



Literary history as provocation of national identity, national identity as provocation of literary history: The case of Ukraine

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Abstract

Empirical research into political sentiments gives force to the proposition that, in the context of the 2013–14 Euromaidan and subsequent war, Ukrainian national identity, for most of its history predominantly ethno-cultural, has undergone changes justifying its qualification as ‘civic’. In this article I discuss the ethno-cultural orientation, conventional during the 19th and 20th centuries, of Ukrainian literary history, a scholarly genre that has a tradition of promoting the cause of Ukrainian nation-building; I identify contemporary examples of discourses in the literary sphere – literary works themselves, literary anthologies and the public statements and debates of writers – that embody or applaud civic identities akin to those in evidence on the Euromaidan; and I reflect upon the values, inclusive and multicultural, that a Ukrainian national literary history rhetorically in harmony with post-Euromaidan sentiment would evince.

Keywords

Euromaidan, literary history, national identity, Ukraine

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Introduction: The civic turn in Ukrainian national identity

The year 2014 saw in Ukraine the victory of the Euromaidan protests, the flight of a deposed president, the installation of an interim government and early presidential elections, the Russian annexation of Crimea, the commencement of a sanguinary Russian-backed insurgency in the east of the country and the mobilization of a military response in which volunteers were decisive in both combat and civilian support roles. Against such a background it was scarcely surprising that the publication of three massive volumes of the new 12-volume *History of Ukrainian Literature* (Donchyk, 2014) passed with little public notice. Yet, collectively authored by members of the Taras Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and appearing under that entity's imprint, the *History* is a work of no small significance – as a fruit of scholarship, to be sure, but also as an indicator of the way in which the country's foremost scholarly institution for literary studies conceives of both the object of its research and the relationship of that object to the nation and state.

Early in the 2000s the proposal for such a *History* had ignited spirited scholarly debate about its potential scope and theoretical basis. The discussion was cognizant of contemporaneous Western uncertainties about objectivist claims within the historical disciplines (Syvokin', 2001; Denysova, 2001), of the tendency of the field to succumb to the authority of such metadisciplines as sociology and psychology (Bondar, 2001) and of the potential pitfalls of a single-minded pursuit of 'postcolonial decentralisation' (Bilous, 2001: 24). In the end, however, the *History* would be traditionalist (at least, the introduction to it by Mykola Zhulyns'kyi, director of the Institute of Literature, would frame it as being so). It would offer an evolutionary narrative of a literature conceived of ethno-culturally as encompassing writing in Ukrainian or in other languages by persons able to be defined as belonging to the Ukrainian people; and it would pursue a goal articulated in a strikingly Hegelian, Romantic manner: 'the mission of the *History of Ukrainian Literature* is to give the fullest possible picture of the thousand-year historical and spiritual development of the Ukrainian people, expressed by its creative artists in all its aesthetic multifariousness' (Zhulyns'kyi, 2014: 5). In fact, the content of the early volumes of the *History*, especially the parts that deal with the linguistically variegated writing and the complex ethnic, political, religious and cultural affiliations of Early Modern literati, does not unequivocally resonate with the unitary vision enunciated by Zhulyns'kyi. But the validating ideology emphatically announced in the introduction is that of Romantic cultural nationalism.

The introduction is also notable for invoking contemporary motifs that reflect the legacy of the Euromaidan and the context of the war with Russia. The European affiliation of Ukrainian literature, its 'kinship with Western culture, literature and art' is emphasized, as is the rapprochement achieved in Early Modern cultural institutions of Ukraine between 'the Byzantine Orthodox East' and the 'Roman Catholic West' (2014: 6) and, more generally, the ongoing influence of Christian religiosity upon Ukrainian culture. It is difficult not to detect in these formulations allusions to the Euromaidan's pro-European orientation and its much remarked-upon ecumenical religiosity (Kozyrskya, 2014; Hovorun, 2015; Wanner, 2014). Likewise, a discourse that refers to the historical 'struggle for Ukraine's independence' or the 'struggle of the people for statehood, for a

national church, culture, education and language' cannot be disconnected from the context of the war, conceptualized as a battle to protect from neo-colonial aggression the sovereignty, political and cultural, that was the recent culmination of a protracted and painful process of national evolution. In some respects, then, the *History* promises to bring to expression geopolitical and cultural sentiments that were embodied in the Euromaidan and its aftermath. Yet the model of national identity that it assumes and promotes differs from the essentially civil and pluralist conception of national identity that the Euromaidan and war made ascendant.

Both research (Kulyk, 2014; Kuzio, 2015) and public commentary (Kotliar, 2013; Zilhalov, 2014) detect a major shift in the beliefs and emotions associated with the national identity of citizens of Ukraine during and after the Euromaidan – a shift that had already been presaged in the Orange Revolution of 2004 (Shekhovtsov, 2013). In short, what has been observed is a transition from an ethno-cultural conception of Ukrainianness to its civic counterpart, where Ukrainianness is understood as an attribute freely chosen by people favourably disposed to the Ukrainian nation-state without regard to ethnicity or cultural orientation.

From its first modern formulations in the Romantic era to the establishment of Ukraine's independence in 1991 and for long afterwards, Ukrainian national identity was usually conceived of by its intellectual and literary advocates as signalled by the possession of cultural markers (pre-eminently, knowledge and use of the Ukrainian language) or, in the event of persons acculturated to other, dominant (usually Polish or Russian) nations, descent from people who bore such markers. Ukrainian nationalism, accordingly, was a program to develop and modernize the unassimilated majority as people conscious of their membership of a Ukrainian nation and to reverse the assimilation of elites, with the goal of asserting the dignity and, ultimately, political sovereignty of the Ukrainian people as a broad trans-class community united by a shared national consciousness.

Like the nationalisms of other Central and East European nations submerged in dynastic empires, that of Ukraine focused on the mobilization of its own ethno-cultural community. The ethno-cultural heterogeneity of the territories where ethnically defined Ukrainians constituted a majority was acknowledged by such intellectual leaders of the national movement as Mykhailo Drahomanov (1841–95) and Ivan Franko (1856–1916),¹ but it did not affect the primacy of the objective – cultural, and later political – of empowering the Ukrainian majority on Ukrainian ethnographic territory. Once Ukraine achieved statehood during its short-lived independence of 1917–21, or quasi-statehood as a union republic of the USSR, the issue of the relationship between the titular nation and the minorities within the borders of the corresponding state rose in priority. In the latter, more enduring case, however, the approved national identity of the minorities was defined as part of an overarching Soviet identity, not a Ukrainian national identity.

From the 1930s onward, with the demise of the Soviet indigenization policy (*kor-nizatsiia*), including 'Ukrainianization', and the return of an unproclaimed but effective policy of Russification, Ukrainian identity regressed to the status of one inhibited minority cultural identity among others. In interwar Poland and Romania, meanwhile, a Ukrainian insurgent ethnic nationalism responded to the state nationalisms of those countries. In short, at no time in modern history prior to Ukraine's regaining independence in 1991 had there been an opportunity or need for Ukrainian elites to conceptualize, let alone construct,

an overarching civic national identity that would encompass the many ethno-cultural groups inhabiting Ukraine. It was not until protest movements focused on political and social values – democratic governance, rule of law and freedom from corruption – brought citizens together on the public squares of Kyiv and other major cities independent of ethnic self-identification, as they famously did during the Orange Revolution, that a collective consciousness began to emerge that observers were prepared to label as civic. The Euromaidan of 2013–14, peopled as it was by citizens of Ukraine who in many cases took care to render visible their regional, linguistic and religious diversity, advanced this trend, as did the fact that, except for part of the Donbas, the predominantly Russian-speaking parts of the country rejected secessionist initiatives inspired by the ethno-cultural ideology of the ‘Russian World’, while the volunteers who enlisted in self-organized military formations to combat the Russian-backed separatists were as likely to speak Russian as Ukrainian, as any viewer of Ukrainian television news could daily confirm.

In the following I propose to examine the manner in which, if at all, this civic turn has been anticipated or accompanied by developments in what hitherto has been an important nation-building discourse: that of literary history. The discussion requires some preliminary contextualization.

The ethno-cultural nation and the anxieties of (literary) history

Modern Ukrainian literature, almost always defined as literature written in vernacular Ukrainian, from its origin in the closing years of the 18th century was deeply engaged in the Ukrainian national project. In the Russian Empire this project was undertaken initially by a small part of the Ukrainian educated stratum. Influenced by Herder and the pan-Slav ideas of their Czech and Slovak counterparts, a handful of ethnographers, writers and historians sought to dignify, as part of a single (proto-national) whole, the cultural legacy of the peasant demographic majority and the historical legacy of the landowning elite through the study and celebration, respectively, of folklore and of the Cossack past. From the 1840s onward, this program was augmented by a commitment to the social and economic liberation of the enserfed peasantry, an objective reflected in what became the dominant pathos of Ukrainian literature. Language, the main feature possessed in common by the Ukrainian social strata (as well as Ukrainians of the tsarist and the Habsburg empires), was from the start a key component of the projected Ukrainian national identity, a state of affairs that was tacitly acknowledged by tsarist edicts of 1863 and 1876 that restricted the use of Ukrainian in public and in print. The urgency of the social oppression of the peasantry imposed a populist imperative upon the Ukrainian national project, rendering contentious early attempts to extend the scope of Ukrainian literature beyond populist themes. Although the aesthetic and cosmopolitan experiments of the *fin de siècle* were followed at intervals by other non-populist movements, the Ukrainian cultural mainstream as embodied in Ukrainian literary production remained anchored to the theme of the harsh life experiences of the ethnically Ukrainian plebeian classes and to the mission of their social and national liberation.

The role of literature in national projects is many-sided. It can articulate the values of the nation and postulate the existence of a national community. The latter may be both represented in the literary work and implied in the relationship between the author and

the reader by virtue of their sharing a language of communication. Literature may be construed as an emanation of the character, indeed the creative genius, of a people and thus itself become a national value; indeed, part of the legitimation of a nation may rest upon its capacity to generate such dignified human products as a national literature. Finally, such institutions of literary life as publishing and criticism produce a canon of especially worthy authors and literary texts that may be regarded as embodying national aspirations. Such a canon, and respect for its components, can become one of the unifying symbols of the nation and one of the objects of national education. Ukrainian literature played all of these roles vis-à-vis the Ukrainian nation, and Ukrainian literary histories, with some notable exceptions,² focused on ways in which literature advanced the national project.

In Western Europe and North America unease concerning the disciplinary robustness of literary history has a tradition extending at least to the work of René Wellek in the 1970s (Wellek, 1979: 419). Such disquiet was amplified in the 1990s in the force field of poststructuralist scepticism by anxiety lest the pathos of the connected narrative or the explanatory model characteristic of many literary histories unmask itself as complicit in the unwarranted exercise of cultural power. One author diagnosed this fear as the ‘contact phobia [*Berührungsangst*] of modern literary scholars with respect to the genre of literary history’ (Sprenkel, 1998: xi) – a phobia that David Perkins in his book *Is Literary History Possible?* derived from the unsustainability of claims to causal explanation in literary history; the best it could offer was interpretation (Perkins, 1992: 136). ‘We cannot write literary history with intellectual conviction’, he asserted, ‘but we must read it’ (Perkins, 1992: 17), meaning that facts and stories are essential if literary scholars are to go about their business, though they know their truth-claims to be spurious.

If concerns about the legitimacy of literary history were generally expressed in methodological terms, Western objections to *national* literary histories often took the form of (even emotive) expressions of disapproval grounded in impatience with the idea of nation itself. Literary history was berated for countenancing ‘the stubborn persistence of the nineteenth-century teleological narrative of national history today’ (Hutcheon, 2003: 13) or for its ‘persistent obsession with nationhood’ (Fontaine and Benoit-Dusauso, 2000: xxvii). In a discussion of the qualities appropriate for a national literary history in South Africa, a country where some might see value in the national consolidation that literary histories are often regarded as promoting, one author insisted on ‘resisting a national literary history’, since “‘Nation,” “literature,” and “history” are each signifiers central to the acts of totalisation’ (Green, 1996: 224).

Yet some authors – especially those dealing with national literary histories less well known to Western scholarship and, perhaps, less in the thrall of Western scholarly conventions – continue to embrace what Perkins identified as the traditional tasks of the literary history: recalling the past, including texts seldom read; organizing them by selection and arrangement; interpreting and explaining them by reference to historical context; describing styles and world-views; describing and quoting from works deemed significant; and ‘bring[ing] the past to bear on the present with consequences for the future’ (Perkins, 1992: 12–13).

Perkins’s gloom derives, in part, from the circumstance that, in contrast to the (seeming) objectivity of the natural sciences, literary history has too much rhetorical arbitrariness

about it; is too transparently wedded to identifiable interests; and is too prone to want to *move* its addressees – influence their emotions as well as minds through the selection and arrangement of its material. Hayden White reminded us forcefully in the 1970s of the figured and troped nature of history writing, and his observations apply to writing in all the sciences that deal with people and societies. ‘There has been a reluctance to consider historical narratives as what they most manifestly are: verbal fictions’ (White, 1978: 82), he observed; ‘the historical narrative does not reproduce the events it describes; it tells us in what direction to think about the events and charges our thoughts about the events with different emotional valences’ (1978: 91). Yet such rhetoricity is by no means a necessarily insidious dimension of literary history; a feature common to the human sciences, it is what enables them to seek to influence the world. Such influence is not exercised in the abstract; like all utterances, those of literary history cannot but promote the interests of some social agent. Keith Jenkins, noting that it is impossible to distinguish between ‘history as such’ and ‘ideological history’, made the point that ‘history is never for itself; it is always for someone’ (Jenkins, 1991: 21) – a fact that imposes the obligation to clarify on whose behalf and ‘for whom’ a particular history is written. For whom, then, has Ukrainian literary history been written? With what goals of persuasion? Have the cultural changes of 2013–14 imposed new demands upon Ukrainian literary history and, if so, what are they?

Discussions, widespread during the 1990s, concerning the end (or at least the growing irrelevance) of the nation-state notwithstanding,³ nation-states continue to be the building-blocks of the geopolitical edifice. They are among the most universal fruits of modernity. Since 1991 their number has continued to increase. Daily evidence demonstrates their capacity to become foci of collectively experienced emotions, positive as well as negative. Some nation-states, especially those in Europe, came into being as embodiments of the visions of elites that put themselves in charge of groups of people who were ready to see themselves as nations. Others, especially states created in the process of decolonization, are building new nations to correspond to them. Nations change – as do the world-views, value systems, myths, and emotions that their members associate with them. National moods and predispositions change in response to various factors: cultural shifts, global and local; changing economic circumstances and thus life experiences; and such deliberate endeavours of powerful actors, especially governments, as education and propaganda. These shifts of sentiment set parameters for action by citizens and groups within the nation-state, and by representatives of the nation-state on the international arena.

It is reasonable, therefore, to regard every input that influences the ethical culture of the nation-state as important. For that reason the content and tone of national histories, and histories of national literatures, have practical significance. It matters whether the ‘story’ which the ‘narrator’ of a national literary history tells his or her audience is a 19th-century epic tale of the heroic development, through masterly works crystallizing the national genius, of an ethnolinguistically unitary national spirit from profoundly ancient times to a triumphant present, or a narrative of many strands that pays attention to the presence within a national literature of textual expressions of various identity groups differentiated by ethnos, language, social status or gender, reflecting the while on what, at various historical moments, ‘nation’ and ‘national literature’ might mean.

Many discussions of literature in new nations arising from former colonies take the participation of a national literature in nation-building as axiomatic; they debate not the

possibility of a national literature but the shape that it, and its history, should take. The problems are not trivial: what, for example, should be included in Nigerian national literature and its history – all oral and written outputs in all of the languages spoken in that nation-state? Or writings in a selection of these languages? Or only writings in the language of the former colonial power (Richard, 1987: 294–6; Sullivan, 2001)? Each of these variants, of course, is imbued with different political messages and corresponds to different interests. Literary historiography, thus, is or has the potential to be one of the many cultural interventions that help shape each nation; it has been, and continues potentially to be, a medium for proposing understandings of pasts conceived of as national, and therefore a means of influencing national futures. As the editors of a recent literary history put it:

the crucial question is not whether literary histories based on consensus are *possible*, but whether a history can be instrumental in moving a transnational public towards morally and politically desirable consensus. Good literary (and other) histories [...] recontextualise known information and explanations from the perspective of the present and a vision of the future. (Cornis-Pope and Neubauer, 2004: 15)

In the light of the continued vitality of the nation-state as the framework for a great deal of human collective consciousness and action, it would make sense to add the words ‘and national’ to ‘transnational’.

Literary history as provocation of national identities: Ukrainian literary histories

The legitimacy of grand narratives of national literary history was not everywhere questioned in the 1990s, least of all in the successor countries of the Soviet Union. The following intervention from Estonia, published in 1991, was composed, no doubt, in the closing moments of the USSR. Its emphatic cultural essentialism needs to be read as a manifesto of liberty from the Russocentrism of the Soviet Union that had been masked as socialist internationalism:

Our starting point is the claim that any national literature is a system characterized by the following features: an organic connection to the historical destiny of its ethnic group; a national language as the basic medium of its existence; rootedness in the folklore and mythology of its ethnic group; stability and dynamism as an aesthetic system; the existence of an indigenous, self-aware artistic tradition interacting with other national art forms; social and aesthetic heterogeneity; a literary development and growth influenced by, or generically and typologically correlated with, other literatures and the world literary process [...]. Every national literature is characterized by a specific combination of these features, which distinctly define a national, literary, and aesthetic system. (Bassel, 1991: 773)

From this point of view there exist such things as ‘national artistic consciousness, [a] “national point of view” or national “way of seeing”’ (1991: 774). One would not only question the exclusivist (because radically anti-colonial) values invoked here; one would need to point out that the general definition of ‘national literature’ offered simply does

not accommodate the many national literatures that emerged from the break-up of other colonial empires than the Soviet one. But the passage vividly illustrates the point that, in some places, the long 19th century is longer than we might think. Moreover, in these places the reputedly 19th-century task of nation-building is viewed as incomplete, while history, literature and literary history are counted among the tools available for its completion.

In the absence of a Ukrainian state, and with Ukrainian literary activity taking place in a geographical space shared by representatives of other cultures, some dominant (Russian, Polish, to a lesser extent German), others sharing the subaltern status of the Ukrainian, Ukrainian literary history writing from its inception had little cause or opportunity to do otherwise than focus on phenomena marked by their language as Ukrainian; the task required the separation of Ukrainian literature from other national literatures. Symptomatically, the historian Mykola Kostomarov (1817–85), author of one of the earliest accounts of Ukrainian literature, titled this study ‘A Survey of Literary Works Published in the Little Russian [Ukrainian] Language’, making the point that the object of his inquiry, the nascent Ukrainian literature, did not include literary writings by Ukrainians in Russian (nor, indeed, any non-Ukrainian writing from Ukraine). Gogol, the most famous of such literati, Kostomarov acknowledged only as an author who ‘in his lofty compositions in the beautiful Russian language expressed much concerning the Little Russian way of life, though, to be sure, connoisseurs are of the view that much of this work would have been better, had it been written in his native language’ (Kostomarov, 1994 [1842]: 282).

Ever since, the majority of histories of Ukrainian literature have taken as their proper subject matter writing in Ukrainian (or, for the period preceding the advent of a literary Ukrainian based on the vernacular, in languages that could be construed as predecessors to Ukrainian). The ‘someone’, to reinvoke Jenkins’s term, for whom these works were written was, unequivocally, the Ukrainian nation ethno-culturally imagined, their rhetorical goal being the reinforcement of a national narrative of which the Ukrainian people was the central character. This was true of the literary history of Serhii Iefremov (1876–1939), published three years before the First World War, which saw Ukrainian literature as the main vehicle of expression of the Ukrainian(-speaking) people: ‘our native literature is today the only possession of our people and the sole index, sure and unerring, of its real life’ (Iefremov, 1995 [1911]: 20). It was no less true of the literary history published in 1922–7 by Mykhailo Hrushevs’kyi (1866–1934), the historian who had earlier challenged the ‘general scheme’ of Russian history by claiming the medieval state of Kyivan Rus’ for the Ukrainian historical narrative and who headed the independent Ukrainian government in 1917; his literary history, especially through its inclusion of folklore within the definition of literature, underscored the role of the ‘people’ as the basis of the nation and as the ultimate object of literary-historical inquiry. It was true of Soviet histories of Ukrainian literature, which, notwithstanding their internationalist claims and their emphasis on Russian-Ukrainian literary connections, nonetheless embraced the principle of a national literature as the literature of an ethno-cultural community. It was true even of Dmytro Chyzhevs’kyi’s history, which, notwithstanding its focus on literary forms, selected the texts that were its subject matter on the basis of their language or, if not language, then at least the connection of their authors to an ethno-cultural community that could be defined as Ukrainian – even though, up to and during the 18th century, the members of this community as a rule wrote in a number

of languages. Literature in languages other than Ukrainian entered the purview of such histories if it was thematically connected to Ukraine. Thus, the 'Ukrainian schools' in Polish and Russian Romantic literature were traditionally included in such accounts. On the other hand, it was not usual to include in them reference to authors writing on the territories enclosed by the ethnographic borders of Ukraine if they could not easily be related to the narrative of Ukrainian nation-building – Mikhail Bulgakov or Ivan Bunin, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Karl Emil Franzos or Paul Celan, Bruno Schulz or Stanisław Lem, Mendele Mocher Sforim or Sholem Aleichem, Mihai Eminescu or Ismail Gasprinski, for example.

The activist quality of literary histories of Ukraine persisted even when they made no overt political claims, as the example of Chyzhevs'kyi's *History of Ukrainian Literature* (1956) and its afterlife in the form of polemical responses and re-editions amply shows. Chyzhevs'kyi (1894–1977), the pre-eminent post-war exponent of comparative Slavic literary studies, was born in the Ukrainian lands of the Russian Empire, trained in philosophy and philology at St Petersburg and Kyiv, then studied under Edmund Husserl at Freiburg. In Prague between 1924 and 1932 he was a member of the Prague Linguistic Circle; he taught at Halle and then Marburg in Germany. After a sojourn at Harvard in 1951–6, he returned to Germany, to the University of Heidelberg. 1956 was the year of the publication in New York, in Ukrainian, of his *History* – not a conventional national literary history by any account. Reflecting Chyzhevs'kyi's affinity for formalist approaches to the study of literature, the *History* privileged poetry and focused on trope, figure, and prosody. Chyzhevs'kyi was opposed both to the economic base and cultural superstructure model that was compulsory for literary scholarship in the Soviet Union, and to the heroic, populist national narrative that dominated émigré Ukrainian discourse. He saw his subject as a history of styles, which for him were expressed in world-views as much as in the forms of works of art. The pattern of his history was a kind of eternal dialectical oscillation between opposed stylistic principles: Renaissance and Baroque, then Classicism and Romanticism, then Realism and Modernism. In addition to the explicit historical thesis of this *History*, and its subtextual argument against both the Soviet and the émigré mainstreams, it also implicitly added its voice to those of figures like Erich Auerbach and Ernst Robert Curtius, who offered pan-European master narratives of literary history as post-war alternatives to their national(ist) predecessors. Chyzhevs'kyi insisted that there was a single story of European literature, and that Ukrainian literature was part of it. Later he would make the same argument about Slavic literatures in general (Tschizewskij, 1968).

It would appear that Chyzhevs'kyi's scheme of Ukrainian literary history did not pass unnoticed in Soviet Ukraine, where the eight-volume *History of Ukrainian Literature* (1967–71), one of the delayed fruits of the post-Stalin thaw, silently acknowledged and discreetly echoed his emphasis on style, periodization and the interconnectedness of the literary process (Kyryliuk, 1967). This Soviet history subtly integrated the standard repertoire of official arguments with some not-so-official ones. On the surface, it intoned all of the obligatory historical topoi (the class basis of all history; the division of the literary field into 'progressive' and 'reactionary' domains; the unshakeable friendship of the Soviet peoples and the irrepressible yearning of Ukrainians throughout their history for union with the Russian people). Just below the surface, the same work made arguments about the

antiquity, dignity, wealth and distinctiveness of Ukrainian literature, nourishing a subterranean national narrative within mainstream Soviet culture that, some would later argue, helped account for the ease with which Soviet elites adopted national positions on the eve of the collapse of the USSR.

In 1975 Chyzhevs'kyi's *History* appeared in translation into English, once more in the United States (Čyževs'kyj, 1975), under the editorship of the University of Toronto professor George S. N. Luckyj (1919–2001), who in 1970 had reviewed the Soviet eight-volume history, noting the two-tiered nature of its argumentation (Luckyj, 1970). The new edition of Chyzhevs'kyi's *History* had a new rhetorical objective. Its appearance coincided with a concerted effort by Ukrainian émigré communities in the United States and Canada (and, shortly afterwards, Australia) to establish university programs and chairs of Ukrainian Studies, in part because of the prestige connected with such institutions, in part in the hope of countering the Russocentrism of Slavic and Soviet studies in the West. The new university programs required a certain critical mass of foundation texts in English, and Luckyj contributed energetically to their production. In response to this need, Chyzhevs'kyi's *History* was recycled as an introductory text and students' reference work, a role that, given its theoretical bent and the clearly subjective nature of some of its emphases, it did not quite fit. Nonetheless, in the absence of a competitor, it served so well that in the 1990s the publisher approached Luckyj for a second edition – but augmented with new material bringing the narrative up to the present. In the end, what was published was a volume encompassing under the one cover Chyzhevs'kyi's *History* and Luckyj's own *Ukrainian Literature in the Twentieth Century: A Reader's Guide*, a text of utterly different, indeed traditionalist and commonsensical, theoretical presuppositions (Čyževs'kyj, 1997). In what György Lukács, had he lived, would perhaps have called a 'triumph of postmodernism', Ukrainian literary studies were suddenly enriched, *faute de mieux* but very much in tune with the *Zeitgeist*, with a literary history embodying the denial of monolithic, systematic, essentializing, coherent narrative. Only seemingly apolitical, the literary histories of Chyzhevs'kyi and Luckyj were, to return to Jenkins's terminology once again, 'for someone' in ways whose political messages, while not explicitly stated, are easily discernible. For their notionally primary audience of North American undergraduate and graduate students, and for the Anglophone scholarly readership as well, they presented an account of Ukrainian literature not tarred with the brush, delegitimizing in many academic milieus, of nationalism and thus inscribable into the discourse of respectable Western normality. For the implied audience beyond the Iron Curtain, on the other hand, the first, Ukrainian-language, version of Chyzhevs'kyi's *History* was a provocation and a challenge, delivered at the beginning of the post-Stalin thaw, to produce a national literary history more liberal and more national than its predecessors. Arguably, the eight-volume work, with its reinstatement in the canon of some previously banned authors and its relatively generous treatment of (Western-orientated) pre-19th-century periods of Ukrainian literature, went some distance toward doing just that.

Literary preludes to the Euromaidan

The pluralist mood of the Euromaidan, as well as the transethnic solidarity that was in evidence there and in the response to the immediately following war in the east, resonated

with sentiments that circulated in parts of the literary sphere. There had been a long pre-independence tradition of Russian-language literature by writers who lived in Ukraine or had spent part of their lives there, including such well-known figures as Anna Akhmatova, Mikhail Bulgakov, and Isaac Babel (the latter significant also as a Jewish writer). But it was unusual for those of them who achieved eminence to profess a Ukrainian identity (indeed, Bulgakov in his early work stridently opposed its emergence as a political force). During the latter part of the Soviet period, some Russian-language writers in Ukraine identified to a greater or lesser extent with the country of their residence and were active in its literary life; they were represented both in the literary mainstream (e.g. Boris Chichibabin and Leonid Kiselev) and in the dissident movement (e.g. Viktor Nekrasov and Igor' Pomerantsev). In contemporary Ukraine, a popular internet source lists several dozen writers of various generations who publish in Russian (*Rosiis'komovna literatura Ukrainy*, 2016). Some of these literati have drawn attention to the Ukrainian literary environment as the main context within which they position their works. The most visible and widely translated of them, Andrei Kurkov, makes a point of publicly underscoring his status as a Ukrainian author who writes in Russian. The literary critic Iurii Volodars'kyi made symptomatic remarks when opening a roundtable on Ukraine's Russian-language literature:

Allow me to make a clarification: 'Russian literature in Ukraine' – I would rephrase this a little as 'Russian-language literature in Ukraine'. We are speaking not about Russian literature as such, but about the literature that is being written in the Russian language in Ukraine – about a part of Ukrainian literature. (*Rosiis'komovna literatura Ukraïny: Bidna rodychka z bahatoi simi'?*)

Among contemporary Ukrainian-language literary texts, too, there are those that represent as a real and desirable phenomenon the presence in Ukrainian society of many ethno-cultural strands. The popular prose writer Mariia Matios, for example, sets much of her prose in her native region of Bukovyna, once (and no longer) profoundly multi-ethnic and multicultural. Matios thematizes this multiculturalism, especially the Ukrainian-Jewish component of it, with sympathy and knowledge of the non-Ukrainian parts of the mosaic.

Literary criticism has turned its attention to the parallel existence in Ukraine of literary production and consumption in Ukrainian and Russian. One scholar, examining three writers united by their connection to the city of Kharkiv, reveals as an accidental, not an essential, fact that they write in different languages: Yuri Tsaplin and Andrei Krasniashchikh in Russian, Oleh Kotsarev in Ukrainian (Zaharchenko, 2014). Another, examining Russian-language literary fiction in Ukraine and its circulation in the literary markets of Ukraine and Russia, argues that it is plausible to cluster many such texts as 'Ukrainian Russian-language literature', even as others gravitate toward 'Russian literature in Ukraine', the distinction between the two being permeable and situation-dependent (Puleri, 2014).

Another important niche of the literary sphere, that of the anthology, has reflected and even promoted the multilingual dimension of literature in Ukraine. Olean Haleta has documented the recent boom in literary anthologies, a proportion of which place side by

side texts from Ukraine's different cultural milieus and landscapes, sometimes in a number of languages (2013). One example is *Literary StanislavIF*, a multilingual anthology of texts written in or about the city of Ivano-Frankivsk, known previously as Stanislav: it brings together in chronological order Ukrainian and a few Russian texts (in the original only), several Polish texts (including a Holocaust testimony; the verse is reproduced in the original and Ukrainian translation, the prose in Ukrainian translation only), and a small number of German texts (in Ukrainian translation only) (Ieshkiliev and Bondarev, 2012). Especially eloquent as declarations of commitment to a Ukrainian national identity based on civic values rather than language are the bilingual works or anthologies inspired by the theme of the Euromaidan (e.g. *Ievromaidan*, 2014; Galushko, 2015).

National identity as provocation of literary history

Linda Hutcheon, a defender of histories of post-colonial literatures as testimonial records of the trauma of empire, has asked why it is that, when 'postmodern and poststructuralist theory has begun to dismantle the ideology that subtends teleological narratives, [...] not all constituencies have welcomed this dismantling' (2003: 14). One reason, she submits, is the utility of such narratives for projects of decolonization: they can engage in 'a canny borrowing of the structural power of that earlier national(ist) narrative of a history of progress', using it 'to new but equally political interventionist ends' (2003: 15). Hutcheon approves of postcolonial literary histories' capacity to see a nation's literature from the perspective of its imperial legacy, exposing its inevitably traumatic and, likely, repressed narratives; such acts of witnessing 'constitute an ethical as well as a political project: literary history as *testimonio*' (2003: 15). This Hutcheon contrasts to other, earlier national identity narratives 'grounded in remembered moments of heroism and glory' (2003: 20), and in the contrast there is an implicit evaluation: *testimonio* – legitimate; heroism and glory – not so.

Yet there is little intrinsic difference between the ethical statuses of these two modes of making sense of the literary past. The pathos of 'heroism and glory' – or of *testimonio*, for that matter – is as likely to inhere in 'national' literary histories as 'postcolonial' ones; often, either label may be applied to the same text. Neither is a priori ethically superior. Literary histories, whether postcolonial or national, will reflect the ethical and political values of their authors. It is part of the predicament of historical writing, including literary history, that – through choice of period, selection of material, positioning of narrative voice – it mirrors the stance of the writer, as Hans-Georg Gadamer made clear:

The historicity of our existence entails that prejudice, in the literal sense of the word, constitutes the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something – whereby what we encounter says something to us. (1976: 9)

Embracing this ineluctable mutual hermeneutic involvement of the object of inquiry and their own perspective, literary historians inevitably are informed or guided – 'prejudiced' – by their own values and conditioned by their own circumstances. Thus, for

example, in the first decade of the 21st century and in the context of the growing multicultural diversity of Western societies, Walter Veit called for a reassessment of literary-historical tasks in the light of globalization, on the one hand, and of the need to take cognizance of minorities within contemporary nation-states, on the other. The practical correlative of Veit's exhortation was an imperative to inscribe into literary histories the writings of authors who identify with cultural minorities or write in languages other than those that in a given society are dominant (2008: 420).

How, then, might literary historians write histories of Ukrainian literature in the wake of the Euromaidan? They will have no choice but to write in cognizance of the civic turn in national identity that the Euromaidan embodied and propelled. The events of 2013–14 will not have failed to inflect the hermeneutic 'bases of [their] openness to the world'. They might, therefore, wish to write their literary histories from an inclusive, multi-cultural perspective, taking stock, in addition to the traditional Ukrainian subject matter, of the other literary projects that have taken shape in, or with reference to, the territory that now comprises Ukraine: projects realized in Latin, Polish, Russian, Hebrew, Yiddish, Crimean Tatar, German – the list could be extended – and in relation to values and traditions different from and supplementary to those of the Ukrainian ethno-cultural national project. They might also aspire to write their new national literary histories as postcolonial: as works that give attention to the flows of the power of empire and state through the institutions, conventions, canons and hierarchies of the literary sphere, but whose aim is to transcend both colonial arrogance and anti-colonial rancour.

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Notes

1. Both Drahomanov and Franko regarded Ukraine as the territory encompassed by the boundary of rural settlement of Ukrainian-speaking peasants, and anticipated that at the time of this social group's empowerment through national liberation the question of the minorities inhabiting the same geographical space would call for ethical resolution (Drahomanov, 1991 [1878]: 277–9; Franko, 1986 [1905]: 504–5).
2. Even Chyzhevs'kyi's history, discussed below, which on first encounter appears to be one such exception, proves on examination to serve the ethno-cultural national project, if in a less direct way.
3. For a sample of formulations of scepticism with regard to the future of nation-states from the perspectives of a number of scholarly disciplines, see Ömae (1995), Guéhenno (1995), Hankiss (1999) and Braeckman (2008).

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