainian society—like its guiding Polish star—can draw upon is popular memory of the struggle against imperialism. When the Soviet Union still existed, Boris Yeltsin led a Russian revivalist upsurge against Moscow, but this destroyed the Union, and national self-assertion in Russia again assumed the form of anti-Westernism. Russia's particular richness derives from its blend of influences from the east, south, and north, too. But Russia's anti-Westernism is self-defeating, bound up with a reflex to envision greatness in empire, now merely the phantom twitch of a severed limb. ■

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- 3 Trees bring songbirds close by.
- 4 Trees around your home can increase its value.
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- 8 Trees fight global warming.
- 9 Tree planting is fun!
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