

Review of: Andrukhovych, Iurii:
Dezorientatsiia na mistsevošti:
Sproby. Ivano-Frankivs'k: »Lileia-
NV« 1999.

Iurii Andrukhovych begins his 1999 collection of essays *Dezorientatsiia na mistsevošti: Sproby – Disorientation on a Location: Attempts* – by mapping out the record of historical relations of Ukraine with Europe. Then he proceeds to sketch his impressions from visiting various locations of contemporary Europe and America. The concluding set of essays addresses major issues that Ukrainian contemporary literature faces vis-à-vis the larger history of Ukrainian literature. Speaking from his particular position as a Western Ukrainian writer, Andrukhovych articulates the historical, geographical, and cultural relations that constitute his identity by showing that Western Ukraine, formerly part of the Austro-Hungarian province of Galicia, was a contact zone for inter-cultural dialogue.

As an intellectual who reaches for a pre-WWI moment in his country's history, he offers his vision of the multicultural co-existence that the Austro-Hungarian Empire made possible. Its demise bode ill for the prospects of peaceful, side-by-side living of many ethnic groups as short- and longer-lived states came to replace the dying empire that he affectionately recalls (p. 7). His nostalgia for what is lost with the change of sovereignty over the Western Ukraine from constitutional monarchy of Austria-Hungary to the communist regime of the Soviet Union finds its way in the diversity of the urban dwellers that his narrative registers (p. 6).

Instead of offering a positive reevaluation of the Austrian Empire he attempts a restoration of its memory as a social and political order that granted the Ukrainian ethnic community, among others, the possibility to preserve its collective identity. Without taking out of the picture the inequalities and hierarchies that shot through the social structure of Habsburg Galicia he favorably compares the increase in civic liberties effected by its ruling dynasty with far more oppressive and rigid social order of the neighboring Russian Empire. This contrast, readily available to this Ukrainian writer's recall, may account for the Galician subjects' loyalty to their Habsburg Empire over attachment to what later nationalisms demanded as its single focus – the primordial territory of an ethnic group (p. 8).

Within this account of the Habsburg history of Western Ukraine, Andrukhovych gives a positive evaluation to mutual cultural enrichment by co-existing cultures. Rather than stressing the possibility to switch from language to language as an epitome to the specifically Galician pluralism, he emphasizes the effect of multi-linguistic environment on a single language. Andrukhovych's is a vision that assesses the myth of Austro-Hungarian multiculturalism from the point of view of a non-hegemonic ethnic group. Thereby he places an emphasis on collective identity as a stake in the struggle for collective rights. That makes it possible for him to de-couple the territory from ethnicity.

Andrukhovych lays stress on the differences between Western Ukrainian cities and towns from other Ukrainian regions. The distinct architectural profile of Western Ukraine, along with its linguistic borrowings from Western European languages (p. 8) delineates a history of intimate cultural relations of the Ukrainian component within the former Habsburg diversity with its others. Despite his playful attitude, Andrukhovych asserts Western Ukraine's former belonging to a larger European whole (p. 8) that later partitions of Eastern Europe put paid. However, Andrukhovych qualifies contemporary Ukraine's aspirations to a European belonging.

Rather, he offers a vision of participation in an inter-cultural dialogue that became possible after the end of the Soviet Union. While for him the end of Western Ukraine's organic belonging to Europe came in 1939 with the partition of Poland between Nazi Germany and Soviet Union, the return to the European heritage of the region lies in the recognition of the role that atrocities have played in preserving the cultural and social integrity of some communities over others (p. 29).

Andrukhovych's belonging to Europe is made effective by a painstaking restoration of his individual relation to European languages and cultures. What readers are presented with is tantamount to the cultural archeology of a long-lost past. With his book, Andrukhovych calls for both individual and collective efforts for restoration of a commonality with Europe as a historical and cultural entity. That is why he asserts that his European belonging is underwritten by his individual efforts at mustering the literary and linguistic constituents of the European heritage (p. 40f.).



Therefore it is not accidental that the localities of his short impressionistic pieces of travel writing and commentary sketch are on a map that represents the possibilities of European belonging that inhere in the post-communist condition. For him as an intellectual conversant in Western European languages and its high cultural heritage, neither cultural nor linguistic mediation of access to the newly re-constituted Europe is necessary. His travel writing not only charts the personal itinerary that traces different sites of cultural heritage that only individual search for identity and sense of belonging can discover. It also visits the well trodden paths of guest laborers and commute street-traders that in response to the collective condition of post-Soviet impoverishment and dispossession reinforce rather than refute representation of their otherness as opposed to their European neighbors.

Andrukhovych's journey into Western Europe and North America becomes an attempt at bridging representations that circulate across borders. The pull in two different directions of Andrukhovych's European and Ukrainian belonging accounts for the title of this collection of essays. The author plies his own way in the Western terrains that are yet to be collectively known in his country of origin. Andrukhovych claims his belonging to the European culture by sensibility to it. The book shows him on a trail of observations and reminiscences that make this Ukrainian writer meet with Europe as a space of cultural reference.

