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Archive, Land, Nation, Text: The Lives of the Carpatho-Ruthenica Library

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Thomas Fisher Rare Book Collection
John P. Robarts Library
University of Toronto
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I. Taczaks: A Foreword

While my colleague Edward Kasinec in his “Remarks” described how he has seen Professor Paul Magocsi’s Carpatho-Ruthenica Library grow and evolve over the course of 50 years, I had the privilege of encountering its size and scale all at once (Kasinec 2023). When I was a graduate student, I drove to Toronto for a long weekend in December 2015 to research the Carpatho-Rusyn American writer, Father Emil Kubek, the author of the first Rusyn novel *Marko Sholtys* (Figure 1). I will never forget this experience. To work in the collection, I had to first learn the specific system that Professor Magocsi developed to organize it, one which—I was told—is even superior to the Library of Congress.⁷ For over an hour, Professor Magocsi graciously and gracefully swung from ladder to ladder and led me from bibliographies and topographies to biographies and histories, from language and literature to architecture and art, pulling text after text along the way.

Once I was left to do my work, I began to investigate the Greek Catholic Church's *schematismi*—that is, handbooks of parishes and priests—with the hope of pinpointing the villages Kubek served in before emigrating. But when I flipped through the index of one of them, a surname caught my eye: Taczak, my mother's maiden name. I had heard stories that my grandfather came from a line of priests, but now I might have evidence that this might be true: this Peter Taczak served in Lakárt (Lekárovice, Slovakia) in 1860s, in Nizhne Veretzkyy (Nyzhni Vorota, Ukraine) in 1870s, and in Turja-Bisztra (Tur'ya-Bystra, Ukraine) in the 1880s (*Schematismus* 1865, 149; *Schematismus* 1874, 59; *Schematismus* 1891, 23).

I then realized that I only had to reach down a shelf to see his school curriculum, turn to the left to see maps of the roads he took, jump into the next alcove to read the histories of the villages he served in, walk around the corner to learn the variant of Rusyn he would have known, or walk across the room to see the icons he venerated. And at that moment, I felt something akin to the feeling of the sublime. I wasn't in a library dedicated to Carpathian Rus', I was *in* Carpathian Rus', a special manifestation of it that few have ever encountered.

II. Land

My remarks today propose three distinct but interrelated frames for how we can think about the significance of the Carpatho-Ruthenica Library. The first frame is that this is an archive of a *land* – Carpathian Rus' or *Karpatska Rus'*—a place that has never politically existed but does so as a symbolic geography. Its home has been called a “borderland of borders,” and here we find not only Carpatho-Rusyns but Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, Jews, Roma, Romanians, Italians, Poles, Ukrainians (Magocsi 2015, 7). Thus, when you step into the Carpatho-Ruthenica Library, space and our encounter with it is a primary concern. Here, we find works on demography, topography, geography; on countries, counties, cities, villages; on places that have been located in over a dozen states; on the highlands, lowlands, plains; on lands where tomatoes and grapes grow, on lands where they don't.¹ These works allowed Professor Magocsi to create his signature cartographic achievements: *Map of*

¹ See the discussion of the tomato-grape line (Magocsi 2015, 9).

Carpatho-Rusyn Settlement, Mapping Stateless Peoples, and Carpathian Rus': A Historical Atlas (Figure 2).

We also find a collection of travel narratives to Carpathian Rus', and my favorite may be Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell's *North of the Danube* (Figure 3), a survey of the last days of a free Czechoslovakia. Bourke-White and Caldwell encourage their readers to "think of the people of Czechoslovakia" like Americans. The Czechs are like New Englanders: urban, industrial, bourgeois, whose character is stern, honest, intelligent. The Slovaks "are more like our Southerners," their land "like our agricultural South," their character "gay, warm-hearted, hospitable," "sunny tempered." But the Rusyns "in the Far East", in their view, are like rural, southern blacks: "solid, work-hardened Slavs" who "tended each square inch of soil with the devotion of saints" but live in a land where—they say—"the light of education had never penetrated before" ("Transcript..." 1938; Mok 1938, 21). Well, had the Carpatho-Ruthenica Library existed in 1939, the authors may have viewed Carpathian Rus' and its native peoples in a different light.

III. Nation

The second frame that I would like to propose is that the Carpatho-Ruthenica Library is an archive of a *nation*. As Edward noted, Professor Magocsi began to collect Carpatho-Ruthenica with the dream of creating a Carpatho-Rusyn national library. In many ways, he has succeeded beyond his wildest dreams, but if this is a national library, it is not one of a *king* (like the French Bibliothèque du Roi) nor the national library of an *empire* (like the British Museum) but of a stateless *people*, the Carpatho-Rusyns.

In fact, because Carpatho-Rusyns have never had a state—much less the institutions that could serve as the basis for a national culture—they are constantly forced to provide evidence of their existence. They often point to census data, the number of cultural organizations, the circulation of periodicals, the number of speakers of Rusyn, all of which wildly fluctuate due to economic, political, or social factors. But here, we find Mykhailo Luchkai's 1843 *Historia Carpato-Ruthenorum*, which was recently published in its original Latin and in a parallel Ukrainian translation as *Історія карпатських русинів*, that is, *The History of the Carpatho-Rusyns* (Лучкай 1999). This work is not the oldest history in the collection: that would be the text by the Herodotus of

Carpatho-Rusyn historiography, Ioanykii Bazylovych (Figure 4). Nor is it the rarest Luchkai volume: that would be his *Church Sermons* (Figure 5). What makes the 1843 *Historia Carpato-Ruthenorum* particularly valuable is that it is one of the earliest texts to use the term Carpatho-Rusyns. This is especially important because Carpatho-Rusyns are all too often described as a modern invention of Professor Magocsi's fantasy (Kupensky 2019, 506–511).

Scholars have debated the “Magocsi problem”: how can he be both an academic and an advocate for the Carpatho-Rusyns (Grabowicz 2011, 113)? We hear of the “Magocsi paradox”: how can he be both a Carpatho-Rusyn and a Ukrainian nation-builder (Motyl 2011, 105–109)? Recently, we have even seen the “Magocsi question”: is he a cosmopolitan or a nationalist, an imperialist or an autocrat (Kiebusinski 2021, vi)? But when you stand in the Carpatho-Ruthenica Library—in the “general history” section—you quickly realize that Professor Magocsi has not invented anything. He found it. It is all already here. And maybe, in a century, we might come to realize that his most impactful achievement for the Carpatho-Rusyns will not be his numerous monographs nor his hundreds of publications, however creative and influential they may be. Perhaps it will be the Carpatho-Ruthenica Library, for now future scholars can come to the University of Toronto and find nearly every text they need in one place.

As a national library, the Carpatho-Ruthenica collection also foregrounds the forms of cultural production that are indigenous to the region. Here, we find Aleksander Dukhnovych's 1850 almanac *Greetings from the Rusyns*, or *Поздравление Русиновъ за 1851 р.* (Figure 6). This text is especially noteworthy because it includes the most famous Carpatho-Rusyn literary work: “I was, am, and will be a Rusyn” (“Я Русинъ былъ, есмь, и буду”). However, it is also an important work precisely because it is an almanac: a *misiatsoslov* or *kalendar*.

As a scholar of literature, I have often felt that the almanac as a medium for the dissemination of literature was idiosyncratic and strange. Why couldn't the Carpatho-Rusyns have collections of poetry? Why couldn't they publish in magazines, journals, or newspapers like their contemporaries in New York, London, Paris, or Petersburg? Why aren't there any novels until 20th century?² And why was the first Rusyn novel written in the new world? Even if I knew the answers to these questions, the persistence of the almanac in Carpatho-Rusyn

² This remark refers to the literature of Subcarpathian Rus'. The rise of the Lemko novel occurred in the late 19th century.

culture seemed, to me embarrassing, primitive, provincial. However, I came to appreciate the diversity and uniqueness of the form thanks to the Carpatho-Ruthenica Library. During my visits to Toronto, I have had to consult dozens of them, many of which are represented in the catalogue (Figures 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). Thus, whether readers bought their almanacs for aesthetic, cultural, or religious reasons—whether they read the poetry, laughed at the jokes, or followed the saints’ days—their ubiquitousness in the Carpatho-Rusyn household and centrality to its material culture was an insight that I could not have had without the collection.

IV. Text

Finally, as much as the Carpatho-Ruthenica Library is an archive of a place or the national library of a people, its contents are still, nonetheless, *texts*. This means that they are embedded in a series of cascading global networks. However peripheral one might think Carpathian Rus’ is, there are countless traces of faraway periods and places: the Iron Age, Classical Antiquity, the Renaissance; Africa, Asia, the Americas. Indeed, Elaine Rusinko has argued that Carpatho-Rusyn literature is the “terrain of world literature” precisely because it is located on the borders of many different traditions (Rusinko 2003, 18).

There is perhaps no better illustration of this principle than the work of the mercurial “linguistic Quasimodo,” the writer Ivan Petrovtsy (Марола 2006, 91). Here, we find Petrovtsy’s literary translations in his collection *Our and Not Our Songs* (*Наши и нинаши співанькы*, 1999), a tour-de-force that includes poetry from Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, German, French, Spanish, English, Serbian, Czech, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Armenian, Russian, and Ukrainian. In other words, the Carpatho-Ruthenica Library is also the home to the Psalms, Sappho, Anacreon, Horace, Petrarch, Wang Wei, Li Bai, Du Fu, Bai Juyi, Jeong Cheol, Bashō, François Villon, William Shakespeare, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Robert Burns, Friedrich Schiller, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Edgar Allen Poe, Walt Whitman, Sándor Petőfi, Charles Baudelaire, Friedrich Nietzsche, Arthur Rimbaud, Rudyard Kipling, Guillaume Apollinaire, Sergei Esenin. And this is just one book. Petrovtsy explains that he selected these authors to demonstrate “how we” Carpatho-Rusyns “are rich in a wise and beautiful language” that “can do anything,” including reach the “most sublimic heights of world literature” (Петровцій 2006b, 196). Like

a conqueror, he brings home to the Carpathians poetic treasures from around the world. Napoleon speaks Rusyn. Even God is a Rusyn (Rusinko 2011). But Petrovtsy is not alone. Here, we also have the *Gospels* into Rusyn translated by the Greek Catholic priest Frantisek Krainiak and the poet Iosyf Kudzei (Figure 12), William Shakespeare's tragedy *Richard III* translated by the priest and writer Ivan Muranii (Figure 13), and countless other acts of carrying *belles-lettres* into Carpathian Rus' in almanacs, journals, and newspapers.

V. Lives

To conclude, I would like to refer to one specific translation, Petrovtsy's imitation of Horace's "Exegi Monumentum" (23 BCE) and Alexander Pushkin's "I Raised a Monument to Myself Not Made by Hands" ("Я памятник себе воздвиг нерукотворный", 1836), for Petrovtsy makes a valuable observation about the lives and afterlives Rusyn texts. The conceit of "Exegi Monumentum" is that future readers will recognize the poet's "monument"—that is, their written word—even if their contemporaries did not. However, if Horace's monument is "more permanent than bronze" and Pushkin's is "not made by hands," Petrovtsy's—he writes—is made of shoots and stalks, that is, something ephemeral, finite, fleeting that can be raised by a fire or eaten by horses. "Will there be horses tomorrow?" he wonders: "Will there be Rusyns tomorrow?" Unlike Latin or Russian, Rusyn texts *are* contingent upon a readership, but he takes solace in the fact that "as long as at least one Rusyn remains," Carpatho-Rusyn writers "will be understood in the Carpathians" (Петровці 2006a, 416–417).

What the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Collection and John P. Robarts Library have done is to take a leap of faith that there will be Carpatho-Rusyns tomorrow, that there will be a future readership for this masterful library. What's more: you have actually taken a step to *ensure* that there will be Carpatho-Rusyns in the future, and for this we are grateful that the Carpatho-Ruthenica Library is in such capable hands and that its books and their readers will continue to live on for many, blessed years.

Public Release

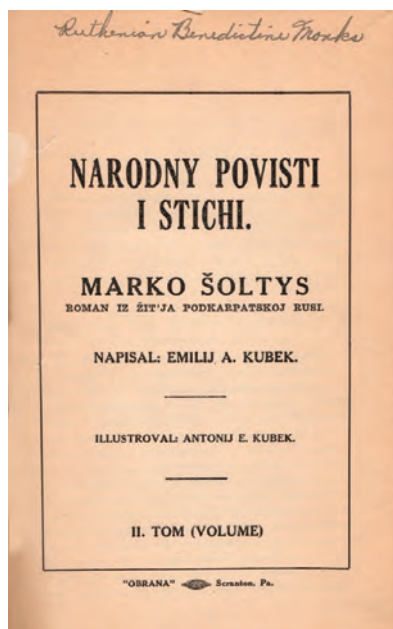
The views expressed in this presentation are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the United States Air Force Academy, the Air Force, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government. PA number: USAFA-DF-2023-202.

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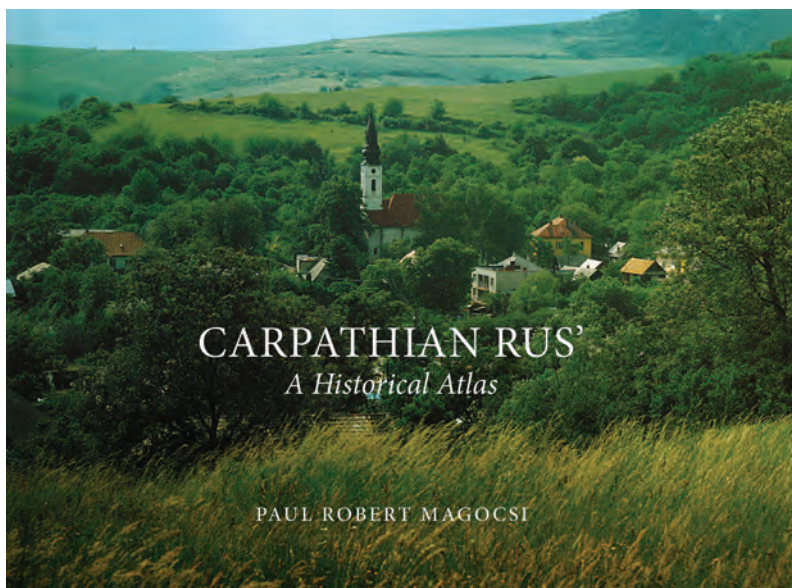
Figure 1/Ілюстрація 1



“Marko Šoltys. Roman iz žit’ja Podkarpatskoj Rusi”. In *Narodny povisti i stichi*, t. 2. Scranton, PA: Obrana.

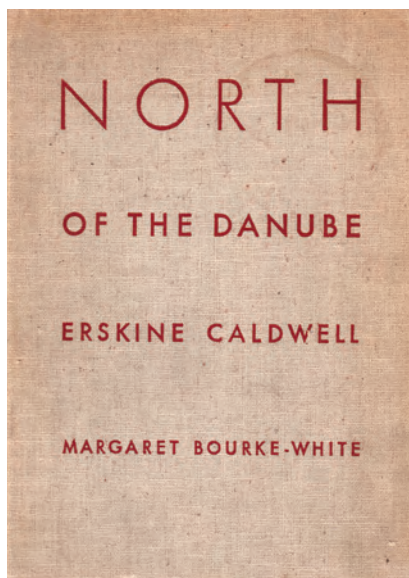
«Marko Šoltys. Roman iz žit’ja Podkarpatskoj Rusi». B: *Narodny povisti i stichi*, t. 2. Scranton, PA: Obrana.

Figure 2/Ілюстрація 2



Magocsi, Paul Robert. 2017. *Carpathian Rus': A Historical Atlas*.
Toronto: Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Toronto.

Figure 3/Ілюстрація 3



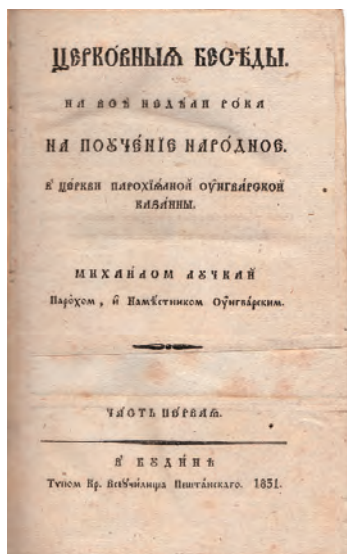
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Figure 4/Люстрация 4



Basiovit, R. P. Joannicio. 1799. *Brevis notitia foundationis Theodori Koriathovits, olim ducis de Munkacs, pro religiosis Ruthenis Ordinis Sancti Basilii Magni, in Monte Csernek ad Munkacs, Anno MCCCLX.* Cassoviae: Ex Typographia Ellingeriana.

Figure 5/Люстрация 5



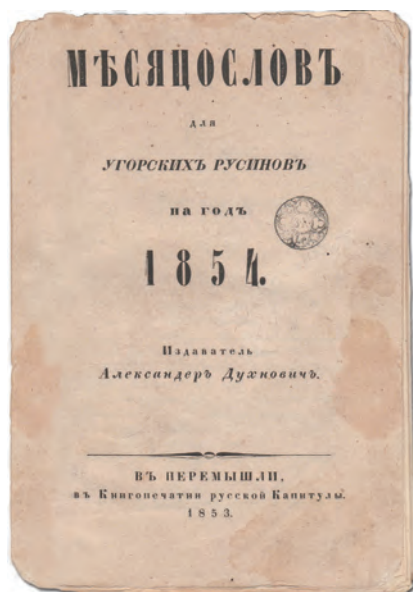
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Figure 6/Илюстрация 6



Поздравленіе русиновъ на годъ 1851 отъ литературнаго заведенія Пряшовскаго. 18[50].
Въден: Типомъ оо. Мехитаристовъ.

Figure 7/Илюстрация 7



Мѣсяцословъ для угорскихъ русиновъ на годъ 1854. 1853.
Перемышль: Александръ Духновичъ.

Figure 8/Глюстрация 8



Чучка, Юлій, ed. 1866–1901.
Мѣсяцословъ на ... годъ имѣющій дней 365.
 Унгвар: Изданіе книгопечатни
 «Общества Св. Василия Великаго».

Чучка, Юлій, ред. 1866–1901.
Мѣсяцословъ на ... годъ имѣющій дней 365.
 Унгвар: Изданіе книгопечатни
 «Общества Св. Василия Великаго».

Figure 9/Глюстрация 9

Биндас, Дюра, ed. 1921–1941. *Руски календар за южнославянских русинох на прости рок 1922.* Руски Керестур: Руске народне просвитне друштво.

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Figure 10/Ілюстрація 10



Вислоцкій, Димитрій, ed. 1922–1923. *Карпаторусскій календаръ «Лемко» на... год.*
 Ужгородъ: Димитрій Вислоцкій.
 Вислоцкій, Димитрій, ред. 1922–1923. *Карпаторусскій календаръ „Лемко” на ... год.*
 Ужгородъ: Димитрій Вислоцкій.

Figure 11/Ілюстрація 11



Zsidó családi és kereskedelmi naptár az 5686 1925-26 évre. 1925.
 Užhorod: Viktoria.

Figure 12/Ілюстрація 12



Тетраєвангеліє. 2009. Пряшов: Світовий конгрес Русинів.

Figure 13/Ілюстрація 13



Шекспѣръ, В. 1942. *Животъ и смерть Короля Ричарда Ш-ёго*.
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