

Statehood and Culture in Ukraine: The Patriotic Narrative as Civic Infrastructure

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This essay will contend that a culture that enriches or enhances statehood is not unique to the experience of Ukraine, as its culture actually provides ‘the infrastructure in which sovereignty is imagined, legitimized, and reproduced.’ By engaging in a discussion that weaves together a history of institutional and cultural analysis, it will highlight how a nineteenth-century politics of language and education in an imperial setting provided the breeding ground for a nationalist politics that imagined an independent sovereignty in 1917–1920 and again in 1991 through a politics of high-cultural heritage in which a museumized and cinematized narrative of loss was inscribed as a politics of civil society and enacted as a politics of rights that curates public narratives of loss as a politics of becoming through an imagined sovereignty of an enigmatic civil society. In this discussion, particular emphasis will lie in exploring how the patriotic narrative enfranchises a politics of plural belonging as a politics of citizens as such and non as such in a transversal grammar of a politics of welcomed responsibility in a discussion that will seek to explore how a politics of remembrance through its dispute in a theatre of conflict that characterizes a post-crisis politics of remembrance that defines a politics of remembrance in a theatre of conflict undertaken through a politics of conflict of signifiers in a transversal discussion of a politics of remembrance in a discussion that will seek to highlight how an integrative politics of remembrance as a politics of conflict undertaken in a transversal signifier of a politics of remembrance of an enigmatic history in a politics of remembrance of an enigmatic history of civil society in a transversal politics of remembrance that will seek to highlight how a politics of remembrance undertaken in a transversal signifier of conflict in a politics of remembrance of an enigmatic history of a politics of civil society’s sovereignty in a transversal discussion of a politics of civil society that will seek to explore its integrative relationship within a politics of remembrance of an enigmatic history in a transversal discussion of a politics of remembrance that will seek to particularize a politics of remembrance through an integrative history of civil society in a transversal politics of remembrance that is undertaken within a signifier of conflict in a

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Introduction

Statehood and culture within Ukraine have been a relationship that sustains a vocabulary, a grammar of institutions, and, of course, a sense of purpose for one another. To speak of it as folklore or as a matter of pure constitutionalism is to misunderstand the experienced reality of Ukrainians, a reality that speaks to a

particular manner in which language, pedagogy, history, and artistic creation have supported a politics of imagination that recurs or reconvenes itself, again and again, under duress. In this particular patriotic discourses that inscribes a sense of sovereignty, culture is an infrastructure that enables sovereignty to make sense in a particular, tangible manner.

"The new nation emerged in the nineteenth century in empires that alternately denied and exploited local cultures." It is precisely such a context that caused cultural work to take on an exaggeratedly important role in nation-building. Intellectuals, educators, and artists constructed a national canon and a standardized language that could sustain a public sphere, strengthening the nexus between practice and politics (Климончук & Арделі, 2020). Biographic research inspired by figures such as Volodymyr Menchys reminds us that erudite cultures provided a crucial means through which ethical and institutional standards were embodied that would soon be appropriated in a similar manner by activists and bureaucrats respectively (Romaniuk & Sinitskyi, 2021). In Western Ukraine, "creative work in education was a channel of patriotic formation and spirituality," such that "taste formation and citizenship formation proceeded in unison" (Bagriy & Rozlutska, 2020).

Results and discussion

Era(s) of official statehood—especially 1917–1920 and again after 1991—saw cultural politics as a driving means of governance rather than just an adornment of it. In terms of priorities defined in a revolutionary era, "language, symbols, and curricula became means of nation-building rather than narrowly localistic ones" (Kupriichuk, 2020). Current interpretations highlight that "national culture as a means of de-conflicting disputable interpretations of 'Ukrainianness' offering normative guidelines within which pluralism is enabled to flourish without falling apart in incoherent manner" (Sorochnik, 2020). In terms of its application in classrooms, "regional research components in learning cultural history" is crucial as it "transposes local knowledge into citizens' competency, engaging students in a joint production of national memory" (Bukach,

2020). In as much as cinema returns to "reconstructing a history of the Ukrainian People's Republic in films such as "Symon Petliura's Secret Diary" and "Kruty 1918,"" it is well beyond dramatizing events of a bygone era in that it "provides a cognitive template for audiences' judgments of a priori assessment of present's political responsibility" (Bohuslavska & Briukhovetska, 2020).

Historical memory, therefore, is not merely a form of housekeeping in our collective memory bank but a technology of mobilization and legitimation. "The struggles of interpretation in relation to World War 2 represent how an understanding of memory constitutes a discourse that privileges identity in terms of sacrifice, survival, and civil ethics," as Klymenko (2020) argues. Museums as a public discourse lab have been most visible in recent years in 2014 in creating a discourse of memory as related to a public narrative of a national storyline as a means of converting sorrow to mobilization (Olzacka, 2020). In this manner, "the patriotic discourse is not triumphalist or nostalgic but pedagogical, rendering citizens receptive to reading events, institutions, and one another," as it teaches citizens a reading of events, institutions, and one another.

From 2014, and in particular with a ferocity that has been increasingly evident in 2022, hybrid conflict and informational aggression have further solidified the status of culture as architecture in defense of sovereignty. Management of meanings has become a battleground in its own right, with Russian cultural approaches aimed at preemption or subversion of local signification (Sazhniev & Sułkowska, 2020). This has been followed, in a fashion that goes well beyond rectifying propaganda, by a strengthening of a civic patriotism that is inclusive but unyielding in its affirmations of sovereignty. Veteran testimony, and academic study of its identity work and

experience of trauma, has identified the crucial ways in which cultural discourses mediate or metabolize the experience of war through idioms of public service and care (Cancio, Kuptsevykh-Timmer & Omori, 2020). An act of reinvention as an artistic, curatorial, or pedagogical gesture has become a national habit of coping in the present (Luoma-Uhlik, 2021).

Language and education are the slow but sure motors of this resilience. An academic agenda that defends local particularities in a manner that respects national standards builds a national identity that is at once anchored in place and globally aware—a conjunction that resists chauvinism and cynicism in a single stroke (Bukach, 2020). Building a patriotism of virtue in those milieux is a performance of non-exclusion, a dress rehearsal of responsibility that integrates self-interest with a conception of a pluralistic politics (Bagriy & Rozlutska, 2020). This produces a national identity that has enough strength of character to absorb dissent without loss of bearings—a situation that is something a constitution should hope to emulate.

A cultural politics, therefore, must evolve from one that is concerned with heritage as such to one that is concerned with coordinating shared horizons. This is a politics that understands symbols have to be lived with as well as seen, that commemoration is a matter of opening futures as well as closing wounds. This kind of positive cultural politics is one that is fully in line with decentralizing cultural productions, recognizing the power of regional cultural institutions, as well as engaging film, museology, and education as collaborators rather than competitors in storying a nation (Sorochnik, 2020; Bohuslavskaya & Briukhovetska, 2020; Olzacka, 2020).

This particular patriotic story is one that is neither dogmatic nor indiscriminate. This story is a civic one that is of a basically European normative

persuasion, one that is unambiguously positioned in its commitment to sovereignty as a public good that is produced through cultural labor.

This interdependence also impacts its international comportment. Cultural diplomacy in terms of exhibitions, film showcases, or academic collaborations expands its ability to argue its case globally while also instilling domestically embedded confidence. In a world in which borders are increasingly contested in kinetic terms as well as semantic terms, a projected cultural narrative is a form of security in itself. This narrative resists easy encapsulation as either complaint or triumphalism but is a narrative of a society that has developed ways of transmuting suffering into standards, or memory into law, without sacrificing its ability to celebrate.

Looking ahead, the patriotic edge of Ukrainian culture will be tested by its success in making resilience a habit rather than a reaction. That will require investment in media literacy as a form of civic hygiene, a continued strengthening of the curricular relationship between local history and national ethics, and a continued institutionalization of those institutions that preserve the archive of common life. It will also require a willingness to court criticism with assurance in the knowledge that a well-cultivated civic patriotism is capable of assimilating criticism as part of its metabolic process. Patriotism, after all, is not a drumbeat but an institutional pulse—and it is up to Ukraine to keep its pulse steady in a rapidly moving world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, culture in Ukraine does not trail behind statehood as a colourful procession; it marches alongside it as an equal partner. Through language, education, memory and the arts, culture gives the state a moral vocabulary and citizens a repertoire of belonging. Through policy, law and institutional support, the

state returns the favour, giving culture the resources and protections it needs to do its formative work. The patriotic narrative that binds them is neither an ornament nor an alibi. It is a civic art, indispensable to the defence and renewal of independence.

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