

Channel Switching: Language Change and the Conversion Trope in Modern Ukrainian Literature

Myroslav Shkandrij

***Abstract:** The article explores the relationship between identity and language choice among Ukrainian writers over the last two centuries. It focuses in particular on the conscious decision by prominent figures to begin writing in Ukrainian and on the literary trope of conversion to writing in this language. It also considers the strategies of writers who work in Ukrainian and produce works in another language as well as those who make the case for the existence of a Ukrainian literature in the Russian language and challenge, in effect, the usefulness of the conversion trope.*

***Keywords:** Ukrainian language, literature, identity, conversion trope, multilingualism*

Identity change, in particular the declaration of a Ukrainian identity, is a familiar topic to students of modern Ukrainian cultural history, although it has attracted very little serious study. In the nineteenth century, a number of prominent historical and cultural figures from Polish, Russian, and other ethnic backgrounds began using the Ukrainian language after making statements of allegiance to or affiliation with Ukrainians and the Ukrainian political project. Among the Polish examples are the historian Volodymyr Antonovych, the son of two Polish teachers who became a leader of the Ukrainian civic movement, and the political thinker Viacheslav Lypyns'kyi, the scion of a Polish *szlachta* family who became an ideologue of Ukrainian conservatism. A well-known Russian example is the historian Mykola (Nikolai) Kostomarov, whom