

Ivan Franko and his community, by Yaroslav Hrytsak, Edmonton, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2018, xxiii + 563 pp., Can\$34.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-61811-968-1

This splendid book explores the first 30 years of the life of Ivan Franko (1856–1916), the poet, prose writer, literary critic, translator, journalist, ethnographer, and political activist who became the founder of the Ukrainian socialist and nationalist movements in western Ukraine. The English-language translation of this prize-winning work, originally published in Ukrainian in 2006 as *Prorok u svoii vitchyzni. Franko ta ioho spil'nota* (A Prophet in His Own Fatherland: Franko and His Society), constitutes an important event which should draw the attention of the international scholarly audience not just to this crucial figure in the emergence of modern Ukrainian nationalism but also to the work of one of Ukraine's leading historians. Hrytsak makes an important contribution to the study of nationalism, of Ivan Franko, of Austrian eastern Galicia, of socialism in the Habsburg Empire, of the emergence of a modern Ukrainian identity, and of biographical writing more generally.

Hrytsak takes a microhistory approach, embedding Franko's story in that of the various communities among which he lived at each stage of his early life. This might seem an odd choice for writing the biography of a great man of letters who left a huge paper trail and about whom his contemporaries had much to say. However, it serves Hrytsak's goal of exploring the interrelations of the individual and society in the creation of modern identities and of explaining how Franko became, already by the age of 30, a "prophet in his own land" (392). Hrytsak argues that it was not just Franko's writings that made him the prophet of

a progressive, modernizing Ukrainian identity among people of his generation in Austrian Galicia – a generation that, like Franko himself, turned away from the previously dominant Russophile tendency – but also his own life story. Franko's generation, the author contends, "saw in his biography and works a model for creating their own identity" (xiv).

For the reader, the microhistory approach makes this biography of Franko also a panoramic biography of eastern Galicia from 1850 to 1890. Hrytsak divides his book into two parts, on "Franko and His Times" and "Franko and His Communities." The first section tells Franko's early life through a broader study of Austrian Galicia. Hrytsak argues that Galicia was, paradoxically, a place with "a great deal of modernity but little modernization" (xix), the most economically backward part of the Habsburg Empire yet also a hotbed of modern political and intellectual movements, indeed a place where awareness of backwardness and a desire for change produced such movements. Both here and especially in the second part, the author takes his readers into the social and cultural experiences of the many social elements that Franko encountered, as well as his relationship with such groups as the petty nobility into which he was born, the peasantry he claimed to hail from, the workers, the Jews, the Poles, the Greek Catholic clergy and their families, and the Ukrainian national movement on both sides of the Russian-Austrian border.

Hrytsak asserts that the value of studying "the young Franko" is precisely to escape the temptation of teleology – of tracing how Franko became a nationalist leader determined to transform the Ruthenian peasantry into a modern Ukrainian nation. Stopping at age 30 allows him to show how nationalism was not the only or inevitable result of Franko's political and intellectual trajectory, and that his identity was forged through interaction with a variety of modern political ideologies. In particular, he focuses on the importance of his encounters with Russian, Polish, and the Ukrainian socialism of Mykhailo Drahomanov. Franko spent his 20s trying to build an alliance of peasants, workers, and progressive intellectuals that brought together the Ruthenians, Poles, and Jews. Ukrainianness, as he was elaborating it in this period, was part of an international progressive movement. Progress was Franko's goal, and he would eventually conclude that progress was to be achieved through a socially reconstituted nation. Thus, according to Hrytsak, key ideas of Austro-Marxism were already being elaborated in Lviv in the 1880s.

Finally, the microhistorical approach allows Hrytsak to reconsider how the historian should make use of Franko's voluminous writings as sources. He focuses in particular on the cycle of short stories, novels, and poetry that Franko devoted to the city of Boryslav, the centre of the Austro-Hungarian Empire's oil industry and an island of economic modernity in eastern Galicia. For Franko, Boryslav provided a glimpse of a socialist future – indeed, Hrytsak suggests that the first short stories and novel of the Boryslav cycle were profoundly shaped by the fact that he was simultaneously translating Karl Marx's *Capital* into Ukrainian. These stories have shaped historical thinking, especially though not exclusively among Soviet scholars, about the workers' movement in Galicia. However, by correlating Franko's writings with the historical evidence, the author convincingly shows that Franko's Boryslav represented a vision of the future rather than a realistic depiction of his time. For example, the "great Boryslav fire" he describes as being allegedly the culmination of a great workers' strike never actually occurred. Moreover, Hrytsak demonstrates that contemporary critics themselves regarded the heroes of his first Boryslav novel as having little in common with actual Galician workers. Yet, the reading public responded with enthusiasm to the Boryslav works precisely for their progressive vision of the future, as well as their high literary quality. Hrytsak thus argues for the role of literature in constituting possible futures, as well as the importance of social reception in that process.

Hrytsak thus argues that, even if Franko had died at the age of 30, he would have still left the Ukrainian national movement both the vision of a modern, progressive nation; but he

would have also left an ideal life story for the poet as national prophet, having suffered imprisonment and exile for his socialist activities and created the myth of himself as the modern peasant embodying the new nation.

If you are planning to read one book on nineteenth-century western Ukraine, start here. This stimulating work brims with insights and new ideas on every page. Hrytsak is an engaging writer and Marta Daria Olynyk's superb translation ensures that the book remains that academic rarity – a page-turner – in its English version. It should attract a wide readership among scholars and students interested in Ukrainian and Polish history, the history of the Habsburg Empire, and the history of nationalism.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2020.1831195>