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**Book Review:**  
***“Ukrainian Identity and Seventeenth  
to Twenty-First Century transformations”***  
***[Tożsamość ukraińska wobec przemian  
XVII-XXI w.]*** Katarzyna Jakubowska-  
**-Krawczyk and Albert Nowacki, eds.**

*Ukrainian Identity and Seventeenth to Twenty-First Century transformations*, edited by Katarzyna Jakubowska-Krawczyk and Albert Nowacki (KUL Publishing House, Lublin 2017) is a collection of research articles on Ukrainian self-identification over several centuries, as indicated in the title. The book is dedicated to Professor Stefan Kozak, and marks the occasion of the 80th anniversary of his birthday. The first text by Stefan Batruch is also dedicated to this praiseworthy researcher of Ukrainian literature. The texts collected in the volume focus on the problem of national self-identification and identity changes from the point of view of history, journalism, cinematography, social sciences and literary studies. Among the authors, there are researchers from Poland and Ukraine; Ukrainian and Polish studies specialists, historians, film critics and literary scholars. In the introduction, the editors of the volume emphasize that the work “covers topics selected by researchers, seen from literary, cultural, historical and other perspectives. Almost twenty texts included in the book present the subject matter introduced in the title in a broad time perspective, from the seventeenth century to the present day”.

The broad time range, interdisciplinary character of the collected texts, and very well planned structure of the book allow tracing several centuries of cultural, literary and political processes which have shaped today’s Ukraine. The sense of identity

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is one of the key and probably most difficult issues of Ukrainian studies. Complex history, past and modern conflicts, centuries-old anti-Ukrainian policy conducted by dominant political forces - all this makes the issues of national, cultural, linguistic and religious self-identification invariably current, and identity issues are an integral part of research on Ukrainian culture, literature, and society.

Research articles have been arranged by the editors in chronological order - from those covering historical times to those referring to the present day. In the beginning, we will find two studies devoted to the formation of national identity in the 17th century. In the first one, Hubert Łaszkiwicz analyses the issue of power and peripheries on the example of the relationship between the Moscow Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the second, by Mariusz Drozdowski, is an analysis of national motifs for the outbreak of the Khmelnytsky Uprising. The editors look at historical issues again later in the book, presenting the text by an outstanding Polish historian, researcher of Polish-Ukrainian relations, Grzegorz Motyka. In his article *Operacja „Zachód” 1947 – sowiecki odpowiednik akcji „Wisła”, [Operation 1947, the Soviet equivalent of Operation Vistula]* about large scale deportation of Ukrainians from Galicia and Volhynia deep into the USSR, he analyses the Soviet deportation project, which may be considered to be “the eastern wing of Operation Vistula”, and whose goal was to break the resistance of the Ukrainian underground movement.

However, it is literary texts that dominate the book. They are pertinent to both phenomena and works of the past and the latest efforts, arising in response to the Revolution of Dignity and the current ongoing war. The domination of literary topics is understandable and justified, after all, it is in this area where the discussion about the Ukrainian identity has been going on since the beginning of the 19th century. As Katarzyna Jakubowska-Krawczyk notes, in the Romantic era, it was in the area of literature where the most important views and ideas relevant to the essence of what the nation was, and its culture and “spirit” represented, were manifested.<sup>2</sup> The authors of poetry, prose, and drama then created models of Ukrainian cultural and national identity. Due to the centuries-long nature of statelessness, it was the literary texts and related politics which gave rise to concepts and patterns which were later to constitute ideological foundations of the emerging nation.

In later periods, the importance of identity issues in literary works and the related polemic was equally important. The authors of the texts about Lesia Ukrainka and Mykhailo Kociubinsky, included in the volume, write about the worldview change and the dominant role of the European idea in shaping the Ukrainian identity at the beginning of the 20th century. Sebastian Delura in his text *Christianity at a Crossroads in Lesia Ukrainka’s Drama Rufin and Pryscylla [Chrześcijaństwo na rozdrożu w dramacie Łesi Ukrainki Rufin i Pryscylla]* analyzes the philosophical and religious foundations of the author’s work’ while Jarosław Poliszczuk refers

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<sup>2</sup> K. Jakubowska-Krawczyk, *Kształtowanie się tożsamości narodowej a obraz Polaka i Ukrainca w polskiej i ukraińskiej literaturze I połowy XIX wieku*, Warszawa-Iwano-Frankiws’k 2015, p. 17.

to another great author in Ukrainian literature of the early 20th century, Mykhailo Kociubinsky, presenting his activity in the context of ongoing heated debate about the development of Ukrainian culture at the dawn of the century. The importance of the European idea in searching for Ukrainian identity at the turn of the 20th century was invaluable, as Lidia Stefanowska recalls: “All the projects of modernization of the Ukrainian culture at the turn of the century were carried out with the view to a pro-European orientation, understood as the orientation on democratic and radical socio-political movements in Europe [...] It was one of the attempts to answer the question as to where Ukraine is situated in Europe and what role it is bound to play there<sup>3</sup> Professor Stefan Kozak in his text *Ukraina między Wschodem a Zachodem (do czasów nowożytnych)* [*Ukraine between East and West (until modern times)*] emphasized the fact that the idea of Europe had played an important role earlier, making the “European awareness more or less present in Ukraine, and being a force which shaped the national and European identity of the Ukrainians.”<sup>4</sup>

The tragic experience of Soviet totalitarianism and its impact on both Ukrainian self-identification and the fate of individual artists is discussed in three texts about Ukrainian artists: the article by Ihor Nabytowycz on neo-romantic motives in Mykhail Draj-Chmara’s poetry, the text by Oleksandr Astafiev discussing the concept of the Absolute in the work of Yuri Lypa, and Anna Horniatko-Szumyłowycz’s analysis, restoring the work of a long-forgotten writer Vasyl Tkaczuk. Rostysław Radyszewski undertakes an analysis of national motifs in Yuri Kosacz’s novel. The profound effects which the period of Soviet totalitarianism exerted on Ukrainian identity and on historical memory is an extremely important although well discussed issue, for example, by Professor Jarosław Hrycak, who proposed a direct diagnosis of Ukrainian society as being affected by amnesia, claiming: “to say that [...] Ukrainian historical memory has been deformed is not enough. You can deform something that has a form. Here we were dealing with atrophy of memory. [...]”<sup>5</sup> The texts collected in this volume regarding this tragic period are not a rehearsal of well-known theses, but either refer to characters erased from collective memory or propose the authors’ original analysis of the work of well-known writers which constitutes a fresh voice in the discussion.

An interesting move which extends the scope of the discussion is the inclusion in the volume of analyses reaching beyond the Ukrainian context, regarding Polish and Belarusian literature. In the volume there is an article by Witold and Anna Kołbuk, discussing pan-Slavic motifs in Józef Ignacy Kraszewski’s prose, and an article by Aleksander Barszczewski introducing Belarusian topics.

<sup>3</sup> L. Stefanowska, *Tematyka europejska w dyskursie tożsamościowym Ukraińców* [in:] *Szkice językowe i literacko-kulturowe*, O. Borys, M. Jeż, A. Samadova, M. Saniewska, eds., Warsaw-Iwano-Frankiws’k 2017, p. 198.

<sup>4</sup> S. Kozak, *Ukraina między Wschodem a Zachodem (do czasów nowożytnych)* [in:] „Slavica Orientalis”, vol. LXI, 3, 2012, p. 295.

<sup>5</sup> J. Hrycak, *Nowa Ukraina. Nowe interpretacje*, Wrocław 2009, p. 117.

Recent issues include a set of texts on Polish-Ukrainian film connections (*Polsko-ukraińskie kontakty filmowe* [Polish-Ukrainian film contacts] by Maria Mocarz-Kleindienst) and literary analyses of the events related to the Revolution of Dignity; the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas. The latter is included in the text by Katarzyna Jakubowska-Krawczyk discussing the memory code in Dmytro Pawłyczka's post-Maidan poetry, the literary picture of the "Russian world" discussed by Lubomir Puszak; Albert Nowacki's comprehensive review article on identity discussions in Ukrainian journalism and the post-Maidan literature. The authors raise current and important issues, such as the role of memory and of the past in national self-identification, changes in the perception of one's identity under the influence of recent events.

In the book, Dagmara Nowacka writes quite rightly in one of the articles:

"The process of shaping the national consciousness of Ukrainians is not a new topic. It has been explored by a number of researchers in the sociological, cultural, as well as philosophical, historical, literary and linguistic contexts."<sup>6</sup>

This does not change the fact that, although analysed for years, the topic still remains in the mainstream, and its importance is emphasized by the history of the course of upheavals, conflicts, and wars that affect Ukraine. The events of the Revolution of Dignity, the ongoing war in the East of the country, violation of the territorial integrity through annexation of Crimea, the repressions faced by Ukrainian intellectuals and creators of culture - all that puts the well-known issue in a completely new context. The authors *Tożsamość ukraińska wobec przemian XVII-XXI w.* also analyse these recent events in an attempt to determine the impact they have on changes and formation of contemporary Ukrainian identity<sup>7</sup>. After all, "the times of violent, revolutionary social changes always make us reflect on our own identity, our future, and humanistic values."<sup>8</sup> Ukraine is once again experiencing political upheavals and revolutionary social changes, so it definitely seems worth it to look again at identity changes, and the historical approach makes it possible to understand the processes which shaped today's self-identification.

<sup>6</sup> D. Nowacka, *Rusinów Galicyjskich poszukiwania tożsamości „Kozak i ochotnik” Iwana Witoszyńskiego* [in:] *Tożsamość ukraińska wobec przemian XVII-XXI w.*, K. Jakubowska-Krawczyk and A. Nowacki, eds., Lublin 2017, p. 86.

<sup>7</sup> A. Nowacki, *Dyskusje tożsamościowe w ukraińskiej publicystyce i literaturze pomajdanowej* [in:] *Tożsamość ukraińska wobec przemian XVII-XXI w.*; Jakubowska-Krawczyk K., *Kody pamięci w tomie Dmytra Pawłyczki „Virshi z Majdanu”* [in:] *Tożsamość ukraińska wobec przemian XVII-XXI w.*, K. Jakubowska-Krawczyk and A. Nowacki, eds., Lublin 2017, pp. 227-238.

<sup>8</sup> A. Nowacki, *Dyskusje tożsamościowe w ukraińskiej publicystyce i literaturze pomajdanowej* [in:] *Tożsamość ukraińska wobec przemian XVII-XXI w.*, K. Jakubowska-Krawczyk and A. Nowacki eds., Lublin 2017, p. 254.

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The review concerns the book *Ukrainian Identity in the Face of the 17th-21st Century Changes*, edited by Katarzyna Jakubowska-Krawczyk and Albert Nowacki (KUL Publishing House, Lublin 2017). This collective work consists of scientific articles on various aspects of Ukrainian native and cultural identity over several centuries. The book is dedicated to Professor Stefan Kozak on the occasion of the 80th anniversary. The book contains historical and cultural studies, but most of them are literary articles that deal with both past (modernism) and recent literature related to the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbass.

**Key words:** identity, Ukraine, literature, history, culture.

## RECENZJA KSIĄŻKI

### **TOŻSAMOŚĆ UKRAIŃSKA WOBEC PRZEMIAN XVII-XXI w POD RED. KATARZYNY JAKUBOWSKIEJ-KRAWCZYK I ALBERTA NOWACKIEGO**

Recenzja dotyczy książki *Ukraińska tożsamość w obliczu zmian XVII-XXI wieku* pod redakcją Katarzyny Jakubowskiej-Krawczyk i Alberta Nowackiego (Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2017). Ta zbiorowa praca składa się z artykułów naukowych dotyczących różnych

aspektów ukraińskiej tożsamości narodowej i kulturowej na przestrzeni kilku stuleci. Książka dedykowana jest prof. Stefanowi Kozakowi z okazji 80-lecia. Książka zawiera studia historyczne i kulturowe, ale większość z nich to artykuły literackie, które dotyczą zarówno przeszłości (modernizmu), jak i współczesnej literatury związanej z rewolucją godności, aneksją Krymu i wojną w Donbasie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** tożsamość, Ukraina, literatura, historia, kultura.

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