



Marco Puleri. *Ukrainian, Russophone, (Other) Russian: Hybrid Identities and Narratives in Post-Soviet Culture and Politics.* Postcolonial Perspectives on Eastern Europe Series. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2020. 294 pp. \$60.95, cloth, ISBN 978-3-631-81662-2.

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Ukrainian, Russophone, (Other) Russian: Hybrid Identities and Narratives in Post-Soviet Culture and Politics seeks to understand the future of the “Russian question” in Ukraine. Through diverse analytical tools, Marco Puleri argues that in Ukraine an identity that goes beyond the binary of Russian versus Ukrainian has developed. He accomplishes this task by examining the political and cultural narratives present in Ukrainian society in the lead-up to and aftermath of the Revolution of Dignity in 2014.

Puleri analyzes a wide breadth of literature, ranging from novels, poems, and diary entries, to sociological studies and journal articles. His engagement with various texts and uncovering of significant details showcasing hybrid identities in Ukraine is the highlight, as well as the most illuminating aspect, of the work. Furthermore, the logic in the structure and presentation of the arguments help make a compelling case for the author’s claims, all in under 250 pages of text.

In part 1 of the book, “From Culture to Politics—Displaced Hybridity/ies (1991-2013),” Puleri frames the ideas of “Ukrainianness” and “Russianness” in Ukraine before 2014 and showcases the hybrid features of cultural identities present at the time. He gives particular attention to such figures as Nikolai Gogol’/Mykola Hohol’, whose “national

identity has been at the core of intellectual and political debates in Russia and Ukraine, where his literary experience has been included in both the Russian canon (as Nikolai Gogol’) and in the Ukrainian one (as Mykola Hohol’)” (p. 51). Puleri argues that the duality of Gogol’s contested identity best serves as a template for understanding where Russophone literature fits in among post-Soviet cultural space. Additionally, his engagement with more contemporary writers in Ukraine, such as Aleksei Nikitin, Vladimir Rafeenko, and Andrei Kurkov, furthers his argument for the presence of a hybrid cultural identity in Ukraine and makes for a compelling read.

Part 2 of the work, “From Politics to Culture—After Revolution of Hybridity (2014-2018),” builds off of part 1 in understanding how this notion of hybridity has evolved since 2014. On the one hand, Puleri provides an overview of the shifting political tides in Ukraine and argues that the rise of patriotism found in Russian policy helped build ideological divides in language and culture between Ukraine and Russia. On the other hand, he identifies a growing subset of Ukrainian Russians, defined as people who maintain their cultural and linguistic ties to Russia but support the Ukrainian state. Through his analysis of the works of Elena Stiazhkina, a Russian-language writer who was dis-

placed as the result of the war in Donbas, Puleri demonstrates the hybrid Ukrainian cultural identity that has developed with the intersection of Ukrainians and Ukrainian Russians. Lastly, Puleri asserts that the Ukrainian literary canon is unlikely to make space for Russophone authors. Despite their recent adoption of Ukrainian language into their works, these authors are still considered as separate from the body of Ukrainian literature.

Puleri's book is remarkable in its meaningful application of theoretical tools and the dialogue it creates with the works of other scholars and authors. The project has the potential for an enormous scope, but Puleri seldom strays from his main objectives. While reading, I became curious as to how Russophone culture in Ukraine is expressed in other outlets besides literature. How is hybridity in Ukraine expressed in film, art, television, or online? The author's choice to focus on literature and the words of authors is intriguing, but it left a number of questions—including the ones mentioned above—unanswered.

The truth is often what lies in between. This book is an excellent attempt in unmasking the current situation of Ukrainian culture. This book will appeal to scholars of both Ukraine and Russia, helping to set the stage for future analysis of identity in greater post-Soviet space.

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