

# Podcast Transcript: Granddaughter of Immigrants

**Episode Title:** This is Antoniv - Episode 3

**Host:** Erika Hanchar

**Guest:** Jars Balan

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## Transcript

Dialogue: Erika and Her Father

**[Host & Narrator: Erika Hanchar]:** Hey Dad.

**Dad:** Hey kid, how are you?

**[Host & Narrator: Erika Hanchar]:** I'm good. I've been trying to make some sense of these old family documents. Do you know anything about your grandparents, their life before they came to Canada?

**Dad:** You mean the old country?

**[Host & Narrator: Erika Hanchar]:** Yeah, do you know anything though about where they grew up, where they met?

**Dad:** I don't know much about that. But you know, I remember my grandparents. They were always getting moved around. Your great grandma, she wasn't trying to escape the nursing home, she was getting kicked out.

**[Host & Narrator: Erika Hanchar]:** Dad, but that was when they were much older, that was here in Canada.

**Dad:** Do you mean Ukraine? And Poland? I don't know much about that.

**(soft piano music plays)**

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## Narration: Episode Introduction

**[Host & Narrator: Erika Hanchar]:** My dad's stories of his family and his grandparents seemed to always take place in their elderly years. But it was their beginnings I was mostly interested in.

I'm Erika Hanchar, and this is *Granddaughter of Immigrants*. Episode 3, This is Antoniv.

A stranger at a garage sale translated a pile of brittle old documents, basically handing me a map I didn't know I had. On the top of that pile was a marriage registry for Anastasia Malyk and Peter Radomski, and a military service passport. I like to imagine that I'm a good enough storyteller to surmise their experiences; the traumas, the random details they accidentally let

out over the years, and place them all together in a chronological timeline and call it the story of our family.

But I've got to be honest, it's not totally possible. I want more than anything for this podcast to be about two things: history and facts. But no matter how much research I do, all it does is lead me down another rabbit hole of more unanswered questions. So it's probably best that I just start with what I have, and as the pieces fall together in the storyline, I'll share them.

I'm going to attempt to paint a picture here, based on what I know from the translated documents I have. Any prose or poetic elements in this podcast are simply my writings. Like any amateur historian, genealogist, or archivist, when we don't have the answers, we can simply and thankfully turn to history to guide us.

There's so much about my family that I will probably never know. Like, imagine 100 years from now and the only thing your family can learn about you comes from an old passport or an expired driver's license. Not exactly the deep look into the unique and complex mindset and experiences of you and your time here on earth. Well, that's kind of what we're working with here. It's kind of what most people who are researching their long-lost ancestors and family tree are often left to start with.

**(soft piano music plays)**

**(birds and village nature noises)**

So, let's try to piece together a story here, based on what we know from the translated documents. The year is 1919, and Ukraine as we know it today was called the Kingdom of Galicia.

**Fast Fact:** The ancient Kingdom of Galicia predates Russia by ten centuries. Surprised? I know I was. Ukraine was and has always been a sovereign nation; borders just keep shifting. But I digress, this podcast isn't about Ukraine's forever identity crisis; it's about my forever identity crisis.

In the Kingdom of Galicia was a tiny village of Antoniv. And there lived the Malyk family. As a matter of fact, at least three generations of Malyk called that tiny village with just the one church and a few hundred inhabitants home. The Malyks were a big family with 14 children. Yes, 14 kids. The village of Antoniv had somewhere between 100 and 500 inhabitants between the 1880s and the early 1900s. So the Malyks were responsible for anywhere between 3 and 10% of the population.

Theodore and Maria had many blessings, but the years between 1888 and 1894 were not kind to them. They lost their first son just a few months after his birth in 1883, and then in 1887, they lost their firstborn daughter Anna, Anna number one, at age 5. Two years and two healthy babies later, Ian and Pelagia (yes, Pelagia has to be some sort of homemade name), they tried again. And in the winter of 1889, they had Anna number two, who sadly didn't make it to the end of that year. With only a small break between 1880 and 1892, they welcomed their sixth child, a healthy boy named Stephen. And then for the next two years, they raised their two sons and

one daughter.

By June of 1894, they seemed to have broken the curse: my great-grandmother Anastasia was born, the seventh of 14 kids and the third child to be called Ana. That same year in the same village, a boy was born: Peter, the fifth and youngest child to Antonius and Josepha Radomski. Antonius was 39 at the time and working for a manor house in the village of Antoniv. His wife Josepha was 43, which was considered quite old for the time. There was almost a six-year gap between their third child and Peter, their fourth. I think it's safe to say that Peter was not entirely expected.

Actually, according to records, Antonius and Josepha had left their home in the village of **Holovchensi**, just 20 minutes away from Antoniv, to take the easier job at the manor house. Their three older children, some of whom were already married, were left to manage the family farm. So Peter grew up like an only child in the manor house. It was there that he met Anastasia Malyk. It's unclear of when their story actually began, but by the end of World War I, Peter was at the right age to enlist, and he did. According to records, he was in and around the Chortkiv area, and he was active in the Polish military during the interwar period between World War I and World War II, the years 1918 to 1922.

**(soft piano music plays ends)**

**(birds and village nature noises ends)**

**Jars Balan (Expert Guest):** You have to remember the interwar period after the First World War ended and peace agreements were drawn up eventually; there was a part of Ukraine that ended up in the Soviet Union. The part of Ukraine that your family came from ended up mostly in the Polish state that was formed.

**[Host & Narrator: Erika Hanchar]:** That was my friend Jars Balan, the coordinator of the Kule Ukrainian Canadian Studies Center at the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta. Jars is a specialist in Ukrainian Canadian history and culture. And here is again to give a little more historical insights into our story.

**Jars Balan:** The regimes in each of these places were different. The Polish regime was authoritarian, became more and more authoritarian, and the Polish government pursued a policy of Polonization. They had historical claims to much of Ukrainian lands going back centuries.

**[Host & Narrator: Erika Hanchar]:** Polonization is the process of making people, places, or cultures more Polish, especially by encouraging and forcing them to adopt Polish language, identity, and customs.

**Jars Balan:** In Western Ukraine, there was tension between the Ukrainians who formed the majority of the population and the Poles. Polish landowners buying up land in Ukraine was good

quality land, and the government was encouraging people to move to what were ethnically mostly Ukrainian lands because they wanted to Polonize them. They allowed Ukrainian schools, their Ukrainian language schools, to operate till grade 5 or grade 6, and then everything had to be in Polish after that. They had promised in the peace agreements, the Treaty of Versailles, and the terms that were all worked out that they would grant Ukrainians autonomy, that Ukrainians would be able to set up their own school system, have their own organizational life; and then they reneged on that.

**[Host & Narrator: Erika Hanchar]:** And that broken promise radicalized Western Ukrainians against the Polish government.

**Jars Balan:** Eventually, what happened was the Ukrainian nationalist movement became more extreme. They adopted armed struggle against the regime; they started assassinating Polish officials, they started burning and sabotaging Polish crops, you know, of the Polish landowners, and the Poles responded with repressive means, something called pacification, where they sent in troops into villages that were hotbeds of resistance to the Poles and beat people physically, killed a few, beat some of them to death, actually.

**[Host & Narrator: Erika Hanchar]:** Now with Ukraine having been quite literally cut up into new countries, you would think that during the interwar period, the dangers might feel quite removed from a small-town boy and girl. But for Peter, who entered the military at the very end of the biggest war in history, the realities of the battlefield were closer than one would have thought.

I want to pause for a moment and shed a little light on what for me was one of the biggest misconceptions about wartime, and then unlearn a few things. As a kid growing up in North America, in a country brought to you by Great Britain, I was taught that we were the winners, the peacekeepers, and the allies in war. When wars were won by the good guys, us we celebrated and commemorated.

But here's the truth: quite often, the wars we celebrated winning in history books and on the big screen were in fact not over. Just because our national news stopped reporting on it or had moved on to another story didn't mean that everyone got to go home and carry on. Quite the opposite. A lot of wars create spinoff conflicts that mean civil unrest for many. For Peter Radomski, the end of World War I didn't mean a battle wasn't raging on his doorstep.

Only 30 minutes or so from Antoniv is the city of Chortkiv. And this was the site of more political and military unrest. The Chortkiv Offensive was a military campaign by the Ukrainian Galician Army against the Polish forces during the Polish-Ukrainian War in June of 1919, and it took place in the streets of Chortkiv. It was a counterattack to push Polish troops out of Galicia. And since Galicia was both Ukrainian and Polish in people and culture, politically, Peter could have been fighting against his own neighbors or his extended family. People he knew. For a while, the Ukrainian army was able to take back some small towns and hold down the city of Chortkiv, but supplies and weaponry were sparse, and to be fair, the Ukrainians were just outnumbered by the Polish army.

Peter returned to Antoniv in the spring of 1919, just in time to witness a large-scale epidemic of Typhus that ravaged Galicia, the Chortkiv region, and most of Eastern Europe. The outbreak was sort of an aftershock to the Polish-Soviet War and the Ukrainian-Soviet War, brought on by massive groups of refugees, prisoners, and military personnel to the regions of Western Ukraine. With them came the spread of lice that thrived in crowded conditions and effectively spread infection.

As I read into my family's records during that time, I came across several deaths due to Typhus. Reading it reminded me of how fast COVID spread in our time, and thinking for a moment that I understood the horror and scale of a Typhus epidemic, I soon learned that Typhus spreads faster, causing an infection that was nearly impossible to manage. It spread throughout the Ukrainian countryside, and by the end of 1919, it had reached Antoniv and taken Peter's mother Josepha. She was just 66 years old. The wars and the Chortkiv Offensive worsened health conditions across the country. The death toll was somewhere between 2 and 3 million, with thousands on record dying in and around the Chortkiv area alone. By early 1920, Anastasia's father Theodore also passed away due to infection caused by Typhus.

Things must have seemed pretty dire in Antoniv. Now with the end of the First World War and the Polish-Soviet War and the Polish-Ukrainian War, and of course the Chortkiv Offensive, the climate of Ukraine now looks very different. The country was cut into pieces again. And for Anastasia and Peter, who were born Austrian on paper, raised as Ukrainian speakers in Galicia, and then by their 20s were reclassified as Polish on the same land, in the same village, only now with new papers just stamped by a new empire, and with two deceased parents. Starting a new life might have been the only option.

**(soft piano music plays)**

**(birds and village nature noises)**

In 1920, after war, disease, and overall hardship, Peter and Anastasia were married in their village at the Church of the Intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a Greek Catholic church that I imagine would have been easily filled by just the Malyk and Radomski families alone, especially now that the Malyks had four more children after Anastasia. Peter and Anastasia's marriage was considered an intermarriage, a religiously mixed marriage, as he was a Roman Catholic and she was of Greek Orthodox. Back then, this would have been a big deal socially, but after the wars, religious tensions had settled a bit.

**Jars Balan:** Notwithstanding the tension and conflict between Ukrainians and Poles in Galicia... that doesn't change the fact that there were also positive relations. There are a lot of intermarriages, Ukrainians with Poles and stuff, so you get people, who at home, the father was Polish, the mother was Ukrainian, and they subscribe to both so there was fraternization in a positive way, but there was also friction.

**(soft piano music plays)**

**(birds and village nature noises)**

**[Host & Narrator: Erika Hanchar]:** Exactly one year to the day, they welcomed their first daughter Natalia, and the following year, a little boy named Jan. Even with two babies and a somewhat stable country politically (and by stable, I mean not at war), this life, I can only imagine, wasn't what Peter and Anastasia had dreamed about. The same old farm tainted by the pangs of war and the grief and loss of parents must have lit something within them, because what they did next could not have been done hastily. The plans they made had to take years to develop, years before the death of their parents or the birth of their children.

**(soft piano music plays fades out)**

**(birds and village nature noises fades out)**

I want to believe that their lives and mine, for that matter, were all part of some greater plan. Because when you're building a family history from paper like I have been, things get awfully simplified. An entire war becomes a date, a parent becomes a death line, and a place becomes a map coordinate.

**(soft electronic music transition)**

Every name, every place, and every story came to me all because of a stranger at a garage sale translating documents, pointed at a faded ink stamp on a piece of paper and said, "This is where your family is from. This is Antoniv."

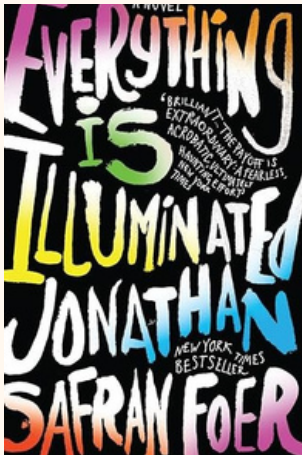
And that's the answer. But maybe the question was, "But for how long?"

This episode of *Granddaughter of Immigrants* was written by me, Erika Hanchar, and made possible with the help of our guest historian and author Jars Balan, administrative coordinator for the Kule Ukrainian Canadian Studies Center at the University of Alberta. If you'd like to learn more about Ukrainian Canadian history and culture, you can read his book, *Salt and Braided Bread: Ukrainian Life in Canada*, available on Amazon.

Sound engineering and design for *Granddaughter of Immigrants* by Colin Thompson and me, Erika Hanchar. Music for this episode by Semo and Out of Flux. For the full transcript and links

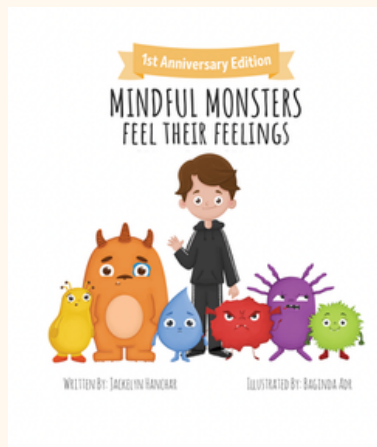
to books mentioned in the episode, please see the show notes. *Granddaughter of Immigrants* is brought to you by Main Character Creative, a digital media agency.

# Book RECOMMENDATIONS



**EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED**

**JONATHAN SAFRAN-FOER**



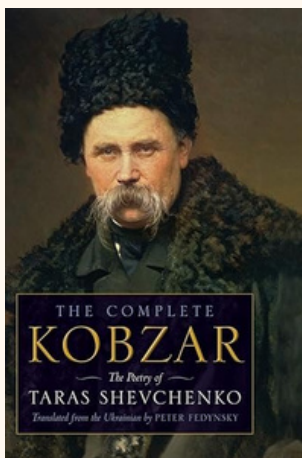
**MINDFUL MONSTER FEEL THEIR FEELINGS**

**JACKELYN HANCHAR**



**THE GIFT OF THE SHIFT**

**ANN PAPAYOTI & TRACEY MACDONALD**



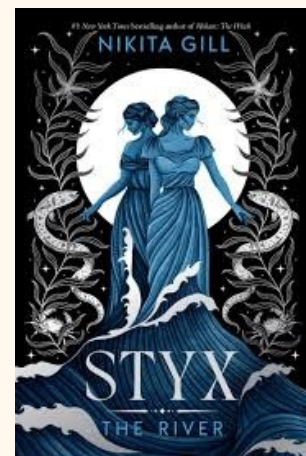
**THE KOBZAR**

**TARAS SHEVCHENKO**



**SALT AND BRAIDED BREAD**

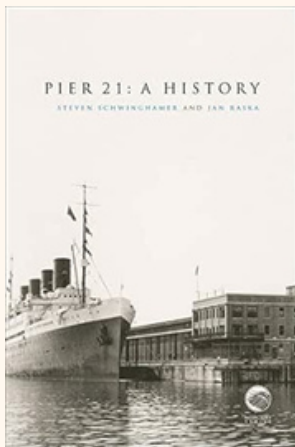
**JARS BALAN**



**STYX : THE RIVER**

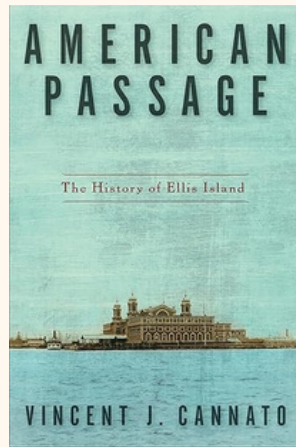
**NAKITA GILL**

# Book RECOMMENDATIONS



PIER 21 : A HISTORY

JAN RASKA  
STEVEN SCHWINGHAMER



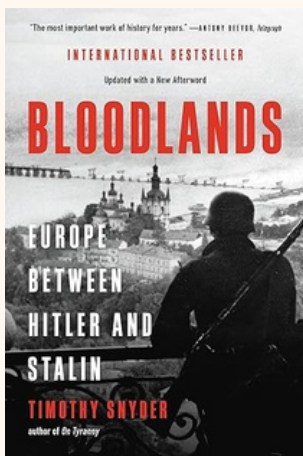
AMERICAN PASSAGE

VINCENT CANNATO



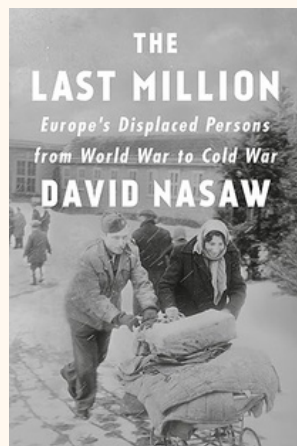
BABYN YAR

A. ANATOLI  
ANATOLY KUZNETSOV



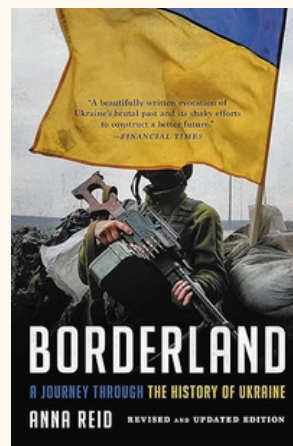
BLOODLANDS

TIMOTHY SNYDER



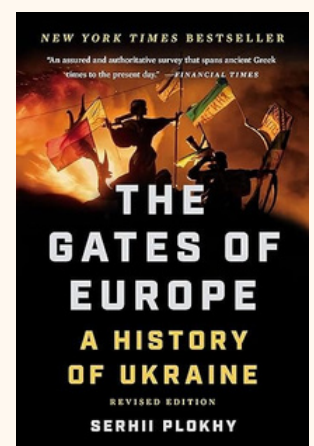
THE LAST MILLION

DAVID NASAW



BORDERLAND

ANNA REID



THE GATES OF EUROPE

SERHII PLOKHY

# ABOUT ME

I'm Erika Hanchar, a **Writer, Director, Podcaster** in Ontario, Canada. I got my start in the film industry as a Stills Photographer on a **YTV children's television** production back in 2005.

In 2016, I received the Kobzar Scholarship to the **Humber School for Writers** in Toronto, and have participated in several readings at **Toronto's Arts & Letters Club** in 2018 and 2019.

In 2022, my manuscript *The Warsaw Servant* was named a finalist at the **Palm Beach International Book Festival**. More recently in early 2025, I wrote and directed a **PSA commercial** with the Women in Film & Television in Florida, USA.

My Podcast **Granddaughter of Immigrants** 2026 is a creative storytelling experience of my families immigration journey to Canada. With expert guests from **University of Alberta**. Museum Director of Shevchenko Museum in Toronto and my psychologist, who all breath history, story and clarity into the narravtive.



*“(Erika) you really have your senses down, I could taste, feel, see and hear what the characters were going through. The taste of gravel was in my mouth. Honestly.”*

**Lois Cahall** on the manuscript for; *The Warsaw Servant*  
**Founder and Creative Director**  
**Palm Beach Book Festival**

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