

Ukraine as the Hub of Postimperial Formalism. Ukraininess, Revolutionary Populism, and the Theory of Poetical Language ‘in’ Russia and ‘in’ Poland

Original study

Michał Mrugalski
University of Tübingen / Humboldt University of Berlin (michal.mrugalski@hu-berlin.de)

Received: February 2023, Accepted: March 2023

Abstract: The notion of ‘postimperial formalism’ accounts of the interconnectedness of Russian, Ukrainian, and Polish variants of formalism, whose distinctive character is contingent on the dialectics of liberation and subjugation (or autonomy and heteronomy) operating in the multinational entity of the Russian empire. Specifically, the theory of poetic language – the pars pro toto of early literary theory – carries with itself the survivals of the conditions of the multinational empire. This is most eloquently expressed in the writings of Polish and Jewish-Ukrainian populist activists turned ethnographic researchers, who prepared a theory of poetic language to which the formalists could have recourse. I first map the dimensions of the Ukrainian investment into the formulation of the theory of poetic language. Secondly, I describe the role of the constructed Ukraininess – under the guise of the so-called Ukrainian school of Polish romanticism – in the emergence of Polish formalism.

Keywords: Theory of Poetic Language, Imperium, Colonialism, Populism, Formalism, Ukrainian School of Polish Romanticism

I introduce the notion of ‘postimperial formalism’ to point to the interconnectedness of Russian, Ukrainian, and Polish variants of formalism as I assume that the conditions of the multinational entity of the Russian empire contributed to the specificity of this triune formalism, distinct from other local variances of formalism, e.g. Czech or German (Steiner 2022; Nebrig 2022). The distinctive character of postimperial formalism is contingent on the dialectics of liberation and subjugation (or autonomy and heteronomy). Specifically, the theory of poetic language – the pars pro toto of early literary theory, to which the name of OPOlaZ¹ attests – carries with itself the survivals of the conditions of the multinational empire, where it emerged, specifically said tension between centralism and enfranchisement or else dependency and empowerment. This is most eloquently expressed in the writings of Polish and Jewish-Ukrainian

populist activists turned ethnographic researchers, who prepared a theory of poetic language to which the formalists could have recourse. (I expand on this topic in section one). The focus on Ukraine – caught in the process of self-identification as a nation and literary culture – exposes most fully the postimperial entanglement of literary theory so that one is tempted to conclude that if it is true that modern literary theory emerged in Central and Eastern Europe (Tihanov 2004, 2019), then one of the reasons for its emergence (alongside the role of the intelligentsia and literature) was the fact that Ukraine also somehow ‘was’ there, caught in the process of the multinational empires’ dissipation. The activity of Ukrainian writers, scholars, and populist activists, developing in a transnational milieu the notion of Ukraininess, had as its incidental albeit fortunate effect the particular character of Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian

1 Obshchestvo izucheniia poeticheskogo iazyka, i.e. The Society for the Study of Poetic Language.

Ukraine as the Hub of Postimperial Formalism

formalism, with its double focus on poetic language and the tensions between emancipation and subjugation.

The outline of the argumentation is following: I first map the dimensions of the Ukrainian investment into the formulation of the theory of poetic language; the focus lies the Ukrainess as the epitome of the national and an object in the play of the 'official' and the 'populist' forces. A proto-formalist theory of poetic language emerges in the ethnographic writings of populist revolutionaries as a way of recognizing the worth of perceived minor cultures. Secondly, I describe the role of the constructed Ukrainess – under the guise of the so-called Ukrainian school of Polish romanticism – in the emergence of Polish formalism.

1. THE CONSTRUCTION OF UKRAINE AND THE NATURE OF POETIC LANGUAGE

In agreement with Babak and Dmitriev (2021), I regard the social role of modernist literary theory in Ukraine – but also elsewhere – as a nexus of universal revolution and nation-building. In the context of the multinational empire of Russians, nascent Ukrainess appears to form the vantage point of more established nations as something close and alien, natural and constructed according to evident rules (and thus easily parodied). As such, it has the capacity to bring to light contrivance – the quality of have-been-made – in cultures prone to regard themselves as ancient and organic.

The liberal Russian writer Ivan Turgenev satires in his *Rudin* (1855) the views of conservative print media on Ukrainian poetry and language (some contemporary readers, however, took the views to be his own,² which evidences their acceptability in polite society):

Вот мы толковали о литературе, — продолжал [Pigasov], — если б у меня были лишние деньги, я бы сейчас сделался малороссийским поэтом.

— Это что еще? хорош поэт! — возразила Дарья Михайловна, — разве вы знаете по-малороссийски?

— Нимало; да оно и не нужно. [...] Стбит только взять лист бумаги и написать наверху: Дума; потом начать так: Гой, ты доля моя, доля! или: Седе казачино Наливайко на кургане!, а там: Попид горою, по-пид зеленюю, грае, грае воропае, гоп! гоп! или что-нибудь в этом роде. И дело в шляпе. Печатай и издавай. Малоросс прочтет, подопрет рукою щеку и непременно заплачет, — такая чувствительная душа! [...] Да разве существует малороссийский язык? Я попросил раз одного хохла перевести следующую первую попавшуюся мне фразу: грамматика есть искусство правильно читать и писать. Знаете, как он это перевел: храматыка е выскуство

правильно читаты ы писаты... Что ж, это язык, по-вашему? самостоятельный язык? (Turgenev 1978[1855], 215–216)

['We were talking of literature,' [Pigasov] continued, 'if I had money to spare, I would at once become a Little Russian poet.'

'What next? A fine poet you would make!' retorted Darya Mihailovna. 'Do you know Little Russian?'

Not a bit; but it isn't necessary. [...] You need only take a sheet of paper and write at the top "A Ballad," then begin like this, "Heigho, alack, my destiny!" or "The Cossack Nalivaiko was sitting on a hill and then on the mountain, under the green tree the birds are singing, grae, voropae, gop, gop!" or something of that kind. And the thing's done. Print it and publish it. The Little Russian will read it, drop his head into his hands and infallibly burst into tears-he is such a sensitive soul! [...] But is there a Little Russian language? [Here, an element of parody of the Ukrainian grammar is missing in the translation – M.M.] Is it a language, in your opinion? an independent language?³

The Ukrainian language is taken to be the children's play of a cypher, transforming or disfiguring 'real', i.e. Russian words according to noticeable simple rules. It is quite simple to show that and how it is made. In the case of Ukrainess, we deal with a special kind of Orientalism: it consists not of the naturalization of a construct (as in Said 1978, 21, 48–49, 86, 122, 144; Culcasi 2010), but of lying bare the fact that this Ukrainian life in close touch with nature ("Poland's Scotland", in Mochnacki's words (Mochnacki 1910[1828], 200) and according to Słowacki (1958[1832], 147) our minnesingers and troubadours) – that this Ukrainian life in close touch with nature is something made, un-natural, an artifice. Ukrainess appears to be a device, while the foundational gesture of formalism consists in showing that and how something is made and this something happens to be of Ukrainian origin.

Andrii Portnov writes referring to Michael Moser:

In the 19th century, Polish political discourse tended to perceive any "Ruthenian/Ukrainian" identity that would not integrate into the Polish nation as Russian or Habsburg intrigue, and Russian discourse gradually portrayed the Ukrainian movement as "Polish intrigue". (Portnov 2020, 17)

Ukrainess is read as a plot, a design, and – since it entails the centrality of language and poetry – a *priem*. This pertains both to the people whose interests are threatened by the revealing power of this trope, casting the

2 See commentary in Turgenev 1978, 492–493.

3 Constance Garnett's translation: <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/6900/pg6900.txt>

shadow of a doubt on the naturalness of the communities they represent, and the nation-builders, the Ukrainians by choice openly discussing their project of nascent Ukraine (Magocsi 2016, 38–54) under the circumstances of the multinational empires, where multinationalism and centralization counterweight and energize each other.

The imperial implications of Ukrainess or, more broadly, populism, survive in the very construction of formalist theory. In particular, the theory of poetic language emerged in a Ukrainianized context and remained true to this imperial-revolutionary origin throughout its development in and after the OPOIAZ. The theory of poetic language is doubly entangled in the imperial project. On the one hand, it expresses the emancipatory aspirations of suppressed nations (not only those inhibiting Ukraine and often opting for, and contributing to Ukrainess: Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, and Jews, but also the peoples of the Far North). As such, it is genetically related to the populist movement, both in the Ukrainian and terrorist meaning of the notion (Babak, Dmitriev 2021, 12–14). But on the other hand, one cannot simply step out of the imperial situation. The champions of the suppressed peoples simply assume the role of their mouthpieces and assume their position – albeit on poetic language – is universally valid. As it becomes clear at the end of this subsection, the theory of poetic language inertially perpetuates imperialist aspirations.

Regarding the relation between poetic language and the populist revolutionary movement, the case of the brothers Potebnia becomes iconic: Oleksandr Potebnia enabled through his theory of the relation of thought and language (1989[1862]) a theory of poetic language that can be generalized not only on literature and art but also on the mind and culture (on this the stellar career of literary theory in academia depends). His brother Andrii's attentat against the governor of the Kingdom of Poland in 1862 inaugurated the epoch of populist terror in the empire (cf. D'jakov, Kieniewicz, Miller 1963). After Andrii's untimely death during the failed Polish January uprising 1863–64, Oleksandr turned to philological questions that facilitated the development of specific Ukrainian philology (Babak, Dmitriev 2021, 46).

The theory of poetic language in the formalist sense of the term originates from the disintegration of Indo-European studies and philology, with their worship of great origins and their – to put it delicately – elitism. The biographies of its main facilitators reflect the revolutionary pathos of the theory itself; *la révolution du langage poétique* is a tautology, given that the revolution is driven by populism.

The Polish linguist Jan Rozwadowski wrote in his 1913 essay “Językoznawstwo i język literacki” (Linguistics and literary language) – referring to Jan N. Baudouin de Courtenay – that philology undergoes a diversification and ceases to be restricted to studying a small number of canonized languages: on the one hand Greeks, Romans, ‘Indians’, in short, great cultures and on the other hand all the negligible rest.

Baudouin de Courtenay – the founder of the Kazan and St. Petersburg schools of linguistics and the seminal figure for many formalists (Jakobson 1971, 389–455; Tchogounnikov 2018) – describes graphically the liaison and the separation of linguistics and philology in 1904:

Arystokratyzm dawniejszy, zaszczerpiony przez niewolnictwo filologii erudycyjnej, a uznający za godne badania jedynie języki szlacheckie, literackie i święte, z piętnem boskości lub królewskość na czole, musiał ustąpić przed coraz większym demokratyzmem pojęć językoznawczych. Dziś nie ma języka, nie zasługującego na badanie. (Baudouin de Courtenay 1974[1904], 159)

[The earlier aristocratism, instilled by the slavery of erudite philology, and recognizing only noble, literary and sacred languages as worthy of study, with the stigma of divinity or kingship on their forehead, had to give way to the ever-greater democratism of linguistic concepts. Today no language does not deserve to be explored.]

Rozwadowski's crucial rationale why there are no languages not deserving of serious examination comes from the writings of Polish and Jewish-Ukrainian populist revolutionaries turned ethnographers who, displaced to Siberia, described the peoples of Siberia and the Japanese north: Bronisław Piłsudski, Wacław Sieroszewski, Lev Shternberg, Vladimir Tan-Bogoraz, Vladimir Iokhelson, and others.

According to them, there are languages devoid of written documents but no language lacks poetry. More precisely, every language splits into poetic language and the ordinary language of everyday communication – no matter how far the culture in which it is spoken deviates from Western or classical standards. The distinction between poetic and communicative language is a cultural constant. Bogoraz emphasizes (Bogoraz 1922; cf. Murav'ev 1987, 563) that the whole group of ethnographers cum realist writers ‘born by Siberia’ revered the Russian writer of Polish-Ukrainian descent Vladimir Korolenko, who likewise was a *Narodnik* and an exile in Siberia, whose short-story “Son Makara” (Makar's dream, 1885) inaugurated the movement.

The Pole Wacław Sieroszewski, author of the Academy award-winning monograph *lakuty. Opyt etnograficheskogo issledovaniia* (Yakuts. An Attempt at an Ethnographic Description, 1896), comes closest to the early formalist conception of poetic language. Sieroszewski's account of poetic language as it functions among Yakuts anticipates the finale of Viktor Shklovskii's “Iskusstvo kak priem” (Art as Device, 1917), where Shklovskii (2018[1917], 268) distinguishes between two types of rhythm – the regular rhythm as described by Herbert Spencer (and Karl Bücher) on the one hand and truly poetic rhythm on the other. The former facilitates activities of the embodied subject by relieving attention

Ukraine as the Hub of Postimperial Formalism

and thus sparing mental energy, while the latter throws the recipient off balance and consists in unpredictability. According to Sieroszewski (1896, 587–612; 1900, 349–368), the Yakuts not only make a strict distinction between everyday and poetic language, but they also have two types of poetry. One that accompanies all everyday activities to facilitate them by the facile rhythmisation, and a festive one, which Sieroszewski describes with all the typical formalistic adjectives as “strange, unpleasant, repulsive” (obce, niemiłe, odrażające, Sieroszewski 1900, 351) to an unaccustomed ear. Some genres invite paraphrases, while other forms demand stability and memorization (Sieroszewski 1896, 609).

Admittedly, Shklovskii does not quote Sieroszewski. However, in addition to Oleksandr Potebnia’s folkloristic works, Shklovskii explicitly refers to Korolenko, the protoplast of the Siberian school; and he does it in an odd, marked way that challenges the historian’s imagination.

In the lecture, which is rightly considered to be the beginning of the Russian formal school and bears the title “Voskresheniie slova” (Resurrection of the Word, 2018[1913]), Korolenko is quoted in two essential places. The first instance occurs when the notion of poetic language is introduced as a reliable cultural constant. The sharp differentiation between the difficult language of poetry and easy communicative language occurs in all cultures (Shklovskii repeats the thesis posited by the Polish and Ukrainian revolutionary ethnographers and Korolenko’s followers):

Я. Гримм, Гофман, Геббель отмечают, что народ часто поет не на диалекте, а на повышенном языке, близком к литературному; «песенный якутский язык отличается от обиходного приблизительно так же, как наш славянский от нынешнего разговорного» (Короленко, «Ат-Даван»). (Shklovskii 2018[1913], 212)

[Jacob Grimm, Hoffman, and Hebel all note that folk songs are often sung not in dialect but in a “heightened,” quasi-literary language; “the Yakut song language differs from the everyday variety about as much as Old Slavonic from today’s Russian” (Korolenko, At-Davan). (Shklovskii 2016[1913], 71)]

And right after that, in the conclusion of Shklovskii’s epoch-making contribution, Korolenko, alongside Kruchenykh, becomes the champion of the arch-formalist economy of making the form more difficult, *zatrudneniie*:

Слишком гладко, слишком сладко писали писатели вчерашнего дня. Их вещи напоминали ту полированную поверхность, про которую говорил Короленко: «По ней рубанок мысли бежит, не задевая ничего». Необходимо создание нового, «тугого» (слово Крученых), на видение, а не на узнавание рассчитанного языка. (Shklovskii 2018[1913], 212)

[The writers of yesterday wrote too smoothly, too sweetly. Their texts were like that polished surface of which Korolenko said: “Across it, the plane of thought runs touching nothing.” There is a need for the creation of new, “tight” language (Kruchenykh’s expression), aimed at seeing instead of recognizing. (Shklovskii 2016[1913], 71–72)]

When three years later in the seminal essay “Art as Device” (2018[1917], 266), Shklovskii reuses the above-cited paragraph on the universality of poetic language,⁴ which always asserts itself through contrast with everyday language, only the name Korolenko disappears from it (along with the citation from him), other examples are preserved. This can mean many things, but I believe that Shklovskii did not simply reject the wisdom of Siberia, but, on the contrary, assimilated it to a degree that it became his own, personal opinion (of course, it actually pertained to the complicated situation in Ukraine and around Korolenko at that time).

The notion of poetic language harbors the dialectical character of the revolutionary activity itself as its hereditary material. In all three cultures, literature was perceived as a vital part of the emancipatory process; it was supposed to be instrumental in the work of liberating the people, e.g. by expressing their self-consciousness as a collective. Around the time as symbolism or early modernism held sway, the emancipatory function underwent specification typical of all developed societies; it emancipated itself into ‘literariness’, understood as an autonomous quality – i.e. one irreducible to other areas

4 „Поэтический язык, по Аристотелю, должен иметь характер чужеземного, удивительного; практически он и является часто чужим: шумерийский у ассирийцев, латынь у средневековой Европы, арабизмы у персов, древнеболгарский как основа русского литературного, или же языком повышенным, как язык народных песен, близкий к литературному. Сюда же относятся столь широко распространенные архаизмы поэтического языка, затруднения языка «dolce stil nuovo» (XII век), язык Арно Даниеля с его темным стилем и затрудненными (harten) формами, полагающими трудности при произношении (Diez, «Leben und Werke der Troubadours». S. 285).” Eng: “According to Aristotle, “poetic language” must have the character of the foreign, the surprising. It often is quite literally a foreign language—Sumerian for Assyrians, Old Bulgarian as the basis of literary Russian—or else, it might be elevated language, like the almost literary language of folk songs. Here, we can also name the widespread use of archaisms in poetic language, the difficulties of the dolce stil nuovo (XII), Arnaut Daniel’s dark style, and hard forms which presuppose pronunciation difficulties (Diez 213).” (Shklovskii 2016[1917], 93–94)

of culture. It now consists of combining heterogenous and plural elements into unique and united form. The revolutionary pathos sublimated into the autonomy of art, which often was said to presage the shape of labor in the free society. Literature emancipated from the objectives other than its own development turned out to be the symptom of the people's emancipation. However, paradoxically, the theory of autonomous festive poetic language can reinforce the subjugation; it is likewise part of its heredity. The case of Polish formalism's relation to Ukrainess, on which I expand in section two, is a case in point. But even more so Russian formalism.

Poetic language becomes entangled in the neo-imperial projects, more or less disguised as a great liberation. If OPOIaZ-formalism can be regarded as a theoretical wing of Russian futurism, then even the most innocent among the Futurists, Velimir Khlebnikov has been fairly recently alleged by Irina Shevelenko (2017, chapter 5) to carry over to his poetry the imperial ways of conceptualizing relations between cultures and languages. In his article from 1913, "О расширении пределов русской словесности", Khlebnikov describes the path to recreating the 'pan-Slavic' language as the absorption of other Slavic languages into the Russian language. The article reproduces, according to Shevelenko, the typical discourse of the empire under the guise of heteroglossia *avant la lettre*. I would argue that Khlebnikov's post-1917 phantasies of all-human (instead of all-Slavic) stellar language do not necessarily imply giving up the imperial paradigm, as Shevchenko suggests. Khlebnikov's exercises in the widening of language buttressed the formalist theory of poetic language, especially in Jakobson (1979[1921]), who likewise flirted with Eurasianism (Glebov 2021) and in Grand Moravia he cherished after World War II a vision of a benevolent empire (Jakobson 1985, 95–152). Only such a well-intentioned multinational empire can secure, according to Jakobson, the equality of all nations and languages (Jakobson 1985, 119).

It didn't take long before the ethnographical knowledge of the construction of languages was employed by Baudouin's pupil Evgenii Polivanov, who simultaneously worked on "the general phonetic principle of every poetic technique" (Polivanov 1963[1930]), a kind of the cultural universal of poetic language, and Lev Iakubinskii (the co-founder of the OPOIaZ) in the project of *korenizatsiya*. One of their forerunners, the 'koreniators' named Aleksandr Potebnia (Babak, Dmitriev 2021, 60). The scale of investment of the formalist researchers in the project prompts Evgenii Blinov to paraphrase Lenin and equalize the power of the Soviets with "formalism plus the korenizatsiya of the whole state" (Blinov 2022, 120). The main purpose of this seemingly well-intentioned campaign of promoting the languages of different nations consists of – in the words of Evgenii Blinov –

не в прагматическом союзе [metropolii] с «краинами», а в том, чтобы новая власть стала не только понятной, но и «родной», установив тем самым «нерушимую духовную связь между массами и властью». [...] Сталин констатирует нехватку надёжных кадров из среды «местных трудовых масс» и призывает приступить к их немедленной подготовке. Именно с помощью коммунистических местных кадров можно построить новую культуру, пролетарскую по своему содержанию и национальную по форме. (Blinov 2022, 123–124)

[not in a pragmatic alliance [of the metropolis] with the "outskirts", but in making the new government not only understandable, but also "native", thereby establishing an "indestructible spiritual bond between the masses and the authorities". [...] Stalin notes the shortage of reliable personnel from among the "local working masses" and calls for their immediate training to begin. It is with the help of local communist cadres that it is possible to build a new culture, proletarian in content and national in form.]

Blinov quotes from Stalin's *Politika sovetskoj vlasti po nacional'nomu voprosu v Rossii*: the title itself suggests that the "question of nations" – and implicitly the question of poetic language as there is no nation devoid of poetic language – should be as regarded "in" Russia. "In" Russia *korenizatsiya* becomes, under the guise of empowerment, a politics of subjugation through subjectification, the internalization of the power coming from the outside by creating the local comprador elites. The formalist knowledge of generalization from (poetic) language to culture in general, to which Aleksandr Potebnia and the populist ethnographers greatly contributed, is either instrumental in or compatible with the endeavor.

2. THE UKRAINIAN SCHOOL OF POLISH FORMALISM

In this section, I provide another example of postimperial formalism's dialectics of emancipation and subjugation. I limit the scope of my argument to two forerunners of Polish formalism/structuralism – Kazimierz Wóycicki and Juliusz Kleiner. This is because the second generation of Polish 'formalists', especially the Warsaw Circle active in the 1930s, actually were full-fledged structuralists, drawing upon the Prague Linguistic Circle (Mrugalski 2022). Their preoccupation with Russian Formalism amounted to reconstructing the genealogy of their own stance, regarded as more advanced.⁵

The works of Kazimierz Wóycicki and Juliusz Kleiner abound in references to the poets of the so-called Ukrainian school of Polish Romanticism,⁶ especially Józef Bohdan

5 Even Kazimierz Wóycicki, whose activity peaked around 1914, was called rather a structuralist than a formalist by Edward Możejko (2018, 204).

6 For an overview the Polish romantic and postromantic poets' fascination with Ukraine see Boruszkowska 2014.

Ukraine as the Hub of Postimperial Formalism

Zaleski and Juliusz Słowacki. What was the Ukrainian school of Polish Romanticism? The contemporary critic Aleksander Tyszyński defined it in 1837:

Duch i styl ukraińskiej szkoły różne są zupełnie od ducha i stylu szkoły litewskiej [Mickiewicz], a bardziej jeszcze innych poezji polskich. Ponurość, dzikość, krwawe obrazy, zbrodnie są ulubioną, powszednią poetów ukraińskich treścią; [...] jeśli w nich spotkasz miłość, miłość będzie ponura lub dzika albo też cielesna i prosta. [...] Styl ukraińskich poetów wszędzie nierówny, niepoprawny, ciemny; rymy to nazbyt trudne, to całkiem zaniedbane; odznaczają go słowa silne, ponure i nieraz nadęte, porównania ciężkie, dalekie, mocno poetyczne; mnóstwo wyrazów nowych, miejscowych, niezwykle obroty i składnie” (Tyszyński 1837, 46–47).

[The spirit and style of the Ukrainian school are completely different from the spirit and style of the Lithuanian school [Mickiewicz], and even more other Polish poetry. Gloom, wildness, bloody images, and crimes make up the favorite, common content of the Ukrainian poets; [...] if you come across love in them, the love will be gloomy or wild or carnal and simple. [...] The style of the Ukrainian poets is uneven, incorrect, dark; rhyming either too complex or completely neglected; [the style] is distinguished by strong, gloomy and sometimes puffed words; heavy, distant and highly poetic comparisons; lots of new, local words, extraordinary figures and syntax.]

The Ukrainian school initially evokes „formalism” understood as a disparagement, similarly to the period of the 1930s in the Soviet Union (formalism as a synonym of gimmickry, sensationalism, verbosity). Although Tyszyński’s definition fits rather well with Malczewski and Goszczyński, I will limit myself to tracking the role of Bohdan Zaleski and Juliusz Słowacki in the writings of Wóycicki and Kleiner. One of the reasons being that Zaleski epitomizes the musical character of Ukraine (expressed by Pushkin’s characterization of the Ukrainians as a “singing and dancing tribe”, племя поюче и пляшущие; cf. Marchukov 2011, 141), whereas Słowacki according to Kleiner synthesizes as early as in *Żmija* all aspects of the Ukrainian school: melancholy, cruelty, sentimentalism (Kleiner 2000[1919], 151).

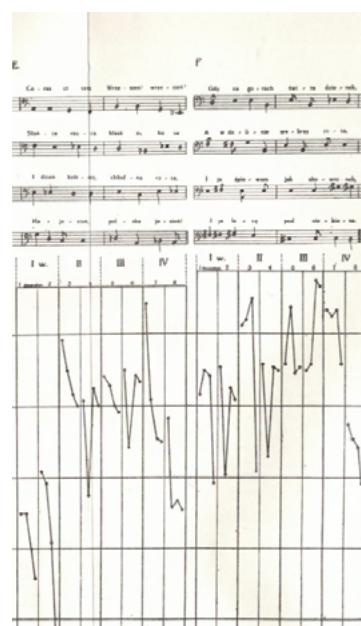
Wóycicki’s work – just as Kleiner’s – bears traces of the historical situation in which it emerged – the end of Poland’s 123-year partitions and the reconstruction of the state, of which a part had been, at least partially, geographical Ukraine (this sentence expresses the rudiments of the tensions between liberation and subjugation). In Wóycicki, the main pathos lies in unification at both the level of method and the object-level: seemingly heterogeneous elements add up to new holistic structures characterized by stylistic unity. *Restitutio ad integrum* – related to both the state and human – was likewise the

great topic of Romanticism, a dominant current in Polish culture and the main resource of quotations in the Formalists’ writings.

Kazimierz Wóycicki’s two important contributions *Literary History and Poetics* and *The Style Unity of the Poetic Work* (both 1914) postulate a great integration – the integrity of the internally varied discipline of literary scholarship is paralleled by the style unity of the literary work. Thanks to the fact that unity in diversity is an axiom of literary studies, the literary work may be subject to both intrinsic and extrinsic literary history (he calls the former ‘literary evolution’), dealing with formal and genetic issues, respectively.

Wóycicki describes style unity as an “almost organic relationship” (Wóycicki 1914b, 6). The whole can be deemed organic when it exhibits features that its elements do not possess. In the organic form, “all parts [...] move toward a collective goal” (Wóycicki 1914b, 5). The teleological and functional approach is emblematic of modern – principally Formalist and Structuralist – approaches to literature and culture in general. Wóycicki falls back on Theodor Lipps’s description of aesthetical activity as imparting unity to, and finding unity in various phenomena. This most spontaneous action of the mind yields aesthetical pleasure as the mind works according to its nature (Lipps 1903, 10). This also pertains to bodily movement (Lipps 1906), which means that the goal of aesthetic activity amounts to liberty and ease and freedom understood both mentally and physically. The functional approach is an emancipatory approach.

One of the hypostases of the unity is vocal harmony and melody (Wóycicki 1960[1912], 177). Wóycicki first monograph, *Forma dźwiękowa prozy polskiej i wiersza polskiego* (Forma dźwiękowa prozy polskiej i wiersza polskiego, 1912), contains a chart of the melody of Zaleski’s poem.



Wóycicki's essays and lectures are generally resplendent with examples from Polish Romantic literature, especially Słowacki, who readily illustrates virtually all of Wóycicki's formalist points. A kind of poetry that parallels Russian *zaum'* (transrational language) is illustrated by Zalewski's Ruthenian-hued verses, which are so melodic that they can be sung, but only hardly recited. "The content of poems is so negligent, that they cannot be interpreted" (Wóycicki 2015, 137). As an example serves "W spółce ze słowikiem" (In partnership with a nightingale)

O głoski już stroim
Wymruka to świt
Ku lubkom tu swoim
Cyt jeszcze, cyt, cyt.
Sen ranku, och, krótki,
A długie dnia smutki;
Niech cicho spokojnie, miłe śnią obie,
Oj, bied-bied-bied-bied-bied-biedniż my sobie.

Zalewski as a representative of the Ukrainian school stands for melody and pure, content-free form. Ukraineness serves him – Wóycicki suggests – as a mode for speaking or an artistic device expanding the boundaries of Polish poetry or its range of possibilities. But the greater freedom of Polish aesthetics entails a dominion over the region it explores to gain the means to transcend its limitations.

Juliusz Kleiner is, on the one hand, considered the author of the first essay to advocate modern, anti-Positivistic literary studies in Poland titled "Charakter i przedmiot badań literackich" (Character and Object of Literary Studies, 1913). On the other hand, Kleiner pursues the literary history of Romanticism as an epoch of geniuses as if extending the shelf life of positivist literary historiography. His life's work consists of three monographs on the poet-prophets (1912, *Zygmunt Krasiński. Dzieje myśli* (The History of Thought, 1919–1927), *Juliusz Słowacki. Dzieje twórczości* (The History of Creation, 1919, 1920, 1923, 1927), and simply *Mickiewicz* (1933 and 1948).

The amount of energy invested in penning the great *literary-historical syntheses* is perplexing against the backdrop of Kleiner's theoretical statements. In the pioneering "Character and Object of Literary Studies" (1960[1913]), Kleiner endeavours to identify the literary *par excellence* in a gesture parallel to the Russian

formalists' search for literariness. From the irreducible specificity of literature as a phenomenon of culture, Kleiner derives the impossibility of reducing a work of art to the conditions of its creation – be it the psychological or the sociological circumstances. An unbridgeable gap exists between the autonomous and unique work and the environment of its creator. Under this premise, literary history always misses its mark since – as Kleiner claims, drawing on Dilthey (1989[1883]) – literature and other domains of culture create atemporal arrangements of exceptional achievements. And yet only in their light is human, i.e. historical existence comprehensible.

The literature of romanticism addresses precisely this disparity and mutual indispensability of poetry and temporal reality, pure patterns and societal content. Kleiner's formalism accordingly focused on romanticism. On the one hand, Romanticism emphasizes the contrast between poetry and reality. On the other hand, poetry must be implemented; be lived.⁷ Juliusz Słowacki's Ukraine mediates between or unites pure art and history; nevertheless, to serve as the keystone of an arch between poetry and the world, Ukraine must be a made-up or simply become a made Ukraine, an artifice or a contrivance.

Kleiner's introduction to his Słowacki monograph (Kleiner 2000[1919], I–X) is especially symptomatic of the genesis of post-romantic aestheticism. Above all, the dream of Polish romanticism – the restoration of Poland – is correlated with aesthetic or stylistic principles characteristic of formalism. According to the principle of making difficult (*utrudnienie*), the normal, the ordinary, the accustomed gives joy (anew) thanks to the experience of the abnormal, the alienated: non-normal life, painful patriotism gave birth to Polish romanticism; its extraordinary role was determined by the absence of state life – and yet Romanticism will endure not only as an aesthetic, universal human value, but also as a national asset (Kleiner 2000[1919], I). Thanks to this anomaly, coming generations can look at Poland with the eyes of a convalescent lest they do not take it for granted. Here, the modernist aesthetics of new vision gained as the result of experiencing difficulty allegedly participating in actual nation-building.

The most Formalist aspect of the Słowacki monograph: the energetic surplus value (the exhilarating aesthetic pleasure stemming from the free exercise of one's faculties) depends on the device of making difficult

7 Romanticism encompasses pure aestheticism (Novalis's definition of poetry as expression for expression's sake; Aleksandr Pushkin's claim *à propos* of his *Cygany* (1827, *Gypsies*) that the aim of poetry is poetry itself; Mickiewicz's last Crimean sonnet bracketing all traumatic experiences as material for long-lasting forms; Juliusz Słowacki's wish that his *Beniowski* will light us as fireworks and vanish, etc.). Apparently, the translation of Percy Bysshe Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry* contributed to the emergence of Russian Formalism (Svetlikova 2005, 74–77; Lachmann 2022). And on the other hand: if Positivism reduces the literary work of art to the circumstances of its inception, to the particular reality that generated the artwork together with the artist, then proto-Romanticism and Romanticism bear the embryo of Positivism: it suffices to mention Herder, Mme De Staël, A.W. Schlegel's *Über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* (1809–1811, *On Dramatic Art and Literature*), Friedrich Schlegel's *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur* (1815, *History of Old and New Literature*) and Mickiewicz's 1922 "Introduction" to *Ballady i romanse* (1822, *Ballads and Romances*).

Ukraine as the Hub of Postimperial Formalism

the perception of content (*utrudnienie*). With the help of this economical principle, Kleiner defies and refutes positivism together with its reduction of structure to genesis. While assuming that certain circumstances produce certain works, positivism necessarily relies on the principle of the least effort. In other words, the reverse engineering of the work of art so that we gain insight into the conditions of its inception demands that one assumes the trajectory of the creative process to be predictable, i.e. unsurprising. This assumption holds only if the creative process takes place along the lines of least effort. This is the positivist principle *par excellence* – since it is supposed to connect the physical and the psychical realities. According to Kleiner, instinct follows the principle of the least effort, while conscious creation is based on making it difficult. Consciousness is form – because the form is difficult, and unpredictable. Even though the social and literary milieu pushed the eighteen-year-old Słowacki towards the simple form of *ukrainska dumka* (parodied as late as in Turgenev), he favoured difficulty by turning to the form of the sonnet: the sonnet, an international form, proves that European Romanticism is not amorphous hysterics, but a creator of durable forms (Kleiner 2000[1919], 57–58). Just as the Russian formalists projected onto literary history the correlated principles of estrangement and making difficult, so these principles supposedly shape Słowacki's development as a poet.

Kleiner regards the difficult time around 1918/19, full of adversity and branded by the alliance with Simon Petliura's Ukraine against the evil empire, as the materialization of Romantic aesthetics in real life. (Of course, the Polish-Ukrainian war of 1918-1919 waged for Lviv and Eastern Galicia should not be missing in the picture, cf. Klimecki 2000.) Kleiner describes the moment when the Słowacki monograph was published – concurrent with the formation of the state and its defence against Soviet aggression hand in hand with Ukrainian combatants – as the Parousia of romanticism. Romanticism becomes visible in a historical tragedy:

Dla nas, dla pokolenia, które przeżyło wojnę światową i które przeżywa radość i tragedję kształtowania się państwa wśród grozy i niebezpieczeństw, wśród naporu wrogów i wśród padających ruin świata starego, wielka poezja porozbiorowa stała się znowu aktualną. Myśmy zrozumieli krzyk rozpaczony Konrada, wołającego do niebios o cud, któryby okropnościami ziemi kres położył, myśmy odczuli bezmiar bólu, jaki wzbiera w sercu Polelum, wśród zagłady Wenedów tragicznie wywyższonego na stosie ponad wrogów [...], myśmy poznali prawdę, która tkwiła w ideach mesjanicznych o przemianie świata i o złączeniu z tą przemianą powstaniu Polski. (Kleiner 2000[1919], VII)

[For us – for a generation that went through a world war and experienced the joy and tragedy of founding a state in terror and danger, among the enemies and rubble of the old world – the great post-partitionist

poetry became up to date again. We understood the call of Konrad's despair, which cried to heaven for a miracle, to put an end to the horrors of the earth – we felt the infinity of pain in the heart of Polelum, tragically towering over the enemies in the midst of the destruction of the Weneds [...] and we realized the truth that lay in the Messianic ideas of the transformation of the world and the transformation-related emergence of Poland.]

Of course, the world and Poland let down the expectations and history separated itself once again, it seems irretrievably, from the system of literature. This disappointment is best summed up in Józef Piłsudski's words to the Ukrainian soldiers betrayed by Poland in the Polish-Soviet peace treaty of Riga: "Ja was przepraszam, panowie, ja was bardzo przepraszam, tak nie miało być" (I am sorry, gentlemen. It was not supposed to be like that). The downfall of real romanticism coincided with the division and re-disappearance of Ukraine, partitioned between Poland and the USSR.

The role of Ukraine in Słowacki's poetry, according to Kleiner, revolves around the music and rhythm of poetry (again!) as well as the synthesis, the unity. Ukrainess is supposed to bridge the gap with its musical form between poetic license and factuality, which approximates the goal of romanticism.

The extraction of the Ukrainian undercurrent in Kleiner's monograph suggests that Słowacki's growth as a poet resembles Ernst Cassirer's stadial development of symbolic forms from the mythical thought to the representative function (*Darstellungsfunktion*) and the scientific symbolism of *Bedeutungsfunktion* (Cassirer 1923, 1925, 1929). It is a way from purely sensual or sensational 'formalism' to the distinction between the form and the content and finally to a renewed unity of both sides in purely relational concepts of modern mathematics, logic, and mathematical physics; the latter returns to the unity of pure form on a higher echelon than the mythical thought. Słowacki opens with the inconsequential music or "virtuosity" of "Piosenka dziewczyny kozackiej" (The Song of a Cossack Girl, Kleiner 2000[1919], 130) and the novel *Żmija. Romans poetyczny z podań ukraińskich w sześciu pieśniach* (*Żmija. Poetic Romance from Ukrainian Legends*); the latter is a "show of rhythm" in verse and narration (Kleiner 2000[1919], 159); subsequently the virtuosity gives way to socially and nationally engaged poetry, where content becomes substantial (Kleiner 2000[1919], 145–146; 2000[1920]).

The synthesis of the oppositions is embodied in the ripe vision of Ukraine, dominated by the personage of Wernyhora, present in *Beniowski* (2000[1923], 251) and *Sen srebrny Salomei*. Wernyhora is a singer and a prophet, a Ukrainian and a Pole (2000[1927], 123–124); he is the figure of synthesis of music and commitment, form and content. Wernyhora truly achieves what Słowacki expected from his youthful *Żmija*: "rewelatorstwo muzyki", i.e. the prophesy of music (2000[1919], 162; cf. 2000[1927], 127–129).

Polish formalism sees the Ukrainian school of Polish romanticism as a movement towards more freedom and agency, both politically and aesthetically. However, as in the case of *korenizatsiya*, whose formalist proponents and their allies posed the question of nationalities and poetic language “in” Russia, the ‘Ukrainess’ of this school remains fully determined by the needs of ‘Polish’ romanticism, especially with a view to poetic – rhythmic, patterned musical, festive, impractical, etc. – language. Nevertheless, Polish formalism would be impossible without Ukraine and we have good reasons to generalize this conjecture to the material of Russian formalism.

REFERENCES

- Babak, G., Dmitriev, A., 2021. *Atlantida sovetskogo nacmodernizma: formalnyi metod v Ukraine (1920-e – nachalo 1930-kh)*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.
- Baudouin de Courtenay, J.N., 1974[1904]. Szkice językoznawcze. In Baudouin de Courtenay, J.N., Zwoliński, P. (Ed.), *Dzieła wybrane*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, vol. 1.
- Blinov, E., 2022. *Perom i shtykom: vvedenie v revoliuionnuu polityku iazyka*. Moskva: Idz. dom Vyssei shkoly ekonomiki.
- Bogoraz (Tan), V., 1922. Korolenko i sibirskaiia shkola pisatelei. In Petrishchev, A. (Ed.), *V.G. Korolenko. Zhizn' i tvorchestvo*. Petrograd: Mysl', pp. 30–33.
- Boruszkowska, I., 2014. Źródła romantycznej fascynacji Ukrainą i zagadnienie szkoły ukraińskiej w romantyzmie polskim (debata o „szkołach poetyckich”). *Rocznik Naukowy Lingwistycznej Szkoły Wyższej w Warszawie*, 4, 37–53.
- Cassirer, E., 1923, 1925, 1929. *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*. Berlin: Cassirer, vol. 1: *Die Sprache*; vol. 2: *Das mythische Denken*; vol. 3: *Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis*.
- Culcasi, K., 2010. Constructing and Naturalizing the Middle East. *Geographical Review*, 100(4), 583–97.
- D'jakov, V., Kieniewicz, S., Miller, I. (Eds.), 1963. *Russko-pol'skie revoljucionnye svjazi*. Moskva: Izdat. Akademii Nauk SSSR.
- Dilthey, W., 1989[1883]. *Introduction to the Human Sciences. Selected Works*. Makkreel, R. A., Rodi, F. (Eds.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, vol. 1.
- Glebov, S., 2021. *From Empire to Eurasia: Politics, Scholarship, and Ideology in Russian Eurasianism, 1920s–1930s*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Jakobson, R., 1971. *Selected Writings*. The Hague: Mouton, vol. 2: *Word and Language*.
- Jakobson, R., 1979[1921]. Noveishaia rusaskaia poeziiia – Nabrosok pervyi: Postupy k Khlebnikovu. In *Selected Writings*. The Hague: Mouton, vol. 5: *On Verse, Its Masters and Explorers*, pp. 299–354.
- Jakobson, R., 1985. *Selected Writings*. The Hague: Mouton, vol. 6: *Early Slavic Paths and Crossroads*.
- Kleiner, J., 1960[1913]. Charakter i przedmiot badań literackich. In Markiewicz, H. (Ed.), *Teoria badań literackich w Polsce: wypisy*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, vol. 1, pp. 195–214.
- Kleiner, J., 2000[1919], [1920], [1923], [1927]. *Juliusz Słowacki. Dzieje Twórczości*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, vol. 1: *Twórczość młodzieńcza*; vol. 2: *Od Balladyny do Lilli Wenedy*; vol. 3: *Okres Beniowskiego*; vol. 4: *Poeta mistyk*.
- Klimecki, M., 2000. *Polsko-ukraińska wojna o Lwów i Galicję Wschodnią*. Warszawa: Volumen.
- Lachmann, R., 2022. The Migration of Concepts. In Mrugalski, M., Schahadat, S., Wutsdorff, I. (Eds.), *Central and Eastern European Literary Theory and the West*. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, pp. 23–46.
- Lipps, T., 1903. *Ästhetik oder Psychologie des Schönen und der Kunst*. Hamburg and Leipzig: Voss, vol. 1.
- Lipps, T., 1906. Zur ‚ästhetischen Mechanik‘. *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 1(1), 1–29.
- Magocsi, P.R., 2016. *The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism: Galicia as Ukraine's Piedmont*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Mochnacki, M., 1910[1828]. Artykuł, do którego był powodem *Zamek kaniowski* Seweryna Goszczyńskiego. In Śliwiński, A. (Ed.), *Pisma po raz pierwszy edycją książkową objęte*. Lwów: Połoniecki.
- Mozejko, E., 2018. Structuralism, Polish. In Makaryk, I. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 204–207.
- Marchukov, A., 2011. *Obraz Ukrainy v russkom soznanii. Nikolai Gogol' i ego vremia*. Moskva: Regnum.
- Mrugalski, M., 2022. Structuralism and Semiotics in Poland. In Mrugalski, M., Schahadat, S., Wutsdorff, I. (Eds.), *Central and Eastern European Literary Theory and the West*. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, pp. 670–722.
- Murav'ev, V., 1987. Vladimir Germanovich Tan-Bogoraz. In Tan-Bogoraz, V., *Vosem' plemen. Voskresshee plemia*. Moskva: Vostochno-Sibirskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, pp. 557–574.
- Nebring, A., 2022. Formalism in Germany. In Mrugalski, M., Schahadat, S., Wutsdorff, I. (Eds.), *Central and Eastern European Literary Theory and the West*. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, pp. 181–199.
- Polivanov, E., 1963[1930]. Obshchii foneticheskii princip vsiakoi poeticheskoi tekhniki. *Voprosy iazykoznanii*, 1, 99–112.
- Portnov, A., 2020. Poland and Ukraine. Entangled Histories, Asymmetric Memories. In *Essays of the Forum Transregionale Studien*. Berlin: Forum Transregionale Studien, vol. 7.
- Potebnia, A., 1989[1862]. Mysl' i iazyk. In Potebnia, A., Toporkova, A. (Ed.), *Slovo i mif*. Moskva: Pravda, pp. 17–200.
- Rozwadowski, J., 1960[1913]. Językoznawstwo a język literacki. In *Wybór pism*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, vol. 3, pp. 123–134.

Ukraine as the Hub of Postimperial Formalism

- Said, E. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Słowacki, J., 1958[1832]. *Król Ladawy. Powieść historyczna z czasu ostatniej rewolucji w Polsce*. In Słowacki, J., Kleiner, J. (Ed.), Staff, L. (Trans.), *Dzieła wszystkie*. Wrocław: Ossolineum, vol. 8.
- Shevelenko, I., 2017. *Modernizm jak archaizm: nacjonalizm i poszukiwania modernistycznej estetyki w Rosji*. Moskwa: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.
- Shklovskii, V., 2016[1913]. Ressurecting the Word. In Berlina, A. (Ed. and Trans.), *Viktor Shklovsky: a reader*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 53–62.
- Shklovskii, V., 2018[1913]. Voskresheniie slova. In Shklovskii, V., Kalinin, I. (Ed.), *Sobranie sochinenii*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, vol. 1, pp. 205–212.
- Shklovskii, V., 2016[1917]. Art as Device. In Berlina, A. (Ed. and Trans.), *Viktor Shklovsky: a reader*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 73–96.
- Shklovskii, V., 2018[1917]. Iskusstvo kak priem. In Shklovskii, V., Kalinin, I. (Ed.), *Sobranie sochinenii*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, vol. 1, pp. 250–268.
- Sieroszewski, W., 1896. *Jakuty: opyt etnograficheskogo issledovaniia*. Sankt-Peterburg: Tipografiia Glavnogo Upravleniia Udelov, vol. 1.
- Sieroszewski, W., 1900. *Dwanaście lat w kraju Jakutów. Wrażenia i notatki*. Warszawa: Karpiński.
- Steiner, P., 2022. Herbartian Aesthetics in Bohemia. In Mrugalski, M., Schahadat, S., Wutsdorff, I. (Eds.), *Central and Eastern European Literary Theory and the West*. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, pp. 200–211.
- Tchougounnikov, S., 2018. The formal method in Germany and Russia: the beginnings of European psycholinguistics. *Linguistic Frontiers*, 9(1), 90–101.
- Svetlikova, I., 2005. *Istoki russkogo formalizma. Tradicija psikhologizma i formal'naia shkola*. Moskva: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie.
- Tihanov, G., 2004. Why Did Modern Literary Theory Originate in Central and Eastern Europe? (And Why Is It Now Dead?). *Common Knowledge*, 10(1), 61–81.
- Tihanov, G., 2019. *The Birth and Death of Literary Theory. Regimes of Relevance in Russia and Beyond*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Turgenev, I., 1978[1855]. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v tridcati tomakh*. Moskva: Nauka, vol. 5.
- Tyszyński, A., 1837. *Amerykanka w Polsce*. Sankt-Peterburg: Drukarnia Karola Kraya.
- Wóycicki, K., 1960[1912]. *Forma dźwiękowa prozy polskiej i wiersza polskiego*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Wóycicki, K., 1914a. *Historia literatury i poetyka*. Warszawa: Towarzystwo Naukowe Warszawskie.
- Wóycicki, K., 1914b. *Jedność stylowa utworu poetyckiego*. Warszawa: Towarzystwa Naukowe Warszawskie.
- Wóycicki, K., 2015. *Wykłady ze stylistyki i historii literatury*. Adamski, M. (Ed.). Warszawa: IBL PAN.