



Cossacks and gauchos

Myths of masculinity in the political struggles
of the River Plate and Ukraine,
1830s through 1840s

Tomasz Hen-Konarski

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of History and Civilization
of the European University Institute

Florence, 21 March 2017

European University Institute
Department of History and Civilization

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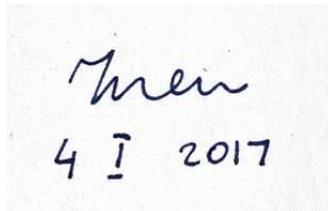
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Summary

In my dissertation I study the ways in which the literary figures of free males on horseback, the Cossacks and the gauchos, were endowed with political meanings in the River Plate and Ukraine of the 1830s and 1840s. My study is located within the field of history of political culture with special attention paid to ideology, its symbolical representations and the ways in which they formed part of broader mythologies. The two cases are not studied for their own sake, but as examples of complex ideological tensions caused by the expansion of state and the transformation of bourgeois society. What brings their stories together is their having a common point of reference in the late Enlightenment/Romantic fantasy of ‘non-modernity’ of which the anarchic frontier horseman is just one symbol.

The overarching question that I address is how several different actors in their contingent environments employed these symbols to construct the male subject of modern politics (modernity being understood here as a disciplinary myth and a claim-making concept, rather than a tangible historical condition). I offer contextualized interpretations of several texts: verse journals directed at uneducated subalterns of Buenos Aires at the beginning of 1830s; a historical novel by Nikolai Gogol'; a celebrated biographical essay by Domingo F. Sarmiento; pulp novels, secret reports, memoirs and propaganda dossiers of Michał Czajkowski, a Polish-Lithuanian politician and military commander based in Istanbul; Polish- and Ukrainian-language writings of several minor authors from Austrian Galicia.

I show that the Cossack/gaicho myths are just two examples of dream about the free life beyond the limitations imposed by the state and society. In fact, that dream was present in many other environments and took many different guises, US cowboys being just one obvious, though chronologically later, example. Such longings were inextricably linked to the global ‘structured transformations’ interpreted by the historical actors as the rise of ‘modernity,’ though clearly the figure of anarchic frontier horseman was not the only conceptual tool used to cope with them. What made the Cossack/gaicho myths so successful was that they were a very specific antithesis of ‘modernity,’ one that combined 1) the rejection of state and family; 2) the claim to be truly native; 3) and the promise of liberating the repressed masculine instincts.

Key words: nineteenth century, masculinity, modernity, subjectivity, journalism, literature, liberalism, democracy, revolution, Cossacks, gauchos, Argentina, Poland, Russia, Ukraine

Acknowledgements

The idea to compare the Cossacks and gauchos first occurred to me in 2009, when I was preparing my presentation for the Graduate Training School “Comparing Empires,” convened by the COST Network *Tributary Empires Compared* (A36) in Rome. Here, the main merit goes to two persons: my MA supervisor Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, who invited me to participate in that event and my friend Paulina Ścieżka, a student of linguistics, who was the first to introduce me to the writings of Domingo F. Sarmiento. Another participant of that workshop in Rome was Mateusz Falkowski who helped me in many different ways and is a constant presence in my academic life. The meaning which I give to the Cossack-gaUCHO comparison in this dissertation is completely different from what I presented eight years ago, but that training school was the beginning of this intellectual experiment.

Many thanks must go to my supervisor Lucy Riall and my second reader Pieter Judson. Lucy was always generous in sharing her expertise and supported me in moments of doubt. Without her advice and encouragement this text would never come into being. Pieter was much more than just a second reader, rather a co-supervisor and the most critical of interlocutors. It is not possible to do justice to his contributions in a short note of acknowledgements.

Several persons read fragments of this dissertation and helped me to improve my argument: Bettina Brandt, Bettina Brockmeyer, Stéphane Van Damme, Laura Downs, Angelika Epple, Walter Erhart, Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, Maciej Janowski, Martina Kessel, Pavel Kolář, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, Oleksandr Polianichev, Johannes Remy, Ann Thomson, Torsten Voß and several co-participants of thesis writing seminars at the EUI. I also owe valuable bibliographical suggestions to José Miguel Escribano Páez, Gabriel di Meglio, Ostap Sereda, Oleh Turii, Frank Sysyn and Ignacio Zubizarreta. I am especially indebted to Alexandra Ortolja-Baird who helped me to clarify my English and eliminate accidental rhymes (‘the horse of course’).

For four months I worked on this project at the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology, which surprised me as one of the nicest and most stimulating academic milieus which I have encountered in my life.

Many other people and institutions should be named here, but I would not like to make this note of acknowledgements too long. I will close it here thanking my wife, my mother and my grandmother.

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Note on conventions

To render terms and names in Russian and Ukrainian I use the simplified romanisation systems of the Library of Congress (without diacritics and ligatures).

Names of the rulers are rendered in their anglicised forms, except for a couple of Russian names assimilated into English, hence Charles III instead of Carlos III, but Ivan the Terrible instead of John the Terrible. Names of all other personages are given in their original version, such as Santiago de Liniers, Ioannis Kapodistrias, Nikolai Karamzin. Several activists, intellectuals and state officials can be identified as both Russians and Ukrainians, because in the nineteenth century these identifications overlapped. Deciding how to render names of such personages in English, on the basis of either their Ukrainian or Russian version, is a politically charged question, as it is often used as way of claiming historical protagonists as ‘belonging’ to either nation. In most cases, if these personages were active in the Russian public sphere and published in Russian under Russian names, I will give their names in their Russian version, hence Vladimir Antonovich instead of Volodymyr Antonovych and Nikolai Kostomarov instead of Mykola Kostomarov, although there can be no doubt that both these historians identified themselves, first and foremost, with Ukraine. There are two reasons for my preference of the Russian form: 1) usually, it facilitates bibliographical queries; 2) the Russian name was a kind of public persona at that time and I think that it is not my task to restore historical justice in the Russo-Ukrainian relations, but rather to follow and interpret linguistic protocols of the period.

Place names are given in accordance with the official names used nowadays by their national authorities with the exception of those who have a widely used domesticated English-language version and those that were renamed radically in the twentieth century, hence Lviv instead of Lwów, Moscow instead of Moskva and Ekaterinoslav instead of Dnipro.

‘Banda Oriental’ is the term that I use to refer to the area of the present-day Uruguay prior to its independence in 1828. Consequently, in accordance with the usage of the time the adjective referring to this area and its inhabitants will be ‘Oriental.’ ‘Buenos Aires’ when used as a modifier refers to the Province of Buenos Aires, while ‘porteño’ refers to the city of Buenos Aires. ‘River Plate’ is the term that I use to denote the large region encompassing roughly the present-day states of Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay (sometimes also Bolivia and Brazilian Rio Grande do Sul). ‘The Río de la Plata’ is the name that I use for the estuary of the Uruguay and Paraná rivers.

Michel Gobat showed convincingly that the very idea of ‘Latin America’ came into being only in the mid-1850s as an anti-imperialist response to the US filibusters and the corollary ideology of a superior Anglo-Saxon race. In the next decade, it was taken over and solidified by the French imperialists who wanted to justify their incursion in the region.¹ As my work deals mostly with the 1830s and 1840s and I focus exclusively on the former Viceroyalty of the River Plate, I choose to avoid the anachronistic use of this denominator and opt instead for the term ‘Spanish America.’

I use the term ‘Indians,’ because I do not refer to the indigenous communities themselves, but to the ways in which they were perceived and described by the nineteenth-century Argentine intellectuals.

The monarchical polity that had as its capital the city of Moscow and was to serve as the basis for the Russian Empire (created in 1721) will be called ‘Muscovy,’ hence ‘Muscovite’ and the ‘Muscovites.’ The vast East European republic of noble-born citizens will be referred to as the ‘Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.’ The composite adjective ‘Polish-Lithuanian’ and the modifier ‘Commonwealth’ can refer to either the state itself (partitioned in 1795) or the predominantly Polish-speaking nobility and its peculiar culture up until the 1860s, when it embarked on the eventual transformation into an unequivocally Polish nation. Both in the case of Muscovy and of Poland-Lithuania the dividing line between those *ancien-régime* polities and identifications, and their successors, is not clear-cut, as is, for instance, attested by my nineteenth-century sources which tend to use the terms Russian and Polish indiscriminately (their protocols will be preserved in my quotations from and commentaries on them). In particular, the anachronistic term Polish-Lithuanian seems to generate at least as many problems as it solves, but this is no place for radical terminological reforms. Despite all the difficulties and reservations, I find it indispensable to differentiate in an academic text the Muscovite from the Russian and the Polish-Lithuanian from the Polish.

The two constituent parts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth will be called the ‘Realm of Poland’ (Polish *Korona Królestwa Polskiego*) and the ‘Grand Duchy of Lithuania’ (Polish *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie*). Consequently, the adjectives Polish and Lithuanian when employed in the context of the *ancien-régime* realities will refer to these two administrative organisms rather than the narrower ethnic identities. Thus, a Polonophone Ruthenian nobleman from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, such as Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz was, will be identified as Lithuanian.

¹ Michel Gobat, “The Invention of Latin America: A Transnational History of Anti-Imperialism, Democracy, and Race,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 118, No. 5, December 2013, 1345-1375.

At times, I use the term ‘Ruthenian’ (Polish singular masculine *ruski* and Ukrainian singular masculine *rus'kyi*) in a similar way to denote the Ukrainian ethnicity when it is not tantamount to the Ukrainian national identification. Also, in the chapters and sections devoted to the Polonophone context, what we would nowadays call the Ukrainian lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth will be referred to as the ‘Ruthenian Palatinates’ (Polish plural *województwa ruskie*) which is an attested phrase from the late eighteenth century; the nobility of this region will be called Ruthenian (a use also grounded in the primary sources); similarly, for the Uniate Catholic and Orthodox Christian peasants of the Ruthenian Palatinates I will use the term Ruthenian. Thus, I avoid such terms as unqualified adjectives Polish and Ukrainian which impose inescapable connotations with the present-day nations of Poland and Ukraine or, as is the case with the composite adjective ‘Polish-Ukrainian,’ suggest some sort of awkward combination of these two latter-day identifications.

Accidentally, two different lands are referred to as Galicia in English: a Spanish kingdom and an Austrian crownland. I use the name and derivative adjectives in both senses without additional explanations, as they tend to appear in contexts so different that they cannot be confused.

When referring to the United States of America and its citizens I never use the unqualified terms ‘America’ and ‘American,’ but rather ‘US’ as both a name and a modifier. Though quite artificial, this choice is justified by the fact that most of my Spanish-language sources from the early nineteenth century use the unqualified term American to denote the Spanish Americans as opposed to Spaniards and other Europeans. In practice, in many situational contexts American is simply a synonym of Argentine or River Plate.

Following Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, I prefer to break down the all-encompassing and vague term ‘identity’ and talk instead of personas, labels, acts of identification, representations, categorisations, sense of collective belonging (*Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl*) and self-understanding.² Sometimes, however, I find it impossible to avoid using the term identity. Though it is not exceptionally helpful as an analytical tool, it does reflect the way in which my historical protagonists collapsed the labels, representations, self-understandings and claims about collective belonging, in order to achieve their particular goals. Though we should not accept the identity talk at face value, neither should we dismiss it high-handedly, as it was (and is) a productive political construct which needs to be accounted for.

² Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, 2005), 59-90.

Translations from Bulgarin, Sarmiento, Czajkowski, Pérez and Galician *scriptores minores* are my own. Those from *Taras Bul'ba* are based on the text available online, but it was almost always necessary to amend it.³

³ <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1197/1197-h/1197-h.htm> (retrieved 18.05.2014).

1. Introduction

Field marshal Andrés García Camba was a true man of empire – the Spanish Empire, to be precise. A career military official, originally from Spanish Galicia, during his long and fruitful life he served, among others, as a line officer in South America, a captain general of the Philippines, Galicia, Balearic Islands and Puerto Rico, and a senator for life representing the liberal progressive camarilla of the so-called *ayacuchos*. Long before reaching these high honours, it befell him to fight the pro-independence forces of General Martín de Güemes in what is today the north Argentina. García Camba recounted those events in his memoirs published in Madrid in 1846, some thirty years after they had actually transpired. Though not exactly men of the plains, Güemes's mounted troops were dubbed gauchos and García Camba had to explain to his Peninsular readers what this term meant: exceptionally skillful and courageous horsemen of the countryside (*hombres del campo*). The Galician official did not conceal his admiration for them, as they proved on numerous occasions that they had been cut out for a guerrilla war.¹ García Camba seems to have felt that in order to explicate the phenomenon of gauchos it was not enough to simply describe them. A suitable point of reference was needed to clarify the matters and so the memoirist mentioned two names which he expected his readers to know well: ‘...the gauchos [are] individually courageous [and] so skilled on horseback that they equal or even surpass the celebrated Mamelukes and famous Cossacks.’²

The Spaniards had first-hand knowledge of the Mamelukes as members of the French Imperial Guard taking part in Napoleon's invasion of 1808, but they would have known the Cossacks mostly from literature. In García Camba's memoirs there is in fact a trace of what sort of writings could have transmitted their image to the Iberian Peninsula. At one point the author states that the pro-independence Americans learned from the loyalist regular troops, just as Peter the Great's Muscovites had from the Swedes of Charles XII.³ Apparently, Field marshal García Camba read Voltaire's works on Eastern Europe in which Ukraine and Cossacks featured quite prominently. He also assumed that his readers would have had an idea of them.

¹ Andrés García Camba, *Memorias del general García Camba para la historia de las armas españolas en el Perú 1809-1821* (Madrid, 1916), 314

² García Camba, *Memorias*, 326.

³ García Camba, *Memorias*, 202; for the meaning of Voltaire's depiction of Peter and Charles as disciplining heroes see Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994), 93-94.

The comparison of gauchos to the Cossacks and oriental Muslim riders (but not the other way around) is not my invention, but was part and parcel of the way in which they were defined by the historical actors themselves, most prominently by the eminent Argentine journalist and politician Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, to whom I devote one of my chapters. During the 1840s the Cossacks seem to have been a universally recognisable label in the Spanish-speaking world: at roughly the same time as García Camba and Sarmiento, the Chilean *costumbrista* author Jotabeche, or José Joaquín Vallejo Borkoski (his maternal grandfather was Polish-Lithuanian), described Colchagua as ‘our Cossack province,’ because it was shabby, backward and populated by *huasos*, the Chilean counterpart of gauchos.⁴ That superficial but widespread knowledge of Cossacks was a fruit of the Francophone print culture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.⁵ While the real Cossacks and gauchos never faced each other and were actually quite disparate, their representations in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century came to interact in the rapidly expanding field of Europeanate political culture. This circumstance serves as one of the most powerful justifications of my project as a whole, though not the only one.

*

In this dissertation I study the ways in which the literary figures of free males on horseback, the Cossacks and the gauchos, were endowed with political meanings in the River Plate and Ukraine of 1830s and 1840s. I focus on literary texts, because, as has been noted by Gabriel Paquette, the key feature of the first decades of nineteenth century ‘was the collision of literature and political thought, which became entwined and left each other with indelible (certainly detectable) traces, if not fundamentally transfigured by the encounter. [...] Literary forms were not mere disguises for the (semi-)covert expression of political ideas. Rather, recourse to, and employment of, literary forms, styles, and modes of representation was construed by many as a political intervention in itself. [...] [T]he demarcation of the study of literary texts from political philosophy has distorted the canon of political thought by reducing the range and variety of texts considered worthy of study by historians.’⁶ With my contribution I intend to compensate, at least partially, for this distortion. As I focus on texts originating from journalists and writers, it is an exercise at the intersection of intellectual,

⁴ José Joaquín Vallejo, *Obras de don José Joaquín Vallejo (Jotabeche)* (Santiago de Chile, 1911), 140; the article in question comes from 1842.

⁵ For an overview of this topic see Vadym Adadurov, *Napoleonida na skhodi Ievropy: uivlennia, proekty ta diial'nist' uriadu Frantsii shchodo pivdenno-zakhidnykh okrain Rosiis'koi imperii na pochatku XIX stolittia* (Lviv, 2007).

⁶ Gabriel Paquette, “Romantic Liberalism in Spain and Portugal, c. 1825-50,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (2015), 488-489.

cultural and literary history. More specifically, it is located within the field of history of political culture with special attention paid to ideologies, their symbolic representations and the ways in which they formed part of wider mythologies.

The overarching question that I aim to address is how several different actors in their contingent environments employed these symbols to construct the male subject of modern politics (modernity being understood here as a disciplinary myth and a claim-making concept, rather than a tangible configuration of civilisation).⁷ Of course, the protagonists of my story were not very likely to pose the question this way, as the very notion of modernity was still at an early stage of its making and so it would usually be conveyed in other terms, for instance as ‘civilisation.’⁸ More often than not, the actors with whom I deal, tackled more immediate political issues relevant for each of them: the tension between appointed bureaucracy and embedded civil society, the replacement of personalised networks of loyalty with the ones pretending to be more legalistic and merit-based, the delimitation of national community, the construction of competitive state institutions, the inclusion in the global socio-economic structures, or the striving for a violent anti-bourgeois revolution, to name the most important ones.

I am interested in showing how one symbol can be endowed with several (and often contradictory) meanings by different players and how in different contexts and situations these meanings can then be recontextualised, hybridised or displaced. As has been observed by Axel Körner, ‘[r]econstructing the particular context from which images emerged allows historians to examine the intersection between structure and event, between individual interpretation and collective perceptions.’⁹ By focusing on the conflicting significations imposed upon images and stories by diverse actors, I try to offer a cultural history of politics that captures the importance of socially conditioned structures and patterns without neglecting the decisive role of individual agency and contingent circumstances. Ideally, I should be able to offer ‘an actor-centred approach on a local level,’ but with expressly global purposes.¹⁰ Secondly, I aim to document the kinship between political mythologies from two distant areas

⁷ See Carol Symes, “When We Talk About Modernity,” *American Historical Review* Vol. 116 (2011), No 2, 715-26; Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, 2005), 146-147.

⁸ James E. Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World: Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Durham, 2014).

⁹ Axel Körner, “Introduction,” in idem, Nicola Miller and Adam I. P. Smith, *America Imagined: Explaining the United States in Nineteenth-Century Europe and Latin America* (New York, 2012), 5-6.

¹⁰ Angelika Epple, “The Global, the Transnational and the Subaltern: The Limits of History beyond the National Paradigm,” in Anna Amelina et al., eds, *Beyond Methodological Nationalism: Research Methodologies for Transnational Studies* (London, 2012), 262.

of the Europeanate cultural space (coined as an analogue to the Persianate world and Sinosphere) and the ways in which they interacted. Thirdly, I write a study in European political imagination using evidence from regions which are often overlooked or presented as peripheral and thus passive. It is an attempt at provincialising Europe from within by removing the ‘normative Europeans’ of Amsterdam, London and Paris from centre stage.¹¹ Lastly, it is an exercise in working with an alternative canon, as I put on equal footing works of recognised classics and those of authors who fell into oblivion, including non-elite voices directed towards peasantry.

In my study I offer contextualised interpretations of several pieces. I focus on the texts themselves and their intended immediate meanings and less on the process of their reception, but the latter issue is inextricable from my way of approaching the process of authorial creation. For me, the very act of creation is a consequence and testimony to reception (Certeau’s reader as producer).¹² I treat my sources less as original works of their authors and more as records of their experiences of reception of other texts and environmental stimuli. I do not deny agency to my protagonists: in fact individual subjects and their efforts do occupy the very centre stage of my story, but I try to complicate our understanding of their contribution. Rather than presenting them as myth makers (*mythopoietai*), artistic geniuses who create meanings from scratch, I treat them as mythographers (*mythographoi*) who write down, interpret and adjust the stories that are available to them. In the course of this process the authors always transform the narratives in question, often proving highly original and creative, but they never just invent them.

I focus on the 1830s and 1840s, but locate these decades in a wider horizon of what might be called a very short nineteenth century, lasting from the late 1810s to the early 1870s. I choose this time frame, firstly because it was the high point of Europe’s masculine revolutionary culture and, secondly, because it was precisely during that period that the so-called ‘steam literature’ started to take shape enabling, in the words of Henry Nash Smith, the discovery of a new reading audience ‘that had not previously been known to exist.’¹³ I also bear in mind the preceding period, the late eighteenth century, in which the mythologised images of the steppe frontier and its semi-savage inhabitants were produced by the enlightened imperial officials.

¹¹ Here I allude to Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000).

¹² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, 1988), 167-170.

¹³ Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: the American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA, 1970), 91.

On the surface, my project is comparative, as I bring together evidence from two distant regions: the River Plate and Ukraine. However, it must be emphasised that it is not my goal to compare these two ‘regions,’ as actually both are artifices contrived for the purpose of this dissertation. The ‘River Plate’ is here just a shorthand for the culture radiating from the city of Buenos Aires, whereas ‘Ukraine’ encompasses several complex contexts under two distinct state regimes (Russia and Austria). Comparisons, I believe, should never aim exclusively at finding similarities yet, when there are none, the comparative exercise becomes futile. The historical trajectories of Argentina and Ukraine are so different that comparing the two spaces does not seem exceptionally productive. In turn, bringing together the representations of Cossacks and gauchos is much more justified.

In the Eastern European context Ukraine is by no means the poorest orphan with no dowry. Throughout the past four hundred years it has proved a rich and diverse environment in which some of the most interesting proposals subverting the hegemonic narratives originating with Poland and Russia were formulated. However, it does not match the privileged position of Argentina, a true superpower in terms of cultural and intellectual contributions, influential well beyond the confines of the Spanish-speaking world. Consequently, the historiographical location of the two countries is quite different. Though Ukraine features prominently on the map of Eastern European area studies, it is usually presented as a passive space without distinctive qualities or, worse still, the most perfect embodiment of Bloodlands. The latter is a flawed and, indeed, dangerous label reinforcing the orientalist stereotypes about this part of Europe (contrary to the explicit intentions of its author).¹⁴

Though not without its specific problems, Argentina, especially the city of Buenos Aires, seems to be accepted in historiography as a hub of modernity, comparable, if not equal to European continental nations such as France and Italy. Paradoxically, this means that it did not sit well with erstwhile predominant narratives of Latin American history and stood a bit apart from many accounts and interpretive models. Traces of this situation are noticeable even in the recent, expressly revisionist literature. For example, James Sanders in his important work *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World: Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in*

¹⁴ The term Bloodlands originates with Timothy Snyder’s *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (London, 2010); for discussions of this work and the concept of Bloodlands see John Connelly, Mark Roseman, Andriy Portnov, Michael David-Fox and Timothy Snyder, “Review Forum: Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 13 (2012), No. 3, 313–52 and Jörg Baberowski, Dan Diner, Thomas Kühne, Mark Mazower and Timothy Snyder, “Forum: Timothy Snyder’s *Bloodlands*,” *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 115–68

Nineteenth-century Latin America has surprisingly little to say about Argentina (only a few iconic intellectuals are addressed in a cursory manner). A positive side-effect of this situation is that, more often than with many other South American countries, Argentina was treated seriously and studied for its own sake as a unique historical case, rather than as yet another variation on the common theme of Latin American underdevelopment. Unfortunately, legitimate attention to historical contingency and uniqueness often borders on an implicit (or even explicit) Argentine exceptionalism.

Although my choice of River Plate and Ukrainian lands might suggest otherwise, by focusing on the political aspects of their cultural production I do not mean to distil truths about 'Europe's (semi)peripheries.' I do not see the two spaces as embodiments of backwardness, but rather as historically specific sites of development, different but not fundamentally disparate from countries traditionally believed to be Europe's core and form the engine of civilisation. When issues related to Eurocentric progress and its alleged diffusion emerge in my thesis, they do so only as themes addressed by historical actors, elements of their writing and reflections of certain mythologies, not as questions that I seek to resolve on my own.

I conceptualise the River Plate and the Ukrainian lands as embedded in a wider network of cultural and intellectual exchanges that I choose to call the Europeanate world. The term is modeled after the Persianate world, current in Islamic studies. The Persianate sphere, world or space denotes the zone of influence of Persian high culture, especially its literature and protocols of power. The term is expressly artificial and academic and serves to emphasise a cultural convergence without necessarily absolutising it and attributing every creative innovation to the Persian influence. The Persianate world is not imagined as religiously, ethnically or racially unified, as it encompasses Turkic, Indic, Dravidian and Iranian peoples, as well as Shias, Sunnis and non-Muslims (Christians, Zoroastrians and others). Neither is it clearly delimited from the outside world as its borders are porous and flexible: for some scholarly purposes it can even include the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate, where Persianate elements were applied only very selectively. It is also embedded in and overlapping with other networks, such as Islam and the Great Steppe.

To further clarify how I use the label 'Europeanate' I shall borrow a passage from Shahzad Bashir's discussion of Islamic world: '...I understand the term ['Europeanate'] nominalistically, meaning that a perspective is to be taken as such based on self-identification in language and rhetoric. This conceptualization eschews an a priori attribution of an essential core to ['Europe'] that would unify all things ['Europeanate'] into a single system. Rather, the

term ['Europeanate'] is an aspect of human agentive assertion, can accommodate internal diversity without preset limits, and is characterized by fluidity rather than stasis.¹⁵ Perhaps my proposal will not prove valid, but I believe that we need to seek a term to capture the important role that Europe played in that period as a node of cultural exchange and a point of reference for people around the globe, but one that does not overestimate the power of its alleged core and the uniformity of its cultural and intellectual life.

My study on the River Plate and the Ukrainian lands does not just aim to add a few colourful details to what we already know about the European politics in the nineteenth century, especially in the 'peripheries,' but instead it wants to reveal some aspects of Europeanate lexicons of power that are less discernible when approached through different contexts. Ideally, I would like to show a history that is hidden from the vantage point of Paris and London, but nevertheless relevant to everybody. Accordingly, I reject the commonsensical diffusionist assumptions which locate all the important innovations in North-Western Europe reducing the rest of the Europeanate space (and the world as a whole) to the role of passive receivers, copyists or, at best, adapters. Benedict Anderson famously claimed that it was the American Creoles that engendered the modern nationalism which later spread around the world. Much evidence suggests that Anderson was not right on this account (though it must be noted that his bold claim was an impulse for rethinking several big issues and its importance goes far beyond its factual validity or lack thereof). I do not wish to repeat Anderson's gesture and simply reverse the predominant Eurocentric vision by claiming that indeed the 'peripheries' were more creative and they invented this or that. Rather, I would like to present my allegedly peripheral protagonists as reacting to the same secular stimuli and contributing to the common effort of transforming the world, on par with, but not ahead of the usual suspects from Amsterdam, London, New York and Paris.¹⁶

¹⁵ Bashir continues: 'Dropping the term ["Europeanate"] altogether by, for example, analyzing matters solely in regional terms [...] detracts from the fact that human life in these regions has been densely interconnected for centuries. Retaining the term ["Europeanate"] in the way I have conceptualised allows us to appreciate the internal projection of a universalism and the incessant traffic of ideas and peoples within a very large geographical area. In this view, [the Europeanate sphere] is to be seen as a conglomeration of things [Europeanate] that is forever under construction and varies radically between times and places. And no single [Europeanate culture] can be abstracted out of particular historical experience and then be made into a universal touchstone to measure the "Europeanness" of ideas and actions attributed to [Europeans] in particular places.' "On Islamic Time: Rethinking Chronology in the Historiography of Muslim Societies," *History and Theory*, Vo. 53 (December 2014), 519-544. Of course, I do violence to Bashir's text by substituting the neologism Europeanate and its derivatives for Islam and its derivatives.

¹⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin And Spread of Nationalism* (New York, 2006), 22-66. For well-documented and sophisticated critiques of Anderson's vision of Creole nation building see Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen, eds, *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the*

One relatively well known example that can illustrate my approach is the label ‘liberal,’ doubtless a key element of Europeanate lexicons. In the early nineteenth century it came to denote the political and intellectual formation emphasising allegedly universal freedoms and rights of rational individual actors, denouncing hereditary privilege and arbitrary power, and supporting parliamentary governments regulated by constitutional charters. This use of the term ‘liberal’ (the word itself had functioned before in other contexts) was first stabilised in the 1810s in Spain and only later popularised by Francophone texts around Europe. Liberalism as a package of ideas had existed before and the Spaniards did not invent it in 1812, but they gave it a name and their short constitutional experiments proved resonant enough to make their contribution relevant all around Europe. We can see here that the allegedly passive and imitative Spain was an active and creative contributor at the time when, for example, France was stifled by the grip of the Napoleonic regime. Spain was not a lone, heroic innovator whose path-breaking contributions have been maliciously obscured by powerful northerners, but rather a partner and a constant presence in the common Europeanate marketplace of ideas.¹⁷

The understanding of the nineteenth-century River Plate and Ukraine is not at stake in my project. My dissertation is meant to be, first and foremost, a transnational study of a peculiar myth of masculinity, free from the constraints imposed by either family or state. I need to make two emphatic reservations here. The first is that I treat this myth as *a* masculinity model, not *the* masculinity model. In the early nineteenth century, there were also other ways of presenting and conceptualising masculinity, perhaps more powerful and consequential. The rebellious masculinity of the Cossack/gaicho type is just one element of a much bigger picture. Secondly, the label of ‘transnational’ does not imply the usual emphasis on direct connections, transfers or entanglements between solid ‘national’ units as, in fact, there was not much meaningful contact or exchange between my River Plate and Ukrainian protagonists. What brings their stories together is their having a common point of reference in the late Enlightenment/Romantic simulacrum of ‘non-modernity,’ of which the anarchic frontier horseman is, again, just one symbol. I treat the Cossacks and the gauchos as two examples of a dream about the free life beyond the limitations imposed by the modern state

Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America (Washington, 2003) and José Carlos Chiaramonte, *Nation and State in Latin America: Political Language During Independence* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2012).

¹⁷ For the rise of the label ‘liberal’ Javier Fernández Sebastián, “Liberalismo en España (1810-1850). La construcción de un concepto y la forja de una identidad política,” and Roberto Breña, “«Liberal» y «liberalismo» en la Nueva España y en México (1808-1848)” in Javier Fernández Sebastián, ed., *La Aurora de libertad: Los primeros liberalismos en el mundo iberoamericano* (Madrid, 2012), 261-332.

and society. In fact, that dream was present in many other countries and took many different guises, US cowboys being just one obvious example, so the Cossacks and the gauchos are two specific varieties of a much wider phenomenon. Neither do I offer an exhaustive study of nineteenth-century Cossack and gaucho figures themselves, but instead I select cases that illustrate political aspects which I find important for my argument.

My comparison, I hope, helps to dispel ‘the mirage of false local causes’¹⁸ that are so often summoned when dealing with such supposedly peripheral areas as Eastern Europe and Spanish America. But ultimately this scholarly operation should enable us to achieve much more, namely to capture an important element of political mythology pervading the whole Europeanate world. Such longings, I argue, were inextricably linked to the ‘structured transformations’¹⁹ interpreted by the historical actors as the rise of ‘modernity,’ though clearly the myth of anarchic frontier horseman was not the only conceptual tool used to deal with them.

The figures of the Cossacks and gauchos not only originated from the same post-Seven Years’ War situation in the eighteenth-century global Empires of Spain and Russia (more on which later), but also ended up serving as analogous default representations of nationalised masculinity in twentieth-century Argentina and Ukraine. I made, however, a deliberate decision to remove the issue of nation-building and nationalism from centre stage and to approach these two ultimately hyper-nationalist symbols from a different angle. Focus on nationalism often leads to a circular logic that tends to convey a sense of historical inevitability of nations as we know them. Personally, I prefer to search for contingencies and the creative contributions of unique human beings. In order not to lock myself in the cage of nationalism studies, I address the questions of nation-building explicitly only in the last chapter of my thesis, the one dealing with Austrian Galicia. Even there, however, they are presented as a subordinate element of a much more complex field of ideological struggle in which the most important rift is the one dividing revolutionary democrats and reformist liberals.

In the course of my analysis of primary sources I build two main threads: first, I am interested in how these stories and images were used by individual authors to construct their visions of masculine subjectivity (on this account I accord broadly with Lynn Hunt’s suggestion to write a global history focusing on individual actors’ efforts to construct their

¹⁸ The phrase is Marc Bloch’s, but I quote in English from John H. Elliott, *History in the Making* (New Haven, 2012), 175.

¹⁹ Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History* (Princeton, 2016), 90-114.

selves),²⁰ and secondly, how these masculine subjectivities were meant to contribute to a wider societal order, especially in the context of state-building experiences of the time. The latter topic area bifurcates in my work into two autonomous questions: the first has to do with the opposition between, on the one hand, the simulacrum of ‘modernity’ usually associated with the state order modeled after Western Europe and, on the other, that of ‘non-modernity,’ one figure of which is the anarchic frontier horseman of the Cossack/gaucha type. The other question concerns the hope for (or fear of) the establishment of an egalitarian democratic society, most plausibly by way of violent revolution.

The two sides of the story, the individual and the collective, are inextricably connected. Indeed, the Cossack/gaucha myth proved so successful precisely thanks to the fact that it bridged the actors’ most intimate longings with the political anxieties of the age. Secondly, this success can be attributed to the fact that the Cossack/gaucha figures enabled communication between various elite and non-elite actors, though quite often the differences in their understanding of those symbols were so profound that one should actually speak about fruitful miscommunications.²¹

The widespread and different guises of this phenomenon were enabled by the existence of what might be called a global Europeanate public sphere. It can be called global, because it encompassed settlements on six continents but, at least in the perspective of my study, it is doubtless Europeanate in the sense of being facilitated by media, lexicons and institutions originating with predominantly Christian societies of European origin. The interplay of the two regional contexts selected for my research illustrates that this vast space of information circulation was, at the same time, planetary in scope and European (or European-like) in outlook.

The figure of the semi-savage horseman of the frontier plains was diffused by the French-language literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The Cossacks were one paragon of this myth mediated globally by the Francophone authors and so they

²⁰ Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era* (New York, 2014), 78-118.

²¹ For the sake of argument I use throughout my work the simplistic labels of ‘elite’ and ‘subaltern’ actors. In truth, these two ideal groups often overlapped and were quite differently delimited in every geographical and cultural context. For my purposes, I use the access to formal schooling and resulting cultural resources as the main indicator of belonging to the elite. In the River Plate the non-elite actors were referred to as the *bajo pueblo* (populace), while the elite was called *gente decente* (people of quality). In the Ukrainian lands the subalterns were mostly serfs, but I will also add to them petty Jewish and Ruthenian burghers, lowly Cossacks, landless nobles, parish priests and emerging proletarians. For useful discussions see Gabriel di Meglio, *¡Viva el bajo pueblo! La plebe urbana de Buenos Aires y la política entre la Revolución de Mayo y el rosismo (1810-1829)* (Buenos Aires, 2006), 15-21 and 40-50; and Ricardo D. Salvatore, *Wandering Paysanos: State Order and Subaltern Experience in Buenos Aires during the Rosas Era* (Durham, 2003), 1-25.

made their way to the minds of River Plate authors and politicians, such as Sarmiento. Yet the similarities between the two cases have even deeper roots. The intellectuals from the River Plate sought to locate their land on the map of European civilisation and adjust what they knew from their own experience to the models they found in French-language books. Of course, the lived experience and social circumstances in the River Plate differed wildly from those of Ukrainian lands, but the way in which the Cossacks and gauchos were depicted was quite close. It was not just an instance of smart copycats at the back of beyond imitating the fashionable Francophone authors. The comparison between the Cossacks and the gauchos worked so well because it captured an important truth about the two figures, though not necessarily the one that the actors wanted to convey.

Whether the ‘real-life’ Cossacks and gauchos were genuinely similar or even related to each other is debatable. My own inclination would be to emphasise the differences. What is most important here is that the people who codified their representations in the later eighteenth century were very similar: they were Enlightened imperial officials aiming at transforming a distant grassland dominion (River Plate and Black Sea coast respectively) by improving its administration and liberalising its economic regime. In both cases the basis of these officials’ education was Classicist, whereas its superstructure was ‘philosophical’ (in the sense of the term prevalent in the later eighteenth century). It is not only about their reading the same Francophone authors, but about their having kindred mindsets and tasks from the very beginning and thus reaching for the same sorts of books and solutions.

The image of the Cossacks and gauchos constructed by the eighteenth-century actors for their own very peculiar purposes was later inherited by their nineteenth-century successors who strove to define their fatherlands and their place in the world. Here again there is much more than just the circulation of news and ideas: what we are dealing with is an overarching set of connected and, to a large degree, analogous transformations, domestic and transcontinental alike. It is this world situation of common roots, parallel developments and circulating concepts that makes the global/transnational scope of my study justifiable and indeed useful.

Taking the transnational label with a grain of salt, I analyse various representations of Cossacks and gauchos in light of different cultural and societal contexts in which their authors functioned and the transfers between them. This is especially evident in the Ukrainian part of my research, where I bring together primary sources that are usually compartmentalised as Polish, Russian and Ukrainian. In the River Plate part of my project I study almost exclusively the Argentine version of gaucho myth (actually, with a clear overrepresentation of the

Province of Buenos Aires), while neglecting its counterparts from Uruguay and the Rio Grande do Sul. Apart from obvious logistical limitations, this is justified by my intent to focus on the conflict between competing nation- and state-building ideologies. In Ukraine, these rival partisan visions tended to coalesce into Polish, Russian and Ukrainian nationalisms, whereas in the River Plate the separatist ideology of the Rio Grande do Sul and the nation-building ideologies of Uruguay did not compete significantly with the Argentine ones and hence they would not serve my purpose of evidencing the kinship between the explicitly nationalist and other factional identifications. In turn, within the Argentine Confederation there was a clearly articulated enmity between two partisan myths that offered contrasting visions of state and nation: one that was emphatically Europeanised and progressive, but also racially exclusive and elitist, and another one that was more confessionalised (Catholic) and conservative, but also populist and racially inclusive. It is this internal Argentine rivalry that I wish to juxtapose with the competition of various national identifications taking place in the Ukrainian lands.

A side-effect of such a selection of themes and primary sources is that the gaucho sections of my work occupy notably less space than the Cossack ones. It cannot be denied that my previous research experience in Polish-language aspects of Ukrainian history has certainly affected my choice of paths but, at least in part, this imbalance is justified also by the fact that while in the gaucho part of my study I deal with one national historiography, in my Cossack chapters I need to grapple with evidence and literature compartmentalised into three rich national traditions, dealing with two imperial monarchies (Habsburg and Romanov) and two *ancien-régime* republics (Hetmanate and Poland-Lithuania).

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As my project is located at the intersection of several fields of research, I am forced to draw on a wide and eclectic array of scholarship. The Cossacks and the gauchos have been studied extensively, both as actors of social realities and as literary figures and it would not be possible to name here all relevant works, classics and recent innovations alike. They will be referenced in the following chapters. For the construction of ‘others’ and colonial (or colonial-like) process of imagining the realms of savagery and underdevelopment I draw mostly on Mary Louise Pratt, Adolfo Prieto and Larry Wolff.²² As for the politicisation of masculine ideals, the contributions that are most relevant for my research are those of Judith

²² Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York, 2003); Adolfo Prieto, *Los viajeros ingleses y la emergencia de la literatura argentina, 1820-1850* (Buenos Aires, 1996); Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*.

Deutsch Kornblatt, George Mosse, Lucy Riall and Lora Wildenthal.²³ Exceptionally important is their appreciation of how myths or fantasies of masculinity, especially those concerning the longed-for liberation from the constraints of expanding modern state and bourgeois family life, were employed as engines of political mass mobilisation. An important reference is also Klaus Theweleit's *Male Fantasies* on the gendered imaginations of German right-wing activists after the First World War, though, alas, it can hardly serve as a model of consistence and clarity.²⁴ For my purposes, works focused emphatically on Latin America and located at the intersection of gender studies, literary studies and history, proved more useful: *South American Independence: Gender, Politics, Text* by Catherine Davies, Claire Brewster and Hilary Owen; Francine Masiello's *Between Civilization and Barbarism: Women, Nation, and Literary Culture in Modern Argentina*; and Doris Sommer's *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*. Very inspiring was Sommer's analysis of narrated 'erotics of politics,' though in contrast to her work there is much less emphasis here on the ideal of the happy heterosexual union.²⁵

The political histories of the River Plate and Ukraine of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century have both undergone substantial renovations in the last thirty years. In Argentina, the so-called new political history managed to recover the agency of subalterns and, more generally, the inherently modern and political nature of violent struggles of the period.²⁶ In Ukraine, in turn, a trend that I would dub post-statist ethnosymbolism restored the importance of the inherited lexicons for the construction of new politics in the course of the

²³ Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, *The Cossack Hero in Russian Literature: A Study in Cultural Mythology* (Madison, WI, 1992); George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford, 1996); Lucy Riall, *Garibaldi: Invention of a Hero* (New Haven, 2007); Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham, 2001).

²⁴ Klaus Theweleit, *Male fantasies* (Cambridge, 1987-1989).

²⁵ Catherine Davies, Claire Brewster and Hilary Owen, *South American Independence: Gender, Politics, Text* (Liverpool, 2006); Francine Masiello, *Between Civilization and Barbarism: Women, Nation and Literary Culture in Modern Argentina* (Lincoln, 1992); Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley, 1991).

²⁶ Raúl Fradkin, *La historia de una montonera: bandolerismo y caudillismo en Buenos Aires, 1826* (Buenos Aires, 2006); Ariel de la Fuente, *Children of Facundo: Caudillo and Gaucho Insurgency during the Argentine State-Formation Process (La Rioja, 1853-1870)* (Durham, 2000); Juan Carlos Garvaglia, *San Antonio de Areco: Un pueblo de la campaña, del Antiguo Régimen a la modernidad argentina* (Rosario, 2006); Jorge Gelman, "Unitarios y federales. Control político y construcción de identidades en el primer gobierno de Rosas," *Anuario IEHS*, No. 19 (2004), 359-390; Pilar González Bernaldo, *Civilidad y política. En los orígenes de la Nación Argentina. Las sociabilidades en Buenos Aires, 1829-1862* (Buenos Aires, 2001); eadem, "El levantamiento de 1829: el imaginario social y sus implicaciones políticas en un conflicto rural," *Anuario IEHS*, No. 2 (1987), 135-176; Meglio, *Bajo pueblo*; Salvatore, *Wandering Paysanos*; Alejandro Rabinovich, *La société guerrière. Pratiques, discours et valeurs militaires dans le Rio de la Plata (1806-1852)* (Rennes, 2013); Ignacio Zubizarreta, *Los Unitarios: faccionalismo, prácticas, construcción identitaria y vínculos de una agrupación política decimonónica, 1820-1852* (Stuttgart, 2012).

nineteenth century.²⁷ Both trends contributed to complicating our understanding of interplay between continuity and change in what has hitherto been described as passage from the *ancien régime* to mature modernity.

In my thesis I treat politics as a peculiar sphere of culture, a dynamic and heterogeneous system of signs and stories which are appropriated and used for particular purposes by individual and collective actors. It is an arena to which any specific community issue can be brought and transformed into an element of universalised struggle for power in the society. I draw my methodological inspiration for dealing with it from Roland Barthes, Michel De Certeau, and Stuart Hall.²⁸ I follow these scholars in their reconstruction of complex myths and political (*sensu lato*) values as conveyed in various sorts of non-canonical sources. Also, I welcome their insistence on the fluidity of meanings and their construction through negotiation by unequal but always creative actors. An especially important influence has been Quentin Skinner's procedure of recovering the illocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions of speech acts (their thrust as political interventions) which I apply to the more eclectic realm of cultural production, that is symbols, myths and practices.²⁹ I focus on stories and images embedded in them and it should be noted that by images I do not 'just mean visual representations, but also textual metaphors and concepts,' to borrow a handy formulation from Axel Körner. Thus understood, images 'are objectifications of subjectively constructed abstractions.' They 'enable us to capture a range of impressions that are less structured, fixed, and also less coherent than would be implied by the ordering principles of ideology, but which nevertheless may have been significant in shaping attitudes.'³⁰

An immediate model for my enterprise are Lynn Hunt's works on the French Revolution and the way in which she has used novels and other ostensibly non-political texts.³¹ In the same vein I appreciate Henry Nash Smith's interest in the US dime novels and

²⁷ Serhii Plochy, *Cossack Myth: History and Nationhood in the Age of Empires* (Cambridge, 2012); Aleksei Tolochko (Oleksii Tolochko), *Kievskaiia Rus' i Malorossiiia* (Kiev, 2012); Frank Sysyn, "The Cossack Chronicles and the Development of Modern Ukrainian Culture and National Identity," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 14 (1990), No 3/4, 593-607; Volodymyr Kravchenko, *Ukraina, imperiia, Rosiia: vybrani statti z modernoi istorii ta istoriohrafiï* (Kiev, 2011).

²⁸ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies: Complete Edition* (New York, 2012); Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*; Stuart Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* (Birmingham, 1973).

²⁹ Quentin Skinner, "Interpretation and the understanding of speech acts," and idem "Moral principles and social change," in idem, *Visions of Politics: Volume 1, Regarding Method*, Cambridge, 2002, 103-127, 145-157.

³⁰ Körner, "Introduction," 5.

³¹ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1984); eadem, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1992).

his combination of cultural and intellectual history.³² Finally, an important reference, both as a model and a foil, is Christopher Hill's comparative study of historical imaginations in late nineteenth-century France, Japan and the US. I find it exceptionally inspiring that he does not focus on transfers and connections, but rather on parallel processes taking place in those three relatively distant environments and conditioned by transformations of global scope.³³ Other important references for the global and transnational aspect of my work are John H. Elliott's history of Spanish and British presence in the Americas, John Robertson's comparison of the Scottish and Neapolitan Enlightenments and Timothy Brook's study of seventeenth-century globalisation as seen from Delft.³⁴ All these works offer case studies of at least two relatively distant geo-cultural contexts to build arguments about wider transnational ramifications. Timothy Brook's work seems particularly relevant for my project, as it focuses on very local phenomena as revealing symptoms of global interconnections, or knots of Indra's net, to use his metaphor. It is also a model of a comparison that is neither fully symmetrical, nor explicitly asymmetrical, which can be also said of my thesis. Next, I profit greatly from Sebastian Conrad's recent assessment of the field of global history, especially his concept of 'structured transformation.' Lastly, a reference of some importance is Franco Moretti's proposal of 'distant reading,' though what I actually do in my work would be better characterised as 'selective close reading.'³⁵

Nationalism and nation building are not my central concerns, but they do play a relatively prominent role in my narrative. Hence, it is indispensable to identify my theoretical references here as well. I mostly draw on the revisionist constructionism of Caspar Hirschi, Pieter Judson and Michał Łuczewski, and to a lesser extent on the now classical contribution of Benedict Anderson. Most importantly, I am inspired by these authors' emphasis on, first, the primacy of the political and, secondly, the multiplicity of dialoguing nationalisms within one public sphere. I also appreciate their arguments about the multidirectional transfers of

³² Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: the American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA, 1970).

³³ Christopher Hill, *National History and The World Of Nations: Capital, State, and the Rhetoric of History in Japan, France, and the United States* (Durham, 2011).

³⁴ J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* (New Haven, 2007); John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680-1760* (Cambridge, 2005); Timothy Brook, *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (New York, 2008).

³⁵ Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London, 1999); idem, *Distant Reading* (London, 2013).

nation-building models (also from the ‘peripheries’ to the ‘centres’), the centrality of the claims about collective dignity and honour, as well as the transformative role of mass media.³⁶

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My dissertation offers several case studies that are meant to elucidate various sides of the politicised nineteenth-century Cossack/gaicho myth and its appropriation by different actors in the two regions. Chapters 3 to 7 each follow a roughly similar pattern: they open with an introduction to the cultural and political context indispensable for interpretation of sources, which is then followed by the analysis proper.

The dissertation opens with an introductory chapter about the myths of free horsemen of the frontier plains, their Mediterranean and Middle Eastern origins and the emergence of their gaicho and Cossack avatars. I then proceed to the anti-liberal vision of society presented in Luis Pérez’s ‘gaicho journalism’ at the beginning of 1830s. I argue that Pérez formulates a vision of a hierarchical solidarity and socio-political leadership based on charisma and ‘agility,’ as opposed to the mechanistic oppressiveness of the state. I compare this proposal with the ideal of ‘Cossack freedom’ espoused by the peasantry of Central Ukraine during the unrest of 1850s.

Next, I shift my focus to the elite actors who also used the topos of free males on horseback to grapple with the problem of mechanistic state and atomising modernity: Nikolai Gogol’, Domingo F. Sarmiento and Michał Czajkowski.

I argue that contrary to most scholarly interpretations of his work, Gogol’ had a very critical attitude towards the Cossack myth: using the Cossacks as an example of benighted barbarism and reductive masculinity, he was trying to present a new vision of modern masculine subjectivity that would overcome the limitations of the past periods and allow individuals to develop in a more balanced manner. In Gogol’’s opinion, an indispensable condition for this new Christian humanism was a strong modern state, though at the same time he understood that its ‘wooden’ nature (that is, its lack of flexibility and human touch) might also become a danger.

Sarmiento’s take on the gaichos was roughly similar, but more radical. An enthusiast of the allegedly all-destroying march of progress, he had no qualms about the mechanistic nature of modern state to which he opposed the benighted gaicho anarchism. At the same

³⁶ Pieter Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848-1914* (Ann Arbor, 1996); Michał Łuczewski, *Odwieczny naród: Polak i katolik w Żmijęcej* (Toruń, 2012); Caspar Hirschi, *Origins of Nationalism: An Alternative History from Ancient Rome to Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 2012); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York, 2006).

time, again similarly to Gogol', he contributed substantially to the aestheticisation of elemental gaucho masculinity.

Michał Czajkowski, in turn, was a revolutionary Polish-Lithuanian activist who developed a very strong attachment to Ukrainian history and identification. I present Czajkowski as a conservative dreamer who used the Cossacks as a symbol of a rich, multicultural past that offered individual males more satisfying avenues of self-fulfillment than the imagined 'Western modernity' that was Sarmiento's darling. I argue that Czajkowski tried to devise an alternative 'East European modernity' that would be more humane and authentic. In some respects his vision was close to that of Luis Pérez and doubtless it was in clear opposition to the diagnoses of Gogol' and Sarmiento.

The three authors shared in the same mythology, as they agreed about the opposition between the messy gaucho/Cossack order of the past and the soulless atomising modernity. Where they did differ was in their preferences and valuations: Czajkowski longed to preserve the rich 'pre-modern' maze, whereas Sarmiento and Gogol opted for 'modernity.' Paradoxically, all three could be characterised as moderate conservatives. To add even more confusion, both Sarmiento and Czajkowski, whose developmental ideals were clearly conflicting, were involved in quite similar revolutionary activities.

In the last chapter I focus on the issue of nation-building ideologies, especially their dialogical and partisan qualities. For this purpose I study the Cossack-themed works of Polish- and Ruthenian-language authors from the Eastern Galicia of the *Vormärz*. I show that the Cossack topics and devices could be used in a number of contradictory ways, but they were always associated with anarchic masculinity and violent assault on the existing social order. As such they served as a figure of democratic revolution. Though later the Cossacks became the central symbol of Ukrainian nation building, in *Vormärz* Galicia the most important issue conditioning the interpretation of Cossack myth was the competition of two visions of political progress and modernisation: that of the revolutionary democrats and of reformist liberals. The question of Polish and Ruthenian nation building cannot be separated from this partisan rivalry.

2. The emergence of Cossacks and gauchos as symbol and myth

2.1. *Šēru* and *eschatia*

In history writing, stories that do not open with the ascension of Queen Victoria to the British throne usually start with the Greeks and Romans. In accordance with this honoured practice one should trace the image of mounted males of the grassy plains to Herodotus and his descriptions of Scythians. There are, however, a number of problems with such an ascription of Classical origins to everything. Those issues cannot be properly addressed in this short introduction, but neither should they be simply ignored as non-consequential. By taking the artifact of ‘Classical heritage’ for granted we accept at face value not the views of the Greeks and Romans themselves, but those of some early modern European intellectuals and our contemporaries who wish to perpetuate the solid and enclosed denomination of ‘European civilisation.’

I do not aim here to substitute this talk of European civilisation with something bigger, richer and more inclusive, but simply to note that when it comes to the symbolic opposition between the nomadic and settled lifestyles, this binary seems to be spread much further than the Greco-Roman heritage and that the Hellenes and Quirites themselves had been participants of a complex cultural exchange, inheritors rather than originators. One could bring here evidence as diverse as the ambiguous Mexican attitude towards the Chichimeca ‘barbarians’ (but at the same time, believed to be the ancestors of the Aztecs)¹ or the Chinese treatment of nomadic peoples from the north and west.² I have no such ambitions, but neither can I completely disregard this issue.

While the Classical tradition seems deeply problematic to me, the importance of diverse Classicisms and their relationship with original ancient texts and worldviews cannot be overestimated in the medieval and early modern cultures of Christendom and Islam. In order to soften the reifying implications of the honoured gesture of bringing out the ancient Mediterranean origins and precedents for the modern phenomena, I will first look at a piece that is still quite close, in terms of idiom and geographical distance, to what we consider the ‘Classical legacy of Europe,’ but which is, for a number of contingent reasons, usually located beyond the pale of ‘ours’ and identified as ‘oriental.’

¹ Charlotte Gradie, “Discovering the Chichimecas,” *The Americas*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (July 1994), 67-88.

² Nicola di Cosmo, *Ancient China and its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History* (Cambridge, 2004); see also Siep Stuurman “Common Humanity and Cultural Difference on the Sedentary-Nomadic Frontier: Herodotus, Sima Qian, and Ibn Khaldun,” in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, eds, *Global Intellectual History* (New York, 2013), 33-58.

The piece in question is the Babylonian epic *He Who Saw the Deep*, more commonly known as the standard version of Gilgamesh epic. Codified at the end of the second millennium BC on the basis of older accounts and attributed to a scholar named Sîn-lēqi-unninni, the epic suffered from the subsequent obsolescence of Babylonian language and never made its way to become a staple of Greco-Roman culture, otherwise permeated with the wisdoms of ‘Eastern sages.’ Nevertheless, the Gilgamesh story related in many important, if indirect, ways to the cultures of central and western Mediterranean: the question that excited European scholars and intellectuals in the second half of the nineteenth century, after it had been rediscovered, was the affinity of its flood myth to those of Greeks and Hebrews.³

He Who Saw the Deep itself is a product of a complex environment where several literary languages had interacted for centuries. It is a multilayered text that needs to be handled with care, but here I am only going to offer some very superficial observations on the question of uncivilised masculinity as presented in the epic.

The main protagonist of the text is Gilgamesh, a powerful king of Uruk and son of the goddess Ninsun. Though filled with hubris, he is no barbarian, but rather an embodiment of elite Babylonian masculinity and self-assurance. The only mortal with whom Gilgamesh ever establishes a fruitful emotional bond is his companion Enkidu. ‘Offspring of silence,’ ‘child of nature, the savage man from the midst of the wild,’ Enkidu was created by a fertility goddess to be a match for Gilgamesh who was abusing his subjects. Originally, Enkidu knew no people and socialised exclusively with animals inhabiting the *ṣēru*, the flat hinterland of agricultural areas, translatable either as desert or steppe.⁴ As Enkidu is troubling the hunters under Gilgamesh’s protection, the king sends Shamhat the harlot to lure the wildling to the city:

[S]he spread her clothing and he lay upon her [...] When with her delights he was fully sated, he turned his gaze to his herd. The gazelles saw Enkidu, they started to run, the beasts of the field shied away from his presence.⁵

Through intercourse with a woman Enkidu loses his purity and part of his strength, but in exchange he acquires ‘reason, and wide understanding.’ Shamhat persuades him to join the

³ Martin West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford, 1971); idem, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford, 1997); Theodore Ziolkowski, *Gilgamesh among Us: Modern Encounters with the Ancient Epic* (Ithaca, 2011).

⁴ Ignace J. Gelb et al., eds, *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago: Volume 16: Š* (Chicago, 1962), 138-147.

⁵ Andrew George, transl. and ed., *The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian* (London, 1999), 8.

human society, teaches him how to eat bread and drink ale, and has his hair cut.⁶ After some initial hostility Enkidu becomes Gilgamesh's closest companion, joining him in all his dangerous endeavors and eventually perishing at his side. Gilgamesh is completely devastated by the loss:

"I shall weep for Enkidu, my friend, like a hired mourner-woman I shall bitterly wail." [...] He covered, like a bride, the face of his friend, like an eagle he circled around him.⁷

This is no place to do justice to this masterful text. Nevertheless, it is striking how many familiar elements can be encountered here. The steppe/desert is already a key (though not exclusive) foil to the urban-cum-agricultural areas. Its inhabitant is a nomadic wild man, endowed with a gargantuan strength. The seductive woman serves as a pioneer of civilisation, employing her sexual charms to separate the savage man from the animal world and to integrate him with human society, not unlike the Polish lady that seduces Andrii Bul'ba in Nikolai Gogol's novel. The domestication proves both debilitating and enriching. The brotherhood of adventurous males is presented as the most durable and authentic bond that can be forged between human beings, while nothing even distantly resembling the hetero-erotic marriage seems to play any significant role in the story. Finally, the opposition between the settled civilised world and the savage *šēru* space is mediated by several ambiguous go-betweens: hunters, trappers, shepherds and eventually Enkidu himself. It should be emphasised here that although the figure of this companion of Gilgamesh is obviously exceptional, it is also an element of a wider phenomenon: the lexicon used to describe him is closely related to the Babylonian portrayals of nomads neighbouring their settled areas.⁸

One important element is still lacking in the Babylonian story: the horse. Enkidu and other marginal men roam the *šēru* on foot. It is here that the standard talk about Herodotus (V c. BC) and ancient Greeks proves of some use to us. Doubtless, Herodotus's depiction of Scythians is one of the most consequential portrayals of horse-riding steppe nomads mutating into myriad later figures of a similar kind. The Scythians and the story of their successful resistance against the Persian king Darius fulfill an important function in his narrative, prefiguring the Athenians' victory over Xerxes and thus serving as both a foil and a model for the imagined community of Hellenes. The horse is a key attribute of this people because it enables their peculiar way of living: homeless (*aoikoi*) and always on the move in the flat

⁶ *Gilgamesh*, 14.

⁷ *Gilgamesh*, 64-65.

⁸ Elena Cassin, "Le semblable et le différent: Babylone et Israël," in Léon Poliakov, ed., *Hommes et bêtes: entretiens sur le racisme: acte du colloque tenu du 12 au 15 mai 1973 au Centre culturel international de Cerisy-la-Salle* (Paris, 1975), 115-127.

Pontic grassland, they are cityless (*apolis*) and hence unreachable (*aporoi*). They live in *aporia*, a place difficult to pass or simply the space of ‘others.’ Ultimately, this is what makes them capable of defeating the Persian army without fighting a single pitched battle. Herodotus presents the Scythians as struggling to defend nothing other than their particular liberty, just like the Athenians and unlike other peoples conquered by the Persians and dealt with by the historian of Halicarnassus.⁹

The contemporaries of Herodotus labeled the territories to the north of the Black Sea *eremia*, wilderness, or *eschatia*, frontier of the cultivated land. Still, the historian of Halicarnassus chose to portray the Scythians as something more than mere savages. In his rendering they actually separate the realm of men from the cannibals and other monstrous races of the far North. Their nomadic ways, epitomised by their special relationship with horses, contradicted everything that the elite Hellenes cherished in their own way of life and political arrangements, but also mirrored it in a curious manner and eventually secured the enviable Scythian liberty.¹⁰

From the time of Herodotus onwards, the combination of horse-riding, flat landscape, nomadism and anarchic freedom becomes a stable package. It is a rather peculiar cocktail, both alluring and terrifying, and the subsequent authors could not decide whether such people were more admirable or abhorrent. The emphasis on the negative aspects found its culmination in the myth of centaurs, savage and lustful hybrids of man and horse, eventually defeated by the forces of reason and restraint.¹¹ But even there a thinly veiled fascination can be easily discerned, as the very idea of organic unity between the rider and his mount never ceased to fire the imagination.

The ambiguities were always there and had to be addressed somehow. So, Ephorus of Cyme (IV c. BC) simply chose to split the dark and light aspects of savage horsemen and claimed that there were actually two separate Scythian peoples: one savage and cruel, the other, just, invincible and holding no private property.¹² This strategy was taken up by Ammianus Marcellinus (IV c.) who contrasted the Huns and Alans. The ways of the two peoples, as depicted by the late Roman historian, are strikingly similar (which he admits himself), especially concerning their dedication to horses and lack of fixed abode. But

⁹ François Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (Berkeley, 2009), 3-11, 19-29, 34-60, 193-208; idem, *Memories of Odysseus: Frontier Tales from Ancient Greece* (Chicago, 2001), 108-116.

¹⁰ Hartog, *Mirror of Herodotus*, 12-14, 38-40.

¹¹ Page DuBois, *Centaurs and Amazons: Women and the Pre-History of the Great Chain of Being* (Ann Arbor, 1991), 25-32.

¹² Hartog, *Memories of Odysseus*, 110.

whereas the Huns are said to be monstrous, two-legged beasts, the Alans, in turn, are ‘tall and handsome.’ While the Huns ‘are content with the disorderly government,’ the Alans freely choose their leaders on the basis of merit. While the Huns are wreaking destruction ‘afire with an inhuman desire for plundering others’ property,’ the Alans are formidable warriors, dedicated to their bellicose ethos. And so on.¹³

No exhaustive analysis of all those disparate texts can be offered here, but it should be clear by now that the ambiguous figure of un-civilised, nomadic male of the plains is part and parcel of the heterogeneous cultural traditions of the Mediterranean. Its crucial components predate Classical Antiquity and go back at least to Mesopotamia of the second millennium BC. One element of utmost symbolic importance arrives later, namely the horse, but then it stays for good acquiring various meanings and functions. Characteristically, the horse is coupled with yet another consequential addition to the image of nomadic males of the plains: the unswerving attachment to liberty. In fact, the two elements are so closely related that it seems that it is precisely the horses that enable the political freedoms of the steppe peoples. For instance, Ammianus Marcellinus notes that the Huns attended their political assemblies on horseback.¹⁴ It is far from certain that these two innovations in the image of steppe nomads, the horse and the liberty, originate with the Hellenes or Herodotus himself, but the texts lifted from the Greco-Roman canon serve as fair illustrations of the direction in which this myth was moving.

Perhaps the most important structural characteristic of all those images is their ambiguity, which works on more than one level. First of all, the nomadic male of the plains is both fascinating and terrifying. This leads to his being presented as either an evil, destructive barbarian, or a pure, natural man. Secondly, the nomadic male of the plains can serve at the same time as a foil to the feminised world of the city, as embodied in Shamhat; a mirror of ourselves, in some distant way connected to the civilised man, which is attested by the Gilgamesh-Enkidu fraternity and the intimate analogy between Athenians and Scythians suggested by Herodotus; and finally, a go-between and a guardian of sorts, standing between the civilised realm and the complete wilderness beyond. In short, for the male city-dweller the plains nomad can be an alien, a mediator and even an image of himself.

¹³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, transl. by John C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA, 1940), Vol. 3, 381-395.

¹⁴ Ammianus, *History* 3, 382-385.

2.2. The busy afternoon of the Age of Lights: a global reshuffle and local resistances

After the Seven Years' War, imperial administrators and policy makers of all major European powers sought to build on the recent experiences and transform their dominions in order to make them more competitive. Among them, officials and scholars in the service of Russia and Spain set out to reform the grasslands on the northern shores of the Black Sea and around the mouth of Rio de la Plata, respectively. They knew nothing of Gilgamesh and Enkidu and had no intention of reproducing the Classical topoi or any other clichés of the past. Rather, they wished to gather a body of hard 'philosophical' knowledge and use it as a basis for boosting the administrative control, economic growth and military potential of the regions in question.¹⁵ Nevertheless, they relied heavily on symbols and stories described cursorily in the previous section and eventually drew on them to codify the standard elite representations of Cossacks and gauchos. Their cultural artifacts, embedded in the global moment of the 1770s, served as a point of reference for the next one hundred years.

The war of 1754–1763 highlighted the transcontinental character of the European powers' rivalry. Both victors and vanquished started to look for new ways to boost their empires' economic and military potential. Especially worrying, but at the same time stimulating, were Britain's successes and acquisitions. For the Spaniards, Britain served as both the most threatening enemy and a model to emulate. The Spanish authorities conceptualised their own specific difficulties as resulting from backwardness and the squandering of resources, which needed to be overcome in order to catch up with the threatful competitors.¹⁶ One of the most pressing problems was the issue of trade between Spain and the Americas and the losses resulting from the Luso-British contraband.¹⁷

The Seven Years' War and subsequent developments confirmed Russia's status as an arbiter of Austro-Prussian rivalry and as the most likely candidate to take over the Ottoman

¹⁵ Sophus Reinert and Pernille Røge, eds, *The Political Economy of Empire in the Early Modern World* (Basingstoke, 2013); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York, 2003); David J. Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards And Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven, 2005); Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-century Atlantic World* (Stanford, 2001); idem, *Nature, Empire, and Nation: Explorations of the History of Science in the Iberian World* (Stanford, 2006); Gabriel Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain and its Empire, 1759-1808* (Basingstoke, 2008); Elena Vishlenkova, *Vizual'noe narodovedenie imperii, ili, uvidet' russkogo dano ne kazhdomu* (Moscow, 2011); Allan J. Kuethe and Kennet J. Andrien, *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century: War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713-1796* (New York, 2014); Yuri Slezkine, "Naturalists Versus Nations: Eighteenth-Century Russian Scholars Confront Ethnic Diversity," *Representations*, No. 47, Summer 1994, 170-195.

¹⁶ Weber, *Bárbaros*, 179-186.

¹⁷ John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven, 2006), 292-324.

possessions. This drew Saint Petersburg even deeper into European politics which opened exciting prospects, but also posed serious questions. The government was concerned mostly with boosting the economic and demographic potential of Empire's westernmost dominions, so as to sustain the potential military effort and strengthen Russia's reach into Central Europe and the Balkans.¹⁸

The policy makers of both Spain and Russia believed that they could multiply their empires' economic potential by introducing new administrative and economic solutions that would better correspond to the realities of their dominions and up-to-date European statecraft. This meant discarding the antiquated policies, supporting internal trade and building new institutions. Both Spaniards and Russians shared the conviction that in their quest for power and improvement they had to attentively observe and often copy the solutions applied by rival empires, which they considered to be more advanced.¹⁹ This combination of hostility and fascination is one of the most characteristic elements of both Russia and Spain's self-perception of being peripheral and backward states.

It was during this period of all-imperial overhaul and reshuffle that the River Plate was cut out from the Viceroyalty of Peru and New Russia was established on the former territories of the Zaporozhian Cossacks. Creation of both administrative entities was only an element of sweeping reconstructions with global ramifications, though doubtless an important one. In their official communications the imperial officials depicted the River Plate and New Russia as potentially rich but, for the moment, unproductive flatlands inhabited by unruly, semi-savage frontiersmen who wasted the precious resources and endangered the imperial order, in other words, as *eschatia*, the frontier of cultivated land. The overall motivations behind the creation of the new administrative units were similar: to solidify imperial control over grassland peripheries, to better integrate them with the respective empires' economic systems and thus to strengthen their role in international commercial networks.

These similarities should by no means obfuscate the fact that the specific concerns in these two cases were quite different. The Spanish government was mostly interested in fighting contraband trade and the outflow of South American bullion. The establishment of a new viceroyalty and the liberalisation of trade were meant to put an end to those economically

¹⁸ Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven, 1981), 187-236; John LeDonne, *The Grand Strategy of the Russian Empire, 1650-1831* (Oxford, 2004), 108-152; Hugh Ragsdale, "Russian foreign policy, 1725-1815," in Dominic Lieven, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume II: 1689-1917* (Cambridge, 2016), 508-515.

¹⁹ For the Spanish and Portuguese see Gabriel Paquette, "Views from the South: Images of Britain and Its Empire in Portuguese and Spanish Political Economic Discourse, ca. 1740-1810," in Reinert & Røge, *Political Economy of Empire*, 76-105.

harmful practices (as understood by mercantilism).²⁰ The Russians, in turn, envisioned the transformation of the Pontic grasslands, first and foremost, in terms of a physiocratic development of agriculture and an increase in population that would stimulate industry and trade.²¹

Whereas the Spaniards aimed to encourage the growth of trade *within* their empire, from the very beginning the Russians sought not only to produce more grain, but also to export it directly from the Pontic region, thus gaining a strong foothold in both the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. In both cases the imperial agents had to deal with complex realities and several forms of resistance on the ground. Especially problematic from their point of view were local political traditions and institutions that limited the metropole's power.²²

The imperial officials and scholars addressed these challenges by describing the realities that they encountered and devising possible solutions. Their agendas differed in many ways. The lands which they tried to transform, the geopolitical situations they faced and the internal architecture of their empires were especially disparate. Nevertheless, perhaps because they acted in the same geopolitical moment, participated in the shared culture of late Enlightenment and drew on the same Classicist tradition constructed in Europe since the Renaissance, the visions they produced eventually proved strikingly similar. They can be summed up by three common features: an open, flat grassland with a sparse population and in constant threat of barbarian incursions; a backward frontier of European settlement inhabited mostly by unruly, semi-savage men of mixed race; a potentially productive region and bulwark of empire which, due to long-lasting neglect and antiquated arrangements, remains a liability.

²⁰ Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance and Reform*, 95-117, 137-153; John Lynch, *Bourbon Spain, 1700-1808* (Oxford, 1989), 350-374; Stanley J. Stein & Barbara H. Stein, *Apogee of Empire: Spain and New Spain in the Age of Charles III* (Baltimore, 2003), 143-170.

²¹ Roger P. Bartlett, *Human Capital: the Settlement of Foreigners in Russia 1762-1804* (Cambridge, 1979); Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca, 2004); Nataliia Polons'ka-Vasylenko, "The Settlement of Southern Ukraine (1750-1775)," *Annals of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the US*, IV-V (1955); Leonard G. Friesen, *Rural Revolutions in Southern Ukraine: Peasants, Nobles, And Colonists in New Russia Southern Ukraine, 1774-1905* (Cambridge, MA, 2008); E. I. Druzhinina, *Iuzhnaia Ukraina v 1800-1825 gg.* (Moscow, 1970); eadem, *Severnoe Prichernomor'e v 1775-1800 gg.* (Moscow, 1959).

²² Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine*, 66-75; Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 325-368; Zenon Kohut, *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy: Imperial Absorption of the Hetmanate, 1760s-1830s* (Cambridge, MA, 1988); Regina Grafe, *Distant Tyranny: Markets, Power, and Backwardness in Spain, 1650-1800* (Princeton, 2011); Natalia Polons'ka-Vasylenko, *Zaporizhzhia XVIII stolittia ta ioho spadshchyna* (Munich 1967); Serhii Plochy, *Cossack Myth: History and Nationhood in the Age of Empires* (Cambridge, 2012).

Such descriptions helped to suppress the dissenting political traditions of local Spanish American notables and Cossack elders who emphasised their historical merits, inherited rights and resulting autonomies. In accordance with the Enlightenment imperialist discourses of *disponibilité* and improvement, the lands in question were portrayed as ruined wastelands awaiting redemption from the agents of the modern state and the blessings of *doux commerce*. Similar tasks and obstacles were faced by imperial centralists in other post-1763 contexts, for example in British North America and the Habsburg lands,²³ but it was only in New Russia and the River Plate that this very characteristic vision of grassland plains roamed by half-savage, mounted frontiersmen was applied as the main interpretive tool.

Presenting the local narratives and claims to power as emanating from beyond the truly civilised world helped to delegitimise the anti-centralisation resistance of local elites by casting them as unruly dwellers of an *eschatia*, paralysed by chaos, wastefulness and obscurantism, if not completely barbarous. Such marginal lands and their inhabitants were so amorphous and confused that they could not be categorised as truly savage, but hung suspended between the neat definitions. In this manner they served as an even better foil to the Enlightenment civilisation than the ordinary ‘full savages.’²⁴

Precisely such shady and backward areas were the hunting ground of enlightened despots fashioned as champions of order and improvement. Ukraine happens to be not only the geographical location of ancient Scythia, but also a model case of the Enlightenment *pays perdus*: distant, backward and unknown, yet still reachable. Or so it was depicted by Voltaire in ‘his enormously successful *History of Charles XII*,’ as we are told by Larry Wolff. Ukraine’s inhabitants, the Zaporozhian Cossacks were ‘the strangest people who are on the earth,’ an exclusively male pack of semi-savage brigands of mixed Tatar, Polish-Lithuanian and Muscovite origin. It takes a no less ferocious, but ardently progressive despotism of Muscovy’s Peter the Great ‘to discipline the Cossacks.’ As is suggested by Wolff, Voltaire used Ukraine as an emblem for East European confusion and backwardness that justified the brutality of Russia’s autocratic regime (which was his long-time sponsor). In this interpretation, Peter became a redeemer, enlightener and preserver of genuine East European agency as opposed to Charles XII’s Sweden, interloping from the outside.²⁵

²³ Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 28-50, 71-75, 79-85; Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 301-303, 305-307, 312-319, 326-353.

²⁴ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994), 1-16, 89-142.

²⁵ Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 89-97.

Of course, the Ukrainian Cossacks were just one variety of the figure of the steppe nomad described by eighteenth-century intellectuals. Paradoxically, Voltaire himself denounced the study of such non-sedentary societies as ‘useless erudition,’ because they had always been mere destroyers, ferocious beasts not unlike tigers and wolves. Nevertheless, both the patriarch of Ferney himself and many other Francophone authors could not resist returning to this topic over and over again, as it served them as an important foil to the unstoppable process of European civilisation that they were trying to understand and propagate. Among others, Voltaire suggested a link between the Asian barbarians and the Enlightenment bogeyman of feudalism and used the history of nomadic migrations as an opportunity to denounce China’s historical immobility and intellectual isolation which, according to him, made this empire vulnerable to aggression from such lowly peoples.²⁶ We will find both these tropes later in Sarmiento who was heavily influenced by Francophone ‘philosophical’ writings of his time.

The representations of nomads were by no means homogeneous and the image of anarchic Ukrainian Cossacks was a variation that emphasised the problematic aspects of political liberty. However, Montesquieu, for example, went in the opposite direction, arguing that this sort of society favoured the establishment of ‘military despotism.’ For the purpose of my dissertation it is especially useful to note the vacillations of this author who depicted the ‘Tatars’ (by which he meant any Turkic nomads) as both anarchic invaders and state builders, slaves of despotism and a people incapable of producing a strong sovereign. In fact, entrapped in his own classificatory schemas, Montesquieu took great pains to distinguish the Asian nomads from the ancient Germanic peoples, to whose influence he attributed the rise of European feudalism, a phenomenon which he valued positively as an historical originator of political liberty.²⁷ The indefatigable Sarmiento would also take up many tropes and devices originating with the author of *The Spirit of the Laws*, such as the military despotism of nomadic pastoralists and his geographic determinism.

By presenting the grasslands as *eschatia* and their inhabitants as marginal nomads, these Enlightenment figures undermined local narratives about merit, power and privilege and justified the imperialist encroachments of their sponsors. Voltaire’s text on Ukraine is a model in this respect and it was followed by other, mostly Francophone, writers who devoted their attention to the Ukrainian Cossacks and popularised their image as anarchic and colourful

²⁶ Rolando Minuti, *Oriente barbarico e storiografia settecentesca. Rappresentazioni della storia dei Tartari nella cultura francese del XVIII secolo* (Venice, 1994), 95-139.

²⁷ Minuti, *Oriente barbarico*, 63-93.

half-savages. This tendency would culminate in Honoré Daumier's grotesque depictions of Cossacks as the embodiment of Russian soldiery during the Crimean War (Picture 1). Their Ukrainian, or in fact any other, specificity is completely lost and they simply stand for the barbarism and backwardness of the Russian Empire, best encapsulated by their taste for eating candles. Ultimately, however, authors of such representations could not escape activating all the ambiguities and tensions inherent in the myths of nomadic males of the plains. As a consequence, the images they employed and mediated would mingle with the very local stories they were meant to undermine and so lent them a new lease of life.



1. Honoré Daumier, *Manière d'entraîner les Cosaques*, *Le Charivari*, April 4 1854

In order to better understand how the empire-builders employed the image of free horsemen of the plains it is indispensable to have an idea of the local political traditions that they were trying to displace and the role of terms such as Cossacks and gauchos within them. I will now describe in some detail the history of Ukrainian Cossacks as both a real historical phenomenon and a myth, before then complementing this history with some observations on the Spanish Empire's reconstruction after the Seven Years' War and the construction of the gaucho label.

In Central-Eastern Ukraine and in Spanish America alike, the local elites defended their autonomy and privileges against the encroachments of a distant imperial centre by making claims about their unique contributions to the noble cause of empire building and defence of the true Christian faith. Whereas the Orthodox Ukrainian landowners used the mythologised memory of their ancestors' struggle against Catholic Poland-Lithuania and Muslim Crimea, the elites of Spanish America talked about their predecessors' participation in the conquest, Christianisation and eventually preservation of the Hispanic New World besieged by *indios salvajes* and greedy British, Portuguese and Dutch outsiders. Both stories served to justify the peripheral elites' insistence on their inherited rights and privileges as both inalienable and ultimately advantageous for the imperial monarchy as a whole. Whereas in Central-Eastern Ukraine the key identification employed for this sort of claim-making was the label Cossack, inextricably associated with the visions of anarchic steppe masculinity, in Spanish America the starting point was quite different: the status of *españoles americanos*, considered equivalent to Spain's *hidalgos* or lowly nobles.²⁸

The Zaporozhian Cossacks were a peculiar community of frontiersmen in continuous conflict with the Muslim Tatars of Crimea. Their name derived from the phrase *za porohamy* (beyond the rapids), because their main camp named *Sich* was located on a river islet to the south of the rapids of Dnieper. The Cossacks accepted the nominal sovereignty of the Polish-Lithuanian kings, but in reality they were a world apart, more allies than subjects of the Commonwealth. From the very beginning of their existence, somewhere in the sixteenth century, the sense of inhabiting an *eschatia* of the Polish-Lithuanian universe was part and parcel of both their self-understanding and outside understandings of them, as is attested by oft-cited seventeenth-century account of Guillaume Levasseur de Beauplan.²⁹ The Zaporozhians were frontiersmen *par excellence*.

In the first half of the seventeenth century the great Polish-Lithuanian lords started to extend their *latifundia* to Ukraine and to pressure the Zaporozhian area. They also tried to enserf the local population. This socio-economic conflict combined with religious hostility as most of the nobles supported the Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church, while the peasantry, burghers and Cossacks clung to the Orthodox Church. There was also an ethnic dimension as many nobles either assimilated the Polish way of life and language, or originated directly from Poland proper, whereas the lower strata remained unequivocally Ruthenian. All this led to a series of uprisings against the magnates' rule in which the leading role was played by the

²⁸ Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 153-183.

²⁹ Guillaume Levasseur de Beauplan, *Description d'Ukraine* (Rouen, 1660).

Cossacks. The confessional concerns were instrumental in securing a sustainable alliance of rebellious commoners and substantial sections of landed and ecclesiastical elite against the great lords and the Counter-reformation-minded royal government. As other examples from seventeenth-century Europe suggest (England, Naples and Scotland), confessional struggle was the best instrument for channeling and legitimising the emancipatory *élan* of the masses and securing the support of some segments of the middle and upper classes.³⁰

The most serious Cossack revolt of this sort broke out in 1648 under the leadership of Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi (Polish: Chmielnicki) and shook the very foundations of the Polish-Lithuanian state, unleashing a succession of devastating wars involving all the neighbouring powers. As a consequence, Khmel'nyts'kyi managed to create a separate polity in Ukraine which he ruled as Hetman, or commander-in-chief, of the Zaporozhian Cossacks. Khmel'nyts'kyi himself and the Cossack elite were steeped in the political culture of Poland-Lithuania which was a composite monarchy that had evolved in a radically republican direction. In the 1650s the Ukrainian rebels sought to reverse the most outrageous infringements of Ruthenian rights (as they perceived them) and to re-establish the healthy balance between the prince and their *patria*, not unlike the Catalans described by John H. Elliott.³¹ When it became clear that it would be difficult to come to satisfying terms with the Polish-Lithuanian magnates and their king, the Zaporozhian Cossacks picked a new prince and accepted the protection of the Muscovite ruler with whom they shared the Orthodox Christian confession. Apparently, Khmel'nyts'kyi and his lieutenants understood this agreement as a deal between unequal partners, while the Muscovites saw it as a simple oath of allegiance transforming the Ukrainian Cossacks into the subjects of their monarch, just like any others.

After a prolonged war, Ukraine was eventually divided into three main parts: the western area on the right bank of the Dnieper remained with Poland-Lithuania where the Polonised nobility managed to successfully dominate the bulk of population; the so-called Little Russia on the left bank of the Dnieper, as well as the city of Kiev, went to Muscovy as an autonomous entity ruled by Hetmans elected by the Cossacks but then confirmed by the Muscovite Tsar (later simply nominated by him); the Zaporozhia (the future New Russia), the area to the south of the Dnieper rapids where the Sich was located, nominally accepted the

³⁰ John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680-1760* (Cambridge, 2005), 60-70; Serhii Plokhy, *The Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine* (Oxford, 2001).

³¹ John H. Elliott, *History in the Making* (New Haven, 2012), 51-58, 62-70; idem, *The Revolt of the Catalans: a Study in the Decline of Spain (1598-1640)* (Cambridge, 1984); idem, 'King and Patria in the Hispanic World,' in idem, *Spain, Europe & the Wider World 1500-1800* (New Haven, 2009), 173-192.

superiority of Cossack Hetmans and the sovereignty of Muscovite tsars, but in practice it remained an independent republic of hardcore Cossack frontiersmen.

For us here the most important area is Central-East Ukraine known otherwise as Little Russia, or the Left Bank. Ruled by autonomous Hetmans, it could also be referred to as the Hetmanate (Ukrainian: *Het'manshchyna*). It was here that the local actors created separate historical traditions that would condition the formation of both the Russian and the Ukrainian national identifications and, most importantly for my purposes, durable variations of Cossack myth.

The Hetmanate emerged in the seventeenth century as a consequence of an early modern revolution with a clear anti-elite thrust. Although it had been catalysed by the Cossack frontiersmen, it also involved thousands of peasants, town-dwellers and noblemen, mobilised and united by the clarion call to defend the Orthodox faith from Greek and Latin Catholic encroachments. Despite these revolutionary origins, the society and political institutions of the Hetmanate soon began to resemble those of Poland-Lithuania. The noble-born Orthodox landowners who had chosen to support Khmel'nyts'kyi and his successors merged with the Cossack military officials of plebeian origin to form a new landowning and office-holding elite, the so-called Notable Military Fellowship (Ukrainian *Znachne Viis'kove Tovarystvo*). The members of this new stratum would soon have their own peasant serfs, whereas the rank-and-file Cossacks retained their personal freedom, but lost their economic independence and political influence, becoming thus mere clients of Notable Military Fellows. Although there opened a considerable socio-economic chasm between the two ends of social ladder, the revolutionary tradition was never obliterated and the ideal of an all-Cossack fellowship enabled a specific upward mobility and secured a degree of basic respectability to the individual non-elite Cossacks. Thus, despite the superficial similarities, the situation of poor and toiling Cossacks was quite distant from that of peasant serfs. In this, the Hetmanate again resembled Poland-Lithuania where a great lord possessing dozens of towns and commanding over hundreds of retainers was theoretically equal to an illiterate and landless nobleman; which was of course a fiction, but a powerful one and as such it shaped in a peculiar way the functioning of the clientage networks in the Commonwealth.³² Another

³² Lev Okinshevych, *Znachne Viis'kove Tovarystvo v Ukraini-Het'manshchyni XVII-XVIII st.* (Munich, 1948); Kohut, *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy*; Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto, 1994), 158-198; Paul Robert Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine* (Seattle, 1996), 267-289 & 305-321; the modern Ukrainian phrase *Znachne Viis'kove Tovarystvo* is a twentieth-century scholarly ossification of the fluctuating terms appearing in the primary sources and Okinshevych's book translates it into English as the Ukrainian Military

telling analogy would be with Spanish America, where there emerged a peculiar egalitarian ideology among White American Spaniards. As related by Alexander Humboldt:

[W]hen a plebeian gets into an altercation with a titled personage, he will quite commonly say to him: “Do you think you are whiter than me?” – words which perfectly reflect the status and origins of today’s aristocracy.³³

As in Poland-Lithuania, this idiosyncratic egalitarianism of the American Spaniards was driven by their desire to acquire and preserve noble status (which would be unattainable in the Iberian Peninsula). This universal nobility was justified with their alleged descent from the *conquistadores*, whose achievement was understood as a strange combination of crusade and social revolution, not unlike in the Cossack Hetmanate with its memory of heroic struggle against the Catholic oppressors. Thus, all three privileged strata, the American Spaniards, the Polish-Lithuanian nobles and the Ukrainian Cossacks, distilled ideologies that combined a far-reaching, though mostly imaginary, civic egalitarianism within with a rigid system of ethnic and confessional exclusions. For the comparison of Cossack and gaucho figures it is indispensable to underline here the single most important difference between the two: the glorious war of religious liberation which is one of the pillars of the Cossack myth is absent from the gaucho one. *La conquista*, an analogous foundational war, is related in Spanish America with the older and more inclusive figure of the American Spaniard (*español americano* or later *criollo*).³⁴

Similar to the *Decretos de Nueva Planta* and other centralising measures of the Spanish Bourbons, the Russian authorities gradually dismantled the autonomous Ukrainian polities, both the squirearchical Hetmanate and the more egalitarian Zaporozhia (and also other peripheral autonomies, like Livonia and Smolensk) throughout the course of the eighteenth century. This process has been recounted by other scholars, but it is important to underline here that both in the Spanish and in the Russian Empire the crucial and most intense stage of reforming distant peripheries took place in the period following the Seven Years’ War. In the 1770s and 1780s Catherine the Great embarked upon a comprehensive program of imperial reconstruction. The Ukrainian lands were to become perhaps the most important

Nobility – I have chosen to render it as the Notable Military Fellowship which is equally correct, but emphasises different aspects of the concept.

³³ Quoted after Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 172; see also Gabriel di Meglio, *¡Viva el bajo pueblo! La plebe urbana de Buenos Aires y la política entre la Revolución de Mayo y el rosismo (1810-1829)* (Buenos Aires, 2006) for the devaluation of terms *don* and *doña*.

³⁴ Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 163, 169-172.

laboratory for socio-economic experimentation which obviously provoked resistance from the landowning and office-holding elite of Little Russia, amongst others.³⁵

The members of Little Russia's Notable Military Fellowship defended their position and regional privileges by arguing that their ancestors had fought the Muslim raiders, protected the Orthodox faith and driven out the perfidious Poles and their Jewish henchmen. Then, they made a voluntary pact with the Muscovite Tsars who had confirmed their political rights, allegedly granted to them by the Polish-Lithuanian kings. In this view, the existence of Hetmanate as a separate polity under the imperial umbrella was not only compatible with Russia's interests, but was actually a cornerstone of Empire which had been built as a joint enterprise of Little Russians and Muscovites. In short, the autonomy of the Hetmanate had to be retained because, firstly, the Little Russians merited it and, secondly, the Muscovite rulers had promised to uphold it. These claims were illustrated by many historical stories praising the virtues of the Little Russian Cossack polity and the legalistic resistance of its elite against the Muscovite bureaucrats.

Importantly, the talk of Cossack rights and privileges was not a purely elite affair. The centralising measures of Catherine II meant that the Notable Military Fellows lost much of their political power, but almost always retained their privileged status as members of the elite, roughly equal to the nobles of other parts of Russian Empire. It was not so with the individuals and groups of lower socio-economic standing that had hitherto enjoyed Cossack status. They faced the danger of being assigned the status of peasants and eventual enserfment. For these formerly entitled subalterns deploying the label of Cossack and the historical narratives of Little Russian merit was a way of defending their respectability and personal freedom. In extreme cases it could be also used to justify violent resistance against the demands of noble landowners.³⁶

The Cossack memories of Little Russia undermined the stability of Russian Empire in more than one way, but their ostensive main villain was Catholic Poland-Lithuania. Thus, such stories were perceived as relatively innocuous to the Orthodox Russian monarchy and acceptable to both the Little Russian landowning resisters and the Saint Petersburg

³⁵ Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine*, 61-75, 308-324, 359-373.

³⁶ Ivan O. Hurzhii, *Povstannia selian v Turbaiah (1789-1793)* (Kiev, 1950); Kost' Huslysty, *Turbaivs'ke povstannia* (Kiev, 1947); A. Lazarevskii, "Istoricheskie ocherki poltavskoi lubenshchyny XVII-XVIII vv.," *Chteniia v Istoricheskom obshchestve Nestora Letopistsa*, vol. 11, 1896, 158-193.

government officials. By and large, Little Russian autonomism was an ideology of loyalist malcontents, rather than rebels and conspirators.³⁷

Contrary to the prevailing stereotypes, the early modern Spaniards enjoyed an exceptionally wide share of political liberties as the monarchy lacked financial fluidity and effective enforcement mechanisms, thus requiring it to negotiate its every step on all levels.³⁸ Spanish America was an enormously diverse space, provoking an equally varied collection of local responses to the centralising innovations introduced by the Bourbon government after the Seven Years' War. In some places they met with violent resistance like the New Granadan Comuneros,³⁹ in others they were welcomed as long-awaited amendments. The areas surrounding the mouth of the Rio de la Plata belong to the latter category, as the new imperial order offered the elites of Buenos Aires an unusual boost in power and prestige. To strengthen the control over the illicit outflow of Peruvian gold and to stifle Portuguese advances in the Banda Oriental (today's Uruguay), the Spanish government created in 1776 a new Viceroyalty of the River Plate. Almost overnight Buenos Aires was transformed from a God-forsaken contraband port on the shores of Southern Atlantic into a crucial centre of imperial commerce and administration.⁴⁰

The new administrative division covered the territories of present-day Argentina, Bolivia (then known as Upper Peru), Paraguay and Uruguay. Its first viceroy was Pedro de Cevallos, a successful military commander who was rewarded with this position for his victories over the Portuguese and consequently became a protagonist of the first known gaucho-style poem. The whole administrative reform was sponsored by Charles III's Minister of the Indies José de Gálvez y Gallardo, who also introduced some cautious changes in the Spanish Empire's hitherto stiff trade regime. As a result, the city of Buenos Aires thrived in the last three decades of the eighteenth century and, at the beginning of the 1800s, it was opulent enough to lure the British aggressors from the Cape Colony.⁴¹

³⁷ There is, however, evidence that as late as the 1790s and 1810s there were isolated individuals that contemplated the possibility of breaking with the Russian Empire and establishing a separate Little Russian polity under the protection of some other powers, for instance, Prussia or France, but their constituency does not seem to have been substantial, Bronisław Dembiński, *Tajna misya Ukraińca w Berlinie w r. 1791* (Kraków, 1896); Plokhy, *Cossack Myth*, 225-260.

³⁸ Grafe, *Distant Tyranny*, 116-246.

³⁹ Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 361-368.

⁴⁰ Jeremy Adelman, *Republic of Capital: Buenos Aires and the Legal Transformation of the Atlantic World* (Stanford, 1999), 19-40.

⁴¹ Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Politics, Economics and Society in Argentina in the Revolutionary Period* (Cambridge, 1975), 3-64; Susan Migden Socolow, *The Merchants of Buenos Aires 1778 - 1810: Family and Commerce*

Another consequential innovation introduced in this period was the establishment of militias recruited from among the local Christian subjects (not only the White *españoles americanos*), which enjoyed a wide legal immunity, the so-called *fuero militar*. This move was meant to boost the military potential of distant imperial possessions by putting some of its burden on local shoulders. The Spanish policymakers believed that ultimately they would mobilise more resources and use them to better control the peripheries, but a side result was that there emerged a military corporation encompassing free males of all social standings and shades of skin. Not only did they know how to use arms and conduct complex field operations, but they also developed a sense of civic empowerment, legal privilege and self-worth. This had vast political consequences: as it is aptly described by Tulio Halperín Donghi, after the outbreak of revolution this civic ‘military were on the way to becoming first estate in the new nation.’⁴² In addition, the new institution offered the local community leaders an opportunity to strengthen their own position as militia commanders.⁴³ All this harmonised with the traditional pride of *españoles americanos* as descendants of *conquistadores* and defenders of the realm and in the long run it undermined the grip of the centrally appointed imperial administration. Still, one should not be too harsh on the Spanish policymakers as they did relatively well when seen in the wider context: similar attempts at strengthening the global positions of other European powers led to the outbreak of the North American Revolution and plunged the French government into a fatal debt crisis.

It was in the context of such tensions between the centralising imperial centre and resisting provincial elites that the relatively stable representations of Cossacks and gauchos crystallised and came to play their role in political debates.

2.3. Portraying the Enlightenment’s Enkidus

Not long ago the word ‘invention’ was all the rage.⁴⁴ In accordance with this convention I ought to describe in this section how Enlightened scholars and administrators invented the Cossacks and gauchos. Yet, they did not. When the imperial reshuffle

(Cambridge, 1981); Juan Carlos Garavaglia, *Construir el estado, inventar la nación: El Río de la Plata, siglos XVIII-XIX* (Buenos Aires, 2007).

⁴² Tulio Halperín Donghi, “Revolutionary Militarization in Buenos Aires 1806-1815,” *Past & Present*, No. 40, July 1968, 84.

⁴³ Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 300, 394; Gabriel di Meglio, *¡Viva el bajo pueblo! La plebe urbana de Buenos Aires y la política entre la Revolución de Mayo y el rosismo (1810-1829)* (Buenos Aires, 2006), 83-90; Kuethe & Andrien, *Spanish Atlantic World*, 243, 272.

⁴⁴ The origin of this trend was the outstanding volume edited by Eric Hobsbawm and T. E. Ranger, *The Invention of tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

materialised in the 1770s, the Cossacks had already been around for quite some time. As for the gauchos, while they were still in the making as a separate social category, it would be simplistic to ascribe the decisive agency in their formation to elite imperialist ‘inventors.’ Both the Ukrainian Cossacks and the River Plate gauchos were complex, dynamic groups and, in fact, quite different from one another. They had in common the condition of being portrayed by others as half-savages roaming the frontier, but this is not the same as being invented. What was constructed (rather than invented) from the 1770s on was the simulacrum of anarchic Cossack/gaucha horsemen of the plains and their positioning as yet another obstacle to the imperial improvement of grassland peripheries. This is a crucial circumstance justifying the rationale of my comparative project, but it should by no means obscure the fact that the Cossacks and gauchos themselves were much more than just the fantasy of scholars and bureaucrats.

The Enlightenment representation of Ukrainian Cossacks spread by Francophone literature over the Europeanate space was in many ways paradigmatic for Enlightenment universalism and its stadial schemes.⁴⁵ At the same time, it was unusual and exceptional in that it always had to be confronted with rival, ‘non-metropolitan’ understandings of the question. These competing visions altered and nuanced the clear-cut figure of half-savage anarchists of *eschatia*. It could not simply be ignored that at various points of their complex development the Ukrainian Cossacks had been a military corporation, a revolutionary movement, a privileged estate, an occupational group, an ethnic-like identification, a folk tale and even a semi-independent polity. There have always been quite powerful groups interested in preserving and activating the memory of one or more of these aspects.

The term gaucho was originally a label adopted by subaltern individuals in the River Plate countryside. For obvious reasons they had only limited access to the elite institutions shaping hegemonic representations of reality and so the Spanish imperial officials and the local urban elites could sculpt their image much more easily and thoroughly in accordance with their own interests. As we shall see in the chapter on Luis Péres, eventually the subaltern groups that wished to identify as gauchos would also manage to pose a challenge to the one-dimensional, ‘Hunnic’ representations of themselves. Here, however, I would only like to emphasise again the fundamental difference between the two labels and consequent representations. Whereas the term gauchos took shape quite late in order to denote the nomadic proletarians of the grassland frontier, that of Cossacks also implied, from the very

⁴⁵ Vadym Adadurov, *Napoleonida na skhodi levropy: uivlennia, proekty ta diial'nist' uriadu Frantsii shchodo pivdenno-zakhidnykh okrain Rosiis'koi imperii na pochatku XIX stolittia* (Lviv, 2007).

beginning, heroic, historical struggles and inherited rights. In the River Plate this latter work was done by another powerful label, the *españoles americanos* as descendants of *conquistadores*. It is then even more striking that those two very distant and different identifications could eventually be presented in such similar ways, fabricated with the help of Classicist tropes and ‘philosophical’ (in the Enlightenment sense of the term) practices. Now, I will illustrate my claims with a closer look at the ways in which some elite authors constructed their representations of gauchos from the 1770s on.

In its narrowest sense the term gaucho is used to denominate the semi-nomadic proletarians roaming the pampas plains and living without fixed residence and occupation. The gauchos are believed to be close in their lifestyle to the Indians, but nevertheless accepted as a marginal part of sedentary European communities, located on their geographical and social frontier.⁴⁶ However, in some contexts the denominator gaucho can encompass all the country dwellers or even the whole population of the River Plate. At least in part, this vagueness results from the original permeability and fluctuation of the gaucho population. A gaucho (*sensu stricto*) could easily become a *peón*, or a hired farmhand, and then after the expiry of his contract return to his gaucho status. In practice, all countryside paupers could be lumped together as gauchos, regardless of the exact conditions of their life. It is thus necessary to remember that the precise meaning depends on the situation and intentions of each subject. The etymology of the word itself has not been determined conclusively, but it is known that as late as the end of the eighteenth century other terms would be used alongside it to describe the class of people that we call gauchos nowadays: *changadores*, *gauderios*, *guasos*, *camiluchos*. It seems that originally all these denominations were rather pejorative.

One of the earliest and most often cited descriptions of the gauchos can be found in an eccentric work entitled *El lazarillo de ciegos caminantes desde Buenos Aires hasta Lima*. It was published in 1773, most probably in Lima, although the title page states Gijón in Asturias (a characteristic usurpation of metropolitan position of power and prestige)⁴⁷ It is also stated there that a certain Calixto Bustamante Carlos Inca vel Concolorcorvo, an Indian from Cuzco, compiled the text from the notes of Alonso Carrió de la Vandra, a high-ranking Spanish official. The work is a kind of travel guide intended principally ‘for the people who because of their vulgarity are called scum or tough-skinned, be they of sword, carbine and

⁴⁶ Jorge B. Rivera, *La primitiva literatura gauchesca* (Buenos Aires, 1968), 24-27.

⁴⁷ José Luis Busaniche, *La incógnita de El Lazarillo*, in Concolorcorvo, *El lazarillo de ciegos caminantes desde Buenos Aires hasta Lima* (Buenos Aires, 1942), xii.

pistols, or of *bolas*, *mate* pot and lasso,⁴⁸ in other words: for soldiers and mule drivers. Characteristically, the latter are identified by items which are part and parcel of gaucho imagery.

Lazarillo is the work of a cultured author who managed to combine practical information with elements of administrative reports and social satire, in a text clearly embedded in the best traditions of Spanish literature. It is important to take into consideration the hybrid character of the work in which Baroque literary games intersect with Enlightenment criticism and picaresque caricatures. Rather than for genuine imperial soldiers and mule drivers, the piece is intended for elite armchair travellers and later in the text it is even explicitly suggested that sedentary intellectuals from both shores of the Atlantic can also find it interesting.

Lazarillo presents gauderios, as they are called there, as a class of American-born sluggards (*holgazanes criollos*)⁴⁹ who wander aimlessly the countryside of the Banda Oriental and live by stealing cattle from the peasants. Likewise, the author considers the indifferent acceptance of these losses by the peasants to be semi-barbarous, therein blurring the division between the humble, settled farmers and the wandering individuals. This image broadly aligns with that which we find in the nineteenth century and brings to mind several elements of ancient depictions of *eschatia*. *Lazarillo*'s gauderios are filthy vagabonds, riding horses that they either stole or caught and tamed in the pampas. They wear ponchos which also serve them as bedding. To feed themselves they gather in groups of five or four and hunt with *bolas*, knife and lasso. Apparently, they consume only beef and the author takes great pains to depict their eating habits as disgusting, irrational and wasteful: so, he claims that they eat half-raw meat, roasted in dried cow dung, and they often kill animals just to get their favourite part (flank steaks, tongues or marrow) and leave the rest. When they do not hunt, they sing about love whilst accompanied by guitars, usually in inns called *pulperías* (a detail that was to acquire an immense importance in more sentimentalist renderings of the topic).

The gaucho lifestyle is only possible thanks to the extraordinary natural riches of the region and the author does not miss the opportunity to point out that while the English newspapers boast that in London two hundred British MPs gorge themselves with a two-hundred pound cut of beef, in the Banda Oriental it is usual that seven or eight gauderios have

⁴⁸ '...a la gente que por vulgaridad llaman de la *hampa*, o *cáscara amarga*, ya sean de espada, carabina y pistolas, ya de *bolas*, *guampar* y *lazo*,' Concolorcorvo, *Lazarillo*, 1.

⁴⁹ Concolorcorvo, *Lazarillo*, 30.

a five-hundred pound cut.⁵⁰ The suggestion is clear: a land so fertile could become a source of agricultural riches, were it not for the bad government tolerating such squander as is embodied by the gauderios. Images and language employed by the author serve to conjure up an impression of barbarous neglect that hinders the development of Spanish power, always threatened by the greedy Portuguese and their British sponsors.

This picture can be complemented by a report on Montevideo and its vicinity which was prepared by an anonymous official in the 1790s. This author concurred with *Lazarillo* in his negative assessment of gauchos as a hindrance for the region's development and as a result of careless administration. According to the author, the Banda Oriental is a lawless land where all deem themselves entitled to kill and steal at whim. Changadores, as he calls them, are outside the reach of any authorities, 'without knowing God, or serving King, or loving their neighbour.' They have no families and their origin is mixed: some of them are Portuguese, some runaway soldiers, sailors or criminals, while a few are naturals of the Banda Oriental. The author suggests that among the latter some might not have been baptised. On top of all these outrages, their economic involvement with the Portuguese traders handicaps the royal revenues. Yet, at the same time, the author cannot resist a degree of admiration for these men who 'never face fear, for whom it is usual to fight the beasts and disregard them easily; who value their own life very little and terminate that of their neighbour with the same serenity as that of a calf.' They 'need neither the stimuli of honour, nor appetite for ambition to repel cowardice.'⁵¹

Although the life of gauderios is picturesque enough to serve as an entertaining digression from the main subject of *Lazarillo*, it is not considered alluring for the cultured authors and their readership. The anonymous official eventually manages to fence off any possible fascination with the changadores by relegating them to the realm of the irrational and resolving that they are 'more ferocious than courageous.'⁵² The gauchos are, first and foremost, the lowest and filthiest class of country dwellers. This assessment is fully in line with the attitude of the nineteenth-century porteño elite. In the early 1860s Mariquita Sánchez de Thompson would recall the peasant militiamen from the period of the first British invasion of Buenos Aires as strong and robust, but at the same time disordered, black and unhandsome,

⁵⁰ Concolorcorvo, *Lazarillo*, 33-35.

⁵¹ 'sin conocer Dios, ni servir al rey, y sin amar al prójimo;' 'gente que no ha visto la cara al miedo, que tiene por oficio lidiar con fieras bravas, y burlarse de ellas con facilidad, y que estiman sus vidas muy poco, y quitan las de sus prójimos con la misma serenidad que la de un novillo;' 'no necesitan los estímulos del honor, ni el apetito de la ambición para sacudir la cobardía,' Anónimo, *Noticias sobre el Río de la Plata: Motevideo en el siglo XVIII*, ed. by Nelson Martínez Díaz (Montevideo, 1988), 88. Cf. Weber, *Bárbaros*, 250-251.

⁵² 'tienen más de fieros que de valientes,' Anónimo, *Noticias sobre el Río de la Plata*, 88.

‘...mounted on filthy, poorly kept horses; everything of the most miserable and ugly kind. Filthy weaponry, it is impossible nowadays to convey the image of those troops. Having seen them, I told a close friend: “if the English don’t get frightened at that sight, there’s no hope.”’ Characteristically, this unflattering portrait of the peasant militiamen is immediately followed by an enthusiastic description of neat enemy soldiers dressed in ‘the most poetic’ Scottish uniforms. As the author underlines, they were ‘the most handsome youths’ of ‘snow white complexion.’ The passage is closed with the exclamation: ‘What an immense contrast!’⁵³

European Whiteness and cleanliness is juxtaposed against the Blackness and filth of the disorderly River Plate peasantry, whose wretchedness is even more evident when contrasted with the ‘poetic’ Scotsmen. Mariquita Sánchez de Thompson was not immune to the Romantic sensitivities that welcomed the picturesque expressions of *Volksggeist*, but apparently it did not occur to her that the inhabitants of her native country could be perceived through such a lens. Even the brief allure of the gaucho spirit as expressed by the anonymous Spaniard of the 1790s is not present in her account. In her romantic Scottish-like landscape there is no room for the filthy and swarthy (if not outright Black) gauchos. The River Plate countryside serves as the constitutive other of European civilisation, embodied by the British intruders, but also by the upper classes of Buenos Aires, only too eager to articulate their disgust at embarrassing ‘native’ troops. Thus, they try to secure and underline their kinship with the North-Europeans, even though it is these people who are invading their country and trying to subjugate them.⁵⁴

The gauchos, as depicted by the enlightened officials and elite city-dwellers of the last decades of Spanish rule, belong fully with the *eschatia*. They are not a people, not even a marginal one as was the case with the Scythians, but a heterogeneous pack of individuals (Voltaire also made this claim about the Zaporozhian Cossacks). They are like a collection of latter-day Enkidus that roam the land, waste its resources and thwart the exploitative efforts of hunters sent from the cultured city by king Gilgamesh. However, they have none of Enkidu’s charm and virtue, only the ugliness of the destructive Huns. This imagery is mobilised in order to portray the present state of affairs as dire and thus question the suitability of the existing arrangements and institutions of power. When taken up, in turn, by the local porteño

⁵³ ‘en caballos sucios, mal cuidados; todo lo más miserable y más feo. Las armas sucias, imposible dar ahora una idea de estas tropas. Al verlas aquel día tremendo, dije a una persona de mi intimidad: si no se asustan los ingleses de ver esto, no hay esperanza;’ ‘las más lindas tropas que se podían ver, el uniforme poético;’ ‘la más bella juventud;’ ‘caras de nieve;’ ‘¡qué contraste tan grande!’ Mariquita Sánchez de Thompson, ‘Recuerdos del Buenos Ayres virreinal,’ in eadem, *Intimidad y política: Diario, cartas y recuerdos*, ed. by María Gabriela Mizraje (Buenos Aires, 2003), 152.

⁵⁴ Cf Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley, 1992), 90.

elites this imagery serves to justify their domination over the surrounding country. Either way, there are discernible political stakes in the disparaging descriptions of countryside.

The situation starts to evolve in a different direction with the war of independence. To stop the advance of Spanish troops from the northwest, general Martín Güemes had to employ guerrilla tactics in the region of Salta. The Spaniards dubbed his irregulars into gauchos, meaning that they were no better than bandits.⁵⁵ As early as March of 1814, José de San Martín lauded the gauchos' resolute resistance to the royalists in a dispatch to the Buenos Aires government.⁵⁶ This forced the pro-independence porteños to reconsider their traditional attitudes. The issue was given some attention in a supplement to *La Gazeta de Buenos-Ayres* on 22 March 1817, which related the victory of one hundred and fifty gauchos over three hundred veteran Spanish troops. The author did not fail to mention that most of the gauchos had been unarmed and proceeded to attribute this victory to their 'enthusiasm' prevailing over the Spanish 'art.' The note ends with a rhetorical question: 'And will it be possible to subjugate a nation that can count on such defenders?' The natural spontaneity of patriotic militiamen is contrasted here with the rational military 'art' of the imperial army as, in this occasion, the former proved to be superior. Perhaps also the armed men of the River Plate countryside can be poetic?

Even more interesting is a footnote accompanying the article. It starts with an anecdote on Lucius Junius Brutus who led the coup that toppled the Roman kings. According to the porteño journalist, Lucius Junius was left with the cognomen Brutus because, when tyrants killed his whole family, he pretended to be intellectually impaired and thus managed to save his life and later avenge his kin. In this way, a humiliating nickname became a proud patrician cognomen.⁵⁷ The classical anecdote serves as an ennobling point of reference for a similar semantic change undergone by the term gaucho: 'Until now, the name of gaucho would evoke not a very positive idea of the subject upon which it would be bestowed, and the honourable labourers and landowners of Salta managed to endow it with lustre and glory, thanks to so many exploits that make them worthy of eternal recognition.'⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Shumway, *Invention of Argentina*, 69.

⁵⁶ Bonifacio del Carril, *El gaucho a través de la iconografía* (Buenos Aires, 1978), 39.

⁵⁷ Cf Titus Livius Patavinus, *Livy in Fourteen Volumes: Books I and II*, transl. by B. O. Foster (Cambridge, MA, 1976), I, lvi-lx, 193-209.

⁵⁸ '¿Y una nación que cuenta con tales defensores podrá ser subyugada?'; 'El título de Gaucho mandaba antes de ahora una idea poco ventajosa del sujeto a quien se aplicaba, y los honrados labradores y hacendados de Salta han conseguido hacerlo ilustro y glorioso por tantas proezas que les hacen dignos de un reconocimiento eterno,' *Suplemento a la Gazeta de Buenos-Ayres del sábado 22 de marzo de 1817*.

Two elements deserve our attention here. First of all, the emphasis the author puts on the patriotic enthusiasm that is opposed to the artificial stratagems of the royalists, and secondly, the way in which he detaches the term gaucho from its traditional negative connotations by pointing out that the new patriotic gauchos are respectable farm labourers and landowners. Far from being vagrants, the gauchos are the *agricolae boni*, sons of the land who, fuelled by righteous ardour, have risen to fight for freedom. The *Gazeta*'s author is not ready to invoke the image of either a pure, natural man of the sort of Enkidu, or the cunning and homeless, but freedom-loving Scythians. Instead, he tries to tone down anything reminiscent of the frontier and nomadism and replaces these elements with more passable representations of patriotic tillers.

The author tries to achieve here much more than just to counter an insult of the royalists. With the declaration of independence in July of 1816, the River Plate revolutionaries severed all ties with the previous order of things. They had to look for a new source of legitimate sovereignty that would replace the monarchy and the most obvious choice was the people. However, both the people and the fatherland were still to be defined because no one knew even the approximate territorial shape of the entity that was to emerge. In other words, the people had to be invented and, as it was to soon turn out, it proved a tortuous journey. The 1817 note on the patriotic gauchos defeating the artful Spaniards seems to be one of its earliest stops.

The association with lawlessness and anarchic freedom never really disappeared, but it could be also employed as a fruitful polemical device. In the issue of *La Gazeta de Buenos-Ayres* of 7 June 1817 there is a letter by general Güemes in which he describes the pillaging and insults allegedly committed by the Spanish troops. He calls them perverts who, with no respect for religion, directed their outrages against 'innocent women and property of every kind.' It is then assessed that even savages (that is Indians) would not behave so ferociously. General Güemes compares the barbarities of the Spanish troops with the exemplary comportment of his 'brave officials and gauchos in general' who are focused exclusively 'on the annihilation of enemy.' As a consequence, concludes Güemes, the whole civilian population has been converted to the cause of independence. It is doubtful that any reader in 1817 would miss the spicy paradox of law-abiding gauchos protecting the helpless citizens from the carousing royal troops.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ 'Son incalculables los daños y perjuicios que estos perversos han causado en un pueblo inerme. Su conducta no tiene igual, ni aún entre las naciones salvajes; baste decir que sin respetar lo más sagrado de la religión han convertido su furor y saña contra inocentes mujeres y contra todo género de propiedad sin distinción. El robo y

This picture of respectable, patriotic gauchos would be misleading if treated in isolation. Negative stereotypes continued to dominate and the way in which *La Gazeta de Buenos-Ayres* insists upon the fact that Güemes's soldiers were landowners and settled labourers is quite revealing in this respect. In reality, independence brought more persecution and state control to the people identified as gauchos. Any person without employment and domicile could be treated as a potentially dangerous gaucho vagabond and, as a consequence, be arrested and coerced into military service. In addition, it was no longer possible for gauchos to hunt wild cattle, as it had been in the colonial period, because the powerful landowners now defined it as cattle-rustling. Although the chronic shortage of labour meant that the unpropertied preserved much freedom in their dealings with their employers, theirs remained a clearly subaltern position. Despite sundry propagandists employing the positive aspect of the gaucho figure, the pejorative associations persisted in the everyday use of the elite.⁶⁰ 'The term gaucho is one offensive to the mass of the people, being understood to mean a person who has no local habitation, but lives a nomadic life,' observed an Irish traveller as late as the 1840s.⁶¹ It is essential to appreciate this ambivalence. Otherwise, it would be impossible to understand the multiplicity of seemingly contradictory statements about the gauchos in the River Plate politics.

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In this chapter I have focused on the emergence of Cossacks and gauchos as a 'highbrow' myth embedded in elite traditions of Europe and the Mediterranean (*sensu lato*). In the last decades of eighteenth century the image of free horsemen of *eschatia* was reformulated and codified to justify the reforming measures of imperial authorities. Later, it was taken up by local urban elites who claimed the privileged position of Enlightenment, as they wished to control (in vain) the dramatic events transpiring from the 1810s onwards. However, the political use of the labels Cossack and gaucho was by no means limited to a few educated males with access to power, imposing their erudite visions on a passive world at their disposal. Rather, it was a multidirectional network of tensions and exchanges in which

el saco han sido su ocupación favorita. [...] No es así la conducta de mis bravos oficiales y gauchos en general: obedientes a las órdenes de sus jefes han sido ejemplares en la comportamiento que han observado, sin otro norte que la aniquilación del enemigo, a él sólo convertían su intrépido valor,' *Gazeta de Buenos-Ayres del sábado 7 de junio de 1817*.

⁶⁰ John Lynch, *Argentine Caudillo: Juan Manuel de Rosas* (Lanham, 2001), 41-52; Ricardo D. Salvatore, *Wandering Paysanos: State Order and Subaltern Experience in Buenos Aires during the Rosas Era* (Durham, 2003), 165-171, 197-231.

⁶¹ William McCann, *Two Thousand Miles' Ride through the Argentine Provinces* (London, 1853), 154.

imperialist dreams underwent radical transformations and contributed to the production of the very local realities that eventually overcame them.

Similar to their ancient predecessors, the representations of Cossacks and gauchos were constructed as a foil to the settled urban-cum-agricultural civilisation. Thus, they served perfectly to embody the ‘non-modernity,’ which was an inextricable element of the disciplinary myth of ‘modernity,’ featuring in both Enlightenment and Romantic visions of human history.⁶² The images of free horsemen codified in the late eighteenth century became powerful symbols employed in the nineteenth-century politics by actors of all hues and stations.

⁶² See Carol Symes, “When We Talk About Modernity,” *American Historical Review* Vol. 116 (2011), No 2, 715-26.

3. Luis Pérez and his gaucho journalism in verse

3.1. Introduction

In the early afternoon of 5 October 1820 a swarm of red-clad gauchos charged furiously at the improvised redoubt in front of the Convent of Saint Francis in the very centre of the city of Buenos Aires. At the head of the charge was their commander, a twenty-eight-year-old lieutenant colonel, blue-eyed and fair-haired. In defiance of the strong enemy fire directed at them from the surrounding roofs, the cavalymen swiftly captured the position. But this was just the beginning. In the nearby streets there were other hotbeds of resistance that had to be liquidated. Only after several hours of fierce fighting and the arrival of substantial infantry reinforcements, could the young commander claim victory over the rebels and invite his governor to enter the city's main square. This chief-executive was General Martín Rodríguez and the commander who had won the day for him was Juan Manuel de Rosas.¹

Superficially, it might seem like yet another episode in the allegedly perennial struggle between barbarism and civilisation, countryside and city, as depicted later by Sarmiento. However, the political alignments of the moment make such an interpretation very problematic. In October 1820, Rosas's gauchos were fighting to reinstate a governor representing the so-called *Partido del Orden*, mostly composed of the reconfigured Directorial faction, gravitating towards what would become the Unitarianism in the later 1820s, Sarmiento's darling *force civilisatrice*. Their enemies were urban insurgents sympathising with Colonel Dorrego, who presented himself as a patriotic hardliner advocating the continuation of war against Santa Fe's Estanislao López. Rosas was perceived by the porteño elite as a providential saviour, bringing peace and order after long months of political chaos.² At that moment, if there was a barbarism-civilisation dichotomy perceived by the urban elites, the barbarism was embodied by the unruly city mob and civilisation by the disciplined countryside cavalymen.³ Ten years later Juan Manuel de Rosas was a Federalist populist himself, the porteño Unitarians – his arch-enemies and Colonel Dorrego – a martyred governor whose death at the hands of rebels was the last straw that persuaded Rosas to assume the leadership of Buenos Aires Province.

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¹ Adolfo Saldías, *Historia de la Confederación Argentina: Rosas y su época*, Vol. 1 (Buenos Aires, 1892), 71-100.

² For an interpretation of the events see Gabriel di Meglio, *¡Viva el bajo pueblo! La plebe urbana de Buenos Aires y la política entre la Revolución de Mayo y el rosismo (1810-1829)* (Buenos Aires, 2006), 205-213.

³ Best illustrated by the emphasis of contemporary sources on Rosas's troops exemplary discipline and reluctance to pillage, Saldías, *Historia*, 86-90.

This chapter differs from the rest of my dissertation in its consistent and thorough attempt at approaching the lower social strata and their understanding of images of free horsemen in the early nineteenth century. In a research project striving to explain the ways in which non-elite actors were represented in public debates, the views of these actors themselves should not be disregarded. We do know that neither the gauchos nor the Cossacks were mere inventions of educated urban intellectuals and activists. They were meaningful ideals for millions of rural inhabitants of Ukraine and the River Plate. Thus, they cut across not only ethnic, confessional, linguistic and political divisions, but also those of class and estate, and they served as a viable platform for both communication and fruitful misunderstandings. It was precisely the richness of the (sometimes contradictory) meanings with which these terms were endowed by different actors in different situations that made them such a powerful device for political mobilisation in the confusingly diverse space of the early nineteenth century. What did the figures of gauchos and Cossacks mean to the very peasants believed to embody these dreams?

As for Ukraine, the evidence we possess is mostly vague and indirect. The Russian Empire remained a relatively stable and efficient state throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. This stability meant that the traditional social hierarchies were preserved and political passions were channelled to the safe beds of elite activism: the nobility's representative institutions, careerism, as well as revolutionary anti-government conspiracies (which were more a nuisance than a serious threat). In such a world there was not much room for peasant interventions in large-scale politics or even the elite actors' attempts at mobilising the peasantry. Still, the little evidence that we have about the resistance of peasant subalterns in Ukraine points to the importance of the Cossack myths as a device through which to articulate social and political grievances.

The most significant instance comes from the spring of 1855 and is known in Ukrainian historiography as the so-called *kyivs'ka kozachchyna* or the Kiev Cossacking.⁴ The Russian Empire was losing the Crimean War and Nicholas I, desperate to save face, chose to make an unusually radical move: in December of 1854 he issued a manifesto calling for a *narodnoe opolcheniie*, a popular *levée en masse*, to defend the fatherland and Orthodox faith. The *opolcheniie* was to be organised only in the core Russian provinces, thus excluding the Ukrainian lands, but the document itself was publicised all over the Empire. The move had

⁴ The most important monograph is Serhii Shamrai, *Kyivs'ka Kozachchyna 1855 r.: Do istorii selians'kykh rukhiv na Kyivshchyni* (Kiev, 1928). However, I was unfortunately unable to locate a copy as, due to the Stalinist proscription, it is a veritable *rara avis* even in Ukrainian libraries.

unexpected consequences. Peasants of the Kiev governorate interpreted it as a call to form a Cossack army and from February to April of 1855, tens of thousands of them refused to work the land and demanded to be ‘written down as Cossacks.’ Claiming that the whole procedure must be completed before Saint George’s Day, as it had been in Khmel’nyts’kyi’s times, the peasants forced their parish priests to prepare adequate registers of volunteers.⁵ They wanted to fight for their monarch and religion not as conscripts, but as free men forming separate volunteer units. After the end of the war their members were expected to be liberated from serfdom and granted their land as free peasants. The conduct of rebels was reported to be resolute, but also relatively peaceful and orderly: against all expectations, no noble manors were plundered and Jews were left in peace.⁶

The movement was easily crushed by the Russian military and police forces, but it is very instructive to look at it as proof of the political capacities of Ukrainian peasants and of the use they made of the Cossack stories. It might seem tempting to dismiss it as a primitive rebellion of benighted rustics. True, the Kiev peasants legitimised their actions by referring to the Cossack myth which encompassed such seemingly backward elements as loyal service to the monarch, defence of religion and inherited privileges. However, what mattered for them most was the emancipatory potential of Cossack stories and symbols. It was a dream of collective liberation from the oppressive state and capitalist-minded nobles, but presented in a relatively safe and acceptable way (from the vantage point of Empire’s authorities). On one occasion the peasants reportedly told a priest who argued that the Emperor had not summoned a Cossack army: ‘Father, we know it all too well that there is no such decree, but we’d like there to be one.’⁷ It is characteristic of how peasants rejected the exploitation arising from the new business initiatives of noble landowners. Apollo Korzeniowski, Joseph Conrad’s father, noted that the peasants of Korsun’ passed a motion that they would continue cultivating the cereals, but relinquish the sugar beets.⁸ The latter were indispensable for the growing sugar industry developed by the entrepreneurial members of the nobility.

Certainly, the Cossack freedom claimed by the Kiev peasants was quite distant from the ideological constructions of such elite actors as Nikolai Gogol’, Michał Czajkowski or the

⁵ [Apollo Korzeniowski], “O powstaniu ludowym [na Ukrainie w 1855 roku,” in Tomasz Teodor Jeż, *Udział Polaków w wojnie wschodniej (1853-1856) z przypisem o powstaniu ludowym na Ukrainie w 1855 roku* (Paris, 1858), 206.

⁶ Elżbieta Orman, “Następstwa wojny krymskiej. Chłopskie rozruchy wiosną 1855 r. w majątkach polskiej i rosyjskiej szlachty guberni kijowskiej,” in Jerzy W. Borejsza and Grzegorz Bąbiak, eds, *Polacy i ziemie polskie w dobie wojny krymskiej* (Warsaw, 2008), 93-95.

⁷ Quoted after Orman, “Następstwa,” 98.

⁸ Korzeniowski, “O powstaniu na Ukrainie...,” 210.

scriptores minores of Vormärz Galicia who will be studied in my next chapters. No less distant, however, were the gauchos depicted by Luis Pérez from those of Domingo Sarmiento, Eduarda Mansilla or José Hernández. The Kiev Cossacking proves that the Ukrainian peasants did have their own historical memory featuring the stories of Cossack struggles against the nobility, but also shows that they were not entrapped in that mythologised past. The peasants knew how to modify their heritage for their present needs and how to use it in political discourse, not unlike the Buenos Aires subalterns. In both cases freedom from forced labour and the preference for militia service over standard conscription were key concerns that mobilised the peasants and made the figures of Cossacks and gauchos so attractive. Rather than Hobsbawm's primitive rebels, they were Skinner's rational actors, manipulating available lexicons to justify their questionable behaviour.⁹

The single most important difference in the contents of the two myths is the unusual relevance of historicist elements in the Cossack myth, which is lacking in the stories of the River Plate gauchos. Perhaps even more consequential were the disparate political circumstances in which the two figures were employed. The River Plate after the disintegration of the Spanish imperial umbrella presented a very different picture from that of Russian-ruled Ukraine. New republican regimes could not avoid the mobilisation of the lower strata, both urban and rural, nor was it possible to control communication and prevent the political opposition from addressing the masses who, in turn, from 1806 on became heavily militarised. Thus, the people rose up as an independent political actor whose presence had to be taken into account by any leadership, be they government or opposition. Internecine struggles of elite factions would engage increasing numbers of commoner supporters and thus contribute to the emergence of an explicitly politicised and socially inclusive public sphere. Journals and pamphlets of the time are one avenue allowing us to witness the attempt made at mobilising (or at least, neutralising) the masses.¹⁰ (We must not forget, however, that this is only one of the mobilisation tools employed at that time.)¹¹

⁹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Manchester, 1971); Quentin Skinner, "Moral principles and social change," in idem, *Visions of Politics: Volume 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2002), 145-157.

¹⁰ Meglio, *Bajo pueblo*; Lyman L. Johnson, *Workshop of Revolution: Plebeian Buenos Aires and the Atlantic World, 1776-1810* (Durham, 2011); Ricardo D. Salvatore, *Wandering Paysanos: State Order and Subaltern Experience in Buenos Aires during the Rosas Era* (Durham, 2003); Alejandro Rabinovich, *La société guerrière. Pratiques, discours et valeurs militaires dans le Rio de la Plata (1806-1852)* (Rennes, 2013).

¹¹ For the persisting importance of non-printed media and traditional forms of sociability see François-Xavier Guerra, "Forms of Communication, Political Spaces, and Cultural Identities," in Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen, eds, *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Washington, 2003), 3-32.

As the sources used in this chapter are so different from those employed in other parts of the dissertation, it is at times difficult to bend them to the research agenda imposed upon the work as a whole. I will start with explaining the relevant contexts indispensable for understanding Luis Pérez's output. First, I will sketch the most important political developments of the time. Readers who are not experts in Argentine history cannot be expected to be familiar with them, but they are indispensable in understanding Pérez's political manoeuvring. Then, I will describe the new forms of political communication that emerged in the Province of Buenos Aires after 1810 and the main social grievances that conditioned the rise to power of Juan Manuel de Rosas. Finally, I will introduce Luis Pérez himself as the author of rhymed pro-Rosas journals and pamphlets. I will then proceed to the analysis of primary sources attributed to Luis Pérez. Firstly, I will show how he portrays the gauchos and against whom he opposes them. Next, I will try to elucidate the aim which seems to have been the most important one for him: the promotion of Juan Manuel de Rosas as the head of Buenos Aires Province. This will be combined with an explanation of the place that Pérez ascribed to his hero in the overall power structure.

3.2. Contexts

3.2.1. Political overview

At the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Spanish Empire found itself sucked into the vortex of wars provoked by the French Revolution. Initially, they mostly affected the metropole, but with the passing of time the incessant conflicts would seriously diminish the flow of news and goods between the Iberian Peninsula and the American dominions. For Buenos Aires the real upheaval came in 1806 and 1807 when Spain happened to be allied with France: the British made two consecutive assaults on the River Plate and were defeated on both occasions. This experience boosted the pride of local citizens, mostly *españoles americanos*, but also numerous Peninsular Spaniards settled in the region, as it was the local volunteers and militias that proved instrumental in the defeat of invaders. At the same time, it brought disgrace to the Spanish-appointed authorities, because the Viceroy Rafael de Sobremonte had chosen to abandon the city of Buenos Aires and escape to Córdoba in the interior.¹²

The British invasions heralded yet another important innovation. With the viceroy disgraced, the fiercely patriotic lower strata of Buenos Aires came to cherish the French-born

¹² Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Politics, Economics and Society in Argentina in the Revolutionary Period* (Cambridge, 1975), 111-149; Johnson, *Workshop of Revolution*, 249-262.

military commander Santiago de Liniers who had assumed leadership of the armed resistance against the British. Thus, a new sort of hero emerged for the first time, one whose charisma was constructed by lower-class public opinion on the basis of his military exploits in defence of the fatherland. The cult of bellicose masculinity and xenophobic Buenos Aires patriotism coalesced to produce a new non-elite (and indeed anti-elite) political discourse. Liniers himself was not interested (or daring enough) to capitalise on this, but when put together with later leaders, such as Dorrego or Rosas, he is clearly a part of the same evolutionary continuum. His reluctance to fight the establishment and the resulting sterility of his popularity, are even more instructive, as they show that the charisma attributed to heroes was not constructed by themselves alone, but was rather a confluence of their own, more or less successful, actions as political entrepreneurs, contributions of sympathetic media managers and, crucially, of the public at large, including the lower strata.¹³

The British invasions were the game-changing moment. They made patent that the Spanish overlordship no longer guaranteed external security and internal social peace. More than a decade of enemy depredations on the high seas forced the River Plate merchants to find new outlets that could substitute for the ports of Peninsular Spain. The local elites came to see that the Spanish imperial umbrella was no longer efficient, both economically and militarily. It became thinkable that the hitherto imperial arrangements could actually hinder the River Plate's prosperity and so they might be discarded under the right circumstances. These materialised when the porteños learnt of the havoc wrought by Napoleon on the Iberian Peninsula in 1808.¹⁴

When the news of the French capture of Seville arrived, a local elite faction in Buenos Aires ousted the then Viceroy Baltasar Hidalgo de Cisneros and established the body known as the First Junta on 25 May 1810. It took over power, still in the name of the captive Ferdinand VII, and this so-called May Revolution is celebrated nowadays as the de facto independence of Argentina, though it would not be declared for a few more years. In fact, it was more of a coup than a true revolution, an internal affair of the elite, but it enabled a completely new sort of politics in which the popular classes would rapidly gain unprecedented prominence. The porteño politicians had to give up the traditional lexicon of deference, royal

¹³ Meglio, *Bajo pueblo*, 78-90; Ariel de la Fuente, *Children of Facundo: Caudillo and Gaucho Insurgency during the Argentine State-Formation Process (La Rioja, 1853-1870)* (Durham, 2000); Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Tradición política española e ideología revolucionaria de Mayo* (Buenos Aires, 2009).

¹⁴ For a discussion on the intellectual origins of and current historiographical debates about the transition from the Spanish imperial order to the independent nation-states see Gabriel Paquette, "The Dissolution of the Spanish Atlantic Monarchy," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (2009), 175-212 and José Carlos Chiaramonte, *Ciudades, provincias, estados: orígenes de la nación argentina, 1800-1846* (Buenos Aires, 2007), 128-154.

grace and hereditary privilege, and replace it with promises of new beginning, violent denunciations of despotism and emotional claims about the people and the common weal. In their jostling for power, various factions and individual leaders mustered the commoner followers, especially the militiamen, and offered them adequate incentives. Lastly, there flourished a periodical press reporting on political developments in the River Plate and abroad, as well as the vicissitudes of war against the loyalists.¹⁵ As we shall see, among the militiamen mobilised by Cornelio Saavedra in May 1810 in support of new arrangements, was one Luis Pérez, the future author of verse journals analysed in this chapter.

A succession of porteño governments claimed control over the whole territory of the former Viceroyalty, but they still had to fight those who preferred to preserve the administrative unity and appointed hierarchies, as though the king had not been absent. These loyalists themselves were quite heterogeneous, varying from absolutists to liberal constitutionalists, but they agreed on the necessity of overturning the local rebellion of Buenos Aires and ‘the preservation of Empire.’¹⁶ As a result, a protracted civil war ensued between the porteño governments and the loyalist viceroys of Peru, which was mostly fought in what is today’s Bolivia and northern Argentina. As Spain was occupied by the French and could not send any substantial reinforcements, it was an almost completely inter-American struggle until 1816.

Eventually, the loyalists were defeated across the Spanish Americas and the expected punitive action from the Iberian Peninsula never materialised. However, in February of 1820 the intensification of political conflicts within the city of Buenos Aires combined with the assault of provincial leaders who defied porteño centralism, led to the collapse of the unified state structure. All the River Plate provinces became sovereign entities and a succession of military coups and external incursions ensued in the Province of Buenos Aires. This experience was dubbed by the city’s elite as the *Anarquía del Año XX*. In September 1820 a degree of stability was restored to Buenos Aires by Governor Martín Rodríguez aided by a skillful countryside entrepreneur Juan Manuel de Rosas and an energetic minister Bernardino Rivadavia: events recalled by Luis Pérez in his *El Gaucho*.

Rodríguez’s group was known as the *Partido del Orden*. In many ways it continued the policies of the pre-1820 centralist governments, the so-called directories, but within the

¹⁵ Halperín Donghi, *Revolutionary Period*, 150-176; Meglio, *Bajo pueblo*, 77-122; Noemí Goldman, *¡El pueblo quiere saber de qué se trata!: historia oculta de la Revolución de Mayo* (Buenos Aires, 2009).

¹⁶ The phrase is taken from Timothy Hawkins’s *José de Bustamante and Central American Independence: Colonial Administration in an Age of Imperial Crisis* (Tuscaloosa, 2004).

bounds of Buenos Aires Province. The group employed a combination of patronage and violence to control the elections of deputies to the provincial legislative assembly. Their power was challenged by the opposition leader Manuel Dorrego who cast himself as a popular tribune (the name of his periodical was indeed *El Tribuno*) and proved quite successful in this capacity. Military or popular uprisings leading to outright bloodshed became less common, but the conduct of electoral procedure was quite violent.¹⁷ Nonetheless, the Unitarian-leaning elite porteños remembered this period as a *feliz experiencia*. As for Juan Manuel de Rosas, the future hero of Luis Pérez's verses, though he distanced himself gradually from the Buenos Aires government, he did nevertheless profit from its economic policies, expanding his cattle businesses. At that time, he was by no means a populist champion of pauper gauchos.¹⁸

The goal of re-establishing the forfeited unity of the River Plate never disappeared. In 1824 there gathered in Buenos Aires a new assembly representing all provinces, the General Congress. Its aim was to prepare a constitution acceptable to everyone. It was during the deliberations of this body that the labels of Unitarians and Federalists crystallised, giving shape to the conflict in which the verse journals of Luis Pérez were to play a prominent role. The Unitarians were dedicated to the mythology of progress and civilisation which was to be championed by a strong, centralised state, while the Federalists combined a vague conservatism and populism with the defence of provincial autonomy and respect for law.¹⁹

The situation was made more complicated during the following year, when a rebellion broke out in the Banda Oriental against Brazilian rule (established there in 1816, thanks to porteño distaste for José Gervasio Artigas, a local pro-independence leader defiant of centralism of governments based in Buenos Aires). The congressmen chose to act boldly and in October they enacted the incorporation of the Banda Oriental, provoking a war with Brazil. In such difficult circumstances the Unitarians gained the upper hand and in February of 1826 Bernardino Rivadavia was named President of the United Provinces of the River Plate, while a national army was created to fight the Brazilians. The resistance of other provinces, lack of decisive military victories, exhaustion of the Buenos Aires country dwellers and alienation of landowning capitalists forced Rivadavia to resign in June of 1827, thus sealing the fate of his

¹⁷ Meglio, *Bajo pueblo*, 255-278.

¹⁸ Raúl Fradkin and Jorge Gelman, *Juan Manuel de Rosas: la construcción de un liderazgo político* (Buenos Aires, 2015), 117-151.

¹⁹ The two currents had their roots in the years immediately following independence, Halperín Donghi, *Revolutionary Period*, 215-220, 264-307; for the Federalists' emphasis on preservation of legal order see Salvatore, *Wandering Paysanos*, 161-196; for a pioneering study devoted to the long-neglected Unitarianism see Ignacio Zubizarreta, *Los Unitarios: faccionalismo, prácticas, construcción identitaria y vínculos de una agrupación política decimonónica, 1820-1852* (Stuttgart, 2012), 13-56.

Unitarian enterprise.²⁰ The self-proclaimed popular leader, colonel Manuel Dorrego, became governor of the once again sovereign Province of Buenos Aires. However, his acceptance of the independence of the Banda Oriental as a buffer state between the River Plate and Brazil served as a trigger for a Unitarian coup against him. In December 1828 he was defeated in the battle of Navarro and executed by General Juan Lavalle who became a new governor.²¹

This time Juan Manuel de Rosas was among the supporters of the unfortunate Governor Dorrego, whom he had defeated for Rodríguez in 1820. Rosas and his influential Anchorena cousins had their businesses in the Buenos Aires pampas, along the Indian frontier and they suffered heavily from the shortage of labor caused by military conscription. In this peculiar conjuncture their interests as capitalist entrepreneurs came to coincide with those of countryside proletarians. However, after the defeat of Navarro and Dorrego's execution, Rosas himself had to flee across the border to Santa Fe, ruled by the Federalist Estanislao López. It seemed that the popular cause was lost, but the inhabitants of the Buenos Aires countryside, infuriated by the murder of the leader whom they perceived as their defender, joined in an all-out anti-Unitarian rebellion. Rosas's name, though he himself was in exile and had no control over these events, served as one of the rallying calls. In this way he became an awaited savior and avenger of the martyr Dorrego. All those who were dissatisfied with the new Unitarian government took up the Federalist partisan identification and came to collaborate with Santa Fe, which was sheltering Rosas. The murder of Dorrego became the justification for the slogan: 'Death to the savage Unitarians!' and for a foundational myth of a new militantly populist Federalism. The lower strata intervened in politics and changed the course of events. Juan Manuel de Rosas's only task was to step into the shoes prepared for him by the mass imagination.²²

Facing a universal uprising of the peasantry, Lavalle soon resigned from his post and went in exile. The interim authorities nominated Juan Manuel de Rosas as the new governor, offering him the extraordinary powers and the title of the *Restaurador de las Leyes e Instituciones de la Provincia de Buenos Aires*. It was during those heady days of 1830 that Luis Pérez initiated his engagé verse journalism. In January 1831, Rosas managed to conclude an agreement, the so-called *Pacto Federal*, with the leaders of the Federalist-controlled

²⁰ Fradkin & Gelman, *Rosas*, 151-171.

²¹ Raúl Fradkin, *¡Fusilaron a Dorrego! O como un alzamiento rural cambió el rumbo de la historia* (Buenos Aires, 2008), 21-36; Fradkin & Gelman, *Rosas*, 179-183.

²² Fradkin, *¡Fusilaron a Dorrego!*; Pilar González Bernaldo, "El levantamiento de 1829: el imaginario social y sus implicaciones políticas en un conflicto rural," *Anuario IEHS*, No. 2 (1987), 135-176; Fradkin & Gelman, *Rosas*, 183-198.

provinces of the River Plate. The confederated provinces remained sovereign entities: each administered its own affairs and there was no central government, but the governor of Buenos Aires was tasked with representing their interests abroad as *encargado de relaciones exteriores*. Soon, the governments of Unitarian-controlled areas were ousted and a relative peace returned to the region as a whole. Having restored some degree of stability, Rosas resigned at the end of 1832 from the post of governor to lead a military campaign on the Indian frontier.

Rosas's first government was replaced by a new cabinet in which his followers had to share power with liberal Federalists, some of whom had been old collaborators of Dorrego. There ensued a fierce competition between the two factions in which Rosas's followers managed to impose upon the liberals the label of *cismáticos* (schismatics), while calling themselves *apostólicos* (apostolic Catholics). It was also suggested that the *cismáticos* were in fact crypto-Unitarians. The mastermind of this complex operation was Rosas's wife doña Encarnación Ezcurra, who was especially successful in organising the subalterns against the elite. Other leaders of pro-Rosas faction were truly terrified by her lack of restraint in terrorising the political competitors with the help of popular violence. Due to Ezcurra's acquaintances in the non-elite world, her enemies dubbed her *mulata Toribia*, even though she actually hailed from one of the most important porteño families. Together with her middle- and lower-class collaborators she succeeded in destabilising the situation in Buenos Aires to such an extent that the Province's legislature saw no other option but to beg Rosas to return. As a result, after the murder of Facundo Quiroga, his ally from La Rioja who had been immortalised by Sarmiento as an embodiment of gaucho politics, Rosas was offered completely unrestricted powers, or *la suma del poder publico* in March 1835. This was confirmed in a referendum: 9316 ayes against four nays.²³

It is important not to confuse two things: Rosas and his wife took popular agency seriously and put great effort into using it to their own advantage, but this does not mean that they meant to represent the interests of subalterns. As is testified by Rosas's own claims in his oft-quoted conversation with an Oriental diplomat, when he fully appreciated the power of popular classes, he was terrified by it. He concluded that it was indispensable to make symbolic identitarian concessions to the subalterns, in order to harness their political agency and use it for the preservation of social hierarchies.²⁴

²³ Gabriel di Meglio, *¡Mueran los salvajes unitarios! La Mazorca y la política en tiempos de Rosas* (Buenos Aires, 2007), 27-55, 65-71; Fradkin & Gelman, *Rosas*, 244-259.

²⁴ Fradkin & Gelman, *Rosas*, 207-208.

3.2.2. Political communication and imaginaries in the Province of Buenos Aires

The verse journals of Luis Pérez have to be located within the context of the dynamic press scene of the time. The change of regime inaugurated in May of 1810 may not have been exceptionally revolutionary, but it had profoundly revolutionary consequences. This became clear after 1820, when the political order established by the porteño elite collapsed. After its imperfect reconstruction in September, there was greater space for not only non-elite actors, but also some that were explicitly anti-elite. Two important factors enabled this: the relative freedom of press (ended only by Juan Manuel de Rosas) and the universal manhood suffrage introduced in 1821.²⁵

Jeremy Popkin has argued with regards to France, that it was the revolutionary upheaval that produced the conditions in which the bourgeois citizenry could define itself and not the other way around. According to Popkin, revolutions are ‘crucibles in which new social identities take form.’²⁶ This seems to hold true not only for Western Europe and such relatively elite subjects as bourgeois citizens, but also for politicised subaltern subjectivities and for other regions of the world. Press, being the single most powerful medium of mass communication, was a tool for the construction of these new subjectivities. Readers (and listeners) of newspapers reimagined themselves as members, on the one hand, of an all-encompassing public (or nation) composed of equal and conscious political subjects, and on the other, as members of delimited segments within the society in whose name respective newspapers claimed to speak, such as workers, peasants and women. Thus, the new media helped to construct new identifications and self-understandings for subaltern individuals and groups.

This latter aspect was especially irritating for the Enlightened bourgeois elite, as the rapid pluralisation of the press undermined its claim to stand for the universal human values and speak for the society as a whole. The fictive persona of the ‘people’ constructed in order to justify the claim to power laid by the wealthy and wise turned out to be difficult to control.²⁷ Eventually, the Enlightened citizens in tailcoats were forced to admit that the ‘people’ were in fact plural, diverse and by no means docile, dangerously resembling the *ancien-régime* spectre of the ‘many-headed hydra.’

²⁵ Marcela Ternavasio, *La revolución del voto: política y elecciones en Buenos Aires, 1810-1852* (Buenos Aires, 2002).

²⁶ Jeremy D. Popkin, *Press, Revolution, and Social Identities in France, 1830-1835* (University Park, 2002), 17.

²⁷ Popkin, *Press & Revolution*, 18-22.

Luis Pérez and his gaucho figures are an excellent example of the construction of a politicised subaltern identification and self-understanding. As such, they need to be seen in the context of the wider mediascape of Buenos Aires. In the 1820s there functioned some twenty pro-government periodicals and a similar number of opposition publications. In the year 1830 alone there were five active printing presses and nineteen titles appearing in Buenos Aires, among them one Anglophone (*The British Packet*) and one written allegedly by women for women (*La Argentina*). The periodicals were coupled with countless flyers. It was a genuine *guerra de papeles*. Characteristically, one of the first initiatives of Colonel Dorrego after assuming power in 1828 was a bill limiting (albeit moderately) the hitherto almost unrestrained freedom of the press. The situation only changed dramatically with Rosas's eventual victory. Suffice it to say that while in 1831 there were thirty-one periodicals published in Buenos Aires, from 1836 until the *Restaurador's* fall in 1852, the number of titles oscillated around five.²⁸

Luis Pérez's verse journalism belonged to the idiosyncratic River Plate form of political communication, the so-called gaucho genre, arguably the first originally native genre in the literary space of the region. It is characterised by 1) the conscious use of gaucho sociolect (at least some elements of it), and 2) the shaping of the narrator in the *forma mentis* of a gaucho, either a bard, the so-called *payador*, performing in front of his rural audience or an interlocutor having a conversation with another gaucho.²⁹

Though the figure of the gaucho is expressly non-urban, the label itself was attractive to many subaltern city-dwellers and the politicised gaucho-style pieces were a product of a political culture centred in and around the growing emporium of the River Plate. This was so because at least as early as the 1820s there was a substantial and politically relevant population of non-elite males in the city of Buenos Aires, who originated from the countryside. As one of Luis Pérez's gaucho voices claims, his message is directed, first and foremost, at the inhabitants of the suburbs of the city of Buenos Aires (*los mozos de las orillas*). This area was covered by slaughterhouses and farms supplying the city with necessary foodstuffs. Their employees were carriers of countryside culture permeating the

²⁸ Jorge Myers, *Orden y virtud: el discurso republicano en el régimen rosista* (Buenos Aires, 1995), 26-28; Olga Fernández Latour de Botas, "Estudio preliminar", in *El Torito de los muchachos: 1830* (Buenos Aires, 1978), xiii-xv, available at <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/el-torito-de-los-muchachos-1830--0/html/ff9132ea-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064.html> (retrieved 10.01.2014).

²⁹ Pedro Luis Barcia, "Las letras rioplatenses en el período de la Ilustración: Juan Baltasar Maciel y el conflicto de dos sistemas literarios," *Humanidades: revista de la Universidad de Montevideo*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2001), 41-60, also available at http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/las-letras-rioplatenses-en-el-periodo-de-la-ilustracion-juan-baltasar-maciel-y-el-conflicto-de-dos-sistemas-literarios--0/html/ff912390-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_2.html (retrieved 28.10.2016).

urban tissue of a rapidly expanding Buenos Aires. Most of the slaughter houses' employees originated in the countryside and had the according mindset, but they did not feel as insecure and alienated in the urban environment as genuinely rural gaucho visitors, who experienced cruel pranks at the hands of city hooligans and were puzzled by the shamelessly décolleté urban coquettes, as depicted in the early 1820s by an anonymous gaucho-style poet.³⁰ Pérez's *mozos de las orillas* seem much more at peace with the realities of the big city. The difference between them and their elite enemies is more that of social standing within one community than that of two alien communities.

The gaucho-style texts were not a pure folk poetry, but rather an attempt to imitate it in order to produce something truly national and, most importantly, to communicate better with the lower strata of the society. Josefina Ludmer in her classical essay chooses to call it the *género gauchesco*, not *gaucho*, thus indicating its derivative, complex nature based on a literary appropriation of the genuine gaucho voice.³¹ At least some items of this stylised production would later acquire a life of their own and permeate the popular bloodstream. Several gaucho-style songs seem to have been assimilated by the real gauchos themselves and they served as an inspiration and context for the orally transmitted folk songs and, indirectly, for further written gaucho-style works.³² A dynamic exchange of mutual reinforcements between the printed word and the oral sphere took place there. The flourishing of gaucho themes in River Plate culture, both for elite and subaltern consumption, was a fruit of this complex situation. It does not make sense to search for the truly folkloric, pure gaucho poetry as opposed to the artificial, stylised products of politicisation or commercialisation. What we are dealing with here with is a rich public sphere in which voices of all sorts came to interact. The print culture did not undermine or contaminate the pure folk culture, but helped to make it more robust, flexible and dynamic.

It is telling that the first known piece fulfilling the criteria of the *género gauchesco* is an indubitably elite product masquerading as popular poetry. Juan Baltasar Maciel's short poem *Canta un guaso en estilo campestre el triunfo del Excelentísimo Señor Don Pedro de Cevallos* is an encomiastic account of the Spanish victory over the Portuguese written in

³⁰ Olga Fernández Latour de Botas, "Cauces y lagunas de una investigación literaria: Sobre la *Graciosa y divertida conversación que tuvo Chano con señor Ramón Contreras con respecto a las fiestas mayas de 1823, impreso de Expósitos*", *Logos: revista de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras* 13-14 (1977-78), 252-283, available online: <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/cauces-y-lagunas-de-una-investigacion-literaria--0/> (retrieved 18.05.2014).

³¹ Josefina Ludmer, *El género gauchesco: un tratado sobre la patria* (Buenos Aires, 1988); see also Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley, 1991), 70-78.

³² Olga Fernández Latour de Botas, "Lo musical en la ficción gauchesca: antecedentes y proyecciones", *Música e investigación*, Year 3 (1999), No. 5, 47-80.

1777. After this creation there is a gap of some forty years and it is only during the first decade of independence that an Oriental author, Bartolomé Hidalgo, composes a series of patriotic poems that can be undoubtedly identified as belonging to the gaucho genre. Nicolas Shumway argues that Hidalgo's decision to appropriate the voice of the low-born and half-savage gaucho should be read in the light of political programme of José Gervasio de Artigas, an Oriental pro-independence leader in the 1810s.³³ He combined strong autonomist elements presaging later Federalism with bold attempts at an agrarian redistribution that would transform the poor Oriental gauchos and Blacks into middle-class landed citizens, a prospect that could hardly inspire enthusiasm amongst the educated porteño elite. What is beyond doubt, is that by using the personae of gauchos as mouthpieces of anti-monarchic patriotism, Hidalgo contributed significantly to the redefinition of this figure's place in the River Plate imaginary.³⁴ What emerged was a cycle, that is a series of texts referring to Hidalgo's work by employing the forms honed by him and the protagonists he brought into being: Chano and Contreras. From the very beginning this cycle is immersed in the partisan conflicts of the time: first, the clashes identified as struggle for independence and as such mystified by a good deal of historiography as a non-partisan, national striving; and then, the conflicts between various factional milieus and societal segments, eventually crystallising into the Unitarian-Federalist opposition.

Apart from Hidalgo there were also other authors who resorted to the figure and folklore of the gauchos in order to present their political argumentation as the *vox populi*, not unlike the Parisian Père Duchesne. One of the most interesting examples is father Francisco de Paula Castañeda, who would first champion the cause of independence and then that of the Catholic Church assaulted by Minister Bernardino Rivadavia in the 1820s. Father de Paula Castañeda published a number of *gauchipolítico* periodicals which he filled with his own politically engagé poems in which he used gaucho voices in a highly polemical manner. He was named by Pérez as his immediate inspiration and there can be no doubt that his innovations paved the way for the transformation of the gaucho persona from Hidalgo's relatively inclusive embodiment of patriotism and national struggle against the old imperial order, into an exclusionary partisan label.³⁵

Castañeda, Hidalgo, Pérez and others strove to reach the uneducated sectors of the society with their message: mainly the poor migrants from the countryside and the Blacks.

³³ For Artigas and his policies see Lucía Sala de Touron, Nelson de la Torre and Julio C. Rodríguez, *Artigas y su revolución agraria, 1811-1820* (Mexico, 1978).

³⁴ Julio Schwartzman, *Letras gauchas* (Buenos Aires, 2013), 121-128.

³⁵ Schwartzman, *Letras gauchas*, 138, 166-169; Shumway, *Invention of Argentina*, 67-70.

The illiterate would listen to the texts read aloud in the *pulperías*, both in the capital city and the countryside of the Buenos Aires province.³⁶ As some gaucho-style pieces take the form of the *payada*, or the gaucho bard's performance, it is also possible that those works which include dialogues refer to some popular notions of theatrical culture, be it genuinely popular *Commedia-dell'arte*-like performances or an acquaintance of the uneducated porteños with the conventional theatre active in the city (in fact, we do possess a gaucho-style piece from the early 1820s describing a countryside gaucho's visit in the theatre).³⁷ Also, there was at that time in the River Plate a lighter intermezzo-like theatrical genre called *sainete*, explicitly embedded in popular culture, and there is even one extant piece of this kind from the late 1780s that features a gaucho lover: *El amor de la estanciera*.

This rise of politicised, gaucho-style literary products must be located in the context of the *sui generis* democratisation of River Plate politics. This peculiar transformation was not only about the introduction of universal manhood suffrage (which did happen in Buenos Aires in 1821), but also the brutalisation and militarisation of political life which, to an unformed outsider, could seem like a chaotic succession of mindless civil wars, especially during the years 1820 and 1829. In such realities, the ability to rapidly summon a substantial force of armed males, to hamper a political enemy's attempts at doing the same and to prevent one's military followers from deserting, became key to political success and physical survival. As early as the first decade of the century, still within the imperial framework (albeit loosened by the adversities of the global warfare), the expansion of military organisation proved to offer the lower strata some hitherto unknown opportunities. Membership in various militia and army units secured individuals without education and material resources the access to covetable goods, such as decent clothes, as well as to an organisational framework enabling them to voice their concerns in a way which the elite could no longer ignore.³⁸

Thus, the elite leaders had to develop a complex apparatus, flexibly combining coercion and incentives that would secure them the male bodies they so badly needed to carry out their military-cum-political enterprises. The same can be said of the entrepreneurs owning estancias and *saladeros* (salting farms). They too had to tackle the shortage of labour and the methods they employed to fence off their farmhands closely paralleled those of military commanders and politicians. No wonder that military, political and economic enterprise were

³⁶ Pérez claimed that he had spent his own money to ensure that his periodicals circulated in the countryside, Ricardo Rodríguez Molas, "Luís Pérez y la biografía de Rosas escrita en verso en 1830", *Historia*, No. 6 (1956), 107.

³⁷ Latour de Botas, "Cauces y lagunas".

³⁸ Rabinovich, *La société guerrière*; Salvatore, *Wandering paysanos*, 137-150.

usually closely related. Eventually, it was the leader who knew best how to combine these three areas of activity, Juan Manuel de Rosas, who succeeded in establishing himself as the dictator in Buenos Aires. The fact that he combined the military, political and economic spheres should not deceive us into seeing him as a throwback to amorphous ‘prepolitical’ ways of struggling for power, either an egotistic lord of the plains or a front of traditional kinship group.³⁹ Rosas was a politician and entrepreneur, or better a political entrepreneur.⁴⁰ The verse journalism of Luis Pérez with its *völkisch* vision of gaucho politics helped to mystify the real nature of Rosas’s enterprise, but in fact it was one of its most modern elements.

As the Argentine historiography of the 1990s and 2000s suggests, it does not seem correct to understand the power politics of the Province of Buenos Aires simply in terms of feudal-like clientage networks centred around a few powerful men struggling for power. At least until the mid-1830s, the uneducated masses remained a powerful actor in their own right: they knew very well how to shift their allegiance in accordance to what they understood as their best interest. The deficit of male labourers made the elite prone to coercion whenever possible, but at the same time offered farmhands and other proletarians plenty of opportunities to negotiate with their patrons, for whom they were so valuable. In order to get the bodies the elite also had to accommodate the souls. And here enters Luis Pérez with his rhymed journalism.

3.2.3. The lower strata and the rise of populist politics

As we have seen, the dramatic political transformation offered the non-elite masses of the Province of Buenos Aires a wide array of new devices for advancing political demands. At the same time, they were accompanied by a number of disconcerting phenomena, such as the collapse of local industries, the expansion of the British-dominated global trade, the chaotic turf wars between sundry political factions and leaders, and the unprecedented invasion of new forms of state control in their private lives.⁴¹ Also, on the symbolic plane, one must never underestimate the fact that the inhabitants of the Buenos Aires Province had lived through a traumatic series of events in which the father-like guarantors of order were violently displaced one after another: the King of Spain, the *Cabildo* of Buenos Aires and eventually

³⁹ For the kinship-centred interpretation of caudillos and their power see Roger M. Haigh, “The Creation and Control of a Caudillo,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (November, 1964), 481-490.

⁴⁰ Fradkin & Gelman, *Rosas*, 50-63, 127-144, 384-393, 430-431.

⁴¹ Halperín Donghi, *Revolutionary Period*, 81-108.

Governor Dorrego. Thus, to understand the meteoric career of Juan Manuel de Rosas and the way in which he was advertised by Luis Pérez, it is indispensable to identify the main grievances of the lower strata of the Buenos Aires society.

One important issue widely perceived as a blatant injustice was the high position that foreign-born individuals occupied in the Province, especially those originating from the former metropole. The Spaniards were a recurring motif in the political imaginary of the time for two main reasons. First of all, they represented the rejected imperial order. In the year 1830 it was no longer realistic to fear any loyalist enterprises anywhere in the Southern Cone, but nevertheless, accusations of this kind could still work as a viable political weapon. Secondly, petty entrepreneurs, especially innkeepers or *pulperos*, originating from abroad, mostly Spaniards and Portuguese, were a notable part of Buenos Aires's social horizon. They played a role somewhat similar to that of East European Jews: representing the lowest echelon of the economic power structure and hence widely resented by the lower strata. Indeed, in a *costumbrista* story recounting a gaucho's adventures in the city of Buenos Aires, Luis Pérez includes an episode of a violent quarrel with a *pulpero*.⁴² To make the situation even worse, unlike the East European Jews, detached from the bulk of the society by their religion, these up-start foreigners could aspire to elevated positions within the community. Such behaviour had additional negative connotations with the arrangements of the imperial period, when the Spaniards had enjoyed certain legal privileges.⁴³ This issue can be illustrated by Pérez's portrait of a *pulpero* who claimed to be a very respectable man (befriending a university-educated doctor and sporting a watch), but was also said to have been the most adept highwayman in his homeland.⁴⁴

Of course, not only Spaniards owned *pulperías*. For instance, *criollo* brothers Genaro and Julián González Salomón were *pulperos*, first-generation-*americanos* and, at the same time, influential middle-rank activists of the Federalist movement, instrumental in attracting the poor to fight for that political cause.⁴⁵ As can be seen, the peculiar place occupied by the *pulperos* in the Buenos Aires socio-political space was rife with internal contradictions.

The Spaniards could easily serve as scapegoats that would be blamed for most, if not all, of the tensions resulting from the experience of violent state formation and war against

⁴² *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 7 (09.09.1830), 26; for more on *pulperos* and *pulperías* see Meglio, *Bajo pueblo*, 47-48.

⁴³ For a microhistorical account of how the Spanish-born were both othered and integrated in the socio-political tissue of a rural Buenos Aires locality see Juan Carlos Garavaglia, *San Antonio de Areco, 1680-1880: un pueblo de la campaña, del Antiguo Régimen a la modernidad argentina* (Rosario, 2009), 354-380.

⁴⁴ *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 2 (22.08.1830), 6.

⁴⁵ Meglio, *Mazorca*, 93-109.

Brazil. In the Federalist propaganda of the time they would be accompanied in this role (and indeed conflated with) the toffee-nosed urbanites and followers of the Unitarian party. Thus, the ‘other’ that could be held responsible for all that went wrong about state building served to detach the incumbent Federalist rulers from negative associations and, overall, eased the construction and acceptance of the Buenos Aires state apparatus.⁴⁶

The single most serious cause of discontent among the lower strata of the Buenos Aires society, both in the countryside and in the city, was the military draft. Although in reality, local intermediaries were always involved in the procedure in one way or another, apparently it was the resistance to the draft that contributed most to the construction of elite ‘others’ as imperious *cajetillas* or *maturrangos*, either aliens or sell-outs disrupting the peaceful and prosperous lives of the genuine *criollos*.⁴⁷

The peasants and urban subalterns were not opposed to military service as such. In truth, the militia service was quite welcome, as it confirmed their social status of *vecinos* (enfranchised proprietors), offered many of them the access to numerous covetable goods (clothes, arms), did not sever their local ties, and provided their areas with basic military protection. The problem started with the regular army where the draft was forced, discipline and isolation stricter, and one’s perceived status within the wider society much lower, as soldiers were thought to be a sort of prisoners. As a rule, it was the most poor and alienated individuals that were the most vulnerable to the draft, but in the second half of the 1820s the dearth of soldiers needed to fight the Brazilians in the Banda Oriental was so acute that the recruiting parties started to kidnap even fairly respectable agriculturalists with blatant disregard of legal regulations and accepted social practices. The army was organised by the porteño government and the officer corps was staffed with the Unitarian-leaning commanders. Thus, the social resistance that any administration would have to face, became infused with partisan overtones. The Unitarian urbanites tore sons from their mothers and fiancés from their beloved to enslave them as soldiers in a distant war they did not even know how to win. As it happened, it was eventually the anti-Unitarian governor Dorrego who managed to reach an honourable peace agreement and thus relieve the lower strata.⁴⁸

For a young adult male who did not run his own farm, before Dorrego’s peace one of the very few possibilities of avoiding the draft was to find shelter as an employee of one of a handful of great landowners, the most dynamic of whom was Juan Manuel de Rosas. No

⁴⁶ Garavaglia, *Areco*, 377-380.

⁴⁷ Raúl Fradkin, *La historia de una montonera: bandolerismo y caudillismo en Buenos Aires, 1826* (Buenos Aires), 2006, 166.

⁴⁸ Fradkin, *Historia de una montonera*, 130-145; Salvatore, *Wandering paysanos*, 217-218, 271-276.

wonder then that as early as 1825, Federalism started to be a political identity assumed by the first nuclei of resisters and the name of Rosas (coupled with rumors of his discontent with the government), one of the rallying calls. Interestingly, the myth of Rosas seems to have been strongest in the areas where he had no direct economic impact (north-west of the Province). At least in this early period, his charisma was a construction more of his discontented, aspiring followers, rather than of his own conscious effort. The clout surrounding him was produced by the desperate subalterns searching for a commander/father that would lead their struggle against the encroachments of the imperious government, but later it helped Rosas himself to intercept power in the Province of Buenos Aires. Together with the vilification of the Spaniards and Unitarians, it served as one of the most powerful devices for the legitimisation of the expanding state apparatus. However, Rosas did not come after all the work had been done. He took advantage of the favourable circumstances, but he had to neutralise some serious difficulties as well.⁴⁹

First of all, Rosas was a man who had in the past collaborated with the *Partido del Orden* in keeping Manuel Dorrego out of power and everybody knew that. What is more, in the very year 1830, Rosas was building a following among the social elite by promising them that he would restore the social order and tame the abhorrent masses. This was, in short, the message of his succinct biography *Ensayo histórico sobre la vida del Excelentísimo Señor Don Juan Manuel de Rosas, Gobernador y Capitán General de la Provincia de Buenos Aires* by Pedro de Ángelis.⁵⁰ Rosas himself is reported to have claimed in 1829 that previous governments had failed to notice the importance of the lower strata, and, consequently, gain their recognition. In contrast, he said that he ‘thought it very important to gain a decisive influence over this class in order to control it and direct it; and I was determined to acquire this influence at all costs. I had to work at it relentlessly, sacrificing my comfort and fortune, in order to become a gaucho like them, to speak like them, to do everything they did. I had to protect them, represent them, guard their interests. In short I had to spare no effort, neglect no means to secure their allegiance.’ This political programme stemmed allegedly from Rosas’s disgust at the lawlessness and violence of the River Plate countryside in the early years of independence, when he was virtually forced to fight for his life and property.⁵¹ His popular rural leadership was presented to the city-dwellers as a fruit of a conscious effort,

⁴⁹ Fradkin, *Historia de una montonera*, 130-145, 154-158, 172-186; Juan Carlos Garavaglia, *Construir el estado, inventar la nación: El Río de la Plata, siglos XVIII-XIX* (Buenos Aires, 2007), 282-288, 298-300.

⁵⁰ Pedro de Ángelis, “Ensayo histórico sobre Rosas,” in idem, *Acusación y defensa de Rosas*, ed. by Rodolfo Trostiné (Buenos Aires, 1945), 173-205.

⁵¹ John Lynch, *Argentine Caudillo: Juan Manuel de Rosas* (Lanham, 2001), 44-45; quoted also in Fradkin & Gelman, *Rosas*, 207-208.

of an arduous labour of self-fashioning and political bargaining. This was not a message destined for the gauchos, but for the elite porteños exhausted by incessant power struggles and the resulting spread of violence. The basic claim was clear for everybody: 'I can do better than the *Partido del Orden*.' In exchange for the porteños' compliance Rosas promised to transform the unruly gaucho mob into a disciplined force, bringing peace to the tormented city.

Secondly, Rosas was undoubtedly a member of the social elite. Although, as we shall see, Pérez spared no effort to picture Rosas as a natural-born gaucho leader, he was actually a descendant of noble Spanish lineage. What is more, he was by no means a typical agriculturalist of the Buenos Aires countryside. Together with his partner, Rosas established the first *saladero*, or salting farm, in the Buenos Aires Province. Thus, he was a pioneer of the new economic order brought about by the collapse of the Spanish imperial umbrella and the arrival of British-dominated transoceanic trade. Soon, Rosas became one of the pillars of the new class of landowning entrepreneurs that aspired to replace the porteño wholesale merchants at the helm of Buenos Aires society.⁵² An exceptionally perspicacious businessman, Rosas learnt to be flexible and attentive to his men's needs. There was an acute shortage of labour and the vast territory hindered any attempts at a more consistent surveillance of the employees, forcing the landowners, great and small, to come to terms with the independent and rationally calculating wage earners.⁵³ At the same time, the out-dated vision of medieval-like patriarchal omnipotence should not be replaced with that of a unassuming gaucho *primus inter pares* building his position on the basis of a friendly exchange of services and spontaneous acclamation. Rosas was a gifted capitalist innovator and, as it happened, a descendant of a seventeenth-century Spanish field marshal and captain general of Chile, not a miraculous peasant prodigy.

Rosas had risen to power thanks to the peasant uprising caused by the execution of Governor Dorrego and thus his position had to be defined in relation to that political martyr's overpowering shadow. The cult of colonel Dorrego and the need to avenge him were relevant sources of Rosas's legitimacy as an anti-Unitarian leader. In fact, Rosas used Dorrego's lavish funeral, celebrated in Buenos Aires on the anniversary of his execution, to confirm his own status as the killed tribune's avenger and the new *padre de los pobres* (one of Dorrego's

⁵² Saldías, *Historia de la confederación*, 1-31; Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Politics, Economics and Society in Argentina in the Revolutionary Period* (London, 1975), 81-108.

⁵³ Carlos A. Mayo, *Estancia y sociedad en la pampa: 1740-1820* (Buenos Aires, 1995), 85.

nicknames).⁵⁴ It was, however, now time for Rosas to become a figure in his own right and he had to emancipate his image from the subordination to the dead governor.

Manuel Dorrego is a key figure whose political activities and afterlife critically conditioned the career of Juan Manuel de Rosas as a Federalist leader and the rhetoric of Luis Pérez as his promoter. First of all, the colonel was instrumental in constructing a vocally anti-elite, popular, political identity that eventually became Buenos Aires Federalism. Secondly, as I have mentioned, the need to liberate Rosas from the shadow of Dorrego was one of the main reasons for which Pérez reformed this politicised populist identity in gaucho terms rather than satisfying himself with the traditional and widely accepted talk of *criollos* or *americanos*.

Similar to Rosas, Dorrego was doubtless a member of the porteño elite, but as a politician he became a mouthpiece of the lower, mainly urban, social strata. In the 1820s in Buenos Aires, anyone in opposition to the government had to overcome exceptional obstacles to be elected, because the pressure of the incumbent administration was a relevant factor on all levels of the electoral process. For an opposition politician to neutralise the government's influence, it was necessary to mobilise the discontent of popular sectors and this is what Dorrego did by combining anti-elite grumbling with nationalist bellicosity in his periodical, *El tribuno*. It should be noted here that his jingoism was still that of the Buenos Aires Province and as such it could be directed against the Brazilians, the British, the Portuguese, and even the Santafecinos of Estanislao López, although they concurred with him in their Federalist rejection of what they perceived as the despotism of the Unitarian government.⁵⁵

Dorrego cultivated a very specific image. As a military commander, he used to fraternise ostentatiously with his subordinates originating from the lower classes (also non-White) and even turn a blind eye to some of the abuses committed by them, including such serious offences as the rape of elite women.⁵⁶ He also distanced himself from the accepted standards of elite sociability through undisciplined and playful behaviour. Lastly, he posed as a reckless adventurer and flaunted his personal courage in the face of enemy fire. He was always reluctant to withdraw or halt his advance, even in very unfavourable circumstances. It

⁵⁴ Fradkin & Gelman, *Rosas*, 206-207; Meglio, *Mazorca*, 41-42.

⁵⁵ The strength of the politicised porteño identity was reinforced by the fact that almost all the state symbols deployed in Buenos Aires had a clearly porteño mark. The sky-blue and white flag designed by Manuel Belgrano for the new state could be interpreted as a continuation of the banner of Buenos Aires which was of the colours of the Immaculate Conception (the official name of the city being *Ciudad de la Santísima Trinidad y Puerto de Santa María del Buen Aires*), that is light blue and white. Also, as late as 1844 among ten dates on which the official annual celebrations were held in Buenos Aires, two were manifestations of friendship with France, two of friendship with the United Kingdom, two were devoted to the Argentine Confederation as a whole, and four to the Buenos Aires Province alone, Garavaglia, *Construir el estado, inventar la nación*, 35 & 83-86.

⁵⁶ Halperín Donghi, *Politics, Economics and Society*, 380-381.

is difficult to judge whether this was a conscious calculation on Dorrego's part, but one has to note that what was often a disastrous military tactic could later prove an extremely successful public relations strategy. This mix of quirkiness, virility and friendly simplicity in his contact with the individual representatives of lower strata, proved an explosive cocktail in the hands of a politician determined to voice very harsh criticisms against the socio-political elite. Combined with the belligerent hostility towards all the enemies of Buenos Aires, both real and imaginary, this approach secured Dorrego the position of unquestioned leader of the *Partido Popular*, as his followers were known in the 1820s.⁵⁷

Throughout the 1820s, Dorrego remained a father-like figure for the porteño lower strata and, consequently, he was perceived by the bulk of the elite as too lax in his treatment of what they considered to be the worthless plebs. Returning from the war against Brazil in December 1828, when Dorrego was in power, the Unitarian General Lavalle commented angrily that 'the republic has become a Blacks' picnic (*una merienda de negros*).'⁵⁸ The discontent of the elite led to Dorrego's downfall and death, and eventually to Rosas's rise as his avenger and head of the Buenos Aires Province. How he eventually managed to dispense of the image of the martyred governor will be shown in my analysis of Luis Pérez's treatment of this personage.

3.2.4. Luis Pérez and his journalism in verse

The output of Luis Pérez is an interesting example of the rhymed journalism of the early 1830s. It is a document in which we can find the voice of a (relatively) non-elite supporter of Rosas. Obviously, the very fact that Pérez published a number of periodicals should make us cautious, as it would be impossible for someone completely deprived of social capital and access to specific resources, but in comparison with, say, Pedro de Ángelis, he can be considered a non-elite voice. What is more important, is that Pérez's message was directed at the lower strata of society and adjusted to their expectations.⁵⁹

In this chapter I focus on two sets of sources: the so called "Biografía de Rosas" published by Pérez in his periodical *El Gaucho* from the end of July to mid-December of 1830 and selected pieces from the first ten issues of his other periodical *El Torito de los Muchachos* published from August to October of the same year. All the texts come from the

⁵⁷ Meglio, *Bajo pueblo*, 213-219, 280.

⁵⁸ Raúl Fradkin, *¡Fusilaron a Dorrego!*, 25.

⁵⁹ For a similar assessment of Pérez see Pilar González Bernaldo, *Civilidad y política. En los orígenes de la Nación Argentina. Las sociabilidades en Buenos Aires, 1829-1862* (Buenos Aires, 2001), 136.

period before Rosas's conflict with the liberal Federalist *cismáticos*, but one can actually recognise in them some of the tensions that would become so urgent in the years to come.

Pérez's biographical poetry on Rosas can be divided into two parts. From the first to the ninth issue (but with an interruption in the seventh and eighth) it is an autobiographical monologue of a gaucho named Pancho Lugares. However, more than a half is a description of the military campaign in defence of Manuel Dorrego and the role played in those events by Pancho's patron Juan Manuel de Rosas. It closes with the defeat inflicted on the forces of Dorrego and Rosas by the Unitarian General Lavalle in the battle of Navarro. In the tenth issue, Pancho Lugares is exhorted by his friend Panta the Nutriero to suspend his own biography and focus on that of their patron Juan Manuel de Rosas. Then, the fourteenth to fortieth (with the exception of the twentieth) issues contain Rosas's biography proper, which starts with his childhood and terminates with the steps taken by him after the battle of Navarro (recounted for the second time).

Pérez's biographical poetry on Rosas is now read as one piece and rightly so, because it clearly forms a whole. However, at the time of its release the readers (or hearers) would only have access to single installments (perhaps coupled with some previous ones, if they kept them), embedded in separate issues of *El Gaucho* and surrounded by other items printed in it. These other texts constituted the immediate context for each episode of Pérez's presentation of Rosas. It is indispensable to take a look at one issue of *El Gaucho*, in order to get an idea about the peculiar ecology of this source. For this purpose I will use the first issue bearing the date of 31 July 1830.⁶⁰ For some reason it does not feature the figure of the gaucho that has already appeared in the advertising *prospejo* and will adorn all the following issues. Instead, there is only an indistinct thatched cabin (Picture 2). Though later discarded, the choice of this motif as an identifying element is indicative of what Pérez wished to communicate about his journal, its authors and readers. The simple rural house suggests a non-elite community that identifies itself with the countryside and its ways, rather than the city of Buenos Aires.

The issue's first and longest item (a page and a half out of a total four) is the first installment of Pancho Lugares's story of his life and service to Rosas. Lugares starts with an invocation to God and the Virgin, then he presents himself and recounts a story of his forced draft, only to conclude with a criticism of ruthless and myopic porteño 'mandarins.' This piece is followed by a lighter one entitled "Pasteología" (pastrylogy), apparently with no immediately political relevance in Buenos Aires. Satirising the US temperance movement, the

⁶⁰*El Gaucho*, No. 1 (31 July 1830), available at <http://trapalanda.bn.gov.ar/jspui/handle/123456789/11282> (retrieved 29.10.2016).

text describes New York pastry makers meeting to discuss the ways of fighting an anti-gluttony initiative. Next comes the section “Correspondencia del gaucho,” in which we find a poem sent to the editor by a *gaucho de las provincias* and a letter from a rural priest amicably protesting against the use of non-standard orthography which conveys the plebeians’ idiosyncratic pronunciation. The latter is a question of some consequence because it reveals that Pérez was aware of the ideological consequences of his linguistic choices and was ready to thematise the problem and defend his stance as an anti-elite gesture (his short answer in verse is provided in the next issue). The last page is filled with advertisements, mostly playful and tongue-in-cheek (they are also present in *El Torito de los muchachos*).



EL GAUCHO.

Cada uno para sí, y Dios para todos.

Redactor Luis Pérez

N.º 1.) BUENOS AIRES, 31 DE JULIO DE 1830. (PRECIO 2 RS.)

2. Front page of the first issue of Luis Pérez’s *El Gaucho*

This quick overview of just one issue of *El Gaucho* allows us to see that the so-called biography of Rosas was a central element of a bigger package in which partisan interventions combined with displays and conceptualisations of plebeian pride, and with emphatic facetiousness and entertainment. The presence of the wider American context, exemplified here by the satire of US temperance initiatives is also notable. The *völkisch* claims made by Luis Pérez about himself and his ‘gaucho’ public do not mean that they were truly primitive peasants detached from the wider world.

In turn, *El Torito de los Muchachos* was a periodical similar to *El Gaucho* in that it also claimed to contain the output of gauchos commenting on contemporary politics, mainly rhymed letters of various individuals tracing their roots back to the Buenos Aires countryside.

The mother of the narrator of the “Biografía de Rosas” was from the Contreras family and his first employer, from the Chano one. Both surnames are taken from the cycle inaugurated by Bartolomé Hidalgo in his gaucho pieces. The narrator of *El Torito de los muchachos*, Juancho Barriales (name derived either from *barrio* – town district, or *barro* – mud,⁶¹ in either case suggesting the genuinely native *americano* character of the personage), claimed to be an *aparcerero* (tenant) of Contreras. Thus, the author located his protagonists within a recognisable tradition, at the same time creating a textual tissue of relationships between his own sundry creations. His personages, also females and Blacks, formed a circle composed mainly of Hidalgo’s protagonists’ kith and kin. It should be noted, however, that not all that we find in *El Torito de los muchachos* can be identified as gaucho-style pieces: there are many poems that employ the standard Castilian of the time and do not pretend to be typical works of gauchos.

Though he wrote more gaucho-style verses than the celebrated national bard José Hernández, we know precious little about Pérez himself.⁶² The superficial nature of our knowledge about him is attested by his very name, as Luis Pérez is close to Mr Nobody. Nevertheless, Ricardo Rodríguez Molas has managed to gather a body of more or less tenable biographical data which allow us to locate Pérez in the social realities of the early nineteenth-century River Plate.⁶³ According to Pérez himself, he attended a school in Tucumán. In 1807 he probably fought in Buenos Aires against the British and later he participated in the May Revolution of 1810. The latter is confirmed by the fact that in 1834 an anonymous ‘patriot of 1810’ accused him of committing some robberies while a soldier of the First Company of the Civic Volunteers at the end of May 1810, which proves that it was not possible to deny his presence there. In 1813 there was a second lieutenant Luis Pérez fighting against the loyalists in the northern interior, but it is not possible to be sure that it is the one that interests us here. In 1830 Pérez becomes active as an author and editor of a number of rhymed newspapers and leaflets in which he assumes the personae of gauchos and Blacks (also female)⁶⁴ to champion the cause of Juan Manuel de Rosas. His political creed is summed up

⁶¹ Interpretation suggested by Julio Schwartzman, *Microcrítica: lecturas argentinas (cuestiones de detalle)* (Buenos Aires, 1996), 120.

⁶² William Acree, “Luis Pérez, a Man of His Word in 1830s’ Buenos Aires and the Case for Popular Literature,” *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, Vol. 88, No. 3, 372.

⁶³ Rodríguez Molas, “Luís Pérez y la biografía de Rosas”; for more on Pérez and his political writings see Schwartzman, *Letras gauchas*, 144-160 and Ana María Amar Sánchez, “La gauchesca durante el rosismo. Una disputa por el espacio del enemigo,” *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*, No. 35 (1992), 9-17.

⁶⁴ For the ‘Black poetry’ by Pérez see Ricardo Rodríguez Molas, “La música y la danza de los negros en el Buenos Aires de los siglos XVIII y XIX,” *Historia*, 1957, No. 7, 103-126 and Luis Soler Cañas, *Negros, gauchos y compadres en el cancionero de la federación (1830-1848)* (Buenos Aires, 1958).

in one of his stanzas: 'Me, of course, there no more, / [But] always by the side of the patron / I followed him, because I'm firm / in our Federation.'⁶⁵ The patron is of course Rosas.

Between 1830 and 1834 Pérez published such periodicals as *El Gaucho*, *La Gaucha* and *El Gaucho Restaurador* or *El Torito de los Muchachos*, among others, which he filled with his own rhymed output. He used a language saturated with plebeian characteristics, but still much more comprehensible nowadays than that of some later authors who invested great effort into conscious stylisation. As he claimed in the first issue of *El Torito de los Muchachos*, the main aim of his enterprise was to entertain the lads of the suburbs of Buenos Aires, not the wise and the posh.⁶⁶ The gaucho sociolect was employed throughout the text, via such forms as *¡güenas tardes!* instead of *¡buenas tardes!*, *velay*, similar to the French *voilà*, *agora* instead of *ahora*, or *inutarios* instead of *unitarios*.⁶⁷ As is attested by an introductory article in the first issue of *La Argentina*, Pérez's journals were perceived as, first and foremost, satirical publications (somewhat offensive) of the so-called *gauchizumbón* (gaucho-jester) style and so were classified separately from the serious newspapers such as *El Lucero*, *La Gaceta* or *El Tribuno*.⁶⁸

In fact, Pérez's intentions were not as innocent as he would like us to believe when he claimed his writing was all about popular entertainment. The so-called *Prospejo* of 1830, a kind of advertising prospectus of *El gaucho*, had a clear political message: partisan feuds had to be abandoned, the country needed a constitution and the only man able to bring the order was Juan Manuel de Rosas, so it was worth fighting (or even dying) for him. What Pérez had in mind was a sort of politics in which the use of outright violence was the norm. It is supported by both the aggressive language employed by him (explicit threats being no rarity),⁶⁹ and by the iconography of young restive bulls. This image implied the countryside and gaucho folklore, as well as robust masculinity and brutal virility. What is more, it could be associated with bullfighting, a form of entertainment deeply embedded in the culture of cattle breeding society, but also denounced by the clergy as lacking respectability, conducive to licentiousness and, more generally, characteristic of popular *fiesta* and the lower social

⁶⁵ 'Yo por supuesto ay no más, / Siempre al lado del patrón / Lo seguí, porque soy firme / En nuestra federación,' Luis Pérez, "Poesía biográfica de Rosas titulada «El Gaucho» publicada en 1830, por Luís Pérez", reprinted in Rodríguez Molas, "Luís Pérez y la biografía de Rosas," 116 (111-132).

⁶⁶ 'Mi objeto es el divertir / Los mozos de las orillas: / No importa que me critiquen / Los sabios y cagetillas,' *El Torito de los muchachos: 1830*, No. 1 (19.08.1830), 1.

⁶⁷ For a discussion of *velay* see Schwartzman, *Letras gauchas*, 176-177.

⁶⁸ Latour de Botas, "Estudio preliminar", xv.

⁶⁹ For that see for example Regina A. Root, *Couture and Consensus: Fashion and Politics in Postcolonial Argentina* (Minneapolis, 2010), 21-24.

strata.⁷⁰ It can be observed that politics, as presented by Pérez, was a peculiar spectacle involving the killing and humiliating of defeated enemies and thus symbolically shaping the nature of social relations. Entertainment was an essential element of this game, but much more was at stake.

Although unwavering in his support for Rosas, Pérez's militant anti-elite attitudes would cause him many problems and eventually lead to his imprisonment. Among his adversaries we find Pedro de Ángelis, another supporter of Rosas, but of a very different hue. The Naples-born de Ángelis was one of the best educated people in the River Plate and his compilation of primary sources is still used by historians of the region. An erstwhile tutor of Joachim Murat's children, he was a personification of Enlightenment intellectual elitism and he arrived in Buenos Aires at the invitation of Bernardino Rivadavia, usually presented as the political antithesis of Rosas.

Both Pérez and de Ángelis were useful for Rosas at that moment when his power was still very far from absolute, but the former seems to have been resented by the upper-class pro-Rosas establishment of Buenos Aires. Pérez was sent to prison for the first time in January of 1831, just two days after the appearance of the last known issue of his *El gaucha*. His detention was widely condemned and de Ángelis was among those who came to his aid. Eventually, Pérez was released in mid-February thanks to the intervention of Rosas himself and his powerful cousin and ally, Tomás Manuel de Anchorena, arguably the richest man in the River Plate.

In March of 1834, Pérez entered into a bitter exchange with de Ángelis in which they both flaunted their devotion to the cause of Federalism. It was a few months after Rosas's faction had ousted their *cismático* Federalist competitors from power. Pérez, a bellicose, anti-elite and independent-minded newspaperman was now a liability. At one point the author of *El Gaucho* accused de Ángelis of being an insolent *gringo* and a notorious serial turncoat who had arrived on the Argentine beaches loaded with sheet music. Pérez himself had been attacked earlier by the Minister of Government Manuel José García. The minister stated in the House of Representatives that Pérez was sowing discord at the very moment when it seemed that some degree of political equilibrium and legal security was achievable. Moreover, de Ángelis's *El Monitor* accused him 'of having intimate links with a gang of robbers who are currently prosecuted by the local court.' It is impossible to either substantiate or discard this

⁷⁰ Nicolás Lucero, "La guerra gauchopolítica," in *Historia Crítica de la literatura argentina*, vol. 2 (Buenos Aires, 2003), 23; Juan Carlos Garavaglia, *Construir el estado, inventar la nación*, 47-53, 63; Johnson, *Workshop of Revolution*, 78.

last claim, but all this shows the repugnance and apprehension provoked by the plebeian Pérez among the porteño elite, even though they concurred in their vocal support of Juan Manuel de Rosas.

Another conflict of a more fundamental nature was related with Pérez's quarrel. An amendment was proposed to the House of Representatives which would forbid relating and commenting on political issues in a playful and seditious way. This provoked considerable resistance from various sectors. As it was put by an anonymous author concealing his name behind the pseudonym *A Gaucho* (possibly Pérez himself): '...it is the most original idea that about "political matters," one is only allowed to speak in a serious way. But Sir, what is not serious then? Does it mean that we can only use the language that would be understood by a limited number of people, grandiose and pompous discourses, and nothing that could be understood by poor peasants, ignorant as I am?'

As for Pérez himself, he was not destined to participate in this debate to its very end.⁷¹ On 21 April 1834 he was arrested, just a few days before Ezcurra's collaborators from the *Sociedad Popular Restauradora* started new popular riots on the pretext of Bernardino Rivadavia's return to Buenos Aires.⁷² Apparently, Rosas and his wife preferred this sort of steered subaltern agitation to the subversive messages of Luis Pérez. After that we hear no more of this *gaucho escribinista*. This does not necessarily mean that his end was of the most sinister kind. After all, his was a family quarrel within the ascendant faction. He might have been released and employed in an area where he would be less irritating to the educated elite and less visible to the historians. In Buenos Aires in 1843 there was a Luis Pérez who ran an unspecified business related to the distribution of prints. It is impossible to determine whether this was our gaucho-style journalist.⁷³ Conversely, de Ángelis remained by Rosas's side until the very last days of his rule in Buenos Aires and was only forced to emigrate after his protector's defeat in February 1852.

3.3. Analysis of Luis Pérez's verse journals

3.3.1. The gauchos and their enemies

Pérez's texts were presented as having been written by the gauchos, for the gauchos (and other lower-class readers). On the first page of every issue (except for the first two) of *El*

⁷¹ For an overview of the dynamic changes in the Buenos Aires legal press regime see Myers, *Orden y virtud*, 18-34.

⁷² Rodríguez Molas, "Luís Pérez y la biografía de Rosas," 107-110; Fradkin & Gelman, *Rosas*, 257; Meglio, *Mazorca*, 64-66.

⁷³ Latour de Botas, "Estudio preliminar", xix.

Gaicho, there is a picture of a poncho-clad man leaning against a wooden fence and holding a printed sheet – apparently, this is the gaicho journalist, or *el gaicho escribinista* (Picture 3).⁷⁴ But what does it mean in specific terms to be a gaicho? A rural tramp of the kind depicted by Concolorcorvo? Not really, for Pérez’s gaicho is, first and foremost, a *criollo del pago*,⁷⁵ or a countryside White American. In the River Plate the term *criollo* was originally used to denote a person of mixed blood and as such it was employed frequently by people born in Europe as a derogatory name for the locally-born country dwellers. Somewhere at the turn of the 1820s and 1830s, the American-born Whites (hitherto known as *españoles americanos*) assumed *criollo* as a proud self-description delimiting them from the Peninsular Spaniards (*españoles europeos*).⁷⁶ A similar process was undergone by the word gaicho, although its outcome was much more ambiguous. Negative connotations (images of non-White rustlers and vagabonds) of this term were still present at that time but, as we have seen, they had been qualified during the British invasions and the war of independence.

A depiction of the local peasant as an embodiment of national robustness challenging the foreign influence is present as early as the late eighteenth century in the dramatic piece *El amor de la estanciera*. It recounts the rivalry between a local Juancho and a rich Portuguese Marcos for the hand of a local girl named Chepa. The girl’s father prefers Juancho, saying that all that come from Spain are scoundrels and a poor local peasant is worth more. He praises Juancho’s toughness and skill in lasso-handling, while remaining suspicious of Marcos’s claims to noble status. The girl’s mother, conversely, qualifies Juancho as a taciturn savage.⁷⁷ Chepa herself seems to be more interested in the eloquent foreign challenger. Of course, in the end the local peasant prevails, but the depicted contrast between the preferences of local males and females is indicative of the anonymous author’s misogynistic and xenophobic worldview. Later, it was echoed in Pérez’s *El Torito de los muchachos* where he explicitly stated that all women preferred an ugly richman to a poor angel.⁷⁸ Also, he

⁷⁴ *Escribinista* or *gacetero* are two terms employed by Pérez to describe his profession in the first issue of *El Torito de los Muchachos*.

⁷⁵ ‘A la ciudad me trajeron / Con otros criollos del pago, / Que de leva en esos días / De uno en uno habían tomado,’ Pérez, ‘Poesía biográfica de Rosas,’ 112.

⁷⁶ Garavaglia, *San Antonio de Areco, 1680-1880*, 380.

⁷⁷ ‘CANCHO: Mujer, áquestos de España / Son todos medio bellacos. / Más vale un paisano nuestro / Aunque tenga cuatro trapos. // PANCHÁ: Decime pues hombre viejo / Más que ese es Juancho Perucho / Pues no veis que es un salvaje / que no habla poco, ni mucho. [...] CANCHO: Eso veremos después / No sé por qué no me agrada / Este mozo portugués. / El presume de nobleza / Y me ha ensartado una historia / Que para haver de explicarla / Ya me falta la memoria. / Juancho Perucho es morrudo / Y sabe bien enlazar / Y que quiera que no quiera / Con Chepa se ha de casar,’ [Anonymous], *El amor de la estanciera*, [Buenos Aires, ca 1787], <http://www.biblioteca.clarin.com/pbda/teatro/estanciera/teatro.htm> (retrieved 10.01.2014).

⁷⁸ ‘Así son todas, porque / No hay mujer en estos tiempos / Que no deje el Ángel pobre / Y no elija el rico feo,’ *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 2 (22.08.1830), 4(8).

presented women as one of the politically suspicious elements of society, requiring constant surveillance because of their reluctance to wear mourning attire after Dorrego's death or to display the red ribbon symbolising adherence to the Federalist cause.⁷⁹ If, at the turn of the 1780s and the 1790s this peasant misogyny seemed to be a harmless element of a playful *costumbrista* piece, in the 1830s Luis Pérez managed to endow it with a deeply politicised meaning.



EL GAUCHO.

Cada uno para sí, y Dios para todos.

N.º 26 BUENOS AIRES, 27 DE OCTUBRE DE 1830. (PRECIO 2 rs.)

3. Front page of *El Gaucho*

However, we should not overemphasise the exclusionary thrust of Pérez's message. True, he does use the expressly masculine figure of gaucho and he is not afraid to activate the misogyny and xenophobia inherent in it, but these are tactical contingencies, not a thought-through nation-building project. Though it is the figure of the (ideally) White American gaucho that is selected to represent the essence of the Federalist nation, the community is envisaged as also encompassing commoner women and even non-Whites. The tension inherent in it is never satisfactorily resolved, but rather glossed over. Still, Pérez is willing to go as far as to cherish and give voice to the personae of loyal Federalist Blacks and subaltern women (Picture 4). The latter he dubs *federalas* which is another example of his playful use of linguistic error to create subversive counter-categories.⁸⁰ The truly important 'other' whom

⁷⁹ Especially, the whole issue 10 (19.09.1830) of *El Torito de los muchachos*.

⁸⁰ Fradkin & Gelman, *Rosas*, 438.

Pérez constructs and banishes from the national community is neither female nor Black, but a treacherous, emasculated, elite White.



LA GAUCHA.

Contestacion de Chanonga á la carta de D. Pancho Lugares.

[No. 1.]

BUENOS AIRES, AGOSTO 23 DE 1833.

[3 Rs.]

4. Front page of *La Gaucha* depicting a female, non-elite Federalist

What else can we learn specifically about the gauchos themselves from Pérez's rhymed journalism? The first striking feature is their piety, as his gaucho narrator invokes the name of God and the Virgin at the very beginning of his biography of Rosas. Also, the first page of every issue of *El Gaucho* bears the epigraph: 'Each one for himself and God for everybody,' a translation of the French saying, 'Chacun pour soi et Dieu pour tous.'⁸¹ This somewhat original trans-cultural borrowing notwithstanding, Lugares's is a rather traditional and unreflecting kind of religiousness which treats individual faith as more of a character trait than as a fruit of conscious intellectual effort. One is pious or not, the same as one is smart or stupid, pretty or ugly. This attitude is especially evident in the way in which he tells us of Rosas being an exemplary Christian already in his youth, just after describing his industry, skill in lasso and popularity: 'He was a good Christian and a modest lad, a friend of his friends and firm in his religion.'⁸²

⁸¹ Olga Fernández Latour de Botas, "Estudio preliminar," xv.

⁸² 'Era cristiano parejo / Y mozo sin presunción: / Amigo de sus amigos / Y firme en su religión,' Pérez, "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 117.

When it comes to beliefs, the second important element is the gauchos' patriotism. The first issue of *El Torito de los muchachos* is especially rich in patriotic declarations. Juancho Barriales repeatedly underlines that it is not clear whether being a *gacetero* shall bring him a better life than that of a horse tamer, but he nevertheless persists in his resolution, because of his grief over his fatherland's distress.⁸³ The only compensation (by no means of a pecuniary character) he is interested in is from the Federalist lads.⁸⁴ He is a free man daring to defy the Unitarian liars: 'I can speak as a free man whatever I feel, as they had the right to lie.'⁸⁵

Patriotism is conflated with loyalty to the cause of Federalism: the defeat of the Federalists would be a national catastrophe.⁸⁶ The Unitarians are by definition *hostes patriae*, the enemies of fatherland. They are called the assassin party (*partido asesino*)⁸⁷ and in a playful, fake testament, a deceased Unitarian claims that his actions cost the fatherland the lives of many sons, most notably that of Governor Dorrego.⁸⁸ Also, it is often suggested that the Unitarians act in collusion with the Spaniards, referred to as *godos*, *gallegos*, or *sarracenos*, all derogatory terms still popular in Spanish America.⁸⁹

Gauche patriotism, as presented by Luis Pérez, is a somewhat paradoxical phenomenon, because it is precisely the Buenos Aires state apparatus that is the most oppressive element that the gauchos had to face. Its most onerous manifestation was the army draft, at that point sending men to fight the Brazilians in the Banda Oriental. Characteristically, Lugares (the narrating subject in *El Gaucho*) claims that he would have willingly enlisted to fight the invaders, had he not have been drafted by means of brutal trickery. The peasant, when treated in a humane way (*a las güenas*), proves himself a devoted patriot and a law-abiding citizen:

⁸³ 'Me hei metido a gacetero / No sé que será mejor / Si vivir con este oficio / O el andar de domador. // Yo creo que lo primero, / Si hemos de hablar en rigor / Será un servicio a la Patria / Y a mi me estará mejor. [...] Sólo un interés me arrastra, / Y me arrastra con razón / Que es ver como está la Patria / Que me quiebra el corazón,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 1 (19.08.1830), 3.

⁸⁴ 'Solo busco recompensa / En los mozos federales; / Sin perjuicio (ya se sabe) / De que me larguen los reales,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 1 (19.08.1830), 1.

⁸⁵ 'Hei de hablar como hombre libre / Lo que sintiere en mi pecho, / Ya que ellos para mentir / Tubieron tanto derecho,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 2 (22.08.1830), 5.

⁸⁶ 'Mire que si desperdicia / Esta tan linda ocasión / ¡A dios Diablos! Nuestra Patria / A dios la Federación,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 1 (19.08.1830), 2; Cf. the observations of González Bernaldo, *Civilidad y política*, 151-153 on the establishment of Federalist faith as a pillar of the republican state in 1833.

⁸⁷ *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 3 (26.08.1830), 11.

⁸⁸ 'Declaro me debe / la República Argentina / Muchos hijos que ha perdido / Y una parte de su ruina,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 4 (29.08.1830), 14.

⁸⁹ On the title page of later issues of *La Gaucha* there appears also the term *fungueiros*. *Fungueiro* is a Galician word for stick and it is probably yet another derogatory name for Spaniards. See for example *La Gaucha*, No. 15 (6 December 1831), available at <http://trapalanda.bn.gov.ar/jspui/handle/123456789/11330> (retrieved 29.10.2016).

Had it not been better, we used to say, that they enlisted us as soldiers in a peaceful manner, inviting us in our localities? What man who has the patriotic blood running in his veins would not fight readily seeing his land attacked?⁹⁰

Lugares's claim can be also interpreted as a manifestation of his preference for a more flexible and 'free' militia service over that of the regular army commanded by the Unitarian-leaning officers. Thus, the tension resulting from the opposition of republican patriotism and the hostility towards the oppressive state is resolved by the vilification of the Unitarians and the urbanites (the two categories are conflated) as brutal usurpers, whereas the Federalist government of the moment deserves respect and loyalty.⁹¹

The corrupt character of the Unitarians' politics is portrayed at length in the above mentioned fake testament of a deceased member of this faction (issues 4–6 and 8 of *El Torrito*). Leaving aside the tedious enumeration of wrongs allegedly committed by the self-interested Unitarian politicians, it is more useful to take a look at the ways in which they are ridiculed as being toffee-nosed know-it-alls who pretend to possess a better education than the rest of the society, but who actually just select bits of information here and there without ever going any deeper. Their social prestige is derived from superficial image-building devices: having one's name published in many subscribers' lists, wearing a tailcoat (*fraque* or *levita*), having a neatly trimmed U-form beard,⁹² always being unequivocally judgmental or sarcastic and flaunting a lot of ostentatious disdain for anything that does not come from abroad:

You want to pass for a sage? That's very easy, just study the tables of contents, and from each author and book memorise well just one idea. About the nation speak with disdain, extol anything that comes from abroad. See your name in every subscription list, but read no more than one line. Always speak in a haughty manner, slit, slice, criticise and judge everything; treat the simpletons sarcastically. Thus, the posh will praise you, if not for being wise, then at least for being as stupid as most others.⁹³

The Unitarians are also emasculated in an interesting way. First of all, constant calls at their brutal treatment are formulated in a way suggesting that there is nothing to fear from

⁹⁰ '¿No era mejor, nos decíamos, / Que para hacernos soldados / Nos hubieran á las güenas / Convidado en nuestros pagos? // Pues ¿qué hombre que tenga sangre / De patriota en las venas, / A peliar no iría con gusto / Viendo atacada su tierra?', Pérez, "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 112.

⁹¹ '...Confianza en nuestro gobierno / Ha de triunfar la opinión,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 1 (19.08.1830), 3.

⁹² An advertisement of felt strips that can be used as a fake U-form beard can be found on the last page of the first issue of *El Torito de los muchachos*.

⁹³ '¿Sabio pretendes ser? Muy facilmente, / Pues índices estudia por tarea / Y de autores y libros una idea / Reten en la memoria tenazmente. / Habla de la nación muy bajamente, / Ensalza lo extranjero tal cual sea; / Cualquiera suscripción tu nombre ves / Mas no leas una línea solamente. / Habla, pero con tono soberano / Hiende, raja, critica y juzga todo; / Con sarcasmos responde a los más tochos. / Tan solo a ti te alaba cortesano / Que si no fueses sabio de ese modo / Serás un tonto necio como muchos,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 4 (29.08.1830), 16.

them, as these effeminate cowards are no match for the virile Federalists. Some handsome man, supposedly a Unitarian sympathiser, is reported to have been terrified just because of hearing a warning to beware of *El Torrito*, which was not even directed to him.⁹⁴ Two nicknames used for the Unitarians throughout *El Torito de los muchachos* are *pintor* and *cajetilla*. Both can be translated as urbanite, fop, dandy, refined or delicate and seem to be related to the eighteenth-century Spanish figure ‘*petimetre*, a shallow and effete character who aped French fashions and who was given to vacuous and affected conversations.’⁹⁵ In a characteristic threat directed at an imaginary Unitarian, the term *pintor* is coupled with the diminutive *mocito*.⁹⁶ *Mozo* is a noun that can be translated as youth or lad and Pérez uses it often for the Federalists (for example, as *mozos federales* or *mozos domadores*, horse-taming lads, or *mozos payos*, countryside lads). The diminutive *mocito* can be rendered in English as little boy or little lad. It has a clearly patronising and infantilising tone. The imaginary Unitarian sympathiser is not a real man, but a boyish fop. In another characteristic instance, a deceased Unitarian is to be buried in female dress. This is because he was always a ladies’ man: ‘I ask to have as a shroud a female dress, for even in death I want to show how much I love them.’⁹⁷ The expression employed is ambiguous, but suggestive of the foppish and lecherous habits of the departed. His penchant for women resulted in his forfeiting his masculinity and gravity, evidenced by his choice of a female dress as a shroud.

The representations of Unitarians are crucial for our understanding of gauchos because they serve as the key defining other for them. The opposition between the constituencies of the two factions is also conveyed by the contrast of the Unitarian tailcoat and the Federalist jacket and *chiripá* (a wide waistcloth worn over the loose gaucho trousers):

I also know some who used to wore *chiripá* and now they have a tailcoat, they passed to the Unitarian party.⁹⁸

If the Unitarians are effeminate fops and ladies’ men, the Federalist gauchos are virile and undervalued by women. They represent simple peasant toughness and unwavering loyalty. They have their own sense of dignity and of what they deserve as human beings (*el*

⁹⁴ *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 5 (02.09.1830), 18.

⁹⁵ Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Nature, Empire and Nation: Explorations of the History of Science in the Iberian World* (Stanford, 2006), 102.

⁹⁶ ‘No seas curioso / Mocito pintor. / ¿A ti que te importa / Quien es editor?’, *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 4 (29.08.1830), 16.

⁹⁷ ‘It. Pido por mortaja / Un vestido de mujer / Porque quiero hasta la muerte / Mostrar que las quiero bien,’ *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 4 (29.08.1830), 13.

⁹⁸ ‘Yo también conozco algunos / Que han sido de chiripá / Y ahora que tienen fraque, / Se han pasado a la unidá,’ *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 2 (22.08.1830), 6.

propio amor).⁹⁹ They believe that individuals deserve respect not because of their social position as measured by their wealth, but because of their honour, understood as an inalienable moral quality. Honourable men can be afflicted by material or even legal adversities and this does not deprive them of their dignity:

I treat as a decent person every honourable man, for one can be very good and suffer life adversities.¹⁰⁰

A Federalist has to be a full man (*hombre cabal*),¹⁰¹ engaging in an active and virile manner in the struggle against the fatherland's enemies. A Federalist that was not tough (*terne*) would be worth nothing.¹⁰² This manly ideal is infused with political meaning, as it is argued that these qualities are indispensable in the moment of decisive confrontation with the Unitarian peril. Resolute and brutal action is needed to fight the enemies. Dorrego's leniency and its catastrophic consequences are given more than once as a justification for the necessity of a radical treatment of the Unitarians.¹⁰³ Pérez frankly states that he sees his journalism as a form of combat no less effective than physical actions. As he puts it, he will make some of the Unitarians dance.¹⁰⁴ He often uses very violent metaphors such as slapping (*pescozones*)¹⁰⁵, charging (*embestir*)¹⁰⁶ or goring (*cornear*),¹⁰⁷ although it is also clear that what is actually at stake is nothing more than the press denouncement conceptualised as a Stendhalian-like mirror (*un pedazo de espejo*).¹⁰⁸ The use of the verbs to charge and to gore are related to the name of the periodical: *El Torito de los muchachos*, or the young bull of the lads. Apart from charging and goring, the young bull is frequently presented combing the streets of Buenos

⁹⁹ 'Esto es a lo que los hombres / Le llaman el propio amor, / Y puede creerme que estoy / Tan lleno como el mejor,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 1 (19.08.1830), 3.

¹⁰⁰ 'Yo hei tenido por decente / A todo hombre que es honrao; / Pues puede ser muy de bien / Y ser mozo desgraciao,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 2 (22.08.1830), 8.

¹⁰¹ 'Cielito cielo que sí / Cielito del Federal / El que llevase este nombre / Debe ser hombre cabal,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 2 (22.08.1830), 8.

¹⁰² 'Cielito cielo que sí / Cielito de la Ensenada: / El federal que no es terne / ¡Dianchos! No vale de nada,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 2 (22.08.1830), 7.

¹⁰³ *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 1 (19.08.1830), 4 & 9 (16.09.1830), 36.

¹⁰⁴ 'También me dice agora / No debemos de aflojar; / Yo le prometo que algunos / Han de salir a bailar,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 1 (19.08.1830), 3.

¹⁰⁵ 'Y por fin, que hemos de hacer, / Cuando no bastan razones, / Será preciso amansarlos / A fuerza de pescozones,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 2 (22.08.1830), 7.

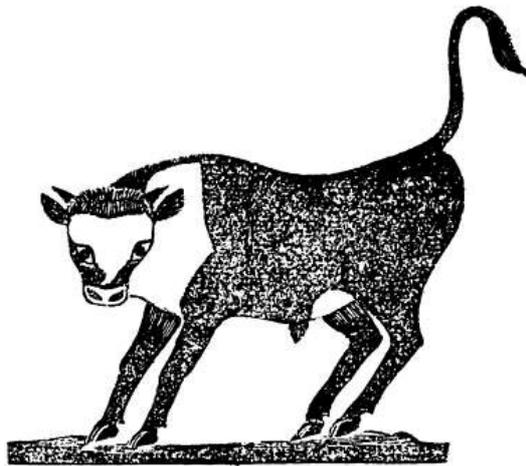
¹⁰⁶ 'A la primer embestida / Que dé el Torito a un unitario / No habrá santo que lo libre / Tal vez en el calendario,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 3 (26.08.1830), 9.

¹⁰⁷ 'Ya que V. ha provocado / A este pobre animalito / Prepárase a recibir / Las corneadas del Torito,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 10 (19.09.1830), 37.

¹⁰⁸ 'En un muladar un día / Cierta vieja sevillana / Buscando trapos y lana, / Su ordinaria granjería, / Por acaso vino a hallar / Un pedazo de espejo; / Lo limpió para mirarse / Y viendo en el aquellas feas / Quijadas de desconsuelo, / Dando con él en el suelo / Le dijo: ¡Maldito seas! [...] Cuantos harán lo mismo con el Torito, pero no importa, cuando esto suceda es señal que ya los ha corneado,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 3 (26.08.1830), 12.

Aires in search of Unitarians. In many respects more a hound than a bull, he can always sniff out a Unitarian rabbit burrow.¹⁰⁹

That the young bull metaphor was vital, is attested not only by its frequent recurrence in the texts of *El Torito de los muchachos*, but also by its graphic representation on the front page. In the first four issues, the periodical bears a standard picture of a lute and a trumpet adorned by leafy twigs. In the fifth issue a small silhouette of a standing young bull was added above the first column of text. Then, from the sixth issue on, the lute and trumpet were replaced by a much more dynamic depiction of a young bull lashing his tail at the point of charging (Picture 5). The picture is somewhat primitive, reminiscent of the popular charm of Muscovite popular prints *lubki*: the young bull seems to burst with energy, as if captured just before charging against his enemies. The animal can be interpreted as a symbol of youthful peasant masculinity engaging enthusiastically in the disciplining of porteño society.



EL TORITO DE LOS MUCHACHOS.

Para decir que viene el Toro, no hay que dar esos empujones.

NUM. 9.º BUENOS AIRES, SEPTIEMBRE 16 DE 1830. PRECIO 2 REALES.

5. Front page of *El Torito de los muchachos*

¹⁰⁹ 'Tiene olfato como perro, / Y adonde nadie lo espera / En parando la nariz / Descubre la vizcachera. // No hay café, tienda ni cueva / Tortulia ni beverage / Ande entren los inutarios / Que no adivine lo que hacen,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 5 (02.09.1830), 17. The text mentions a *vizcachera*, or dwelling of the *viscachas*, South American rodents closely related to chinchillas; it can be also an allusion to the battle of Las Vizcacheras (south of Salado) of March 1829 in which the Federalists defeated and killed Federico Rauch, a Unitarian commander of Alsatian origin, see Fradkin, *¡Fusilaron a Dorrego!*, 61-63.

The pro-Rosas Federalists stand for the countryside and, as a consequence, they are the robust bulk of the male national body embodied by the lively young bull. The opposition between the city and the countryside was especially meaningful in the Buenos Aires Province. At least as early as the late eighteenth century, the porteño ecclesiastics depicted the countryside as an area of confusion and a malignant source of all scandals and shame. Later, this imagery was conflated with the Enlightenment civilisation-barbarism dichotomy, eventually codified during the struggle between Lavalle and the pro-Rosas rebels. In the course of 1829, while Buenos Aires was besieged by the Federalists, the city's Unitarian press constructed a clear-cut opposition between the countryside savagery and the big-city civilisation which, of course, was superimposed on the partisan divide.¹¹⁰ Sarmiento did not have to invent anything new. So, when Pérez cast his Federalist farmhands as the natural-born patriots of Buenos Aires, he was speaking polemically to an enemy propaganda which still had a great future before it.

It is now worth taking a closer look at these gaucho individuals as brought to life by Luis Pérez. One exemplary specimen is Juancho Barriales himself, the surly lad (*mozo amargo*) from the county (*pago*) of Magdalena, where Rosas had an estate on the shores of the Río de la Plata, south-east of Buenos Aires.¹¹¹ Here, the opposition between the countryside and the city should not be treated too literally. As Barriales claims, his message is directed, first and foremost, at the inhabitants of the suburbs of Buenos Aires (*los mozos de las orillas*) who, as we have seen earlier, were not really alien to city life. Another gaucho protagonist is Pancho Lugares from the *El Gaucho* periodical. Lugares possesses exceptional horsemanship skills that he acquired during his countryside childhood, when he had to support himself (in contrast to the porteño leisure class), and they serve him well in his military service.¹¹² He is no vagrant. He is treated as a respectable man and addressed with *usté* (corrupted *Usted*) and *ño* or *ñor* (corrupted *Señor*).¹¹³ He claims to have always been in the employment of Juan Manuel de Rosas as one of his farmhands and when narrating the struggle in defence of Dorrego, he presents himself as a kind of aide-de-camp to the

¹¹⁰ Garavaglia, *Construir el estado, inventar la nación*, 46, 90; Fradkin & Gelman, *Rosas*, 185-189.

¹¹¹ On 17 August 1830 the following advertisement appeared in *El Clasificador*: 'El Torito de los Muchachos, periódico nuevo escrito por un aparcerero de Contreras, mozo amargo del pago de la Magdalena. El primer número saldrá el jueves próximo de la Imprenta Republicana, y continuará los jueves y domingos. En la misma imprenta y en el despacho de papel sellado se reciben suscripciones a dos pesos mensuales. En los mismos parajes se encontrará en venta,' quoted in Latour de Botas, "Estudio preliminar," xv.

¹¹² 'Y supe léer y escribir, / Luego que cumplí doce años. / A domador aprendí / Por tener de que vivir,' Pérez, "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 111 (& 112 for the soldiering experience).

¹¹³ "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 113, 115; although it should be noted that the verbal forms and possessive pronouns are of the second person singular, whereas personal pronoun employed is *vos*, typical for the River Plate Spanish.

charismatic landowner. Indeed, the pride of being his lifelong client seems to be an important ingredient of Lugares's self-understanding. As early as the first stanza of his autobiography, he flaunts himself as a gaucho of the Salado which means that he lives to the south of the River Salado, close to the Indian territory where Rosas had his land estate Los Cerrillos. Elsewhere, it is stated that the people from the south of the Salado are the most valuable, at least in military terms,¹¹⁴ due to either their experience in fighting the Indians or simply their innate discipline as the men of Rosas. It should be noted here that Lugares's biography suggests a peculiar social arrangement in which the strong vertical bonds between the political-cum-economic leaders and their subaltern followers remain stable throughout their lives (or maybe even the subsequent generations). This idealised image was to play an exceptional role in the Buenos Aires political debates, Argentine historical memory and professional scholarship on the topic.

Still, stable employment and lifelong commitment to his patron do not save Lugares from the typical gaucho misfortune of being drafted into the army. Unable to produce his documents (which he left at home), he is arrested by a sergeant, tied to a croup, driven to the city and allotted to a mounted regiment.¹¹⁵ This episode allows the author to locate his protagonist in Buenos Aires and make him a witness of chaotic porteño politics, and also to corroborate his credentials as a true gaucho suffering *desgracias* on the part of law enforcement officers representing the evil city. Thus, he can have it both ways: a law-abiding farmhand and at the same time a free-spirited victim of urbanite oppression.

Respect for the law is an important trait of Lugares as an employee of Rosas. Treated unjustly by the military authorities, he considers desertion for a while, but eventually rejects it (although, it should be noted, mainly on the grounds of limited practicability).¹¹⁶ He serves for some time, but when he learns that the Unitarians toppled Governor Dorrego, he chooses to desert as remaining in the military would be tantamount to supporting the coup. His decision is praised by one of his former employers as a proof of Christian spirit:

Look, Pancho, to my feeling and understanding, what you've just done is a good Christian deed. I wish that many soldiers behaved like you. Unsaddle your horse and trust in God.¹¹⁷

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¹¹⁴ '...la mejor gente / Que es la del Sud del Salado' "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 126.

¹¹⁵ "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 112.

¹¹⁶ 'Lo que me ví tan suelto / A matreriar empezé; / Y muchas veces confiezo / Que en resertar me pensé. // Pero yo saqué mis cuentas, / Y dije: el dirme no es nada; / Pero este diablo del río / ¿Cómo será la pasada?,' "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 113.

¹¹⁷ 'Mira, Pancho, en mi sentir, / Y acá en mi corto entender, / Partida de hombre cristiano / Es la que acabas de hacer. // ¡Ojalá! Muchos soldados / Se portaran como vos. / Desensillá tu caballo, / Y tené confianza en Dios,' "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 113.

The figure of Pancho Lugares, an exemplary gaucho, can help us to understand the image Pérez strove to convey of the gauchos. Certainly, gauchos are not unintelligent, as they are able to write and publish political verse. Indeed, elsewhere Luis Pérez was more than willing to flaunt the success of his journalistic enterprise, as measured in financial terms.¹¹⁸ However, the gauchos' most prized skill is different: it is their horsemanship that makes them so special. They are, as Pérez calls them, horse taming lads (*mozos domadores*) or undefeated free men in the countryside (*libres en campaña*).¹¹⁹ Similarly, Juancho Barriaes more than once claimed to ponder on the possibility of returning to his original trade of horse taming.¹²⁰ The importance of horsemanship for gaucho identity is corroborated by the fact that one of the synonyms for the *cajetillas*, that is non-gauchos or urbanites, was *maturrangos*: lame riders, horse killers.¹²¹ The horse is a culturally charged animal, associated with political and military power, as well as with noble pedigree and individual freedom. Successful horse taming is a skill allegedly unattainable by the city-dwellers. Lastly, it refers to the intimate closeness of the gauchos with the nature of their land.

The gauchos have their own language which is not inferior to that of city dwellers, but simply different and can be employed equally well to support the right political cause, even more so as it is not easy to deceive the gaucho militants.¹²² They are good Catholics and valiant soldiers. They have their own political instinct and innate patriotism. It is only the wrongs inflicted on them by the covetous urbanites that distance them from the service to the fatherland. For instance, as we already know, Lugares claims that he would readily take arms to defend his country from the Brazilians, but the experience of having been forced into the cavalry made him ponder desertion.¹²³ Gauchos have a natural sense of hierarchy and propriety which stems from the social realities inherent in the land estates in which they live and work under the patriarchal guidance of *estancieros*, pampas landowners. Thanks to their just and skillful leadership, gauchos also have a natural inclination for law and order, a respect best illustrated by their exemplary comportment after the capture of Buenos Aires in 1820, when Rosas had to reinstate Governor Rodríguez:

¹¹⁸ Nicolás Lucero, "La guerra gauchipolítica," 26-27.

¹¹⁹ 'Toda la noche anduvimos / Aquí caigo aquí levanto: / Mozos todos domadores / En aquel diablo de barco,' Pérez, "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 113; 'Con los libres en campaña / No han de poder acabar,' *ibid.*, 114.

¹²⁰ *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 1 (19.08.1830), 2 & 7 (09.09.1830), 26.

¹²¹ Fradkin, *Historia de una montonera*, 166; attested in *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 2 (22.08.1830), 6.

¹²² 'Aunque engañar no sea fácil / A la gente montonera,' Pérez, "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 115.

¹²³ "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 113.

Rodríguez was reinstated and the unit of red-clad gauchos was admired by the people when it saw their formation. They kept us on the square, encamped, as they say; let them testify, those who were present, whether there was any disorder.¹²⁴

Nevertheless, representatives of the porteño power continue persecuting innocent gauchos, as did the sergeant with Pancho Lugares. In short, the gauchos are men of the countryside, healthy, pious and hierarchy-loving, as opposed to the city of Buenos Aires, which represents chaos and destabilisation. Contemporary social arrangements of the Buenos Aires countryside are presented as natural and commonsensical and opposed to the allegedly artificial aberrations of the big city's pseudo-civilisation:

It is evident that the landowner is a plebeian and a shopkeeper, a man of quality. This is what we learnt from the civilisation: if that's the thing, then my hackney is wiser.¹²⁵

Pérez uses the example of Rosas's gaucho troops' exemplary comportment in the civil strife of 1820 to prove that the urbanites' prejudices and persecutions are unjustified, because the country dwellers are no nomadic brigands, but rather representatives of a kind of higher political culture founded on hard work, practical skill and respect for law and hierarchy. Political turbulence is presented by Pérez as having its origin entirely in the city, whereas the countryside has to repeatedly provide resources to reinstate the order. He juxtaposes the humble gauchos who love law and order and resent the revolutions with the vilified city. Rosas is not exceptional, but representative of this milieu. He is an *ilustro del pago*, the perfect popular leader presaging José Hernández's dream of the just rule of the 'real *criollo*.'¹²⁶ This view is best summed up in a long speech which the author puts into Rosas's mouth under the pretext of his negotiations with his *compadre* General Lamadrid serving as an envoy of General Lavalle. Rosas claims that Unitarian (read: porteño) victory would result only in further internecine strife and that the two generals are puppets of sinister backseat intriguers, such as Dr Julián Agüero.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ 'Rodríguez quedó repuesto / Y el cuerpo de colorados, / Jué del pueblo admiración / Lo que vieron formado. // En la plaza nos tuvieron / Como quien dice acampados, / Que digan si hubo desorden / Los que aquí se han encontrado,' Pérez, "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 121.

¹²⁵ 'Cielito cielo que sí / Cielito y es evidente / El hacendado es de plebe / Y un tiendero hombre decente. // Esto es lo que se ha aprendido / Con la civilización: / Si no saben otra cosa / Más sabio es mi mancarrón,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 2 (22.08.1830), 8.

¹²⁶ Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley, CA, 1992), 275-276; in the twelfth canto of *El gaucho Martín Fierro* the Sergeant Cruz claims that the gaucho must endure adversities until his burial or until the arrival of a *criollo* that would govern this land: 'Tiene el gaucho que aguantar / Hasta que lo trague el hoyo / O hasta que venga algún criollo / En esta tierra a mandar.'

¹²⁷ 'Entre ustedes habrá unión / Mientras halla a quien batir; / Pero en acabándose esto / Todos se han de dividir. // El gobierno uno por uno / Lo tienen que pretender, / Y así las revoluciones / Se tienen que suceder. [...] Pero su intención, amigo, / Bien es fácil de acertar; / Ellos se sirven de ustedes / Para su plan desplegar. // Y sino mire usted a Agüero / Mire lo que ha declarado: / Dice que el ha ido a San Roque / Porque ustedes lo han llamado. // Y esto lo dice después / Que todo el mundo está cierto / Que le movimiento de ustedes / Por su consejo está hecho.'

Now, as we have reached Juan Manuel de Rosas, it is time to devote some more attention to this unusual gaucho.

3.3.2. The new hero for the nascent nation

Luis Pérez was quite explicit about his aims. He wanted to contribute to the defeat of the Unitarian party and so he called the Federalist sympathisers to remain united and rally around the providential leader Juan Manuel de Rosas.¹²⁸ At first sight, it might seem like a very straightforward message, but to convey it convincingly Pérez had to address some more complex issues.

First of all, Rosas was a man who had, in the past, collaborated with the *Partido del Orden* in keeping Manuel Dorrego out of power, which was common knowledge. Secondly, Rosas was undoubtedly a member of the social elite. Although, as we shall see, Pérez spared no effort to picture Rosas as a natural-born gaucho leader, we know that he was actually a descendant of a noble Spanish lineage and an adept capitalist innovator. Thirdly, as we have seen, he had risen to power thanks to the spontaneous uprising caused by the execution of Governor Dorrego and thus his position had to be defined in relation to that political martyr's overpowering shadow. It was a sensitive issue because the cult of Dorrego and the need to avenge him were relevant sources of Rosas's legitimacy as an anti-Unitarian leader. However, it was now time for Rosas to emancipate his image from the subordination of the dead governor.

Luis Pérez had to include Dorrego's story in his portrayal of Rosas in a way that would not only confirm the legitimacy of his patron's avenging actions, but also relegate the defunct to second place. Of course, Dorrego could not topple Rosas, but the latter clearly did not wish to remain just a continuation of the murdered governor's work. This would leave the ultimate source of discursive legitimacy beyond his control and one day someone else could claim to better embody the ideas of the martyr. Even more so, as Rosas had been in many ways involved with the *Partido del Orden*. In many respects then, Rosas's position was quite awkward. But he had also some advantages. First of all, Dorrego was dead and could not counterattack. Secondly, Rosas could claim to be closer to the people, as a man of the

"Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 128; also characteristic in this respect is Lugares's fear of treason on the part of the porteños when Rosas sets off for negotiations with Lamadrid without any bodyguard: 'El patrón salió solito, / Confieso contra mi gusto, / Y así es que hasta volvió, / No se me quito a mí el susto,' Pérez, "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 114.

¹²⁸ 'Que obedezcan al que manda / Pues tenemos el mejor / Y no hay más que apetecer / En nuestro gobernador,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 4 (29.08.1830), 15; 'Quiero dirigirme hoy / A los hombres federales / Y aconsejarles la unión / Para evitar muchos males,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 7 (09.09.1830), 25.

countryside. In a characteristic fragment, Pérez's Rosas makes his support of Dorrego conditional upon the governor's remaining in line with the people.¹²⁹ In fact, Dorrego moulded his whole political career in the shape of a popular tribune and he did not need Rosas to urge him to remain loyal to the people. Among the two, it was rather the latter that might have needed some exhortations of the former to stick firmly to the populist agenda.

What Pérez did was to present Dorrego in a decidedly positive light, as a just and innocent victim of Unitarian criminals. But the overall impression given by the author is that Dorrego was a weakling who did not manage to understand the cruel nature of political struggle. Pérez credits him with many beneficent patriotic contributions, but his heart was too kind and his political enemies (who were also the enemies of fatherland) took advantage of his gentle nature. When forced to face the predatory nature of the Unitarians, he spent a day and night weeping and thinking only about his fatherland. This shows the depth and purity of his patriotic devotion, but also his helplessness and passivity. Speaking from beyond the grave, he regrets all that has happened. He admits personal responsibility for the horrific political chaos that ensued and warns the readers that the Unitarians and the Federalists cannot be reconciled, because the difference between them boils down to that between traitors and patriots. There should be no mercy for the Unitarians ever again.

I am that magistrate who bestowed countless blessings upon everybody. I made peace with Brazil, I ordered the borders, I loved the Unitarians, this is the cause of my misfortunes, They were all disloyal, they won't change, hear the echo of vengeance which comes from my grave. [...] If Abel was killed innocent by his cruel brother, I was assassinated by a tyrant for being merciful to him [...] My heart was kind, I didn't want to do any harm. That is why the capital plunged into horrible chaos, full of regrets and sorrows. My eyes always weeping, seeing that such a rogue doesn't pay for his treachery, I passed days and nights, thinking only about my fatherland. It's a fantasy to believe that you can reconcile the Unitarian and the Federalist, just like the patriot and traitor.¹³⁰

Rosas, in turn, is presented as a dynamic and enterprising leader bound only by his innate respect for law and his healthy judgment of tactical considerations. As for the latter

¹²⁹ 'El patrón le dijo: amigo, / Si usted sigue con el pueblo / Puede contar con mi influjo / Sin disputa desde luego,' Pérez, "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 124.

¹³⁰ 'Yo soy aquel magistrado / Que hecho a todos gracias mil, / Hice paz con Brasil, / Las fronteras colocado; / A unitarios he amado, / Esto es causa de mis males, / Todos me fueron desleales; / En ellos no habrá mudanza; Oye el eco de venganza / Que de mi sepulcro sale,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 1 (19.08.1830), 4; 'Si Abel fue por su inocencia / Muerto por su cruel hermano / A mi me mató un tirano / Por usar con el clemencia. [...] Mi corazón fue bondoso / No quiso hacer algún mal. / Por esto la capital / Se vio en un caos horroroso / Afligido y pesaroso, / Mis ojos siempre llorando / Al ver que tanto nefando / No paga su alevosía / Pasó la noche y el día / Solo en mi patria pensando. / Es la quimera mayor / Creer que se ha de conciliar / Unitario y federal / Como el patriota y traidor,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 9 (16.09.1830), 36.

issue, this is another point serving to underline Rosas's superiority over Dorrego: the only instance in which Dorrego acts in a resolute and bold manner, is where he acts against Rosas's advice and it leads to the catastrophic Unitarian victory in the battle of Navarro.¹³¹ Thus, Pérez detached his hero from the embarrassing military failure, placing all blame on the shoulders of executed governor. He also discredited the latter's legendary recklessness by juxtaposing Rosas's prudence and military expertise.

The way in which Luis Pérez countered the legend of Manuel Dorrego in order to make room for Juan Manuel de Rosas might seem unrelated to the question of gaucho imagery. However, the fundamental reason why Pérez's Rosas proves so much more effective and resourceful than the holy man Dorrego, is that he does not hail from the city, but is rather a true man of the countryside, a genuine gaucho. This label clearly differentiated Rosas from both his predecessor and his Unitarian enemies. It also located him much closer to the people, playing a crucial role in promoting the *Restaurador* as an efficient leader of Buenos Aires masses. The gaucho imagery collapsed Rosas's personal leadership, the populist variant of Federalism and a very specific *völkisch*-like vision of society into one ideal of a masculine people embedded in the pampas countryside. As a node in the development of charismatic leadership and mass politics, Rosas's populist virility has wider ramifications going beyond the limits of the River Plate and possibly even Spanish America.

The way in which Pérez described Rosas as a man of countryside is revealing of his politics as a whole, and it is thus indispensable to devote some attention to it. As we are told, Rosas was a gaucho child prodigy:

Since he was ten-years-old, every gaucho in the countryside loved him, for the BLOND stood out in lassoing and tying down. He'd never refrain from any tough job; he was popular, honourable and a good child in every regard. [...] When he was fourteen his parents put him in charge of their estancias, for they found him so capable. [...] On horseback he was a devil, an adept tamer, always succeeding: no brook would ever stop him or make him return, for he was such a good swimmer and so courageous that he had fights everywhere he went, always mounted on his steed. With these abilities he won such distinction that doubtless everybody admired him in the countryside. Each day he gained more and more experience and so at twenty-five he knew every work. His advice was the best to populate an estancia and the same considered the farm work. [...] When they visited him, he was welcoming and he always

¹³¹ Pérez, "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 129-131.

talked about work. He needed only one look to understand men and when he condemned someone, there was no hope that he was wrong.¹³²

The future leader spent his childhood in the countryside and learnt all that was needed to thrive there. Already in his early youth, Rosas was universally admired for his exemplary piety, prudence and industry, but mostly for his horsemanship ('sobre el caballo era diablo'), as there was no obstacle that he would not be able to clear on horseback. He also excelled in writing, a typical city skill, which proved that he was by no means inferior to the haughty urbanites as he could defeat them in their own field, whereas they would be no match for him in horsemanship, lasso dexterity or farm management. The similarity to the old Bul'ba in Gogol's novel is worth noting: he astonishes his son Ostap by quoting Horace, proving that a simple Cossack is intellectually capable of mastering and retaining school knowledge without difficulty.¹³³

The educated porteño elite was an object of Rosas's abhorrence and disdain, and he would always tell his gauchos, when no one else could spy on them, that 'he did not have a good opinion on the wise of the land,' that they were 'no good men' and that they 'would entangle us in their petty evil theories:'

Not to mention the writing, for he was the enlightened (*ilustrao*) of the countryside and everybody would seek his advice and no one else's. [...] He did not have a good opinion on the wise of the land; "they don't know the right answers," he'd tell us, when we were alone. "They will entangle us in their petty evil theories. Let's hope not, one day they'll see. They're no good men, they're very haughty. I wish I were wrong and not right."¹³⁴

The comment that Rosas had to watch his tongue and could tell only his trusted men what he really thought about 'the wise of the land' suggests an atmosphere of fear and oppression, while the 'petty evil theories' (*malditas teorías*) contrast sharply with both the

¹³² 'De diez años ya en el campo / Todo gaucho lo quería / Pues en pialar y enlazar / EL RUBIO se distinguía. // No había trabajo por juerte / Que aquel se le resistiera; / Era popular, honrado / Y buen hijo a toda prueba. [...] A la edad de catorce años / Sus padres lo dedicaron / A gobernar sus estancias / Porque capaz lo encontraron. [...] Sobre el caballo era diablo, / Porque era güen parador / En la gata y en el pato jamás: / Ni arroyo que lo atajara, / O hiciera volver atrás; // Porque era tan nadador / Y de corage tan lindo, / Que andequiera se azotaba / Siempre atenido a su pingo. // Con esta capacidad / Se ganó tal distinción / Que en el pago era de todos / Sin duda la admiración. / La experiencia lo jue haciendo / Más singular cada día / Y así a los veinte y cinco años / Todo trabajo entendía. // Su consejo era mejor / Para poblar una estancia / Y lo mismo era hacendado / Tratando de la labranza. [...] Cuando iban a visitarlo / Era de güen agasajo / Y su conversación siempre / Recaiga sobre el trabajo. // En una sola mirada / A los hombres penetraba, / Y aquel que le echaba un fallo / Que esperanzas que se errara,' "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 117.

¹³³ Nikolai Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1937) (henceforth *PSS* 2), 45 & 66.

¹³⁴ 'De plumario no digamos / Porque era era el ilustrao del pago, / Y ansí todos a el no más / Venían a consultarlo. [...] De los sabios de la Tierra / Güena opinión no tenía; / Estos no tienen acierto, / Siempre a solas nos decía. // Estos nos han de enredar / Con sus malditas teorías; / Y si no, tenga espera / Y lo verán algún día. // Estos no son hombres güenos, / Tienen mucha presunción. / ¡Ojalá! yo me equivoque / Y que no tenga razón,' "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 117; for the mandarins (*mandarines*) see "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 112.

eternal truths of the Catholic faith and the practical skill and knowledge of the countryside that found its repository in Rosas. He was a real *ilustrao del pago*, an enlightened man of the countryside, as juxtaposed to the sterile and sinister *ilustrados*, or mandarins of Buenos Aires. The elimination of the intervocalic [d] in the noun *ilustrao* is characteristic of the careless colloquial pronunciation and it seems to be a deliberate and meaningful resource when applied to a term which is usually associated with striving for linguistic clarity and correctness. Here, Pérez tries to create a subversive counter-category that would allow the appreciation and elevation of countryside culture. Both his portrayal of Rosas and his own publishing venture seem to be meant as proofs of the gaucho culture's superiority: the countryside people are able to learn and appropriate the city tools, whereas converse achievements of urbanites do not seem plausible.

Being from the countryside enables Rosas to govern the country dwellers much more ably than can be done by the city delegates. Indeed, one of the main thrusts of the text is to present Rosas as belonging to the pampas countryside and emphasise that the gauchos see him as one of their own. Above, we have seen his alleged anti-intellectualism and preference for rural skills, but there are also other resources that contribute to that picture, for example the use of characteristic nicknames which are both tender and respectful: the Patron, the Shaggy, the Blond, the Old (*el Patrón, el Pelado, el Rubio, el Viejo*) alongside the more usual Don Juan Manuel.¹³⁵ These nicknames both shorten the distance between the leader and his followers and in a way naturalise him as an organic, unalienable part of their world. The same effect is evoked by the stanza in which Lugares confesses his deep anxiety for Rosas negotiating with General Lamadrid without any bodyguard.¹³⁶

Rosas is cast as a perfect gaucho, excelling not only in horsemanship but also in traditional gaucho knife fighting, as he is reported to have killed an Englishman with his *faconsito*, or gaucho knife.¹³⁷ The conclusion is that the gauchos themselves recognise Rosas as just the right man to lead them:

They shouted unanimously: "Let him do well! Now we do have someone who'd govern the gauchos!"¹³⁸

¹³⁵ The use of those nicknames is also attested in other texts of the time, see Rodríguez Molas, "Luís Pérez y la biografía de Rosas", 105.

¹³⁶ 'El patrón salió solito, / Confieso contra mi gusto, / Y así es que hasta volvió, / No se me quito a mí el susto,' Pérez, "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 114.

¹³⁷ 'Estuvo en la reconquista / A Liniers incorporado. / Y en un inglés ya puso / Su faconsito el Pelado,' Pérez, "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 114, 118; earlier in p.112 is a description of how the gauchos rising to fight the porteño regime are happy to face their enemies armed only with knives and shielded by the Almighty.

¹³⁸ 'Y así todos a una voz: / Bien haga el hombre, gritaban / Diciendo: ahora sí tenemos / Quien gobierne la gauchada,' "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 119.

His authority is presented as something more than an effect of simple economic exchange. He lives with his men, shares their pleasures and sorrows, helps them in times of distress and knows how to distinguish an unfortunate peasant from a real rogue.¹³⁹ He always discerns when someone commits a misdeed and if he sees that the perpetrator acted without evil intentions he can offer shelter and employment to such a person. Thus, through labour he transforms ‘a bad man into a decent head of family.’¹⁴⁰

Two further elements are worth mentioning in passing: that this policy of ‘resocialization through work’ was also praised in the portrayal provided by de Ángelis and that apart from being a seemingly humanitarian treatment, it can be interpreted as a way to fence off the pool of potential employees and political-cum-military followers from any interventions of state authorities. However, Pérez presents it simply as yet another testimony to Rosas’s profound understanding of the countryside realities, which he believes (or at least pretends to) to be a result of his being part of the rural world.

This can be illustrated by yet another exemplary episode. When asked by Governor Rodríguez how he managed to gather a significant military force so rapidly, Rosas responds cheerfully: ‘the peasant needs to be treated with astuteness (*maña*) rather than force and rigour.’¹⁴¹ He leads the gauchos because he knows them well and this is thanks to the fact that he lives among them and is actually one of them. No mention is made by Pérez of the noble pedigree which is described so carefully by de Ángelis.¹⁴² Rosas is presented here as a democratic hero, the true representative of the people that are always on his side and flock around him cheerfully.¹⁴³ The people, in turn, are portrayed as genuinely imbued with healthy deference, a taste for hierarchy and orderliness. The fact that Rosas raises troops on his own from among his own employees is proof of his patriotism, but also a showcase of the

¹³⁹ ‘Lo mismo era cuando veía / Algún hombre desgraciado, / Lo tomaba de su cuenta / Y ya estaba soliviado. // En su desgracia venía / De algún vicio arriagado / El a furza de consejos / Luego lo daba enmendado. [...] El aborrece al ladrón, / Al pícaro no le da lado; / Pero siempre favorece / Al paisano desgraciado,’ “Poesía biográfica de Rosas,” 118.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Sabe muy bien distinguir / Cuando el hombre hace un delito; / Y si el hecho es impensado, / El lo ampara en un conflicto. // De estos lances de su vida / Ya la cuenta se ha perdido, / Porque son tantos que no hay / Quien los haya retenido. // Y así es que ha sido su juerte / El sacar de un hombre malo / Un buen padre de familia / Y un honrado ciudadano,’ “Poesía biográfica de Rosas,” 118.

¹⁴¹ ‘El paisano quiere maña / más bien que juerza y rigor,’ “Poesía biográfica de Rosas,” 119.

¹⁴² Ángelis, “Ensayo sobre Rosas,” 188-190.

¹⁴³ ‘Una voz no más se oía, / Y los gauchos en tropel / Hacia Navarro tiraban. / A unirse á D. Juan Manuel,’ Pérez, “Poesía biográfica de Rosas,” 113.

proper rural hierarchy and its organisational superiority over the artificial mechanisms of the city.¹⁴⁴

Respect for order and law seems to be the essence of the political ideology ascribed by Pérez to Rosas.¹⁴⁵ When approached by the politicians, aggrieved by the government of Rivadavia, to lead a coup against the porteño minister, Rosas refuses, arguing that ‘a revolution is worse than suffering a factional government’ (the same anecdote has been recounted by de Ángelis). Elsewhere, it is recalled how in 1820 Rosas had restored Governor Rodríguez, toppled by the sympathizers of Federalism. In 1830 Rosas was closer to Rodríguez’s enemies, but the episode allowed Pérez to show that his hero’s exemplary respect for law and order overrode his factional sympathies.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, after the defeat at Navarro and murder of Governor Dorrego, Rosas still makes the continuation of his struggle against the Unitarians conditional upon the decisions of the appropriate legislative body, although it seems to him unthinkable that such an assault on the legal order could go unpunished.¹⁴⁷

Respect for law is the leitmotiv of the whole piece and while it is unnecessary to list all the occurrences of this topic, some elements should be mentioned here. First of all, the urbanites such as Rivadavia, Governor Rodríguez and Dr Agüero, are pictured as quintessential enemies of law and order: power-hungry, haughty, factious and never at rest.¹⁴⁸ Conversely, Pérez’s Rosas presents the respect for laws as indicator of civilisation and hence any defender of laws is thus also a defender of civilisation, be he a gaucho or an Indian.¹⁴⁹ Most probably, here the author tried to counter the assaults on his patron, who had been accused of tormenting Buenos Aires with the help of barbarians, Indians and gauchos. Moreover, Pérez equated the defence of laws and legal authorities with the defence of liberty. As was widely accepted then, ‘liberty is a flame that cannot be extinguished and the one that

¹⁴⁴ ‘A eso de la media noche / A Los Cerrillos llegó, / Y con solo sus recursos / Sobre cien hombres armó,’ Pérez, “Poesía biográfica de Rosas”, 119; also ‘Pero a pesar de todo esto / Nunca se desalentó, / Porque siempre este hombre grande / En si recursos halló,’ “Poesía biográfica de Rosas,” 126.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Myers, *Orden y virtud*, 73-84 & Salvatore, *Wandering Paysanos*, 162-165.

¹⁴⁶ ‘Martín Rodríguez, nos dijo / manda legítimamente; / La legislatura lo ha hecho, / A su orden está mi gente,’ Pérez, “Poesía biográfica de Rosas,” 114, 120.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Que él tiraba a Santa-Fé / A ver la resolución / Que tomaba en este caso / Ay nuestra Convención // Que a ella le correspondía / Como cuerpo Soberano / Dar la órdenes y a todos / Oponerse a los tiranos. // Que si esta se pronunciaba / Por qué la guerra se hiciera, / Él con todos sus recursos / Pronto estaba a obedecerla. // Que así lo suponía él, / Pues no podía persuadirse / Que un ataque hacia la ley / Quedase sin corregirse. // Pero en fin se iba dispuesto / A obedecer y no más, / Lo mismo si fuera por guerra, / Que si fuera por la paz,’ “Poesía biográfica de Rosas,” 131.

¹⁴⁸ See “Poesía biográfica de Rosas,” 121 for Rodríguez, 124 for Rivadavia, and 128 for Agüero.

¹⁴⁹ ‘¿Qué no sabe usted, amigo / Que en un país civilizado, / Esos motines no lo hacen / Sino pillos y malvados?,’ “Poesía biográfica de Rosas,” 127; the question of Indian presence in Rosas’s army is touched upon further on the same and the next page, where Rosas underscores that his are sedentary Indian agriculturalists who put aside their ploughs to fight for their patron: ‘A más de esta todos ellos / Son indios domiciliados, / Y para venir aquí / han tirado sus arados.’

fighters for the laws always triumphs at the end.’¹⁵⁰ The rule did not prove valid with Dorrego, but here the suggestion is that Rosas is, by definition, invincible. The city politicians of the sort of Rivadavia and Agüero are presented as detached from the people, who in turn always stand on the side of Rosas because he always defends their interests, liberty and laws (the whole logic seems to be circular). As we have seen, Rosas explains to Dorrego that he is going to support him and the cause of Federalism, as long as he ‘remains with the people.’¹⁵¹ In the end, Pérez’s argument implies, the sympathies of the law-loving people are the main cause of the Unitarians’ repeated failures and Rosas’s successes.¹⁵²

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Pérez’s gauchos are rebellious commoners who oppose the liberal vision of society composed of individual, rational actors, imagined as self-interested atoms. For Pérez and his followers, this was a sham that served only to perpetuate the domination of *maturrangos* and *cajetillas*, the educated city elite. The author of *El Gaucho* did not offer instead that more radical ideology of revolutionary egalitarianism that we know from the contemporary clash of liberalism and democracy taking place in Europe, for example in France or in the Austrian-ruled Galicia (as described in my final chapter).

Claudio Lomnitz argues against Benedict Anderson that the ideologies of nation do not necessarily need to emphasise the egalitarian fraternity within the national community and that the nation can be imagined as a fundamentally hierarchical organism.¹⁵³ I am myself reluctant to accept Lomnitz’s claim without reservations, as I believe that seemingly contradictory statements about equality and hierarchy can be combined in one ideology and that the nationalism *sensu stricto* cannot do away with at least a token sense of equality and fraternity in the face of fates. Nevertheless, Luis Pérez provides important evidence supporting Lomnitz’s diagnosis and it cannot be disregarded. Even more so, as the case of Pérez is rather counterintuitive: it might seem logical to expect that it would be the social

¹⁵⁰ ‘Los que defienden las leyes / Tienen en su corazón / Amor a la autoridad / Y una firme decisión. // La libertad es un fuego / Que no se puede apagar, / Y el que lucha por las leyes / Siempre acaba por triunfar,’ “Poesía biográfica de Rosas,” 128; see also p. 114: ‘Gente que por voluntad / Vendrá á mostrarle á Lavalle, / Que á un pueblo libre á la juerza / No se le manda que calle. // Sí señor; yo estoy seguro / Que la causa de las leyes / Ha de triunfar sin remedio / De ese puñado de areves.’

¹⁵¹ ‘El patrón le dijo: amigo, / Si usted sigue con el pueblo / Puede contar con mi influjo / Sin disputa desde luego,’ “Poesía biográfica de Rosas,” 124.

¹⁵² Explaining the fall of Rivadavia: ‘Entonces se vio bien claro / Que los que los pueblos quieren / Es lo que mande un gobierno / Que en todo los considere,’ “Poesía biográfica de Rosas,” 125, and on the next page a description of the country dwellers’ enthusiastic support for Rosas: ‘La campaña mostró entonces / Cual era su decisión, / Pues en tropillas venían / Buscando la reunión. // Es verdad que daba pena / Ver a todos desarmados / Pero también consolaba / Verlos tan entusiasmados.’

¹⁵³ Claudio Lomnitz, “Nationalism as a practical system: Benedict Anderson’s theory of nationalism from the vantage point of Spanish America,” in Miguel Ángel Centeno and Fernando López-Alves, eds, *The Other Mirror: Grand Theory through the Lens of Latin America* (Princeton, 2001), 329-358.

elites who should try to strengthen their privileged position by representing the nation as inevitably stratified and themselves as its enlightened leaders, but here it is a militantly populist and anti-elite activist that does so.

Pérez imagined a society that was hierarchical and built upon personalised power relations enshrining the respectability of each deserving individual. Pancho Lugares is so confident that he can be considered an honourable and respectable man, not because he sees himself as peer to Rosas, but because he is Rosas's man, which entails also being a devout patriot, a good Catholic, a law-abiding citizen and a 'full man.' Lugares is embedded in an emphatically stratified social order, but there is nothing debasing about that. Rather, it guarantees his individual respectability as a man and as a citizen and offers him legitimate avenues of political and professional development.

The more alienated individuals became by British-dominated capitalism and mired in the chaotic factional wars, the more they looked to a man that promised them a world in which all could expect to find a due station corresponding to each person's innate degree of respectability. The idealised hierarchical arrangement was to secure the preservation of the inalienable rights which we hold to be self-evidently coupled with egalitarian homogeneity. Thus, *caudillismo* that has been traditionally presented as one of the most backward-looking South American endemics, turns out to be a variation on an inherently European theme, reminiscent of Louis Napoleon's Caesarism as described by Karl Marx or later Boulangisme.¹⁵⁴

At the centre of this vision is the idealised patron, Juan Manuel de Rosas, and his *maña*. This peculiar term brings to mind the concept of *mētis* introduced by James C. Scott to describe 'practical, locally rooted knowledge, the mixture of ideals for change with acceptance of the messiness of life, a more personal sense of human relations,' as opposed to the 'muscle-bound' rational designs of the 'high modernist' state. Scott meant his *mētis* and 'high modernism' as accurate analytical tools but, as has been pointed out by Frederick Cooper, '[t]he best example of high modernism that appears in Scott's text is James C. Scott.' The US anthropologist perpetuated the Romantic opposition of the artificial, modern state and

¹⁵⁴ Karl Marx, *Later Political Writings*, ed. and transl. by Terrell Carver (Cambridge, 1996), 116-123; for Napoleon III as a popular leader see also Eugenio di Rienzo, *Napoleone III* (Rome, 2010), 96-104 and Philip Thody, *French Caesarism from Napoleon I to Charles de Gaulle* (London, 1989); for Boulanger see William D. Irvine, *The Boulanger Affair Reconsidered: Royalism, Boulangism, and the Origins of the Radical Right in France* (Oxford, 1989) and James R. Lehning, *To Be a Citizen: the Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic* (Ithaca, 2001). Sarmiento attests that such a 'normalising interpretation' of Argentine political life was possible in his time and he himself was deeply critical of it, see Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Viajes por Europa, África y América 1845-1847* (Buenos Aires, 1886), 124.

the organic, spontaneous *Gemeinschaft*.¹⁵⁵ The fact that we can recognise Scott's *mētis* in Pérez's *maña* shows that this sort of contrast was politically productive also in the Province of Buenos Aires of the 1820s and 1830s. It was not necessarily because it described the realities in an accurate manner, but rather because it spoke to similar anxieties about the expansion of atomising capitalism and the modern state. Just like in the case of Moscow-based Slavophiles, Pérez's vision of an illiberal, hierarchic social order did not stem from his being a representative of organic rural society, but was a symptom of his detachment from traditional way of life and, more generally, of tensions brought about by the economic and political developments raging in the early nineteenth century. The flexible, organic *maña* was a political fiction, but, as it turned out, a very powerful one.

3.4. Conclusions

Pérez's work explicitly addresses an audience that is either peasant or of peasant origin and it is no wonder that it courts the inhabitants of the countryside.¹⁵⁶ However, the fervent assaults on the exclusivist porteño elite and the zeal for the promotion of gaucho values suggest that the author tried to use Rosas's political project for his own subversive ends, elevating the status of gauchos and their culture within the emerging political constellation. John Lynch concluded that Rosas did not want to stimulate a true politicisation of the lower strata, but rather to extend a kind of personalist patronage (Pérez's *maña*) that would enable him to mobilise them when necessary for his political ends.¹⁵⁷ Whatever Rosas actually thought about the political activities of non-elite actors (and there are good reasons to believe that he was not enthusiastic about them), we can note that at least at the initial stage of his rise to power there was some room within his political camp for someone like Pérez who did not hesitate to promote his own political-cum-cultural agenda. The ideal of *maña*, a personalised and depoliticised way of managing power and mobilising resources, served Pérez not only to mystify the real nature of Rosas's ambitions, but also to steer them in a truly populist direction and to fight the hegemonic liberal ideology of the porteño elite. At no point, however, was it an accurate description of the power mechanisms in the Province of Buenos Aires.

¹⁵⁵ My take on *mētis* is based on the discussion in Frederick Cooper's *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, 2005), 140-141.

¹⁵⁶ See the apostrophe: 'Es el asunto, paisanos, / Que tenemos emprendido,' Pérez, "Poesía biográfica de Rosas," 117.

¹⁵⁷ Lynch, *Argentine Caudillo*, 46-47; for a criticism see for example Di Meglio, *¡Viva el bajo pueblo!*, 255-318.

In 1830, when Rosas's position was still relatively tenuous, a publicist of such a hue was not only acceptable, but even welcomed by the *Restaurador's* side. It was not only about mobilising the gauchos' support, but also about thwarting the propaganda efforts of his political enemies who tried to appropriate the gaucho voices and stir popular discontent against the new ruler of Buenos Aires. The Unitarians used forms of popular poetry and appealed to the sensibilities of lower strata by emphasising Rosas's collusion with his wealthy Anchorena cousins.¹⁵⁸ In truth, the Unitarians were not as exclusively elite as their enemies would like: in 1832, a *payador* Felipe Taborda was arrested and condemned to three years of military service for, among other things, public praise of the Unitarian General Lavalle.¹⁵⁹

Both de Ángelis and Pérez executed variations on the same set of themes and shared the paramount goal of promoting the positive image of their political patron. However they aimed at different audiences to whom they tried to convey differently tailored messages: the former shaped Rosas into a gaucho tamer, the latter, a gaucho leader. Rosalía Baltar notes that this divergence has more serious implications: elite Rosas as imagined by de Ángelis, is a state builder and cultural hero (comparable to the ancient Greek Triptolemus who taught people to cultivate cereals); in turn, Pérez's Rosas is a 'companion, different and better, for sure, but close, gaucho and peasant.'¹⁶⁰ It seems that Luis Pérez had a sincerely populist (though not necessarily democratic) agenda of his own, which eventually collided with the pro-Rosas porteño establishment, especially after the dictator settled down comfortably in Buenos Aires and started his final metamorphosis into the awe-inspiring proprietor of the lavish suburban residence of Palermo. Pérez himself seems to have been familiar with the codified contrast of the city and countryside, as he boldly endeavoured to counter the stereotype of gauchos as barbarous vagrants. Instead, he offered a picture of a pious, robust and virile nation of peasant freeholders entirely dedicated to the preservation of liberty and the common weal: a vision strongly reminiscent of Michelet's peasant France¹⁶¹ and various Eastern European nation-building projects, Ukrainian, Slovak, Lithuanian and others.

Both the Indians and the Blacks are credited by Pérez as defenders of liberty and order (and the latter are even allowed a voice in his periodicals), but neither could represent a nation

¹⁵⁸ These efforts, commonly associated with the name of Hilario Ascasubi, culminated at the turn of the 1830s and 1840s with the publication of such Montevideo-based periodicals as *El Grito Argentino*, *El Gaucho en Campaña* and *El Gaucho Oriental*. See Ricardo Rodríguez Molas, "Elementos populares en la predica contra Juan Manuel de Rosas," *Historia*, Year IX, , No. 30 (January-March 1963), 69-101.

¹⁵⁹ Ricardo Rodríguez Molas, *La primitiva poesía gauchesca anterior a Bartolomé Hidalgo* (Buenos Aires, 1958), 14-16. See also Ignacio Zubizarreta, "La intrincada relación del unitarismo con los sectores populares," *Quinto Sol*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2011), 1-27.

¹⁶⁰ Rosalía Baltar, *Letrados en tiempos de Rosas* (Mar del Plata, 2012), 172.

¹⁶¹ Jules Michelet, *The People*, transl. by C. Cooks (London, 1846), 17-29, 72-78.

which imagined itself as inherently White. Hence, it was only the gauchos, the ‘countryside White Americans’ (*criollos del pago*),¹⁶² that could serve as the embodiment of genuine American people. Still, as the associations with anarchy, legal transgression, race-mixing and crudeness remained all too present, Luis Pérez felt that he needed to counter this stereotype by emphasising such elements as innate deference, taste for hierarchy and passion for the law and order. As a consequence, he does not have that much to say about the gaucho’s individual liberty and his mystical relationship with the intoxicating open landscape of the pampas, topics whose roots are discernible in the eighteenth-century Spanish accounts and eventually came into bloom in Sarmiento’s *Facundo*.

Pérez’s gauchos are free and freedom-loving, but they combine these traits with innate deference and taste for social hierarchies. Their natural-like liberty is meant to contrast with the artificial and distorted ways of the city’s ‘wise and posh’ (*sabios y cagetillas*) and it is best illustrated by the gauchos’ special relationship with horses, as they are horse-taming lads or *mozos domadores*. Instead of the oppressive apparatus of state coercion they require the *maña*, a flexible system of informal rural loyalties and relationships that can ideally be put to work only by the country dwellers themselves and the leadership they recognise as their own. Even if *maña* was only a fiction produced by Pérez to mystify the elite nature of Rosas’s power, it seems to have worked well, both with the Buenos Aires masses and with generations of historians.

Similar to Eastern Europe, Spanish America can be conceptualised as a part of the Europeanate space, not in the sense that its inhabitants passively mimicked the developments of the European core (as is often assumed in the narrative of the so-called Atlantic revolutions), but rather because they independently and creatively developed some of the shared cultural traditions and interacted with some of the same secular stimuli.¹⁶³ Sarmiento’s assessment of American caudillo mobilisation accorded in broad outlines with Herder’s vision of non-European politics, when he explicitly opposed Napoleon and San Martín, representing conventional European military science, to Artigas and Bolívar, American leaders capable of mobilising large parties of gaucho and *llanero* horsemen (even though in the case of the Venezuelan *Libertador* it would be a more accurate description of his loyalist arch-enemy

¹⁶² ‘A la ciudad me trajeron / Con otros criollos del pago, / Que de leva en esos días / De uno en uno habían tomado,’ Pérez, “Poesía biográfica de Rosas,” 112.

¹⁶³ For the discussion of the argument developed by François-Xavier Guerra but enriched later by the consideration of the so-called specular (or diffusionist) bias see Mónica Quijada, ‘Sobre *nación, pueblo, soberanía* y otros ejes de la modernidad en el mundo hispano,’ in Jaime E. Rodríguez, ed., *Las nuevas naciones: España y México 1800-1850* (Madrid, 2008), 19-26.

José Tomás Boves).¹⁶⁴ Where Sarmiento did not agree with the German philosopher was the overall appreciation of the realities in question: for the famous citizen of San Juan it was the European-like statehood deplored by Herder that was an ideal model to follow, whereas the complex system of rural loyalties embodied by insurgent gauchos, encapsulated by Pérez's *maña*, was tantamount to backwardness and barbarism. Nevertheless, the dichotomy itself remained in place.

Of course, Sarmiento's knowledge of the Prussian thinker was most probably secondhand and, as for Luis Pérez, it is very unlikely that he had ever heard his name. Concurrences of their thought should be seen as symptoms of a generalised tension between the development of the modern state, new forms of social exclusion and stratification, and the ideologies of egalitarian brotherhood coloured by folkloric fascinations. The juxtaposition of the pure and industrious countryside with the characteristic non-state, *maña*-based *Vaterautorität* emanating from it in a natural-like manner also lies at the heart of Luis Pérez's vision of gaucho liberty. Contrary to later literary visions, in this version gaucho freedom is that of a content member of a genuine *Gemeinschaft*, not of an unrestrained, solitary male spirit. For Pérez, a nation is an organic community in which political, economic and military power should be combined in the hands of one leader, a leader not only accepted by the people but originating from it: a leader created by the people in a way which is at the same time conscious and inevitable. All this is presented in a stark contrast to the artificial scheming of the porteño mandarins, Sarmiento's state-building heroes.

This vision of politics and society can be recovered not only from the criticisms of the anti-Rosas political exiles, but also such subaltern supporters like Luis Pérez. Pérez's gaucho-style works were not faithful photographs of the socio-political realities of his time, but politically engaged combat pieces. They were meant to appeal to the needs and longings of his readership and they should be understood as depictions of an idealised world that never existed, but was desperately longed for. As we have seen, the inhabitants of the Buenos Aires Province had lived through a traumatic series of events in which the subsequent father-like guarantors of order were violently displaced one after another: the King of Spain, the *Cabildo* of Buenos Aires and eventually Governor Dorrego. Rosas the patron and his organic clientelism were a dream conceived by the peasants for whom Rosas the man was but hearsay. In 1829 this dream helped to mobilise the rural population to rise against the

¹⁶⁴ Nicholas A. Germana, "Herder's India: The Morgenland in Mythology and Anthropology," in Larry Wolff and Marco Cipolloni, eds, *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 2007), 119-140; Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Civilización y barbarie. Vidas de Quiroga, Aldao y El Chacho* (Buenos Aires, 1889), 13-14.

government blamed for all the hardships the peasants had suffered during the Brazilian War and finally, this vision was employed by Rosas and his associates to establish himself as the dictator of the Buenos Aires Province and to mystify the profoundly capitalist nature of his regime. The pampas and the gauchos were not exactly as depicted by Luis Pérez: hierarchy-loving, unwaveringly Federalist and always loyal to their patrons. If that had been the case, Luis Pérez's gaucho journalism would have never been necessary. Similarly, Rosas was no fatherly overlord of the pyramidal fellowship of vassals cemented by the organic *maña*, but he was successfully advertised as such. The more individuals came to be alienated, the more they looked to a leader that would guarantee all a due station corresponding to each person's innate degree of respectability. The idealised hierarchical arrangement was to secure the preservation of inalienable rights and civic identities, which are usually presented as possible only within liberal constitutional frameworks. Pérez's *caudillismo* is not a backward-looking Spanish American endemic, but a modern political dream.

In writing his rhymed journalism, Luis Pérez was mostly concerned with fighting the enemy party. This struggle was not just a purely personal vendetta, let alone a mindless exchange of blows, but, he believed, a debate concerning the way in which Buenos Aires society should be organised. At stake was the future of the Argentine nation. To ensure that the uneducated masses would have their fair share of power, he used the image of the gaucho located at the intersection of a certain ideal of individual masculinity and a determined vision of organically hierarchical political community.

The secret of the gaucho figure's effectiveness lies in the fact that it was an image appealing to rural and city proletarians, closest to their dreams of individual self-fulfillment. The gaucho proved also to be a myth that allowed the reconciliation of all seemingly contradictory ideals that had to be conveyed to build the new political community: the claim to be a native White American nationality and the need to detach it from both the Spanish and the local Indian heritage; civic equality and the organic hierarchy; republican liberty and charismatic dictatorial leadership. What Luis Pérez and other authors of gaucho-style pieces did was to deploy gaucho imagery combined with attractive polemical forms of expression and a language easily accessible to a readership with no formal schooling. In this way the gaucho-style authors defined the limits of new nationality and contributed to the construction of a new discursive space which enabled the rise of a truly popular public opinion as an independent political agent, leaving aside the question of how brutal and disruptive it eventually proved to be.

Apparently, Pérez saw himself as a militant for the cause of political emancipation of the lower social strata, the gauchos and the Blacks, at the same time believing that this ideal was reconcilable with a stratified arrangement of the society. He understood his periodicals to be essential tools in that endeavour and believed (or at least, he pretended to believe) that Rosas's government provided room for people who not only wanted to make a career, but who actually strove to change the rules of the game and break the monopoly of the porteño elite. He also claimed, and apparently in good faith, that the violent clampdown on the Unitarians (and political dissent in general) was achievable only through a free and unrestrained public debate:

Lads, now we have the right to write, it is ours and no one can impede it [...] If children and loonies have the habit of telling truth, no one can prevent us from speaking freely.¹⁶⁵

It is worth noting here that in 1834, reminding his opponents of his own contributions and sacrifices for the Federalism, Pérez identified it as 'the popular cause' (*la causa popular*).¹⁶⁶ It seems that he really believed that the movement personified by his idol Rosas was a continuation and development of Dorrego's vision, a truly popular enterprise – by the people and for the people. As it turned out, his was a deeply mistaken judgment. Eventually, the dictator disposed of him when he was no longer needed and it was the elitist de Ángelis that remained by his side to the very end of his rule.

¹⁶⁵ 'Ya los muchachos tenemos / Derecho para escribir, / Y como es nuestro / Nadie lo podrá impedir. [...] Si los niños y los locos / Suelen decir la verdad / Nadie nos podrá impedir / Que hablemos con libertad,' *El Torito de los muchachos*, No. 3 (26.08.1830), 11.

¹⁶⁶ Rodríguez Molas, "Luís Pérez y la biografía de Rosas," 107.

4. Nikolai Gogol' and his Cossack fantasy

4.1. Introduction

20 July 1895 was a truly glorious day for Arturo Berutti. His opera premiered in Buenos Aires with the president and most ministers in attendance. The piece was received enthusiastically and the composer took nineteen curtain calls. Berutti was of Italian origin and studied in Germany, but he had been born in Argentina. It was only after his opera had been acknowledged in Turin that he decided to return from Europe. At home he was met with immediate recognition. No wonder: an Argentine-born composer had finally produced a piece warmly received in Italy and then chose to return with it. Given the peripheral anxieties of the still relatively young Argentine nation, Berutti was simply doomed to succeed and, indeed, nowadays he is considered to be Argentina's first national composer. There was only one odd aspect to the story, which a French correspondent did not fail to point out: 'it is a grotesque notion to wish to have an Argentine opera based on the history of Ukraine.' Berutti's opera was *Tarass Bulba*.¹

This may look strange to us but, as noted by Lubomyr Hajda, it illustrates how widespread Ukraine-related exoticism had become in nineteenth-century European popular culture, how integrated the European space was and how appealing the colourful fantasies about mounted frontiersmen of the steppe were. In Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows the alleged 'Russian Cossacks' (impersonated by Georgian performers) were accompanied by the River Plate gauchos.² Later in the 1960s, a Hollywood movie *Taras Bulba* was released with Yul Brynner as the eponymous hero and Tony Curtis as his treacherous son Andrei. For generations of Ukrainian Americans and Canadians, the film was a sort of national epic as it depicted the semi-mythical mother country they could not visit. However, it was not the original Ukrainian landscapes that featured: the movie was shot in the US and, once again, Argentina where the local gauchos from the municipality of San Lorenzo, Salta, performed as background actors.³

There seems to be a mysterious intimacy between the tale of Taras Bul'ba and the plains of the River Plate. These curiosities do not tell us much about the politics of the early

¹ Lubomyr Hajda, 'Taras Bulba on the Pampas and the Fjords: A Ukrainian Cossack Theme in Western Opera,' in Zvi Gitelman et al. (eds), *Cultures and Nations of central and Eastern Europe: Essays in Honor of Roman Szporluk* (Cambridge, MA, 2000), 211-214; the original Italian-language libretto by Guglielmo Godio, *Tarass Bulba: Drama lirico in 4 atti* (Milan, 1895) is available online: https://archive.org/details/tarassbulbadramm00beru_0 (retrieved 18.05.2014).

² Richard Alexis Georgian, *Cossacks, Indians and Buffalo Bill: The Adventures of Georgian Riders in America* (Barringer Publishing, 2011).

³ A documentary on that experience *Cuando el pueblo fue Hollywood* was made by Federico Windhausen in 2009, see the blog <http://tarasbulbasalta.blogspot.it/> (retrieved 18.05.2014).

nineteenth century, but they do invite a bolder treatment of the masculinity myths which are interrelated in a number of ways. Thus, although at first sight the oeuvre of Nikolai Gogol' does not seem to have too much in common with Luis Pérez's verse journals, it is worthwhile reflecting upon the way the two authors employ the powerful masculine figures that convey the dreams of societal and individual liberty in order to comment upon the ongoing state-building efforts in their respective fatherlands.

Superficially, it might appear like Gogol' is taking a position similar to that of Pérez, that is, he insinuates a populist stance to an inherently elite government. Indeed, showing precisely this sort of analogy was my original motivation when I decided to put the chapters devoted to these different authors one after another. Yet, as I intend to show in my analysis of the 1842 version of *Taras Bul'ba*, this was not actually the case with this particular piece by Gogol'. It appears that, rather than reproducing the Cossack masculine fellowship as a viable model to be adopted by the Saint Petersburg government, the author's intention was to question the unqualified populist fascinations of his contemporaries and make them reflect upon the unfettered liberty associated with the Cossack dream. Gogol' turns out to be not only sympathetic to the Russian imperial project (which is not that big a surprise), but also approves of the female sensibilities and contributions to the development of the civilised state and is exceptionally critical of the mindless ethno-confessional jingoism embodied in his eponymous Cossack protagonist.

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Gogol's *Taras Bul'ba* has long been one of the most influential texts shaping the way in which the Zaporozhian Cossacks were imagined by both the Russians and the Ukrainians, as well as by other nations. In 2009, yet another movie adaptation was released starring acclaimed actors from Poland, Russia and Ukraine. Despite the international character of the project, the picture was widely perceived to champion the notion of the all-Russian nation and indeed its director (who also happens to be a member of the Russian Communist Party) has been reported to claim that the Ukrainians and Russians are actually one nation and Ukraine is just the Southern Rus'.⁴ This uncomplicated nationalist-imperialist interpretation accords in general lines with the prevailing scholarly consensus on *Taras Bul'ba*. For instance, Mark Al'tshuller sees the extremism and intolerance allegedly championed by Gogol' in *Taras Bul'ba*, as the single most important departure of the Little Russian author from the model of Walter Scott's novels. He also perceives the descriptions of atrocities perpetrated by the

⁴ Quoted after a popular yellow-press-like Polish news portal: <http://film.interia.pl/news/premiera-tarasa-bulby,1284711?source=rss> (retrieved: 10.05.2014).

Cossacks as condoning or even laudatory. Romana Bahrij-Pikulyk and Simon Karlinsky believe that *Taras Bul'ba* is 'a hymn in praise of the Zaporizhians and their way of life, which is centred on heroism, war, violence and death.' The latter scholar characterised it further as 'one of the most ultra-nationalistic works in all literature.' Similarly, Judith Kornblatt concludes that Gogol's Cossacks possess the idealised wholeness and vitality of the Russian soul and that the author glorifies their 'principles of war and brutality.'⁵ However, as I will argue, the above views represent a fundamentally mistaken interpretation of Gogol's intended message.

As for the Ukrainian dimension of the question, it has received a relatively superficial treatment outside Ukraine itself. This long neglect can be attributed mostly to two factors which are both different manifestations of the Russian cultural hegemony over its 'near abroad.' First of all, the Ukrainian contexts are understandable and indeed treated as autonomous and worthy of interest almost exclusively by the dedicated scholars of Ukrainian culture, history and politics, whereas most others see them as interesting footnotes, at best. Secondly, Gogol's uncontested status as a great Russian writer suggests that it suffices to take into account only his Russian background. As a result, Gogol's complex attitude towards his nobiliary Ukrainian heritage has been largely neglected.

To date, the most thorough attempt at reading Gogol' through the Ukrainian lens has been Edyta Bojanowska's.⁶ A literary scholar from Poland currently based in the US, she has explicitly aimed to prove that Gogol' was indeed an intellectual torn between the Russian and Ukrainian nations. This proposition enabled her to go beyond interpretations that did not bother to consider the possibility of anything outside of the Russian context. Especially valuable and eye-opening has been the way in which Bojanowska appreciated the puzzling ambiguities of the Gogolian text (in this respect, she seems to be indebted partly to Iurii Mann and Simon Karlinsky).⁷ To give just one example, in *Taras Bul'ba* the main villain and traitor is the protagonist, whose feelings are described most thoroughly and with whom the narrator seems to sympathise more than with anyone else. If one accepts the traditional reading of

⁵ Mark Al'tshuller, *Epokha Valtera Skotta v Rossii: Istoricheskii roman 1830-kh godov* (Saint Petersburg, 1996), 259; Romana Bahrij-Pikulyk, "Superheroes, gentlemen or pariahs? The Cossacks in Nikolai Gogol's *Taras Bulba* and Panteleimon Kulish's *Black Council*," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Fall 1980), 38; Simon Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolaj Gogol* (Chicago, 1992), 77, 79, 86. Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, *The Cossack Hero in Russian Literature: A Study in Cultural Mythology* (Madison, WI, 1992), 47-54 & 59-60.

⁶ Edyta Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism* (Cambridge, MA 2007); for a brief discussion of relevant literature concerning Gogol's nationalism see *ibid.*, 7-12 and respective endnotes, 382-383.

⁷ For instance, Mann's appreciation of Gogol's sympathy for the Poles and his sympathetic depiction of Jewish suffering, Iurii Mann, *Gogol': Trudy i dni: 1809-1845* (Moscow, 2004), 516.

Taras Bul'ba as a nationalist rhapsody with a one-dimensional political message, then one has to assume that several elements of the story just do not make sense there. Of course, these discrepancies can be a result of a never perfect suppression of competing meanings, a possibility that we should not lose sight of. Even more so, as the work in question was reworked and expanded substantially over a period of seven years and, as the author was making edits, this and that could have escaped from his scalpel. Before surrendering, one should make the effort of tackling the difficult fragments in other ways, assuming that the author knew more or less what he was doing with his text.

As has been said already, Edyta Bojanowska proved impressively perspicacious in pointing out the elements of the text which make it very difficult to uphold the traditional 'jingoist' reading of *Taras Bul'ba*. What is more, her bold and persistent interrogating of what identity/identities Gogol' actually wanted to depict and promote opened a whole range of new interpretive avenues which seem to be of utmost importance. As she has noted, 'nationalism has not been merely an aspect of Gogol's posthumous reception. It constituted a key dimension in Gogol's creative process and in his contemporary reception.'⁸

Unfortunately, Bojanowska has proven much less adept in providing convincing answers about the author's own embattled identity, although there is indeed no dearth of fascinating material to build upon, starting with Gogol's famous confession that he could not really divorce his being a Russian from his being a *khokhlik*. The latter term is a diminutive of the noun *khokhol*, which is nowadays a Russian ethnic slur for Ukrainians, but which used to be a mildly derogatory term applied mostly to the Ukrainian peasantry. Bojanowska's book opens with this episode, but characteristically *khokhlik* is rendered in English simply as Ukrainian and it is only later that she explains the complexity of the term.⁹ Throughout the book she uses the term Ukrainian indiscriminately, whereas in fact a number of competing names can be found in *Taras Bul'ba* alone: Ukraine, Little Russia, Southern Russia and even New Russia (this one referring exclusively to what is today's Southern Ukraine).¹⁰

This illustrates the main problem with Bojanowska's way of addressing the identity question in Gogol', namely, that she takes it for granted that there were two solid entities that competed, Russian and Ukrainian identities, and Gogol' had to choose between them. All this despite her explicit references to the now standard scholarly literature about the constructed nature of nationalisms and, even more startlingly, despite her listing in the bibliography

⁸ Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-3; Kornblatt, *Cossack Hero*, 43-44 translates *khokhlik* with the Canadianism Uke.

¹⁰ Although she does analyse the issue explicitly in one section, Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 266-271.

Zenon Kohut's *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy* which explains in detail the contents of the 'Ukrainian' allegiances that Gogol' inherited from his parents.

In fact, Gogol' was neither Russian nor Ukrainian in our understanding of the term: he was a member of the Little Russian landowning elite which cultivated the memory of the past (quite close in time) when it had held the political power in its autonomous polity and also of the more distant, semi-mythical struggle against the Catholic Polish-Lithuanian oppressors. At the same time Gogol' inhabited and made a stellar literary career in a state that happened to be a vast continental empire with the Orthodox Christianity (his own confession) as its official faith and cornerstone, with its symbolic core located in a faraway northern region called Muscovy and its political decision-making centre even further north on a seashore where Germanic, Finnic and Slavic populations met and mingled. Also, it should not be overlooked that being a landowning nobleman (although not a particularly rich one) and having grown up in the autonomist republicanism of his estate, he lived in a peculiar epoch of interest in the popular, especially peasant, culture which was believed to define the character of the body politic.

Bojanowska concludes that Gogol' contrasted the warm and secure Ukrainian culture with the dehumanised and bureaucratic Russian one.¹¹ In a way she is right, because this is indeed what one can see in his works, but actually this is also what one can find in many genuinely 'Russian' texts, as Ukraine was widely believed to be the most picturesque and authentically East Slavic land, the Italy of the Russian Empire. For instance, this imagery is explicitly invoked in Bulgarin's *Mazepa* (which will be commented upon later).¹² What Bojanowska fails to appreciate however, is that what Gogol' praises is not Little Russia as a whole but an embellished picture of the patriarchal, squirearchical countryside. The centre stage is granted by him to the lower and middle echelons of the landed gentry, as epitomised by endearingly ramshackle manors, organically embedded in the Ukrainian countryside. One such example is Taras Bul'ba's household in the first chapter of the novel, the other can be found in the short story *The Old World Landowners*.

What Edyta Bojanowska identifies as the negative vision of Russia in Gogol's writings is actually that of the Russian imperial state and bureaucracy, which is not tantamount to the Russian nation that could be easily juxtaposed with the Ukrainian nation. Indeed, it seems that it might have been more difficult for Gogol' to imagine the Russian national community than

¹¹ Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 50, 166-169, 253-254 & 367-377.

¹² Faddei Bulgarin, *Mazepa – Povesti* (Moscow, 1994), 221-222: the fields of Ukraine are contrasted with the sea and stones of Saint Petersburg, as cold and deaf as the people that inhabit it.

the Ukrainian one,¹³ let alone compare the two as phenomena of similar kind and magnitude. At that time, various politicised, nation-like identifications could be used by the same individual for various purposes and which of them would eventually succeed as ‘the nation’ was to become clear only much later. The very notion of unified Italy, Czechoslovakia or Illyria was still no less hazy than that of the All-Slavdom, Hispanic America or the River Plate.

In this chapter I build upon Bojanowska’s impressive interpretive achievements, but also try to avoid what I consider to be her simplistic and ahistorical understanding of the identity choices that a person like Gogol’ could make in the first half of the nineteenth century. Special attention, I believe, should be attributed, first of all, to the plurality of ways in which Russianness and Ukrainianness were understood in that period; secondly, to the importance Gogol’ attributed to the tension between the feminine and masculine elements in individual and societal development; and thirdly, the vision of the modern state and its tasks. Most importantly, I disagree with Bojanowska in her focus on the Russo-Ukrainian national split as the central issue in *Taras Bul'ba*. I do interpret the symbolic figure of the Cossack in this novel as fundamentally political, but rather in the sense of standing for a particular anti-authoritarian model of masculine civic empowerment, of which Gogol’, I believe, was profoundly critical.

Now I will try to elucidate the political message conveyed by the 1842 version of Gogol’s *Taras Bul'ba*. First, in section two I will explain three important contexts in which the novel has to be situated: that of the traditions of the Little Russian (East Ukrainian) autonomism within the Russian Empire, that of the competing ideals of Russianness promoted in the 1830s and the 1840s, and that of the Russian historical novel. Then, in section three I will analyse various aspects of the novel’s political message. I will start by introducing the text itself and summarising its plot. Consequently, I will describe what sort of community is embodied by Gogolian Cossacks. Especially, I will highlight and analyse the organic character of the Zaporozhians, their masculinity and the defining ‘others’ against whom they are constructed. Then, in the subsections devoted to the Cossacks as the body politic and the model of individual self-fulfilment I will focus my attention on the political assessment of the Gogolian Zaporozhians and its possible ramifications for the nineteenth-century Russian imperial state and its individual male citizens.

¹³ Which she actually notes herself, Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 105-110, 367-371.

4.2. Contexts

4.2.1. Little Russia and Gogol'

The Old World Landowners (Starosvetskie pomeshchiki) short story could serve as a paragon of Gogol's literary style. It opens with an idyllic depiction of an endearingly ramshackle manor inhabited by a charming couple of aged Little Russian nobles. The enchanting atmosphere woven aptly by the narrator is soon demolished by the invasion of sinister outside forces from which there is no rescue. Characteristically for Gogol', the peculiar mix of the fantastic and the satirical produces the sense of tragic powerlessness experienced by the protagonists, who face a quiet but inescapable destruction.¹⁴ The imperfect but good-hearted inhabitants of the manor succumb to death and solitude, whereas their beautiful household is devastated by predatory strangers who babble about improvement and welfare of the serfs, but who actually are concerned only with monetary profits. For the purposes of my argument what matters most is the way in which Gogol' defines this old world manor as an embodiment of the Little Russian past that was so dear to him. At the very beginning of the story, it is explicitly stated that praise should be bestowed exclusively upon 'the old, national, genuinely cordial and at the same time rich families,' who are juxtaposed to the low born Little Russian careerists infesting (*kak sarancha*, 'like locusts') the government offices in Saint Petersburg.¹⁵ It can only be noted in passing that at one point Gogol' himself was such a low-rank functionary of Little Russian origin, although as a nobleman most probably he did not consider himself a complete *homo novus*. More importantly, it has to be appreciated that what seems to be crucial here is not the opposition between the Russian and the Ukrainian identifications, as that between the parvenu and gentry traditions, the cosy patriarchy and the artificial, soulless bureaucracy. The latter can be as much Little Russian as Muscovite, which does not make it any bit less oppressive.¹⁶

At various points of his life, Gogol' would present Little Russia in a more approving way, distance himself from it, or even openly criticise it, but his vision of his home country was invariably characterised by the nostalgia and political memory of the post-Cossack landowning elite. Gogol's representation of Ukraine was embedded in the imaginary of one peculiar stratum and had its roots in the early modern period. It evolved from the 1650s until the end of the eighteenth century, but its ultimate codification was a narrative about the Ukrainian Cossacks entitled *The History of the Rus*. This text was compiled shortly after the

¹⁴ For an analysis of the fantastic elements in Gogol's oeuvre see Iurii Mann, *Poetika Gogolia* (Moscow, 1988). 55-129.

¹⁵ PSS 2, 11-38.

¹⁶ For an inspiring analysis of the *Old World Landowners* see Mann, *Poetika Gogolia*, 157-165.

conclusion of the Napoleonic period and circulated for more than two decades in manuscript copies among the Little Russian elite, only to be published in print in 1846 by a Moscow-based antiquarian. It appears that the main aim of this story was to provide arguments to defend more favorable terms of integration for the peculiarly organised landed elite of the former Little Russian Hetmanate into the all-imperial nobility. Despite articulating the worldview of the conservative landowners, it soon became an important source of inspiration for people of the most varied political hues, revolutionary democrats and populist anarchists included. *The History of the Rus* was also an important source of protagonists and plots for the writers and poets of the period: Ryleev, Bulgarin, Gogol', Pushkin, Shevchenko, Kulish, to name but a few.¹⁷

Even before the emergence of *The History of the Rus*, various elements of the narrative distilled by the Little Russian landowning elite could be taken up by actors not related with this region and, apparently, not fully appreciating the context. For instance, the cosmopolitan-minded Nikolai Karamzin published three speeches of Vasiliï Poletyka defending the Hetmanate's republican arrangements in his journal *Vestnik Evropy* (*Herald of Europe*). It seems that for Karamzin it was simply an uncontroversial example of the European-style Enlightenment patriotism expressed by a concerned landowning citizen from the southwest of Russia. At the same time, the anti-Polish and anti-Catholic thrust of the autonomist argument made it dear to the Russian traditionalists for whom '[t]he Ukrainian struggle of the seventeenth century had become a holy conservative cause on a par with the Russian militias during the Time of Troubles' (1598-1613). As late as the 1840s, an ultra-conservative reviewer welcomed Shevchenko's Ukrainian-language poem *Haidamaky* as a text about a legitimate struggle of the Orthodox people against their Catholic oppressors, completely disregarding its subversive social message and the use of a different linguistic standard.¹⁸

For the purposes of this analysis it is most important that, among all those contradictory appropriations, also the liberal Decembrist rebels such as Kondratii Ryleev and Vil'gel'm Kiukhel'beker (Wilhelm Küchelbecker) could take up the traditional republican autonomism of the conservative Little Russian elite and interpret it as an expression of their own political views. They saw the elite Cossack traditions as a convenient mix of Herder-style Slavophilia,¹⁹ constitutional resistance against arbitrary power and militarised masculine

¹⁷ Serhii Plokhyy, *Cossack Myth: History and Nationhood in the Age of Empires* (Cambridge, 2012), 15-74 & 307-368; see also Aleksei Tolochko (Oleksii Tolochko), *Kievskaiia Rus' i Malorossiiia* (Kiev, 2012), 177-203.

¹⁸ Paul Bushkovitch, "The Ukraine in Russian Culture 1790-1860: The Evidence of the Journals," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Vol. 39. No. 3 (1991), 344-345, 352-353.

¹⁹ John P. Sidoruk, "Herder and the Slavs," *AATSEEL Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (September, 1955), 71-75.

brotherhood. In fact, this was a misunderstanding, because the traditional republicanism of the early modern style is by no means identical with nineteenth-century liberalism, however that did not matter too much for the Romantic conspirators.²⁰ Also those who were disinclined to condone the Decembrists' constitutional longings would readily conflate the liberalism of their time with the memory of early modern republicanism, usually associated with anarchy and inefficiency, best embodied by the image of partitioned Poland-Lithuania. Among those critics, as I will try to prove, stood Nikolai Gogol'.

The Little Russian fad was not all about politics *sensu stricto*. It could be attributed to other reasons, not least of which was Catherine the Great's expansion into the Black Sea region. This enterprise had been advertised as the restoration of Russia's beautiful south where the Empire's Classical roots would combine harmoniously with a multiethnic modernity to form a New Russia in the Pontic area. As it happened, much of this promised land covered the territory of the old Zaporozhia. Thus, the former Cossack and Tatar lands started to be perceived as the Russian Ausonia, or Italy.²¹

The other important reason for Ukraine's popularity was the folkloric fascination. Leaving aside the academic debates of the time,²² most Russian opinion perceived the area near Kiev as the cradle of Russianness and the Ukrainian folklore was believed to be the purest and most authentic of all the regions of the Empire. Except for the most narrow-minded Westernisers, the conservatives and the liberals alike were susceptible to such arguments. Indeed, the Catherinian vision of the beautiful Classicist South was compatible with the belief in the folkloric richness and authenticity of the 'Ukrainian Russianness.' Contrary to what has been suggested by Anne-Marie Thiesse, the folkloric interests, at least in the Russian case, seem to have emerged not in opposition, but as an offshoot of the desire to inscribe the Russian nation into the Classical Greco-Latin framework of reference.²³ This is no place to dwell on that argument, but this peculiar mix can be illustrated with one of the most celebrated quotes in the Ukrainian history. As it was put by Johann Gottfried Herder in his famous *Journal of my Voyage in the Year 1769* (published only in 1846):

Ukraine will become a new Greece: the beautiful sky of this people, their merry disposition, their musical nature, their fertile soil, etc. shall awake one day. From diverse petty peoples, as

²⁰ For the Decembrists and especially Ryleev see Plochy, *Cossack Myth*, 15-27.

²¹ Serhii Bilenky, *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations* (Stanford, 2012), 96-98; Tolochko, *Kievskaiia Rus'*, 71-77.

²² Tolochko, *Kievskaiia Rus'*, 205-235.

²³ Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La création des identités nationales: Europe, XVIIIe-XXe siècle* (Paris, 2001), 23-29; See also David L. Cooper, *Creating the Nation: Identity and Aesthetics in Early Nineteenth-century Russia* (DeKalb, IL, 2010).

was once with Greece, a cultured nation will be formed. Their borders will reach the Black Sea and thence the whole world.²⁴

Immediately after his arrival in Saint Petersburg, Gogol' understood that he could capitalise on his own Little Russian background and chose not to miss the chance. In fact, it was only then that he became consciously interested in the culture of his fatherland.²⁵ First, he contemplated a career of an academic historian and here his most important project was, not surprisingly, a history of Little Russia.²⁶ As it happened, he became a writer and his first breakthrough was a collection of tales with a conspicuous Little Russian colouring: *Evenings on a Farm near Dikan'ka* (*Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki*; Dykan'ka is a town near Poltava in Central Ukraine). In 1835, Gogol' eventually abandoned his academic plans and embarked on a literary career for good.²⁷ This same year he published the first version of *Taras Bul'ba* which had a rather unproblematic message extolling the genuine Orthodox spirit of the Ukrainian Cossacks and their fierce anti-Polish sentiments.

Some scholars want to see in this early text a manifestation of a conscious Ukrainian patriotism, allegedly distinct from the Russian,²⁸ but to my mind it is a rather straightforward story about the Orthodox people of Rus' oppressed by the evil foreigners. Such motifs from the Hetmanate's history were part and parcel of the all-Russian patriotic repository and were quite popular, especially among those less fond of the autocracy. For Decembrists and other liberals, the Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising was an example of violent, popular upheaval and charismatic, military-political leadership. Nevertheless, it would be extravagant to suspect them of holding any sympathies for Little Russian separatism as it was in the first decades of the nineteenth century: a nostalgic grumbling of the conservative Left-Bank elite. As for Gogol', it is true that his 1835 *Taras Bul'ba* contains many elements of the two Little Russian historical narratives (that of the imperialist clergymen and that of the autonomist landowners, most probably mediated by *The History of the Rus*), but they serve more as a source of inspiration, while a story itself was tailored for the all-Russian readership and does not seem to be extremely complex or ambiguous.

²⁴ 'Die Ukraine wird ein neues Griechenland werden: der schöne Himmel dieses Volks, ihr lustiges Wesen, ihre Musikalische Natur, ihr fruchtbares Land u. s. w. werden einmal aufwachen: aus so vielen kleinen wilden Völkern, wie es die Griechen vormals auch waren, wird eine gesittete Nation werden: ihre Gränzen werden sich bis zum schwarzen Meer hinerstrecken und von dahinaus durch die Welt,' Johann Gottfried Herder, *Journal Meiner reise im Jahr 1769*, in *Werke in zehn Bänden* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), vol. 9/2, 67-68.

²⁵ Karlinsky, *Sexual Labyrinth of Gogol*, 31-32.

²⁶ For a study of Gogol' as a historian see Bojanowska, *Gogol'*, 97-169.

²⁷ Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 167-169.

²⁸ See for example Saera Yoon, 'Transformation of a Ukrainian Cossack into a Russian Warrior: Gogol's 1842 *Taras Bulba*,' *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Fall, 2005), 430-444.

This is not to say that Gogol' was not aware of or interested in Little Russian issues. The last traces of the region's distinct legal and social arrangements were abolished only by Nicholas I and Gogol', who hailed from the lower echelons of the Notable Military Fellowship, was well aware of what was at stake. However, as has been suggested by Iurii Mann, his attitude towards the disgruntled landowners of his home region was ironic, at best – a stark contrast to Pushkin's flaunting his Muscovite ancestors' patriotic contributions in the struggle against Poland-Lithuania in the early seventeenth century. At that stage, in the 1830s and 1840s, the autonomist tradition was mostly about concocting evidence for particular families' noble pedigrees, usually traced back to dubious sixteenth-century charters of the Commonwealth kings, while at the same time inflating their often equally hazy contributions to the struggle with the semi-mythical Polish-Lithuanian lords and demonised Jesuits. By and large, it was a rather stifling and unattractive intellectual climate for the talented and ambitious youth that Gogol' was. His own family had Polish-Lithuanian roots and built its tenuous claim to noble status on a seventeenth-century ancestor who had been a Cossack colonel and a serial turncoat serving alternately with the Muscovites, Poles and Ottomans and perhaps even converting to Catholicism at some point. Gogol' chose to conceal all those complexities in Saint Petersburg, which can serve as a good example of both the instrumental meddling with the past typical for the Little Russian squirearchy and Gogol's own efforts to distance himself from what he had left at home, after resolving to achieve success in the growingly anti-Polish and anti-Western atmosphere (though it is tempting to see the troublesome ancestor as a prefiguration of his literary interest in the topic of Cossack treason).²⁹

Of course, there was also a less elite-focused attitude towards the Little Russian identity emerging, as it was the period in which the booming folkloric explorations were endowed with serious political meanings that would eventually lead in many different directions. Although later this tendency became a tenet of anti-imperial Ukrainian nation building, we should not forget that the towering figure of Ukrainian folklorism in the 1830s and the 1840s, Mikhail Maksimovich (Mykhailo Maksymovych), was a devout patriot of the Russian Empire.³⁰ His example shows that emphasis on the specificity of Ukrainian culture could also contribute to the construction of the so-called all-Russian nationality, encompassing all three

²⁹ Mann, *Gogol'*, 9-29; Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 38; Leonid Livak, *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination: A Case of Russian Literature* (Stanford, 2010), 140-141.

³⁰ Bilenky, *Romantic Nationalism*, 269-279.

branches of Orthodox East Slavs: Great Russians (today's Russians), Little Russians (today's Ukrainians) and White Russians (today's Belarusians).

Gogol' himself felt some sort of belonging with the Ukrainian people and appreciated its fundamental distinctiveness from that of the Muscovy proper. At some points he might have even been contemplating the restoration of separate nationhood in Ukraine, as is attested by a fragment entitled *Rome* in which the divided Italy with its past glories seems to stand for the politically subjugated Little Russia, whereas the modern Paris possibly symbolises Saint Petersburg (several other interpretations are possible).³¹ But this is not what the 1835 *Taras Bul'ba* is about. It is only the later 1842 version that addresses the issue of the Little Russian tradition as opposed the Russian autocratic Empire, but here, as I will try to show, the overall conclusion is not encouraging for the autonomists, let alone the separatists. The key problems that are taken into account are the individual self-fulfillment and the question of what sort of polity can guarantee it, while at the same time securing the preservation of the most important collective values, for instance, the Orthodox confession. There is a regionalist or even ethnic dimension to this, as the context that Gogol' knows best is that of the Little Russia but, I would argue, it is an aspect subordinate to other political considerations, not the primary and most important one.

4.2.2. Russia under Nicholas I

Nicholas I is usually presented as one of the most backward-looking Russian rulers, the proverbial Europe's gendarme. As in most cases, the reality is much more complex. It will not be my aim here to substitute some sort of white legend for the dominant black one. Rather, I will sketch out the cultural and ideological landscape of Russia at that time.

*

The reign of Nicholas I commenced in 1825 with an earthquake, namely, the Decembrist rebellion. Nicholas was the younger of two surviving brothers of Alexander I, the older being Constantine who had given up his claim to the throne. However, the liberal-minded aristocrats and military officers decided to take advantage of this delicate situation and proclaimed the absent Constantine the lawful Emperor. Eventually, Nicholas managed to rally the support of most of the guard regiments and crush the resistance of the rebel troops occupying the Senate Square. This experience should have made Nicholas I rather reserved about Western-style liberalism. Still, in 1829 he resolved to fulfil his legal obligations and

³¹ Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 313-316; see also *ibid.*, 161-167 for a discussion of an unpublished fragment of *Mazepa's Meditations*.

travelled to Warsaw to be crowned there as constitutional king of Poland. As it happened, by the end of the following year, Poland plunged into revolutionary havoc. Nicholas was subsequently dethroned by the Polish parliament and Russian armies had to reconquer the country.³²

That Nicholas's own father had been strangled by his own disgruntled courtiers helps us to understand why the Emperor had good reason to perceive constitutionalism, parliamentarianism and liberalism in general as serious threats to his rule and personal safety. All those elements could be associated with other European countries, easily identified as the so-called West. This impression was further reinforced by the fact that one of the main foci of the subversive trouble and ingratitude within the Empire was Poland, the country traditionally perceived by the Russians as the embodiment of all that was threatening about foreign European culture.³³

Thus, at the beginning of the 1830s a doctrine was distilled by the Russian political elite organised around Nicholas, which drew on the preexistent sense of Russia's difference and detachment from the rest of Europe in order to sharply delimit it from the political climate of the continent. The Decembrists' attempt against the Emperor and their vague constitutional projects were said to be saturated with subversive Western poison, inherently alien to the soul of the Russian people, characterised by peacefulness, reverence and love of the monarch.³⁴ This was an ideological construction formulated in the circumstances of acquaintance and dialogue with the Western European thought and realities, not a genuine product of the pure Slavic mind. In other words, it was a fine manifestation of the very thing it claimed that Russia was free of.

The best known articulation of this current of political thought was the tripartite formula of Nicholas I's minister of education Sergei Uvarov, often referred to as the so-called official nationality: Orthodox Christianity – Autocracy – Nationality (*pravoslavie – samoderzhavie – narodnost'*). The first two elements are rather straightforward, but the word 'nationality' requires a closer look. First of all, it must be said that the term is derived from the Russian noun *narod*, which in different contexts can stand for both nation and people (*Volk*). Thus, the Russian term *narodnost'* combined the semantic fields of nationality and

³² W. Bruce Lincoln, *Nicholas I: Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias* (London, 1978), 17-47, 135-143.

³³ Lincoln, *Nicholas I*, 91-92.

³⁴ Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy: Volume One: From Peter the Great to the Death of Nicholas I* (Princeton, 1995), 264-279 & 296-308.

popular spirit.³⁵ In fact, this does not seem to be a very unusual semantic cocktail in the context of nineteenth-century Europe, but in Russia these concepts were all the more inextricable thanks to the ambiguity of *narod*.

Now, what was this Russian essence actually like? As *narodnost'* was elevated by a government minister to the position of one of the three tenets of the state, it could be expected that there was at least some vague meaning behind it. In fact, there is surprisingly little. Apparently, the *narodnost'* boiled down to an unbreakable attachment of the Russian subjects to their faith and monarch, that is, to the first two segments of the tripartite formula (*pravoslavie* and *samoderzhavie*). This attachment was said to be built on the strong foundation of love.³⁶

All this Uvarov combined with his own peculiar version of the Enlightenment stadial history, according to which Russia was not a fully European country, but rather stood between Europe and Asia. Russia was simply on a different stage of development, not yet ready for the constitutional monarchy which he believed to be the ultimate form of government, but at the same time more robust than worn out Europe and still capable of achieving the historical apogee. In his assessment of Russia's historical situation, Uvarov did not actually stand too far from Petr Chaadaev and Timofei Granvoskii, intellectuals usually identified as Westernisers, but where they saw a predicament of a nation without history (and thus identity), he underlined the youthful fertility and open avenues of development.

The tripartite formula of the official nationality was more a slogan or a programme for the future than a consistently implemented agenda of the day. Consequently, it could be interpreted in a number of ways. Some like Mikhail Pogodin and Stepan Shevyrev took it seriously and invested a lot of effort to study the genuine Slavic topics that should ideally help to define the character of the Russian state and the vectors of its expansion in the wider Slavic space. On the other end of the same spectrum there was a group of dynastic patriots who emphasised the central importance of autocracy and loyalty to the monarch (but also to the Orthodox Church). Not surprisingly, the three most vocal figures of this current were not ethnic Russians, but two Polish-Lithuanian nobles and a Baltic German: Faddei Bulgarin (Tadeusz Bułharyn), Osip Senkovskii (Józef Sękowski) and Nikolai Grech (Nikolaus Gretsche). These influential litterateurs did not dismiss the importance of nationality altogether, but simply distributed accents in a different way.

³⁵ Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy: History of a Conservative Utopia in Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought* (Oxford, 1975), 46; Cooper, *Creating the Nation*, 166-168; Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 35.

³⁶ David Saunders, "Historians and Concepts of Nationality in Early Nineteenth-Century Russia," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (January, 1982), 61.

In many ways, the ‘dynastic’ intellectuals were actually closer in their thinking to the ruling elite of the Russian Empire, than Pogodin and Shevyrev. After all, Uvarov himself was more a cosmopolitan man of Enlightenment than a devout collector of the Slavic tradition. Similarly, Nicholas I was brought up by noble-born ethnic Germans and throughout his lifetime he would always remain extremely cautious about questioning the rights of the nobility, even when it meant preserving the hegemonic position of the Polish-speaking Latin Catholics in relation to their East Slavic Orthodox serfs.³⁷

Outside the spectrum encompassing seekers of official nationality and dynastic patriots, the public sphere comprised two tendencies tolerated by the government: the so-called Westernisers (*zapadniki*) and the Slavophiles (*slavianoliuby*).³⁸ Characteristically, the luminaries of both these groups were based in Moscow, as opposed to Saint Petersburg, the hub of the ‘dynastic’ conservatism and official nationality. In a way, they were more radical, independent and slightly younger editions of government-clinging groups. Westernisers wanted Russia to take Western Europe as a model and try to become a modern nation, a sort of large, East European France. A great example of this camp was Vissarion Belinskii, a vocal enemy of developing the Ukrainian speech varieties into a distinct standard language. Their use, he argued, detached the authors from universal human values, while the Ukrainian topics could be put to better use and endowed with deeper meaning by their inclusion into Russian-language literary production. To illustrate his argument he juxtaposed Gogol’ as a positive example with Taras Shevchenko. Russia should join the European family of civilised nations as a homogeneous unitary state and all the East Slavs had to coalesce into one French-like society (of course, this was based on a very simplistic vision of the then French). Only this would enable the Russians to become men of the nineteenth century in the full sense of the term. For this reason, the liberal Belinskii was much less welcoming of the Ukrainian fad in Russian literature than most conservatives of his time.³⁹

Another important figure among the Westernisers was Timofei Granovskii, a young professor of history whose public lectures at the Moscow University were an immensely

³⁷ Lincoln, *Nicholas I*, 48-59, 239-252; Bushkovitch, ‘Ukraine in Russian Culture,’ 347-349; Cynthia H. Whittaker, ‘The Ideology of Sergei Uvarov: An Interpretive Essay,’ *Russian Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (April, 1978), 158-176; Andrei Zorin, *Kormia dvuglovogo orla* (Moscow, 2001), 338-374.

³⁸ In the widest sense the term Slavophile can refer to any intellectual interested in the study and promotion of the Slavic culture, identity and usually also some sort of supraconfessional and supranational unity. As such, it can be applied to individuals and phenomena stretching from the eighteenth and even seventeenth (Mavro Orbini and Juraj Križanić) to the twenty-first century. Here however, it will be used in a narrower sense to denote the group of Russian intellectuals based in Moscow and active from the 1830s to the 1850s.

³⁹ Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 20 & 308-313; Andrea Rutherford, ‘Vissarion Belinskii and the Ukrainian National Question,’ *Russian Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (October, 1995), 500-515.

popular social fixture. Neither original nor prolific, he was nevertheless a sort of cult figure and an important transmitter of Hegelian historiosophy.⁴⁰ In his lectures he argued that the European cultural identity developed in the Middle Ages as a consequence of tension between the imperious Papacy and the secular rulers. Russia did not participate in this process and thus lacked a European identity. This line of thinking was not alien to Gogol' as is attested by some of his historical sketches.⁴¹

The Moscow Slavophiles (Aleksei Khomiakov, Ivan Kireevski, the Aksakov brothers) in turn drew on the German Romantic philosophy (Friedrich W. J. Schelling, the Schlegels, August von Haxthausen) to argue that Russia was the historical embodiment of the Slavic soul and as such it needed a different arrangement and path. For instance, autocracy and serfdom should be preserved as they allowed a comprehensive collective spirituality, but to function properly both institutions needed to be cultivated in a peculiar Orthodox Slavic way that would assure they did not degenerate into a mechanism of inhumane exploitation. In practice, the Moscow Slavophiles attributed central importance to the Orthodox Christian confession with which, they believed, the Slavic spirit was predestined to combine harmoniously.

In fact, theirs was a programme more radical in its conservatism than that of the imperial court and during the reign of Nicholas I the Moscow Slavophiles played the role of the loyalist malcontents.⁴² Only one, but extremely important, element of this ideology was potentially subversive: in contrast to some earlier opponents of Russia's indiscriminate acceptance of the West, the Moscow Slavophiles looked for inspiration not so much in the heritage of the Muscovite aristocracy and clergy with their use of the Byzantine Greek and Church Slavonic, but rather to the genuine Russian *Volk* and its vernacular. However, as there seemed to be no threat that they would become involved in revolutionary conspiracies of any sort (differently to the unreliable Westernisers), the Slavophiles were tolerated without reservations.⁴³

This rather detailed introduction to Russian political orientations in the first two decades of Nicholas's rule is indispensable in explaining *Taras Bul'ba's* political thrust. As I will seek

⁴⁰ By historiosophy (philosophy of history) I mean all rational speculations on the significance and *telos* of human history (or large sections thereof) deduced from a priori axioms rather than built on the basis of empirical evidence (historiography). Nineteenth-century examples would include G. W. F. Hegel's theory of *Zeitgeist* and his triad of thesis, antithesis, synthesis; Juliusz Słowacki's genesic philosophy; Nikolai Danilevskii's and Konstantin Leont'iev's visions of circular rise and fall of incompatible civilisations.

⁴¹ Gogol', *PSS* 9, 124-125, 167-171; see also Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 113.

⁴² For Nicholas I's genuine dedication to the reformist agenda see Lincoln, *Nicholas I*, 92-104, 180-195

⁴³ Lincoln, *Nicholas I*, 263-268; Walicki, *Slavophile Controversy*, 121-283.

to show, Gogol' tailored this story to be an intervention in the debate between liberal constitutionalists fascinated with Cossack republicanism and progressive absolutists reluctantly using some Slavic props. In turn, the future generations understood *Taras Bul'ba* as a work defined by the conflict between the Slavophiles and Westernisers. This spurious contextualisation made them completely miss the author's message which was at the same time progressive, monarchist and anti-misogynistic.

*

The reign of Nicholas I is crucial not only on the plane of political ideologies, but also because it was a time of innovation in terms of mass political communication. The military parades organised by Nicholas's father Emperor Paul were meant to showcase the perfect obedience of the subjects to their ruler, but in fact they were accessible to a very limited public of individuals who could be physically present to either participate or spectate (in fact, the boundary between participants and spectators is always fuzzy in such events). It was during the rule of Nicholas I that prints depicting the Emperor and his family in various situations started to be distributed widely. It is hardly possible to overestimate the importance of this medium.

The content of the communication between the ruler and his subjects changed substantially. According to Richard Wortman, in a stark contrast to the androgynous superhuman creature that had been his grandmother Catherine the Great or the seducing angel of his brother Alexander I, Nicholas was the first fully human being on the Russian throne for a very long time. Of course, he was not just any mortal, but a very particular one: Nicholas I was a father and a husband. The male monarch was presented as the head of the family, benevolent, but also just and severe when necessary: ready, for example, to execute five young leaders of the Decembrist conspiracy, the flower of the aristocratic *beau monde*. At least in part, this model was inspired by the way in which the figure of Frederick William III had been shaped during the Napoleonic period (Nicholas's wife was Princess Charlotte of Prussia, daughter of the cherished Queen Louise).

The message conveyed by the patriarchal imagery was more complex than it might seem at first sight. First of all, it suggested a combination of restraint, dedication and self-sacrifice on the part of the Emperor, who strove for the wellbeing of his wife and children, always faithful to their persons and to his family obligations. Again, the difference with the disorderly emotional lives of Catherine the Great and Alexander I had to be striking. The Emperor's restraint and dedication was a model for his servants and subjects and also gave him the moral right to demand from them as much as he invested himself.

Secondly, the court and the guards formed a sort of extended family for the imperial couple and if we remember that these two institutions were meant to serve as a peculiar miniature representation of the Empire's society as a whole, it becomes clear that the entire political nation of Russia was in a way the Emperor's family. Nicholas, of course, played the role of the father, so doubtless it was him who held the power, but in this vision also the Empress, as a mother and a wife, was envisaged to possess a degree of agency that should not be neglected, even though her position was unequivocally subordinate. What is more, the Emperor also had numerous duties towards his subjects, the same as he had towards his family, quite a contrast in comparison with the Angel of Peace, Alexander I who had bestowed the blessings of his supernatural presence upon his invariably grateful subjects. The attitude of Nicholas I is best encapsulated by the fact that during the coronation he bowed thrice to the spectators, a gesture hitherto unknown to the Muscovite ceremonial. By the beginning of the twentieth century it would become so deeply rooted that all thought of it as an ancient Russian tradition.

As the whole nation was a sort of imperial family, the bond that brought it together was nothing else but love. Nicholas I might have been harsh at times, but he was always a loving father to his subjects, making genuine efforts to reach out to them; they, of course, reciprocated fully his affection.⁴⁴ Real Russians would never rebel deliberately against their Emperor and what qualified one as a true Russian was exactly this mix of devotion and obedience. And conversely: what located one beyond the pale of genuine Russianness was the subversive spirit of rebellion. Nicholas I's reign was a rule of love: not a family drama, but rather a family idyll. It was a head-on rejection of father-killing and brotherhood myths analysed by Lynn Hunt and discernible in the Cossack tales recounted by Russian liberals.⁴⁵

For the purposes of this chapter, it is enough to emphasise that this loving family mythology stood in stark contradiction to the stories of violent liberatory struggles carried out by militarised masculine brotherhoods of Cossacks which spoke so well to the Russian liberals, Ukrainian conservatives and, soon, Ukrainian populist nation-builders. While the Cossacks were a band of fatherless brothers, free and equal, the imperial family order was expressly hierarchical and structured with the all-pervading sense of duty and service; while the Cossacks were exclusively male revelers, the imagined Russian family featured also

⁴⁴ Characteristic anecdotes about Nicholas I helping common people are recounted in Lincoln, *Nicholas I*, 178-179.

⁴⁵ These five paragraphs are based on the account of Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 247-264 & 296-332; see also Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1992).

outstanding female figures endowed with a relatively wide share of agency. In turn, the two myths made similar claims about defending the Orthodox Christian faith.

We shall later see that many motifs of family love played an important role in Gogol's *Taras Bul'ba*. Whether he employed them consciously or whether his environment was simply so permeated with this imagery that it was impossible for him to escape, is of secondary importance. What matters is that to understand his text one must be aware of the prominence of the intertwined ideals of Slavic purity, Orthodox Christianity, autocratic monarchism and family love in the Russian political culture and public debates of the 1830s and 1840s.

4.2.3. Walter Scott and the Russian historical novel

In the course of the 1820s and early 1830s a flurry of Walter Scott's novels appeared in Russian translations. In fact, individual members of the intellectual and aristocratic elite of the Russian Empire were already well acquainted with the Edinburgh author's novels before the release of their Russian translations, because they had read them either in English or in French. As elsewhere in Europe, Scott's works were an immediate success as they catered to a notable thirst for history which had already borne fruits in the form of some history-themed novels and dramas independent of Scott's inspiration. The most important figure in this current had doubtless been Nikolai Karamzin, a sentimentalist author today remembered mostly for his short story *Poor Lisa (Bednaia Liza)* about a peasant girl seduced by a nobleman and his twelve-volume *History of the Russian State (Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskogo)*, published 1816-1829) praised for its engaging novelistic style. As was famously put by Pushkin, Karamzin was a Columbus that discovered the old Russia for the reading public.⁴⁶ Prince Viazemskii, in turn, noted that Karamzin had rescued Russia 'from the invasion of oblivion' (*ot nashestviia zabvenii*) just like Prince Mikhail Kutuzov (commander-in-chief in 1812) who had rescued Russia from the invasion of Napoleon.⁴⁷

Numerous novels, short stories and novellas, more or less closely copying the Scottish model, were published by Russian authors by the end of 1840s, prompting Mark Al'tshuller to identify it as the Walter Scott epoch in the history of Russian literature. Gogol' himself was well acquainted with Scott's works. According to Pavel Annenkov, his one-time secretary, the Scotsman was his favorite foreign author.⁴⁸ In this section I will first sketch some distinctive traits of the Scott-style historical novel and then I will dwell a bit longer on one Cossack-

⁴⁶ Quoted after Tolochko, *Kievskaiia Rus'*, 49.

⁴⁷ Quoted after E. N. Penskaia, "Russkii istoricheskii roman XIX veka," in A. N. Dimitriev, ed., *Istoricheskaiia kul'tura imperatorskoi Rossii: formovanie predstavlenii o proshlom* (Moscow, 2012), 424.

⁴⁸ Karlinsky, *Sexual Labyrinth of Gogol*, 78.

themed work of this kind published in 1834, just one year before the first version of Gogol's *Taras Bul'ba*.

The crucial characteristic of Scott's novels is that they aim to offer a tangible picture of the past, inhabited not only by the statesmen and heroes, but also the common people with their everyday problems. The past in turn is understood and rendered as an irretrievably lost realm, the last traces of which are rapidly vanishing or are already gone and have to be laboriously recovered from the treasure trove of the archives. There is an inescapable air of nostalgia and a peculiar exoticism of this close, yet still unreachable world. In many ways, Scott's exercise is kindred to that of James McPherson, who had also claimed to be collecting and arranging the vanishing gems of the original Celtic culture. Several of Scott's most important novels are located in the eighteenth century, so relatively close in time, but they are all about the difference and strangeness which are meant to be savoured by his readers. Of course, the author wants to engage them emotionally, but in a sanitised manner enabled by the fact that the whole thrill derives from the inaccessibility of this realm of yore. This quality is reinforced by the fact that Scott's point-of-view characters are often visitors to the world of his stories.

For instance, Frank Osbaldistone, a Protestant Londoner with first-hand knowledge of France and links to the merchant elite of the City (*Rob Roy*), is a nineteenth-century British gentleman (the way in which Walter Scott and his readers imagined it). What is more, this sympathetic protagonist, with whom the reader can easily identify, is characteristically passive: he suffers the vicissitudes of the plot more as a spectator (or a victim) than an actor. In other words, Osbaldistone is a persona of the reader, a device which enables her or him to travel through and enjoy the world of the novel without really becoming part of it. All this contributes to the overall celebration of the past as past: the foundation and source of the present, relevant for our understanding of who we are and what our world is like, but nevertheless a fundamentally separate realm, the alignments of which cannot and should not be superimposed on the reality of the author and his readers. This is especially perceptible in Scott's treatment of the confessional conflicts which are represented as unfortunate successions of destructive acts in which all the parties have their faults and merits, but ultimately they can be justified only on the grounds of their individual loyalties. Most importantly, these strifes are relegated (together with the dynastic allegiances and Scottish

particularism) to the past as anachronistic pangs in the emerging commercial state-society of the United Kingdom.⁴⁹

Scott's historical novels were by no means pure and objective manifestations of his epoch and its taste for history: on the contrary, they seem to be conscious polemical interventions which commented on the same demand to which they catered. By and large, it seems that the way in which he posited the autonomy of the past was not fully shared (and appreciated) by his contemporaries and, to an extent, even himself.⁵⁰

Another relevant trait of the Edinburghian author's oeuvre is the choice of historical backgrounds for his plots. That these are always periods of violent conflict is not surprising for historical adventure fiction. More importantly, Scott tends to choose internecine conflicts whose resolution opens a way for the forging of a new national whole: Saxons and Normans, Jacobites and Hanoverians, Covenanters and Cavaliers, Scotch and English. Eventually, this leads to the emergence of the new British, a polite and commercial society united by shared interests and spirit of enterprise which does not preclude preserving the heritage of the ancestors.⁵¹

It must not be forgotten that in the first decades of the nineteenth century when the academic discipline of history was in its infancy and other social sciences did not yet exist, the historical novel was treated not only as an entertainment, but also a particular sort of historical enquiry, the merits of which could not be dismissed as easily as they would be later. Thus, the historical novels of Scott and other authors had a peculiar epistemological status between scholarship, pedagogy and entertainment. Their borderland or hybrid character was reinforced by the fact that the poets and writers often combined their unequivocally artistic

⁴⁹ Al'tshuller, *Epokha Valtera Skotta*, 11-21; Brian Hamnett, *The Historical Novel in Europe in the Nineteenth Century: Representations of Reality in History and Fiction* (Oxford, 2011), 82.

⁵⁰ Hamnett, *Historical Novel*, 83 suggests reading *Redgauntlet* as a dialogue between 'Scott the adventurer and dreamer, and Scott the sensible lawyer and Protestant loyalist.' For an exhaustive appraisal of Scott's complexities and internal tensions see Katie Trumpener, "National Character, Nationalist Plots: National Tale and Historical Novel in the Age of Waverley, 1806-1830," *English Literary History*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Autumn 1993), 685-731 excavates the trove of the subversive Irish national tale that was Scott's immediate context and 'defining other;' Yoon Sun Lee, "A Divided Inheritance: Scott's Antiquarian Novel and the British Nation," *English Literary History*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (Summer 1997), 537-567 in turn argues that Scott consciously aimed to question the historical narrative of British patriotism under construction at that time. Although the two arguments present two different and (superficially) contradictory sides of Scott's enterprise, I believe they can be reconciled as proving Scott's overall skepticism about the unqualified application of 'historical' alignments in the present, both in favour and in defiance of the British state.

⁵¹ See for example how the 1707 union is problematised in a conversation of two Glaswegians in Walter Scott, *Rob Roy. Vol. II* (Boston, 1857), 131-133; the quote points to the socio-economic dimension of Scott's message: as has been noted by Yoon Sun Lee, "A Divided Inheritance" and Kathryn Sunderland, "Fictional Economies: Adam Smith, Walter Scott and the Nineteenth-Century Novel," *English Literary History*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Spring 1987), 97-127 Scott understood the identity transformations which he described as processes determined by and affecting not only the national, political, confessional and ethnic divisions, but also those of class and estate.

endeavours with collecting folklore and writing historical monographs. For instance, Scott himself made his name with a collection of ballads, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, Friedrich Schiller authored serious scholarly works on the Dutch Revolt and the Thirty Years' War, and Gogol', as we have seen, planned to become an academic historian and even after abandoning those dreams still published some historical essays.⁵²

At that time, both the novel and professionalised academic historiography were developing in Europe. However, the former seems to have reached its full maturity faster than the latter. In Russia, it was precisely the generation of writers and poets that flourished in the first half of Nicholas I's reign that eventually became recognised as the fathers of the Russian literary tradition and successfully relegated the previous dwellers of the Parnassus to the realm of footnote and pedantry. Along with Gogol', remembered mostly for his prose and drama, this new pantheon also included the playwright Griboedov and the poets Pushkin and Lermontov.⁵³ Doubtless, it had much to do with both deliberate state patronage⁵⁴ and the expansion of printing, entailing the overall transformation of the public sphere. What matters here is to emphasise the very special status Gogol's *Taras Bul'ba* had (and still partly has) as a historical novel and, what is more, one written by an author considered a living classic.

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Though not always faithfully followed, Scott's methods and themes were an omnipresent reference for all authors of nineteenth-century historical fiction, including Michał Czajkowski, whose writings I shall analyse in one of the future chapters. As for Gogol', it was indispensable to introduce Scott's way of narrating in such detail, precisely in order to show that the Little Russian author departed from it. His contemporary and acquaintance Faddei Bulgarin mimicked it more closely, achieving a short-lived success, but eventually becoming the whipping boy of Russian literary history.

It was especially Scott's topic of older and more particularist identities being overcome by the newer and more inclusive ones that proved so attractive to the authors in the Russian Empire where uncertainty about belonging was widespread. One of the texts that addressed this passage from *ancien-régime* particularism to modern state allegiances was Bulgarin's *Mazepa*, published in Russian in 1834 and immediately translated into Polish. The novel is

⁵² Hamnett, *Historical Novel*, 29-62; Gogol's published articles on history and historiography include, among others, *A Glance at the Formation of Little Russia*, *On the Little Russian Songs*, *Schlözer, Müller and Herder*, *On Teaching of the Universal History* and *On the Wanderings of Peoples at the End of the Fifth Century*, PSS 8, 26-49, 85-97, 115-140.

⁵³ Lincoln, *Nicholas I*, 295.

⁵⁴ For an unfulfilled programme of this sort see Sidney Monas, *The Third Section: Police and Society in Russia under Nicholas I* (Cambridge, MA 1961), 71-72.

important as a Cossack-themed precedent of *Taras Bul'ba*, but also because Bulgarin himself was a sort of patron for the young Gogol' in Saint Petersburg.⁵⁵

Faddei Bulgarin (Jan Tadeusz Bułharyn) 'had valid claim to several «firsts» in Russian literature,'⁵⁶ but his complex biography cannot be explored exhaustively here. He was born into a Polish-Lithuanian noble family in what is today's Belarus. As a soldier in Napoleon's *Grande Armée*, he participated in the 1812 invasion of Russia. After the close of the Napoleonic upheaval he embarked upon an unexpected career in Saint Petersburg where his *Severnaia Pchela* (*The Northern Bee*) became the first privately-owned paper providing political news to the larger public in the Russian Empire and the mouthpiece of mainstream, moderately conservative opinion.⁵⁷ With his Polish-Lithuanian background, Bulgarin was less involved than some of his contemporaries in the search for the genuinely national features of the Russian state, but he did not discard the importance of the issue altogether. Always loyal to the monarch, he became a collaborator for Russia's first political police executive established by Nicholas I, the so-called Third Section of His Imperial Majesty's Chancery. At the beginning of its existence, the notorious Third Section was more like a secretive think-tank than a sinister KGB-style force.⁵⁸

As a writer, Bulgarin was the author of *Ivan Vyzhigin*, a picaresque story considered to be Russia's first novel of manners. It was an immediate success: a path-breaking literary achievement and doubtless the most important novelistic rendering of contemporary Russia before the appearance of Gogol's *Dead souls* (*Mertvye dushi*).⁵⁹ Thus, for a short period Bulgarin became the central figure in Russian literary life and even long after his star had faded he could safely claim that 'all literate people in Russia know of my existence.'⁶⁰ Among others, he was also the author of Russia's first science fiction,⁶¹ a comprehensive statistical study of the Empire, and of two historical novels: one about the Time of Troubles at the beginning of the seventeenth century and the other on the Ukrainian Cossacks, which will be

⁵⁵ Abram Reitblat, "Bulgarin i III Otdelenie," in Faddei Bulgarin, *Vidok Figliarin: Pis'ma i agenturnye zapiski F. V. Bulgarina v III Otdelenie*, ed by. Abram Reitblat (Moscow, 1998), 12.

⁵⁶ Nicholas P. Vaslef, "Bulgarin and the Development of the Russian Utopian Genre," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 1968), 35.

⁵⁷ Nurit Schleifman, "A Russian Daily Newspaper and Its Readership: «Severnaia Pchela», 1825-1840," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, Vol. 28, No. 2, *Autour de la presse russe et soviétique* (April-June, 1987), 127-144.

⁵⁸ Under its first head manager Maksim fon Fok (Magnus von Fock) the whole Third Section had around 20 full-time employees and 30 external collaborators (pundits/informers), Reitblat, "Bulgarin i III Otdelenie," 16-17; Lincoln, *Nicholas I*, 88-92; see also Monas, *The Third Section*.

⁵⁹ Gilman H. Alkire, "Gogol and Bulgarin's *Ivan Vyzhigin*," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (June, 1969), 289-296.

⁶⁰ Quoted after Elena Katz, "Faddei Bulgarin's Polish Jews and Their Significance for the Russian Judeophobic Tradition," *Russian Review*, Vol. 66, No. 3 (Jul., 2007), 406.

⁶¹ Vaslef, "Bulgarin and the Russian Utopian Genre," 37.

commented on here. Both texts fed on Russian historical myths with an especially strong anti-Polish thrust, an interesting (and doubtless conscious) choice for an author who was Polish-Lithuanian himself.

A Lithuanian⁶² and a leading ‘dynastic’ patriot, Bulgarin served very well as an embodiment of the artificially dehumanised and cosmopolitan Empire that both the Slavophile-minded conservatives and the revolution-thirsty liberals hated so much. Thus, he was an easy target for the assaults of the latter, as the former would not deign to defend him. This attitude had dire consequences for future generations of scholars: until recently Bulgarin was known mostly as the villain of Russian intellectual and literary life, worth mentioning only for the fact that Pushkin, Viazemskii and Lermontov had satirised him cruelly in their poems, a sort of ennoblement for such an allegedly miserable and narrow-minded figure. This negative image has started to evolve recently (at least in Poland and in Russia), but it is yet too early to speak of the scope of this change, especially as Western-based scholars do not seem to have taken much notice of this debate, let alone participated in it.⁶³

The novel that is interesting for us here is *Mazepa*. It tells the story of Hetman Ivan Mazepa who started his career as a page of King John Casimir, arguably the most adventurous ruler of Poland-Lithuania,⁶⁴ but was later elevated to leadership among the Ukrainian Cossacks by Muscovy’s Peter the Great. In 1708, Mazepa decided to change sides and joined King Charles XII of Sweden. As a consequence, the autonomous Cossack state in Eastern Ukraine plunged into a civil war between the supporters of the Hetman and those of the Tsar. Eventually, the fates of the whole of Eastern Europe were sealed in the battle of Poltava, Central Ukraine, in June 1709, when Peter defeated the Swedes and their Cossack allies thus initiating Russia’s rise to the position of unquestionable hegemony over that part of the

⁶² For the non-ethnic sense in which I use the term Lithuanian see my note on conventions.

⁶³ For a good example of this new tendency see Abram Reitblat’s introductory article in Bulgarin, *Vidok Figliarin* which is a collection of Bulgarin’s reports submitted to the Third Section; other interesting works are Aleksandr Altunian, ‘*Politicheskie mnenia*’ *Faddeia Bulgarina: ideino-stilisticheskii analiz zapisok F. V. Bulgarina k Nikolaiu I* (Moscow, 1998); Petr Glushkovskii (Piotr Głuszkowski), *F. V. Bulgarin v rusko-pol’skikh otnosheniakh pervoi poloviny XIX veka: evoliutsiia identichnosti i politicheskikh vozzrenii* (Saint Petersburg, 2013) where a comprehensive bibliography (including recent PhD dissertations defended all over Russia) can be found; a cursory appreciation of an early stage of this reevaluation of Bulgarin’s and his fellow conservatives’ role is a review article by Ronald D. LeBlanc, “Villains No More, No More Villains: Rehabilitating the Evil Triumvirate,” *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Autumn 1994), 493-499.

⁶⁴ Before his election as king of Poland-Lithuania John Casimir was a Spanish admiral, a cardinal in Rome and for two years a prisoner of Cardinal Richelieu in France. After the first few years on the throne, he was forced into exile by the invading Swedes. Playing the card of confessional struggle against the Protestant invaders he managed to regain power, but was later defeated in a civil war by the disgruntled magnates. When his plans for constitutional reform proved unsuccessful, he abdicated and moved to Paris where he died as an abbot of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. In the Polish-language literature (for instance, in Słowacki’s *Mazepa*) he has been depicted as an ardent promoter of the Counterreformation and an incorrigible womaniser.

continent. Mazepa himself died soon after as an exile in the Ottoman Empire, but throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries he remained ‘a modern-day Judas’ of the Russian Empire.⁶⁵ Until 1869 his name would be cursed publicly every year on the first Sunday of the Lent in all the Orthodox churches of Russia and Ukraine (unnamed Little Russian rebels would be anathematised until 1917).⁶⁶ At the same time, a literary myth of Mazepa flourished in other European literatures producing celebrated texts by, among others, Lord Byron and Juliusz Słowacki. These works described the amorous exploits of the eponymous protagonist whilst a young page in the service of John Casimir and his consequent persecution by Polish-Lithuanian magnates.

Unlike the model established by Walter Scott who preferred to locate the real historical figures only in the background of his novels, Bulgarin’s text focuses on Hetman Mazepa himself, presented as an unequivocally negative but also extremely intelligent Richelieu-like figure. His insatiable ambition and sinister machinations are one of the two main engines of the plot, the other being the irresistible erotic allure of a young Cossack officer Ognevik (his name stemming from *ogon’*, fire, and meaning either a fever or an igniting flint). The latter protagonist is Mazepa’s main opponent throughout the novel, fiancé of the Hetman’s daughter and, as it eventually turns out, his long-lost son. The plot is somewhat chaotic and leaps over a couple of years to transport us to the eve of the battle of Poltava (not described directly, but recounted by other protagonists). It also contains some frenetic elements, for instance, the vivid descriptions of a decaying female cadaver.⁶⁷

Mazepa is doubtless the villain of the text, although one who can be respected for his intellectual capacities, as he outwits the rash Ognevik on a number of occasions. Also, it must be noted that he is eventually allowed to reconcile with his son and die a dignified, even tragic, death.⁶⁸ Together Mazepa and Ognevik embody various aspects of the Cossack particularism as opposed to the unified Russian Empire. In this way the author manages to present the notion of the separate Ukrainian Cossack nation as a doomed but serious and respectful ideal.⁶⁹

The original source of Mazepa’s downfall in the novel seems to be the fact that he is contaminated with Polish-Lithuanian (read: Western) culture: among others, he often speaks

⁶⁵ Ploky, *Cossack Myth*, 42.

⁶⁶ Nadieszda Kizenko, ‘The Battle of Poltava in Imperial Liturgy,’ in Serhii Ploky, ed., *Poltava 1709: The battle and the Myth* (Cambridge, MA), 228.

⁶⁷ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 258, 261-262.

⁶⁸ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 293-296.

⁶⁹ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 13-15, 82-83, 90, 117-118, 213-216, 238-239.

Latin and plots with a Jesuit priest.⁷⁰ This gives him the tools with which to manipulate individuals (for Mazepa, life is a game of chess and humans are pawns),⁷¹ but also feeds insatiable ambitions and desires, many of which have to do with the female sphere: the main motivation behind his treason is the desire for a mature Polish beauty, Princess Dul'skaia.⁷² This is a meaningful device, as the Polish-Lithuanian nobility culture is characterised with extreme reverence for noble-born women.⁷³ At one point it is stated that Catholic Europe, for which the old Poland-Lithuania stands as a shorthand, is ruled by priests, Jews and women.⁷⁴

Interestingly, the novel, which is ostensibly strongly anti-Polish, contains many detailed descriptions and explanations of Polish-Lithuanian realities. In a way, Bulgarin uses the anti-Polish stereotypes as a pedagogical device to acquaint the Russian public with a more nuanced vision of his motherland. The image he conveys would require a closer analysis, but it is safe to note that it is both enchantingly picturesque, as well as slightly condemning: a country with a colourful nobility culture and scandalous lawlessness, where only the strong and powerful can feel secure.⁷⁵ One can note in passing that this had been a diagnosis widespread among the enlightened Polish-Lithuanians of the late eighteenth century and it became a received wisdom in the Polish-language public sphere of the early nineteenth century, so Bulgarin did not need the malicious Russian propaganda to become critical of the old Commonwealth that had allegedly failed as a state.

The novel was published one year before the first version of Gogol's *Taras Bul'ba* (released in the *Mirgorod* volume in 1835) and there are a number of striking concurrences between the two texts. First of all, the depiction of the Polish-Lithuanian state and society in *Taras Bul'ba* closely follows that of *Mazepa*, even though Gogol's text is much less detailed than that of Bulgarin. Especially distinctive, is the crucial social role attributed by the two authors to the intoxicatingly beautiful aristocratic women. For instance, Bulgarin's portrayal of Princess Dul'skaia and, to a lesser extent, that of Mariia Lomtikovskaia (a Polish Jewess seduced by Mazepa and turned Orthodox Christian), seem to have much in common with the personage of Andrii's sweetheart in *Taras Bul'ba*. In light of this similarity it should not be neglected that in both texts it is the irresistible desire for an alluring Polish woman (Mazepa's for Dul'skaia and Andrii's for the Palatine's daughter) that forces the protagonists to abandon the Orthodox Christian side. Not surprisingly, Gogol's own most serious real-life romantic

⁷⁰ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 18-21, 140, 150.

⁷¹ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 165.

⁷² Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 44-45, 131-132, 152, 228-229.

⁷³ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 100-101.

⁷⁴ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 167.

⁷⁵ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 91-92, 136-143.

interest was a Russified Polish-Lithuanian aristocrat, Anna Viel'gorskaia (Anna Wielhorska).⁷⁶

Ognevik appears to be a sort of model for Gogol's youthful Cossack, Andrii. First of all, similarly to Gogol's Andrii, Ognevik is strongly attracted to the feminine sphere (for which he is condemned by the old Cossack commander Palii who embodies the traditional Cossack virtues).⁷⁷ Ognevik also belongs partially to the Polish-Lithuanian culture, both by birth and by education. In a characteristic scene he speaks to the kidnapped Polish-Lithuanian nobles in Polish and asks Palii to spare the lives of the helpless captives (in which he succeeds, except for the Jews).⁷⁸ Finally, just like Andrii he is extremely beautiful: even Charles XII (a thinly veiled portrayal of Napoleon), who has been wounded by Ognevik on the battlefield, does not fail to note his exceptional beauty.⁷⁹ On a number of occasions this trait of Ognevik's changes the course of action, as various more powerful protagonists either fall in love with him (Lomtikovskaia, Palii) or at least spare his life not wanting to hurt such a beautiful creature (Mazepa, Peter the Great). Similarly, Andrii is a somewhat passive figure whose fate is determined by his good looks, which eventually win the sympathy of the Palatine's daughter. Ognevik and his father (Mazepa) perish tragically as a consequence of the conflict that had torn them apart and their deaths enable the metamorphosis of Cossack Ukraine into a new entity fully unified with the Russian Empire. In the same way, the tragic deaths of Andrii and Taras Bul'ba presage the arrival of the new Russian ruler who would effectively defend the Orthodox people and allow their full bloom.

Apart from his biological progenitor, Ognevik has yet another father, the old Palii, a Cossack commander who rebelled against Hetman Mazepa and conducts an indiscriminate guerrilla war against the Polish-Lithuanian landowners. 'Wild as a steppe steed' (*dik kak stepnoi kon'*), he is a real democratic hero whose main aim is to protect the peasantry and thus he is recognised by the oppressed Orthodox serfs as their father (*bat'ko*). Palii's band is known as *vol'nitsa*, a term difficult to translate, but which is derived from the adjective *vol'nyi*, free, and so it can be rendered imperfectly as a free or voluntary party. Palii himself is also characterised by a combination of unwavering loyalty to the Muscovite tsar, devout Orthodox piety, compassion for the peasantry and untamed hatred for the Polish-Lithuanian

⁷⁶ Iurii Mann, *Gogol': Zavershenie puti 1845-1852* (Moscow, 2009), 193-200.

⁷⁷ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 140.

⁷⁸ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 117-119.

⁷⁹ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 275-277.

nobles and their Jewish middlemen. In a scene reminiscent of both Walter Scott's *Rob Roy* and Gogol's *Taras Bul'ba*, he orders a captured Jew to be drowned in the Dnieper.⁸⁰

Palii finds himself in conflict with his feminised and Polonised adoptive son Ognevik, although there is no betrayal *sensu stricto* here and eventually they reconcile (in a sequence constructed in a very similar way to that of Taras Bul'ba's attempt to visit his son Ostap in the Polish prison).⁸¹ The figure of Palii is very close to that of the old Bul'ba, who was said to defend the peasants from the abuse of the haughty Polonised Ukrainian leadership and was shaped as a similarly semi-savage, fanatically religious and xenophobic, popular leader. Even though his eventual fate is not as tragic as that of Taras Bul'ba, Palii proves equally unable to protect the Orthodox people from the foreign and native oppressors. Palii's weakness and, more generally, that of the Ukrainian body politic seems to be conditioned mainly by the inherent deficiencies of the Ukrainian democratic arrangements which allow the agile politicians of the kind of Mazepa to rise to power. The ease with which the moods of the crowd can be manipulated (and to bad ends) is illustrated in detail in the scene in which Mazepa addresses the angry Cossacks after the arrest of Palii.⁸² Later, I will try to show that, as has been observed by Edyta Bojanowska, Gogol' depicted the Cossack republicanism in an equally discouraging way (in the 1842 version).

By and large, both Palii and the old Bul'ba are portrayed as heroes belonging to a specific historical situation which is long gone and will never return. They had their merits as popular leaders and defenders of the Orthodox people, but they had to give way to the unified Russian monarchy, the arrival of which is prophesied vaguely in *Taras Bul'ba*, but unequivocally illustrated in *Mazepa* where Peter the Great appears in person as a dedicated and patriotic ruler (again, a thinly veiled portrayal of Nicholas I).⁸³

This is no place for definitive conclusions on Bulgarin's *Mazepa*, but it seems more than probable that one of the most important messages that the author wanted to convey was the superiority of the progressive-minded autocratic monarchy over traditional early modern republicanism, which is presented as extremely vulnerable to the subversive attempts of the native demagogues, foreign meddling and the morally justifiable but politically catastrophic dissension of some myopic patriots. What follows is the necessity of the unification of such a republican nation, be it Poland-Lithuania or Cossack Ukraine, with the polity of the future, the nineteenth-century imperial state of Russia.

⁸⁰ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 67-79, 84, 100, 122-130, 139.

⁸¹ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 170-176.

⁸² Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 158.

⁸³ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 179-194.

4.3. Analysis of selected topics from the 1842 version of *Taras Bul'ba*

4.3.1. *Taras Bul'ba* – the story

Taras Bul'ba was first published as a long novella in a collection entitled *Mirgorod* in 1835. The story was met with a warm response by most mainstream critics⁸⁴ and was acclaimed as the best in the volume, so it is no wonder that Gogol' chose to republish it separately in 1842. On this occasion, he expanded the text substantially and it is this second version (which can be qualified as a short novel) that I address here.

The story is located in some undefined past, reminiscent of the late sixteenth/early seventeenth century, although several elements (for instance the dualism of the Hetmanate and Zaporozhia) resemble arrangements of the eighteenth century: these could have been remembered in the author's family as 'the Cossack realities' of the autonomous Little Russia (his father, a petty landowner and Ukrainian-language playwright, was born in 1777).

Although clearly inspired by Walter Scott and Faddei Bulgarin, *Taras Bul'ba* substantially departs from these models. For instance, it contains several historical explications of the context, but they are much less detailed than those of Bulgarin, more historiosophical than historiographical excurses. One will not find in Gogol's text the graphic, frenetic descriptions of violence or the picturesque tangibility of everyday detail. The terrors of war are conveyed by mentions of generalised, depersonalised violence and the omnipresent, all-devouring fire, rather than through more concrete and detailed depictions of torture and suffering of a protagonist with whom the reader could establish a stronger emotional bond.⁸⁵

Taras Bul'ba has attracted less attention from mainstream Gogol' scholarship than his other writings, most probably because in many respects it is much less accomplished than his signature works: the plot is very schematic and predictable, the historical realities are rendered in a surprisingly superficial way, and there is disappointingly little of the disconcerting mix of satirical and fantastical elements, usually so characteristic of Gogol's work. *Taras Bul'ba* seems to be closest to the sentimentalist tradition and the story is a sort of historiosophical meditation illustrated with a rather vague plot and a succession of impressionistic, if powerful, vignettes.

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⁸⁴ There were positive reviews in the three most influential literary journals of the time: *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* where Senkovskii published, *Severnaia Pchela* run by Bulgarin and Grech and *Sovremennik* established by Pushkin who authored the review in question, Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 307.

⁸⁵ *PSS* 2, 83-84.

The tale opens with the eponymous hero Taras Bul'ba welcoming his two sons as they return home from their studies at the Kiev Academy. The father mocks their unshapely appearance and academic attire and thus provokes his firstborn Ostap into a fist fight, while the younger Andrii watches them passively, disappointing the old Taras. On the next day, all three depart together to the Zaporozhian Sich, the Cossack headquarters on a Dnieper island in the frontier area between the Realm of Poland and the Khanate of Crimea. The father who wants his sons to become true Cossacks, topples the incumbent commander-in-chief who would not break the sworn peace with the Muslims. The Cossacks go to war with the Catholic Poles who allegedly persecute the Orthodox Christians. On this occasion, an anti-Jewish pogrom is also carried out. The Cossacks' campaign is savage and destructive, but the young Bul'bas become seasoned warriors. However, during the siege of Dubno, Andrii defects to the Polish side, lured by an aristocratic girl whom he met while a student in Kiev. He repudiates his family and fatherland and becomes a Polish-style knight, but upon encountering his father on the battlefield, refuses to fight him. The old Bul'ba, in turn, has no such qualms and kills his son. The Cossacks eventually lose the struggle and Ostap is taken captive by the Poles. Taras Bul'ba travels to Warsaw only to see him executed on the main square, where the tortured Ostap is presented as a Christ-like figure. The old Bul'ba takes part in another Polish-Cossack war during which he slaughters dozens of beautiful Polish youths of both genders to avenge Ostap. Taken prisoner in a skirmish, he is crucified by the Poles on a thunderstruck tree. Dying, he prophesies that a ruler will rise in the Russian land (*iz russkoi zemli svoi tsar*) and no power will match his. The story closes with Bul'ba's Cossacks canoeing on the Dniester and cheerfully remembering their dead commander. Assorted birds drift across the river, among them the proud goldeneye (*gordyi gogol'*) which can be interpreted as the author's signature, thus emphasising the personal relevance of this text.

4.3.2. The Zaporozhian Cossacks as an organic community

Arguably, the most important characteristic of the Cossacks in *Taras Bul'ba* is that they are an organic community. By that I mean that they are depicted as a community of men unspoiled by civilisation. Their way of life, their social organisation and their individual selves are products of an uninterrupted interaction with their country's natural environment. Here, nature and history are inseparable, although usually it is the latter that seems to be dependent upon and secondary to the former. In nineteenth-century Europe, the organic communities are presented as pure (that is ethnically homogeneous) and authentic, aboriginal to their land and laudable for their ethics. A society of this kind is a sort of living organism, or

rather a part of a larger living whole which is their land, in the case of *Taras Bul'ba* referred to as either Ukraine or the Russian land.⁸⁶

The organic community is contrasted with the artificial state societies. Fantasies of organic community can be interpreted as a highly idealised version of Ferdinand Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft* concept. This dream found one of its most explicit formulations in the milieu of the Moscow Slavophiles, active from the 1840s onwards. For them and their direct predecessors *liubomudry*,⁸⁷ as for Jules Michelet, the paragon of the soulless, commercialised modernity was industrial Britain.⁸⁸ In being an organic community the Cossacks are close to the gauchos, as depicted at the end of the eighteenth century by the Spanish imperial officials and later in the 1840s by Sarmiento and his fellow Romantics. As we have seen, Luis Pérez also juxtaposed his organic gauchos to the artificial porteños and their corrupt politics, but he emphasised different aspects, focusing less on the mystical bond of individuals with the natural environment, and more on the health of the rural, socio-political arrangements encapsulated by the concept of *maña*.

The organic character of the Zaporozhian Cossacks is conveyed in a number of ways throughout *Taras Bul'ba*. The two most powerful devices that are employed are, firstly, the descriptions of the steppe environment and the Cossacks' links to it, and secondly, explicit reflections on the people's soul.

The natural environment that shaped the Cossacks is the steppe. They are not only influenced by it, they are in many ways part of it. This is best illustrated in a scene in which the old Bul'ba and his sons immerse themselves in the tall steppe grass:

In the meantime the steppe had long since received them all into its green embrace; and the high grass, closing round, concealed them, till only their black Cossack caps appeared above it. [...] And the Cossacks, bending low on their horses' necks, disappeared in the grass. Their black caps were no longer to be seen; a streak of trodden grass alone showed the trace of their swift flight.⁸⁹

The Cossacks disappear, dissolving themselves into the beautiful nature of their land. What is left is only the trace that could have been left by any larger animal. Their communion with natural environment is further emphasised by the fact that in Russian (differently to Polish and Ukrainian) the word steppe (*step'*) has the feminine gender. In the case of this

⁸⁶ See, for example, *PSS* 2, 43& 78.

⁸⁷ *Liubomudry* means 'lovers of wisdom,' it is an artificial Slavic replacement for the term philosophers (*filosofy*) which bore strong association with the eighteenth-century radical Francophone *philosophes*. The group was active in the first half of the 1820s.

⁸⁸ Walicki, *Slavophile Controversy*, 71-82 & 168-178; Jules Michelet, *The People*, transl. by C. Cooks (London, 1846), 72-74.

⁸⁹ *PSS* 2, 58.

sentence the gender of the noun determines the verbal forms, so in the original text it is clear that it is a feminine entity who received them into her green embrace: ‘*step’ [...] priniiala ikh vsekh v svoi zelenye ob“iatiia.*’ The steppe is a mother and also a lover that embraces the male Cossacks in the beauty of her nature (hinted at by the adjective ‘green,’ suggestive of vitality and freshness). As it is noted in the next paragraph, a sunny day spent in the steppe was a stimulus that awakened the Cossack souls and made their hearts fly like birds.⁹⁰

This image is followed by an ecstatic description of the steppe’s nature. First, it is said that it extends boundlessly to the shores of the Black Sea. The Cossack motherland is simply tantamount to the steppe, which covers it all. The sentence conveys the sense of vastness allowing the unrestricted freedom of movement. The steppe is fully authentic and genuinely natural, as ‘the immeasurable waves of [its] wild plants’ have never been ploughed. Nothing is more beautiful than the green-gold ocean covered with millions of colorful flowers. While a thousand birds flutter, singing in the air, majestic falcons hang high, gazing intently on the earth. And only God knows in what distant lake the cry of the wild geese will be echoed.⁹¹ The whole passage closes with an exclamation by the narrator: ‘To hell with you, steppes! How beautiful you are.’ Subsequently, the narrator returns to his storytelling, describing the bivouac of his protagonists. One of the things he notes about it is that they do not drink alcohol while travelling and eat only bread with lard.⁹² It is a picture of simple, down-to-earth life, much less lyrical than the millions of colorful flowers, but also contributing in an important way to the overall picture of the Cossacks as natural men, unspoiled and firmly rooted in their land. The transition between the ecstatic and the earthy aspects of the organic realities of Cossack life is mediated by the colloquial exclamation quoted above which is suggestive of both the intoxication and the comfortable familiarity.

Suddenly, after this short lard-and-bread intermezzo, the lyrical delirium makes a forceful comeback with a description of the change in the steppe’s aspect brought about by the dusk. The singing birds are replaced by the whistling of ground squirrels and the chirping of crickets, the dark-blue sky is intersected with rosy-gold brush strokes and white clouds, and the sea of grass is now much calmer as the gentle evening breeze caresses it softly.

The image of the steppe as a limitless, alive and beautiful open space is a crucial element of both the Cossack dream’s allure and its symbolic message. Such visions of open plains refer us directly to the wider context of European and Europeanate literature. The

⁹⁰ The importance of this has also been noted by Kornblatt, *Cossack Hero*, 54.

⁹¹ *PSS* 2, 58-59.

⁹² *PSS* 2, 59.

comparisons with sea and ocean are an especially strong case in point. The sea-related images and expressions are heavily loaded with symbolic meanings ranging from promises of liberty, discovery and adventure through the return to the pure elemental sources of life and the passage to the *orbis alius*.⁹³ In the context of the River Plate pampas, the sea-related vocabulary is attested as early as the 1720s, but it was only in the early nineteenth century that it became an indispensable element of the visitors' description of the region, present in virtually all accounts. As has been convincingly shown by Adolfo Prieto, the popularity of this topos is owed, first and foremost, to the success of Alexander Humboldt's *Personal narrative of travels to the equinoctial regions of America* and his other writings. Although the German scholar never visited the River Plate, his powerful depiction of the Venezuelan *llanos* served as a model for the travel writers in the Southern Cone. In order to convey the sense of the sublime evoked by the open landscape of the Venezuelan interior, Humboldt did not fail to summon 'the solemn spectacle of the starry vault' and 'the waving motion of the grass.' All this he crowned with an observation that 'everything recalled to our minds the surface of the ocean.' Humboldt, who had never visited the Russian Empire, used the term 'steppes' to explain what the Venezuelan *llanos* actually were. Thus Humboldt, who can safely be regarded as the founding father of Romantic geography, codified the imposing, ocean-like grassland plains as one variety of picturesque landscape.⁹⁴

Humboldt's choice of subject area (Venezuela) and vocabulary (steppes) secured the association of this myth with Spanish America and the Russian Empire. Humboldt's *llanos* impacted not only upon foreigners (mostly British and Irish) writing about the River Plate, but also indirectly upon the Argentines themselves. For instance, the porteño Romantic poet Estebán Echeverría opened his iconic *La cautiva* (1837) with a depiction of the pampas (*el desierto*): 'the sad countenance, solitary and taciturn like the sea, when suddenly at dusk it reins its arrogance.'⁹⁵ Gogol' and his Argentine counterparts drew on the same pool of images and expressions to convey the majesty of the plains.

⁹³ Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (Lincoln, NE, 1996), 188-215; the phrase *orbis alius* appears in Lucan, *Pharsalia*, I, 47 and refers to the Druidic beliefs about the souls' existence in another world (*orbe alio*).

⁹⁴ Adolfo Prieto, *Los viajeros ingleses y la emergencia de la literatura argentina, 1820-1850* (Buenos Aires, 1996), 16-26, 38, 52, 55, 62, 67, 79, 87; Ana María Barrenechea, "Función estética y significación histórica de las campañas pastoras en el *Facundo*," *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*, Year XV, No. 1-2, 315; for an immensely influential treatment of Humboldt's role in shaping the representations of Spanish America see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London – New York, 2003), 111-143, 172-197.

⁹⁵ Esteban Echeverría, *Obras completas. Tomo I* (Buenos Aires, 1870), 36.

Both the plains themselves and the way they shaped individuals and communities, betray striking resemblances in the texts from the two regions in question. In *Taras Bul'ba*, Gogol' goes quite far in developing upon how the steppe environment actually invades his protagonists' bodies and minds. First of all, the steppe is omnipresent in their lives. When they look around themselves they see only the limitless grass which they already have inculcated in themselves. This can be illustrated with the passage in which Ostap and Andrii depart with their father from his manor:

Before them still stretched the field by which they could recall the whole story of their lives, from the years when they rolled in its dewy grass down to the years when they awaited in it the dark-browed Cossack maiden, running timidly across it on quick young feet.⁹⁶

Leaving aside the issue of predatory male sexuality that seems to be hinted at here, we shall only note that the young Cossacks have so many relevant memories related with the steppe that it just cannot be removed from them.⁹⁷

Gogol' is also quite specific about the ways in which the natural environment of the steppe directly influences the individuals. I have already mentioned the sounds produced by the steppe fauna (birds, ground squirrels and crickets), but the steppe also stimulates other senses. The wind lightly brushes the cheeks, the coolness of the Dnieper can be felt from a distance, and the narrator explains to us in detail what would be the reaction of someone woken up in the night in the middle of the steppe.⁹⁸ Similarly, Sarmiento in his *Facundo* (which I shall analyse in detail later) devoted quite much room to the description of the pampas environment actively shaping the individual and collective selves of the gauchos. To give just one powerful example here, in the introductory section of chapter two on the 'originality of the Argentine national character,' Sarmiento establishes a causal relationship between the persistence of superstition among the gauchos and the abundance of thunderstorms in the Pampas:

...electric fluid is part of the economy of human life and is the same as what they call nervous fluid, which when excited, arouses passions and sparks enthusiasm, that a people inhabiting an atmosphere charged with electricity to the point where clothing, if rubbed, gives off sparks like a cat's fur stroked the wrong way, must be quite disposed to the workings of imagination.⁹⁹

Just like the gauchos of Sarmiento's pamphlet, the Cossacks of Gogol's novel are presented as an organic element of the steppe, its environment constantly contaminating and

⁹⁶ PSS 2, 52.

⁹⁷ Cf. Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 221-222 & 282-283.

⁹⁸ PSS 2, 60.

⁹⁹ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Civilización y barbarie. Vidas de Quiroga, Aldao y El Chacho* (Buenos Aires, 1889), 36-37.

shaping both their minds and their bodies. The steppe is presented as something much more than just a space: it can be said that the steppe is the Cossack way of life. For instance, when describing the arrangements in the Sich, the narrator makes it clear that there was no formal training there, but instead revelry and hunting in the steppe.¹⁰⁰

The link between the steppe environment and the mental makeup of the Cossacks is further emphasised by the frequent use of the adjective ‘wide’ (Russian: *shirokii*) to describe the character of the Russian people shaped by it. One of the best examples can be found in chapter one. The narrator explains that Taras Bul’ba was an exceptionally stubborn man whose character had been shaped by the dangerous frontier life, constantly menaced by Muslim raiders. He moves then to describe how the Cossacks emerged as a spontaneous resistance to aggressors and how they would persist functioning without state, forming ad hoc military groupings when needed and then dissolving them. Every man supported himself through fishing, hunting or distilling vodka, but when necessary a levée en masse would be summoned faster and more efficiently than any recruiter ever could (a claim resembling Pérez’s belief that Rosas’s *maña* was a better mobilisation tool than the military draft carried out by the central government’s delegates). In conclusion it is stated that these circumstances allowed the wide nature and the strength of the Russian people (as Gogol’ identifies it in the 1842 version) to come into full bloom. This sentiment is repeated thrice in one, albeit long, paragraph:

... the old, peaceful Slavonic spirit was filled with vituperative flame, and the Cossackdom was instituted—a wide reckless outbreak of the Russian nature [...] It was, in fact, a most remarkable manifestation of the Russian strength, forced by dire necessity from the bosom of the people [...] In short, the Russian character here received a powerful, wide scope, a hefty display.¹⁰¹

The above statements about the wide Russian soul are accompanied by a sentence in which the Cossacks themselves are alleged to have expressed their sense of connection with and embeddedness in the natural environment of the plains: ‘We are scattered all over the steppes; wherever there is a hillock, there is a Cossack.’¹⁰²

The Cossacks’ belonging to their environment is at the same time organic and fragile, as they are, at the end of the day, semi-nomads roaming an unsettled frontier of civilised world. Nothing encapsulates this internal contradiction of their condition better than Gogol’s first choice of surname for Taras, eventually abandoned in later versions: *kul'baba*, that is a

¹⁰⁰ PSS 2, 64 & 68.

¹⁰¹ PSS 2, 46-48; these ideas are developed in Gogol’s historical sketch on the formation of Little Russia.

¹⁰² Ibid.

dandelion. A common flower found in the fields and thus a good symbol of the commoners' belonging to their native country, the dandelion also brings to mind a lack of stability and strong roots.¹⁰³

The organic, militaristic libertarianism of this vision must have been very alluring to those who knew of the realities of the nineteenth-century bureaucratic state. For the moment, however, I want to dwell on how, according to Gogol', the steppe environment shapes not only the souls of the individual Cossacks, but also determines the way in which the soul of the whole Russian people can manifest itself. The development of the early medieval monarchies is interrupted and they are replaced with frontier struggle in the open grassland. Thus, the traditional Slavic peacefulness recedes and a peculiarly Slavic bellicosity takes shape. The steppe formed the Russian people as it was in this period. At the same time, the steppe itself is conceived here as a historical fact, a result of political developments (Mongol raids and collapse of the early medieval Rus') and collective human agencies (predatory economy of the Tatar Crimea and the grassroots resistance of the Russian men). The intimate two-way relationship between history and the natural environment should not astonish us, given that elsewhere in the text human beings are presented as a part of the steppe nature, not only the Cossacks, but also a Tatar horseman disappearing on the horizon.¹⁰⁴

Taras Bul'ba, an indigenous Cossack commander (*odin iz chisla korennykh, starykh polkovnikov*),¹⁰⁵ is one of the most accurate embodiments of those realities. More will be said later about the ambiguities in the portrayal of this character, but here I would only like to focus on one issue. As a representative of the organic Cossack community he has to be depicted as an authentic and at the same time engaging character. In order to achieve this, the author constructs him as a strange combination of terrifying savagery and traditional simplicity. On the one hand, he commits some truly repulsive acts of barbarism: he kills his son, slaughters dozens of innocent civilians and has graphic dreams of publicly despoiling the beautiful body of his son's Polish lover. Even before the situation has reached this level of violent intensity, he clearly treats his wife in a heartless and degrading manner. On the other hand, he can be also presented as a good-natured, if somewhat ridiculous, uncle-like figure, sometimes even capable of surprising compassion towards other human beings, for instance Iankel' the Jew whose life he saves.

¹⁰³ Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 274.

¹⁰⁴ *PSS* 2, 60.

¹⁰⁵ *PSS* 2, 48.

This aura of innocent kind-heartedness is especially strong at the beginning of the text and then recedes with the development of the story. One of its strongest manifestations is old Bul'ba's manor, depicted as an old-fashioned household of a middling-sort landowner, clean and neat but also full of useless trifles and family souvenirs and thus reminiscent of the gentry house from *The Old World Landowners*. Although superficially this might seem to be incongruous with the sinister barbarism of Bul'ba, both aspects are alloyed, perhaps even reconciled, in the opening scene of the book in which he challenges his firstborn Ostap to a fistfight. Overall, they contribute together to the sense that he was a real man of this land, firmly embedded in the antiquated realities of Ukraine.

As the narrator explains, Bul'ba's was the kind of house that was later celebrated 'in the songs and popular ballads, no longer sung in Ukraine as of yore by the blind old men, to the soft tinkling of the bandura, to the people thronging round them, in accordance with the taste of that warlike and troublous time.'¹⁰⁶ Here, we see the last important characteristic of the organic community as depicted by Gogol': it belongs exclusively to the past. Even the memory of it preserved by the blind bards has lost its genuine vitality, because they are said to no longer entertain the population. Although elsewhere in the text it is suggested that the Cossack glory will survive forever in the songs of the bards, here it is clear that they are have disappeared.¹⁰⁷ In accordance with the Scottian models, Gogol' casts himself as a nostalgic antiquarian erecting a tombstone to the irretrievable (even if relatively close) past.

In *Taras Bul'ba*, Gogol' depicts the Zaporozhian Cossacks as an organic community embedded in the Ukrainian steppe frontier. This specific historic-cum-natural environment shapes in many ways both the individual selves of the male Cossacks and the soul of the people as a whole. It is depicted as an intoxicating open space and a land of unrestricted male freedom. It excites the senses with its beauty, but also with the inherent perils of the borderland. As a peculiar combination of natural, cultural and political circumstances, the steppe environment is the decisive factor shaping the national essence which Gogol' identifies here as Russian. The eponymous hero can be seen as the embodiment of the spirit of that time, a mix of savagery and old fashioned warmth. Lastly, the allure of this picture is further strengthened by the fact that it is relegated to the realm of the irretrievable past.

¹⁰⁶ PSS 2, 43-44.

¹⁰⁷ PSS 2, 131-132.

4.3.3. The Cossacks as a masculine ideal

The Cossacks are an exclusively male community. There is no such thing as a female Cossack. Women are perceived as somehow dangerous and excluded from normal sociability (Sarmiento also depicted gaucho women as purely passive objects deprived of meaningful agency in a men's world). In the Sich, the Zaporozhian headquarters and the symbolic heart of the Cossackdom, there are no women as they are forbidden to enter. This fact is stated emphatically by the narrator on the occasion of his enumeration of the types of men arriving at the Sich:

The lovers of women alone could find nothing here, for no woman dared show herself even in the suburbs of the Sich.¹⁰⁸

This way of posing the issue seems to be deliberate, given that Bul'ba's own son Andrii is presented as such a lover of women. Repeatedly, his father warns him that the women are the main threat to the Cossacks and they will bring him no good. For the first time a wisdom of this sort appears at the very beginning of the story, just after the fist fight between the old Bul'ba and his firstborn Ostap. Turning to Andrii whose passivity has enraged him, he explains:

You are a mummy's pet! (*mazunchik*) [...] Don't listen to your mother, my lad; she is a woman, and knows nothing. What sort of petting do you need? A clear field and a good horse, that's the kind of petting for you! And do you see this sword? That's your mother!¹⁰⁹

The old Bul'ba continues to ridicule the schooling his sons had in Kiev, but in this he is less convincing, given that it was he himself who sent them there and, as we learn later, he did not hesitate to employ some very resolute means to force his son Ostap to be a good and obedient student. By and large, formal European-style education based on the Classics is presented in a somewhat ambiguous light as something unavoidable but at the same time useless and of secondary importance. As for the women, there is no such ambiguity. Misogynist declarations are repeated by the old Bul'ba throughout the whole text. For instance:

Enough you hag! A Cossack is not born to run around after women. You would like to hide them both under your petticoat, and sit upon them as a hen sits on eggs.¹¹⁰

After which he orders the hag (who is actually his wife) to serve them food. On the one hand, this order emphasises his wife's inferior status and on the other banishes her from the

¹⁰⁸ PSS 2, 66.

¹⁰⁹ PSS 2, 43.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

male sphere, as the domestic food preparation belongs unequivocally to the feminine realm.¹¹¹ The masculine-feminine opposition is illustrated here with various alimentary items, as the old Bul'ba rejects the 'soft' ones (dumplings, honey-cakes, poppy-cakes, pastries) that he expects his wife might have wanted to bring and demands instead the stout food for men (a whole sheep, a goat, forty-years-old mead, a scorching moonshine). Apparently, the main threat posed by the women is that they might soften the Cossacks, that is, despoil and feminise them.

Again, it seems to be no accident that Andrii's betrayal is triggered by two women: his beautiful Polish sweetheart and her ugly Tatar servant who together seem to encapsulate the two sides of the feminine peril. More importantly, to lure him they employ arguments mobilising Andrii's love for yet another female character, his mother:

Go tell the knight: if he remembers me, let him come to me; and if he does not, then make him give you a bit of bread for an old woman, my mother, for I do not wish to see my mother die before my very eyes. Better that I should die first, and she afterwards! Beseech him [...] he also has an old mother, let him give you the bread for her sake!¹¹²

Characteristically, these feminine feelings are extrapolated by Andrii's seducers to appeal to his compassion for fellow human beings and evoke his humanitarian instincts. Thus, the feminine-related family instincts and the humanitarian sensibility stemming from them are the most fundamental threats to the Cossacks. It is clear that the feminisation leads the young man to abandon his Cossack identity based on narrow ethno-confessional xenophobia. The chapter ends with the conclusion that a Cossack (that is Andrii) has perished (*I pogib kozak!*).¹¹³

To be precise, the narrator does not claim that there were no women at all in the life of the Cossacks. For instance, the old Bul'ba has a wife who gave birth to his sons. It is clear, however, that she is held by him in contempt and her status is not much better than that of a house slave, as can be seen from the quotes above. The narrator devotes much space to the description of the woeful position of this woman: insulted and beaten, Bul'ba's wife is 'a strange creature' (*strannoe sushchestvo*) whose main task is to give birth to sons, guard the hearth and cater to the needs of her husband, when he deigns to show up. Neglected by her husband, she was denied erotic self-fulfillment and had to channel all her feelings into maternal love.¹¹⁴ The Cossack world is not then completely void of women. Rather, it is a

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² PSS 2, 90.

¹¹³ PSS 2, 107.

¹¹⁴ PSS 2, 49-50.

fraternal patriarchy¹¹⁵ in which women are marginalised, reduced to slavery, completely subjugated to the needs of the male warriors and, as a consequence, deprived of any opportunity for emotional development and satisfaction. Nothing could be more distant from the idyllic vision of family love promoted by Nicholas I's official propaganda.

Sexual violence is never explicitly mentioned by Gogol', but it is hinted at on numerous occasions.¹¹⁶ In any case, women are clearly relegated to the margins of the Cossack community. One obvious reason for this is the fact that the Cossacks are military men and it seems to be the essence of their condition. War with the Muslim invaders was the main reason for their emergence after the disappearance of the early medieval Rus' civilisation. The only way in which a Ukrainian youth can become a full man is to participate in a Cossack military operation, ideally a raid against the Tatars or the Turks. This is why the old Bul'ba takes his sons to the Sich and this is why he has to stage a coup to topple the Sich commander-in-chief or the Kosh Otaman (Russian: *koshevoi ataman*; Ukrainian: *koshovyi otaman*) who would not break the peace with the Muslim neighbours. As it turns out, it does actually work, because the experience of war eventually allows Bul'ba's sons to transform themselves from 'nestlings' into full men, to replace their youthful softness with strength and rigor.¹¹⁷

Even though war lies at the heart of the Cossack life, this should not be imagined as similar to that of the soldiers of the author's time. On the contrary, as we have seen earlier, the narrator does not fail to specify that in the Sich there was no drill or any other consistent military exercise. Instead of exemplary military barracks, the Cossack world depicted by Gogol' is a 'drunken, noisy mirth,' a paradise of 'schoolboys' let loose. Elsewhere Gogol' presented an all-male boarding school located in a Northern Ukrainian town as a merry paradise of innocent creatures.¹¹⁸

The Sich is presented as a realm of 'life with all its revelry' (*zhizn' vo vsem razgule*): 'a ball noisily begun, which had no end.'¹¹⁹ When the Bul'bas arrive, one of the first things they see is a drunken Cossack sleeping in the middle of the road. The narrator states that he was

¹¹⁵ The concept is Carole Pateman's but I quote it after Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley, CA, 1992), 201.

¹¹⁶ Housemaids fear Ostap and Andrii and escape when they see them; Bul'ba's sons in turn remember how they lurked in the grass awaiting a fearful girl that used to pass there; eventually, the way in which the old Bul'ba imagines his punishment of Andrii's lover is suggestive of gang rape, *PSS 2*, 43, 52 & 122. Also, sexual violence was part and parcel of the standard Cossack-cum-Haidamak imagery, especially in the Polish-Lithuanian memory. Seemingly lighthearted mentions of sexual violence in the least expected moments are not unusual for Gogol' and serve to forewarn the advance of the evil forces, as for example in the *Old World Landowners*: 'For quite a long time those cats sniffed at each other through the hole in the pantry with Pulkheria Ivanovna's kitten and in the end they managed to lure her, like a unit of soldiers lures a stupid peasant girl,' *PSS 2*, 29.

¹¹⁷ *PSS 2*, 84.

¹¹⁸ Karlinsky, *Sexual Labyrinth of Gogol*, 87-88.

¹¹⁹ *PSS 2*, 64-66.

stretched out like a lion and assesses that it was ‘a pretty daring picture’ (*kartina dovol'no smelaia*), so the overall impression he suggests is positive. Next, they see another Cossack who cannot stop dancing, such is his joy. He has his winter fur coat on and is soaked with sweat. As he explains to the old Bul'ba: ‘I have such a disposition that whatever I take off, I will drink it away.’¹²⁰ No accumulation of wealth takes place among the Sich Cossacks, because they immediately spend all the money they bring from their raids on carousing. As can be seen, the Sich, the heart of the Cossackdom, is depicted by Gogol' as a realm of excessive male delights. This excess symbolises unrestricted freedom and also guarantees social equality. Such a vision must have been especially attractive for the nineteenth-century elite males tormented with numerous (and often conflicting) disciplinary regimes, while at the same time expected to assert their virility in everyday life with certain acts of defiance, especially by permitting themselves sensual pleasures that were less easily available to women: prostitution, excessive alcohol consumption and outdoor recreation.¹²¹ In his Cossack utopia, Gogol' displaces the family bonds, everyday responsibilities, administrative and societal discipline and hierarchy, offering instead a vision of exclusively male camaraderie based upon violence and carousal.

Alluring as it is, the overall presentation of this masculine paradise is by no means unambivalent. Without attempting a definitive solution at this stage, I would only like to address one important question: who is the ideal embodiment of Cossack masculinity? In practice, we have three protagonists to choose from: Taras Bul'ba, Andrii Bul'ba and Ostap Bul'ba .

On the surface, it might seem that the answer is obvious: Taras Bul'ba, the main and eponymous protagonist of the story, one of the best manifestations of the remarkable strength of the Russian soul, to paraphrase the author's words. However, Bul'ba is a complex literary construction. He commits numerous atrocities, topples a legitimate leader, starts a war for his own selfish purposes and eventually kills his own son. It is clear that the narrator sympathises with Bul'ba's tormented wife. Later, Bul'ba also proves imprudent and unable to rein in his emotions, as he ruins his only chance to see his imprisoned son Ostap before execution. Yet, at times he behaves in a rational and restrained manner, as in the scene in which he manages to curb his own fury, ‘reasoning that it was foolish to thus vent his rage on the first person who presented himself.’¹²² There are even moments in which he seems to be a Christ-like

¹²⁰ PSS 2, 62-63.

¹²¹ Rebecca Friedman, *Masculinity, autocracy and the Russian university, 1804-1863* (Basingstoke, 2005).

¹²² PSS 2, 114.

figure, for instance, when presiding over the supper as the new commander of the siege of Dubno, or when crucified by the Poles. It is consequently hard to assess whether Bul'ba is presented in a more positive or negative light.

There is however one reason which disqualifies the old Bul'ba completely as the masculine ideal: he is grotesque. In an earlier version of the text he was to be called Taras *Kul'baba* which in Ukrainian (but not in standard Russian) means dandelion. This choice is interesting. On the surface, it does not seem to be a fitting name for an exemplary defender of national values. Nonetheless, dandelions sprouting in the steppe and then carried away by the wind, can be understood to encapsulate the peculiar paradox of the Cossacks who are both the most organic sons of the land and homeless nomads. This metaphor suggests the fragility of the Cossacks' world and their inability to build something stable. Moreover, as has been noted by Edyta Bojanowska, '[t]hrough meaningless in Russian, the word contains the root *baba*, which denotes a peasant woman or a wench, quite incongruous with Taras's professed contempt for all things female.'¹²³ As for the surname Bul'ba, it means 'tuber' which corresponds to the protagonist's appearance, as he is said to be exceptionally fat: some 328 kg (20 poods) to be precise.¹²⁴

The portrayal of the old Bul'ba is full of internal tensions and contradictions. I think that there is no need to try to reconcile them fully, but given the grotesque traits of this figure (his weight, violent disposition and imprudence), it is clear that Bul'ba is not the ideal Cossack male. We are left with Andrii and Ostap, his sons. As for Andrii, the narrator always praises his beauty and what is even more important he praises it as manly.

Even in death he was very handsome; his manly face, so short a time ago filled with power, and with an irresistible charm for every woman, still had a marvellous beauty; his black brows, like sombre velvet, set off his pale features.¹²⁵

The importance of male beauty is attested not only by the repeated mentions of it, but more importantly by the power which it can have over other men, Taras Bul'ba included. It is because of the strong impression that his young sons leave on Taras Bul'ba – 'their freshness, stature, and manly personal beauty' – that he decides to go with them to the Sich.¹²⁶

Male beauty is not just about what nature has bestowed upon the individual. External elements, such as clothing and lifestyle, are also important. It is only after having spent some

¹²³ Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 274.

¹²⁴ *PSS* 2, 52.

¹²⁵ *PSS* 2, 144.

¹²⁶ *PSS* 2, 48.

time in the steppe and changed their clothes that the young Bul'bas become truly handsome, manly and Ukrainian.¹²⁷

Both Ostap and Andrii are beautiful men, but given that the latter eventually turns out to be a traitor and ceases to be a Cossack, only Ostap can be our ideal male. And he is indeed. He duly hated school, but persevered, because he wanted to get to the Zaporozhian Sich, the males' earthly paradise. The war against the Poles enabled him to mature together with his brother as a man. The narrator claims that they both distanced themselves from the typical Cossack plundering.¹²⁸ The young Bul'bas become formidable fighters, but when Andrii loses himself in the intoxicating bliss of battle frenzy, Ostap always retains control of his senses and mind and becomes a respected and prudent commander.¹²⁹ Andrii's behavior is less reasonable, more feminine according to the dominant nineteenth-century conceptions, whereas Ostap becomes a fully rational man. Ostap thus surpasses his own father. When the old Bul'ba kills Andrii, Ostap is dismayed, even a bit disapproving, and wants to bury his brother.¹³⁰

In contrast to the old Bul'ba, Ostap is not blinded by hatred, but rather governed by reason, Christian piety and family love: early in the text he is moved by the grief of his mother.¹³¹ Actually, he seems quite un-Cossack in this respect and, like his brother Andrii, he must pay for that with his life. In the primitive Cossack universe depicted by Gogol' there is no room for such individuals and the only path that Ostap can choose to remain true to himself is that of the Christian martyrdom at the hands of the Polish heretics. Just like Andrii, he remains beautiful and manly in his death, although in a different way.

Cossacks are presented as an exclusively male community of warriors. Women can exist only on the margins of their world, reduced to a woeful serfdom. Otherwise, they would pose a threat to the Cossacks' bellicose spirit. The Cossacks lead a life of violence, revelry and social equality, a prospect that had to be alluring to many an elite male in the early nineteenth century. Despite the fact that the Cossack life is depicted with a self-indulgent pleasure, it is not the old Bul'ba, arguably the fullest embodiment of the Cossack spirit, but his son Ostap, characterised by prudence, piety and family love, who is presented as the example to follow. Apparently, there is no ideal Cossack male in the novel: there is only a perfect Cossack, Taras Bul'ba, and a perfect male, Ostap Bul'ba, but the two ideals are never brought together.

¹²⁷ PSS 2, 51.

¹²⁸ PSS 2, 84.

¹²⁹ PSS 2, 84-85.

¹³⁰ PSS 2, 144.

¹³¹ PSS 2, 55.

4.3.4. The defining ‘others’

In *Taras Bul'ba* there seem to be three relevant others defining the identity of the Cossacks: women, Poles and Jews. The most obvious other, the Muslims, are virtually absent from the text. Those acquainted with the political history of Ukraine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century might expect that the main defining other would be the Jews. But this does not seem to be the case either. The Jews are there of course to accentuate certain aspects of the Cossack nature, especially their courage and disdain for money, but their overall portrayal might be described as a patronising but sympathetic satire, with strong elements of genuine compassion. At one point it is even stated explicitly that the Jews were treated by the Cossacks with less intense hatred and cruelty than the Catholic priests.¹³²

A pogrom against the Jews is described, but the old Bul'ba himself saves the life of Iankel' who claims to have known his brother. The violence against the Jews is motivated by the fact that they serve as middlemen and bankers of the Poles. In other words, it is presented as secondary and derivative: it is the Poles who are the real enemy. What is more, the Jewish sufferings can be described in a deliberately sympathetic way, as is the case with an emaciated Jewess and her child in the besieged Dubno. Elsewhere a sort of fascination with the exotic character of the Jewish presence can be discerned, for instance in the colourful description of the Jewish quarter in Warsaw, where ‘a pretty little Hebrew face, adorned with discoloured pearls, peeped out of an old window.’¹³³

Finally, we should not forget that it is to Iankel', his intelligence and loyalty that the old Bul'ba owes his safe arrival in Warsaw. It is true that the Jews are presented as cowardly and grotesque, as for instance when they spit, in accordance with ‘the customs of [their] faith.’¹³⁴ Most importantly, the Jews are excessively greedy, which is an inseparable part of their nature, although Iankel' manages to banish the thought of bounty offered for Bul'ba's head and is even said to be ashamed of his avarice.¹³⁵ All in all, the Jews are clearly alien and contemptible, but their subaltern position and vulnerability seems to arouse a considerable degree of sympathy in the narrator.

As the Cossack identity is all about a peculiar exercise of masculinity, in some sense women seem to be the most important defining other. At the same time, they are the most dangerous one, because it is impossible to banish them completely from Cossack life. They

¹³² PSS 2, 96.

¹³³ PSS 2, 98, 153.

¹³⁴ East European Jews of the early nineteenth century indeed used to spit when passing by a church; for this custom see Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *The Golden Age Shtetl: A New History of Jewish Life in East Europe* (Princeton, 2014), 165.

¹³⁵ PSS 2, 150.

are not allowed to enter the Sich, which is the heart of the Cossackdom, but they remain on the margins of the Cossack space, albeit as disdained subalterns. Women pose a constant threat to the Cossacks, as their very presence is a temptation to embark upon a different life, to become softened and to abandon the Cossack identity.

As we have seen, it is the women and the desire for contact with them that makes Andrii betray his family, faith and fellow-Cossacks in Dubno. As we will see later, the very act of treason is described by Gogol' as a sort of religious conversion to the intertwined Catholicism and Polishness which are all about the worship of female deities: the Virgin Mary and Andrii's aristocratic sweetheart, portrayed as an impressive mature beauty (in contrast to her first appearance at the beginning of the novel). In fact, this betrayal through feminisation is presaged in the scene in which Andrii visits her in Kiev for the first time. Impressed with his beauty she dresses him in her own clothes and adorns him with her jewels: in other words, she imposes a new, more feminine identity upon him.¹³⁶ Similarly, in the previous chapter we have seen a deceased Unitarian buried in a female dress, which is a sign of his being a lecherous ladies man which had compromised his masculinity.

Even before meeting the beautiful Pole, Andrii wanders alone dreaming of women and their bodies.¹³⁷ He is exceptionally sensitive and smart and in war he behaves in an unmanly fashion, surrendering to the intoxication of the battle frenzy. Also, his exceptional beauty, although of a manly kind, is somewhat unbecoming of a stern warrior. Indeed, the main problem with Andrii is that he seems to be naturally inclined to the feminine element, as is recognised by his father who, upon learning of his betrayal, recollects that 'there were no bounds to a woman's influence upon Andrii's heart.'¹³⁸

Femininity is an important element of the depiction of the third relevant other of the Cossacks: the Poles. When the narrator introduces the Palatine's daughter for the first time, he says that she was as fickle as every Polish girl (*vetrena, kak poliachka*).¹³⁹ Apparently, the Polish culture is intrinsically fickle and shallow, or at least it provides room for such development of female characters. Another feminine feature of the Polish way of life is that it can be dangerously seductive and indeed many members of the Cossack elite are said to have adopted it (to the old Bul'ba's disgust).¹⁴⁰ Actually, the association of the Poland-Lithuania with femininity and sexual laxity was an already established topos in the Russian culture of

¹³⁶ PSS 2, 57.

¹³⁷ PSS 2, 55.

¹³⁸ PSS 2, 122.

¹³⁹ PSS 2, 57.

¹⁴⁰ PSS 2, 48.

Gogol's time. We have seen, for instance, the prominent presence and agency of the beautiful Polish women in Bulgarin's *Mazepa*.¹⁴¹

Another important ingredient of Polishness is its aristocratic nature and social stratification. In contrast to the egalitarian Cossacks, the Poles are depicted as a hierarchical society in which the great lords are surrounded by colourful retinues of noblemen and commoners. This vision is encapsulated in the description of the crowd gathered in Warsaw to watch the execution of Ostap and his fellow Cossacks: magnates on their palaces' balconies, stunning ladies with hands 'white as sugar,' lavishly dressed servants, undernourished petty noblemen, commoners and a hawk in a golden cage.¹⁴²

To an extent, the narrator seems to esthetically enjoy the Polish aristocratic culture. Apart from enchanting women, the Poles boast handsome knights wearing colourful caftans embroidered with gold, but at the same time they are underfed and indebted to Jewish moneylenders.¹⁴³ Thus, even though the Polish knights can be quite handsome, the overall impression is that of a stratified society in which those without property and connections can survive only by submission to the lords who are on the verge of financial ruin anyway.

The aristocratism is so strong that even when a Polish (or Polonised) lord is said to be doing something good, his behavior is tainted by haughtiness, as is the case of Palatine Adam Kisel' who sponsors the Kiev Academy, but never deigns to socialise with this milieu.¹⁴⁴ The prevalence of aristocracy is also perceptible in Polish politics, as it is said that the king and some more enlightened members of the elite would like to show mercy to the Cossack prisoners, but they have no power and the diet was turned into a satire of government by the short-sighted, selfish, vainglorious and savage lords.¹⁴⁵

An even more relevant element of the Polish otherness is that they stand for the West, for the Latin Catholic world. As early as the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Russian public perceived Poland to be metonymically related to France and, more generally, the Catholic West. As such, the imaginary Poland served as the closest and, arguably, the most fundamental other of Orthodox Russia. Hence, the popularity of the historical tale about the 1612 Polish-Lithuanian invasion. According to this story, it was the joint effort of the Muscovite aristocracy and commoners that enabled them to expel the

¹⁴¹ Cf. for example, in the celebrated Enlightenment work *Journey from Saint Petersburg to Moscow* (*Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu*, 1790) a description of the 'Polish' town of Valdai where all unmarried women allegedly prostitute themselves, Aleksandr Radishchev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow – Leningrad, 1938), vol. 2, 300.

¹⁴² PSS 2, 163.

¹⁴³ PSS 2, 114-115.

¹⁴⁴ PSS 2, 54.

¹⁴⁵ PSS 2, 164.

invaders and institute a new dynasty: the House of Romanov. The myth was only reinforced when in 1812 (exactly two-hundred years later) the French *Grand Armée* featuring, among others, tens of thousands of Polish-Lithuanian soldiers, again captured ‘the white-stone Moscow.’¹⁴⁶

Both Poland-Lithuania and the West as a whole are fundamentally corrupted and characterised by perverse power relations. A beautiful Polish Jewess converted to Orthodox Christianity, states in Bulgarin’s *Mazepa* that Catholic Europe is ruled by women, Jewish bankers and priests (by which she means the Jesuits).¹⁴⁷ All three groups can be defined as standing in contradiction to Cossack manliness, while the latter two figures also represent the unnatural deviations of modern civilisation, as opposed to the organic Cossack order. *Taras Bul’ba*’s westernised Poland is ruled by anarchic aristocrats, but otherwise the Bulgarin’s triad seems to be valid as a description of the essence of the Polish realities with the pride of place given to women and priests and the Jews relegated to the second row. This ‘Western/Catholic triad’ is even mentioned at one point in *Taras Bul’ba*, albeit in a different context.¹⁴⁸

Gogol’s favorite way of conveying Poland’s Western identity is through descriptions of Gothic and Renaissance/Baroque-style Polish architecture (in fact, Gothic architecture is rare in Ukraine and eastern Poland where the Baroque predominates). A good example is that of the Palatine’s house in Dubno, emphatically reminiscent of Italian cities which Gogol’ adored.¹⁴⁹ Another example is the abbey pillaged by the Cossacks:

And the magnificent abbey was soon wrapped in the devouring flames, its tall Gothic windows showing grimly through the waves of fire as they parted. [...] There, the black, burned monastery like a grim Carthusian monk stood threatening, and displaying its dark magnificence at every flash.¹⁵⁰

These descriptions seem to appreciate the esthetic merits of the Polish culture. The latter example, that of the Gothic-style abbey, reveals a sort of awe and respect for the magnificence and depth of the Latin Catholic tradition.

There is an interesting sketch called the *Al-Mamun (an historical characteristic)*, from the first half of the 1830s, which is roughly contemporary with the first version of *Taras Bul’ba*. In this text Gogol’ tells a story of a well-intentioned Arab caliph who wished to transform his political realm into a realm of the Muses (*gosudarstvo politicheskoe prevratit’ v*

¹⁴⁶ Zorin, *Kormia* 158-186.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Catholic Europe is ruled by the Jews, the clergy and the women, that is, money, prejudice and passion,’ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 167

¹⁴⁸ PSS 2, 84.

¹⁴⁹ PSS 2, 99

¹⁵⁰ PSS 2, 84 & 88.

gosudarstvo muz). His paramount aim was to enlighten his subjects and thus make them happy. For this purpose he brought Greek philosophers from Constantinople and put them into positions of power. Being familiar with the dogmas of Christianity and loving truth too much, he conceived a plan of purging the Quran from such ‘absurdities’ as the promise of a paradise full of earthly delights. In this way he hoped to eradicate religious enthusiasm and fanaticism from his dominions. Of course, such experiments met with considerable resistance and the gentle Al-Mamun ended up persecuting his subjects and their religion. His empire plunged into chaos and religious fanaticism became even stronger than before. Al-Mamun misunderstood the Asian nature of his subjects and their stage of historical development. Instead of developing enlightenment upon the foundation of the national essence, he tried to impose alien, although truly superior, ideas upon his nation.¹⁵¹ If this story is read as an allegory of the Russian Empire, it becomes clear that Gogol’ was against the implementation of Western ideas on Russian soil not because they were not better, but because they would not work well in his fatherland.

The story of Al-Mamun seems to suggest that to Gogol’s mind the Western religion (Catholicism) might be more humane and more enlightened, just as the philosophical Christianity of Al-Mamun’s Greek experts allegedly was, but it does not correspond to the Russians’ national essence and to their stage of historical development. The way in which Gogol’ describes the resistance of the fanatical Arabs against Al-Mamun’s purified religion is not far from that in which he recounts the Cossacks’ savage war against Catholicism. Gogol’ himself was to live for many years in Italy where he would spend a lot of his time in the entourage of Princess Zinaida Volkonskaia, a famous Russian convert to Catholicism.¹⁵² It seems that in the 1830s, Gogol’s fascination with Catholic spirituality led him to believe that while this confession was objectively superior to the Orthodoxy in many ways, it was subjectively un-Russian.

This seems to be confirmed by the sequence devoted to Andrii’s defection. Led by a Tatar woman through an underground tunnel he comes out in a Catholic monastery church. Everything here is loaded with symbolic meaning. Guided by the feminine element, the protagonist undergoes a peculiar rite of passage, descends to the chthonic realm where he encounters a picture of the Catholic Madonna, another feminine symbol, and then reemerges in a new sacred space:

¹⁵¹ *PSS* 8, 76-81; see also an analysis in Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 119-122, where she convincingly relates the story of Al-Mamun to Gogol’s views on Peter the Great.

¹⁵² For Princess Volkonskaia and her Roman salon see Andrzej Litwornia, *Rzym Mickiewicza: poeta nad Tybrem 1829-1831* (Warsaw, 2005), 228-247.

They found themselves beneath the dark and lofty arches of the monastery church. Before one of the altars, adorned with tall candlesticks and candles, knelt a priest praying quietly. Near him on each side knelt two young choristers in lilac cassocks and white lace stoles, with censers in their hands. [...] The stained-glass window above the altar suddenly glowed with the rosy light of dawn; and from it, on the floor, fell circles of blue, yellow, and other colours, illuminating the dim church. The whole altar was lighted up; the smoke from the censers hung a cloudy rainbow in the air. Andrii gazed from his dark corner, not without surprise, at the wonders worked by the light. At that moment the magnificent swell of the organ filled the whole church. It grew deeper and deeper, expanded, swelled into heavy bursts of thunder; and then all at once, turning into heavenly music, its ringing tones floated high among the arches, like clear maiden voices, and again descended into a deep roar and thunder, and then ceased. The thunderous pulsations echoed long and tremulously among the arches; and Andrii, with half-open mouth, admired the wondrous music.¹⁵³

The Western confession is not ridiculed here as a ghastly schism of the haughty Polish disbelievers, but is presented as a fascinating spiritual realm. Andrii can indeed consider himself lucky for having gained access to this wonderful world of benevolent female deities, among whom he places the Palatine's daughter whom he calls *tsaritsa*, a term that can be translated as queen or empress, but was also a standard Russian Orthodox way to refer to the Virgin Mary. The identification of the Polish beauty with the Virgin Mary is further corroborated by Andrii's claim that only 'celestial angels' (*nebesnye angely*) are good enough to serve her.¹⁵⁴

The portrayal of the Poles and their culture is not then completely negative. Actually, its connection to Western Europe and Latin Catholicism renders it very precious and profound. Perhaps, it is exactly for this reason that feminine Poland is so dangerously alluring and has to be constructed as the irreconcilable enemy of the virile Cossackdom. As it is put by Taras Bul'ba in the 1835 version:

The Tatars are one thing, and the Liakhs [Poles] – the other [...]. The Saracens still have some conscience left and the fear of God, whereas the Catholics never had or will have it.¹⁵⁵

4.3.5. Cossacks as the body politic

Later I will show that revelrous Cossack liberty does not seem to be a viable model for individual self-fulfillment, but what about the political ideals embodied by the Cossack community?

¹⁵³ PSS 2, 96-97.

¹⁵⁴ PSS 2, 103.

¹⁵⁵ PSS 2, 325.

On the surface, they might seem enviable. The key statement can be found in a battlefield speech delivered by Taras Bul'ba in chapter nine. It contains a forceful praise of the fellowship (*tovarishchestvo*) as a form of societal bonding, a peculiar political community. A true fellowship is based on love which seems to be understood as an act of free will, at least to some extent. As such, the fellowship is stronger and more precious than the family bond, because it is founded on voluntary love (as contrasted to blood kinship) and only human beings (*odin tol'ko chelovek*) are capable of it. Although there were other fellowships, none were stronger than the Cossack one, because no one can love stronger than the sons of the Russian land. This emphasis on the concept of love and the Russians' exceptional capacity for it corresponds to Nicholas I's official propaganda of Empire as an extended family where the main criterion of belonging is the will to love: that is, obey the father. The open-ended nature of the Russian fellowship is illustrated in chapter three of the novel by the admittance procedure to the Sich: every male can join it, as one is required only to declare his adherence to Orthodox Christianity and to know how to make the sign of the cross. So it seems to be an exceptionally open, inclusive and, one could add, egalitarian community.

The Cossack fellowship is not the only fellowship, but it is said to be the most perfect one, unsurpassed by any other. One of the reasons for its specificity is that it emerged in a very difficult historical moment, as a spontaneous popular response to the external aggression of the Saracens (*busurmany*), when the people of Rus' became orphaned (*siry*e). Consequently, it did not develop any centralised organisation, but yet it managed to retain exceptional efficiency and coherence.¹⁵⁶ Even more important than the historical circumstances is the fact that the Cossack fellowship was conceived among the Russian people. The fellowship is based on love and no one is capable of loving the way the Russians love, hence the Russian fellowship must be extraordinary.

It seems justifiable to complement this characterisation of the merits of Russian nature with a thought expounded by Gogol' in a letter to Anna Viel'gorskaia, namely that the Russian nature is capable 'to receive the dignified Word of the Gospel in a more profound manner than the others.'¹⁵⁷ The Russians are not only more loving and charitable than the other nations, but they are also by their very nature more Christian. One can find decent persons among other peoples, '[b]ut when it comes to saying a hearty word—you will see. [...] the same kind of people, and yet not the same!' This seems to contradict the open and inclusive nature of the Cossack community. The tension is never addressed and of course no precise

¹⁵⁶ See *PSS* 2, 133-134, but see also 46-47.

¹⁵⁷ Mann, *Gogol': Zavershenie puti*, 196.

solution is indispensable here. The ideal of Orthodox Christian fellowship can very well be internally inconsistent and quite alluring at the same time. Yet, two proposals can be advanced which are never explicitly spelled out, but would nevertheless make perfect sense.

The first is that what matters here as a political message is egalitarian inclusion within one ethno-confessional community – the Russian people. It is an image of orphaned men of various social stations who establish a voluntary brotherhood to defend the Russian land. Vertical social inclusion and solidarity is achieved here at the cost of the horizontal ethno-confessional exclusion. The latter is strengthened further by the mentions of primordial Russian character of Ukraine (referred to as Southern Russia) and the purely predatory role ascribed to the foreigners in the collapse of the early medieval Rus'. The influence of foreign culture is associated throughout the novel with unjust and oppressive social stratification, as epitomised by the Polish magnate slapping the faces of the self-abased Russians with his yellow shoe. Any foreign presence in the Russian land, be it Polish, Tatar or else, is delegitimised as an usurpation, a deplorable fruit of the Mongol invasion, a thirteenth-century act of violence. This interpretation corresponds to the contemporaneous concerns about power in the Russian Empire being intercepted by aliens, mostly the omnipresent ethnic Germans, but also some Poles who, though a small number, are especially irritating for the ethnic Russians. Paradoxically, the conclusion: 'the same kind of people, and yet not the same!' (*takie zhe liudy, da ne te*), which encapsulates the sense of Russian exceptionality and unsurmountable incompatibility with emotionally inferior foreigners, closely mirrors a dialogue from Bulgarin's *Mazepa*.¹⁵⁸

The second explanation concerns the role of Orthodox Christianity. We have seen that making the sign of the cross (as we can guess, the Russian version of the gesture, visibly different from the Latin Catholic one) and declaring adherence to the Orthodox confession were the only requirements to join the Sich. Superficially, it might seem that it excludes a good deal of potential recruits on ethno-confessional grounds, but in the text it is presented as a very liberal and straightforward act: no one enquires about the past, heritage or actual convictions. One could have been anything: a thief, a murderer, a rapist, a Catholic bishop, perhaps even a Jew (though not a woman), but once he has decided to make the sign of the cross and join the Orthodox community, there are no further questions. Thus, Orthodox Christianity seems to be the essence of Russian identity. If this is indeed the case, the inclusive nature of the Russian people is upheld, as it is open to anybody willing to convert to

¹⁵⁸ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 180-181.

the Orthodox confession and be filled with powerful Christian love, the most important Russian characteristic. This love will be able to eventually overcome even confessional divisions, as has been already suggested by Bulgarin in the scene in which the Orthodox peasantry shows respect to a picture of the Catholic Madonna.¹⁵⁹ In Gogol's text, the inclusive universalism of the Orthodox Christianity is attested by Bul'ba's toast:

Therefore let us drink all together, let us drink before all else to the holy Orthodox faith, that the day may finally come when it may be spread over all the world, and that everywhere there may be but one faith, and that all the Saracens may become Christians. [...] And every Cossack drank a last draught to the glory of all Christians in the world. And among all the ranks in the kurens they long repeated, "To all the Christians in the world!"¹⁶⁰

The Russian national project as imagined in *Taras Bul'ba* is inextricably entangled with Orthodox Christianity. As it is stated at the end of the novel, the faith is like an invincible rock towering amidst the stormy sea of Russian history, which reaches up to heaven (*iz samoi srediny morskogo dna voznosit ona k nebesam neprolomnye steny*). It is not only an unsurpassable force, but also one that links the very foundations of Russian nationality with its transcendental *telos*.¹⁶¹ In this respect Gogol' stays in tune with the ideas of the Moscow Slavophiles who, as has been indicated, should rather be named Orthodoxophiles. However, what matters more in terms of the political ideals is that the linkage of the Russian identity with the Orthodox Christian confession renders it universalist and inclusive. Thus, the Russian nation becomes an open-ended global project. Here, Gogol' seems to stand quite close to the Classicising conservative poet and diplomat Fedor Tiutchev according to whom Moscow, the city of Peter (by which he means Rome, not Saint Petersburg) and the city of Constantine are the three capitals of the Russian Realm (*tsarstvo russkoe*), which encompasses seven internal seas and seven great rivers, among them, the Nile, the Euphrates, the Ganges and the Danube. It will never perish, as had been foreseen by the Holy Ghost and prophesied by Daniel. Russia thus becomes the Biblical fifth kingdom, the ultimate embodiment of the globalised Christianity and a reincarnation of the Roman Empire.¹⁶² Such fantasies should be interpreted along with the thought of many others, some of them quite distant from Tiutchev, from Mickiewicz, Ściegienny and Mazzini through Štur, Kostomarov and the proto-Zionists,¹⁶³ who infused their nationalist projects with more or less unorthodox

¹⁵⁹ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 138.

¹⁶⁰ *PSS* 2, 130.

¹⁶¹ *PSS* 2, 166.

¹⁶² Nina Sinitsyna, *Tretii Rim: Istoki russkoi srednevekovoi kontseptsii (XV-XVI vv.)* (Moscow, 1998), 16-21.

¹⁶³ For the elements of transreligious and transnational regeneration in the proto-Zionist thought see Petrovsky-Shtern, *Golden Age Shtetl*, 294-296, although I disagree with his insistence that the religious should be clearly

religious ideals and thus located them at the centre of the expected global regeneration. It was a peculiar chiliastic imperialism of political dreamers, characteristic of the first half of the nineteenth century. That such a universalistic interpretation of Gogol's thought is justifiable and meaningful is further corroborated by the fact that the idealised landowner, portrayed in the unfinished second volume of his masterpiece *The Dead Souls*, is explicitly characterised as swarthy and of non-Russian origin, but fully devoted to Russia. What is more, he is juxtaposed against a gallery of native Russian spendthrifts who lack any sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of their serfs.¹⁶⁴

The two proposed solutions of the exclusivity-inclusivity contradiction can actually work together. Inclusion is meant, first and foremost, to be an instrument allowing the egalitarian communion of the Orthodox Russians. At the same time, every human being can join this communion by converting to Orthodox Christianity, the confession that lies at the heart of the Russian identity.

As we have seen, the organic Cossack community is founded on the basis of fellowship, or *tovarishchestvo* which stems from the unsullied Russian soul. But how can the ideal fellowship be translated into everyday political practice? The text contains several detailed descriptions of political procedures and the impression they leave is very ambiguous, to say the least. Some of their elements convey the organic nature of the Cossack condition and, more specifically, the mystical bond between the native soil and the community. The anointment procedure of the Kosh Otaman is especially striking: the four oldest Cossacks lay mud on the elect's head.¹⁶⁵

Yet otherwise the politics of the Cossack community does not seem very edifying. Before delivering our overall verdict, let us stop and reflect for a moment: what could be the form of government of a community where all the members considered themselves to be free, independent and equal? A community that can function, it is alleged, without any effective standing army or administration? What polity could perpetuate such a fragile situation? In practice, it would have to be some sort of direct democracy in which all the entitled citizens would participate in the decision-making process. Consensus, if not outright unanimity, should always be sought, because majority voting would pose a serious threat to the inviolable integrity of the sovereign subjects. Could such a polity survive anywhere outside the realm of fantasy? 'In our times it is hardly possible to believe that such a kind of government [...]

delimited from the nationalist; in any case, the task of interpreting the proto-Zionist initiatives against the background of the romantic nationalisms seems very promising.

¹⁶⁴ PSS 7, 59-61.

¹⁶⁵ PSS 2, 72.

could have ever existed among the civilised peoples,¹⁶⁶ as it is stated by Faddei Bulgarin in a description of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Gogol' knew his Ukrainian essentials (from Bulgarin's *Mazepa*, *The History of the Rus* and his own family's traditions) and there can be no doubt that he was well aware that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the old Cossack Hetmanate (at least at the beginning of its existence) had been precisely such impossible republics of sovereign citizens. For anyone with even the most superficial knowledge of the Polish-Lithuanian political system, it is striking how similar it is to the Cossack politics in *Taras Bul'ba*. Starting with language: throughout the novel the Cossacks address each other as gentlemen brethren (Russian plural: *pany-brat'ia* in the novel, derived from the Polish plural: *panowie bracia*). One can see in the pogrom scene how loaded this form was: one of the Jews tries to beg for mercy. In order to soften the Cossack mob he starts by addressing the Cossacks as the most honourable, illustrious lords (Russian plural: *iasnevel'mozhnye pany* in the novel, Polish plural: *jaśnie wielmożni panowie*), a form usually reserved for the upper echelon of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility, still used by the anti-Polish Soviet propaganda in the twentieth century as this association had become so deeply-rooted with this particular nationality.¹⁶⁷ Then, in the course of his speech the Jew imprudently claims that the Jews are with the Zaporozhians 'like brothers' (*kak brat'ia rodnye*). The reaction of Gogol's Cossacks is furious: they will not allow the Jews, whom they disdain and would never accept as part of their fellowship, to call them brothers.¹⁶⁸ The Jew is drowned in the Dnieper, an act of savagery directly corresponding to scenes from Bulgarin's *Mazepa* (a Jew is drowned on the order of Semen Pali) and Scott's *Rob Roy* (a government agent is thrown into a loch on the order of Rob Roy's wife).

What is even more striking, the very term *tovarishch* (Ukrainian: *tovarysh*; Polish: *towarzysz*) and its abstract derivate *tovarishchestvo*, a crucial concept in the novel, comes from the Polish-Lithuanian military-cum-political tradition. *Tovarishch/tovarysh/towarzysz* can be rendered in English as companion, comrade or associate and it is conceptually kin to the Latin *socius*, *sodalis*, *commilito* and Greek *hetairos*. More precisely, in Poland-Lithuania *towarzysz* was used to describe a noble-born member of the old-style (Polish: *autorament narodowy*, or the national order) cavalry units organised in the traditional manner (Polish:

¹⁶⁶ Bulgarin, *Mazepa*, 91.

¹⁶⁷ See for instance a 1920 poster where Poland is depicted as a noble-born, most honourable bulldog, 'the last hound of the Entente:' http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Polish-Soviet_War#mediaviewer/File:Polish-soviet_propaganda_poster_16Y.jpg (retrieved 18.05.2014).

¹⁶⁸ *PSS* 2, 79.

zaciąg towarzyski, or fellowship-based recruitment). The fellows of these units retained their civic privileges and, whenever they found it necessary, every such detachment could instantly transform itself into a small political convention of empowered noble-born citizens deliberating on the common weal, just as we see the Cossacks doing during the siege of Dubno in *Taras Bul'ba*. What is more, in eighteenth-century Little Russia the terms fellowship and fellows were used to designate the new landowning and office-holding elite of the Hetmanate, *Znachne Viis'kove Tovarystvo* and Taras Bul'ba's most elaborate treatment of the notion of *tovarishchestvo* in his battlefield speech in chapter nine seems to be inspired partly by a fictional Khmel'nyts'kyi's speech on *tovaristvo* as recounted in the *History of the Rus*.¹⁶⁹ Characteristically, the fake Khmel'nyts'kyi of the later 1810s uses the term *tovaristvo* to denote his closest officers and collaborators (imagined by the nineteenth-century landowners as their direct ancestors). The overall message of that speech is the call to defend the Little Russian *patria* from the Polish-Lithuanian interlopers. This common fatherland is defined in the traditional republican vein as a community of blood, civic rights and confession. Such an understanding is quite in tune with (though not identical to) most other actions of Gogol's Taras Bul'ba, but paradoxically it contradicts the complex combination of inclusivism and exceptionality contained in his battlefield *tovarishchestvo* speech.

The forms 'gentlemen brethren' and 'fellowship' used by Gogol' in his Cossack novel are strongly suggestive of the Polish-Lithuanian tradition which was by no means a positive association in the Russian Empire of his time. In this context it is striking how the democratic process is depicted in chapters three and four. If the fellowship speech from chapter nine offers a highly idealised portrayal of the spontaneous political bonding based on the Orthodox Christian love, the picture we find in these two chapters could not be further from it. As has been noted also by Bojanowska, the Cossack *demos* is a drunken mass manipulated by the old Bul'ba, this time presented as a selfish and cynical politico, reminiscent of Bulgarin's Mazepa rather than Palii.¹⁷⁰ What appears to be democracy is actually an aptly steered spectacle, a disconcerting combination of authoritarian machination and ochlocratic fervor. The incumbent office holder is threatened by an intoxicated mob which demands his resignation. As is explained by the narrator, fatal beatings of disliked incumbents were the usual outcome of such situations.¹⁷¹ Apparently, the closest contemporary counterpart of the Cossack electoral gathering as depicted by Gogol' would be a group of football hooligans making the

¹⁶⁹ Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 280; Georgii Koniskii [Anonymous], *Istoriia Rusov ili Maloi Rossii* (Moscow, 1846), 63.

¹⁷⁰ Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 281-285.

¹⁷¹ PSS 2, 70.

whole train carriage tremble with their chants and the ordinary passengers cower in the hope of becoming invisible.

This coup is carried out only because Bul'ba selfishly wants to send his sons to war. The way in which the new Kosh Otaman persuades the summoned Cossacks to launch the new anti-Ottoman raids is presented as the most shameless demagoguery, complete with the use of the worn-out phrase 'Vox populi, vox dei' (*glas naroda – glas bozhii*).¹⁷² Eventually, when another enemy is chosen, it is done on the basis of unconfirmed hearsay of the most absurd kind. It is never actually substantiated that Jewish women had their skirts made of Orthodox priests' cassocks and that the Jesuits harnessed the Orthodox peasants to their carts. As Edyta Bojanowska has rightly noted, at least some of this sensational news is qualified with the phrase 'they say' (*uzhe govoriat*).¹⁷³

Again, the similarity of the unedifying portrayal of Cossack democracy with the negative image of the Polish-Lithuanian county dietines (theoretically sovereign assemblies of the local noblemen) is clear to see. Already, the eighteenth-century enlightened Polish-Lithuanian reformers presented these peculiar hotbeds of direct democracy as half-savage gatherings of drunken illiterates manipulated by the great lords. In reality, dietines varied throughout space and time, some were indeed violent and controlled by the aristocrats, while others were run quite independently and peacefully by the local middling-sort squires. Gogol's explicit opinion on the Polish-Lithuanian parliamentary system, as expressed in chapter eleven, accorded with the peculiar black legend encapsulated by the proverbial *polisk riksdag*. In the nineteenth century the received wisdom was that Poland-Lithuania had been a failed state unfit to survive in the modern world and the chaotic dietines were part and parcel of this imagery. Any suggestion that the Cossack political system was similar to that of the partitioned Commonwealth, must have been received as a biting satire, if not an outright condemnation. Even more so, as the Poles are otherwise the main threat to the Cossack identity throughout the novel.

The Cossacks might be genuinely Russian fellows, but their political mechanism is as caricatural as that which was believed to have brought down Poland-Lithuania. Actually, the only situation in which the Cossack society seems to work well is during wartime emergency or similar situations. This is quite logical, given that war was the original condition that had caused the birth of Cossackdom. Only when forced to fear for their lives, can the Cossacks behave in a rational and orderly way. It is, for instance, underlined that the old Bul'ba 'never

¹⁷² PSS 2, 75.

¹⁷³ Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 283-284; PSS 2, 77.

permitted alcohol to be drunk while travelling' in the steppe and took all the indispensable precautions, always having in mind the possibility of a Tatar ambush.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, it is noted that only during war the Kosh Otaman becomes the true leader. Suddenly, the Cossacks start to behave in an orderly way and obey his commands.¹⁷⁵ Good leadership is equated here with authoritarian-style personal rule and explicitly contrasted with the timid execution 'of the fickle wishes of a free people' (*vetrenykh zhelanii vol'nogo naroda*). There can be no doubt that the narrator juxtaposes Polish-Lithuanian-style republican anarchy with the strong and rational authoritarianism, resembling the allegedly benevolent autocracy of Nicholas I.

However, as soon as the emergency subsides, the Cossacks plunge back into their usual revelry and carelessness. When forced to besiege the city of Dubno, they soon get bored, start to drink heavily and become carelessly inattentive.¹⁷⁶ When this relaxation and lack of discipline eventually lead to a military setback, the Cossacks do not accept their commander's criticism of their drunkenness and protest that there is nothing condemnable about their behaviour, as there has been no military action or religious fasting, so in such a situation alcohol consumption is fully acceptable. The way in which the Kosh Otaman is defied by one of his lieutenants is very telling of the way in which the Zaporozhian republican spirit is construed by Gogol':

“Stop, father!” said he; “although it is not lawful to make a retort when the Kosh Otaman speaks before the whole army, yet it is necessary to say that that was not the state of the case. You have not been quite just in your reproach of the whole Christian army”.¹⁷⁷

The lieutenant admits that it would be better not to contradict the commander-in-chief in public, but then nevertheless proceeds to do that because he is convinced, as he argues, that this is necessary to do justice to the whole Christian army, that is the Cossack commonwealth at arms. He believes that he is entitled and actually, we may guess, even obliged to voice his opinion on a topic which he regards as the public interest of the civic community as a whole. The other Cossacks seem to agree with him shouting their praises. This is pure early modern republicanism complete with a noisy dietine. What is more, the Kosh Otaman accepts the prevailing judgment of the Cossack opinion and backs down admitting that there is no need to dwell on that issue any more, as the Cossacks should focus now on how to deal with the reinforced Poles.¹⁷⁸ It is very telling that Gogol' chooses to illustrate the free deliberations of

¹⁷⁴ PSS 2, 59.

¹⁷⁵ PSS 2, 80.

¹⁷⁶ PSS 2, 86.

¹⁷⁷ PSS 2, 108.

¹⁷⁸ PSS 2, 109.

the empowered republican citizens with a situation in which the careless and potentially dangerous revelry is eventually condoned as legitimate behaviour. Apparently, this is representative of Gogol's overall appreciation of the non-authoritarian forms of decision-making, as elsewhere, in his masterpiece *Dead Souls*, he concluded that '[i]n general, we [Russians] are not cut out for representative assemblies. In all our gatherings, from a peasant meeting through all sorts of academic and other committees, unless there be in authority a leading spirit to control the rest, the affair always develops into confusion. Why this should be so one could hardly say, but at all events a success is scored only by such gatherings as have for their object dining and festivity—to wit, gatherings at clubs or in German-run restaurants.'¹⁷⁹

It is likewise notable that Gogol' expanded the atrocities and destruction perpetrated by the advancing Cossack army in the 1842 version of his text,¹⁸⁰ while at the same time distancing his preferred heroes, Andrii and Ostap, from them by claiming that they did not participate in the plundering. Clearly, this was a conscious act of recasting the 1835 Cossacks in a less positive light. Even during the wartime emergency, the Cossack body politic is handicapped with several shortcomings which all boil down to Cossack immaturity and savagery.

Earlier in the book Andrii, an exceptionally sensitive and smart Cossack, has marveled at the sentinels sleeping calmly with their stomachs filled with dumplings and buckwheat polenta. Then, reflecting upon the Cossacks' short-sighted management of food supplies, he concludes that his compatriots are like children: myopic and irresponsible.¹⁸¹

This seems to be a crucial observation. The Cossacks are children and, as we know from Taras Bul'ba's fellowship speech, they are orphaned (*siryē*) children.¹⁸² They have lost their natural fathers, their *domini naturales*. The Rurikid rulers of Kiev had been wiped out by the Mongol-Tatar invaders and then replaced by the alien Catholic kings from the distant Poland. True, the Kosh Otaman is addressed as father, but he belongs more with the gentlemen brethren as he can be defied and addressed on an equal footing. At times, he becomes more fatherly than usual, but he is only a substitute, resembling the incapacitated, elective pseudo-father on the throne of Poland. Lynn Hunt has argued that the French revolutionaries had to stage a patricide to establish the republican brotherhood of empowered male citizens. They used images of fatherless fraternities that would enable the reestablishment of individual

¹⁷⁹ PSS 6, 197.

¹⁸⁰ Bojanowska, *Gogol*, 286.

¹⁸¹ PSS 2, 92.

¹⁸² PSS 2, 133.

liberty, civic equality and the healthy bonds between the body politic and the natural environment of the land. As Hunt has noted, in post-revolutionary France such depictions of egalitarian fraternities implied a complete displacement of the female actors from the public sphere, a sort of civil incapacitation not unlike that of old Bul'ba's wife (and in clear contradiction with Nicholas I's promotion of limited feminine agency).¹⁸³ What Gogol depicts in his novel is exactly such a parentless brotherhood or fellowship, but his assessment of it is by no means approving. Having no father-figure, the Cossack culture is locked in childhood and by stifling the feminine contribution it impoverishes itself spiritually (of which more later).

The overall judgment suggested by the author is not simply reproachful, as he underlines some attenuating circumstances. First of all, childish as they are, the Cossacks manage to preserve the national soul of the Russian people and this is no small achievement, given the overall dire situation and numerous external threats. Secondly, the narrator repeatedly reminds the reader that the whole story takes place in a distant past: '...that period of daredevils' (...*togo udalogo veka*), 'At the time when those things took place...' (*V to vremia...*) or 'In that savage age' (*V togdashnii grubiy vek*). At one point it is stated that not even the folk ballads preserve the memory of that time any more.¹⁸⁴ Just like in Scott's novels, everything is relegated to the faraway and unpolished realm of yore which makes it safer for the readers to find delight in the graphic descriptions of violence and irresponsible fantasies of anarchic life without family. It also offers them yet another pleasure, that of nostalgia. Thus, in a paradoxical way, depictions of cruelty, though elements with the greatest potential to stimulate strong emotions in the reader, also serve to accentuate difference, distance and detachment. Any barbarity can thus be justified as simply a manifestation of the exotic and irretrievable bygone and consequently the moral responsibility for the most odious acts described in the text is removed from all groups, even the Poles.¹⁸⁵

The childish Cossacks, together with all the other colourful and terrifying elements of the novel, belong to the past and cannot return. What is more, similar to Poland-Lithuania, the Cossack polity is a failure in the long-run. It proved weaker than the more developed Westernised Poland: 'one force overcame another' (*sila odolela silu*), as it is summed up;¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Hunt, *Family Romance*.

¹⁸⁴ *PSS* 2, 43, 49, 152 & 162.

¹⁸⁵ Ostap's torment is assessed on two levels. Politically, it is a mistake, as the King and his enlightened advisers see it. The responsibility for this error lies with the Polish political system which grants too much power to the selfish lords. Here, Polish aristocrats (but not the King) bear the responsibility. More generally, it is the savage age (*grubiy vek*) that one should blame for the barbarous cruelty of the Cossacks' execution.

¹⁸⁶ *PSS* 2, 177.

nor did it offer the more sophisticated individuals any satisfying avenues of self-fulfillment. As a body politic, Cossackdom did preserve the Russian spirit in the period of historical change, but now it needs to make room for more advanced forms of social organization. The crucified Taras Bul'ba is quite outspoken about what is going to come next:

A ruler of our own arises from the Russian land (*podymaetsia iz russkoi zemli svoi tsar*), and there won't be a power in the world which shall not submit to him!¹⁸⁷

Just as childhood must be left behind at some point, so must the republican politics (and other Cossack activities so dear to the Decembrists) recede. The future belongs to the fatherly, autocratic monarchy which will effectively protect the foundation of Russian identity: the Orthodox faith.

4.3.6. The organic community and individual self-fulfillment

In many ways Andrii is the pivotal figure of the story and his disappearance well before its end might be seen as the most serious weakness of the plot. It is his actions and his erotic charm that unleash some of the most dramatic conflicts. In this he closely resembles Bulgarin's Ognevik. Literary filiations and 'influenceology' aside, a closer look at Andrii should enable us to grasp some important aspects of Gogol's uneasiness about the Cossacks. I would like to argue that Andrii's story is an illustration of the way in which the Cossack ideal falls short of enabling the individual development and self-fulfillment of more complex and demanding personalities.

As we have seen, the Cossack realities ruined the life of Andrii's mother, reducing her to woeful slavery. It is the impossibility of satisfying her erotic needs that is presented as the essence of her plight. As a consequence, she has transformed her erotic drive into maternal love.¹⁸⁸ Andrii, as I argued earlier, has many feminine traits. One of them is that, similar to his mother, he has a richer emotional life. The narrator contrasts him with his older brother Ostap in comparison with whom he 'had livelier and more fully developed feelings.'¹⁸⁹ Most importantly, from the very outset he had more developed erotic needs. Already in his school days in Kiev he is said to be secretly obsessed with dreams about 'the woman,' a generic but corporeal feminine entity with flashing 'shiny, elastic breasts' (*mel'kali ee sverkaiushchie, uprugie persi*) and 'soft, bare arms' (*nezhnaia, prekrasnaia, vsia obnazhennaia ruka*). However, he had to conceal those thoughts 'because in that age it was held shameful and

¹⁸⁷ PSS 2, 172.

¹⁸⁸ PSS 2, 49-50.

¹⁸⁹ PSS 2, 55.

dishonourable for a Cossack to think of love and a woman before he tasted battle.’¹⁹⁰ Heteroerotic desire is clearly positioned here as something hostile to and mutually exclusive with bellicose virility.¹⁹¹

The acute sense of erotic deprivation is only the most onerous symptom of Andrii’s sensitivity and longing for a different life. He is the only protagonist whose impressions, not simply thoughts, the narrator presents in detail. This suggests that he is the only one to engage emotionally with his environment in a relevant and complex manner. For instance, his horror at the cruel execution of a murderer who is buried alive and his appreciation of the starry sky on the night of his defection.¹⁹² Andrii is presented as an extraordinarily sensitive individual, mindful and perceptive of a whole range phenomena and dimensions apparently unavailable to his fellow-Cossacks, completely lost in their bouts of drinking and carnage. While his problems do not boil down to repressed erotic needs, it is eventually this aspect of his longings that proves to be the driving force behind his most daring deeds, as when the memory of his Polish sweetheart’s beauty appears before his eyes on the night of his defection: ‘her beautiful arms, her eyes, her laughing mouth, her thick dark-chestnut hair, falling in curls upon her shoulders, and the firm, well-rounded limbs of her maiden form.’¹⁹³

As we have seen, Andrii’s defection is mediated by women and depicted as a conversion to Latin Catholicism, a more complex and refined confession, the centerpiece of which are intoxicating female deities. Feminine beauty and the erotic desire it evokes serve as gateways to civilisation, intellectual and spiritual refinement of the savage Cossack. It is all embodied in the Palatine’s daughter who does for Andrii what Shamhat the harlot did for Enkidu: satisfies him sexually and transforms him into a civilised man. Andrii’s encounter with her, which is at the same time another stage of his treason, is depicted as a mystical clash of savage Cossack masculinity with sophisticated Polish femininity. In a candle-lit chamber the Palatine’s daughter reveals herself as an impressive mature goddess ‘moulded in the proportions which mark a fully developed loveliness’ and with a luxuriant mass of hair falling in curls upon her arms and breasts. Andrii’s manly beauty is also acknowledged, but at the same time he finds his nomadic and predatory Cossack nature to be an irreconcilable obstacle for his communion with the Polish woman.¹⁹⁴ Thus, to reach real self-fulfillment he has to abandon his previous identity which did not allow room for complex feminised constructs.

¹⁹⁰ *PSS 2*, 55-56.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Taras Bul’ba’s statement that the sabre is the Cossack’s only wife.

¹⁹² *PSS 2*, 67-68, 88-89.

¹⁹³ *PSS 2*, 91.

¹⁹⁴ *PSS 2*, 100-102.

The inferiority of the Cossack condition is evident here and angers Andrii. The only thing left to him is to sublimate his individual self and to leave behind his previous allegiances. From now on his only loyalty is with his new goddess, both more abstract and more tangible than the Cossack fellowship:

And what are my father, my fellows, my fatherland (*otchizna*) to me? [...] Who says that the Ukraine is my fatherland? Who gave it to me for my fatherland? The fatherland is what our soul longs for, what is dearest of all to us. My fatherland is—you! That is my fatherland, and I will bear that fatherland in my heart. I will bear her there all my life, and I will see whether any of the Cossacks can tear it thence. And I will give everything, barter everything, I will die for such a fatherland!¹⁹⁵

Somewhat paradoxically, this awe-inspiring feat of love and betrayal is interpreted as a manifestation of his daring Cossack nature. This notwithstanding, it eventually leads to Andrii's death as a Cossack. The importance of the erotic aspect of the transformation is evident from the fact that the dramatic ritual is sealed with an act of physical communion, 'a unifying kiss which made them feel what it is given to a human to feel but once in a lifetime',¹⁹⁶

In this way Andrii becomes a true Polish, that is Western, knight, complete with his Queen of Love, noble-born companions, aureate accoutrements and an impressive stallion. As described by Iankel':

[N]ow he is so grand a knight. I hardly recognised him. Gold on his shoulders and his belt, gold everywhere about him; as the sun shines in spring, when every bird twitters and sings in the orchard, so he shines, all gold. And his horse, which the Palatine himself gave him, is the very best; that horse alone is worth two hundred ducats.¹⁹⁷

Although the Cossacks are also referred to as knights (*rytsary*), it is clear that theirs is a completely different sort of knighthood. However, Andrii does not give himself over completely to vainglorious Polishness. As it eventually turns out, he manages to preserve his original moral chastity. When forced to face Taras, he refuses to fight with him, the same as he did at the very beginning of the story. Killed by his own father, he is described as manly and beautiful even in death, while the old Bul'ba is named a filicide (*synobiitsa*). At the end of the day, Andrii proves to be a tragic and noble victim rather than a villain.¹⁹⁸ His innate

¹⁹⁵ PSS 2, 106; in a sketch titled *Zhenshchina* in which the ideal of masculine-feminine communion is developed, Gogol' concludes that love is 'the fatherland of the the soul' (*otchizna dushi*).

¹⁹⁶ PSS 2, 106-107.

¹⁹⁷ PSS 2, 111-112.

¹⁹⁸ PSS 2, 143-144; it can be noted that in this way he is somewhat similar to the sorcerer from Gogol's *Terrible Vengeance* (*Strashnaia mest'*), ostensibly a villain, but actually himself a powerless victim of the inherited guilt, see Mann, *Poetika Gogolia*, 38-54.

femininity and, more generally, complexity and sensitivity made him especially vulnerable to the allure of the refined Polish (read: Western) culture. Thus, the text's overall message seems to be: the Cossack dream of unrestrained violence, carousal, female subjugation and male egalitarianism might be exciting for many a tormented nineteenth-century male, but in the long-run it cannot satisfy the needs of a sensitive and gifted individual.

Does it mean then that the complexity of one's personality is determined by the presence or absence of the feminine? That it is the recognition of the feminine needs, especially the erotic ones, that makes cultures progress and become stratified? This is very likely as it does resonate well with Gogol's explicit statement voiced elsewhere that the manly '[f]irmness, valour (*muzhestvo*) and proud contempt for vice would degenerate into bestiality (*zverstvo*)' if not combined with the feminine element. 'The woman is the language of gods' and in order to convey 'the divine in the matter' and to achieve the full humanity it is indispensable 'to embody the woman in the man' (*voplotit' v muzhchine zhenshchinu*)¹⁹⁹ by which Gogol means the marital partnership, which is understood as a spiritual-religious enterprise. Due to their mindless misogyny, the Cossacks are deprived of this path of spiritual development, though it should be noted that they do participate in the sacred feminine through their communion with the steppe which receives 'them all into its green embrace.'²⁰⁰ In the longer term this seems to be insufficient, as it does not allow intellectual and cultural development. On a less esoteric level, Gogol specifies that the slavery suffered by Asian women leads to the bestial degeneration of society and it is hard to deny that the subjugation of the Cossack women as presented in *Taras Bul'ba* is disconcertingly close to this Orientalist stereotype.

Gogol takes issue here with the liberal visions of democratic, masculine fraternities, as they were imagined in his time and juxtaposes them with the conservative ideal of the healthy, patriarchal family epitomised by Nicholas I and Aleksandra Fedorovna. Himself a convinced conservative, Gogol did not miss the chance to point out the displacement of the feminine from the public sphere and make it one of the main points of his assault upon the liberal longings of his contemporaries.

The peculiar mix of conservatism and anti-misogyny is specific to Gogol, but the criticism of narrowly understood masculinity was a more widespread phenomenon in nineteenth-century European culture. Martina Kessel argues for the important role played in the German bourgeois culture by the 'whole man' ideal. Perfect males were not devoid of strong emotions and sensual longings (both traditionally considered as feminine), but rather

¹⁹⁹ PSS 8, 143-147.

²⁰⁰ PSS 2, 58.

combined them with rationality which was recognised as masculine. The willpower itself, one of the very core masculine traits, was believed by many to be enabled only by the properly managed erotic drive. In the sources Kessel uses in her research, the ‘whole man’ was contrasted mostly with the paralysing self-control and pedantry that precluded true emotions and stifled the ‘life force’ indispensable to achieving anything meaningful. The ‘whole man’ ideal could serve to justify male domination on the grounds of their overcoming the gender polarisation, but could also serve to undermine it whenever their ‘wholeness’ could be questioned.²⁰¹ Gogol’, in turn, identified the feminine element as a civilising force and contrasted his two protagonists striving for ‘wholeness’ with the irrational Cossacks mired in a destructive revelry-anarchy. Gogol’ did not champion a world dominated by self-sufficient ‘whole men,’ but rather one characterised by a harmonious, if hierarchical, collaboration of men and women unified by their striving for perfection, just like in Nicholas I’s official propaganda of family love.

The incompleteness of individual development focused on primitive masculine elements as exemplified by Andrii-Taras rift, is only one aspect of Gogol’’s criticism of the myopically misogynist Cossack dream. If we take a closer look at Ostap, the ideal male hero, we will discover that he is not happy either. We do not know too much about his thoughts and feelings, but he is said to have been less sensitive than Andrii. Less sensitive is tantamount to less feminine here. As we have seen, Ostap, the embodiment of responsible masculinity, is governed by reason, family love and Christian piety. Together with Andrii he does not participate in pillaging and is moved by his mother’s sufferings, and similarly to Andrii he dies tragically. He is dismayed at his father’s filicide and is actually its victim, as it is on that very occasion that he is captured by the Poles. Thus, despite being perfectly masculine, Ostap does not fit in the Cossack world and pays for it with his life. Andrii’s femininity made his situation more dramatic and catalysed his act of treason, but the foundation of the problem lies elsewhere: in the very nature of the Cossack identity itself. Eventually, as he seeks to overcome the limitations of the Cossack identity, Ostap manages to sublimate his self, but in a different direction than Andrii. Where his younger brother gave himself to the proudly gilded and beautifully feminine Polishness, Ostap chooses a simpler Christian humility. He becomes a prisoner and a martyr, a Christ-like figure. Eschewing both earthly temptations, that of the savage Cossack masculinity embodied by his father and that of the refined, aristocratic femininity embodied by his Polonised brother, Ostap discovers that only the spiritual path of

²⁰¹ Martina Kessel, “The ‘Whole Man:’ The Longing for a Masculine World in Nineteenth-Century Germany,” *Gender & History*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (April 2003), 1-31.

the humble Orthodox Christianity offers the truly satisfying solution to the elite males' torments.

4.4. Conclusions

The Cossacks as a symbol are exploited in *Taras Bul'ba* in at least two contradictory ways. On the one hand, they stand for the genuine, 'wide' Russian soul and their peculiar way of bonding, the fellowship, is given as a perfect manifestation of Orthodox Christian love, allegedly the foundation of the Russian imperial organism in the age of Nicholas I. As his most famous works suggest, Gogol' was deeply concerned about the real nature of the bureaucratised Russian statehood of his time. He depicted it in an unambiguously negative light as a monstrous, dehumanised machinery producing an emotional vacuum and shameless exploitation. The original Slavic spirit had been lost and what remained was a mindless, destructive machine. Here, the Cossack community with its pure Russian soul stands as a warning and, to a limited extent, an example to be heeded, as otherwise the narrow-minded bureaucrats may fail to fulfill the great ideal. Gogol' shapes himself as His Majesty's most loyal opposition, criticising the administration for not being faithful to the inspirational project set out by the Emperor. Thus, although not as accomplished, *Taras Bul'ba* accords in broad outlines with the most celebrated of Gogol's works and their penetrating critique of contemporary Russian society with its sclerotic bureaucracy and corrupt social hierarchies.

But *Taras Bul'ba* is not just a praise of the original Slavic 'unity, integrity (*tsel'nost'*), organicity, fullness (*polnota*), and brotherhood,'²⁰² but also a meditation on what went and might go wrong with it. Thus, it stands halfway between the 'dynastic' patriots and the Moscow Slavophiles and it even betrays a vague consanguinity with the thought of the Westernisers. According to Gogol', revelry, intoxicating natural environments and unrestrained individual freedom were simply not enough, because a mature male spirit needs a happy family life which requires a sense of responsibility, a genuine dedication to Christian ideals and a degree of respect for women as fellow human beings. Here, the author's treatment of Catholic religious heritage is especially telling, as it is in a way the second leg of the same message. Gogol' depicted it with a poorly concealed fascination, not dissimilar to that of the Westerniser Granovskii. As I have already mentioned, in the years between the publication of the first and the second version of *Taras Bul'ba*, Gogol' flirted with Latin Catholicism. He called Rome his spiritual motherland, socialised with Polish-Lithuanian

²⁰² Vladimir Golstein, *Lermontov's Narratives of Heroism* (Evanston, IL, 1998), 17.

émigrés in Princess Volkonskaia's salon and even explicitly stated that 'our faith and the Catholic faith are perfectly alike [...] both true.'²⁰³ However, it should not be overlooked that the Polish version of Western Catholic civilisation, as he depicted it, was not only esthetically alluring and intellectually superior to that of barbaric Rus', but also full of cruelty, childish vainglory and a myopic hunger for power. The overall conclusion seems to be that indulging either the feminine or the masculine needs is not the right solution, as both the feminine aristocratic Poland and the masculine egalitarian Cossackdom failed to secure a holistic self-fulfillment. As is illustrated by Ostap's path, the true solution to Cossack barbarism lies not in the West, but in the genuine engagement with the spiritual trove of Orthodox Christianity. It can be added that this did not preclude the eventuality that some kind of sublimated reintegration with the Latin lung of Christendom might take place, but never a mere conversion to the Western confession.²⁰⁴ Be that as it may, the indispensability of Orthodox Christian spirituality for both the individual and collective self-fulfillment is uncontroversial. In this respect, the 1842 version of *Taras Bul'ba* seems to be a document evidencing a moment of transition in which Gogol' reevaluated his Catholic fascinations and moved towards a much stricter confessional adherence to the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

As for the Cossacks themselves, Gogol' explores in detail the temptations of their anarchic masculinity and his conclusions are not very encouraging. The 'barrierless' condition of the Cossack existence is explicitly opposed to the settled family life which Nicholas I's propaganda presented as the most perfect embodiment of Orthodox love. On this account, the Cossack community (additionally tainted with the Polish-style anarcho-republicanism) is a complete failure. Instead of building a healthy family woven around an assuring father-figure, the Cossacks create a headless band of irresponsible revelers. The old Bul'ba is the best illustration of the overall bankruptcy of the Cossack system. He is a deplorable husband who, in stark contrast to Nicholas I, does not see the real value of his loving wife. What is more, he is a poor father: instead of grooming his sons for the responsible maturity and dutiful self-sacrifice, in other words, for becoming fathers in their own right, he introduces them into the community of eternally immature, parentless brothers. Driven by the fascination with the youthfulness of his own sons, he abdicates his fatherhood and tries to rejuvenate himself as their brother. Combined with Andrii's search for individual self-fulfillment (which could not be successful among the infantile Cossacks), this leads to utter disaster. The Poles may have

²⁰³ Quoted after Livak, *Jewish Persona*, 141-142.

²⁰⁴ The metaphor of the two lungs of Christendom is Viacheslav Ivanov's (1866-1949), but it became popular in the ecumenical discourse of the late twentieth century and made its way to John Paul II's encyclical *Ut unum sint*; for more on Gogol's fascination with the Latin Catholicism see Mann, *Trudy i dni*, 508-516.

many shortcomings (and very serious ones), but ultimately it is they who represent the civilised world and it is they who prove stronger and win the struggle: 'one force overcame another' (*sila odolela silu*). The old Bul'ba himself acknowledges the Cossacks' fatherless condition by calling them orphans (*sirye*) and, when crucified, eventually comes to understand that only the return of the father, 'a ruler of our own from the Russian land' (*iz russkoi zemli svoi tsar*), can secure development and stability.

An especially interesting aspect of *Taras Bul'ba* as a novel is that it is one of the most profoundly misinterpreted texts in the history of European literature. Due to its emphasis on ethno-confessional violence and colourful historical costume, it has been received by both scholars and the non-expert public as a praise of jingoist violence and an idolisation of its perpetrators, the Cossacks. Similarly, as we shall see, Sarmiento's *Facundo* was crafted as an accusation of the gauchos' barbarity, but was (and still is) read as the finest Romantic rendering of the Argentine national essence and its depositors, the free-spirited gauchos of the boundless pampas (although in this case due to the specificity of the genre the author's intentions cannot be simply ignored). In the context of this widespread misunderstanding, it has to be articulated as forcefully as possible that, overall, Gogol's portrayal of the Zaporozhian Cossacks was negative and this was achieved firstly, by emphasising their barbarous treatment of women, secondly, their inability to provide avenues of emotional, intellectual and spiritual development to more complex individuals and thirdly, their anarchic political arrangements, redolent of the subversive Decembrist longings. Gogol's vision was not a one-dimensional denunciation, but the prevailing message was that of the necessity of leaving the Cossack past behind. However, this meaning was immediately displaced by the joys of Cossack revelry and adventure which became the universally accepted understanding of the story. This was partly due to the sharp polarisation of Russian intellectual life along the Slavophile-Westerniser divide, as well as to the endless demand for images and myths that would reinforce the sense of the still not-so-obvious Russian nationality and clearly delimit it from the 'others.' This unproblematically jingoist vision of the sturdy Cossack lads would later become a bone of contention between the Russian and Ukrainian nation-builders, but it is only tenuously related with Gogol' himself and his text.

Paradoxically, it was the very immediate context in which Gogol' lived and worked that made it difficult to understand his message about the Cossacks, nationalism, liberalism and state building. Generations of readers and later scholars entrapped in the simplistic Slavophile-Westerniser opposition overlooked the political nuances of the time and their

importance for Gogol'. Distance, in turn, made it possible to interpret the tale of Taras Bul'ba in a rather different way, one that was closer to Gogol's own message.

To illustrate this I would like to return for a moment to Arturo Berutti's opera with which I opened this chapter. In its libretto, written by the minor Italian writer and political activist Guglielmo Godio, the story is condensed to a minimum, but the main thrust and general contours are preserved. The Cossacks are freedom lovers and patriots of Ukraine, but at the same time mindless, destructive revelers. Andrea (that is Andrii) is the protagonist and a tragic hero. He does not accept the intellectual poverty of the Cossack way of life and is exceptionally devoted to his mother. Tarass, in turn, is a ruthless bigot (the Argentine reviewers compared him to Rosas) and when he kills his son at the end, the chorus exclaims the very last word: 'Orrore!' In Godio's rendering, *Taras Bul'ba* is by no means an ultra-nationalistic glorification of Zaporozhian brutality, but rather a challenge to it. Much evidence suggests that the obscure Italian writer understood the short novel much better than most other readers.²⁰⁵

Gogol's own appreciation for the Russian soul embodied in Cossackdom was not unambiguous and must be located within his overarching argument about the destiny of the Russian Empire. The Zaporozhians preserved the purity of the Russian national essence which he valued greatly, but the future did not belong to the rowdy freedom-loving Cossacks, but to the new Russian monarchy that would be able to secure the holistic development of the Orthodox Slavs and defend them from the foreign predators, be they Polish, Jewish or other. What is more, the Russian ruler would be able to establish a lasting *pax rossica* that would bring benefits even to the Poles and Jews that had to be fought in the past. However, the new state should never neglect the Orthodox faith, which was both the foundation and the ultimate goal of its existence.

Gogol' was well acquainted with the Cossack story employed by the landowners of his home Little Russia to bargain for privileges such as the recognition of their belonging to a more prestigious echelon of the imperial nobility or the right to distil alcohol free of tax. At an earlier stage in the late eighteenth century, the story could be even used to legitimise demands for the restoration of the autonomous republican polity under the imperial umbrella of Russia, but in the 1830s this was no longer the case. The autonomist narrative was quite complex and

²⁰⁵ Hajda, "Bulba on the Pampas and the Fjords," 213; Godio, *Tarass Bulba*, 38. Godio himself was a poet, travel writer and an avid promoter of cultivating *Italianità* in the Americas. The most basic information on him can be found in Hajda's article, but see also Mark I. Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge, 2008), 41.

malleable, and different actors in different situations could underline different elements such as the Cossacks' military and political contributions in fighting the Catholic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the voluntary character of their union with the Muscovite state which presumed they have never forfeited their inalienable freedom, and their being the original inhabitants and holders of their land. As we have seen, Gogol' made his own choices and presented the Cossacks as colourful, rowdy semi-savages who fought against the refined Polish civilisation, epitomised by impressive gothic churches and seductive aristocratic women. Gogol's Cossacks were free males living harmoniously with the open landscape of their native Ukraine, but they were unable to satisfy the higher spiritual longings of more sophisticated individuals or to establish a viable polity. While Gogol' conceded that republican virtue and anarchistic revelry might look attractive (he even devoted his juvenile narrative poem *Gants Kiukhel'garten* to a kindred theme), it was clear that the lack of the father in Cossack society would ultimately lead to catastrophe, as time was unstoppable and the West was approaching. One could guess that it was due to Divine Providence that the Cossacks were lucky enough to encounter a Western Europe embodied not by a well-organised *Polizeistaat*, but Poland-Lithuania which was itself quite anarchic and dysfunctional.

Taras Bul'ba's was a multiple warning: the Russian Empire was indispensable and any chimeras of the backward-looking, Little Russian separatism had to be abandoned; the liberal revolutionary project of replacing the fatherly autocrat was even more dangerous, as it smacked of the French Revolution; and untamed masculinity could not be a satisfactory avenue of individual development of any complex human being. In other words, the collective and individual ideals encapsulated by the figure of the Cossack were exhaustingly criticised. Gogol' agreed that the bureaucratic legal order was 'wooden,' that is soulless and somewhat artificial, but the real solution was not its destruction and replacement with some sort of Cossack or Western freedom, but mitigation by the benign influence of a Christian autocrat.²⁰⁶ At the same time, the imperial government should not forget that its main task was to ensure the happy development of the Russian, national essence and thus should be very careful not to end up like the Poles who had trapped themselves in an anarchic dead end. More accurately, the government had to evade the sinister void of the frigid boulevards of the artificially Western Saint Petersburg. The wide Russian soul would develop properly only under the benevolent guidance of Orthodox Church and the autocracy embodied in the ideal of happy

²⁰⁶ PSS 8, 42.

nuclear family. The Russian Empire should never fail to be the Russian nation-state, loving and tender, but also, when necessary, paternally resolute and rigorous. This seems to be the message of the final version *Taras Bul'ba*, ostensibly the most Ukrainian of Gogol's pieces.

5. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and his gauchos

5.1. Introduction

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento was an exceptionally versatile individual and he can be safely called the schoolmaster of Argentine history. He invested great effort into building a comprehensive school system in his country, as he believed that it would become a vehicle for the propagation of European civilisation and a scourge for American barbarism. His *Facundo*, to name his most celebrated work, was an indictment of the semi-savage gauchos halting the progress of Argentina. One would not expect him to have much patience for undisciplined non-European masculinity, let alone indulge in it. Yet, Sarmiento was himself too much a product of European Romanticism to resist that temptation. The dream of male freedom unrestrained by either state or family was part and parcel of the Francophone literature he devoured unselectively as an autodidact. Indeed, when sanitised by the safe distance of race, language, religion and colonial subordination, the barbarians proved alluring enough to make Sarmiento delight in exploring his own primordial instincts and imagining himself as one of them. This happened in the last days of 1846 in the countryside near Oran in French-ruled Algeria.

Sarmiento came to the Old World as an official envoy of the Chilean government, charged with learning the education policies of European states. He thought that Algeria was an important case for study because the state building carried out by the political elites of the independent American nations was comparable to the empire building executed by the nineteenth-century European conquerors in Africa.¹ At the moment that interests us here, Sarmiento was travelling on horseback to visit ‘the interior’ and meet ‘the Arab tribes.’ Among others, he was accompanied by an officer of the Spahis, the light cavalry recruited by the French authorities from among the Muslim populations of the Maghreb. Sarmiento described him as being decorated with the Legion of Honour and ‘of Turkish race.’ Otherwise, the South American traveller did not notice too many details of the land surrounding him. As he explained to the addressee of his letter (who served as a rhetorical device rather than anything else), ‘the pleasure of seeing myself on horseback in the midst of open and uncultivated field and the gilded prospect of galloping freely’ was too distracting. ‘The gaucho instincts, dormant in us when we travel in coaches, trains or steamboats, were suddenly awakened by the tramp of horses.’ Sarmiento did not fail to mention that he himself had not only bought a burnoose, but had also taken pains to discreetly observe the locals’ way

¹ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Viajes por Europa, África y América 1845-1847* (Buenos Aires, 1886), 199-200.

of wearing it. He wanted to look like an agha and acquire at least a fraction of ‘the *chic* of Arab gracefulness.’²

The episode described above is symptomatic of a number of elements present throughout Sarmiento’s oeuvre. First, there is a suggestion of an affinity between the Muslim populations of Algeria and the gauchos of the River Plate, as well as that between the Argentine landscape and the ‘open and uncultivated fields’ beyond Oran. Sarmiento knew the lexicon of Orientalism mostly from the Romantic Francophone authors and used it on more than one occasion when depicting the gauchos of his native land.³

Secondly, on this occasion Orientalism is not dismissive, but rather appreciative. Sarmiento’s treatment of what he identifies as the Arab culture is exceptionally positive. It is the Arab heritage that endows the country with ‘the poetical shade of local colour.’ This culture is characteristically masculine, best epitomised by the *chic*, burnoose-clad aghas mounted upon slender stallions. The author himself makes an effort to ‘go Arab’ in order to share in the masculine grace of the locals.

Thirdly, a purely technical observation: Sarmiento’s return to the undisciplined masculinity of tribesmen is catalysed by the proximity of horses and uncultivated fields. Certain props and sceneries retain the power to evoke and transport the actor in spatial, temporal and civilisational taxonomy.

Moreover, Sarmiento admits that there are gaucho instincts dormant in himself and in all Argentines. They are the kernel of their masculinity, which is defined as both alluring and barbarous. Far away from his home continent he is even happy to indulge in them. In Algeria, feeling one’s gaucho roots is by no means dangerous to the progress of fatherland, just as the barbarous Arab horsemen are no longer a peril when subjected to the rule of French conquerors. The undisciplined masculinity of the horsemen of times past becomes an embellishment of the inexorable modern order established by the imperial troops. Disarmed and reduced to the level of innocuous ornamentation, the barbarous instincts are welcomed: as relics they endow the homogeneous, indistinct space with specific characteristics that transform it into distinct places and secondly, they enrich the virility of individual civilised males.

Finally, the position of Sarmiento himself is notable. On the one hand, there are gaucho instincts within him, but on the other, his credentials as a carrier of progress and

² Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 217.

³ Christina Civantos, *Between Argentines and Arabs: Argentine Orientalism, Arab Immigrants, and the Writing of Identity* (Albany, 2006), 31-42.

enlightenment cannot be questioned. He visits the uncultivated fields beyond Oran as an education expert and a guest of honour of the French imperial administration and flaunts a favourable review of his book published in the prestigious *Revue des deux mondes*.⁴ In Algeria it cannot be doubted that he is a White civilized person and stands on the side of modernity. This allows him to be relaxed about his gaucho atavisms. However, a trace of ambiguity remains, which is neither accidental nor completely exceptional. Let us consider the Spahi official in his company. Similarly to Enkidu, ‘the savage man from the midst of the wild’ who became the closest companion of the cultured elite hero Gilgamesh, the Spahi official is an example of how a barbarian male can be of service to the noble cause of civilisation (Legion of Honour), whilst at the same time retaining vestiges of his savage horseman masculinity: after all, he serves France as a *chasseur indigène*. Like Sarmiento, he is an agent of progress and civilisation, but at the same time he is a specimen of an inferior race that yields to the more advanced groups.⁵

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Sarmiento is a crucial figure that mediated between the lexicons of colonial imperialism and liberal state building, thus contributing decisively to the Spanish American elites’ specific understanding of their place in the world. His attitude towards the gauchos is generally unsympathetic: he presents them as barbarians that hinder the march of progress and do not fit the modern world. In this he accords with the main message of Nikolai Gogol’s *Taras Bul’ba*, as reconstructed by myself against the prevalent scholarly tradition. However, his insistence upon the necessity of building the Argentine nation as an outpost of Western civilisation and his self-debasing enthusiasm for foreign, usually North Atlantic, cultural models, invites parallels with many Polish-language authors who also chose to depict their fatherland as an inherently Western European nation overpowered by culturally inferior East European conquerors. Sarmiento can be also compared with Michał Czajkowski to whom the next chapter is devoted, as both were politicians in exile and prolific writers who combined elements of fiction and non-fiction in their oeuvre in order to convey political ideals. They are specimens of a wider prosopographical trend, even though their ideological inclinations and partisan alignments are rather different. Although they shared in the same modernity-building mythology, they located themselves differently within it.

⁴ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 228.

⁵ For a perceptive analysis of Sarmiento’s account of Algeria see Civantos, *Argentines and Arabs*, 42-51; also Dario Roldán, “Sarmiento y el viaje a Argelia. Entre el inmovilismo y la utopía social,” in Graciela Batticuore, Klaus Gallo and Jorge Myers, eds, *Resonancias románticas: ensayos sobre historia de cultura argentina (1820-1890)* (Buenos Aires, 2005), 199-210.

Recognised by some as one of the founding fathers of the unified Argentina, Sarmiento is labelled by others as the arch-villain of the elitist conspiracy that subjected the nation to the interests of foreign powers.⁶ By no means an underestimated figure, his vast oeuvre can be still studied in new and fruitful ways. In this chapter I will focus on how he depicted the gauchos. More specifically, I will explore Sarmiento's gauchos as a variation of the Romantic theme of native inhabitants of the land enjoying a privileged relationship with the nature and preserving the national essence. Then, I will locate this representation within Sarmiento's vision of his country's destiny in the globalised world and, more generally, of the modern order as a whole. First, however, I will introduce the individual himself and the political struggles in which he participated.

5.2. Sarmiento and his Argentina: a nineteenth-century life

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento was born in the Province of San Juan in February 1811, which means that he belonged to the first generation of Argentine men and women that spent all of their lives in a state of political independence from Spain. San Juan itself was a peculiar place. Located at the foot of the Andes in the region of Cuyo, it was much more closely related to Chile than to Buenos Aires, as until the 1770s it had formed part of the Spanish Captaincy General of Chile. Thus, the young Sarmiento would travel eastward and cross the now defunct eastern border of eighteenth-century Chile only occasionally, never reaching Buenos Aires, but during the 1830s he spent some five years across the Andes, working in Valparaíso, Copiapó and Huasco. In light of this, Sarmiento's choice of Chile for his exile in 1840 becomes only natural. Given the fluidity of national delimitations in Spanish America, we could easily imagine Sarmiento settling in Santiago de Chile for good and becoming an eminent Chilean intellectual, like the celebrated Venezuelan Andrés Bello.

Without going into unnecessary detail, it can be said that San Juan was an area with a relatively strong tradition of allegiance to the liberal cause of Unitarianism. Its governor in the 1820s was Salvador María del Carril, an avid supporter of Bernardino Rivadavia. During his term a provincial constitution was enacted that was the first in the River Plate to establish the freedom of religious cults.⁷ This act had a strong political colouring, but little practical utility, as there were virtually no non-Catholics in San Juan at that time. Del Carril was also involved

⁶ Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina* (Berkeley, 1993), 164-167.

⁷ Paul Verdevoye, *Domingo Faustino Sarmiento: educar y escribir opinando (1839-1852)* (Buenos Aires, 1988), 11-15.

in the fateful execution of the Federalist leader Manuel Dorrego and spent the years of Rosas's rule in Buenos Aires in exile.

As for Sarmiento himself, he was born into a poor family for whom he claimed noble lineage in his memoirs. Due to material adversities, he could not travel to Córdoba or Buenos Aires to attend formal higher schooling. He was taught the basics of Latin by his uncle, a priest, and then learnt to read French on his own. Despite his unequivocally Unitarian sympathies (if we can believe his own memoirs), the relatively mild Federalist regime of Governor Nazario Benavídez allowed him to spend the later 1830s in San Juan. During that time he came into correspondence contact with the young intellectuals of the so-called generation of 1837, most notably with Juan Bautista Alberdi.⁸

This was a group of relatively young porteño savants and savantes who envisioned themselves as the founders of a new intellectual movement that would overcome the sterile struggle between the Unitarians and Federalists. At that moment, the Governor Juan Manuel de Rosas had just finished consolidating his power by purging the Federalist movement of liberals who rejected both the Unitarian centralism and the *Restaurador's* authoritarian stranglehold. Apparently the young intellectuals of 1837 were not condemned to become Rosas's enemies, as they shared his criticism of the Unitarians' slavish imitation of European solutions. Instead, they hoped to become the agents of an intellectual regeneration sponsored by the governor of Buenos Aires. Theirs was a program of a moderate authoritarian progressivism, following the latest European models (especially Romantic aesthetics), but they also sought to find a truly Argentine voice of their own. For instance, Juan Bautista Alberdi proposed to emancipate Argentina linguistically by distancing the country's literary language from that of Spain. Eventually, it turned out that Rosas was not interested in this sort of intellectual vagaries and the 1837 group soon gravitated towards an overt opposition to his government, almost all of them joining the old Unitarian exiles in Montevideo.⁹

Sarmiento is often counted as a member of the 1837 group, but this is only an imperfect approximation, as he never met any of them at this time. Rather, he was a provincial

⁸ Verdevoye, *Sarmiento*, 18-22.

⁹ Jeremy Adelman, *Republic of Capital: Buenos Aires and the Legal Transformation of the Atlantic World* (Stanford, 1999), 165-190; José Carlos Chiaramonte, *Ciudades, provincias, estados: orígenes de la nación argentina, 1800-1846* (Buenos Aires, 2007), 247-257; Tulio Halperín Donghi, *De la revolución de independencia a la Confederación rosista* (Buenos Aires, 1993), 355-360; Shumway, *Invention of Argentina*, 121-145; William H. Kattr, *The Argentine Generation of 1837: Echeverría, Alberdi, Sarmiento, Mitre* (Toronto, 1996); Pilar González Bernaldo, *Civilidad y política. En los orígenes de la Nación Argentina. Las sociabilidades en Buenos Aires, 1829-1862* (Buenos Aires, 2001), 96-99; Fernando Alfón, *La querrela de la lengua en Argentina (1828-1928). Tesis doctoral* (La Plata, 2011), 16-25.

fan of their intellectual achievements. This does not mean that he was passive or unproductive. In his distant location, Sarmiento was involved in initiatives reminiscent of his later trajectory: in 1839 he established and ran a school for girls. He also edited the newspaper *El Zonda* which, though published by the state printing press, criticised the realities of San Juan life. Eventually, pressured by annoyed local notables, Governor Benavídez ran out of patience and Sarmiento was detained and forced into exile at the end of 1840.¹⁰

The timing of Sarmiento's exile is indicative of the concomitant intensification of political conflict in the River Plate. In 1839 and 1840 Rosas had to suffer the French blockade of the Río de la Plata, face a hostile coalition of northern provinces, fight the Unitarian incursion of General Lavalle, quell a rebellion of disgruntled landowners in the south of Buenos Aires Province, and disarm a conspiracy in the city itself. Understandably, Rosas felt threatened from all quarters and it was in this period that he authorised the most outrageous murders of his suspected enemies. Though his crimes never approached the hellish visions woven by the enemy propaganda, it is true that Rosas's regime became much more brutal in its treatment of political dissent among the urban elite.¹¹ Sarmiento's exile from San Juan must be seen in this wider context: on the one hand, he had merely angered some members of the local elite, but on the other, in the face of an all-out ideological and military confrontation even such a relatively lenient provincial leader as Benavídez could not permit himself to tolerate a suspect newspaperman in his city. It was this overall political situation amalgamated with the personal experience of persecution that shaped Sarmiento's resolutely negative vision of Rosas and Federalism as a whole.

Sarmiento arrived in Santiago de Chile where he became a protégé of Manuel Montt Torres, then minister of education but later president of the republic. In 1842 Montt created Escuela Normal Superior and named Sarmiento, a man without any formal schooling, its first head. Throughout his life, Chile remained for Sarmiento an exemplary regime, a moderately progressive, but also resolutely authoritarian oligarchy that persistently built institutions modelled on Western Europe and integrated the country's economy into global circuits, even when it meant preserving its subordinate and peripheral position. Chile served Sarmiento as an important model of improvement and the struggle for civilisation and as such it was an important foil against which he constructed his vision of gaucho-dominated, barbarised Argentina, which was a figure of sinister non-modernity.

¹⁰ For the first period of Sarmiento's career see Verdevoye, *Sarmiento*, 24-76.

¹¹ Raúl Fradkin and Jorge Gelman, *Juan Manuel de Rosas: la construcción de un liderazgo político* (Buenos Aires, 2015), 273-292; Gabriel di Meglio, *¡Mueran los salvajes unitarios! La Mazorca y la política en tiempos de Rosas* (Buenos Aires, 2007), 119-197.

In Chile Sarmiento actively participated in public life: as a dedicated supporter of Chile's ruling conservatives (*pelucones* or whigs), he jostled incessantly with the country's liberal opposition (*pipiolos* or youths), notably with José Victorino Lastarria.¹² He also argued with the Venezuelan-born polymath Andrés Bello, thirty years his senior, over the merits of Romanticism and Classicism, as well as the future of the Spanish language in America. While Bello wanted American Spanish to remain even more Castilian than that of the contemporary Spaniards themselves, Sarmiento opted for radical linguistic independence and devised a simplified phonetic orthography.¹³ Ultimately, Sarmiento's proposal did not gain wider acceptance and today Spanish Americans still use the conventional Spanish orthography, but the controversy invites comparisons with several East European debates, where claims for linguistic purity and better preservation of the original tongue (Bello) featured alongside attempts to codify 'more modern' standards based on vernaculars and phonetic orthographies (Sarmiento).¹⁴ The episode is also indicative of the fact that Sarmiento was not simply a one-dimensional enthusiast of all things European, but in his own way also championed what James Sanders has called the American republican modernity.¹⁵ He wanted the Spanish Americans to be bold and innovative and to build something new that would surpass the legacy left to them by the Spaniards.

These were formative years for Sarmiento. He matured as a public intellectual and had the opportunity to solidify his acquaintance with the 'philosophical' literature relevant at the time. Sarmiento himself named as his influences Dumas, Guizot, Larra, Michelet, Sismondi, Thiers, Tocqueville and Volney, while condemning the Enlightenment figures Mably, Raynal, Rousseau and Voltaire as impractical sophists.¹⁶ It was under the spell of nineteenth-century historicism that Sarmiento constructed his vision of gaucho-dominated Argentina and its destiny.

¹² For Sarmiento's role as a public intellectual in Chile see Ivan Jaksic, "Sarmiento and the Chilean Press, 1841-1851," in Tulio Halperín Donghi et al., eds, *Sarmiento, author of a nation* (Berkeley, 1994), 31-60 and Verdevoye, *Sarmiento*, 305-318. See also Norman P. Sacks, "Lastarria y Sarmiento: el chileno y el argentino achilenado," *Revista Iberoamericana*, No 143, 1988, 491-522.

¹³ Verdevoye, *Sarmiento*, 172-214; Alfón, *Querella*, 26-42.

¹⁴ Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe. Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2016), 78-91; for various detailed examples see also the first part of Tomasz Kamusella, *The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe* (Basingstoke, 2009).

¹⁵ James E. Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World : Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Durham, 2014).

¹⁶ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Civilización y barbarie. Vidas de Quiroga, Aldao y El Chacho* (Buenos Aires, 1889), 99, 122.

In 1844, an envoy of Rosas's government arrived in Chile. His presence was a source of serious political tensions. The liberal opposition press suggested that Minister Montt forced his protégé Sarmiento to mute his criticism of the Buenos Aires regime. It was in order to disprove this accusation that Sarmiento started publishing the unmasking articles on the life of a provincial Federalist leader, Facundo Quiroga.¹⁷ Quiroga had been a governor of La Rioja, bordering on Sarmiento's San Juan, and a strongman who dominated the whole Argentine West until his assassination in 1835. Sarmiento wrote his texts in a sensationalist style inspired by Alexandre Dumas's *Crimes célèbres* and chose to locate them in the supplement section, the so-called *folletín*, of his journal *El Progreso*.¹⁸ The *folletín* was usually filled with lighter, entertaining and sensationalist materials, mostly (but not exclusively) the *romans-feuilletons* modeled after Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris*. Sarmiento attributed an unusual weight to the *folletín*, insisting that it was one of the most powerful tools for shaping public opinion. He called it 'the applied philosophy of the age,' 'the tyrant of consciences' and 'the regulator of human aspirations,' judging that it can 'decide the destinies of the world pushing the spirits in a new direction.'¹⁹

In July, Sarmiento gathered together his *Facundo* articles, adding a final section on Rosas and the future of Argentina and published them as a book, *Civilización y barbarie. Vida de Juan Facundo Quiroga y aspecto físico, costumbres y hábitos de la República Argentina* (known today widely as *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism*). It is important to understand that in writing these texts, Sarmiento positioned himself, on the one hand, against the Chilean liberals, whom he did not deny legitimacy as political actors, and on the other, against the Federalist governments of the River Plate whom he denounced as benighted bigots.

Facundo is the fruit of frustration and repeated disappointment. The emergence of the generation of 1837 brought hope for a new intellectual outlet in the River Plate, one that would allow the old feud between the Unitarians and Federalists to be overcome. Before long, this hope proved to be a mirage and most personages associated with this movement found themselves in exile. All the military enterprises directed against Rosas and his allies in other

¹⁷ Diana Sorensen Goodrich, *Facundo and the Construction of Argentine Culture* (Austin, 1996), 32-33.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Garrels, "Sarmiento, el orientalismo y la biografía criminal: Ali Pasha de Tepelen y Juan Facundo Quiroga," *Monteagudo*, 3rd Epoch, No. 16, 2011, 59-79, available also at http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/academia_mexicana_de_la_lengua/obra-visor-din/sarmiento-el-orientalismo-y-la-biografia-criminal-ali-pasha-de-tepelen-y-juan-facundo-quiroya/html/dcd6ccc0-2dc6-11e2-b417-000475f5bda5_3.html (retrieved 25.10.2016).

¹⁹ Elizabeth Garrels, "El Facundo como folletín," *Revista Iberoamericana*, Vol. LIV, No. 143 (April-June), 419-47, available also at http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/el_colegio_de_mexico/obra-visor-din/el-facundo-como-folletin/html/dcd6d706-2dc6-11e2-b417-000475f5bda5_7.html (retrieved 25.10.2016).

provinces failed and the representatives of the generation of 1837 started to realise that Rosas's regime might be something more than just a passing aberration of partisan politics. Perhaps, in some distorted manner, it was the dreadful governor of Buenos Aires that embodied and executed the nation's destiny. As was noted with horror by Juan Bautista Alberdi, arguably the most perceptive Argentine political thinker of his time (and hence a meagre politician): '...the cruel triumphs of Rosas might become those of the nation.'²⁰ With *Facundo* Sarmiento defied those defeatist moods and argued that, sooner or later, the victory was theirs, that the progressive exiles and enemies of Rosas were simply doomed to succeed. It was not simply about attacking the government of Buenos Aires or proving the Chilean liberals wrong, but about giving the dispersed anti-Rosas emigres a sense of mission and collective agency.²¹ Thus it was that Sarmiento, this most *achilenado* of all Argentine intellectuals, constructed a vision of Argentina as a distinct nation with its own historical essence and destiny.

Not only did *Facundo* depict Argentina as a full-fledged historical entity, but more importantly it allowed the scattered and seemingly powerless enemies of the *Restaurador* to imagine themselves as a viable political community, the true leaders of the Argentine nation. Not everybody agreed with Sarmiento's diagnosis. In fact, it seems that among the leading Argentine intellectuals of the time, most rejected it, albeit for different reasons.²² This is no wonder given the notorious factual inaccuracies, the overall stylistic idiosyncrasy and the patronising stance of Sarmiento's text. Nevertheless, even those who disagreed recognised the importance of this work and all felt the need to read it and to voice their opinion on it. As a consequence, there emerged a community of Argentine readers of *Facundo*, both imagined and real. This was a new transnational public opinion of exiled and domestic dissidents. In this way, Sarmiento's work contributed decisively to the construction of the Argentine nation.²³

At one point, Sarmiento's combativeness and dedication to his political ideals made him a liability for his Chilean protectors and in the late 1840s he was sent by Montt to the Old World and North America to study education policies. It was the US that impressed him most as the laboratory of modernity, while Europe proved a bit disappointing. The main fruit of this

²⁰ Quoted after Elías J. Palti, "Rosas como enigma. La genesis de la fórmula «civilización y barbarie,»" in *Resonancias románticas*, 77.

²¹ Sorensen Goodrich, *Facundo*, 27-28.

²² Sorensen Goodrich, *Facundo*, 33-66.

²³ For the classical argument about the emergence of nations as imagined communities of myriad simultaneous readers aware of each others' existence see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2006), 22-36.

grand tour sponsored by the Chilean government was Sarmiento's *Viajes por África, Europa y América* (*Voyages in Africa, Europe and America*, 1849), in which he illustrated his views on progress and backwardness with colourful descriptions of various countries he had visited. He assessed the level of development (or lack of it) of each nation according to a stiff Eurocentric scale of civilisation.

In the meantime, the political situation in the River Plate started to change as one of the main Federalist leaders, the Governor of Entre Ríos Justo José Urquiza, stepped out against Rosas. Sarmiento recognised the importance of the moment and published two influential works in 1850: *Recuerdos de provincia* (*Recollections of a Provincial Past*) and *Argirópolis*. The first was a memoir in which he presented himself as the descendant of a noble but poor Spanish family, who had persevered in learning and so managed to overcome the Hispanic stagnation, provincialism and decay. Thus, he eventually elevated himself to the level of the best educated Europeans. It was both an advertisement of himself as the future leader and civiliser of Argentina and a model to inspire the nation to overcome its backwardness and transform itself into a leading engine of world progress.²⁴ *Argirópolis*, in turn, was a project of reunification for Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. Sarmiento planned a new federal capital named Argirópolis to be located on the Martín García Island in the estuary of Río de la Plata. He advocated the immigration of White Europeans and gave the US as a model to follow.²⁵ Though the dream of *Argirópolis* never materialised, several elements present in this text are indicative of Sarmiento's political ideals, especially of his cult of progress, tantamount to the expansion of urban, atomised societies of White European origin.

The political system that kept Rosas in power in Buenos Aires and in Argentina as a whole, was the key issue with which Sarmiento grappled in his writings and which conditioned his description of gaucho communities. As I will try to show, Sarmiento's treatment of Rosas's regime was quite complex, but one of his main aims was to denounce the rule of *Restaurador* as absolute despotism, the consequence of gaucho savagery and the desolation of the pampas. In fact, the Buenos Aires dictatorship can be justifiably recognised as cruel and tyrannical, but at the same time by no means barbarous or backward. Already in the early years of his rule, the followers of Rosas developed a wide-ranging political ritual

²⁴ For an analysis of *Recuerdos de provincia* see Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, "Una vida ejemplar: La estrategia de *Recuerdos de provincia*," in idem, *Ensayos argentinos: De Sarmiento a la vanguardia* (Buenos Aires, 1997), 103-160 and Sylvia Molloy, "Sarmiento, lector de sí mismo en *Recuerdos de provincia*," *Revista Iberoamericana*, No. 143, 1988, 407-418.

²⁵ For a presentation of *Argirópolis* see Adriana Rodríguez Pérsico, "Argirópolis: un modelo del país," *Revista Iberoamericana*, No. 143, 1988, 513-523.

that was enforced upon the society as a whole (at least in the city of Buenos Aires). In theory, if not in practice, everyone in the Province of Buenos Aires had to display the bright red ribbons of the Federalist party while a certain type of beard was forbidden as it was associated with Unitarianism. All had to participate in important state celebrations, including such seemingly private occasions as the mourning of Rosas's deceased wife in 1838 (which is the topic of Echeverría's famous anti-Rosas short story *El matadero* or *The Slaughter Yard*). Every official document or communication had to start with the ritualistic slogan 'Death to the savage Unitarians! Long live the Holy Federation!', enshrining the ruling party and its leader as the essence of national identity. All this was guarded and imposed not only by the law-enforcement agencies, but also by such semi-legal entities as the notorious *Mazorca*, a voluntary body composed of mostly police employees, which terrorised the suspected enemies of regime. Lastly, Rosas's regime always legitimated itself as a patriotic republican government, never failing to conduct elections.²⁶

The political order imposed by Rosas upon Buenos Aires was by no means backward and primitive, but rather innovative and sophisticated in how it coped with the challenges of the time.²⁷ Sarmiento was to some extent aware of the fact that Rosas was not yet another stereotypical caudillo of the countryside, but he had to modulate this appraisal, as it did not sit well with his clear-cut vision of progress. One achievement that Sarmiento was apparently willing to attribute to Rosas, was that he had contributed to the consolidation of Argentina. Rosas himself opposed any attempts at Rivadavia-style constitutional unification, but as a leader charged with maintaining the River Plate's foreign business (*encargado de relaciones exteriores*), he was widely recognised as *Jefe Supremo de la Confederación* (Supreme Chief of the Confederation), even though this position had no legal basis. Rosas believed that in holding the helm of the richest province and managing its relations with other provincial governments on a case-by-case basis, he could easily control all the nominally sovereign entities.²⁸ Up to a point he was proven right, but eventually it transpired that the lack of clear rules meant that the only viable way to legitimise his power was through military confrontation. As we shall see, the analysis of Rosas's rule and his role in the historical

²⁶ Fradkin & Gelman, *Rosas*, 212-215, 222-230, 317-320; Meglio, *Mazorca*; Ricardo Salvatore, *Wandering Paysanos: State Order and Subaltern Experience in Buenos Aires during the Rosas Era* (Durham, 2003), 129-136, 150-154, 325-393.

²⁷ It betrays many traits of what Dylan Riley has identified as 'authoritarian democracy,' as opposed to the 'liberal democracy,' *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe: Italy, Spain, and Romania, 1870-1945* (Baltimore, 2010), 3-6.

²⁸ Fradkin & Gelman, *Rosas*, 295-296, 351, 410-419.

development of Argentina is at the crux of Sarmiento's famous work on the gauchos and for this reason the issue had to be presented in some detail in this introductory section.

In 1850, Rosas's hitherto ally José Justo Urquiza of Entre Ríos 'lifted the banner of rebellion and anarchy.'²⁹ In 1851, Sarmiento participated in person in the military campaign that terminated the rule of Rosas in Buenos Aires, but he was disappointed by the fact that Urquiza did not recognise his *Facundo* as the single most important blow to Rosas's regime.³⁰ Consequently, he chose to temporarily return to Chile. At the beginning of the 1860s, Sarmiento was summoned by President Bartolomé Mitre, another man of letters turned politician, to serve as governor of his home province. In 1863–1864, he was involved in crushing a gaucho rebellion of El Chacho Peñaloza who was captured and instantly executed by the government soldiers, a crime which Sarmiento approved post factum.³¹ Discontented with national politics, he went to the US as a government envoy and it was only there, in the late summer 1868, that the news reached him that he had been elected by the parliament as president of Argentina.

In this capacity Sarmiento crushed the last serious Federalist rebellion of Ricardo López Jordán which was a consequence of the Paraguayan War (1864–1870). In addition, he organised the first national census and vigorously promoted mass immigration from Europe. His main drive however, was the development of a comprehensive school network. For this he secured substantial funds and brought dozens of female teachers from the US. All these policies were well in line with the views he had expounded in his writings. After stepping down in 1874, he continued as an active public figure, but soon felt himself alienated. As so many others, he interpreted his own political failures as proof of the whole system's corruption and indolence. Frustrated, he wrote and published his last major book, *Conflicto y armonías de razas en América (Conflict and harmonies of races in America)*. It was a new attempt to understand the predicament of Argentina as a nation. While in *Facundo* Sarmiento offered explanations based mostly on geographical environmental determinism, in the early 1880s his disappointments combined with fashionable Darwinism and led him to denounce the Argentines as inherently handicapped due to their racial inferiority. Apparently, the only solution was to flood the country with White North Europeans whose blood would eventually extinguish the Indian, African and Asian elements.³²

²⁹ Fradkin & Gelman, *Rosas*, 351.

³⁰ Sorensen Goodrich, *Facundo*, 25-27.

³¹ Ariel de la Fuente, *Children of Facundo: Caudillo and Gaucho Insurgency during the Argentine State-Formation Process (La Rioja, 1853-1870)* (Durham, 2000), 12-14, 25-26.

³² Sorensen Goodrich, *Facundo*, 109-117.

Sarmiento died in 1888 in Asunción in Paraguay where he had gone to avoid the cold winter of Buenos Aires. Though profoundly offended by the political class's rejection of his direct guidance, in his last years he was universally recognised as the most respected figure in the nation, greeted with triumphal arches and rewarded with the government-sponsored publication of his complete works. As we are told by Diana Sorensen Goodrich, *Facundo* was compared in press to Cervantes's *El Quijote*, and both the public opinion and the presidential administration took an active interest in Sarmiento's health. This monumental status was only reinforced after his death, when his coffin returned to Buenos Aires aboard a warship. This last travel invites comparisons with similar funerary sanctifications of national father figures, such as the celebrations accompanying the journey of Taras Shevchenko's body from Saint Petersburg to Kaniv.³³ More importantly for the purpose of this chapter, it needs to be noted that on the occasion of his death almost everybody named *Facundo* as Sarmiento's single most important achievement.³⁴ Thus, against his unmistakable conviction, he became the father of gauchos.

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Sarmiento's was an exceptional career: an autodidact from a remote Andean province who rose to become president of one of the leading South American nations and an intellectual towering above the whole continent. However, what was truly exceptional was not so much Sarmiento's path itself, but his stellar ascent. There were many such political emigres roving Europe and the Americas at that time, but only very few could rise to such heights. Apart from simply having a lot of luck, most importantly in that he became a trusted man of Manuel Montt at the beginning of the 1840s, Sarmiento's most precious asset was his pen. He was a prolific author of non-fiction, even though the glaring factual inaccuracies and flamboyant style make it difficult to categorise most of his works.

5.3. Sarmiento and his gauchos

Facundo is an idiosyncratic work. It is a sociological biography of a gaucho leader, Juan Facundo Quiroga, which the author uses as a tool to illustrate Argentina's socio-political situation as a whole. Sarmiento notes that the Argentine Republic needs a Tocqueville who would come from the outside armed with sociological theories and penetrate its political life. Then, with much false modesty, he declares that presently nobody in South America is

³³ For this topic see Serhy Yekelchuk, "Creating a Sacred Place: the Ukrainophiles and Shevchenko's Tomb in Kaniv (1861-ca. 1900)," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1-2 (Summer-Winter 1995), 15-33.

³⁴ Sorensen Goodrich, *Facundo*, 100-102.

competent enough for such an undertaking. '[I]t is necessary to search in the national past, in the physiognomy of the land, in the popular customs and traditions the points' which determine the predicament of Argentina. Here, Sarmiento embarks upon explaining the recent Argentine history 'with the biography of Juan Facundo Quiroga, because [he] believe[s] that it explains sufficiently one of the tendencies, one of the distinct parts that struggle in this peculiar society.' The condition which he is referring to is the barbarism associated with the pampas countryside, the American ways, the gauchos and the Federalist party.³⁵

Although Sarmiento presents his work as an accurate philosophical (that is, sociological, in nineteenth-century parlance) analysis,³⁶ what he actually offers is a denunciation directed against one group (which happens to be in power) and one leader, Juan Manuel de Rosas, Governor of Buenos Aires. In 1845, Quiroga had been dead for ten years and albeit he features in the title, he is just an illustration, an instrument used by Sarmiento to delegitimise Rosas' regime. As for the factual reliability of the work, suffice it to say that by the time he wrote *Facundo*, Sarmiento had never visited the Province of Buenos Aires and seen the pampas himself.³⁷

Notoriously inaccurate, partisan and mired in obscure political arguments which no longer matter, *Facundo* is nevertheless one of the most influential books in the history of Spanish American literature, initiating, among others, a tradition of novels dissecting dictatorial regimes. The work is also the ultimate codification of Argentina's gaucho myth and as such it is an inspiration for both those who follow Sarmiento's unsympathetic treatment of the gauchos and those who see them as the embodiment of Argentine *Volk*.³⁸

It was not Sarmiento's aim to glorify the gauchos in his *Facundo*. Thus, it is even more telling that he chose to employ the Romantic imagery that so often served to elevate the popular strata and their culture. Arguably, immersed in the Romantic culture of his time, he knew no better images, arguments and tropes and had to play with what was available. In effect, he preserved the images and their contents, but reversed the connotations, either by

³⁵ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 6, 12.

³⁶ For a presentation of *Facundo* as a work of nineteenth-century sociology see Noel Salomon, "La perspectiva histórico-sociológica en el *Facundo*," in Noel Salomon, *Realidad, ideología y literatura en el Facundo de D. F. Sarmiento* (Amsterdam, 1984), 3-13.

³⁷ Shumway, *Invention of Argentina*, 136.

³⁸ For the importance of Sarmiento's *Facundo* see Roberto González Echevarría, "Facundo: An Introduction," in Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism: the First Complete English Translation* (Berkeley, 2003), 1-16 and Diana Sorensen Goodrich, *Facundo and the Construction of Argentine Culture* (Austin, 1996); for an attempt at bringing the *Volk* into the study of Argentina see Jean H. Delaney, "Imagining «El Ser Argentino»: Cultural Nationalism and Romantic Concepts of Nationhood in Early Twentieth-Century Argentina," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Aug., 2002), 625-658.

outright commentaries or by emphasising the elements originating with the Enlightenment stadial history and the *disponibilité* discourse.³⁹

Sarmiento chose to focus on Quiroga and not Rosas himself, because he wanted to convey *lo grande* and *lo violento* of the River Plate realities: the authentic, spontaneous and primitive elements that defined each country's specificity (as was believed by Romantic geographers and historians). A provincial gaucho leader, was a more 'faithful expression of people's existence, their worries and instincts' than the complex Rosas. Facundo was an exemplary representative of a gaucho nation shaped by the immense American plains.⁴⁰

For Sarmiento gauchos are the salt of the River Plate earth. There can be no doubt that they are the natural born sons of the pampas environment. Sarmiento is an enthusiast of geographic and, to a lesser extent, racial determinism, which feature extensively in his work. The most potent means with which Sarmiento conveys the sense of intimacy between the gauchos and the natural environment of the pampas are the descriptions of their supernatural-like abilities. The two most striking examples are the descriptions of *baqueano* and *rastreador*, or the pathfinder and trail finder respectively. The *rastreador* is presented as capable of recognising the trail even after a very long time. Having located it, he never loses it and always manages to catch the pursued individual or animal. The *baqueano* in turn, possesses a photographic memory and serves as a sort of living map: he knows every single path and every single brook of the country. Similarly, Sarmiento describes how gaucho rustlers remember every single horse living at that moment in Argentina. As for the *baqueanos*, apart from their incredible memory, they can also process information and make practical use of it, for instance, they can recognise the area from the taste of grass or count the number of enemies from the cloud of dust stirred up by their horses. All this is modelled on Cooper's descriptions of North American Indians and serves to underline that although the gauchos do not have the formal education offered in schools, they nevertheless possess the specific knowledge and skills that stem from their intimate contact with the nature of fatherland and that, in a way, of all its inhabitants, they know it best (a reflection of judgements which are explicit in Luis Pérez and the Federalist propaganda as a whole).⁴¹

This privileged position is based on the fact that the gauchos live in the pampas, the Argentine landscape *par excellence*, and are shaped by it. For example, the spectacle of the thunderstorm in the limitless grassland cannot but profoundly impact the psyche of the

³⁹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York, 2003), 52, 61.

⁴⁰ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 12. See also Ana María Barrenechea, "Función estética y significación histórica de las campañas pastoras en el *Facundo*," *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*, Year XV, No. 1-2, 309-324.

⁴¹ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 39-45.

inhabitants. Sarmiento, however, believes that there is even more than just the sight, that the ‘electrical fluid’ of the thunderous atmosphere of the pampas affects ‘the economy of human life,’ exciting passions, firing enthusiasm and enhancing imagination. At the same time, the loneliness and cruelty of life in the shadow of savage Indians’ raids blunts the fear of death and renders the gauchos indifferent to violence and human suffering.⁴²

This peculiar combination of stimuli creates a specific mindset that finds its voice in the popular poetry of gauchos. Sarmiento describes the *cantor*, a wandering bard whom he compares to the medieval troubadours. The cantor derives his tales from important and extraordinary events from the life of the gauchos, like a daring abduction of a girl or a spectacular murder. He endows them with an artistic (if rough) form and performs publicly in a *pulpería*, an inn where the inhabitants of the pampas convene. Again, we see here an image inspired by the widespread Romantic depictions of Celtic bards and ancient Greek *aoidoi*.⁴³

Also, it should not be neglected that the natural-born inhabitants of the pampas, as depicted by Sarmiento, are embodied as unequivocally masculine creatures and that the author in some way does admire their primitive manliness. This is especially visible in his entrancing description of gaucho’s composure when lassoing a charging bull:

The gaucho arrives at the spot on his best steed, riding at a slow and measured pace; he halts at a little distance and puts his leg over his horse’s neck to enjoy the sight leisurely. If enthusiasm seizes him, he slowly dismounts, uncoils his lasso, and flings it at some bull, passing like a flash of lightning forty paces from him; he catches him by one hoof, as he intended, and quietly coils his leather cord again.⁴⁴

However, Sarmiento emphasises that the gauchos are unruly and indifferent to the rules of civilised social order. The anarchic aspect of their masculinity is emphasised not only by their inclination towards violent crime (knife fighting), but, even more importantly, their attachment to horses which is also associated with that of the native soil:

The horse is an integral part of the Argentine of the fields; it is for him the same as the tie for those who live in the cities. In 1841 El Chacho, caudillo of the plains, emigrated to Chile “How’s it going, friend?” someone asked him. “How can it go – answered he with pain and melancholy – in Chile and on foot!” Only an Argentine gaucho can appreciate all the misery and anguish that these two phrases express.⁴⁵

In Sarmiento’s rendering, the best embodiment of gaucho masculinity is Facundo himself. Savage and irrational, he is at the same time an exemplary warrior and horseman,

⁴² Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 19-20, 24-25, 36-37

⁴³ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 38-39, 45-47.

⁴⁴ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 33.

⁴⁵ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 48-49.

whose skill and valour allow him to overcome the art of modern military.⁴⁶ He is called the Tiger of the Plains (*El Tigre de los Llanos*), because his wrath is primitive and blindly destructive, yet also sublime.⁴⁷ In his description of Facundo's physique, Sarmiento emphasises his masculinity and strength in a suggestively estheticized, perhaps even slightly erotic, way: a squat body, broad shoulders, a short neck and a well formed head. He also endows him with thick, curly black hair and beard, prominent cheekbones and jet black, fiery eyes lined with rich eyelashes. Summoning the fashionable science of phrenology, Sarmiento interprets these physical characteristics as evidence of his protagonist's tenacity, strong will and awe, all the undoubtedly masculine traits that the Unitarian fops were allegedly lacking.⁴⁸ As has been shown by Francine Masiello, the feminised image of 'civilised' opponents of Federalism was shared not only by Luis Pérez and his contemporaries, but also the anti-Rosas dissidents themselves.⁴⁹

Clearly, Sarmiento was no exception here. His literary description of Facundo Quiroga corresponds with the 1842 portrait of the gaucho guard of Juan Manuel de Rosas, as painted by Raymond Monvoisin (Picture 6). This French painter resided in Chile at the same time as Sarmiento and the latter praises the former's work in his *Facundo* when mentioning Ali Paşa of Ioannina. Monvoisin depicts his gaucho soldier reclining, a mate pot in hand, and squinting, perhaps gazing at something in the distance. His swarthy face is covered with thick, black hair (moustache and sideburns) and part of his chest is exposed from his unfastened shirt. Together with the exotic elements of traditional gaucho attire he wears a red cap and a red jacket. Red was the color of Federalism and Sarmiento marshaled ample historical evidence to show that it was inherently savage and oriental, exceptionally well suited to serve as a symbol of backwardness and barbarism.⁵⁰ Monvoisin's gaucho guard thus combines oriental sloth, fervent Federalism, non-European exoticism and a sensual masculinity, a cocktail that we find also in Sarmiento's description of Facundo Quiroga.

Both civilisation (*civilización*) and barbarism (*barbarie*) are feminine nouns in Spanish, but it is clear that in Sarmiento's description gaucho barbarism is coded as masculine, while civilisation is feminine. The former is associated further with the Federalist party and its use of red colour. Civilisation, in turn, stands for improvement and progress, that is modernity, and is always located in the cities. Facundo is the central figure whose actions

⁴⁶ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 126.

⁴⁷ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 69, 76.

⁴⁸ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 69.

⁴⁹ Francine Masiello, *Between Civilization and Barbarism: Women, Nation and Literary Culture in Modern Argentina* (Lincoln, 1992), 17-51.

⁵⁰ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 109.

clarify this conflict. Nowhere is the opposition between femininity/civilisation/city and masculinity/barbarism/pampas better visible than in the episodes in which Sarmiento's protagonist deals with urban women. In one of these, the victorious Facundo, lying on his poncho, receives a delegation of elite girls from Tucumán, 'bursting with youth, candour and beauty.' They beg him to spare the lives of males belonging to the social elite. Facundo asks many questions, only to inform them at the end of their conversation that it is already too late, because all prisoners have been shot while they were talking. This humiliation illustrates not only the victory of barbarism over civilisation, but also the contrast between the sinister treachery of savage males and the righteousness of civilised females.⁵¹



6. Raymond Monvoisin, *Soldado de la guardia de Rosas*, 1842, private collection

Even more instructive is the well known story of Severa Villafañe.⁵² Sarmiento calls it a pitiful romance and compares it to medieval fairytales about persecuted princesses. Severa was an elite girl from Facundo's homeland, La Rioja. She resisted his advances for years. Interestingly, in the course of the story Facundo himself is also granted some characteristics of a tragic Romantic hero, as at one point he even tries to commit suicide due to his unrequited love. This is a narrative anomaly, as the dominant thrust is to codify the opposition between the animalistic masculine lust and the refined feminine purity. Sarmiento describes, for example, how Severa narrowly escapes from Facundo's aides who try to 'alarm her

⁵¹ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 160-161.

⁵² Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 133-134.

modesty' by stretching her legs and arms on a wall (*sic*). On another occasion, Facundo himself breaks into her house and beats her. Both episodes allude to rape, which Sarmiento preferred not to name explicitly. Eventually, the girl escapes to Catamarca where she enters a convent. Two years later Facundo happens to pass through this city and demands to see the nuns. Upon meeting her tormentor again, Severa screams and dies.

Sarmiento emphasises that the reason why Facundo did not win Severa's favour was not her moral purity *sensu stricto*, but his own barbarism. The fragment is worth quoting at length:

It is not only virtue that makes her resist the seduction; it is the invincible repugnance, the beautiful instincts of delicate woman who detests the types characterised by brutal force, because she fears that they would destroy her beauty. A beautiful woman often accepts a tiny damage to her own honour in exchange for a bit of glory surrounding a celebrated man, but it must be that noble and elevated glory [...]. Such was the cause of pious Madame de Maintenon's frailty and of that attributed to Madame Roland and so many other women who sacrifice their reputation to associate themselves with the famous names.⁵³

Sarmiento's own longings aside, it is clear that he does not praise Severa for her chastity, but for her rejection of degrading, savage masculinity as embodied by Facundo. What is more, by comparing Severa to famous French women, Sarmiento positions her as a specimen of a series, an exemplary representative of the civilisation-bearing sex. Rather than steadfast in their moral principles, Sarmiento's heroines are picky and refined in their romantic choices, rewarding civilised glory and rejecting savage strength. In this explicitly sexual manner, Sarmiento highlights the role of women as standard-bearers of delicacy and civilisation. Men can also contribute to the development of civilisation, but apparently it is not inherent in them, as seems to be the case with women. If not groomed properly and not receptive enough to the elevating female influence, male instincts turn them into savage brutes.

Catherine Davies, Claire Brewster and Hilary Owen showed that the victory of republican arrangements in independent Spanish American nations brought about a gender order in which ideally White males became rational, civilised and politically active citizens, while females, as irrational and incapable of public activity, were allowed only to be the sensitive guardians of domestic sphere. The authors did notice however, that the matters were more complicated with Esteban Echeverría's *El Matadero*, which was written in the context

⁵³ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 134.

of the Federalists' anti-Unitarian propaganda.⁵⁴ If Echeverría was problematic, *Facundo* completely collapses any neat oppositions based on the strict association of the feminine with the private and the masculine with the public. In Sarmiento's view, women do have an important public role, while the quintessence of masculinity seems to be rather threatening to civilised society and politics. Not unlike in Volney's meditation on Palmyra being overtaken by the desert, in independent Argentina urban refinement is stifled by the male barbarians of the plains.⁵⁵ The story of Facundo and Severa reveals yet another aspect of this clash, as understood by Sarmiento. The irrational masculine force can defeat feminine refinement physically, it can even take life from it, but it cannot break it or permeate it. Ultimately, the brutes' rule is sterile and merely destructive. In this respect, Sarmiento's Facundo proves surprisingly close to his contemporary Taras Bul'ba, an equally virile, but inherently limited and devastating figure. Paradoxically, Sarmiento's expressly negative protagonist is presented as much more alluring than the allegedly positive hero of Gogol'. This, however, does not preclude some moments of Gogol'-like grotesque, for example when the Riojan leader sells undershirts requisitioned from the civilian population.⁵⁶

Just like Gogol's Cossacks, Sarmiento's gauchos betray many characteristics of ideal possessors of the pure national spirit: an extraordinary intimacy with and dependency upon the natural environment of the native land, a distance from the civilised world, and a robust national culture, heavily based upon poetry, which emerges from the constant interaction with the country's nature. More often than not, such depictions were valued positively, but Sarmiento had a different agenda. For him the gauchos and their culture were the main hindrance to Argentina's progress. He chose to characterise them with a quote from Walter Scott, commenting on British troops' failed attempt at conquering the River Plate:

...the immense plains surrounding Buenos Aires [...] are in fact peopled by a sort of Christian savages called Gauchos, whose principal furniture is the skulls of dead horses, whose only food is raw beef and water, whose sole employment is to catch wild cattle, by hampering them with a Gaucho's noose, and whose chief amusement is to ride wild horses to death. Unfortunately, they were found to prefer their national independence to cottons and muslins.⁵⁷

Walter Scott never visited South America and drew his knowledge from Francis Head's popular travelogue, but for Sarmiento the metropolitan judgements of Europe were

⁵⁴ Catherine Davies, Claire Brewster and Hilary Owen, *South American Independence: Gender, Politics, Text* (Liverpool, 2006), 14-128.

⁵⁵ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 86.

⁵⁶ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 162.

⁵⁷ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 26; for Scott's original text see Walter Scott, *The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte with a Preliminary View of the French Revolution* (Edinburgh, 1835), 286.

more legitimate than any first-hand testimonies coming from his fellow Americans.⁵⁸ Just like the eighteenth-century officials of the Spanish Empire, the citizen of San Juan seems to have wished to emphasise such gaucho traits as their lack of respect for human life, anarchism, lawlessness, near-inexistent material culture and wasteful use of natural resources. All this he explained by conceptualising the gauchos not only as individuals, but also as participants and creators of a peculiar social order (or disorder).

According to Sarmiento, the gaucho society was, first and foremost, a product of the pampas environment, above all its vast expanses and undiversified landscape. He admits that the gauchos have stable settlements in which separate feudal-like social nuclei emerge. According to the then widespread stadial schemes, this should locate the gauchos above the nomads, but Sarmiento argues that the spatial isolation of Argentine *estancias* makes it actually even more difficult to sustain institutions of socio-cultural integration there than among the nomadic eastern peoples:

The moral progress, the culture of knowledge neglected in an Arab or Tatar tribe, is not neglected, but impossible here. Where to locate a school [...]? Thus, the civilisation is utterly unattainable, the barbarity is normal...⁵⁹

As was observed by Ricardo Piglia, for Sarmiento to explain any phenomenon properly required finding an adequate reference in the body of knowledge gathered by prestigious European scholars.⁶⁰ Characteristically, his preferred comparisons orientalise the gauchos as South American Bedouins, Kalmyks, Arabs or Tatars and present the pampas as a desert, an empty space. It is exactly in such a context that he names the Cossacks, as yet another devious eastern group.⁶¹ While Gogol' described the vitality of green grass covering the steppe and Michał Czajkowski emphasised the freedom that such an environment offered to noble-minded males, Sarmiento speaks of desolation and the collapse of civilisation.⁶²

This orientalisation serves several purposes. First of all, as has been mentioned, it locates Sarmiento's analysis of the River Plate in an easily recognisable scholarly context. Secondly, it allows him to emphasise the collapse and supposed barbarisation of his fatherland, brought about by the independence from Spain and political mobilisation of the

⁵⁸ Francis B. Head, *Rough Notes Taken during Some Rapid Journeys across the Pampas and among the Andes* (London, 1826); for Head see Adolfo Prieto, *Los viajeros ingleses y la emergencia de la literatura argentina, 1820-1850* (Buenos Aires, 1996), 37-45.

⁵⁹ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 30.

⁶⁰ Ricardo Piglia "Notas sobre *Facundo*," *Punto de vista. Revista de cultura*, No 6, Year 3 (1980), 17-18.

⁶¹ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 28.

⁶² At one point Sarmiento does offer an eroticised description of feminine, robust vegetation, but it is not the desert of pampas, but instead the garden-like 'isle' of Tucumán, Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 160.

countryside. Just like the ancient eastern cities of Palmyra and Nineveh that used to be highly developed centres, but were eventually overcome by the nomads, the Argentine cities were similarly conquered. Eventually, the orientalist image of the desert is an explanation of and an indispensable condition for the rise of despotism, a pathology stemming from the extreme conditions of life: a tyrant is a caravan leader writ large.⁶³

At the same time, Sarmiento himself is seduced by his topic and by his own ability to evoke its various esthetical aspects. One example illustrates the tension inherent in his treatment of gauchos. Arguing that the institutionalised religion withdraws from the savage void of the pampas, Sarmiento describes a ‘Homeric picture’ of an old *estanciero* paterfamilias who, in the absence of priests, celebrates the prayer in his home chapel.

Having finished with the rosary, he made a fervent offer. I never heard a voice fuller of devotion, purer fervour, firmer faith, or an oration more beautiful, more adequate in the given circumstances [...]. He asked God for the rain in the fields, fertility of the cattle, peace for the Republic, safety for the travellers. I am very prone to crying and at that time I wept and sobbed, because an exalted religious sentiment had been awakened in my soul [...], because I never saw a more religious scene. I felt I was in the times of Abraham, in his presence, in that of God and the nature that reveals him. The voice of that naive and innocent man made my tissues shiver and penetrated to the marrow of my bones. This is to what religion is reduced in the shepherds’ fields: the natural religion; the Christianity exists, as does the Spanish language, [...] but corrupt, embodied in the coarse superstitions, without preaching, without cult and beliefs.⁶⁴

What we have here is an enthusiastic description of the true natural religion born among the hard-working, unassuming people that live close to nature and far away from the civilisation, not unlike that of the idealised Nekrasov Cossack community described by Michał Czajkowski. Sarmiento does not conceal that this ‘Homeric picture’ deeply impressed him. At the same time, this image has been summoned to evidence the low level of civilisation in the pampas, where even the spread of religion is halted. After letting himself be carried away by the power of his own writing, Sarmiento returns to his main line of argument and brings back his usual talk of corruption and coarse superstitions. Although admittedly beautiful, the retrograde world of Abraham has no right to continue existing in Sarmiento’s highly competitive globalised realities.

⁶³ Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, “El orientalismo y la idea del despotismo en el *Facundo*,” in Altamirano & Sarlo, *Ensayos*, 83-98.

⁶⁴ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 30-31.

Overall, Sarmiento wants to convey that the pampas plains produce a society that is profoundly immoral and backward. Its only schooling is through work with cattle, which is reserved only for males, as women are virtually reduced to domestic slavery, just like old Bul'bas's wife as depicted by Gogol'. The only institution of gauchos' social integration is the *pulpería*, the pampas inn, where information is exchanged and knife fights take place. In such a world the only viable power relations are based on personal loyalty, outright violence and charisma, a vision mirroring the organic *maña* as described in the pro-Rosas propaganda of Luis Pérez.

Esthetical vacillations notwithstanding, Sarmiento was to remain faithful to this political diagnosis throughout his life. While governor of San Juan in 1863, he interpreted a gaucho insurgency which he had to deal with as a symptom of the decades-long clash of two elemental forces:

'[F]or a half a century these towns [of the interior] have spilled blood to resolve an impossible problem. One party, supported by the barbarity of the masses, tends to establish the autocratic government of the caudillo, with neither laws nor constitution nor form. The other, that draws from the cultured classes, tries to create a government but is without power.'⁶⁵

The strong state, brutally imposing the European norms, was the only alternative to the *aporia*, barbarism and despotism of the gauchos. On a more general level, the peculiar power structure of the pampas society is epitomised by a desert caravan chief. In the Argentine history, Facundo embodies this society, as a cruel, anarchic and ultimately primitive leader. Sarmiento emphasises the orientalist inferiority of Facundo's power by noting his face's similarity to that of the notorious Balkan strongman Ali Paşa of Ioannina, as depicted by Raymond Monvoisin.⁶⁶ Though they may seem formidable, Facundo and his like are doomed. Their world is rapidly and brutally replaced by higher forms of political organisation, even when these are as sinister as the dictatorship of Juan Manuel de Rosas.⁶⁷ Such a conclusion endows Sarmiento's considerations with an air of nostalgia, not unlike the one we find in Walter Scott's most successful writings.

Sarmiento exploits the sublime attractiveness of his gauchos to draw the readers' attention and to satisfy their literary appetites, but the main thrust of his argument is that the real gauchos are retrograde barbarians. One can play gaucho, like Sarmiento did in Algeria, and find pleasure in writing and reading about them, but there is no place for the real gauchos

⁶⁵ Quoted after Fuente, *Children of Facundo*, 26.

⁶⁶ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 69-70.

⁶⁷ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 24, 48-50, 53.

on this planet. Similarly, Gogol' indulged in the descriptions of Cossack masculinity only to convey that the myopic, misogynist and savagely cruel leaders of the sort of Taras Bul'ba must yield ground to the enlightened and responsible nationalist of Nicholas I.

5.4. The inexorability of progress

One of the most characteristic aspects of Sarmiento's writing is his love of daring comparisons. When describing the Argentine gauchos and the pampas he summons not only the Cossacks, but also American Indians, Arabs, Bedouins, Circassians, ancient Slavs and Tatars.⁶⁸ One explanation for this, at least in part, is Sarmiento's strong belief in geographic determinism:

The natural conditions produce customs and uses characteristic for those conditions, so that where those conditions are repeated, one can also find the same means of coping with them invented by different peoples.⁶⁹

One might also argue that Sarmiento had to refer to the figures well publicised in the cosmopolitan printing culture of the early nineteenth century in order to render his subject easier to understand for non-specialist readers. But *Facundo* was a text directed, first and foremost, at the Argentine public who would have known, more or less, what the gauchos were, even if not necessarily first-hand. Sarmiento's comparisons seem to serve a different purpose. By using them he inscribes the Argentine past into a bigger picture of human history and, perhaps more importantly, into that of the increasingly global world. This enables him to explain Argentina's situation accurately, determine its place in the world of tomorrow and devise proper policies for his fatherland.

One of Sarmiento's strongest convictions was that the world was a very competitive place. Every societal form can only be understood in relation to others. The nations that do not progress, that do not catch up with the leaders, are condemned to stagnation. The gauchos themselves and the world they inhabit are historically specific figures of non-modernity that serve Sarmiento as a foil to 'civilisation.' Any instance of historical stagnation, including the one brought about by the gauchos, is understood in very negative terms, as a sort of historical decay:

...the decomposition, [...] the nothingness, [...] the barbarity, inevitable mud in which sink the rests of the peoples and races that cannot live, as those primitive and amorphous creations

⁶⁸ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 24, 28, 29, 48, 94.

⁶⁹ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 35.

that followed [one another] on earth, when the atmosphere changed, and the elements that supported their existence were modified and altered.⁷⁰

One example of such a hollowed historical shell is the Argentine city of Córdoba where the oldest university in the Southern Cone had been established by the Jesuits in 1613. Juxtaposed with the lively Buenos Aires, Córdoba is a fossil of medieval mentality enthralled by Aristotelian scholasticism. Sarmiento identifies the Baroque cathedral of Córdoba as gothic, a term reminiscent of both Spain and the Middle Ages, and the whole city as either a catacomb or a cloister.⁷¹ The same image can be applied to whole nations, most notably Spain. Sarmiento depicts it as a country that is suspended between Europe and Africa and for that reason does not fully participate in the development taking place on the other side of the Pyrenees. For this reason, Spain is entrapped in its past and the European elements of Spanish nationhood, stifled in ‘the European Spain’ could only flourish in ‘the American Spain.’⁷² Again, this deadly stagnation of Spanish realities is best illustrated by the description of the city of Córdoba, this time the original Córdoba in Andalusia:

The most helpless of the cities that were, but are no more. The fatherland of Seneca, the last refuge of the followers of Pompey, the court of the Muslims, weeps every day so much glory and so much degradation. Its Roman bridge, its Moorish walls, its Arab mosque, [...] all those historical reminiscences unite with the beautiful landscape [and] the dry Guadalquivir to cry against today’s decadence. How sad is a dead city, once a queen that we see [now] a leper beggar in rags!⁷³

Later Sarmiento compares Madrid, the only city that grows and embellishes itself, and Barcelona, which is so European that it is actually no longer Spanish, with the rest of the *Madre Patria* that has been withering since the early modern Golden Age:

A hundred interior cities, Toledo, Burgos, are piles of ruins. Córdoba has a hundredth of the population that was enclosed by its walls in the Arab times, and a tenth of what it had counted under the Romans. No new city was built; no settlement was upgraded to become a city.⁷⁴

The cultural legacy prevailing in the River Plate is Spanish, which is stagnant and Arabic. It is then necessary to overcome the natural patriotic feelings, exploited by Rosas, and reject his slogan of Americanism: ‘The Americanism is a reproduction of the old Castilian tradition, the Arab immobility and pride.’⁷⁵ The opposite of Argentina’s Hispanic and

⁷⁰ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 11.

⁷¹ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 93-97.

⁷² Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 7.

⁷³ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 187.

⁷⁴ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 191; see also Beatriz Colombi, “Sarmiento: orientalismo, española y el prisma europeo,” in *Resonancias románticas*, 211-222.

⁷⁵ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 42.

retrograde Córdoba is the city of Buenos Aires. It symbolises not only the progress and dynamism but, most importantly, the belonging to the globalised European civilisation. Being the main port city of the country, Buenos Aires is the key link connecting the River Plate with the outer world and saving it from decaying in barbarous isolation, as is the case with Doctor Francia's Paraguay, 'this recondite China' of South America.⁷⁶ To an extent, Sarmiento's thinking is racial. He believes that the Hispanic inhabitants of America descend from Spaniards (and hence, partly Arabs and Moors), Black African slaves and American Indians. Because of this, they are by their very nature less enterprising and more carefree than the unequivocally White Europeans of the Saxon race who enter through the mouth of the Rio de la Plata.⁷⁷ More importantly however, thanks to the workings of the *doux commerce*, Buenos Aires is the entering point for European intellectual achievements and culture in general. It is only thanks to Buenos Aires that Argentina does not lag behind and become ossified like Spain. Although the biologically understood race is an important factor (and in his later years Sarmiento would assign it more and more relevance), it is not decisive. What is crucial is the influx of European ideas brought to Buenos Aires and from there disseminated all around the Republic. Sarmiento presents Buenos Aires as a collective hero in the march of progress and virtually the only engine of Argentina's development.⁷⁸ For we should not forget that this heroic city is surrounded by the pampas and the barbarous gauchos inhabiting it. Sarmiento codifies the opposition between the civilised, European-like realm of the city (which, according to him, is best embodied by Buenos Aires) and the barbarous, American realm of the countryside. Their inhabitants are like two distinct peoples or even civilisations⁷⁹ that are forced to live in one country and the fundamental difference between them can be reduced to the opposition between savagery and civilisation: 'This is what it is about: to be or not to be savage.'⁸⁰ The masculine barbarian not only does not share the civilised man's culture, but he disdains it. Hence, there is a continuous struggle between the semi-savages of the pampas countryside and those who aspire to transform Argentina into a European-like nation. The former rally around the banner of Federalism, the latter that of Unitarianism.

Sarmiento was an unwavering believer in the geographic determinism and, as we have already seen, in accordance with this he explained the gaucho culture as an inevitable product of the River Plate's natural environment. This might suggest that Argentina was condemned

⁷⁶ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 7-8.

⁷⁷ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 25-26.

⁷⁸ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 22, 97-103.

⁷⁹ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 27.

⁸⁰ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 9.

to remain a savage realm of roving gauchos and this was how Sarmiento's text was used by his political competitors for polemic purposes after the fall of Rosas. Juan Bautista Alberdi hijacked Sarmiento's own arguments to justify his support for a federal form of government and a moderate caudillo, Justo José Urquiza, the victor of Rosas. Alberdi argued that Sarmiento's intransigent support for a unitary state dominated by Buenos Aires was in contradiction with his own diagnosis expressed in *Facundo* that caudillismo was inevitable in Argentina.⁸¹

In truth, Sarmiento's is a more optimistic attitude. He asks rhetorically: 'If the enterprise is arduous, should we deem it absurd for that reason?'⁸² Although the gauchos and their peculiar society are a logical consequence of the River Plate's geography, there are also reasons to expect that theirs is not a stable order. First of all, Sarmiento seems to be convinced that the progress of civilisation is unstoppable and it is only a matter of who will introduce it and on what terms. Secondly, there are also some geographical factors conducive to the victory of civilisation in Argentina. Most importantly, it is the privileged location of Buenos Aires at the mouth of the Rio de la Plata, this river of rivers. Like it or not, Sarmiento argues, Buenos Aires will always control Argentina's access to the world economy and thus command resources incomparable with those of other provinces. Thanks to this, in the longer run it is condemned to dominate over them. The road might be bumpy, but the end point is inevitable: the obliteration of gauchos as a relevant socio-political factor and the transformation of Argentina into a modern power.⁸³ This line of argument based mostly on geographical determinism, will be further developed by Sarmiento in his *Viajes*, now clearly under the influence of US theorists of westward expansion and manifest destiny, such as the Swiss-born geographer Arnold Guyot, author of *The Earth and Man: Lectures on Comparative Physical Geography, in its Relation to the History of Mankind*, as well as Thomas Hart Benton and William Gilpin.⁸⁴

Paradoxically, Juan Manuel de Rosas proved instrumental in the fulfilment of Argentina's historical destiny. In fact, the place Sarmiento attributed to the *Restaurador* is a complex question. On a very superficial level, Sarmiento's *Facundo* is a mirror of the persona of Rosas offered by the Federalist propaganda of the time and exemplified by Luis Pérez. For instance, Sarmiento produces a testimony of an illiterate associate of *Facundo*'s, according to

⁸¹ Sorensen Goodrich, *Facundo*, 77-82.

⁸² Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 9.

⁸³ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 104.

⁸⁴ For them see Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: the American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA, 1970), 35-43.

whom the Riojan leader always disliked the people of quality (*gente decente*). This anti-elite attitude closely resembles the statements attributed to Rosas by Pérez. Elsewhere, Facundo is mocked for his reported boasting that his men never pillaged, because his rule of terror allowed him to requisition without limits. More importantly, it is a direct commentary on the Federalists' self-understanding as defenders of legal order and Rosas's ostentatious respect for law, as presented by Luis Pérez.⁸⁵ But it is only the persona of Rosas produced by the Federalist propaganda that Sarmiento finds kindred to his Facundo. To the real-life Rosas, the ruler of Buenos Aires, he attributes a completely different role, quite distant from that of a gaucho leader.

The citizen of San Juan sees the symptoms of the coming historical transformation already in the order established by the hated *Restaurador*. If Facundo is a perfect embodiment of the anarchic gaucho spirit, Rosas is something else. He is neither a real gaucho barbarian, nor a civilised man, but a sort of monster from beyond the human realm. As such, this prodigious (and prodigal) son of Buenos Aires made use of the gaucho skills he had mastered only to exterminate all the genuine gaucho commanders and establish the most despotic and centralised regime that one could imagine. Brandishing the banner of Federalism, he implemented the Unitarian political order in the strictest sense of the term, even if formally the provinces remained loosely confederated sovereign entities.⁸⁶ Sarmiento's Rosas serves as an awe-inspiring but ultimately blind instrument of the Hegelian Providence that foreordained Argentina to become one of the leading powers of the future.

However, there is, apart from Quiroga and Rosas, yet another hero in *Facundo*, one that symbolises the Argentina of tomorrow and serves as the best contrast to both the benighted gauchos and the monstrous Rosas: it is Sarmiento himself. A poor provincial who, through his talent and industriousness, lifts himself from obscurity to intellectual greatness. He names Europe's most important names, he quotes in several foreign languages, he fights both the sinister dictator and centuries of obscurantist rule with his pen and he travels to the most modern metropolises. All this contributes to the construction of Sarmiento as a true cultural hero and would be developed in his *Recuerdos de provincia*.⁸⁷ But even in *Facundo*, allegedly devoted to Quiroga and the gauchos, he cannot refrain from opening his text with an anecdote illustrating his own superiority over the majority of his compatriots. In this famous vignette we see Sarmiento fleeing his land, having been beaten by Federalist soldiers. Before

⁸⁵ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 76, 163.

⁸⁶ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 5, 22-23, 52-53

⁸⁷ See especially Altamirano & Sarlo, "Una vida ejemplar."

crossing the border into the enlightened Chile he leaves one last message on a wall below the fatherland's coat of arms: 'On ne tue point les idées,' which he himself translates as follows: 'One slits men's throats, not ideas' (*A los hombres se degüella, a las ideas no*). Then, we are told that the government had to establish a special expert committee 'to decipher these hieroglyphics.' Even when supplied with a Spanish translation, the Federalist functionaries could not figure out the meaning of the sentence. Sarmiento contrasts himself as a true cosmopolitan with the intellectually deficient Argentine officials. On the one side stand the barbarians and the overwhelming desert preventing any intellectual movement, on the other, the man of the future who impregnates the Argentine wilderness with the ideas that cannot be killed.⁸⁸

Both Rosas and Sarmiento are presented as surpassing the rest of Argentines and the realities in which they live. However, whereas the Federalist leader betrays his own porteño legacy and uses his intellectual superiority to transform the brutal barbarism of the gauchos into his power base, Sarmiento makes a journey in the opposite direction, from a backcountry to the outlets of globally circulating thoughts: Paris, London, New York. In this way, he acquires the divine power of the word, which eventually triumphs over depraved tyrants (note his juxtaposition of Cicero and Nero as the most perfect embodiments of two aspects of Roman legacy).⁸⁹ Rosas, in turn, employs the bare strength and makes himself a ruler of today. At the same time he clears the way for Sarmiento who, in turn, employs his intellect to make himself a ruler of tomorrow. The gauchos and Argentina as a whole are just a fodder for these two struggling titans.

At stake here is much more than simply Sarmiento's promotion of himself as a politician. Rather, he is a builder of civilisation, heroically overcoming the gaucho barbarism and the sinister monstrosity of Rosas. What he offers here is a vision of civilised masculine subjectivity that would deliver the noble-minded Argentines from the emasculation imposed by the Federalist-Unitarian (or pampas-city) divide. Sarmiento is not only of the future, but he is a *man* of the future, active, enterprising and victorious. As such, he can serve as a model replicated by the society as a whole.

⁸⁸ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 3-4.

⁸⁹ 'Este representa uno de los más bellos tipos que ha producido la raza humana; divino por el poder de la palabra, *porque la palabra es Dios*, según la misteriosa expresión de San Juan; aquel otro es la perversidad humana que va más allá todavía del límite donde la imaginación se detiene espantada, por lo que el sentimiento moral de los que no han visto estos excesos, los niega aún contra la evidencia de los testimonios. Nerón es este! Cicerón el primero.' Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 286-287.

5.5. The capitalist phalanstery: Sarmiento's modernity

The gauchos depicted by Sarmiento were ultimately a subordinate element of the disciplinary myth of modernity. More specifically, they served as a figure of 'non-modernity,' that is everything that had to be overcome in order to implement and develop 'civilisation.'⁹⁰ Consequently, Sarmiento's gauchos can be read properly only in relation to this ambitious dream about the future.

What was this glorious Argentina of tomorrow to look like? We know that it was to be modern and European in character, but Sarmiento did not indiscriminately buy into everything European. Interestingly, he claimed that only in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century did the social sciences mature and that the political thought of most eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers was not only wrong, but actually harmful. Among others, he identified Mably and Raynal as anarchists and Rousseau as a sophist. Generally, the main thrust of his criticism is directed against what he presents as the irresponsible naivety of the eighteenth-century thinkers, who focused on the emancipation of the masses and the subaltern condition of the disenfranchised, instead of devising strong executives that would forward the domination of advanced races.⁹¹ To be clear however, Sarmiento was no lover of the *ancien régime* or any of its *Restauration* vestiges.

Actually, his cherished model was not to be found in Europe but elsewhere, namely in the US.⁹² Sarmiento devoted the largest section of his extensive *Viajes* to the US and this is no place to analyse it in detail. I will only raise the main points that are indispensable in understanding how Sarmiento imagined modernity as, according to him, the North American republic was its most perfect embodiment, 'the ultimate result of human logic.' First of all, the US was a limitless, ever-expanding empire 'of free men' that might at some point encompass both American continents. In accordance with the excessive importance attributed by Sarmiento to geographical circumstances, this capacity to expand was one of the main sources of this country's success. In turn, the fact that the fortunate location was coupled with the undeniable superiority of the Saxon race constituted evidence of the rational designs of Divine Providence. The North Americans not only enjoyed all the achievements of European civilisation, but actually surpassed the old continent both in terms of innovation and, even more importantly, in its rapid spread in society at large. One of the most important symptoms

⁹⁰ See Carol Symes, "When We Talk About Modernity," *American Historical Review* Vol. 116 (2011), No 2, 715-26.

⁹¹ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 99.

⁹² Dardo Pérez Guillhou, "Ideas y sistemas políticos en los *Viajes* de Sarmiento," in Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Viajes*, ed. by Javier Fernández (Madrid, 1997), 1033-1051.

of the US success was the stellar population growth observed in the northern union, another being its economic superiority over the neighbours, not only the obvious suspect of Mexico, but also the well ordered Canada.⁹³

This is not to say that Sarmiento was uncritical of US Americans: he starts his description of their republic with a confession of disillusion and disappointment.⁹⁴ Yet this is a rhetorical device more than anything else. The shortcomings of US Americans, as presented by Sarmiento, serve only to strengthen his overall enthusiastic appraisal of their state as the agent of a secular *Parousia*. Of particular note is his repeated insistence on the general lack of manners and boorishness of the Yankees (as he likes to call them), further reinforced by his insinuation as to the sexual freedom and laxity of their women. These claims have several functions: first of all, they help to emphasise that the US is a completely disparate creature, a specimen of a genus different to that of other countries, in other words, a society of the future, and secondly, they are related to the traits that Sarmiento seems to deem as the most important attributes of modernity – mobility and uniformity, for the representatives of the upper classes are no less rude than those of the lower. For example, in a hotel restaurant it is necessary to hang a placard on the wall with regulations preventing the most obvious breaches of civility: men taking seat before women or publicly spitting chewing tobacco.⁹⁵ The widespread US boorishness is curiously symmetrical with the barbarism of Argentine gauchos. Both phenomena are presented as inherently masculine and resulting from the absence of the feminine element, though in the US this is rather due to the women's emancipation through their (relative) defeminisation (a single woman being there a free *hombre de sexo femenino*),⁹⁶ unlike in Argentina where women (as well as cities and educated strata) are subjugated by the semi-savages. In the world of tomorrow the civilising role of women is fulfilled by artificial devices such as propriety placards. All relevant distinctions between individuals are obliterated by the capitalist uniformisation, even such seemingly inescapable differences as those delimiting males from females. Yet, one cannot help feeling that there is some sort of strange intimacy between the two forms of masculinised boorishness and social void depicted by Sarmiento.

Not only do the individual inhabitants of the US all dress in the same way and are equally ill-behaved, but even all the localities prove surprisingly similar. In accordance with the received wisdom that cities are the hubs of progress and civilisation, the contrast between

⁹³ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 335-340, 348, 361, 363.

⁹⁴ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 333.

⁹⁵ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 356-359.

⁹⁶ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 348.

the rural and urban environments can be observed not only in Argentina, but also in such civilised states as Chile and France. Not in the US, however. North American villages, Sarmiento claims, are perfect miniatures of the country as a whole, with all the indispensable institutions of public utility one could wish for.⁹⁷ This uniformity is reinforced by the exceptional mobility of the Yankees, another element reminding us of the gaucho horsemen of the plains. Sarmiento delights in depicting lavish steamboats and dense telegraphic and railway networks that enable US Americans to travel manically. As noted by Nicola Miller, '[f]or Sarmiento, movement was intimately linked to modernity.'⁹⁸ He even suggested that the US Americans actually travelled without purpose, just for the pure pleasure of being on the move, like erratic atoms (or unkillable ideas).⁹⁹

The force behind this tremendous spectacle is none other than capitalism, which Sarmiento, an arrival from a disparate and primitive universe, claims to be unable to fully grasp. The true nature of this order of the future is best epitomised by factories:

I saw in them nothing but cogs, engines, balances, levers and a labyrinth of tiny pieces which move I know not how to produce I have no idea what results...¹⁰⁰

To convey its awe-inspiring strength Sarmiento summons yet another picture, that of a majestic hotel building that he mistakes for a cathedral (it was St. Charles Hotel which indeed had a dome until it was destroyed by fire in 1851). Yet, although its luxury might seem close to that of monuments of the past, its actual nature cannot be farther from it. To make it evident, Sarmiento compares the hotel to Fourier's phalanstery.¹⁰¹ It is no accident that it is precisely in a hotel that Sarmiento locates the scene that best encapsulates his message about the inhabitants of the US as the people of the future, boorish, atomised, always on the move, uniform and egalitarian:

In North America you will find everywhere the symptoms of the religious cult with which this nation worships its noble and dignified instruments of wealth, the feet. [...] Four individuals seated around a marble table will certainly put their eight feet on it, if they cannot procure a velvet seat, the softness of which the Yankees prefer to the marble.¹⁰²

The personalised power hierarchies based on violence and charisma which Sarmiento attributes to the gaucho society are located at the opposite end of the spectrum of civilization

⁹⁷ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 341-343.

⁹⁸ Nicola Miller, "Liberty, Lipstick, and Lobsters," in Axel Körner, Nicola Miller and Adam I. P. Smith, *America Imagined: Explaining the United States in Nineteenth-Century Europe and Latin America* (New York, 2012), 99.

⁹⁹ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 346-347, 350.

¹⁰⁰ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 8.

¹⁰¹ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 351-354.

¹⁰² Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 358.

advancement, although the void and atomisation of the pampas desert seems to be somehow similar to that of the capitalist US. This similarity would require further exploration, but for now it is safe to claim that the two visions are complementary only in the sense that they are mirroring oppositions of one another. This does not mean that it will always be the case. Actually, the geographic advantages that Sarmiento attributes to the US are also identified by him in his native country. If ruled properly, if open to the immigration of the White Northern Europeans and if armed with a comprehensive education system, Argentina will become the US of the southern hemisphere.¹⁰³

In contrast to the predominant opposition between the masculine pampas and the feminised cities, this new order heralded by the North American republic is expressly masculine and conquering. Again, Sarmiento offers a promise of successful, civilised masculinity, this time embodied not only in himself, but in the whole US society. Even if dull and boorish, these new modern men will defeat the robust gauchos of the sort of Facundo. The pampas society with its irrational social bonds and barbarous hierarchies will disappear to make room for the millions of uniform atoms reading their morning newspapers, moving randomly and curbed only by placards with propriety regulations.

Does it all mean that Sarmiento who, after all, proved the most powerful conjurer of the gaucho specters, really wanted to obliterate them from the surface of the earth? Not exactly. Sarmiento did claim that it was the natural environment and its products that defined the fate of every country. Tellingly, he preferred the Romantic descriptions of the pampas penned by Echeverría to the neoclassicist odes of Juan Cruz Varela that ‘added nothing to the treasury of European ideas.’ Echeverría turned his eyes to ‘the desert and there in the immensity without limits, in the solitudes roamed by the savages [...] found inspirations provided to the imagination by the spectacle of nature [that is] solemn, grandiose, incommensurate and taciturn.’ What is more, Sarmiento heralded James Fenimore Cooper as a model American writer who built his work upon the original foundations provided by the New World.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, the Argentines should offer works that would capture the sublime of their national existence:

...the man moving in this scenery [...] assaulted by fantastic fears and insecurity, dreams that haunt him in the desert.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 9.

¹⁰⁴ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 34-37; for an interpretation of Sarmiento’s reading of Cooper as a foundational fiction see Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley, 1991), 52-82.

¹⁰⁵ Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 36.

Though politically deplorable, the epic clash of the barbarian and civilised elements is the most powerful original contribution that the Argentines can offer. After all, this is what Sarmiento himself is doing: turning the gauchos and the pampas into literature, while at the same time destroying them politically.

What Sarmiento envisages is not then a complete obliteration of the anarchic gauchos, but rather their sanitisation as innocuous folklore, just like it was done (he believed) by the French in Algeria. The original inhabitants of the country endowed it with ‘the poetical shade of the local colour.’¹⁰⁶ Some of them could be even employed as *chasseurs indigènes* and thus contribute to the construction of the modern order. In such safe circumstances, it was allowed to cultivate in the civilised men some barbaric instincts that strengthened their masculinity and added more flavour to their uniform lives. As did the burnoose-clad Sarmiento galloping through the hinterland of Oran and imagining himself as a hybrid gaucho-Arab Spahi. Yet this was all that the citizen of San Juan was ready to concede to the gauchos and their culture: the occasional feature in elite role-plays, the honour of having their voice appropriated by the national literature and languishing, either as unequivocally subaltern rural labourers, or in tiny delimited areas resemblant of the US Indian Reservations. Beyond that, the world belonged to the swarms of boorish, fidgety and uniform White men, each of them just a tiny cog in the awe-inspiring, capitalist phalanstery of tomorrow.

¹⁰⁶ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 217.

6. Michał Czajkowski and his Cossack Utopias

6. 1. Introduction: the horror and other delights

With the sun setting, his white horse limping and his Ukrainians noticeably worn-down, Master Sawa decided to encamp on a hill overlooking the modest manor of Gruszczyńce. The building was old and somewhat ramshackle, but it looked enchantingly beautiful in the pink-gold rays of the afternoon sun. The light playing amongst the branches of lindens, plums and cherries; the radiance of fields covered with wheat and rye; the chirping clouds of sparrows whirling above the orchards – all this made Master Sawa pause for a moment and let himself be lost in a tangle of inarticulate longings. But there was also something gloomy in the behaviour of the birds, like a solemn prayer for the fallen. Master Sawa left the bulk of his fellow insurgents grazing their horses in the steppe, took a few men and descended towards the desolate manor on reconnaissance. Seasoned as he was in so many battles with the Russian Imperial troops, what he saw there made his hair stand on end, as if struck by the blow of dragon gale. The Polish noble women, like benevolent nymphs, had adorned this pious, little building with onion wreaths, watercolours, copper ewers and tin pans. But now everything was soaked in blood. Naked bodies of adults and children alike were scattered around, gashed and daubed with feathers from the torn pillows. As for the lady of the house herself, she clutched the headless, green bodies of her children, while a dead puppy lay in her open womb.

‘The horror! The horror!’ goes the climactic quote from the famous novel written in English by yet another Polonophone native of Ukraine. Long before Joseph Conrad published his *Heart of Darkness* and well before he was even born, horror had been part and parcel of Polish-language depictions of Ukraine. As is noted by Sarmiento, ‘[n]o pleasure is greater than being seriously scared, [...] no sensations agitate heart more profoundly than those of terror.’¹ The horror is not just another characteristic, but one of the most powerful devices to engage and please the reading public.

As it is probably clear by now, the episode recounted in the opening paragraph is no reliable account of any specific historical event, but my own imperfect summary of a passage taken from a piece of literary fiction. The work in question is *Sen srebrny Salomei* (*The Silver Dream of Salomea*), a frenetic, historical drama (published in 1844 in Paris) by Juliusz Słowacki, one of the titans of Polish-language Romanticism. The play is set in the Right Bank Ukraine of the late 1760s, when the combined Russian and Commonwealth troops were

¹ Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Viajes por Europa, África y América 1845-1847* (Buenos Aires, 1886), 244.

fighting the anti-royalist insurgency of conservative, republican noblemen, the so-called Confederation of Bar (named after town in the Podolia region where it had started). At the same time, both sides of the conflict had to quell a jacquerie of Ruthenian serfs, the last such catastrophe to occur in the region before the twentieth century.

Sen srebrny Salomei is one of Słowacki's masterpieces and doubtless one of the works which the poet himself considered of central importance for his oeuvre: indeed, he designed it to be a sort of gift for his mother Salomea Bécu with whom he had a very particular and intense relationship and whose name he put in the title (although the drastic content of the drama did not please her). The piece is saturated with Słowacki's mystical historiosophy which I am not going to study here (not that it is not worth the effort).² However, without delving too deep into the exact message of the work, one can easily note the Ukraine-related topoi which the author deployed to achieve his ends: an isolated noble manor serving as the locus of the healthy Polish-Lithuanianness, the sinister, desolate steppes surrounding it, and the destructive carnage inflicted upon the former by the latter. The steppe stands here for barbarism, filth, slaughter, excess, the Cossacks and the Ruthenian culture, whereas the manor represents civilisation, cleanliness, life, moderation, middling-sort nobility and Polish culture. Their entanglement produces a constant tension which was too attractive for the Polish-language Romantic authors to resist.

As was noted by Maurycy Mochnacki, an influential revolutionary conspirator and literary scholar of the time, Ukraine was the Polish Scotland, Poland's most romantic province which meant that it was best fitted to serve as a setting for stories of adventure and violence.³ Indeed, there was at that time a group of authors who are often lumped together as the so-called 'Ukrainian school,' although they were by no means a coherent school, rather a current or fad of sorts. To name but a few: Juliusz Słowacki himself, a financially independent rentier and an exceptionally productive author, scorned during his lifetime, but elevated to the summit of the Polish pantheon since the late nineteenth century; Józef Bohdan Zaleski, an acquaintance of Gogol's and, according to Adam Mickiewicz (a Lithuanian⁴ who was the uncontested leader of Polish-language Romanticism), the second most important Romantic

² By historiosophy (philosophy of history) I mean all rational speculations on the significance and *telos* of human history (or large sections thereof) deduced from a priori axioms rather than built on the basis of empirical evidence (historiography). Nineteenth-century examples would include G. W. F. Hegel's theory of *Zeitgeist* and his triad of thesis, antithesis, synthesis; Juliusz Słowacki's genesic philosophy; Nikolai Danilevskii's and Konstantin Leont'iev's visions of circular rise and fall of incompatible civilisations.

³ Marek Kwapiszewski, "Wizja koliszczyzny w prozie romantycznej (Czajkowski – Grabowski – Fisz)," *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska: Sectio FF*, vol. XX/XXI (2002/2003), 413.

⁴ For the non-ethnic sense in which I use the term Lithuanian see my note on conventions.

poet of Poland, nowadays largely forgotten; Antoni Malczewski, author of the epic poem *Maria* denouncing the lawlessness of the eighteenth-century Polish-Lithuanian lords in Ukraine, also the first man to reach the Aiguille du Midi peak in the Mont Blanc massif; Seweryn Goszczyński, an energetic democratic conspirator and emigre who translated *Ossian* into Polish and authored the frenetic epic poem *Zamek kaniowski* (*The Castle of Kaniv*) set in Ukraine of the 1760s, as well as the first poetic depictions of the Tatra mountains; Michał Grabowski, an influential conservative intellectual and champion of Poland's reconciliation with Russia. These are just a few household names, but there are many others, especially as the amorphous nature of the 'Ukrainian school' allows scholars to include and exclude specific authors on a rather arbitrary basis.⁵ I am not going to study the whole phenomenon of the Ukrainian-themed works of the Polish-language Romantics here, but it is important to signal how widespread and popular this phenomenon was.

Thematically, these works oscillated from the nostalgic depictions of a vague, but generally affluent and happy, past to those of frenetic clashes between the Polish-Lithuanian nobility and the Cossack-cum-peasant rebels, as exemplified by the above mentioned fragment of *Sen srebrny Salomei*. The latter tendency seems to predominate and indeed one could say that in the case of Ukraine, its being the most Romantic is tantamount to being the most violent. Again, the horror is key to these authors' success. This is even more prominent when one examines Goszczyński's *Zamek kaniowski*, whose action transpires exclusively during the night and is perhaps the best Polish-language example of Dark Romanticism.⁶ Grisly massacres and the ravishing of women combine with elements of a nightmarish fantasy world, such as demons and female revenants. Apparently, it worked well with the readership: *Zamek kaniowski* proved a success, a matter of great consequence for someone like Goszczyński who hailed from a very humble environment of landless Podolian nobility and had no inherited connections in Warsaw.

By and large, the Ukrainian stories of the Polish-language Romantics reinforced the binary opposition between noble Polish-Lithuanianness and barbarian Ruthenianness, the latter embodied by the bloodthirsty Cossacks and peasants. At least that is, on the surface. If we look more carefully, we will see that the two realms are not that easy to separate, not only in reality (which is not so surprising), but even in highly stylised literary depictions. As we learn from Master Sawa's conversation with a Polish-Lithuanian lord, he found a Cossack

⁵ For the widest understanding of the topic see Stanisław Makowski et al., eds, "*Szkoła ukraińska*" w *romantyzmie polskim: Szkice polsko-ukraińskie* (Warsaw, 2012).

⁶ For a classical study of this current see Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (Oxford, 1970).

torban (a musical instrument similar to lute) with his interlocutor's coat of arms in the devastated manor of Gruszczyńce. The lord reacts indignantly: 'Would you dare to cast suspicion upon my old household'? To which Master Sawa responds explaining that this was not his intention, but rather to suggest that one of the lord's servants might be a traitor, especially as gossip has it that the very leader of the peasant rebels, Tymenko, is hiding under a false name in noble houses. It is a very interesting moment: first, the lord's immediate, angry reaction suggests that it is not so unthinkable to imagine his involvement in a slaughter of a middling-sort noble family (Malczewski's *Maria* has a lot to say about things of this kind). Secondly, Master Sawa's answer reveals that the noble households are not really such pure preserves of the Polish-Lithuanianness. The manors and palaces themselves are permeated with the most sinister aspects of Ruthenianness, serving as a refuge for the jacquerie's leader. It is only the violence that establishes their Polish-Lithuanian purity, because it is only through martyrdom (and perforce death) that the ideal Polish-Lithuanian nobleman can be distilled from the hybrid reality. Indeed, elsewhere we learn that the language spoken in Gruszczyńce was not Polish, but Ruthenian, often referred to as the 'peasant tongue.' It was not only more convenient, but actually inevitable, as the family's blind grandmother did not speak Polish at all, a shameful detail which her granddaughter, brought up as a lord's protégée, would prefer to conceal.

Probably nothing encapsulates the entanglement of the Polish-Lithuanian and Ruthenian elements better than Master Sawa himself: a Cossack commander, but at the same time a patriot of Poland-Lithuania, he has to search for documents proving his noble pedigree in order to marry his sweetheart Princess Wiśniowiecka (also of illustrious Ruthenian stock). His men are referred to as Ukrainians and he himself admits that Cossack blood runs in his veins, but on seeing the slaughter of Gruszczyńce he embarks on a self-imposed crusade against the Eastern Orthodox Christianity and all things Ruthenian. 'Also in me there is a turmoil and the play of dreadful blood,' he confesses, as befits a Romantic hero. But this only strengthens his resolution to sacrifice himself and wipe the Cossack burial mounds out from the Ukrainian steppes, again in full accordance with the predominant models of tragic Romantic heroism. What is more, Master Sawa explains, the sacrosanctity of his commitment is sealed by the fact that it was taken not in the drunken company of the boastful noble brethren, but among the destruction wrought by the bloodthirsty peasant rebels: in an alcove where he discovered the body of the family's grandmother (the one that spoke only the 'peasant tongue'). Her eyes and mouth wide open, she seemed to be gazing in wonder at the infant heads scattered on the floor, as if some strange creatures were running around

playfully. By her side stood a clock with hands pointing to midnight. It was there that Master Sawa made his solemn vow:

I swore! That the Polish chivalry will banish the Cossack blood! The Ukrainian women shall weep, upon my sword, upon my horse casting curses and spells: for I shall be the sword of punishment, the scythe mowing the pastures, the she-eagle torn in half with two hearts and beaks; a man of three persons, the Pole, the Cossack and the Devil.⁷

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In one of my previous chapters, I dealt with a representative of the landowning elite from the part of Ukraine that had come under Muscovite (and later Russian) sovereignty as early as the second half of the seventeenth century. However, large swathes of the predominantly Ruthenian ethnic territories remained within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth up until the 1790s and affairs took a completely different shape there. In this chapter I will concern myself with Michał Czajkowski, a native of those ‘Polish’ lands and one of the crucial figures for understanding the ways in which the Cossack myth was employed politically from the 1830s to the 1860s.

In the following pages I will first sketch the situation of the so-called Ruthenian Palatinates in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and beyond; then, I will present the life of Michał Czajkowski, otherwise known as Sadık Paşa, in the context of the nineteenth-century models of revolutionary activism; next, I will analyse selected works of this author in order to show how he constructed his conservative Cossack mythology; finally, I will seek to relate my findings to the oeuvre of Domingo F. Sarmiento.

6.2. Ruthenian lands under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and beyond

It is safe to claim that the Ukrainian lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had their own coherent identity that is not merely an invention of later nationalist-minded historians: its recognition and appreciation can be traced in the primary sources produced by the region’s nobility in the early modern period. This ‘Polish-Ukrainian’ identity (to use an anachronistic and imprecise term) was not only about fear and loathing of the peasantry. Rather, it was characterised by a genuine Ruthenian pride. Accounting for it is not easy now, because too often the narratives about region’s nobility have been appropriated by either Polish or Ukrainian nationalists (in today’s sense of the two denominations). In order to avoid that trap, I will start by explaining how this strange land came to be and then proceed to

⁷ Juliusz Słowacki, *Sen srebrny Salomei* (Paris, 1844), 63-70

clarify the specific case of the 'Polish-Ukrainian' citizenry and tensions haunting its sense of belonging.

As has been recounted in the chapter devoted to Nikolai Gogol', the second half of the seventeenth century saw the partitioning of the Ukrainian lands, hitherto under Polish-Lithuanian sovereignty: the city of Kiev and the territories to the east of the Dnieper, the so-called Left Bank, went to the Muscovite monarchy, first as an autonomous republican polity, but in the course of the eighteenth century were gradually integrated into the Russian imperial system; the so-called Right Bank to the west of the Dnieper remained within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. There, the nobility retained its dominance over the peasantry, although not without the express resistance of the latter. In the northern part of the Left Bank, the so-called Hetmanate, the Cossack officer corps was rapidly transformed into the Polish-Lithuanian-like land- and serf-owning stratum, but to the south there still existed the virtually independent Zaporozhian Cossacks under the formal Muscovite (and later Russian) sovereignty.

If the example of the Hetmanate was rather discouraging for the Ruthenian peasants of Poland-Lithuania, the Zaporozhian polity of frontiersmen was a promise of liberation. Up until the 1770s, when the Russian authorities eventually managed to curb Zaporozhian Cossack autonomy, there was a constant movement between the Zaporozhia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Unhappy individual males could easily abandon their households and Polish-Lithuanian masters and start a new life among the Zaporozhian Cossacks. There, beyond the reach of the Commonwealth laws and troops, they assembled bands of poorer Cossacks with whom they would return periodically to prey on the Polish-Lithuanian nobles and Jews. Such Cossack brigands were known as the Haidamaks (Polish plural *hajdamacy*, Ukrainian plural *haidamaky*). Several times throughout the eighteenth century there would erupt uprisings against the rule of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility in the territories neighbouring the Zaporozhia (the Commonwealth's palatinates of Bratslav and Kiev) and the Haidamaks were instrumental in their incitement. Of utmost importance was also the tension between the Orthodox confession and the Uniate Greek Catholicism, the former protected and promoted by both the Russian state and the Zaporozhian Cossacks, the latter by the Commonwealth and most of its nobility.

Of course, the above is a very simplified account of an enormously complex and dynamic situation. In many instances the Ruthenian peasants would prove remarkably loyal to their masters, who in turn formed them into their private 'Cossack' units, while the Haidamaks, whose main goal was plunder, could harm and irritate also many a peasant. The

socio-confessional rift was not so clear cut either: by the end of the eighteenth century the bulk of the Ruthenian peasantry in the Commonwealth was genuinely devoted to Uniate Greek Catholicism, while the tiny Orthodox minority that survived could do so only thanks to the protection and encouragement of some Catholic magnates. In fact, there were even some Orthodox noble communities in the Commonwealth, but mostly in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.⁸ With these (and many other) reservations in mind, we can conclude that at the end of the eighteenth century the predominant image of the Polish-Lithuanian part of Ukraine was that of a land of dread and lawlessness where the isolated manors of the 'Polish' noblemen were besieged by the mass of savage Ruthenian peasantry, as exemplified by the above cited fragment by Juliusz Słowacki. As it was depicted by one oft-quoted memoirist of the time, in Ukraine

...no middling nobleman or Jewish tenant would spend the night at home, but at sunset everybody with their hearts in their mouths would go to the meadows, their valuables concealed and each of them hiding from the others: the husband from his wife, the wife from her husband, the mother from her children, the children from their parents and from each other, so that if caught and tortured no one would be able to reveal the hideout of his loved ones.⁹

The author of the above summoned quote, Reverend Jędrzej Kitowicz, came from the Greater Poland (from 1793 under Prussian sovereignty) and to our knowledge never visited the Ruthenian Palatinates. His account was based solely on the items of news and images circulating in the Commonwealth public sphere.

This imagery explains the outbreak of significant moral panic in spring and summer of 1789, when rumours circulated that the Ruthenian peasants were going to rise against their noble masters and slaughter them ruthlessly. At its peak, noble opinion in the Commonwealth was terrorised on a daily basis with the most dramatic news, for example at the beginning of May the Diet was informed by one of its speakers that fourteen thousand Zaporozhian Cossacks and convicts without noses (a form of judicial punishment) were preparing to cross the border from the Russian Empire and incite a peasant rebellion.¹⁰ Putting aside the immediate political context, we can note that one of the most powerful triggers of this wave of fear and persecution was a case of murder in which a noble couple from Volhynia, Ignacy

⁸ For an exhaustive, though not flawless, English-language treatment of this topic see Barbara Skinner, *Western Front of the Eastern Church: Uniate and Orthodox Conflict in Eighteenth-Century Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia* (DeKalb, 2009).

⁹ Jędrzej Kitowicz, *Opis obyczajów za panowania Augusta III* (Wrocław, 1951), 340.

¹⁰ Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Zbiór Popielów 414, 235-236: Stanislaus Augustus to Augustyn Deboli, 5 V 1789. Hereafter AGAD, ZP.

Wyleżyński and his wife Anna née Bierzyńska, were axed to death in their manor, more precisely in their bedchamber, by two male servants who would also go on to kill five maids (two of whom were of noble stock).¹¹ Horrifying as it was, the crime had no immediate political meaning and was an isolated act of violence, at least this can be inferred from the murderers' efforts to eliminate all the possible witnesses. However, it corresponded perfectly with the myth of the desolate noble manor in constant danger from the savage mass of subalterns: 'three millions of Ruthenian peasantry against one hundred thousand of nobility,' as it was put by King Stanislaus Augustus.¹² At approximately the same time, news reached Warsaw that a certain major Piotrowski had been robbed and murdered in an inn not far from the Wyleżyńskis' estate, but no comparable excitement was caused by it.¹³ An inn murder was deplorable, but essentially normal and even acceptable as it happened in a delimited space which was specifically dedicated to adventure, laxity, violence and deceit, whereas the Wyleżyński case concerned the noble household which should ideally stand as a fortified realm of decent family life and squirearchical sociability, not unlike the big houses of Ireland's Ascendancy.¹⁴ It illustrated how fragile the quintessentially noble space was in the Ruthenian lands, allegedly much more than elsewhere in the Commonwealth.

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The noble nation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth allowed for the cultivation of articulate and politicised regional identifications on more than one level. In various situations they could be activated politically and for this reason they should not be dismissed as vague and innocuous localisms. On the other hand, we need to be very cautious about any attempts of claiming them as early modern forms of later nationalisms. Rather, they were *sui generis* multi-level, political identities, relatively powerful, but not necessarily antagonistic towards the overarching Commonwealth allegiance. As has already been said, what we today consider to be the Ukrainian lands of the Commonwealth was referred to in the late eighteenth century as the Ruthenian Palatinates (*województwa ruskie*). The region was quite diverse in its political texture: the westernmost palatinates of Red Ruthenia and Belz were part of the Kingdom of Poland since the fourteenth century, had a relatively strong stratum of the middling-sort landowners and a long tradition of civic politics: thus, they formed part of the

¹¹ For the sentence in the Wyleżyńskis' case see Vladimir Antonovich [Volodymyr Antonovych], ed., *Arkhiv Iugo-Zapadnoi Rosiii: ch. 3, t. V* (Kiev, 1902), doc. CXXI, 201-216.

¹² AGAD, ZP 414, 184: Stanislaus Augustus to Augustyn Deboli, 22 IV 1789.

¹³ AGAD, ZP 414, 167: Stanislaus Augustus to Augustyn Deboli, 11 IV 1789; *Arkhiv*, doc. CXXV.

¹⁴ R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (New York, 1989), 190-194 and Vera Kreilkamp, "The novel of the big house," in John Wilson Foster, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel* (Cambridge, 2006), 60-77.

core of the Realm of Poland (in contrast to the twentieth century, when these territories came to epitomise the Polish myth of *Kresy* or borderlands). In turn, the palatinate of Podilia was part of Poland since the fifteenth century, whereas those of Volhynia, Bratslav and Kiev were integrated only in the second half of the sixteenth century. The character of Volhynia and Podilia was still quite close to the core areas, for instance they had a number of politically relevant, independent-minded middling-sort landowners and virtually no Orthodox peasants. However, the palatinates of Bratslav and Kiev were different. This was the region to which the name of Ukraine was applied in the late eighteenth century. There, political life was dominated by the latifundia-holding lords, relatively large numbers of agricultural labourers retained their free status, a substantial community of the Orthodox Christians coexisted along with the Greek Catholics and the shared border with the Zaporozhia reinforced the threat posed by the rebellious peasantry. It was thus understood Ukraine that was the province that was most devastated by the Haidamak raids and uprisings (depicted later by Słowacki and Goszczyński).

Despite all the mutual differences, the Ruthenian Palatinates did function as an accepted generic denominator opposed to the rest of the Commonwealth: the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the remaining lands of the Realm of Poland, unequivocally Latin Catholic and predominantly Polonophone. Hence, the region's nobility was recognised as Ruthenian, which referred to a number of aspects: that it inhabited that region, that it was indigenous to it, having its roots there and descending from the knights of medieval Rus', that most of it was Uniate Greek Catholic, although social mobility was usually correlated with preference for the services provided by the Latin priests, and that it was predominantly Ruthenian-speaking, although Polish, Latin (and later also French) were considered more prestigious and would often be used in writing and polite sociability. In other words, the nobility of the region was much less Polish than the present-day understanding of the word and later historical developments might suggest. At the same time, the Ruthenian noble citizens remained unequivocally Polish-Lithuanian. Thus, a nobleman from, say, Volhynia would consider himself a 'Pole,' that is a noble-born citizen of the Commonwealth; a 'Realmer' (*koroniarz*), that is a denizen of the Realm of Poland (as opposed to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania), a Ruthenian, that is a native of the Ruthenian Palatinates, but also a benefactor and often a member of the Ruthenian (meaning Uniate Greek Catholic) Church, a Catholic, either Latin or Uniate (or both, depending on the situational context), but clearly not an Orthodox or Protestant Christian, and finally, an empowered property-holder of Volhynia and his home

county. Each of the above identities (and the list is not exhaustive by any means) could be activated politically in different situations and for different purposes.

This complex socio-political system did not disappear overnight with the collapse of the Commonwealth as an independent state. Old habits and loyalties persisted, even more so as the Russian Empire allowed the Polish-Lithuanian noblemen of the former Ruthenian Palatinates to continue with their dietines and other forms of county self-government until 1840. The dominant position of the landed class (just a fraction of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility as a whole) was not only left untouched, but was reinforced by the security brought by Russian military power and the prosperity resulting from the opening of the Black Sea grain trade. In the first decades of Russian rule, only the mass of landless and largely illiterate petty nobles was affected in a decidedly negative way, since by the standards of the Russian Empire (much closer in this respect to those of Western Europe) they were a social anomaly, a sort of sham nobility and the government sought to strip them of their privileges and allocate them to other estates.¹⁵

On the surface, everything remained more or less the same, as the grain trade and security provided by the Russian military helped to solidify the dominant position of the landowners and, consequently, tighten their grasp on their peasant subalterns. Simultaneously, the very same factors accelerated the mobility, both upwards and downwards, of other social groups. This was especially true for the above mentioned tens of thousands of landless nobles and, secondly, an even greater mass of petty Jewish burghers.¹⁶ There took place a silent, but profound capitalist transformation, a transformation that changed everything but at the same time left the bottom and the top of the social ladder untouched. This is even more paradoxical, given that those at the top, the Polish-Lithuanian landowners, were deprived of most of their erstwhile political power. So whereas in Argentina the rise of export-oriented rural production led to the establishment of a regime of capitalist-minded landowners, in the peculiar circumstances of the Russian-ruled Ukraine a similar process did not bear the same political fruits.

Simultaneously, in the former Ruthenian Palatinates there spread new lexicons of individual and collective expression: Enlightenment improvement, sentimentalist appreciation of feeling and nature, a *Volk*-oriented search for historically genuine identities, Romantic

¹⁵ After the third partition in 1795 the Polish-Lithuanian nobles within the Russian borders totalled 250 thousand or 66,2% of all the nobles in the Empire, Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven, 1981), 556; see also Daniel Beauvois, *Pouvoir russe et noblesse polonaise en Ukraine: 1793-1830* (Paris, 2003).

¹⁶ Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *The golden age shtetl: a new history of Jewish life in East Europe* (Princeton, 2014).

individualism and voluntarism. We must also add to this the perplexity and shame caused by the erasure of the Commonwealth from the map of Europe and the growing sense of political disenfranchisement as the remaining elements of the traditional republican culture of the nobility were gradually truncated and hollowed out. In short, the growing socio-economic power of the Polish-language elite and the overwhelming transformation in the realm of societal values contrasted starkly with the concrete stillness of the Empire's political landscape. Many inside observers perceived this combination of change and stability, characteristic of the former Ruthenian Palatinates, as a symptom of a deep intellectual and moral crisis.¹⁷

6.3. Was Michał Czajkowski's a strange life?

In 1865 Michał Czajkowski (or rather Mehmet Sadık Paşa as was his official name at that time) published a book titled *The Strange Lives of Polish Men and Women (Dziwne życia Polaków i Polek)*.¹⁸ This was a collection of lives of Polish-Lithuanian emigres who, striving for the cause of their country's independence, ended up serving unlikely masters across Europe. However, with all probability many Polish-language readers in the 1860s would have been struck by the lack of what could be considered the most extraordinary Polish emigre biography: that of the author himself. Indeed, it might be argued that one of Michał Czajkowski's motivations for writing this collection was to provide an apology for his own erratic trajectory.

Michał Czajkowski was born in 1804 into a wealthy family of the landowning Polish-Lithuanian nobility of the Volhynia. Later he claimed that his mother had been a descendant of a seventeenth-century Cossack hetman and that this pedigree had been consciously cultivated by her, but it is difficult to assess whether this was really the case or rather his later invention intended to render his background more Cossack. Otherwise, Czajkowski's home region, Volhynia, was a quiet, agricultural province with no steppes of its own and it could hardly pass for a Romantic land of untamed Cossack warriors. In any case, Czajkowski's must have been a fairly standard experience of the young elite males of the former Poland-Lithuania: a boarding school run by an English pedagogue, learning polite sociability in the landowners' households and Warsaw salons where Polish and French languages mingled, constant contact with the Ruthenian folk culture, excessive drinking, gambling and kindred

¹⁷ See for example Józef Dunin-Karwicki, *Wspomnienia wołyniaka* (Lviv, 1897), 66-71 and Walerian Kalinka, „Listy o Rusi,” in idem, *Dziela* (Cracow, 1892), vol. 3, 263-324 .

¹⁸ Michał Czajkowski, *Dziwne życia Polaków i Polek* (Leipzig, 1865).

delights available to young noblemen in the lively Berdychiv (soon to become the main centre of the fully fledged *bataguta* phenomenon), incessant hunting and hound breeding, and finally, first readings in the Romantic literature and lifestyle with a pride of place given to the Arab-Cossack mythology embodied by the extravagant aristocrat, traveller and horse breeder Wacław Rzewuski.¹⁹

This carefree life ended with the revolution that took place in Warsaw at the turn of 1830 and 1831 and resulted in the dethronement of Nicholas I by the Polish parliament. What followed was a war between the revolutionised Kingdom of Poland and the Russian Empire to which Volhynia, Michał Czajkowski's home region, belonged. Probably many Polish-Lithuanian landowners in the area sympathised in some way with Poland, but only few were ready to risk their lives and property. Among the latter was Michał Czajkowski who joined an insurgent cavalry unit led by his brother-in-law Karol Różycki. They managed to outmanoeuvre the Imperial troops and cut through to the Kingdom of Poland where they served the whole campaign as the Regiment of Volhynian Cavalry. In his later recollections Czajkowski always described this unit as an ideal Cossack party charging upon the enemy with the Ruthenian battle cry: *Slava Bohu!*, that is Glory to God. When the Russians eventually won the war and conquered the Kingdom of Poland, Michał Czajkowski chose to emigrate and, like so many of his contemporaries, ended up in France.²⁰

In exile Czajkowski followed his former commander, relative and mentor Karol Różycki and joined the Polish Democratic Association (TDP). This organisation wanted to start a new uprising in Poland as soon as possible. Its members believed that amalgamating the cause of independence with that of emancipation of the peasant masses would ensure victory. The main opponent of the TDP was the milieu of Prince Adam J. Czartoryski, known also as the Hôtel Lambert (after a Parisian palace in which the leader resided). A scion of an illustrious Lithuanian-Ruthenian family, Prince Czartoryski had been brought up before the French Revolution, served as a foreign minister to Emperor Alexander I and was an architect of the Third Coalition, before finally becoming the head of the revolutionary Polish government in 1831. In exile he was surrounded by those emigres skeptical of the plans for immediate insurgency and fearful of the social upheaval. They wanted the future Poland-Lithuania to be a constitutional monarchy and saw Prince Adam J. Czartoryski as the best

¹⁹ For a rich, though somewhat uncritical, account of Czajkowski's youth see Jadwiga Chudzikowska, *Dziwne życie Sadyka Paszy* (Warsaw, 1982), 11-59; many valuable insights can be also found in Franciszek Rawita Gawroński, *Michał Czajkowski (Sadyk-Pasza): jego życie, działalność wojskowa i literacka* (Saint Petersburg, 1900).

²⁰ Chudzikowska, *Życie Sadyka*, 60-89.

candidate to the throne: he had a diplomatic experience, acquaintances and relatives among royalty and aristocracy all around Europe, and descended from the fourteenth-century Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas, just like the Poland's last dynasty, the House of Jagiellon (which had died out in the late sixteenth century). Prince Czartoryski himself remained unconvinced about the idea of being king, but he was firmly convinced that Poland-Lithuania's independence could only be gained with the support of France and Britain and thus counted mostly on diplomatic efforts and dismissed any plans for a premature, general uprising in the country. Not only did they seem doomed to failure, they could alienate the governments in Paris and London.²¹

In the later 1830s, Michał Czajkowski started to gravitate towards Czartoryski's camp. What attracted him most was the ideal of unconditional loyalty towards the father figure of Prince Czartoryski. It is exactly from this time that we possess the first tangible indications of Czajkowski's Cossack activities. One of the important ingredients of his Cossack mythology was the belief that in the chaotic politics of Poland-Lithuania the Cossacks had always espoused the royalist cause and it was only the vile magnates that they had fought. Historically, this was not true and Czajkowski's democratic opponents did not fail to prey upon this weakness in order to ridicule him.²² Prince Czartoryski himself was actually a magnate, not a king, which made Czajkowski's claims even more nonsensical. Nevertheless, for Czajkowski this bond of loyalty imagined as an idealised, unspoiled relationship between a noble-minded liege lord and his unwavering vassal became an important element of his own selfhood, as he shaped it. How idealistically Czajkowski understood his relationship with the Czartoryskis can be illustrated by an episode in 1839, when he dedicated his novel *Kirdżali* to Duchess Maria von Württemberg-Montbéliard who was Adam J. Czartoryski's sister and the author of *Malvina, or the Heart's Intuition* (*Malwina, czyli domysłność serca*, 1816), the first Polish-language novel of manners written by a woman.²³ In accordance with eighteenth-century customs and the difficult financial realities of the Polish emigre life, the Duchess reciprocated with an exceptionally generous Christmas gift. Czajkowski felt deeply offended, but could not send the money back; still, he took pains to prevent the Duchess from repeating the gesture ever again.²⁴

²¹ For an exhaustive, politically focused account of Prince A. J. Czartoryski's life see Jerzy Skowronek, *Adam Jerzy Czartoryski* (Warsaw, 1994).

²² Chudzikowska, *Życie Sadyka*, 134.

²³ English translation available as Maria Wirtemberska, *Malvina, or the Heart's Intuition* (DeKalb, 2012).

²⁴ Chudzikowska, *Życie Sadyka*, 112-113.

The episode recounted above brings us to another important turn that took place in Czajkowski's life during the 1830s: the beginning of his literary career. As his memoirs, our main source for that part of his life, are notoriously unreliable, it is difficult to determine any details. However, it is clear that in 1835 he started to publish both fiction and non-fiction, in Polish and in French, and in the years to come writing was to become his main source of income. From the very beginning Ukrainian topics predominated in his writing. This was not by any means unusual, as it was precisely at that time that the so-called Ukrainian school of Polish Romanticism was thriving. Józef Bohdan Zaleski, now largely forgotten, but at that time considered the best poet of this movement, was Czajkowski's close friend in France. However, Czajkowski's mind seemed set somewhat more radically, even if not consistently, from the very beginning. Literary reviews published by the democratic exiles (thus, not exceptionally sympathetic, to say the least) identified his literary manner as 'sabreness' (*szablistość*), which was meant to ridicule his unconvincing plots revolving around bellicose masculine protagonists.²⁵

In November 1835, Czajkowski took part in the European Historical Congress organised by the French Historical Institute. Czajkowski who came from Volhynia, a region with only tenuous Cossack credentials, was presented at the Congress, among representatives of other European nationalities (English, German, Swiss, Belgians, Spaniards, Portuguese, Greeks, Swedes, Russians and Turks), as a Cossack (*un Cosaque*). In the next chapter more will be said on that unusual performance. Here it suffices to note that Czajkowski's fascination with all things Cossack was higher than that of virtually anyone else in the Polish-language public sphere, that he was ready to toy with national identifications (*un Cosaque*) much more boldly than, again, almost anyone else, that this affected both the way in which he construed the make-up of East Europe and his own place within it, and that initially he was willing to back down, in order to accommodate his somewhat extravagant inclinations into the Polish-language mainstream.

At the end of the 1830s Michał Czajkowski was quite a successful author, at least in financial terms. His literary works proved an important influence on public opinion and individual historical protagonists. For instance, Vladimir Antonovich, one of the key Ukrainian nation builders of the later nineteenth century, confessed that his interest in the Cossack phenomenon had been triggered by Czajkowski's novels. Similarly, the Protestant Slovak nation builder Ján Francisci remembered that in the early 1840s his high school library

²⁵ Chudzikowska, *Życie Sadyka*, 118.

in Levoča had had copies of Czajkowski's *Cossack novellas*, *Kirdžali* and *Wernyhora*. He himself translated one story titled *Otaman Kunicki* and thus won the nickname Otaman.²⁶ *Kirdžali*, Czajkowski's most successful novel, was translated immediately into French and German, and later into English and Croatian.²⁷ Yet all this did not satisfy him. He was a man of action and it was his ambition to participate in the efforts to reestablish an independent Poland-Lithuania and, as he dreamed it, a Cossack Ukraine perennially united with it. He hated the airless realities and the urban way of life that he identified with Western Europe.²⁸ Thus, Czajkowski became an agent of Prince Czartoryski's semi-clandestine diplomatic network. Later, Count Zygmunt Krasiński, an aristocratic socialite unsuccessfully aspiring to gain recognition as Poland's leading prophetic poet, recalled that he had tried to dissuade Czajkowski from enrolling as a full-time agent of Czartoryski's. Krasiński argued that he was giving up an exceptionally advantageous position as a wildly popular writer that could influence all the social strata in exchange for a chimerical adventure – but it was to no avail, Czajkowski wanted to be a Cossack, not a clerk.²⁹ Eventually, he ended up in the Ottoman Empire where he tried to gain support for the cause of his superior both among the governmental circles of Constantinople and the elites of the Ottomans' Orthodox subjects.

Dissecting fantasy from reality in Czajkowski's reports is not an easy task, but he certainly proved more successful than anybody might have expected and within ten years became an important player in the diplomatic networks on the Bosphorus. His most impressive achievement was the establishment of the village Adampol in Bithynia (named after Prince Czartoryski, today's Polonezköy), a colony of Polish emigres. However, despite his achievements he was gradually alienated from the Czartoryski camp. Although the old Prince himself remained sympathetic, most of his aristocratic collaborators looked at Czajkowski with suspicion. First of all, there was a social subtext: depending on the interpretation, it could be said that Czajkowski came from the upper echelons of the middling-sort squirearchy or the lower echelons of aristocracy, whereas Prince Czartoryski, his friends and family, were the unquestionable *crème de la crème*. In other words, Czajkowski's was a position relatively close to that of Czartoryski and his associates, but still inferior, and although he was very happy to offer unqualified deference to the old Prince himself, this was

²⁶ Volodymyr Antonovych, "Avtobiografichni zapysky Volodymyra Antonovycha," *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk*, Vol. 43 (1908), No 8, 203-204; Ján Francisci, *Vlastný životopis — Črty z doby moysesovskej* (Bratislava, 1956), available online: http://zlatyfond.sme.sk/dielo/988/Francisci_Vlastny-zivotopis (retrieved 12.09.2016).

²⁷ Michał Czajkowski, *Kirdgeali* (Paris, 1839); idem, *Kirdžali* (Leszno, 1840); idem, *The Moslem and the Christian or Adventures in the East* (London, 1855); idem, *Kirdžali* (Zagreb, 1878).

²⁸ Chudzikowska, *Życie Sadyka*, 155.

²⁹ Chudzikowska, *Życie Sadyka*, 162.

not exactly the case with his aides. Secondly, there were political differences. His plans for the establishment of Cossack units that would serve the cause of independence smacked of the social upheaval and revolutionary insurgency characteristic of the enemy TDP camp. His intimacy with the Muslim and Orthodox notables of the Ottoman Empire coupled with his insistence on confessional tolerance as one of the base principles of the future Poland-Lithuania, disquieted the growingly Ultramontane sensibilities of Czartoryski's aristocratic collaborators, most importantly Count Władysław Zamoyski. Finally, Czajkowski's family life only corroborated the suspicions and further offended the Catholic zealots of the Czartoryski's salon. Czajkowski left his French wife and four children in France and had no intention of bringing them to Constantinople where he lived with Ludwika Śniadecka, a daughter of an eminent Polish-Lithuanian chemist and biologist.³⁰

Perhaps the best proof of Czajkowski's success as a diplomatic agent was the irritation of the Russian government. It made repeated efforts to have him expelled from the Ottoman Empire as a foreign trouble maker, as he was an envoy of a non-existent nation (or the more conservative half of it, to be precise). Eventually, at the beginning of the 1850s the Russians seemed to succeed, but at that point Czajkowski took a step that both thwarted the efforts of his opponents and personally disgusted Nicholas I,³¹ and horrified his aristocratic principals: he converted to Sunni Islam and became the Ottoman subject Mehmet Sadık, that is Mehmet the Faithful. The choice of name accords with the important place that Czajkowski always ascribed to loyalty and father figures in his life.

In his letters to Prince A. J. Czartoryski, Sadık presented his move as a sort of sacrifice and offered to continue his work for the Hotel Lambert, but the hostility of Czartoryski's Ultramontane associates meant that he could not continue as the Prince's head agent in Constantinople. He had to satisfy himself with playing the role of an exceptionally helpful Ottoman functionary. Apart from new career prospects, one important gain resulting from his conversion was that, as a Muslim, he could legally marry his partner Ludwika Śniadecka.³²

Sadık's grand moment came with the outbreak of the Crimean War, when he was allowed by the Ottoman government to organise the Cossack troops that would fight the Russians. He proved exceptionally successful, as his units, the most important Ottoman detachments that were expressly non-Muslim in character, allowed the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Emperors to combine the display of their ethno-religious identities with a loyal

³⁰ For Czajkowski's relationship with Śniadecka see Chudzikowska, *Życie Sadyka*, 229-245; for Śniadecka herself see Maria Czapska, *Ludwika Śniadecka* (Warsaw, 1958).

³¹ Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Piękny wiek XIX* (Warsaw, 1984), 393-394.

³² For a detailed account of Czajkowski's conversion see Chudzikowska, *Życie Sadyka*, 288-319.

and rewarding service to their state. Otherwise, it is known that within the Ottoman government circles Sadık was a strong supporter of using Christian manpower for military purposes on equal footing with that of the Muslim Ottoman subjects.³³ He also proved a decent field commander: among others, his Cossack troops were the first to capture Bucharest from the Russians and maintain an exemplary order in the city.³⁴

However, the sources of his success in the Ottoman Empire served at the same time as arguments for the Polish-Lithuanian well wishers to discredit him. Sadık believed that his men were a Polish-Lithuanian army in exile and advertised them as such. In fact, the Polish-Lithuanian volunteers and representatives of small Cossack communities that did exist in the Ottoman realm were just a fraction of his soldiers. Most of them were Balkan Orthodox Christians who volunteered to express both their loyalty to the Ottomans and their Christian identifications. As a consequence, the democratic and Ultramontane enemies of Sadık alike suggested more or less openly that his was actually a multinational foreign legion serving Ottoman interests.³⁵ Hence, Count Zamoyski, the leading Ultramontane in Czartoryski's entourage, came to the Ottoman Empire to organise British-funded troops independently from Sadık. Understandably, what ensued was a conflict between the two ambitious men that did not help the Polish-Lithuanian cause. More importantly, the efforts of Sadık and all the other Polish-Lithuanian enemies of Russia were doomed from the very beginning, due to the reluctance of the British and French governments to question Russian possessions anywhere in Europe for fear of generating any type of power disequilibrium. In the end, the Crimean War that looked so promising for Poland-Lithuania reaped no benefits.³⁶

For Sadık it was a cause of profound frustration, even though he himself retained his relatively high rank as commander of all the Cossack units in the Ottoman Empire. However, stability and position were of little interest to him, as his was a grand dream of liberating Ukraine and the whole of Poland-Lithuania with his troops, even if they were actually Bulgarian *chevaux-légers* rather than the true Cossacks. Condemned to inaction by his commitments as an Ottoman general and also by his deep-seated hostility towards the revolutionary democrats, he observed the January Uprising of 1863 and the failed attempts to support it from the Ottoman Dobruja with a mix of disdain and envy.³⁷

³³ Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War* (Boston, 2010), 341-342.

³⁴ Winfried Baumgart, *The Crimean War 1853-1856* (London, 1999), 81; Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 114.

³⁵ Similar anxieties haunted also the public image of Garibaldi, see Lucy Riall, *Garibaldi: Invention of a Hero* (New Haven, 2007), 48-52.

³⁶ Chudzikowska, *Życie Sadyka*, 320-446.

³⁷ Chudzikowska, *Życie Sadyka*, 447-477; see also Tomasz Teodor Jez [Zygmunt Miłkowski], *W Galicji i na Wschodzie: przyczynek do dziejów powstania 1863* (Poznań, 1880).

In the later 1860s Sadık's isolation became more and more painful: his companions were dying out or simply retreating, the Ottoman government abolished the legal and tax privileges of the Cossack communities that he cherished so much, replacing them with universal equality before law (at least in theory),³⁸ and, most importantly, Ludwika Śniadecka passed away in 1866. Deserted and disillusioned, he started to gravitate towards the peculiar hue of the Pan-Slavic ideology that was promoted by imperialist-minded Russian intellectuals. At the beginning of the 1870s he married a nineteen-year-old Greek girl and returned to the Russian Empire where he was given amnesty.

Czajkowski hoped to play a significant role in Russian Imperial politics and to persuade the government to implement his ideas about the future Ukraine, Poland-Lithuania and the Balkans, but the authorities did not heed his advice. They only wanted him to share his knowledge of the internal affairs and military organisation of the Ottoman Empire. Apparently, the text of Czajkowski's memoirs made available to the public at the beginning of the twentieth century might be derived from the reports he had submitted to the Russian authorities after his amnesty.³⁹

Disappointed once again by his prospects, Czajkowski settled down on a farm in the Left-Bank Ukraine where the autonomous Cossack polity had existed under Russian protection until the late eighteenth century. The life of a respected Cossack landowner proved disappointing and his relationship with his much younger wife turned out to be a complete failure. In 1886 Czajkowski shot himself with a revolver.⁴⁰

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Was Michał Czajkowski's a strange life? Surely, its richness is vertiginous: soldier, exile, revolutionary, writer, diplomatic agent (of a non-existing state), redeemer of the long-buried Cossack armies, Ottoman commander and Russian sell-out, the list is truly dazzling. Yet, what is extraordinary here is the accumulation of allegiances, adventures and geographic locations. Many men and women of that time had to pay for their active involvement in politics with exile, sometimes lifelong. Sarmiento noted, exaggerating, that all publicly active Latin Americans were repeatedly exiled.⁴¹ Czajkowski's *Strange Lives of Polish Men and Women* testifies to a similar trajectory. Clearly, while exiles were just fractions of

³⁸ Roderic Davison, "Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (July, 1954), 844-864.

³⁹ Borejsza, *Piękny wiek XIX*, 406-407; Franciszek Rawita Gawronski, ed., *Materiały do historii polskiej XIX wieku: działalność emigracji z roku 1831 na terenie Turcji do pokoju paryskiego* (Cracow, 1909), 8.

⁴⁰ Chudzikowska, *Życie Sadyka*, 478-538.

⁴¹ Sarmiento, *Viajes*, 12.

populations, in the whole Europeanate space there were tens of thousands of them. Czajkowski and Sarmiento are only two specific cases representing a much wider social trend.

Similarly, the combination of revolutionary politics and Romantic literary production was not unusual for the time. Czajkowski's outlook is mirrored closely by Sarmiento and many others from poets Sandor Petöfi and Adam Mickiewicz to novelists Victor Hugo and novelists Massimo d'Azeglio.

What is especially striking about Czajkowski is his flexibility concerning national and religious identifications. As for his conversion to Sunni Islam and choosing Ottoman service, it was actually much more common than one might nowadays expect and it must be also noted that the former was not an indispensable precondition for the latter. In his radical 'going Turk,' complete with the religious conversion, Czajkowski was accompanied by such celebrated Polish-Lithuanian exiles as Józef Bem, a hero of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, and Konstanty Borzęcki (Mustafa Celâleddin Paşa), who brought scientific racism to the Ottoman Empire and formulated the so-called Turo-Aryan theory which was to become one of the tenets of Mustafa Kemal's nation-building ideology.⁴²

But However, the conversion to Islam is only one important aspect of Czajkowski's identity acrobatics. More striking is his articulate and persistent combination of the Polish-Lithuanian and Ruthenian elements. Although he invested most of his efforts in the cause of Poland-Lithuania's resurrection, the Ruthenian elements proved strong enough to allow his reconciliation with the Russian Empire, his lifelong enemy. True, on the surface, Czajkowski's seem to be unusual choices, but his situation as a Polish-Lithuanian nobleman with a strongly articulate sense of belonging to the Ruthenian community was shared by hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people. As was noted by Jerzy Skowronek, the foremost expert in Prince Czartoryski's exile diplomacy, Czajkowski was a man of the borderland and should be judged as such. Of course, the very notion of the borderland might seem a bit simplistic, but what the Polish scholar wanted to say back in the 1980s was that Czajkowski should not be expected to be a Polish nationalist with no other allegiances, as this was not the case for anyone where he came from.⁴³ What was truly unusual about Czajkowski was his emphasis on articulating both aspects of his self-understanding politically and culturally and on the possibility of maintaining it as a larger, consistent whole, whereas most public actors of his time came to think that everybody had to choose one or another option:

⁴² M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Atatürk: an Intellectual Biography* (Princeton, 2011), 172.

⁴³ Jerzy Skowronek, "Michał Czajkowski – patriota pogranicza biografia tragiczna," in Barbara Grochulska, ed., *Losy Polaków w XIX-XX w[ieku]: studia ofiarowane profesorowi Stefanowi Kieniewiczowi w osiemdziesiątą rocznicę Jego urodzin* (Warsaw, 1987), 549-575.

Polish or Ukrainian or Russian, Argentine or Chilean or Spanish, German or Danish or Norwegian.

The transformations which Czajkowski underwent can be compared, for example, to the forcible conversion of millions of Ruthenian Greek Catholics to Russian Orthodoxy in 1839. The Greek Catholic Church and resulting identification were a form of expressly Ruthenian allegiance to the tradition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. When Greek Catholicism was abolished by the Russian government (it survived in Austria and in the rump Kingdom of Poland), its faithful had to choose: either become Latin Catholic, which meant abandoning an important part of their Ruthenian heritage, but preserved their communion with Rome and the sense of belonging to Poland-Lithuania; or accept the forcible conversion, retain the East Christian liturgy, but break with the traditions of the Commonwealth and become Orthodox Russians, at least, in the eyes of the Imperial authorities. Either way, their sense of belonging would be maimed. The difference between the Greek Catholic masses and Czajkowski was that most of the former did not publish books and articles in which they could address the problem freely and historians still have to recover their voices and tactics.⁴⁴

The situation of Czajkowski and the millions of Ruthenian Greek Catholics in the Russian Empire was specific to the former Poland-Lithuania, but the difficulties with adjusting one's personal story and family legacies to clear-cut national denominations were widespread across Europe and the Americas. Sarmiento could have chosen to become Chilean and nobody would have been surprised. He always toyed with the idea of some sort of pan-American or Spanish-American or, at least, River Plate unity, just as Czajkowski and many of his contemporaries took the idea of Slavic unity seriously and envisaged it as a nationalism-like political project, even if nowadays there dominates a tendency to dismiss it as some sort of irrelevant babble, mostly because it did not prove successful in the long run (though Yugoslavia was a quite real fruit of this allegedly sterile ideology).⁴⁵

Again, Czajkowski's identity manoeuvres were unusual for their scope or perhaps for the rich primary sources that document them, but they were representative of a wider trend that affected millions of individuals in Europe and the Americas. On all accounts, a wider perspective allows us to appreciate that actually Michał Czajkowski's was a rich and intense, but, fundamentally, normal nineteenth-century life.

⁴⁴ Marian Radwan, *Carat wobec Kościoła greckokatolickiego w zaborze rosyjskim 1796-1839* (Lublin, 2004).

⁴⁵ Dennison Russinow, "The Yugoslav Idea before Yugoslavia," in Dejan Djokić, ed., *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea* (London, 2003), 11-26; Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe. Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2016), 168-173, 191-213, 281-315.

6.4. Fiction and action: the politics of Michał Czajkowski between fantasy and reality

The novel is perhaps the foremost genre of nineteenth-century European literature. Its influence was formidable in numerous areas beyond the purely literary realm. Dipesh Chakrabarty notes that it is one of the four genres instrumental in the expression of the modern self (the other being biography, autobiography and history). On another level, novels were a vehicle of all sorts of political ideas, not least those related to nation and empirebuilding.⁴⁶ However, novels did not only reflect and transmit the convictions of their authors. The case of Michał Czajkowski shows that they could also shape them by serving as a blueprint for future political schemes. Czajkowski spent most of his life in exile devising ways 'to shatter the Russian Empire' which would allow him to return to his native land.⁴⁷ Characteristically, his plans revolved around daring conspiratorial activities among the Cossack populations of the Ottoman and Russian states. In Czajkowski's biography the novelistic fantasies anticipated the real-life politics of their author. His case exposes the intricate relationship between Romantic political activism, the mass culture of the time and the individualised dreams of masculine self-fulfillment shaped by it.

Czajkowski's novel *Wernyhora: Wieszczy ukraiński* (*Wernyhora: the Ukrainian Prophet*) is perhaps the best point of departure for the study of this peculiar novelisation of insurrectionary politics.⁴⁸ Published in the late 1830s in Paris, just around the time when its author moved to the political camp of Prince Czartoryski, it is set during the *koliivshchyna* of 1768, the last major rebellion of Ruthenian peasants against the Polish-Lithuanian nobility, which culminated in the slaughter of the nobles and Jews in Uman'.

It was widely believed that the peasants had been incited towards violence by Russian agents who employed slogans of Eastern Orthodox solidarity and hatred towards Judaism and Catholicism. The *koliivshchyna* was an important reference point in Polish-language culture, a symbol that combined the fear of social upheaval, foreign meddling and confessional fanaticism with scorn for an inferior Ruthenian culture. By choosing this topic Czajkowski, who was sympathetic towards the Ruthenian and Eastern Christian tradition, confronted the

⁴⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000), 35. For the nineteenth-century novels see also Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel* (London, 1999); Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley, 1991); Catherine Davies, Claire Brewster and Hilary Owen, *South American Independence: Gender, Politics, Text* (Liverpool, 2006); Antoinette M. Burton, ed., *Ten Books that Shaped the British Empire: Creating an Imperial Commons* (Durham, 2014); Axel Körner, Lucy Riall, Alberto Banti et al., "Alberto Banti's Interpretation of Risorgimento Nationalism: a Debate", *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 15, Issue 3 (July 2009), 396-460.

⁴⁷ For the phrase see Andrzej Nowak, "Jak rozbić rosyjskie imperium? Koncepcje polityczne i fantazje kręgu Adama Czartoryskiego (1832-1847)," *Studia Historyczne* 33 (1990), 197-224.

⁴⁸ Michał Czajkowski, *Wernyhora: Wieszczy ukraiński* (Paris, 1838), two volumes.

most negative element in Poland-Lithuania's attitude towards the East Slavic aspects of its heritage. In line with the predominant tradition he placed blame for the massacre on the Russian monks and the few traitors from among the upper echelon of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility. The rank-and-file Cossacks and peasants were just beguiled tools of the evil schemers, either foreign or who had sold out to foreigners.

Czajkowski also introduced a number of positive Ruthenian heroes who opposed the massacre of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility and remained loyal to the Commonwealth as a shared fatherland of Poles and Ruthenians. One of them is the otaman Nekrasa who eventually turns out to be a descendant of a righteous Polish-Lithuanian lord and is strikingly similar to Bulgarin's Ognevik, the other is Wernyhora, a legendary Ruthenian prophet who travels through Ukraine persuading the peasants not to take arms against the nobility, as it is all just a Russian-backed cabal.

Wernyhora is a character taken from the Polish-language political lore of the region. As early as 1809, there circulated manuscript copies of his purported prophecy in which, among others, the *koliivshchyna*, the partitions and the Duchy of Warsaw were predicted *ex eventu*, together with the independence of Poland-Lithuania in the wake of Napoleon's victories and a completely fantastic Anglo-Ottoman action against Russia. In the course of the first half of the nineteenth century new prophecies were added to the text in accordance with political developments, for instance the November Uprising of 1830.⁴⁹

Wernyhora was a recognisable, good (that is pro-Polish-Lithuanian) Ruthenian and thus he served Czajkowski's needs well. For the moment however, let us focus only on the way in which the author narrated the insurrectionary activities. The novel opens with a gathering that takes place at the farm owned by a respected Cossack commander. The purpose of the meeting is to secure the support of the Cossack and Haidamak leaders for the peasant rebellion, organised clandestinely by an Orthodox priest acting on behalf of the Russian Imperial government. To persuade the present Cossack chiefs, the priest uses alcohol, flattery, promises of elevation and appeals to confessional solidarity. Characteristically for Czajkowski, most Cossack characters are presented as actually unwilling to fight for the anti-Polish-Lithuanian cause and accepting it only against their inclination.⁵⁰ We shall come to this issue soon, but for now it is important to emphasise the modality of the insurrectionary conspiracy (in this case a sinister one). The rebellion is imagined as something masterminded

⁴⁹ Stanisław Pigoń, "Przepowiednia Wernyhory," in idem, *Poprzez stulecia: studia z dziejów literatury i kultury* (Warsaw, 1984), 61-85.

⁵⁰ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 3-37.

from the outside (in this case by the Machiavellian government of Saint Petersburg) and launched by an emissary who uses his privileged status as a priest to travel unhindered in the foreign territory. His job mostly consists of networking with the local leaders and winning them over for his subversive enterprise. Not only does he appeal to confessional solidarity, but also employs elements of Orthodox religious celebrations, for example he blesses the peasants who are to carry out the massacre and gives them blessed knives (a well established image in the Polish-language narratives of the Ruthenian rebellion).⁵¹

As a counterweight to him, we have Wernyhora who serves as an example of the good emissary. He also travels clandestinely through Polish-Lithuanian Ukraine, either in disguise or else with such an agility and swiftness that make it impossible to intercept him. He, in turn, persuades the peasants to refrain from massacring the nobles and Jews, but also serves as a secret agent for the Confederation of Bar, a nobles' insurgency against both the Russian Empire and king Stanislaus Augustus, presented as a protégé of the Muscovites. Among others, Wernyhora brings a unit of Zaporozhian Cossacks led by the handsome otaman Nekrasa to the rescue of the nobility.⁵² The otaman is presented as unwaveringly convinced that Poland-Lithuania is the true fatherland of his and all the Zaporozhians and that they had been separated from it in the past by a combination of their own mistakes, foreign (Muscovite and Jesuit) meddling and confessionally motivated crimes committed by both the Catholics and the Orthodox. Logically, he later becomes an active participant in the Confederation of Bar. Actually, a protagonist of this kind and seeing things in such a way was not very plausible, to say the least.

Putting Nekrasa aside for a moment, it has to be emphasised that Ukraine is presented in the novel as a space in which the emissaries of competing insurrectionary conspiracies struggle against each other for the souls of the population. These emissaries, both good and evil, are endowed with almost supernatural abilities to avoid being captured and at the same time weave the plots that drive the action of the novel and also the perennial battle between Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy. It is the emissaries that are the most powerful agents. Other protagonists are not completely deprived of agency and they do count, but much less. They are able to act only when switched on by the emissaries.

There is a sort of hierarchy among these secondary agents. The most efficient (and legitimate) ones are the Polish-Lithuanian landed nobles. It seems to be no accident that here the author chooses to mystify the social realities of both his own time and that of the novel:

⁵¹ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 35, 48, 106-108.

⁵² Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 122-123.

the landed nobility is presented as a unified stratum, whereas the preponderance of the lords is denounced as an abuse of civic equality and, usually, an incentive to betray the fatherland. Only the very few great lordly houses, the scions of which reside in Warsaw and do 'big politics,' are granted the right to stand out, but they are mentioned occasionally and do not feature in the novel. Also, it seems to be no accident that these good lords from Warsaw are the Princes August and Michał Fryderyk Czartoryski, respectively grandfather and great-uncle of Czajkowski's cherished leader Prince Adam Jerzy.⁵³

Even though the landed nobles are presented as naturally predestined to head Polish-Lithuanian society, they are clearly not enough to conduct a successful insurgency. The next important groups that have their role to play are the petty nobles and the Cossacks, both the plebs and the phalanx of the nobiliary Polish-Lithuanian nation. The Zaporozhian Cossacks are depicted as a sort of Polish-Lithuanian nobles in exile, only superficially separated from the body of the Commonwealth, but in essence still belonging to it.⁵⁴

Lastly, there are the Ruthenian peasants. The author seems to sympathise with them and takes great pains to lift the responsibility for the nobles' massacres off their shoulders: not an easy task, if we remember that they were the immediate perpetrators. It seems that Czajkowski's efforts to wash the noble blood from the peasants' hands were motivated mostly by his insistence on the harmonious coexistence between the nobles and serfs, best encapsulated in a scene in which the peasants defend their masters.⁵⁵ This peace is disrupted only occasionally by sinister instigation coming from the outside and the abuses of more selfish landowners.

There is, however, a certain dissonance, as the narrator admits that the anti-noble Cossack brigands (Haidamaks) and the peasants are brethren and there is a fundamental community of interests between these two groups. This concession on the part of the author can be explained as a token nod towards the received wisdoms of his time which he otherwise tried to undermine. Also, it can be noted that it contributed to the appropriation of the Haidamaks as belonging to the Ruthenian peasantry, which for Czajkowski meant that they were fundamentally Polish-Lithuanian. This would be corroborated later in the novel when Haidamak Szwaczka, one of the cruelest leaders of the slaughter comes to understand that he was wrong and helps Wernyhora and Nekrasa.⁵⁶ As for the noble side of the equation, the few critical remarks that the novel's positive protagonists have for the bad noble masters

⁵³ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 160.

⁵⁴ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 158-159, 226-227 and 2, 101.

⁵⁵ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 295.

⁵⁶ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 2, 29, 62, 64, 81-88, 321

mistreating their serfs do not lead to any deeper reconsideration of serfdom, but are rather meant to reinforce it.⁵⁷ Indeed, the fundamental difference between the evil emissary of the Russian Empire and the good emissary of the Polish-Lithuanian patriotism is that the former incites the peasants to rise to arms and take things into their hands, whereas the latter tries to prevent them from doing it and persuades them to remain quiet. The most substantive action he advertises is the repentance for those who participated in the massacre of the nobles and Jews. Only once is it mentioned in passing (and without further consequences) that the peasants should also be allowed to participate in the nobles' insurgency.⁵⁸ Clearly, when it comes to the Ruthenian peasants Czajkowski believes that *Ruhe is die erste Bürgerpflicht*.

In Czajkowski's novelistic world the emissaries of insurrectionary conspiracies enjoy an exceptionally large proportion of power in comparison with other actors and are characterised by unusual mobility and independence. There is one other aspect of their activity that has been already mentioned, but which needs to be emphasised: ultimately, they are competing for the definition of the Ukrainian identity and Ukraine as a space. The Orthodox priest sent by the Russian government does not incite the Ruthenian peasants to slaughter their masters just because he is vile and cruel, his real goal is to weaken the Confederation of Bar and thus contribute to the incapacitation of the Commonwealth as a whole under the Russian Imperial umbrella, and more immediately to cleanse Ukraine of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility and Catholicism, both Latin and Uniate, so that the region can become a purely Ruthenian and Eastern Orthodox land, susceptible to being hijacked by Muscovite cultural imperialism. In turn, the good emissary fights for the preservation of the 'true,' that is the Polish-Lithuanian, identity of Ukraine. On the surface it might seem that Czajkowski depicts Ukraine as a bone of contention between Muscovy and Poland-Lithuania, a territory over which the two powers struggle to control, but this would be only partly valid because his own very clear and partisan view is fundamentally different: Ukraine is Poland-Lithuania, in many ways it is the most Polish-Lithuanian of the Polish-Lithuanian lands and what is taking place is a Muscovite encroachment that has to be countered.⁵⁹

Let us recall the historical circumstances in which the novel is set: in the second half of the eighteenth century, the lands of the western or right bank of the Dnieper are part of the Commonwealth and there the nobility preserves its hegemony over the peasantry, the eastern or left bank of the Dnieper is under the Russian Imperial sovereignty and two autonomous

⁵⁷ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 65.

⁵⁸ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 227.

⁵⁹ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 19-37.

Cossack polities, the Hetmanate and the Zaporozhia, exist that originated in the seventeenth century in the wake of the Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. If anything, the identity of those left-bank Cossacks was built around the hatred towards the Polish-Lithuanian nobility, Jews and Catholicism, no matter how close the political cultures of the adversaries were in terms of values and practices and how disgruntled the Left-Bank Cossack elites happened to be with Muscovite imperialism. Now, Czajkowski's depiction of the Ukrainian question was inaccurate and characterized by wishful thinking. For instance, he repeatedly presents the Zaporozhian Cossacks as Polish-Lithuanian nobles and indeed patriots. The climax of this narrative is reached when the Zaporozhian Cossacks of otaman Nekrasa relieve the nobles and Jews besieged by Russian Imperial troops who are, in turn, disguised as rebel Ruthenian peasants. The whole episode can be seen as an encapsulation of Czajkowski's political message: anti-Polish-Lithuanian jacqueries are products of a Muscovite cabal, but when the nobility and the Cossacks (or the Poles and the Ruthenians) stand together, they easily defeat the Russian invader and secure independence.

It is also noteworthy that there are some other elements in *Wernyhora* that later played an important role in Czajkowski's political thought and that one would be inclined to interpret as ex post justifications of his changing partisan alignments. For instance, there is a clear anti-German thrust. In the 1840s, anti-German elements would be used by Czajkowski to delegitimise the Russian Empire as a crypto-Teutonic state with a German dynasty and bureaucracy.⁶⁰ From the later 1850s on, Czajkowski inflated his anti-German discourse to rationalise his frustration with the Polish-Lithuanian cause and eventually to justify his turn to the Russian Empire as the only Slavic power able to halt the Teutonic advance.⁶¹ However, the Slavophilic anti-Germanism existed in Czajkowski's writings already in the 1830s, so it cannot be interpreted as something generated by his later politics. Similarly, there is a discernible fascination with the Crimean Tatars in *Wernyhora*, who are presented as poetic Oriental knights. It is clear from the novel that Tatar support will prove indispensable in the struggle against the Russian Empire and that liberation will come, 'when the Muslim has watered his horses in the Horyn' [a river in Volhynia].⁶² Again, the idea of a brotherhood in arms between Poland-Lithuania, the Zaporozhian Cossacks and the Ottomans and Tatars was not simply a rationalisation of Czajkowski's diplomatic endeavours in Constantinople, but

⁶⁰ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 54-61 and 2, 83, 95-96, 284.

⁶¹ Michał Czajkowski, *Nemolaka: powieść słowiańska* (Leipzig, 1873), 70, 135-136, 187, 234.

⁶² Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 2, 334.

preceded them.⁶³ It is interesting in its own right, because in the early 1840s he used to present himself to his Paris superiors as having a very instrumental and patronising attitude towards the Ottomans.⁶⁴ In addition, there is a strong anti-clerical thrust in *Wernyhora*. Superficially, it might seem that it is directed mostly against the Orthodox, but actually there are good and bad priests on both sides of the confessional divide and the overall message seems to be that power-hungry clergymen of all denominations promote fanaticism and ruin the lives of individuals and whole nations,⁶⁵ and that the ecclesiastics should be always kept at bay (on the other hand, there are also good priests, both Orthodox and Catholic, but they are never in positions of power).⁶⁶ That Czajkowski developed these sort of anti-clerical views after clashing with the Ultramontane wing of Czartoryski's camp in the 1840s and being publicly stigmatised for his conversion to Islam is quite understandable. Yet here we see that this is more or less what he thought about the clergy already in the 1830s. His politics are there in his literary production before they become politics in the strict sense.

Putting aside the issue of chronological developments, it can be said that all the above should not surprise us in such a politically engagé historical novel. What is more disconcerting is that Czajkowski transplanted this whole worldview into the conspiratorial reports, instructions and schemes which he produced in the 1840s as the head agent of Prince A. J. Czartoryski in Constantinople. To be clear, he did not expound these ideas and convictions as propaganda, but in texts that were meant to represent the political and social realities in the most accurate way and serve as a source of reliable intelligence for real action. Entertainment, academic reasoning and the sympathy of public opinion were no longer at stake, but rather the lives of human beings and the success of diplomatic and military enterprises: men were sent to the enemy territory and funds were allocated to fund those actions. However, reading these plans and reports one cannot help but have an impression that they belong more to the adventure novels than to what one expects from a diplomatic agent, even one representing an exiled government-in-waiting. Perhaps we should not wonder too much about it and just bear in mind what Czajkowski confessed in January 1842 to Prince Czartoryski: 'heart is the main stimulus of my actions.'⁶⁷ Still, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at the strange Cossack world that the head agent presented to his principals in Paris. Even more so, as twentieth-century historians studying Czajkowski's and Czartoryski's

⁶³ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 2, 239-249, 288-289, 334.

⁶⁴ Jerzy Skowronek, *Polityka bałkańska Hotelu Lambert (1833-1856)* (Warsaw, 1976), 5, 53.

⁶⁵ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 2, 103, 202-204, 329.

⁶⁶ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 2, 57-61, 127-129.

⁶⁷ *Materiały*, 65.

schemes put great effort into reconstruct them as ‘serious politics,’ presenting them as more rational than they had actually been and thus obfuscating their novelistic dimension.

At the time there existed a number of groups in the Ottoman territory, that could be, with a varying degree of accuracy, identified as Cossacks. Some of them enjoyed a special legal status (tax and judicial immunity) in exchange for military service, like the Nekrasov Cossacks who originated with a group of the Don (non-Ukrainian) Cossacks that had emigrated from the Russian Empire, because of their attachment to the Old Belief version of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Others were remnants of the Zaporozhian Cossacks who chose to escape from Russian rule after the abolition of their autonomy in the 1770s. They had also been granted special rights by the Ottomans, but after 1828, when most of them had chosen to return to Russia, those who remained were treated by the authorities as any other non-Muslim subjects. Yet others were individuals or groups that for this or other reason could be linked (again, with a varying degree of good will) to the Cossack traditions (not only the Ukrainian ones). No satisfying estimates are available, but in all probability these were not very numerous groups. The region where most of the alleged Cossacks were based was the Dobruja, to the south of the Danube delta, where an exceptional mix of ethnicities lived under Ottoman sovereignty, but in close proximity of the Russian possessions and the autonomous Danubian Principalities (practically, a Russian protectorate, although officially still under the Ottomans). As for Czajkowski himself, he was willing to see the Cossacks everywhere and always ready to fight for Poland-Lithuania and assault Muscovy. As he put it, on more than one occasion, ‘the Cossacks are always on offer to be taken’ and have ‘an enormously bellicose spirit.’⁶⁸ One has an impression that any group that could be somehow linked to either Poland-Lithuania or Russia was a potential Cossack band in Czajkowski’s eyes.⁶⁹ Actually, the more obscure they were, the better.

Dobruja was Czajkowski’s promised land of over-interpretation and creative management of intelligence. The borders between reliable accounts, fantasies and conscious propaganda became blurred and no one was either able or, apparently, very willing to verify Czajkowski’s reports. With the advantage of hindsight we can see the gradual novelisation of Czajkowski’s reports and schemes, how he indulged in the fantasies that seemed more and more like wishful thinking. As he did this incrementally, as his principals knew even less than he did, and as they actually desired him to be at least partly right, his endeavours were never

⁶⁸ *Materiały*, 80, 123.

⁶⁹ *Materiały*, 137, 148.

interrupted, or at least not until his conversion to Islam which was a shock to the Catholic sensibilities of the aristocrats of the Hotel Lambert.

In the spring of 1842, Czajkowski travelled to Dobruja for the first time to learn about that strategically relevant region. Its importance consisted in its being located relatively close to the Ukrainian provinces of the Russian Empire, its being under direct Ottoman administration, thus beyond the easy reach of Russian troops and agents (as was the case in the neighbouring Danubian Principalities), and in being inhabited by people of many different ethnicities, some of whom might be persuaded to support the cause of Poland-Lithuania's rebirth. Czajkowski did not have all the necessary travel permits, but he managed to combine his lordly haughtiness and gentlemanly joviality in a way that secured him safe passage wherever he wanted.⁷⁰ Without denying the truth of this account, it has to be noted that the ability to combine agility, insolence, self-confidence and friendliness in a way that allowed him to socialise successfully with members of all social groups and overcome any bureaucratic obstacles, is part and parcel of the image of the nineteenth-century democratic hero.⁷¹

In Dobruja Czajkowski met various groups and individuals that he identified as the Cossacks. He reported to Prince Czartoryski that those of them who had emigrated from the Russian-ruled Ukraine disliked the Muscovites and were ready to immediately sell their properties, mount their steeds and go to war against Russia.⁷² It seems quite logical that people who had emigrated from the Russian Empire would have their reasons to dislike it. However, it does not have to follow that they were eager to fight against it and even less so in alliance with the Polish-Lithuanian noblemen, many of whom were land- and serf-owners in the Ukraine from which they had escaped. Czajkowski also informed Paris that the Ruthenian immigrants from the Russian-ruled Ukraine were unruly drunkards, but they considered Poland their fatherland and were a rich resource for the Polish-Lithuanian cause.⁷³

It is hard to say what those individuals could have meant by saying that Poland was their fatherland (assuming they really did so), but what is clear is that it did not have to imply any sort of loyalty or patriotism to the cause of Poland-Lithuania's rebirth. At the same time, the Serbs from Zemun would be referred to as Germans, which meant that, differently to their neighbours from Bgrade, they were subjects of the Austrian emperor. Russian travelers of the early nineteenth century still perceived the former Ruthenian Palatinates of the Polish-

⁷⁰ *Materiały*, 73.

⁷¹ Riall, *Garibaldi*, 146-154.

⁷² *Materiały*, 66.

⁷³ *Materiały*, 68-69.

Lithuanian Commonwealth as ‘a Polish land,’ because its landed nobility was predominantly Polish-speaking and Latin Catholic.⁷⁴ The peasant emigres from that region could have meant simply that they came from the right bank of the Dnieper which, not so long ago, had been part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and was where the Polish-Lithuanian nobility remained the dominant social group and property-holders. It did not have to convey any more sympathy for that nobility and its culture than for the Russian Empire. Overall, it is impossible to know what Czajkowski was told and by whom, but it is clear that he was the type of person who would have an inclination to equate the Ruthenian immigrants’ dislike of the Russian Empire with a love of Poland-Lithuania. Clearly, one does not mean the other. Czajkowski reported that he had told the Ruthenians with whom he had spoken in the locality of Slava (Ukrainian: Glory) that he was ‘united by a Polish-Cossack brotherhood’ with them and that the future Polish-Lithuanian king (by which he always meant Prince A. J. Czartoryski) would allow the reestablishment of the autonomous Zaporozhian *Sich*, or Cossack headquarters, in its historical premises.⁷⁵ So far, we are dealing with uncompromising declarations that are given to win the sympathy of the Ruthenian interlocutors. One might argue that such behaviour is rash and irresponsible, but this is generally what insurrectionary agents do. However, further in the same report Czajkowski suggests lobbying the Ottoman government to allow the reestablishment of the Zaporozhian *Sich* on its territory.⁷⁶ Now, perhaps this is not the same thing as planning to rebuild Camelot, but it is not very far from it. Clearly, what seemed to have been a smart political slogan employed to attract the Ruthenian peasants’ attention was treated quite seriously by Czajkowski himself.

The gradual novelisation of Czajkowski’s reports takes various forms. For instance, at one point he starts to sign them as Czajka instead of Czajkowski, which alludes to the *noms de guerre* of the legendary Cossack commanders. This also happens to his lieutenants: Iliński is transformed into Iłaj, Rawski becomes Rawa.⁷⁷ Also, a seemingly reasonable plan to rent a manor and perhaps start a shipping company that would serve as a cover for the political activities acquires an unequivocally Romantic colouring: as head of the company, a Slav from Styria is chosen, because it accords with Czajkowski’s Slavophilism. Before anything has even been firmly fixed, Czajkowski plans to use the company to transport arms to the other side of the Black Sea to support the Caucasians fighting with the Russians. As for the manor,

⁷⁴ Petrovsky-Shtern, *Golden Age*, 29-33.

⁷⁵ *Materiały*, 69-70.

⁷⁶ *Materiały*, 72.

⁷⁷ *Materiały*, 75-76, 147.

it must not be an agricultural enterprise, but one devoted exclusively to horse-breeding, a truly noble/Cossack business.⁷⁸ I do not wish to claim that Czajkowski's plans were completely unrealistic or stupid, but to show that his policy choices were heavily conditioned by the way in which he imagined a clandestine enterprise of noble-born conspirators.

The most colourful are the diverse ideas that Czajkowski has about expanding the anti-Imperial action over the Russian border. Thus, he plans to marry his emissary Rawa to a local Cossack girl in order to gain a stable foothold for conspiratorial work. He deems Rawa to be a better candidate for a link with the Cossacks than other, possibly smarter candidates, because 'he drinks well and sings well,' in other words, because he better fits the novelistic image of the rowdy Cossacks.⁷⁹ As it turns out, in Rawa's case these character traits did not go together with cold blood and patience and eventually his erratic behaviour caused a number of problems.

Czajkowski planned to locate another of his men in an Orthodox monastery in Dobruja and make him pose as an Orthodox monk. He was even ordered to find a boy of humble origins born in the Polish-Lithuanian Ukraine who would be both his servant and disciple. At a later stage a printing press was to be sent there and the monastery was to become a centre of pro-Polish-Lithuanian propaganda directed at the Orthodox Christians in the Empire, disseminating folk-like songs and prayers with an anti-Imperial subtext.⁸⁰

Czajkowski planned to have his revolutionary propaganda broadcast not only by means of print, but also through more original channels. Several old men were to be recruited from among the former Zaporozhians, as well as the Ruthenian immigrants to cross the Russian border posing as traditional Ruthenian bards. Their mission was to spread a prophecy about the unity between the Polish-Lithuanians and the Ruthenians, and the soon to be expected uprising against the Russians. Afterwards, everybody would live happily under the benevolent Czartoryski monarchs, there would be religious freedom and the Orthodox Church would flourish. Czajkowski emphasised that the old bards should be inspired by 'a mysterious faith' in the sense of their mission, so that they would be more convincing. They should not restrict themselves to the territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but also cross to the left bank of the Dnieper where the Cossack polity had existed in the eighteenth century.⁸¹ Here, we return to the realm of romance. Especially noteworthy is the introduction of the 'mysterious faith' that should make the insurrectionary propaganda more efficient. It

⁷⁸ *Materiały*, 74, 81-82, 100.

⁷⁹ *Materiały*, 84.

⁸⁰ *Materiały*, 121, 128, 134.

⁸¹ Biblioteka Czartoryskich, file 5384, 75, hereafter BCz.

might seem to be just a pragmatic and instrumental use of people's feelings, but it allows Czajkowski to incorporate into his allegedly rational political schemes yet another element of the Romantic adventurism, that he had exploited so successfully in his *Wernyhora*. The difference is that he was now devising ways to transform his fantasies about the Ukraine of yore into reality. The novelistic elements, such as the mysterious faith, are not just propaganda tools used to mobilise support, as one might expect, but rather building blocks with which the insurrectionary conspiracy itself (and by extension the very Polish-Cossack unity) is constructed.

Other emissaries were to be sent to the former Polish-Lithuanian Ukraine, the Black Sea Cossacks (direct descendants and successors of the Zaporozhians in the Russian Empire), the Little Russian provinces and the Don Cossacks (non-Ukrainian, ethnically closer to the Muscovites, but largely Old Believers in separation from the Imperial Orthodox Church).⁸² The instructions they were given reveal how tenuous a grasp Czajkowski had on reality and how daring and ambitious his schemes actually were.

An instruction for the emissary going to Ruthenia (that is the former Ruthenian Palatinates of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, then part of the Russian Empire) is a good example. Though it contains advice that is presented as practical, it is all very vague and general. There is nothing that would not be known to any contemporary who had some interest in the region, even without visiting it, containing information readily available in the periodical press and the belles-lettres. The most tangible tips state that the fairs, carnival parties and elections of local officials are good opportunities for networking, because the spendthrifts and spoiled youths who abound there are the best candidates for conspirators. It is enough to tell them something colourful about the patriotic traditions and avoid boring them with 'political dogmas.' The author of the instruction does not limit himself to the Polish-Lithuanian cultural zone. He also wishes to cast his net at the University of Kiev and recruit the East Ukrainians. He believes that the old Cossack tradition of loyalty to the Polish-Lithuanian kings has to be kept alive among them by advertising the Czartoryski family and that they can serve as a springboard for future propaganda among the Black Sea and Don Cossacks.⁸³

As a rule, it is not a historian's task to criticise those she or he studies for the unfeasibility of their plans and prove that today we know better, but here a few words must be said in order to locate Czajkowski's plans in their proper context and it is indispensable to

⁸² *Materiały*, 88-89, 148, 150-154.

⁸³ *Materiały*, 88-94.

fully understand the political thrust of his distortion of intelligence. The traditions of Cossack autonomy were indeed alive among the landowning elites of the left (or east) bank of the Dnieper (also known as Little Russia). It is also true that the privileges granted to them in a very distant past by the Polish-Lithuanian kings in exchange for faithful service featured prominently in their historical accounts. Yet this did not mean that there was any substantial nostalgia for Poland-Lithuania. The mentions of the Polish-Lithuanian origin of those privileges were meant to emphasise that they were rights older than Russian Imperial rule, that they had been won by ancestors and were thus inalienable. Otherwise, hatred towards Poland-Lithuania and Catholicism was one of the key building blocks of East Ukrainian identity and was frequently advertised by both conservatives and progressives in the region, since it served best to legitimise the cultivation of a separate para-national identity. So, when Czajkowski fantasised about playing the Cossack card to win the East Ukrainians for the anti-Russian cause, it was a complete misunderstanding (perhaps intentional).

Another instruction was prepared for an emissary going to the Don Cossacks who had long, it is claimed, been extremely dissatisfied with Russian Imperial rule, which had gradually deprived them of their rights and transformed them into subalterns.⁸⁴ The mission is presented as just the first step in a bigger enterprise and the agent's main task is to network with the local leaders without ever revealing any subversive intentions. However, the content of the instruction clearly reveals that actually it was necessary to gather the most basic knowledge about the Don Cossacks and their region: the emissary was to learn answers to such questions as for example whether they had their own independent treasury or what the most important geographic features of their land were. A proclamation directed at the Don Cossacks (preserved in both French and Russian) does not seem a very well thought out piece of persuasive propaganda either, as it starts with reminding the addressees that their 'name has long been associated with the hordes that the despotism and tyranny launches against freedom and civilisation.'⁸⁵

Whatever its final text would have looked like, the proclamation would not reach too wide an audience, because in accordance with the rules of novelistic mysteriousness it was to be distributed in only two hand-written copies. Neither Czajkowski, nor Prince Czartoryski felt it necessary to explore further details of insurrectionary propaganda among the Don

⁸⁴ BCz 5384, 21.

⁸⁵ BCz 5384, 167.

Cossacks, contenting themselves with leaving it all to the Nekrasov Cossacks who stemmed from the Don and were believed to be best prepared for that task.⁸⁶

Much more tactful is the Polish-language proclamation to the Black Sea Cossacks living in the Kuban' region. It seems probable that, as direct descendants and successors of Czajkowski's cherished Zaporzhians, they were privileged in his imagination as somehow being more noble than the Don Cossacks. Still, more tactful does not mean more realistic. The Black Sea Cossacks are addressed as 'blood of the blood, bone of the bone of the old Zaporozhia' and 'our brethren, our knights.' They are asked whether they do not notice how freedom, honour and glory thunder in Poland and how falcons over the Dnieper herald the arrival of 'the King of Poland, our father.' Further rhetorical questions are added: whether they forgot their saints, their steppes, the city of Kiev, the freedom they had enjoyed under the kings of Poland and the glory of their hetmans, and whether they wish to forever remain enslaved to the Muscovite Emperor who is half-German and half-Tatar. All this is written in the Polish language.

It is characteristic of Czajkowski's outlook that the Polish-Lithuanian historical elements (freedom enjoyed under the Kings of Poland) are conflated with the Ruthenian-Orthodox ones (Kiev, steppes) to form one seamless myth. True, apart from those stilted enunciations about the past, there are also some promises regarding the future, for instance that in the independent Poland-Lithuania of tomorrow all will be children of one fatherland, that Orthodox Christianity will not be handicapped, and privilege will not hinder the ascent of talented and patriotic individuals. For instance, a valiant and smart peasant will be able to become a hetman or a palatine. It can be noted that such an egalitarian message about a commoner becoming a hetman would not sit exceptionally well with the Cossack elders to whom the proclamation was addressed in the first line.⁸⁷ Given the role occupied by the figures of the Polish-Lithuanian Catholics in the identity of the East Ukrainian Cossack and post-Cossack elites, it is to be doubted that such appeals to the Polish-Lithuanian-Ruthenian-Cossack unity could lure many on the banks of the Kuban'.

A third proclamation that can be found among the documents related to Czajkowski's activities in the 1840s, was directed at the Ruthenian peasantry of the right bank of the Dnieper, that is the region of the Russian Empire formerly belonging to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Czajkowski sends this Ruthenian-language text to his superiors, presenting it as written by someone else, but deserving attention, mostly because he thinks it has an

⁸⁶ BCz 5384 74-75, 99.

⁸⁷ BCz 5385, 21-23.

excellent opening: ‘Christians [or peasants, the term meant the two things at the same time] of Podolia, Volhynia and Ukraine! Enough of being cattle!’ The proclamation contains some references to the golden past under the Polish-Lithuanian kings, but they are relatively few and subordinate to the questions of social injustice. The idea of idyllic unity between the noble masters and their serfs is touched upon only so far, as it serves to explain that presently the landowners oppress their subjects, because they are forced to do so by the Russian government. The proclamation contrasts strongly with the two previous ones. Whether it would work well or not with the Ruthenian peasants is impossible to say, but its focus on socio-economic oppression and liberation seems to be a much more promising avenue than Czajkowski’s favorite deliberations on the glorious fraternity of the Cossacks and landowners and his appeals to the love of the Ukrainian steppes.⁸⁸

The proclamations were only one element of a three-step master plan submitted to Prince A. J. Czartoryski. The last step was to be a full-scale military action comprised of a Serbian offensive against Austria, an uprising of the Don and Black Sea Cossacks, and an invasion of Cossack troops in Dobruja organised by Czajkowski. After the insurrectionary propaganda had taken root, carefully selected officers would organise troops with whom they would then cross into the Russian Empire. There is a detailed list of non-existent units, financial provisions for them and even itineraries which they should follow. However, one cannot help have the impression that all these minutiae are meant to cover the overall vagueness of the plan, as the most crucial elements are treated lightly or taken for granted. Just a few examples will suffice: the preparations must be carried out discreetly, so as not to draw the attention of the Russian and Austrian spies, which means that when the date of action has been chosen, the soldiers and officers should gather in small groups in the farms on the steppes near the Russian border. Arms should be brought from abroad. All Russian fleets on the Black Sea need to be burnt beforehand by the followers from among the Nekrasov and Zaprozhian Cossacks, even though it is admitted elsewhere that it is not at all clear that there would be any among them. The insurgent units should cross the whole of Ukraine inciting rebellion and head to the swampy region of Polisia (today’s borderland between the states of Ukraine and Belarus), which was generally believed to be the most backward and inaccessible part of the former Poland-Lithuania. Next, there would be a general uprising of all against the Russians. The conspiracy among the Don Cossacks would be established successfully by

⁸⁸ BCz 5385, 9-12.

emissaries from among the Nekrasov Cossacks.⁸⁹ At no point is it said how all these tricky tasks will be carried out.

Prince A. J. Czartoryski commented on the document and was then answered by Czajkowski. Thus, we possess a sort of written dialogue between the two masterminds. Prince Czartoryski was not uncritical, but ultimately his remarks are based on the same sort of happy-go-lucky mentality as Czajkowski's. For example, the Prince enters into a discussion about the best ways to use the prophetic Ukrainian bards and how many of them there should be, the future privileges and rights granted to the Ruthenian peasants that would support the anti-Russian uprising, and even the question of whether the Crimean Peninsula should be offered to the Don Cossacks as part of their independent state. On an equally hopeful note, Prince Czartoryski also comments that it is necessary to know the exact location of the Russian Imperial troops and their supplies before the action can be started and ideally there should not be too strong a concentration of them at the moment. Eventually, it is clear from his statements that he bases his hope for victory mostly on the support of Serbia and the Don Cossacks, whereas there was actually no hard evidence suggesting that such support might ever materialise. It really looks like the two gentlemen were indulging in an exceptionally costly sort of coffeehouse politics.⁹⁰

More sober remarks were made by A. J. Czartoryski's son, Władysław who served as ensign in the Spanish Royal Guards. He had a better sense of military affairs and proved more inquisitive than his father. The young prince noted quite rightly that the units designed by Czajkowski were too numerous (300 men and more) to maneuver between stronger Russian detachments, but too small to successfully confront them. He also noted that Polisia was not a good base as it would be difficult to find recruits, funds and food there. He suggested that smaller guerrilla units would prove more efficient, but the toll of such warfare would be exceptionally high. He himself was inclined to organise the campaign around one strong unit composed of cavalry and infantry. Although the proposal of Prince W. Czartoryski does not seem very convincing either (and perhaps, given the limited resources available, it was impossible to devise a truly good operations plan), it seems to function in a different realm of knowledge, one regulated by a wholly disparate regime of truth, than that which Michał Czajkowski had presented to the old prince.

The young prince asks specific simple questions: what resources will be available? What shape are the banks of the Danube? What does the road from one locality to another

⁸⁹ BCz 5384 78, 84, 95, 99.

⁹⁰ BCz 5384, 85, 89, 97-106

look like? Czajkowski and the old prince do not give much thought to such issues. They imagine the coming war as an insurgency of the sort described by Czajkowski in his novels. It will be prepared by mysterious Ruthenian bards spreading subversive prophecies. It will be universally supported by the whole Ukrainian population who are naturally disposed to rebellion and do not even need to be convinced, but simply encouraged which should take but one week of work.⁹¹ Of course, the fleets will be burnt, enemy envoys intercepted, everything will go excellently (*wszystko pójdzie wysmienicie*) and somehow it will work (*jakoś to będzie*), as the two famous Polish phrases have it.⁹² The uprising will eventually reestablish the unity forfeited in the seventeenth century and restore the Zaporozhian Cossacks and Eastern Ukraine to the Commonwealth. Obviously, it will find a perfect springboard in the swampy woods of Polisia where the Imperial troops will not be able to hunt down the insurgents. Eighteenth-century-like mounted parties of several hundred men driven by a rebellious spirit will simply wipe the Russian armies out of Ukraine. The reality that already back in the 1770s, the noble-born cavalymen of the Confederation of Bar posed no serious threat to the regular Russian troops, did not preoccupy either of the interlocutors. In Czajkowski's novels, when commanded by a charismatic leader the Polish-Lithuanian fighters always prevailed, so it was just necessary to find a suitably 'rakish' person: Czajkowski's own choice would be his cherished commander from 1831, general Karol Różycki, but unfortunately he was a convinced democrat and opponent of the Czartoryski's camp.⁹³

The ease with which these projects were formulated is even more striking if we bear in mind that Prince Czartoryski was the most cautious among the Polish-Lithuanian emigre leaders, far more sceptical about the insurrectionary prospects than the democratic TDP or the earlier Stowarzyszenie Ludu Polskiego (SLP, Association of the Polish People).⁹⁴ It seems that neither he nor Czajkowski sought an opportunity to shake the public opinion with a spectacular failure leading to a heroic sacrifice of select charismatic activists and thus create a powerful political mythology. This had rather been the case with Szymon Konraski's SLP in the 1830s, an organisation linked directly to Giuseppe Mazzini, the main inspiration of this

⁹¹ *Materiały*, 121.

⁹² The first phrase comes from the period of the May Constitution of 1791, the other one from Mickiewicz's national epic *Pan Tadeusz*, available in English as *Pan Tadeusz; or The last foray in Lithuania; a story of life among Polish gentfolk in the years 1811 and 1812* (London, 1917); for the former quote see Jerzy Michalski, "«Wszystko pójdzie wysmienicie» (o politycznym optymizmie po 3 Maja)," in Jerzy Michalski, *Studia historyczne z XVIII i XIX wieku* (Warsaw, 2007), vol. 1, 323-334.

⁹³ *Materiały*, 125, 143.

⁹⁴ Trencsényi, Janowski et al., *Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, 221-225.

sort of propaganda through testimony of martyrdom.⁹⁵ Prince Czartoryski, an experienced politician and a man of the Enlightenment, let himself be persuaded by Czajkowski because he was forced by the circumstances to play a weak hand, but also because the Romantic novelistic imagination was so powerful and all-pervasive that even he could not escape it.

It is not my purpose here to prove that Czajkowski was wrong on so many accounts (as it is rather obvious), but rather to show how profoundly his insurrectionary would-be conspiracies were shaped by the worldview he had earlier captured in his novels and short stories and to what extent his reports and plans are woven from the literary commonplaces of the Polish-language culture of the time. What was exceptional about Czajkowski and Czartoryski was not their way of thinking and imagining things, but the degree to which they were capable of implementing their schemes in real life. That theirs was not a completely outlandish mindset is attested by an episode in the Kingdom of Poland of the late 1830s. A group of high school students from Kielce was arrested when illegally crossing the Austrian border. Their original plan was to arm themselves and travel to Ukraine, where they wanted to start an anti-Russian uprising. Only after it turned out that they were not able to acquire any guns, did they choose to leave for France and so they ended up on the border with the Austrian Empire.⁹⁶ It was not recorded whether the students had read any of Czajkowski's novels, but clearly theirs was a very kindred sort of revolutionary scheming. Though obviously most people at the time were not involved in such enterprises, neither was this story completely exceptional, as similar cases abounded both in the former Poland-Lithuania and in Europe as a whole.

What we do know for sure is that Czajkowski's breathtaking plans found an avid reader in the Prince A. J. Czartoryski, the most sober of Polish-Lithuanian emigre pro-independence leaders. At least in part, this was due to the fact that the old prince was born during the Confederation of Bar, knew many of its militants, and saw himself as a man of the old polyethnic Commonwealth, a Lithuanian-Ruthenian lord that, even though a Latin Catholic himself, was also a protector of the East Christian traditions.⁹⁷ At the same time, his exchange with Czajkowski proves him to be also a true man of the Romantic nineteenth century. The evidence offered in this section might indeed caricature the old Prince and his agent as irresponsible insurrectionary troublemakers, but this was not my intention. Rather, I wanted to show how profoundly novelistic and adventurous the political planning of the time

⁹⁵ Riall, *Garibaldi*, 30-31. For SLP see the exhaustive monograph Bolesław Łopuszański, *Stowarzyszenie Ludu Polskiego (1835-1841)* (Kraków, 1975).

⁹⁶ Łopuszański, *Stowarzyszenie Ludu Polskiego*, 317.

⁹⁷ Serhiy Bilenky, *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Stanford, 2012), 110-112.

was, not only among the most radical Polish-Lithuanian schemers, but also in other environments. For instance, Czartoryski and Czajkowski's seemingly reckless plans to supply arms to the Caucasians fighting against the Russian Empire had their real-life inspiration in David Urquhart's *Vixen* expedition of 1836.⁹⁸ The Romantic myths were part and parcel of revolutionary politics. In order to properly understand the 'serious' memos and intelligence reports, we also need to be aware of the 'lighter' novels, poems and dramas, as they provided the code in which politics was formulated and conveyed.

6.5. Fictions and facts

The secret reports and plans are perhaps the most surprising example of Czajkowski's mixing of the realms of fiction and non-fiction, but not the only ones. After the Crimean War he published a strange book titled *Kozaczyzna w Turcji* or *The Cossacks in Turkey*, which was meant to document the importance of his *idée fixe*: the need to maintain the Christian Cossack units in the Ottoman Empire and use them to fight Russia.⁹⁹ The work is an apology for Czajkowski's own politics, a pamphlet against his opponents, and a documentary history of the Cossacks in the Ottoman state. It brings together historical documents about the Zaporozhian and Nekrasov Cossacks, Czajkowski's own literary sketches and pseudo-academic essays (some of the latter also by other authors). The main thrust of the book is to prove the continuity of the Zaporozhian presence in the Ottoman Empire and thus to counter the possible accusations that Czajkowski's Cossacks are just a bunch of mercenaries appropriating a past that is not theirs, whilst simultaneously promoting the author's own, not fully clear, historiosophical views on the Slavs (it seems that he was at the beginning of the process of his internal reconciliation with the Russian monarchy). What is most interesting for my purpose here is the way in which the techniques of fiction and non-fiction writing are combined by the author. It is not just that there are forged historical documents (although this also happens). More interesting is to see how various elements (both genuine and not) are combined and recontextualised to form a new whole with a clear ideological message; and secondly, how the author ostentatiously mixes the regimes of fiction and non-fiction.

In the collection there are a number of literary pictures and short stories devoted to Balkan realities. These are typical examples of Orientalising small prose, full of adventures, exotic brutality and Romanticised archaism. Their form is overtly literary. At the same time,

⁹⁸ Ludwik Widerszal, *The British Policy in the Western Caucasus 1833-1842: Palmerston, Ponsonby, Urquhart* (Warsaw, 1833).

⁹⁹ [Michał Czajkowski], *Kozaczyzna w Turcji* (Paris, 1857).

we are told that the stories are about real events and real individuals who serve in Czajkowski's units. One of them, Mateo Raszo, is not only identified by name, but also pictured (Picture 7). The form suggests that we are dealing with fiction, but we are told that everything is true, that it is more like journalism.

A similar cocktail was noted by Lucy Riall in her analysis of popular biographies of Garibaldi which burst with sensationalist, frenetic and romantic elements, but at the same time always insist that they are trustworthy and based on first-hand accounts. One reason is that the blurring of the conventional divide between literary fiction and fact was a feature of Francophone Romanticism. A perhaps more important function of such an accumulation of ostentatiously unrealistic elements was that, ultimately, it distanced the protagonist from the realm of conventional politics, which in the case of Garibaldi served to both tone down his subversive radicalism and to elevate him above the sphere of dull babblers, indolent monarchs and petty schemers.¹⁰⁰ All this seems to be partly true for Czajkowski as well, but I would argue that his main message is that what we consider to be just beautiful literature might indeed be true, that there are places where a free and brave man can still lead a life of chivalry or banditry (depending on the vantage point). One just needs to dare to live this dream.



7. Mateo Raszo as depicted in Czajkowski's *The Cossacks in Turkey*

¹⁰⁰ Riall, *Garibaldi*, 201.

Many years later at the beginning of the 1870s, Czajkowski published a novel entitled *Nemolaka* which is set during the January Uprising of 1863.¹⁰¹ Although a literary failure, the work is interesting for a number of reasons, not least because it is Czajkowski's only Cossack novel set in his own times. Overall, it is a sort of balance sheet of his political career in the Ottoman Empire, explaining his U-turn of migrating back to the Russian Empire. What is more relevant for my purposes here is that the piece is a *roman a clef*, presenting the activities of the Polish-Lithuanian democratic agents in Dobruja in a very unfavorable way for having organised a failed expedition to Ukraine to bring relief to the insurgency in the Russian Empire. Many protagonists are so transparent that the contemporaries did not need any key to recognise them, for instance Zygmunt Miłkowski who used the *nom de plume* Tomasz Teodor Jeż is named simply Jeż (Polish for hedgehog). There are also end notes that either explain more complex details or simply reinforce the author's claim to accuracy. What makes this text so unusual (at least for the present-day reader) is that at the same time the novel contains many elements that overtly undermine its reliability. For instance, an important part of the plot revolves around a Gypsy princess who travels with her horde from Lithuania to Serbia and has a prolonged, if troubled, affair with the main protagonist, himself an incorrigible womaniser or, as the narrator calls him, a Ukrainian Don Juan. It is difficult to determine whether Czajkowski was serious or was playing with story-telling conventions. If the latter were the case, it would still be difficult to judge what he actually wanted to convey.

Another issue is that the second most important protagonist, Iwan Michajłowicz Skorupadzki, is a figure whom no one with basic knowledge of Ukrainian realities would believe in during the second half of the nineteenth century. He is an East Ukrainian Cossack and a descendant of an eighteenth-century Cossack hetman. Unusually for a person of his background, as is admitted even by the narrator, he chose to fight in the Polish Uprising of 1830-1831 and then emigrated to the Ottoman Empire. It can be argued that Czajkowski wanted to portray himself in an indirect way. As he was a Polish-Lithuanian nobleman that assumed a Cossack identity, his protagonist was a sort of mirror reflection: an East Ukrainian descendant of the Cossacks who chose to fight on the Polish-Lithuanian side. Whatever the author's motivations, this is the most unlikely biographical combination that could be imagined. Even more so as the East Ukrainian Skoropads'kyi family was very real, well known and exemplary in its loyalty to the Empire. Indeed, one of its members, Pavlo, was a Russian general during the First World War and in 1918 he became the German-sponsored

¹⁰¹ Czajkowski, *Nemolaka*.

head of an independent Ukraine, which he tried to steer back to some sort of reunification with Russia. In any case, the choice of the Skoropads'kyi surname meant that either East Ukraine was for Czajkowski so distant a land that one could just take famous names from there as from any other Oriental tale, or that he was profoundly ignorant of the real nature of East Ukrainian politics, or that he was weaving an ostentatiously unrealistic narrative and consciously endowing his *roman a clef* with fictional characteristics.

However, the most striking example of the mixing of fictional and non-fictional elements is the story of the Świdziński siblings entitled *The wandering Cossack* and included in *Kozaczyzna w Turcji*. An agent of this surname was active in the service of Prince Czartoryski in the 1840s and did indeed come from Galicia, so the story has some factual basis.¹⁰² Also, the basic elements of the Świdzińskis' biographies as presented by Sadik are perfectly plausible. They are said to have been a brother and a sister from Galicia, grandchildren of a Greek Catholic priest who was well acquainted with both the early modern Cossack texts and newer, nineteenth-century Cossackophile literature in Polish and Russian. The latter claim is not very convincing, as the Galician public of the early nineteenth century, let alone ordinary parish priests, did not know too much about the literary developments in the Russian Empire. Also, the Galician Greek Catholic clergy was not especially fond of the Cossack memory: after all, the historical Cossacks championed Eastern Orthodoxy. But it is not completely impossible, so let us suppose it is true. The priest fills his grandchildren with the love of the Cossack past and tells them to serve the noble cause of its revival. The brother, Jan, travels extensively and eventually arrives in the Ottoman Empire where he meets the Cossacks living there. Next, he becomes an emissary to the Don Cossacks, where he is arrested by the Russian authorities. His sister, Natalia, moves to the Russian-ruled Ukraine, becomes a hermit nun and, despite her popularity, she is arrested by the Empire's authorities for dissuading the peasants from assaulting the Old Believers. The two meet in exile and die upon seeing each other.

Czajkowski's use of Świdzińskis' heroic sacrifice resembles the way in which Giuseppe Mazzini had taken advantage of Bandiera brothers' failed uprising of 1844. In both stories youthful pairs of siblings make failed attempts to oppose oppressive monarchic regimes and pay for that with their lives. Nevertheless, the authors present their martyrdom as fruitful. With their disastrous action, the Bandieras proved the existence of 'God fermenting

¹⁰² Marcelli Handelsman, *Ukraińska polityka księcia Adama Czartoryskiego przed wojną krymską* (Warsaw, 1937), 107; Chudzikowska, *Życie Sadyka*, 256-257.

in the heart of a great people' or, more simply, the existence of Italy as a nation.¹⁰³ Likewise, the Świdzińskis proved the spiritual unity of Poland-Lithuania and Cossackdom-Ruthenia and their common drive for freedom.

If the plot of the Świdzińskis' story is not convincing, it is, at least, thinkable. There could have been such an activist originally from Galicia who would cultivate some sort of Cossackophilia and later be sent as an emissary to the Don Cossacks. He could have had a sister that would convert from Greek Catholicism to Eastern Orthodoxy and become a hermit nun in the Russian Empire, although this would be much less common. However, the whole story is recounted as a sort of Cossack fairy tale. The siblings are brought up by their grandfather as Cossack patriots and devote their whole lives to the conscious service for the rebirth of Cossack Ukraine. Their Cossack patriotism is conflated with that of Ruthenia in general and is presented as something true and alive, even if somehow concealed from the world. There is one very telling moment in the story: when Emperor Nicholas I is given the documents proving that Jan managed to start a successful anti-Russian conspiracy with countless adherents among the Don Cossacks, the monarch gives the orders necessary to prevent it and then burns all the evidence. The truth about the subterranean persistence of the free Cossack spirit is erased by the all-powerful modern state embodied in the person of monarch.¹⁰⁴ The Cossack wanderer becomes a convict, punished for his politically subversive activities, an individual hindering the work of the state machine, but one that will be ultimately deprived of his individual traits and his cultural background, subjected to the will of the Leviathan and transformed into an obedient modern man. Only a storyteller like Czajkowski can recover the true meaning of such biographies by endowing them with the flavour of the Cossack fairy tale.

In a way Czajkowski was right. The difference between fiction and non-fiction writing is not just about factual accuracy. Non-fiction texts can also be completely unreliable in their rendering of events (take, for example, the autobiography of Lance Armstrong). What we consider to be fiction and non-fiction are just two different modalities of approaching things and building the argument. The same as fiction, non-fiction is a cultural artifact.¹⁰⁵ Both Czajkowski and Sarmiento played with the conventions to achieve their ends and produced hybrid texts which are impossible to classify as belonging to either realm. Part of the explanation is that in the 1840s the two writing regimes were not as clearly delimited as they

¹⁰³ Riall, *Garibaldi*, 30-31.

¹⁰⁴ Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 367-385.

¹⁰⁵ Dorrit Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore, 1999).

would become in the second half of the nineteenth century, so that it was easier to blend their characteristics.¹⁰⁶ In the discipline of history, for instance, novels still had a semi-academic status and could be regarded as a legitimate, if auxiliary, avenue to access the past. More importantly, both Czajkowski and Sarmiento saw themselves as, first and foremost, active politicians, men of action. They needed their works to be convincing and efficiently persuasive and used whatever means to achieve that. Although, thanks to their hybridity (or rather what we consider as such), their texts help to evidence the constructed nature of the divide between the fiction and non-fiction, this was not necessarily the aim of either of them. They just wanted to win.

However, Czajkowski's case seems somewhat more complex. He presented the chivalric worlds of the Cossacks and kindred Balkan warriors as more poetic and seems to have been doing it consciously. He infused poetic, fiction-like elements not only with his novels and short stories, but also with his conspiratorial reports, insurrectionary plans and documentary accounts of his political activities, as well as those of his associates. His overall message seems to have been that the sort of modernity that was radiating from and being imposed, as he believed, by the Western Europeans and their followers, was not unavoidable. The rational, realistic (non-fictional) approach to reality was a sham. A different, more poetic world was possible, it was just necessary to want it, to believe it and, ultimately, to recount it.

6.6. The Cossacks to be remembered and resurrected

In his portrayal of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, Czajkowski remains fully in line with the mythologies we already know. The Cossacks feel best in the open steppes of Ukraine where 'the soul drinks the beverage of greatness' and the free male can say to himself: 'I am the king of the steppe, a lord above all lords,' and then forget about his lover and other minutiae of ordinary life.¹⁰⁷ The steppe is the nature of his native country, but also a privileged space where a man can become truly free and powerful. The special relationship that the Cossacks have with their environment is made evident in a fragment which mirrors Sarmiento's depiction of the *baqueano*, the gaucho pathfinder (and countless accounts about American Indian scouts). The Cossack remembers every single detail in the void of the

¹⁰⁶ Brian Hamnett, *The Historical Novel in Europe in the Nineteenth Century: Representations of Reality in History and Fiction* (Oxford, 2011), 29-62.

¹⁰⁷ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 2, 132-133.

steppe. Although there are no border signs, such as mounds (clearly, not true about the real steppe), he nevertheless always finds his way easily.¹⁰⁸

Although there is a place for true love and stable relationships with women in Czajkowski's narratives, the freedom that can be found in the steppe and in the Cossack way of life is one that liberates males from their duties towards women and relegates the latter to a clearly subaltern position. For instance, a Cossack leader named Sawa (an allusion to the same legendary Sawa portrayed by Słowacki) has a sort of harem at his farm and offers his girls (as they are referred to) to the guests, both Muslim and Christian. Also, Czajkowski's ideal Cossack hero, otaman Nekrasa, is eventually separated for good from his sweetheart and has to lead the life of an unmarried warrior whose 'heart has died for love and the soul lives only for the fatherland and war glory.'¹⁰⁹ Although in this case it amounts to a personal tragedy, it nevertheless seems that a married Cossack hero would be somehow impossible.

Glory in war is the real *telos* of the Cossack life. Death on the battlefield is not a calamity, as it is followed by perennial fame. War and war-like activities (such as hunting or rustling) are the only acceptable occupations.¹¹⁰ As it is put in a letter written allegedly by an Ottoman Cossack and published in *Kozaczyzna w Turcji*: 'we live and we want to live on horseback and armed' (*zbrojno i konno*).¹¹¹

The peculiar combination of embeddedness in the steppe nature, the passion for war and the noble quality of the Cossack condition is best encapsulated by the Cossacks' love of horses and their exceptional management of those animals (and also hounds). In the case of otaman Nekrasa, the way he rides his horse is one of the main characteristics that differentiates him from the others and contributes to his exceptional erotic allure.¹¹² Although the Cossack hero lives an unmarried life, his extraordinary male eroticism is one of his key traits. Nekrasa's portrayal accords in broad outlines with the ideal of the Cossack *beau* that can be found in the literature of the time: black hair, moustache, aquiline nose, slim waist, sparkling eyes. At the same time, it is emphasised that his face was not beautiful, as this would probably render him too feminine, but rather radiated with a spirit of lordship and freedom, characteristic of a free son of the steppe.¹¹³

Being closer to nature means that Cossacks can feel more passionately than ordinary people. That is, they are profoundly religious and preserve the true religion in a purer form

¹⁰⁸ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 2, 142-143.

¹⁰⁹ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 2, 335.

¹¹⁰ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 13 and 2, 136-137, 142-143.

¹¹¹ Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 7.

¹¹² Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 123 and 2, 256, 306-307.

¹¹³ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 155.

than the official Church.¹¹⁴ However, their proximity to nature also means that they are less civilised and more savage. For instance, Czajkowski presents them as exceptionally cruel, massacring innocent civilian populations.¹¹⁵

In general, Czajkowski's Cossacks stand for bygone days. It is stated explicitly on numerous occasions, for instance in *Kozaczyzna w Turcji*, where Czajkowski more than once repeats that the Cossacks preserved the knightly poetry and rakish boldness of yore and 'today chivalry lives in the Cossacks and through the Cossacks.'¹¹⁶ As such, the Cossacks whom Czajkowski resurrects both in his writings and in his organisational efforts in the Ottoman Empire, possess all that he cherished about the good old days of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Zaporozhia. Unlike the depersonalised wheels of the modern state apparatus, they are united by personal loyalty to their commander and thus, although obedient soldiers, they preserve their subjectivity and escape alienation.¹¹⁷ Elsewhere, even when they are fighting for the cause that Czajkowski condemns, he admits that in their own way they struggle for freedom and faith.¹¹⁸

Finally, despite the long and bloody record of confessional violence in the Polish-Lithuanian encounter with the Zaporozhian Cossacks, Czajkowski depicts the past as a realm of harmonious confessional and ethnic pluralism. Indeed, a peculiar cult of conservative multiculturalism seems to be one of the tenets of his nostalgic Polish-Lithuanian imperialism. The Commonwealth is repeatedly and emphatically presented as a land that was not uniform and Czajkowski's own units in the Ottoman Empire are also explicitly diverse, including representatives of various Balkan groups, along with the volunteers from the Russian Empire, both Latin Catholic and East Christian. Indeed, even the Jews were allowed to become Cossack cavalymen. This should not be read as proof that Czajkowski was free from the anti-Semitic stereotypes of the period, but rather that he was consciously sending a message about a radically supra-ethnic brotherhood of knights, one in which only merit and courage counted. It is in this light that one should read his enthusiastic descriptions of Dobruja, the last refuge of the Cossacks and, at the same time, a land in which no ethnic group prevailed, a perfect mix of East European diversity. The ethno-confessional diversity of Dobruja seems to

¹¹⁴ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 2, 146.

¹¹⁵ Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 40; *Materiały*, 192.

¹¹⁶ Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 12, 380.

¹¹⁷ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 283; *Kozaczyzna*, 81.

¹¹⁸ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 2, 64, 81.

stand for the wholeness that has been lost forever and will never be restored, as Czajkowski came to think in the bitter period in which he wrote his *Nemolaka*.¹¹⁹

However, the past is not as unequivocally plus-valued sign as it might seem. After all, it was in the past that the political catastrophes that brought down the Commonwealth and the Cossack polities took place. Indeed, not only are the Zaporozhian Cossack a derivative branch of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility, there also seems to be a sort of parallel historical destiny between the two.¹²⁰ Wicked foreigners can be blamed for their collapse, but there is more to it than that. As expressed by an elderly otaman of the Nekrasov Cossacks, whose community Czajkowski depicted in his memoirs as the best specimen of the original Slavic spirit: ‘The Poles are a chivalric nation, but just as with the Zaporozhians, there is no order or concord among them. Today: huzzah! Tomorrow: nay! They do not know what to do: they fight like lions, but butcher each other like dogs. If you respected that prince Adam [J. Czartoryski] of yours as we respect the memory of [our founder and first otaman] Ihnat Nekrasa [that is Nekrasov], then perhaps you would achieve something. Because you see: bees without a Queen will not produce honey, a ship will not sail without a helmsman.’¹²¹

Both the Zaporozhian Cossacks and the Polish-Lithuanian nobles loved freedom so much that their political practice degenerated into anarchy, and they proved unable to defend their way of life from both the encroachments of foreign enemies and their own excessively ambitious and power-hungry individuals. This is clear from the satirical depiction of the chaotic political discussion that takes place in Sawa’s farm in *Wernyhora*. First, the leaders of the Cossacks and the Polish-Lithuanian noblemen quarrel over the choice of commander that should lead them against the Russian Imperial troops. Next, without reaching any conclusions, the debate collapses into a nonsensical exchange on hunting wolves. Tatar leaders, who are also present, silently observe this ‘dietine disorder,’ as the narrator calls it. The anarchy of the Polish-Lithuanian and Cossacks is juxtaposed with the tactful disapproval of the sympathetic Muslims.¹²² Symmetrically, the Zaporozhian Cossacks descend into political chaos and excessive drinking (not without active encouragement from the agents of the Russian Empire) which leads to their being politically incapacitated and eventually annihilated.

How can chivalric liberty be preserved without running the risk of descending into anarchy? Czajkowski’s answer is simple: an authoritarian leader. Such a leader must himself originate from among the Zaporozhian Cossacks or the Polish-Lithuanian noblemen in order

¹¹⁹ Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 4, 6, 137, 142, 147, 255-271; Czajkowski, *Nemolaka*, 33, 37-38, 125.

¹²⁰ Czajkowski, *Nemolaka*, 27.

¹²¹ *Materiały*, 194.

¹²² Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 2, 153.

to share their political values, most importantly, their love of liberty. However, at the same time, he must be more disciplined, perspicacious and resolute than his compatriots and must not waver when a fatherly hand has to be applied in order to protect the nation both from itself and foreign agents. The model of such leadership is provided by Czajkowski in his account of otaman Mychajło Lach. A Polish-Lithuanian nobleman (this is indeed the meaning of the Ruthenian term *Liakh*, a Pole, a Polish-Lithuanian nobleman), he became otaman of the Zaporozhian Sich in the Ottoman Empire somewhere at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Although the position was elective and revocable, he managed to retain it until his death by never parting with the regalia of his power, as well as by hanging numerous Jewish inn keepers who were Russian spies and infringed the rules he had set concerning selling alcohol on festive days. After his death the Zaporozhians descended into carousing and excessive drinking and were eventually betrayed and forced to migrate to the Russian Empire.¹²³

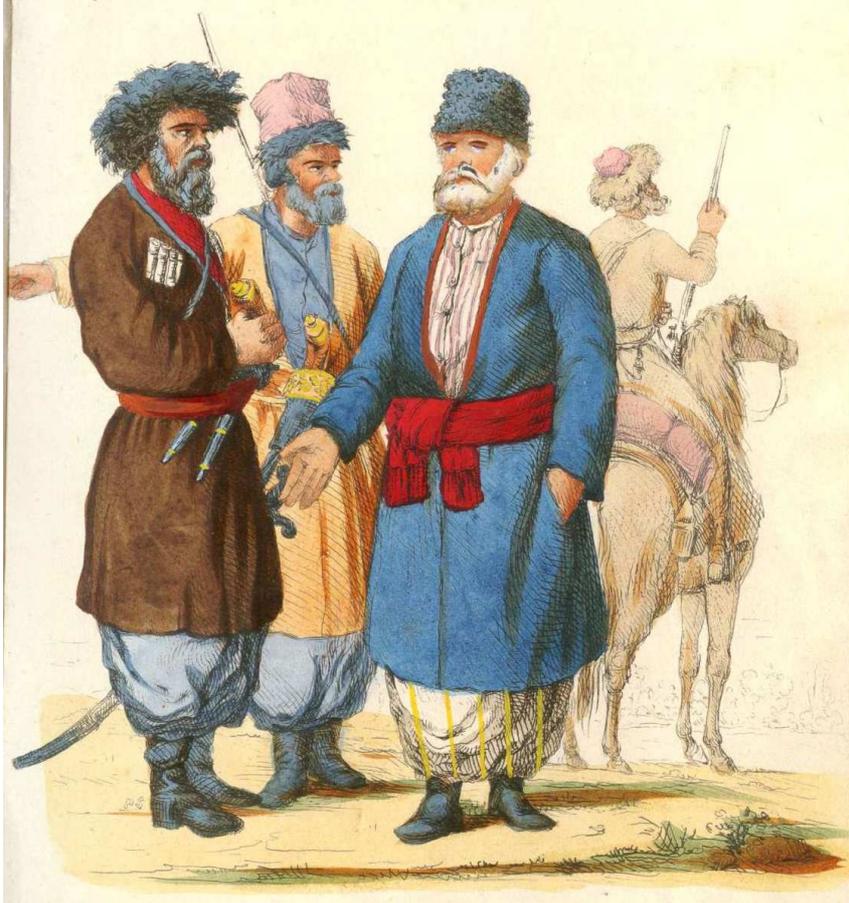
Otaman Lach's iron grip was the model of government that Czajkowski wanted to see in a regenerated Eastern Europe as a whole: a resolute leader from among the Polish-Lithuanian nobility maintaining internal discipline, and preventing foreign meddling. A military dictatorship of sorts disguised as constitutional monarchy was meant to become the foundation of republican liberty. In Czajkowski's dreams the ideal leader for such an idiosyncratic construction was Prince A. J. Czartoryski, a genuine Lithuanian-Ruthenian king.

6.7. More perfect than any phalanstery

On the level of state building, authoritarian leadership was necessary, as without it the Polish-Lithuanians and Zaporozhian Cossacks descended into political catastrophes. However, we should not forget that Czajkowski's is a world of exceptions. There is naturally room in it for communities that function differently. The Cossacks preserved best the original Slavic spirit, of which one of the most important elements was the love of freedom. Unfortunately, this quality could be also be exploited by the Cossacks' enemies to undermine their political unity and eventually to subjugate them. This is why in normal circumstances authoritarian leadership was indispensable as a bulwark against such advances. However, in specific conditions the original form of Slavic freedom could be kept. Czajkowski believed that in distant places there existed small communities of true Cossacks that preserved something very close to the primordial Slavic form of government and continued enjoying

¹²³ Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 27-31.

genuine knightly freedom. Most importantly, there were the so-called Nekrasov Cossacks (Picture 8) whom Czajkowski described as a sort of military order and aristocracy among the Cossacks of the Ottoman Empire, famed for their proverbial loyalty ('Faithful like an Innat Cossack,' as the Ottoman saying went, according to Czajkowski).¹²⁴



8. Nekrasov Cossacks as depicted in Czajkowski's *The Cossacks in Turkey*

The name of the Nekrasov Cossacks accords with that of *Wernyhora's* model Cossack hero, otaman Nekrasa. Already at the end of the 1830s, Czajkowski knew of the existence of Nekrasov Cossacks, but did not possess any precise knowledge, so he assumed that they were a division of Ukrainian Zaporozhian Cossacks, while actually they were Russian Old Believers. In his 'Danubian novel' *Kirdžali*, Czajkowski portrayed the Nekrasovs as the most perfect embodiment of the Zaporozhian ideals.¹²⁵ In *Wernyhora* he probably intended to suggest that his otaman Nekrasa was to become the founder of this largely invented Ukrainian Cossack army in exile. This was important for Czajkowski's insistence on the continuity between the old Zaporozhian autonomy and the Cossack units under Ottoman rule which, as

¹²⁴ *Materiały*, 84, 139; Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 98.

¹²⁵ Michał Czajkowski, *Kirdžali: powieść naddunajska* (Paris, 1839).

he believed, legitimised his claims to lead a Polish-Lithuanian army in exile. Only after arriving in the Ottoman Empire did he learn the details and from then on ceased to depict the Nekrasovs as Ukrainians.

Czajkowski described the Nekrasov Cossacks on at least three occasions: in his letters and reports sent to Paris in the first half of the 1840s, in *Kozaczyzna w Turcji*, published immediately after the Crimean War, and in the memoirs published at the end of his life. The memoirs are considered to be tainted with the views he adopted after returning to the Russian Empire.¹²⁶ This might be true in his treatment of some details and personalities, but generally the three sources do not seem to differ in their ideological thrust, but rather complement each other. As I have argued earlier, the political views that one might suspect to have been adopted by Czajkowski as a justification for his reconciliation with the Russian government are actually present in his writings as early as the 1830s, for example his anti-Germanism.

The Nekrasov Cossacks were descendants of a splinter group of the Old Believer Don Cossacks who had emigrated from the Russian Empire in the early eighteenth century and were shaped as a community by otaman Ihnat Nekrasov (hence also known as the Ihnat Cossacks). In Mysia, near the Lake Manyas, there was a small, tightly-knit community that Czajkowski visited in 1843 and depicted as a virtually flawless body politic:

No phalanstery has ever achieved that perfection: both in terms of general sharing and unity and concord of all. This unity and sharing was their strength, their power: thanks to them also in exile they did not cease to be the Cossacks. They remained Cossacks in their dignity, seriousness and hope. Seeing this all, I thought and said: "Oh God! Why are not the Poles alike? And I prayed to God, so that they [Poles] could become so!"¹²⁷

In the above fragment the image of the dignified Nekrasov Cossacks who remain true to their heritage serves as a foil to the Polish-Lithuanian emigres, who were notoriously quarrelsome, politically divided and, in Czajkowski's Slavophile opinion, gradually abandoning their national spirit.¹²⁸ The portrayal of the Nekrasov Cossacks provided by Czajkowski cannot be read as an accurate rendering of this peculiar community, but rather a depiction of the world as it should, but never will be in the present historical circumstances. This is not to question Czajkowski's honesty, but rather to admit that it is not possible to assess his account without using other primary sources.

Czajkowski describes the Nekrasov as ideal, primordial Cossacks: they have surnames typical for the Don region from which they come and still use patronymics, like other East

¹²⁶ For examples this attitude see Chudzikowska, *Życie Sadyka*, 7 and Handelsman, *Ukraińska polityka*, 103.

¹²⁷ *Materiały*, 190.

¹²⁸ Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 157.

Slavs, their dress is unmistakably Cossack, they display Kievan icons in their houses, another detail indicating the preservation of the East Slav cultural traditions, and they even eat dishes that any Polish-language reader would associate with the Ruthenian and Russian cuisines.¹²⁹

In one word, this host of Ivan Nekrasa was here in the foreign land, just as it had left the banks of the Don centuries ago. The ancestors did not change anything in the customs and habits of their forefathers. If a companion of Stenka Razin or Ihnat Nekrasa had slept for a hundred years with a normal sleep (and not the sleep of death) and then had woken up [...] he would think that it was Razin himself mustering his army on the banks of Volga or Nekrasa on the beaches of Anapa. This Slavic tribe preserved literally everything: it did not lose anything from their fathers' legacy.¹³⁰

The basic condition for the Nekrasov Cossacks' preservation of their unique way of life was their isolation. They did not allow any strangers to enter their settlements, not even the Ottoman officials. Czajkowski himself relates that they wanted to feed him and his companions outside of their village and then make them go away. They were only invited in after one of the Nekrasov Cossacks, who had earlier served in the Russian army, recognised Czajkowski. This is a detail characteristic of Czajowski's general worldview: in the ideal world of chivalry, personal merit means more than anything else and consequently it is one's name and network of acquaintances that open the most important doors in life.¹³¹

The Nekrasov Cossacks observed strict endogamy and did not allow priests into their community.¹³² In fact, the only relevant contacts that the Nekrasov Cossacks maintained with their neighbours was the undeclared war between the Nekrasov youths and the Circassian youths inhabiting the nearby hills. The young Nekrasov Cossacks repeatedly attacked the Circassians and there were casualties on both sides, however this was of little consequence as neither group paid poll tax and thus the Ottoman state did not lose anything by their deaths.¹³³ This detail again serves to emphasise their being effectively outside the reach of the state.

This isolation was made possible by the fact that, although the Nekrasov Cossacks lived in the Ottoman Empire and served the Ottoman Emperor, they preserved full sovereignty. Theirs was an unwavering but fundamentally contractual loyalty towards the Ottoman monarch.¹³⁴ They were ruled by their own leaders, in accordance with their own laws. They even had the right to punish with death and the Ottoman officials never

¹²⁹ *Materiały*, 187, 189.

¹³⁰ *Materiały*, 189-190.

¹³¹ *Materiały*, 179-180.

¹³² *Materiały*, 185-186

¹³³ *Materiały*, 188-189.

¹³⁴ Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 81.

intervened. When the Emperor needed their service, he would simply send his *firman* stating the number of troops he required and they would provide them. In times of war, the command of the Nekrasov troops was in the hands of the otaman elected by the elders for life. His power did not extend beyond the period of military operations, but he would nevertheless command the respect of the whole community.¹³⁵ Otherwise, functionaries were elected annually, however in most cases the same persons would continue to hold their positions for many consecutive years which Czajkowski interpreted as a sign of healthy political instincts.¹³⁶ Czajkowski explicitly contrasted the chaotic Polish-Lithuanian dietines with the orderly respect for tradition held by the Nekrasov Cossacks.¹³⁷

The government of the Nekrasov Cossacks was a gerontocracy: power rested with the elders, that is all honourable males over fifty, and was based on their moral authority. For example, when the Nekrasov Cossacks were going to war, there would be a gathering and every young warrior would ask that an elder bless him. Most received the blessing, but if a youth was known for his bad habits and immorality, no elder would bestow his blessing upon him and he would depart offended. Usually, such a Cossack who had not been given the blessing would not survive the campaign.¹³⁸

They were disciplined soldiers and ‘there was no other control above them, just decency and diligence springing from the charter of their host.’ More practically, decency was maintained with corporal punishments which were meted out immediately, even for such seemingly light transgressions such as insulting someone’s mother.¹³⁹ Thanks to this they were more civil in their everyday behaviour than the old Zaporozhians and Polish-Lithuanian nobles.¹⁴⁰ Every Nekrasov Cossack knew the charter of the host by heart as, alongside the catechism, alphabet and basic maths, it was one of the subjects taught in their school. Every Sunday it was read aloud by deacons, so that nobody forgot it.¹⁴¹ A continuous civic education was an indispensable element of Czajkowski’s Cossack phalanstery.

The egalitarian gerontocracy of the Nekrasov Cossacks was reinforced by the fact that they had no land estates and no private property, except for their houses. Their main source of income was fishing expeditions, organised on the community level. Apart from the reimbursements for the fishermen participating in the enterprise, all the monetary profit was

¹³⁵ *Materiały*, 183, 192.

¹³⁶ Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 92.

¹³⁷ Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 73.

¹³⁸ *Materiały*, 184.

¹³⁹ *Materiały*, 187.

¹⁴⁰ Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 91.

¹⁴¹ *Materiały*, 188.

administered by the elders. Similarly, the ancient Zaporozhian Sich was presented by Czajkowski in his *Wernyhora* as a collectivist (*sensu lato*) society where land was allotted to *kurin's* (or regiments) each year anew (a vision kindred to, if not directly inspired by, August von Haxthausen's influential account of Russian peasants' *obshchina*).¹⁴²

Besides communism, another important factor contributing to the proper functioning of the Nekrasov Cossack Utopia was the peculiar form of Christianity they cultivated. As Old Believers they stood outside the official Orthodox Church. Czajkowski presented the Nekrasov Cossacks as profoundly pious, for example in their treatment of icons, but at the same time decidedly anticlerical. They had four churches in their village, but only one served religious purposes, the others being used as public buildings: an arsenal, treasury, archive and school. Even though they had so many ecclesiastical buildings there were no priests in their community, only low-level monks and deacons. When they needed a priest to celebrate a baptism, marriage or funeral, they brought a priest from a neighbouring village, but did not allow him to talk to anybody. After completing the celebration, he would be rewarded and escorted outside the village because they suspected every priest of being a Russian spy.¹⁴³

The lack of priests meant that they were not enlightened in the modern sense of the term: for example, they believed in and practiced magic. Nonetheless, overall, theirs was a purely Slavic and fundamentally Christian community. They epitomise all that is most noble in the Old Belief, which Czajkowski elsewhere identified as popular Puritanism, the true faith championed by the simpletons who are 'the knights of inviolability, purity and liberty of the Slavic Church and Liturgy.' In this way the Old Belief was not only the repository of the essence of Slavdom, but also of that of Christianity, because Protestantism, the only true Christianity, had its roots in the medieval heresies of the Balkanic Slavs.¹⁴⁴ This wholesale condemnation of established clerical religions, Catholicism included, could only take place after Czajkowski's conversion to Islam and his experience of being rejected by the Polish-language public and especially the devout Catholics surrounding Prince A. J. Czartoryski. However, it has its roots in his earlier thought and is actually symptomatic of his profound suspicion towards the clergy, already discernible in *Wernyhora*. There, a power-hungry Catholic priest destroys the happy relationship of otaman Nekrasa with his sweetheart and sends her to a convent, while an Orthodox priest stands behind the massacres of thousands of nobles and Jews.

¹⁴² Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 2, 159-160; for Haxthausen and *obshchina* see Frederick Starr, "August von Haxthausen and Russia," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 46, No. 107 (July 1968), 462-478.

¹⁴³ *Materiały*, 180.

¹⁴⁴ Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 8, 11, 70.

Czajkowski's descriptions of the Nekrasov Cossacks presented an ideal Slavic community, a Cossack utopia that, apparently, even he himself did not find applicable anywhere else in the foreseeable future. His Romantic visions claim to be true and have a referent in reality. In the 1840s he even planned to use Nekrasov agents and troops in his conspiracies and military expeditions in the Russian Empire. Otherwise, the communist-cum-puritan Nekrasov Cossacks of the Manyas Lake look suspiciously artificial: not only are they almost flawless, they also live in a distant locality reached only by Czajkowski and his lieutenants. Strangely enough, they disappear from the pages of history when globalised circuits of communication reach the Ottoman Empire: in *Kozaczyzna w Turcji*, Czajkowski wrote that, unfortunately, the Nekrasov Cossacks had been decimated by a plague and only few survivors took part in the Crimean War as soldiers of Czajkowski's Cossack units.¹⁴⁵ Like so many times in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, we are told that the past was recorded just before being wiped out by the inexorable advance of modernity. The reader is allowed to savour the nostalgia, this shadow of the shadow. Relics of the pure ethnic essence written down by the intervening intellectual are handed down to us, so that we can appreciate the scope of the tragic loss and construct ourselves in opposition to this magical realm as the men of the modern world.

I am not suggesting that Czajkowski simply invented the Nekrasov Cossacks. Neither did he invent his novels. Rather he composed them out of parts of available information, combining them in the manner that best suited his purposes. Earlier, I tried to show how complex the nature of Czajkowski's writings was, as they combined elements of fiction and non-fiction which affected not only their content, but also their form. In all probability, the Nekrasov Cossacks were real in some sense, but it is extremely difficult to assess to what extent Czajkowski transformed them in his writings. One thing is sure: he longed for a utopian Cossack community that he would be able to present as the perfect embodiment of the pure Slavic spirit. The Nekrasov settlement in Asia Minor served his purposes quite well, but somehow even this was too tangible and the dissonance between the reality and the representation made him uncomfortable. The Cossack earthly paradise had to be located even further away. In his memoirs, Czajkowski recounts that during his visit to the village of the Nekrasov Cossacks he learned that there was another settlement of their kin in Upper Egypt, that it was large and chivalric and that they maintained contact with it. They even introduced him to a monk that had allegedly come from the Upper Egyptian Nekrasov Cossacks. He had

¹⁴⁵ Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 82-83.

travelled seven years, seven months, seven weeks and seven days and brought some red stones from there which were used as talismans.¹⁴⁶ Here, we are fully immersed in the world of fairy tales. However, this does not mean that we can dismiss Czajkowski as a madman whose stories are not worthy of serious consideration. Indeed, the evident implausibility of his account only exposes what is true about so many other writers of his time: that they were, first and foremost, mythographers.

Actually, the Nekrasov Cossacks were especially well suited to serve as the basis for the fantasies of primordial, masculine phalansteries. This was owing to the fact that, on the one hand, they were so distant and nobody knew anything certain about them, and on the other, that they were Old Believers and had emigrated before Peter I's reconstruction of Muscovy and hence could pose as preservers of the pure Slavic spirit, untainted by the allegedly Germanic administration of the Russian Empire. Czajkowski was not the only explorer (or inventor) of the distant Nekrasov Cossack communities. As we are told by Michael Khodarkovsky, in June 1838 the Russian authorities sent a small expedition to map 'one of the most isolated corners of the Caucasus, the highlands of Free Svaneti' in Georgia. This was no ordinary enterprise: the war between the Empire and the Imamate of Shamil was all out and the group in question consisted of only a few experienced men. Among them was Semen Atarshchikov, a Cossack officer of mixed Chechen-Nogay background to whose fascinating life Michael Khodarkovsky devoted the whole book from which I take this story.

The Free Svaneti, which had been mentioned already by Strabo, was presented in the nineteenth-century sources as a mysterious land of savage but egalitarian warriors. As it was believed by the leader of the expedition, one Pozdyshev, it was here that the Nekrasov Cossacks had settled and continued to live. The expedition spent two months in the Free Svaneti and after returning to the Russian headquarters in Nal'chik Pozdyshev wrote a report including an original map of the region. According to him, the inhabitants of the Free Svaneti preserved a very old and pure form of Christianity and were indeed the Nekrasov Cossacks. It is impossible to say what the expedition actually encountered there, but the presence of Atarshchikov, a genuine Cossack himself, would suggest that they should have been capable of differentiating between Cossacks and non-Cossacks. In any case, the Russian military authorities remained rather skeptical and sent a number of exploratory expeditions to the Free Svaneti in the 1850s. They found a population that was deemed half-heathen and strikingly

¹⁴⁶ *Materiały*, 197.

sickly, apparently due to the shortage of salt in their diet. No trace of the Nekrasa Cossack presence was recorded.¹⁴⁷

The Nekrasov Cossacks are just one example of the perfect community of free males lost somewhere at the end of the world. Many searched for it, others simply tried to start it from scratch, even in the most unexpected circumstances, like for instance the radicals of the Second Aliyah who envisaged themselves as desert-dwelling Jewish Cossacks opposed to the allegedly emasculated Yiddish-speaking petty Jews of Eastern Europe.¹⁴⁸ Like it or not, the free man on horseback was one of the most powerful myths that drove European politics and expansion in the nineteenth century.

6.8. ‘Modernities’ and ‘non-modernities:’ Sarmiento and Czajkowski as theorists of void

There is a characteristic episode in Czajkowski’s *Wernyhora*. The eponymous hero tries to persuade an officer of the Commonwealth’s army to join the insurgency of the Confederation of Bar. The officer answers that while he does sympathise with the cause, he swore loyalty to the king and as a soldier cannot break his oath. Czajkowski always has a great deal to say about the necessity of being loyal and obedient to the king, especially the would-be king from the Czartoryski family. However, this is not the direction in which the Cossack prophet Wernyhora heads on this occasion: ‘...it is a shame that a Pole takes upon himself some duties alien to the Poles; in my opinion the most sacred thing is the existence and integrity of the fatherland, the rest is a trifle.’ True, the king in question is Stanislaus Augustus, whom Czajkowski believed to be a Frenchified sell-out (even though his mother was Princess Czartoryska), and the matter at stake is the defense of the fatherland. Nevertheless, I would argue that something more than just patriotism and personal hostility is discernible here. The ideal of military subordination itself is dismissed here as something ‘alien to the Poles.’¹⁴⁹ What is obvious in the modern military is of no benefit to the Polish-Lithuanian noblemen and the Cossacks because, as it is put elsewhere in the novel (but in a similar situation), they are citizen-soldiers, not mercenaries, some sort of ‘Germans on payroll.’¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Michael Khodarkovsky, *Bitter Choices: Loyalty and Betrayal in the Russian Conquest of the North Caucasus* (Ithaca, 2011), 115-117.

¹⁴⁸ Israel Bartal, “Hanukkah Cossack Style: Zaporozhian Warriors and Zionist Popular Culture (1904-1918),” in Amelia M. Glaser, ed., *Stories of Khmelnytsky: Competing Literary Legacies of the 1648 Ukrainian Cossack Uprising* (Stanford, 2015), 139-152.

¹⁴⁹ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 2, 31.

¹⁵⁰ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 234.

By and large, throughout the novel there is a notable contrast between, on the hand, the social world of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility and Cossacks and, on the other, that represented by the foreigners, especially those wearing military uniforms and, to a lesser extent, priestly cassocks. The former is characterised firstly by patriotism, understood as an attachment not only to the state but also to the civic liberties preserved in it, for example the personal inviolability of every nobleman, and secondly, by hierarchical power relations that are fundamentally personal, for example the attachment of the Cossacks to their charismatic commander or that of a Cossack servant to his noble master.¹⁵¹

The other social universe is represented only by isolated individuals: a Russian count, a Prussian military supply officer and a Russian priest. All three serve the interests of the monarchical states that are otherwise almost absent and invisible. All we see is those three relatively non-important executors of the distant, impersonal will. They are not real agents, but instruments managed from afar. The individuals in question are also expressly emasculated. The priest is located beyond the usual norm of masculinity in a way that is obvious, while the two other protagonists, the Russian count and the Prussian officer, are presented as cowardly and ridiculous. In particular, the count is a typical foppish courtier who talks all the time about his travels in Italy, though it must be noted that, overall, he is depicted with a sort of condescending sympathy which cannot be said about the Prussian protagonist.

In *Nemolaka*, Czajkowski's late novel which can be read as his political testament, the figure of the foppish Saint Petersburg courtier is reproduced as a false marquis from the Kingdom of Poland that champions the cause of the revolutionary democrats. On this occasion however, there is not even a trace of patronising sympathy.¹⁵² Apparently, what actually emasculates men and makes them ridiculous is not just the fact of serving a foreign monarch but, more generally, any questioning of 'the feudal' Polish-Lithuanian order and replacing it with modernizing projects, both monarchical bureaucratic and democratic. In glaring contrast to the traditional Cossack and Polish-Lithuanian actors, even those which are not positive, none of those modernising protagonists is a real warrior and deems his own honour to be a matter of utmost importance. Although concerns of this sort are not completely alien to them, they must give way to the designs of the distant principals, either imperialist or revolutionary.

It is the world that Czajkowski prefers that we get to know fully, as both *Wernyhora* and *Nemolaka* are set in its space. In both texts, the depiction of this space is a peculiar

¹⁵¹ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 1, 231-234.

¹⁵² Czajkowski, *Nemolaka*, 16, 27-30, 47, 65.

celebration of heterogeneity and multiculturalism. Its exceptional richness and diversity stand in stark contrast to the three isolated individuals representing the bureaucratic monarchies. In a rare case in which the readers get a glimpse of how that other world actually functions, the picture that is offered is not only discouraging but it is also suggested that the real does not exist there, as anything can be distorted, so as to fit the desired paper realities of the official reports.¹⁵³ This is an important moment to which we shall return soon.

This universe of modern state-bound societies is presented in Czajkowski's *The Cossacks in Turkey*, especially in his rendering of the Russian Empire. He presents it as the ultimate embodiment of a dehumanised modernity imposed upon the richness of the East European cultural heritage. The purest expression of the Empire is its army: composed of thousands of individuals of the most diverse religious and national background, it is perfectly obedient to the will of the Emperor. Human beings lose themselves in this collective whole and become thoughtless elements of this puppet. There is no real multiculturalism here: though the Emperor's servants have different origins and convictions, all this is obliterated by their service to him. He can do whatever he wishes, for example resettle whole nations and confessional denominations, or order thousands of disobedient Old Believer priests to marry convict women and become lay subjects useful to the state. Actually, the Emperor himself is not really a human being. Gogol' saw the Russian monarch as the human check able to correct the 'wooden' legal system and thus make it more bearable to the subjects. Czajkowski depicts the Emperor as an awe-inspiring creature of a different order: always composed, fearless and resolute, 'with a cold eye and a calm face.'¹⁵⁴ As a consequence, there is nothing human about this society, not even the caprice, cruelty or lechery of the despot at the top, just a mechanical order executing inexorably the will of the mind embodied in the Golem-like ruler.

One of the crucial characteristics of the non-traditional statehood societies as depicted by Czajkowski, is their regime of truth. In accordance with the juridical maxim *quod non est in actis non est in mundo* (in fact, formulated well before the nineteenth century), 'true' facts are only the ones that go recorded as such according to specific stylistic procedures, for example in official reports. Whether they actually correspond to reality is of secondary importance. In an episode from *Wernyhora*, to which I have already referred, the Russian officers pen a distorted account of their confrontation with a pro-Polish-Lithuanian Cossack unit, claiming that it actually never happened and the Russian casualties resulted from drowning in a lake. Similarly, the Russian Emperor Nicholas I, when informed of an anti-

¹⁵³ Czajkowski, *Wernyhora*, 2, 230.

¹⁵⁴ Czajkowski, *Kozaczyzna*, 381.

government conspiracy among the Don Cossacks, gives all the necessary orders and then burns the documentation, so that no trace is left of the true Cossack spirit. This enabled Czajkowski to explain the factual inaccuracies of his writings to himself and to others: it was all due to the deliberate falsification of history carried out by the Russian Empire. Yet, I would say that there is more to this. Czajkowski presents the dehumanised, mechanistic modernity as the antithesis of the idealised world of the personalised power relationships. One of the foundations of this sinister modernity, both as a set of practices and as an image, is the peculiar regime of truth which delimits everything that does not fit it as either backward or fiction. At the same time, he offers not only an alternative image of the messily diverse world of non-anonymous networks and hierarchies, but also a different regime of truth, one in which the protocols of fiction writing are applied to constructing narratives that are explicitly marked as trustworthy, that is, ideally belonging to the realm of non-fiction. In the reports sent to Paris in the 1840s it can be judged as a mere aberration, a peculiar stylistic abuse, but in *The Cossacks in Turkey* it is a consistent practice.

Earlier I mentioned the story of the Świdzinski siblings, a sort of fairy tale about the heroic apostles of Cossack freedom and memory. Its basic factual skeleton might have been real, but the way it has been narrated makes it look like a fable. For instance, the alleged motivations of the protagonists seem unconvincing and it would have been easily recognisable to most readers who had any knowledge of the region. It is also in this story that Czajkowski describes the dehumanised machinery of the Russian Empire and the Emperor burning the evidence of subversive activities of the Don Cossacks. One of the messages of the story is that thinking with and seeing through Romantic fiction is the most fundamental means of political resistance. One needs to dare to dream because the alleged truth of the modern world is founded upon falsification and erasure, encapsulated in the Emperor's gesture of throwing the evidence into the fireplace. A different, more gracious, diverse and tolerant world is indeed possible; a different avenue of development can still be taken. At some point Czajkowski became convinced that he encountered it in the Ottoman Balkans with its enchanting ethno-confessional mosaic and power exercised by lordly Muslim officials. In the end however, Michał Czajkowski conflated this dream with his own political enterprise. When the latter failed, he lost his faith in the former and sought only a version of mechanistic modernity that would be least odious to his sensibilities. Hence, his eventual reconciliation with the Russian government which was the closest form to idealised Slavic power and which allowed him to return to his beloved Ukraine and lead a Cossack life of sorts.

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The oppositions between ‘modernity’ and the world of free horsemen constructed by Sarmiento and Czajkowski accord in many ways and differ only in details. Both authors present the modern world as mechanistic, uniform and depersonalised. The old realities are dominated by free males on horseback who are tied to each other by hierarchical bonds of personal loyalty. The non-modern world is messy, but enables individual males to be more masculine and to cultivate their honour. The two universes are complementary, as they are indeed opposite mirrors that constitute one another. On the one hand, there is ‘the machinery of domination [...] the logical consequence of the industrial society’ that brings ‘the total schematization of men [...] the elimination of [human] qualities, [and] their conversion into functions.’ Humans are reduced to ‘mere species beings [...] mere objects of administered life.’¹⁵⁵ In opposition to that stands a vision of a non-modern open grassland, where ‘personal kinship partnerships [...] were built on mutualistic moral obligations without necessarily being symmetrical or equal.’¹⁵⁶ The pampas/steppes inhabited by the gauchos/Cossacks serve as an indispensable other against whom the modern world can be imagined and constructed. In comparison with other imaginary ‘non-modernities,’ the gaucho/Cossack myth which I have reconstructed here has the virtue of conflating the dream of a privileged relationship with the natural environment with the ideal of unbridled masculine freedom. Thus, it helps to accentuate some aspects of the ‘modernity’ under construction that could be otherwise neglected, most importantly, the oppressive quality of allegedly emasculating uniformisation.

The fact that my interpretation of the basic opposition defining Sarmiento’s and Czajkowski’s visions can be illustrated with the help of quotations from celebrated twentieth-century philosophers and one of the most imaginative twenty-first-century historians of North America attests to the fertility of those mythologies beyond the nineteenth century. I do not mean by this to dismiss the historiosophy of Adorno and Horkheimer as an unoriginal combination of clichés, or to question the factual accuracy and analytical sharpness of Pekka Hämäläinen’s contribution on similar grounds. Rather, I believe that accuracy as such is relative, gradable and conditional and that historians, as translators of inherently alien social realities, always have to employ one or another interpretive mythology to render them approximately intelligible to themselves and their interlocutors. One of the most powerful mythologies of this kind is that of the rupture between the ‘modernity’ and ‘non-modernity’ and one of its most popular variants is that which was articulated by Sarmiento, Czajkowski

¹⁵⁵ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London, 1997), 35-38.

¹⁵⁶ Pekka Hämäläinen, “What’s in a concept? The kinetic empire of the Comanches,” *History and Theory*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (February 2013), 84.

and many other kindred writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the help of free horsemen imagery.

There are also important differences between the two authors in question here that reveal their conflicting political agendas. Sarmiento emphasised the despotism of the gaucho leaders and the isolation of the pampas nuclei, suggesting that they did not form a real social tissue. Czajkowski in turn focused on the Cossack and noble leaders' being an organic part of their wildly diverse world and underlined the spontaneous enthusiasm of their followers. As for modernity, Czajkowski saw it embodied in the totalitarian-like machinery of the Russian Empire, whereas Sarmiento lauded the all-pervading capitalism of the US. For the former, the modern machine-society was inherently oppressive and alienating. For the latter, while he did acknowledge the alienation and depersonalising uniformisation of the US society, he balanced this with the appearance of the new forms of social communication and cohesion: telegraphs, press and various institutions of public utility.

One of the crucial issues here seems to be the problem of the void, that is the lack of meaningful structures and points of reference, as symbolized by the open space of the grasslands. For Sarmiento the pampas were characterised by an immense spatial void that hindered the coalescence of the segmented gaucho loyalties into a healthy social tissue. The void itself was an impediment and limited individual liberty. For Czajkowski, the void of the Cossack steppe was liberating for individual males who could inscribe in it the narratives of masculinity and honour, in other words, create their own politics and memory. Here, the void meant absence of impediments. In Czajkowski's view, the modern societies, in turn, produced a different sort of void, one that suffocated the free male spirit and impeded any autonomous establishment of meanings, as everything was controlled by a mysterious mind, be it a *nous* of a superhuman Emperor or the *logos* of capitalism. Sarmiento saw the establishment of the modern void as ultimately liberating and enabling the progress of civilisation (which for him seems to have been the legitimate *telos* of history) and he believed that ultimately modern technologies would prove capable of producing a new social network that would fill the void. For Czajkowski, all this was instead a symptom of the oppressive demolition of everything that was worthy and beautiful in society. The value signs they ascribed to the respective elements of their visions were different, but ultimately the fundamental defining opposition between the non-modern mess of personalised masculine loyalties and the uniform depersonalised machinery, remained in place.

Paradoxically, both authors would have liked to institute quite similar conservative and authoritarian regimes with strong executive prerogatives in the hands of one person, but

embedded in a wider power elite. However, there can be no doubt that they were profoundly different politicians. What separated them was the attitude to the vision of the future and the dream about the modernity that they actually shared. Sarmiento wanted his government to eradicate the vestiges of the old world of the grassland horsemen, whereas Czajkowski wanted to resurrect it. Actually, the former would have probably found much more in common with the exile Polish-Lithuanian democrats whom the latter so detested, even though their insistence on the necessity of giving political power to the masses was nowhere close to Sarmiento's cherished enlightened authoritarianism of Chile and his ruthless treatment of the anti-porteño opposition in Argentina.

The dreams driving Sarmiento's and Czajkowski's politics were very close, if not identical but, at the same time, they were essentially contradictory. They both believed in the opposition between the 'non-modernity' of robustly masculine pampas/steppe and the feminized modernity of the cities (though Sarmiento argued for a possibility of a new masculinity), but they valued it differently. It could be said that they shared in the same modernity-building mythology, but located themselves differently within it. Not only does this accentuate the insufficiency of labels such as conservative or authoritarian but, more importantly, it also shows that ideological choices derived from dreams of adventure and self-fulfilment, which were coming into shape as mythologies of masculinity. The latter were the true defining principle of revolutionary politics. Focusing on them allows us to reconstruct individual preferences and differentiate accurately between nineteenth-century political hues.

7. The Democrats and their Cossacks in Vormärz Galicia

7.1. Nations or ideologies?

In 1856, Colonel Bartolomé Mitre (within ten years to become the first president of reunited Argentina) published the original version of his *Historia de Belgrano y de la independencia argentina*, a work that he went on to edit and republish several times. Mitre was one of the intellectual and political leaders of the liberal establishment that crystallised in Argentina after the battle of Caseros in February 1852. That elite was never politically homogeneous, indeed, during most of the 1850s Argentina was divided between two competing organisms, the Argentine Confederation and the State of Buenos Aires, and in 1856, the same year that the first edition of *Historia de Belgrano* was published, none other than Mitre raided the Confederation's territory in an act of undeclared hostility.

Arguably, the main cement of both groups was the vilification of the fallen Buenos Aires strongman, Juan Manuel de Rosas. Yet, even that practice was not adhered to by all, not least because several participants of the liberal establishment had been closely involved with the Rosas regime before making a smooth political transition into the new liberal elite. However, in the second half of the nineteenth century, those who were not convinced that Rosas had been a one-dimensional, retrograde butcher would simply refrain from public arguments. The predominant line of thinking was that after the liberatory war of 1852, the Argentines were on a sure path to becoming a modern, democratic nation and that nothing could halt this development because it had been foreordained by the laws of history and only temporarily hindered by the Mulatto tyrant, as Rosas was referred to by his detractors (despite being blonde and blue-eyed).¹

What was needed was some sort of justification for this faith. With his *Historia de Belgrano* Mitre meant to offer an explanation for his nationalist beliefs, but in 1856 he was only capable of sanctifying an Enlightenment hero, an illustrious representative of the cosmopolitan elite of the River Plate's emporium. Thanks to their access to the intellectual achievements of the Atlantic world, so the story went, the educated men of Buenos Aires were able (but not necessarily predestined) to throw away the Spanish shackles and introduce their land into the family of Western nations. Though such a presentation served well to shape the liberal pantheon of founding fathers, it was not sufficient to explain why Argentina *had* to become a successful, modern nation. If all that was needed was progress and modernity,

¹ Raúl O. Fradkin and Jorge Gelman, *Juan Manuel de Rosas. La construcción de un liderazgo político* (Buenos Aires 2015), 300.

would it not be more logical to let the British conquer the country in 1806 and implement the most advanced devices brought directly from the very heart of civilisation?

The explanation, possibly stolen from the historian Vicente Fidel López, was added by Mitre only in the third edition of 1876 and took the form of an introductory chapter titled ‘La sociabilidad argentina’ (‘Argentine Sociability’).² In short, Mitre argued that Argentina was a national organism, a unity shaped primarily by the unchangeable geographical conditions and contingent population patterns at the time of the Spanish arrival. In Bolivia and Peru the Spaniards had simply imposed yet another layer onto the stratified society inherited from the Inca Empire. Thus, they had created a sort of racial feudalism in which the bulk of the society was formed by Indian subalterns, obliged to work on the estates and in the mines of the white American Spaniards. In Chile, exceptionally favourable natural conditions and the relative security offered by the curtain wall of the Andes enabled the flourishing of agriculture. Though it is not mentioned in Mitre’s text, one could also add to this list the plantation economy of Brazil with its use of Black slaves’ labour. None of this happened in the River Plate area, where, according to Mitre, there had been no stratified, sedentary societies before the arrival of the Spaniards and, despite the region’s name, no silver and gold. Thanks to these features the conquest was very slow and bloodless (at least, in comparison to what had happened in Mexico and Peru) and there emerged ‘a sort of primitive equality that modified the feudal system of the colony. [...] As in reality there were no rich or poor, everybody being more or less poor, the result was a sort of equality or social balance that would very early contain the germs of a free society, in the sense of human spontaneity.’³ As a consequence, Buenos Aires and its surroundings were to remain a poor backwater for a long while.

The settlers that ended up in this region came from Northern Spain and so they were racially superior to the Southern Spanish conquerors that flooded Peru. Yet, the poor conditions in the River Plate precluded the newcomers from isolating themselves, either spatially or socially, from the native inhabitants of the land. ‘[S]ons of Spaniards and indigenous women were considered Spaniards,’ as a result of which there emerged a new race that was manly and enterprising, but also tainted by ‘a stamp of savage independence.’⁴

No less important than the racial and settlement patterns was the geography itself. On the one hand, the homogeneity of the Pampas environment and the unquestionable centrality

² Elías José Palti, “La historia de Belgrano de Mitre y la problemática concepción de un pasado nacional,” *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana „Dr Emilio Ravignani”*, 3rd series, No. 21, 1st semester 2000, 75-84.

³ Bartolomé Mitre, *Historia de Belgrano o de la independencia argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1887), vol. 1, 10-11.

⁴ Ibid.

of the Rio de la Plata's estuary unified the region and presaged the Unitarian government of the future. On the other, the immensity of the plains, the pastoral economy practiced there, and the constant threat from the unassimilated *indios salvajes* only strengthened the individualism of its inhabitants and their liking for resolute, charismatic leaders, the *caudillos*. The budding nation was hardworking, bellicose and strongly attached to the autonomous municipal institutions brought from the Iberian Peninsula. It formed 'a rudimentary democracy,' or a 'coarse embryo of the municipal republic.'⁵

In this short fragment Mitre sketched a vision that was by no means original. Putting aside the issue of his plagiarism from López, one can see its strong relation to earlier published works, not least those by Sarmiento. In this picture, Argentina was a steppe frontier between the realm of nomadic savages and that of sedentary, white Europeans. It was a primitive, coarse world in which the noble, north European element was polluted with inferior, Indian elements. But it was precisely its primitiveness, imperfection and impurity that determined its unique outlook and eventually put it on the track of democracy.

We could find many parallels to this story all around the world, not least in the previous chapters of this thesis, for instance in Nikolai Gogol's description of the Cossacks' emergence on the fringe of Christendom. However, what is so important in Mitre's case is that he manifestly combines an explanation of his nation's origins and legitimacy with a promotion of one political ideology, namely democracy. According to Mitre, Argentina and democracy are inseparable and the reason for this is that the River Plate was born as a grassland frontier of European municipal culture. A strikingly similar amalgamation of nation-building and democratic ideals can be found in the work of early Ukrainian activists in the Russian Empire. One less known case has been brought out by Johannes Remy in a new monograph: in a Ukrainian-language primer published in 1862, Leonid Iashchenko claimed that in the past all Ukrainians had been self-governing Cossacks and that freedom and democracy had been the fundamental principles of their body politic.⁶ Iashchenko was involved in the clandestine activities of the first Land and Liberty, but his views were typical of wider sectors of Ukrainian nationalists of his time, not only of the limited milieu of revolutionary populists.

In this chapter I shall focus on how the nineteenth-century visions of manly frontiersmen riding astride the divide between the settled agriculturalists and the steppe

⁵ Mitre, *Historia de Belgrano*, 13-14.

⁶ Johannes Remy, *Brothers or Enemies? Ukrainian National Movement and Russia: 1840s-1870s* (Toronto, 2016), 82.

nomads were employed by the promoters of democracy. However, this time I will not focus on the Province of Buenos Aires or the Ukrainian lands of the Russian Empire, as has been the case in my earlier chapters, but on the Austrian Crownland of Galicia and Lodomeria. I choose this peculiar country, to which I have not paid much attention so far, because throughout the nineteenth century it was an important venue of Polish-language culture and a hotbed of Polish-Lithuanian democratic conspiracies in the 1830s and 1840s.⁷ The latter is especially relevant because the most important claim of this chapter is that in Galicia the Cossack symbols were associated, first and foremost, with visions of violent democratic revolution and so the nation builders that happened not to be democrats had serious difficulties in adopting them as a positive reference. Another curious aspect of the Galician experience is that it was here that Ruthenian nation building took off in the first half of the nineteenth century, engendering a national community that would eventually become a pillar of the wider Ukrainian nation. Consequently, Galicia forms a field of struggle in which various political projects coexisted and competed, eventually enabling the emergence of several mutually exclusive national identifications (most importantly, the Polish and Ruthenian-Ukrainian ones), complemented by their allegiance to the Austrian state. Thus, this country seems to be exceptionally well suited for studying the ways in which nationalisms react with political ideologies of other sorts, most importantly revolutionary democracy.

Still, it must not be forgotten that Galicia itself should not be taken for granted: indeed, the very importance of the Cossack figures in its Polish-language literature showcases the extent to which it was intellectually integrated with other Polish-Lithuanian lands and points to the artificiality of studying it as a detached area. What I am doing here can be seen as a postmortem reification of Galician literature. What is more, it is an exercise in working outside the accepted canon, as most authors with whom I deal with here are obscure writers universally perceived as being of limited relevance for the development of national literature, be it Polish, Ukrainian, Austrian or any other. I believe that such texts are important elements of the bigger picture. For a historian, they are invaluable documents of social imaginations of the past, whereas for a literary scholar they form the indispensable, explanatory context for recognised, literary masterpieces.⁸

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⁷ Stefan Kieniewicz, *Konspiracje galicyjskie 1831-1845* (Warsaw, 1950).

⁸ Cf. George Grabowicz, *The History and Myth of the Cossack Ukraine in Polish and Russian Romantic Literature: A Thesis Presented by George Gregory Grabowicz to The Department of Comparative Literature in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Subject of Comparative Literature, Harvard University* (Cambridge, MA, 1975), iv.

The nation-building story sketched by Mitre makes evident the extent to which nations are nothing more than political ideologies, or rather communities of believers of competing political ideologies. This observation accords with the definition of the nation offered by Michał Łuczewski in his study of collective identifications in the Western Galician village of Żmiąca. Łuczewski defines the nation as a movement of national ideologues, individuals who have internalised a nation-building ideology, use it as their self-identification and want to build a community with other individuals whom they consider part of their nation. As Łuczewski shows in his book, an individual can adhere to more than one competing ideology (for instance, to both an Austrian and a Polish nation) and deploy them for different purposes in different contexts.⁹ Most importantly, no nation ever forms a ‘happy family,’ there is almost always more than one ideological offer on the table, hence ‘we should not speak so much about the community of national ideologues and/or the Polish nation but about communities of national ideologues and about Polish nations.’¹⁰

While drawing heavily on Łuczewski’s case study and resulting theoretical insights, I use a definition of nation that is narrower than his. I believe that there do exist some forms of collective political bonding: not nations, but something very similar to them. As I understand it, nation-building ideologies have specific, historically conditioned contents. First of all, nations are represented as encompassing the whole social ladder, the complete society, there being allegedly a special, horizontal bond uniting all the participants. Secondly, in the words of Caspar Hirschi, nations are believed to be ‘not subordinate (but neither necessarily superior) to any other community.’¹¹ Thirdly, nations are envisaged as peers of and competing with other nations (a point made by both Hirschi and Kelles-Krauz).¹² Lastly, nations are usually legitimised by historical arguments, hence depicted as long-term phenomena. Often, these legitimising arguments are about kinship, but they can also refer to a groundbreaking event that led to the establishment of a national community, such as a baptism, a war of independence, an overseas voyage, or a pact between outlaws and runaway slaves, as had been the case with the ancient city-state that until recently was the model for all the European nations.

⁹ Michał Łuczewski, *Odwieczny naród: Polak i katolik w Żmiącej* (Toruń, 2012), 207-323.

¹⁰ Łuczewski, *Odwieczny naród*, 626.

¹¹ Caspar Hirschi, *The Origins of Nationalism: An Alternative History from Ancient Rome to Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 2011), 47.

¹² Timothy Snyder, „Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz (1872-1905): A pioneering scholar of modern nationalism,” *Nations and Nationalism* 3 (2), 1997, 242.

The above clarification does not annul Łuczewski's central insight that nations are communities of national ideologues and that the study of nation building should focus on the ways in which plural nation-building ideologies are internalised as national identities and externalised as national discourses. In other words, it should study how they function as rival political ideologies. In this chapter I am going to do precisely this. The grassland frontier and its manly, individualist inhabitants reconcile well with the democratic ideals of the earlier nineteenth century. Whatever one's true political intent, using such imagery as a foundation of nation-building ideology will likely result in formulating the vision of a democratic and egalitarian national community. I will examine how the figure of the Cossack was employed by various Polish-language authors in *Vormärz* Galicia to make competing political claims. In other words, I will see how this figure functioned as a vessel for ideologies, most importantly revolutionary democracy, but also liberalism (which I present as the former's key rival). I will also show how these partisan uses of the Cossacks played into the logic of ongoing nation building, on the one hand, and the efforts at fashioning the individual selves of historical actors, on the other.

The opposition between liberalism and democracy is one of the crucial questions identified in the *Vormärz* sources studied in this chapter, but it is not necessarily evident and commonsensical nowadays, so a few words must be devoted to it. The two ideologies were closely related and shared a good deal of their political lexicons. After 1830 this proximity only exacerbated the rivalry between their adherents who had to compete with each other for control over the same words and concepts. The democrats sought to establish a society in which all adult males would be empowered equal citizens. The way to achieve it was a violent revolution, which entailed not only legal-political but also radical socio-economic changes. In turn, post-1830 liberalism was a peculiarly elitist ideology. While expressly opposed to hereditary noble privilege and the authoritarianism of non-elected state officials, it also resolutely rejected the democratic empowerment of the masses. For liberals, the helm of society should remain with its natural leaders: enlightened and economically independent males, allegedly always ready to welcome qualified newcomers. Though sharply delimited by economic and educational criteria, this pool of idealised bourgeois citizens was at the same time believed to embody the abstract principle of popular sovereignty and universal humanist values. Unsurprisingly, the protection of private property became the single most important

concern of such liberals.¹³ It was this form of liberalism that shaped Sarmiento's optimist progressivism with his characteristic hostility towards the racially impure, popular classes.

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In the next two sections of this chapter I will introduce the contexts in which I read the Galician representations of the Cossacks. First, I will describe how the Cossacks' struggles against the Polish-Lithuanian nobles were associated in the Polish-language culture with the social revolution. Then, I will devote some attention to Eastern Galicia itself and the meanings that the Cossacks had for its inhabitants.

The three sections that follow are devoted to the reconstruction of political messages with which the Polish-language Galician authors endowed their Cossack-themed works. I present this evidence in a chronological order starting with two plays that are more on the side of Enlightenment Sentimentalism and conservative reformism, but which nonetheless herald the advance of new literary tastes and political visions. The next section deals with texts released in the late 1820s, when Romanticism gained the upper hand, but the standardised set of Romantic Cossack tropes was still in the making. Especially interesting is Michał Suchorowski's vaudeville which conveys the rift between the liberal and democratic visions of popular empowerment. Then, I come to the pieces written after the Münchengrätz Convention of 1833, a period in which hostility escalated between the Austrian government and the democratic underground. It was also at this time that Romanticism became the order of the day and started to transform itself into a system of widely accepted, hegemonic schemas.

I close the chapter with a reconsideration of the attitude of Ruthenian nation builders towards the literary representations of Cossacks in the 1830s and 1840s. This section starts with a concise presentation of the Ruthenian history of Galicia and then I analyse the Ruthenian Trinity's treatment of the Cossacks. I focus my attention on the empowering concept of Ruthenian Glory (*rus'ka slava*) spelled out by Markiiian Shashkevych.

In conclusion I offer some thoughts on the relationship between the deployment of Polish-Lithuanian and Ruthenian national identifications and the competing ideological offers of liberalism and revolutionary democracy.

¹³ Pieter Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848-1914* (Ann Arbor, 1996), 1-20, 49-68, 267-272; Jeremy D. Popkin, *Press, Revolution and Social Identities in France, 1830-1835* (University Park, 2002), 54-61, 68-71, 83-99.

7.2. The Polish-Lithuanian democrats and their Cossacks

In November 1835, Michał Czajkowski, the protagonist of my previous chapter, took part in the European Historical Congress organised by the French Historical Institute. The aim of this convention was to determine the weight of each nation's contribution to the common treasury of European culture. Czajkowski who came from the Volhynia, a region which had only tenuous Cossack credentials, was presented as a Cossack (*un Cosaque*) to representatives of other European nationalities (English, Germans, Swiss, Belgians, Spaniards, Portuguese, Greeks, Swedes, Russians, Turks and a Pole. What is more, he gave a talk in French in which he argued that his compatriots, the Cossacks, were not savages and barbarians, but instead contributed substantially to the development of literature of the North Slavic nations. According to him, until very late, Poland, 'the mother of the Cossack nation,' imitated foreign literatures, whereas the Cossacks had long before had their own national poetry. It was only when Józef Bohdan Zaleski 'opened the resources of Cossack poetry' that Polish literature became truly national (this claim he probably borrowed from Wacław Michał Zaleski, more of whom later). It is not clear whether Czajkowski regarded the Cossacks as a nation separate from the Polish or as a branch of a wider all-Polish or rather all-Polish-Lithuanian community. What is clear, however, is that he considered the Cossacks to be the depositaries of the pure national essence and that he thought that their contribution to East European culture to be not only crucial, but superior to all else, including the poetry of the Polish-language Renaissance on which most Polish-Lithuanian intellectuals prided themselves.¹⁴

Not surprisingly, Czajkowski's extravagant claims were immediately corrected, albeit in a friendly manner, by another participant of the Congress, Jan Czyński, a radical democrat and novelist from Warsaw.¹⁵ Czyński had argued earlier that the Zaporozhian Cossacks had originally been separate from Poland-Lithuania and as such they had created one of the most perfect republics. He also presented their wars against the Polish-Lithuanian nobles as legitimate vindications of their liberties. Now, however, he protested against the injustice done by Czajkowski to Polish-language culture. He argued that the Polonophone peasants produced a valuable popular culture, but it was suffocated by the Westernised nobility because the enserfed peasants did not enjoy the freedom of the Cossacks. As a result, in a

¹⁴ Andrzej Fabianowski, "Rola Kozaczyzny w koncepcjach politycznych Michała Czajkowskiego," in Stanisław Makowski et al. (eds), „Szkoła ukraińska” w romantyzmie polskim: Szkice polsko-ukraińskie (Warsaw 2012), 423-425.

¹⁵ For Czyński see Adam Gałkowski, *Polski patriota - obywatel Europy: rzecz o Janie Czyńskim (1801-1867)* (Warsaw, 2004).

revised version of his contribution published in the *Revue du Nord*, Czajkowski toned down his argument, so as to make it more appreciative of Polish-language literature.¹⁶

The importance of this episode is manifold. First of all, it shows that for many of the Polish-Lithuanian revolutionary democrats, pure popular culture was by definition more valuable than the learned one. This put them in an awkward position as champions of the one East European nation which gloried itself with having the oldest, continuous, Western-style elite literature in the vernacular. Secondly, it shows that the Zaporozhian Cossacks and their anti-noble wars of the seventeenth-century were part of the democratic imagination in former Poland-Lithuania. It seems that the fact that they had not been ethnically Polish (that is, Polonophone and Latin Catholic) did not bother anybody, as Poland-Lithuania was an especially diverse and inclusive project. Thirdly, it reveals a good deal about Michał Czajkowski himself and his ability to play with national identifications.

In fact, the Cossacks were the most important element of the way in which the Polish-Lithuanian noble opinion as a whole, not only the revolutionary democrats, imagined the violent social revolution. It was the references to the Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising of mid-seventeenth century and the Haidamak unrest of 1768 that best served to articulate the fear of peasantry inherent in Polish-language culture. Indeed, those two *lieux de mémoire* were seen as the Polish-Lithuanian counterparts of what happened in France at the end of the eighteenth century. The origins of this signification go back precisely to the ominous events of 1789/1790 when the memory of *koliivshchyna* mingled with the fear of Russian intervention and the worrying news of the French Revolution.

This basic consensus about Cossacks/Haidamaks as a figure of revolution traversed ideological divisions. A note on the *kozachok* dance published in a Lviv calendar for 1822 stated that the Cossacks were melancholic robbers characterised by their '[l]icentiousness, unbridled freedom, [and] tender love.'¹⁷ Writing in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, the moderate conservative Kajetan Koźmian, perhaps the greatest writer of late Classicism, could not come up with a better warning for the short-sighted, exploitative landowners than the Khmel'nyts'kyi Uprising (eventually, on the advice of his friend he

¹⁶ The unusual episode is recounted by Jadwiga Chudzikowska, *Dziwne życie Sadyka Paszy: o Michale Czajkowskim* (Łódź, 1982), 98-101.

¹⁷ *Pielgrzym lwowski podług nadpoziomu lwowskiego ułożony kalendarz na rok po narodzeniu Chystusa Pana 1822* (Lviv, 1821), 92. I translate 'swawola' as 'licentiousness' and 'wyuzdany' as 'unbridled.' Just like the English 'licentious,' 'swawola' and 'wyuzdany' have a sexual undertone in present-day Polish, but in the early modern period they belonged more with the political vocabulary and were used to describe anarchy (Latin: *licentia*). It is difficult to assess which associations, sexual or political, prevailed in the early nineteenth century.

discarded the topic of the Cossack rebellion as too painful and subversive).¹⁸ In a similar vein, the radical conservative and Romantic Count Zygmunt Krasiński imagined the approaching revolution (the inevitability of which he did not doubt) as an apocalyptic re-enactment of the 1768 unrest. 1648 and 1768 were to retain this function until the Western Galician Jacquerie of 1846. Even then, a good deal of the Polish-language public was deeply surprised that the Ruthenian peasants of Eastern Galicia remained calm. The prevalent stereotypes suggested that, due to their being Eastern Christians (read: inferior) and ethnically kindred to the rebellious Cossacks, it was they who should have been slaughtering the noble-born landowners. Nobody expected anything of the kind from the Polish-speaking Latin Catholics who actually did so.

No less important were the visions of the revolutionary democrats themselves. Jan Czyński, who had argued with Czajkowski in Paris, published two French-language novels, *Le Kosake* (Paris, 1836) and *Stenko le Rebelle* (Paris, 1837), in which he depicted the Cossack rebellions as examples of early modern struggle for freedom and justice. An even more radical activist, Tadeusz Krępowiecki, later one of the founders of the utopian socialist Gromady Ludu Polskiego (Communes of the Polish People), argued in 1832 that it was Catholicism that had brought ‘slavery’ to the Lithuanian and Ruthenian lands. The seventeenth-century Cossack rebellions were a justified reaction of ‘the courageous people of Ukraine.’ According to Krępowiecki, the early Cossack leaders Nalyvaiko and Pavliuk, who had been executed by the Polish-Lithuanian noble authorities, were ‘new Spartacuses’ rightly avenged by the awe-inspiring Khmel’nyts’kyi.¹⁹

For the purposes of this chapter the most important case is Seweryn Goszczyński, a lifelong democratic conspirator, one of the pillars of the so-called Ukrainian school of Polish-language Romanticism and a resident of Galicia in the early 1830s. He was convinced that, thanks to the living memory of the Cossack past, the Ruthenian peasants would embrace revolutionary propaganda ‘more sincerely’ than their Polish-speaking, Latin Catholic counterparts.²⁰ In his epic poem *Zamek kaniowski* (*The Castle of Kaniv*) he depicted a rebellious Haidamak mob pillaging a noble household. This was how he imagined the coming popular revolution: as an infernal rebellion of bloodthirsty, frenzied subalterns. The thrust of this vision was by no means optimistic. Rather, it was a warning similar to that of Koźmian’s

¹⁸ Kajetan Koźmian, *Ziemiaństwo polskie: Rękopiśmienna wersja poematu w pięciu pieśniach*, ed. by Piotr Żbikowski (Cracow, 2000), 20-21, 60-70, 93-98.

¹⁹ Quoted after Piotr Kuligowski, “«Socjalizm» powstańców listopadowych: rzecz o Gromadach Ludu Polskiego,” *Nowy Obywatel*, No. 19 (70), Spring 2016, 96.

²⁰ Andriy Zayarnyuk, *Framing the Ukrainian Peasantry in Habsburg Galicia, 1846-1914* (Edmonton, 2013), 29.

(of course there are several other keys with which to interpret Goszczyński's masterpiece, the political is by far not the most important one).²¹

The sinister mood in which Goszczyński painted his Haidamaks reveals the contradiction inherent in the situation of the Polish-Lithuanian democratic revolutionaries. Although they strove to build a new political order in which the power would be given to the people (thus, mostly the peasants), they were recruited almost exclusively from the nobility and communicated best with the members of this estate. More often than not, the real-life commoners were no allies for them, but in fact yet another hurdle to overcome. We should not imagine the conspirators as a band of blasé aristocrats – the Polish-Lithuanian nobility was so numerous and economically stratified that most noble-born conspirators were indeed of very low standing.²² For instance, Goszczyński himself came from a poor and dysfunctional family beset by alcoholism.²³ Yet, this low status did not diminish the conflicted nature of the nobility's relationship with the commoners. Actually, the poorest and lowliest nobles were the ones that were most likely to enter into open hostilities with the peasants, as it was they who had to perform the most onerous roles of estate supervisors, messengers, low-level bureaucrats or accountants. Hence, the internal contradictions of the Polish-Lithuanian democratic ideology as expressed, for instance, by the mainstream emigre Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Polskie (Polish Democratic Association), and emigre the resulting ambiguities in the democrats' attitude towards the Cossack myth. There was only one political organisation that was ready to accept the Cossack/Haidamak violence as a symbol of popular liberation: the Gromady Ludu Polskiego (Communes of the Polish People). Their branch based on the island of Jersey even adopted the Ukrainian town of Uman' (Polish: Humań) as its official name to celebrate the Ukrainian peasantry's struggle for freedom (in 1768 in Uman' the Haidamaks headed by the Cossack commanders Ivan Gonta and Maksym Zalizniak slaughtered thousands of nobles and Jews).²⁴ Yet, the GLP was the most extraordinary organisation combining utopian socialism with religious mysticism and

²¹ Maria Janion, *Gorączka romantyczna* (Gdańsk, 2007), 279-312, 349-356; Halina Krukowska, "«Nocna strona» romantyzmu," in Maria Żmigrodzka, ed., *Problemy polskiego romantyzmu. Seria druga* (Wrocław, 1974), 193-227; Ryszard Przybylski, "Świat jako maszyna piekielna (O Zamku kaniowskim Seweryna Goszczyńskiego)," in Makowski et al., *Szkola ukraińska*, 95-115; Grabowicz, *History and Myth*, 99-119.

²² For an excellent, concise presentation of the nobiliary democratic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century see Hipolit Grynwaser, *Demokracja szlachecka* (Warsaw 1948).

²³ For Goszczyński's biography see Maria Żmigrodzka, *Seweryn Goszczyński* (Warsaw 1952).

²⁴ "List gromady Humań do *Nowej Polski*," in Helena Temkinowa, ed., *Lud polski: wybór dokumentów* (Warsaw, 1957), 102-104; for an overview of Polish-Lithuanian democratic thought of the 1830s and 1840s see Rett Ludwikowski, *Główne nurty polskiej myśli politycznej 1815-1890* (Warsaw, 1982), 251-291.

boasting an unusually high percentage of non-noble members (though all its leaders were noble-born).

7.3. No country for Cossacks?

Nowadays Lviv is the epitome of the Polish *Kresy*, the mythicised Eastern Borderlands whence all grandmas come from (of course, only in the public imagination). The *Kresy* encompass everything that can be longed for as exotic and irretrievably lost about the Polish past, be it the pagan worshipers of the Lithuanian forests, the Ukrainian steppes roamed by manly Cossacks and Tatars, or the Viennese chic of Eastern Galician cafes. This is not the place to talk about the *Kresy* as such in detail. I recall them in order to illustrate what eighteenth and nineteenth-century Lviv was not: it was not part of the *Kresy*. The myth of the *Kresy* as we know it, bucolic, colourful, affluent, free and heroic, is a product of the twentieth century.²⁵

Of course, the very word *kresy* was known and used before the twentieth century, but it simply meant any borderland or frontier area. For instance, when in 1860 a Lviv-based writer, Jan Zachariasiewicz published the novel *Na kresach (In the Borderland)*,²⁶ he did not mean Eastern Galicia, but the Prussian *Provinz Posen*, some 630 km northwest from Lviv, where the Polish peasantry had resisted the Germanisation efforts of the government. From the vantage point of Lviv this westernmost region of the former Commonwealth was a distant and exotic *limes* of Polishness. Twenty-six years later another work was published in Lviv with a similar title: *Na kresach: opowiadanie historyczne z XVIII wieku*.²⁷ It was a historical novel by a well-known intellectual and lifelong critic of the Ukrainian national movement, Franciszek Rawita Gawroński (students of nineteenth-century Ukraine who work at the National Library in Warsaw often encounter the ex-libris of his private book collection). In contrast to Zachariasiewicz's novel, the setting of Gawroński's book matched the present-day understanding of *Kresy*, as it took place near the city of Cherkasy on the banks of the Dnieper, some 650 km east from Lviv. But we should not be deluded: what is conflated nowadays by an amorphous nostalgia was not seen so by the people of the nineteenth century. *Na kresach*, the first part of Gawroński's title, was meant to evoke the exoticism of a distant borderland, not unlike that of the *Provinz Posen*, but this time in the east. The fact that the reading public

²⁵ For an exhaustive treatment of the concept of *Kresy* see Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski, "Kresy – dzieje pewnego pojęcia," *Teologia Polityczna*, Vol. 8 (2015), 161-182.

²⁶ Jan Zachariasiewicz, *Na kresach: powieść z naszych czasów* (Lviv, 1860).

²⁷ Franciszek Gawroński, *Na kresach: opowiadanie historyczne z XVIII wieku* (Lviv, 1886).

of Lviv was treated to tasty stories from the eastern *kresy* shows that it did not see itself as being part of that environment.

Eastern Galicia was indeed a region in which more than one language was spoken and more than one faith was professed, but this does not mean that it was seen by its inhabitants as a borderland. Rather, they perceived it as a diverse whole, one of the core regions of their national space (the notable exception would be the German and Czech-speaking Austrian officials and professionals who indeed did imagine Galicia as a periphery). Frontiers and borderlands were elsewhere and so were the paragons of the frontier realities: the Cossacks. Or rather: the real Cossacks, because when it comes to the realm of representations the Cossacks prove a persistent presence in the Galician public sphere, at least from the 1820s on. This was in part an element of a wider trend, as anywhere else where Polish was spoken and written there was no lack of figures of Cossacks and Haidamaks. However, although Galicia could not boast any real Cossacks of its own, it did have good reasons to be more concerned about them than, say, the above-mentioned *Provinz Posen*. First of all, most Galicians considered themselves Ruthenians (no matter whether they understood this label to denote a separate nationality itself or a ‘branch’ of the Austrian, Polish or Russian one). As Ruthenians they could have felt a sort of kinship with the Zaporozhian Cossacks. Secondly, because of their location in the relative vicinity of the Cossack-inhabited areas and because there had been some Cossack incursions in the would-be Eastern Galicia, they were remembered as one of the threatening neighbours. This sense of hostility was further reinforced in the Church’s official discourse by the confessional rift: all Galician Ruthenians were Greek Catholics, whereas the Cossacks were Orthodox. In other words, for Eastern Galicians, especially the elite, the Cossacks were by no means ‘us,’ but at the same time they were not as distant and abstract as for, say, the inhabitants of Cracow, Warsaw or Poznań. They were both kindred and alien, depending on the aspects that were emphasised.

The above is also true for the Eastern Galician subalterns, by which I mean the Greek Catholic peasants, townlet burghers, lower clergy, village artisans and scribes, and to some extent also the petty nobility. However, the figure of the Cossack appealed to those relatively powerless Ruthenians as a symbol of masculine freedom and a promise of individual ascent and liberation. This is attested to, for instance, by the presence of several Cossack-themed pieces in Waclaw Zaleski’s collection of Galician folk songs (both Polish and Ruthenian-

language).²⁸ Only a few observations on them as a document of Eastern Galician popular culture will be offered here and later more will be said on Zaleski's work as a product of Romanticism. For one, it must not be overlooked that the pieces dealing with the Cossacks are only a tiny fraction of that hefty volume. This relative dearth cannot be blamed on Zaleski's neglect, as he was especially fond of Ruthenian culture and a sort of Cossackophile himself, so it can be assumed that he made every possible effort to obtain as many Galician Cossack items as possible and that indeed they might even be overrepresented in his selection. For instance, he could have chosen to include songs that had originated elsewhere in the Ruthenian-speaking lands and that had arrived in Galicia thanks to the shared language and were performed only very rarely. The small number of Cossack pieces suggests that the motif was marginal in that province. Still, it makes sense to take a cursory look at the Cossack-related content in the Eastern Galician folk songs registered by Zaleski.

One characteristic element is the fact that the pieces in this collection do not necessarily present the Cossacks as 'us,' but rather as attractive and distant others: they can be Muscovite soldiers rushing through the Commonwealth and fighting the noble insurgents or historical figures separated not only by time, but also space.²⁹ In other cases, however, the Cossacks are not presented as so clearly separated and different from the songs' audience.

The Cossack existence in the songs is their freedom. Freedom has some attractive aspects for corvée-bound peasants: the Cossack is free to move, he possesses such valuable items as a saddle horse and silver coins, girls are not indifferent to his allure and he can plunder Jews and have as much fun in inns as he wishes.³⁰ However, there are also darker sides to this Cossack freedom. Violence is inextricable from Cossack liberty and the songs not always condone it.³¹ More importantly, there is something profoundly tragic about the existence of such a free individual. He spends much time in faraway countries for which he and his nearest and dearest suffer. Sometimes he even has to die there and it is not unlikely that his life is ends in an unexpected and abrupt way or, worse, he ends up a slave or prisoner.³²

To sum up, it can be said that the genuine popular interest in the Cossacks seems to have been minimal in the Eastern Galicia of the earlier nineteenth century. The scarce

²⁸ Waław z Oleska [Waław Zaleski], *Pieśni polskie i ruskie ludu galicyjskiego* (Lviv, 1833). Other rare examples of Galician Ruthenian folk songs about the Cossacks can be found in *Pielgrzym lwowski*, 92-95 and Mykhailo Zubryts'kyi, *Zibrani tvory i materialy v tr'okh tomakh: Tom 1: Naukovi pratsi* (Lviv, 2013), 332-333.

²⁹ Zaleski, *Pieśni*, 479-482, 485-486.

³⁰ Zaleski, *Pieśni*, 202-203, 484-486, 498.

³¹ Zaleski, *Pieśni*, 485-486, 503-504.

³² Zaleski, *Pieśni*, 488, 495-496, 498.

representations that we possess were by no means unanimously positive and optimistic. Clearly, the peasant-dominated culture of Eastern Galician subalterns revolved around other topics and found different ways to express its individual and political aspirations. Thus, it can be safely stated that, before the arrival of Romanticism, the figure of Cossack was a reference that was meaningful, but marginal, for both the elite and subaltern Galicians in understanding their place in the world. The wide spread of Cossack themes in Galicia from the 1820s onwards must be attributed to the spread of Europe-wide trends that have more to do with modern print culture than the oral folk heritage with which they wish to disguise themselves.

It is then to the elite Polish-language culture of the Crownland that we must turn our attention. The most important function that the figures of Cossacks fulfilled in this literature was to symbolise violent social revolution. This will be clearly visible, among others, in the works of Tymon Zaborowski and Michał Suchorowski analysed in this chapter. Secondly, the Cossack could be also an embodiment of rebellious individualism and tragic social alienation of Romantic heroes, as exemplified by the writings of Józef Bohdan Zaleski and Lucjan Siemieński. Also this function has an easily discernible political dimension, as it helped the sympathisers of revolutionary democracy to construct a new subversive selfhood for themselves. Lastly, the Cossacks could be a peculiar adornment rendering stories both more exotic and more national (exoticism being one of the Romantic gateways to the national essence). This is most noticeable in the texts by J. N. Kamiński and Stanisław Jaszowski.

7.4. On the threshold of Romanticism

At the turn of 1810s and 1820s, a spate of Polish-language authors started to aggressively promote the new esthetics of Romanticism. A young teacher from Lithuania named Adam Mickiewicz immediately became the icon of this movement of change. Even today, the cultural transformation that ensued is usually presented in terms of an epic struggle between the progressive, youthful Romantics and the retrograde, aged Classicists. As elsewhere in Europe, the conflict was never only about literature and other forms of artistic expression, but also had a political underpinning, though perhaps not as explicitly articulated as later generations would like to believe. The innovators were perceived as questioning not only the esthetical, but also the political and social premises of their age.³³

³³ Useful classics on the topic include Alina Witkowska, *Rówieśnicy Mickiewicza: życiorys jednego pokolenia* (Warsaw, 1998), eadem, *Literatura romantyzmu* (Warsaw, 2003), 5-87; for an introduction to the Italian Romantics vs. Classicists debate which resembles the Polish-language see Kenneth McKenzie, "Romanticism in Italy," *PMLA*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (March 1940), 27-35 and Alessandro Manzoni and Joseph Lozzi, "Letter on Romanticism," *PMLA*, Vol. 119, No. 2 (March 2004), 299-316.

Galicia may not have stood at the forefront of this change, but as a province located at the intersection of the German and Polish-language spheres it was doubtless affected by the Romantic stimuli from both directions.³⁴ It seems to be no mere coincidence that one of the pioneers of Romantic esthetics was Maurycy Mochnacki, based in Warsaw, but originating from the vicinity of Lviv. In any case, in at least two respects Galicia did not lag behind Warsaw and Vilnius: first, in its acquaintance with and assimilation of the German-language *Sturm und Drang* literature, with pride of place given to Friedrich Schiller, and secondly, the development of the Slavophile fascinations. This latter element was especially important for the ways in which the Cossack motifs were employed and understood, and consequently it requires some more attention.

In Eastern Galicia the issue of Poland-Lithuania's relationship with other Slavic peoples was relevant for two main reasons. First, the Ruthenian nature of the province forced the local intellectuals to think more carefully about the meaning of their being Polish, Ruthenian, Polish-Lithuanian and Slavic. Secondly, being part of Austria they had easier access to the work of intellectuals from other Slavic peoples under the Habsburg scepter, such as Jernej Kopitar, Vuk Karadžić or Ján Kollár. Actually, Slavophile interests were not alien to the Polish-Lithuanian Enlightenment and Romanticism of non-Austrian ruled territories: the Slavic past was indeed appropriated by many as the Polish-Lithuanian past. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, when Slavophile motifs were eventually hijacked by Russian Empire's expansionist propaganda, Poland-Lithuania could be presented as the best embodiment of the Slavic spirit (in that vein, Russia was often denied its belonging to the Slavic family as a Germano-Mongolic empire built on a Finnic substratum).³⁵ Ukraine had a special place in those debates, as some intellectual milieus, for instance the emigre democrats, would cast this land as 'the heart of the Slavic body' and a repository of republican traditions and heroism (not unlike Mitre's pampas with their 'municipal spirit' and 'savage independence').³⁶

It was in Galicia that the most radical and seminal contribution of Polish-Lithuanian Slavophile thought was made. In 1819, an unusual paper was published in a Lviv scholarly periodical, *O Słowiańszczyźnie przed chrześcijaństwem* (*On Slavdom before Christianity*) by

³⁴ For an overview of Polish-language Galician literature see Krystyna Poklewska, *Galicja romantyczna (1816-1840)* (Łódź, 1976).

³⁵ The classic treatment of the topic is provided by Alina Witkowska, *Sławianie, my lubim sielanki...* (Warsaw 1972) and Maria Janion, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna: fantazmaty literatury* (Cracow 2006). See also Vladimir Frantsev, *Pol'skoe slavianovedenie kontsa XVIII i pervoi chetverti XIX st.* (Prague, 1906).

³⁶ George Grabowicz, *History and Myth*, 13.

Zorian Dołęga-Chodakowski or rather Adam Czarnocki (his real name).³⁷ The author was an idiosyncratic Lithuanian intellectual resident in the Galician town of Sieniawa where he was a protégé of Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (the same Czartoryski whom we encountered in the chapter on Michał Czajkowski). Due to his own mystifications, many details of Chodakowski's biography are still unclear, but his influence was certainly extensive and creative. Among other things, he was arguably the first East European intellectual to disguise himself as a vagrant and travel the Ruthenian lands collecting folkloristic and archeological evidence – a practice that was to have a great scholarly and political future in the Russian Empire.

In *O Słowiańszczyźnie przed chrześcijaństwem*, Chodakowski called on the Polish-Lithuanian intellectuals to turn their attention to the peasant culture which best preserved the original Slavic spirit, the essence of the Polish-Lithuanian *narodowość* or nationality. For centuries, he argued, this true heritage of the noble Slavic ancestors had been persecuted and suffocated by the oppressive cosmopolitan ideology brought from the West, namely Christianity. Not everything was lost however, because the native land itself, if studied with proper attention, might turn out to be a sacred book passed down by the ancient Slavs. Chodakowski's was a complete U-turn from mainstream Polish-Lithuanian positions, all of which presented Catholicism as an inextricable part of the nation's identity, even if they differed wildly regarding how to manage religious issues in the future. It seems relatively safe to assume that in the given circumstances this sort of neo-pagan, Slavophile nativism simply could not succeed in the longer run, but for some two or three decades it was a notable factor in the cultural and intellectual life of the former Commonwealth and certainly in that of Galicia. Even if the neo-pagan Slavophilia did not have reasonable prospects for the future, it was an important symptom of the younger intellectuals' resentment towards the established Catholic Church and their search for new avenues of religious and national fulfillment.

It is thus indispensable to acknowledge that the period with which we are dealing here was a very dynamic one, characterised by coexistence, competition and a mingling of Enlightenment Classicism and Sentimentalism with budding Romanticism. This situation profoundly conditioned not only the form, but also the content of the works by Kamiński and Zaborowski that I am going to analyse. In short, the texts considered in this section stand on the threshold between late-Enlightenment Sentimentalism and early Romanticism, each one synthesising the two tendencies in its own peculiar way.

³⁷ Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski, *O Słowiańszczyźnie przed chrześcijaństwem oraz inne pisma i listy*, ed. by Julian Maślanka (Warsaw, 1967).

The earliest piece under consideration here is Jan Nepomucen Kamiński's melodrama *Helena czyli hajdamacy na Ukrainie* (*Helena or the Haidamaks in Ukraine*) from 1819.³⁸ Its author was a versatile individual: a lyrical poet, a journalist, an actor, a playwright and a translator from German and French, among others.³⁹ Most importantly however, Kamiński was an *antreprenuer*, that is, in the Polish parlance of the period, a theater producer. In this capacity he earned great merit for the whole Polish-language culture, not only that of Galicia. Though ultimately insolvent, Kamiński's Lviv theatre proved the most important Polish-language scene active without interruptions from 1809 to the beginning of the 1840s, when it was replaced by Count Stanisław Skarbek's company (which also hired Kamiński as a literary manager). For his contemporaries, Kamiński was, above all, a tireless producer of stage spectacles and also, an avid promoter of Friedrich Schiller's poetry. Nowadays however, Kamiński's greatest achievement and lasting recognition is that he offered his stage to Count Aleksander Fredro, author of numerous comedies. In 1835 Fredro's works were attacked by the Romantic Cossackophile Seweryn Goszczyński for being not national enough but, since the twentieth century, they have been valued immensely for their satirical thrust, comparable to the *costumbrismo* of Mariano José de Larra's celebrated essays.⁴⁰

Jan Nepomucen Kamiński was born into a family of poor nobles some 50 km east of Lviv, five years after the Austrian takeover of Galicia. His lowly origins notwithstanding, he received a decent education, graduating from a German-language *Gymnasium* in Lviv and starting studies at the local University (but never finishing them). In the second half of the 1790s he became involved in the Polish-language theatre run by Wojciech Bogusławski, the most important Polish-Lithuanian playwright and theatre director of the Enlightenment period. After Bogusławski's departure, Kamiński organised his own group with which he started touring cities and towns with Polish-language publics in the Russian Empire. In 1807 he settled down in Odessa, a thriving Black Sea port governed by the Duke Armand-Emmanuel de Richelieu, who seems to have appreciated his relatively modern and diversified repertoire. However, only two years later Kamiński returned to Lviv, perhaps hoping that it

³⁸ Jan Nepomucen Kamiński, *Helena czyli hajdamacy na Ukrainie*, in Zbigniew Goliński, Stanisław Pigoń et al., eds, *Miscellanea z lat 1800-1850* (Wrocław, 1967), vol. 2, 19-87.

³⁹ For Kamiński's biography see Barbara Lasocka, *Jan Nepomucen Kamiński* (Warsaw, 1972); Roman Doktór, "Jan Nepomucen Kamiński (1777-1855)," in Teresa Kostkiewiczowa & Zbigniew Goliński, eds, *Pisarze polskiego świecenia. Tom 3* (Warsaw 1996), 719-733; Zbigniew Jabłoński, "Kamiński Jan Nepomucen Michał," *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Vol. XI/4, No. 51, 563-566; Larry Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford 2010), 91-92.

⁴⁰ For an original take on Fredro see Wolff, *Idea of Galicia*, 71-72, 77-79, 106-110, 130-141, 165-173.

would be incorporated into the Duchy of Warsaw as a result of the War of the Fifth Coalition. This never happened, but he settled down there for good. Interestingly, the first character that Kamiński played after his return to Lviv was that of a Cossack hetman in August von Kotzebue's *Graf Benjowsky oder die Verschwörung auf Kamtschatka* (translated into Polish by himself).⁴¹

Helena czyli hajdamacy na Ukrainie premiered in Lviv in December 1819. It was an unusually tense period. As has been argued by Larry Wolff, it was only two years earlier that the Austrian rule in Galicia had been 'restored' after the insecurity of the Napoleonic period.⁴² *Helena* was an instant hit. As well as in Lviv, it was also staged in Cracow, Vilnius and Warsaw. To be clear, Kamiński's play was by no means original. The second part of its title read *A Drama in Three Acts Imitated from Körner and Adjusted to the Events of 1768 by J. N. Kamiński*, and this is what it actually was, a translation of Theodor Körner's *Hedwig, die Banditenbraut* which itself was a bowdlerized reworking of Schiller's *The Robbers*. In turn, Kamiński's *Helena* served as a direct inspiration for Juliusz Słowacki's mystical drama, *Sen srebrny Salomei* that was quoted earlier.⁴³ A copy from a copy from a copy, each transformation truncating its model, but also enriching it with new elements. In any case, the fact that *Helena* was an adaptation might have been the reason why, despite its success, Kamiński never published it in print. As a consequence, today one has to use a twentieth-century scholarly edition of the manuscript.

It is highly symptomatic of the prevailing tastes that Kamiński chose to give his translation the local Polish-Lithuanian colour, that he selected the memory of the Zaporozhian brigandage as his focus, and that the final product proved so successful with the public. Körner's original drama was set on the Austro-Italian borderland and featured 'average robbers,' but Kamiński moved it to a generic Ukrainian environment. The name of Ukraine is mentioned already in the title. Here it must be emphasised that in the Polish-language use of the time the term Ukraine denoted only the territories of the Dnieper basin, so more or less today's Central Ukraine, a region quite distant and exotic for the Galicians who would have associated it with the Cossacks and Tatars. More precisely, the play is set in Chyhyryn (Polish: Czehryń) on the banks of the Dniester. The real Chyhyryn is located on the banks of the Dnieper and it is difficult to judge whether the Dniester name is there due to a copyist's

⁴¹ Lasocka, *Kamiński*, 112.

⁴² Wolff, *Idea of Galicia*, 79-85.

⁴³ Stanisław Makowski, "Jana Nepomucena Kamińskiego *Helena, czyli hajdamacy na Ukrainie*," in Goliński & Pigoń, *Miscellanea*, 5-6, 14-16.

mistake or whether Kamiński intentionally chose the river that ran through the Galician territories to appeal to his public that had only a very vague sense of Ukraine's geography. However, the choice of Chyhyryn itself is very telling. This was a town that for twenty years in the seventeenth century served as the capital of the Cossack Hetmanate, the state originating with the Khmel'nyts'ky's Uprising. It was severely damaged at the end of 1670s and never regained its importance. Though few Galicians at that time would have understood Chyhyryn's historical role, the very name was clearly associated with the Cossack history and the bloody wars of the seventeenth century. Lastly, it is specified that the events take place in 1768, during the so-called Haidamak unrest in the Commonwealth's part of Ukraine. As has been explained earlier, the Haidamaks were Cossack brigands that had pillaged noble households in that region and occasionally encouraged the peasants to rise against their masters. Until 1846, the year of the so-called Galician Slaughter, the 1768 Haidamak eruption was remembered as the most horrific peasant rebellion in the Commonwealth's history and functioned as a productive *lieu de mémoire*. The reference is further strengthened by the fact that Kamiński's brigands are named after famous Haidamaks of the 1760s: Gonta, Charko and Żeleźniak. A picture published in a Lviv periodical in 1819 shows an actor impersonating Gonta, possibly Kamiński himself, dressed as a Cossack with two pistols, wide pants and a black moustache (Picture 9). Some elements of his garb (coat and hat) resemble more that of the Ruthenian mountaineers of Galicia. This is probably no accident: males of the Carpathian Ruthenian communities were also believed to be inclined to brigandage. They would be more recognisable to the Lviv public and what seems to have mattered most was the emphasis on the rebellious spirit of the Ruthenian commoners.

Haidamaks, Cossacks, Ukraine, 1768, Chyhyryn, Dnieper, Dniester, Gonta, Żeleźniak, clearly the setting was painted with very broad strokes, but all the elements point in the same direction: Ukraine as an exotic, past land of Cossack brigandage and widespread fear of subaltern violence. Taken together, the derivative character of the work, the dearth of details and the spurious nature of those few that have been provided (the Dniester/Dnieper slip) showcase the peculiar way in which the Galician public knew Ukraine. Their knowledge was shallow, composed of a very small stock of commonplaces, but still this meager repertory could be activated to evoke powerful, if somewhat contradictory, feelings. On the one hand, Körner's drama was made more Polish-Lithuanian, so more native and familiar, while on the other, the original's indistinctive robbers were replaced with exotic figures from an imagined borderland. For the Galicians, Ukraine was a frontier that was more imaginable and exciting than Lombardy.



9. An actor playing Gonta in Kamiński's *Helena* in 1819

The text of *Helena* presents a world driven by elemental passions and social conflicts. What is more, it even allows some disturbing scenes of violence to transpire on stage. This was something shockingly new for the Polish-language public of the time. One enraged Lithuanian reviewer described how he had escaped with his children from the theatre where he had seen so many sabers, knives and rifles, not to mention the hut burnt down on the stage. Later that night he was woken up by his son's moans: the boy had a nightmare about the Haidamak.⁴⁴ Ultimately, these formal innovations, though smacking of Romanticism, encapsulated an unmistakably Sentimentalist message: it is the loyal servants, loving children and, above all, benevolent parents that can make this imperfect and unjust world a better place. True, at least some of the evildoers were provoked into rebelling against the right order of things by the wrongs that they had suffered at the hands of the unjust notables. But this admission does not lift any culpability from them, instead, it strengthens the sense that they are deprived of any meaningful agency and control of their lives.

Tymeńko, the central villain of the drama, is indeed a tragic figure, but 'not a natural-born Cossack.'⁴⁵ Born out of wedlock to a powerful lord, his relatives deprived him of the part of inheritance that his father had arranged for him. Seeking revenge, he joins the

⁴⁴ Quoted in Makowski, "J. N. Kamińskiego Helena," 14.

⁴⁵ Kamiński, *Helena*, 62.

Cossacks and became a Haidamak. He is torn between the world of the Cossacks, which is one of criminal violence and mindless revelry, and that of the landed nobility. The latter is an orderly, stratified society, imperfect, but steadily developing in a more humane direction. It is the project ‘of decentralised, “noble Enlightenment”’ with its idealised ‘educated landowner, paternal towards the peasants, understanding the case for reforms but at the same time seeing the necessity of retaining ancient traditions.’⁴⁶

The Haidamaks themselves, the real ones, not like the kind of Tymeńko, are presented as barbarous felons who just like to pillage, slaughter and appropriate others’ possessions. Alcohol seems to be their only entertainment and courage their only virtue.⁴⁷ There are no women among them and they seem to disdain them completely.⁴⁸ The possibility of a pleasant future in Zaporozhia is mentioned in passing,⁴⁹ but the overall impression is that violence and destruction are the real *telos* of their actions. Though a good deal of the plot revolves around a young female character, the Haidamaks themselves never seem to be interested in any sexual gratification, though this may be partly due to the sensibilities of the time. On one occasion Gonta appreciates Helena’s beauty: ‘What a pretty girl. It’s such a pity that I need to spare her life, but I gave my word.’⁵⁰ Perhaps one should not understand these words literally, but rather as an allusion to rape. Nevertheless, pure destruction remains the order of the day: ‘Death and blood is our password.’⁵¹

The portrayal of Cossacks offered by Jan Nepomucen Kamiński in his *Helena* is a faithful continuation of the Polish-Lithuanian noble tradition that presented the violent resistance of the Ruthenian subalterns as acts of mindless savagery, perpetrated by creatures incapable of rational thinking and controlling their actions, in other words, deprived of true agency.⁵² The only important element of the inherited imagery that is absent in this piece is the accusation of confessional fanaticism inflamed by Orthodox Christian monks in the service of the Russian government. The overall message is that of Enlightened, conservative reformism which Kamiński’s adaptation has enriched with elements of cultural and class determinism. More interesting than the image of the Cossacks itself is the way in which

⁴⁶ Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe. Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2016), 29.

⁴⁷ Kamiński, *Helena*, 23.

⁴⁸ Kamiński, *Helena*, 62.

⁴⁹ Kamiński, *Helena*, 67, 79.

⁵⁰ Kamiński, *Helena*, 77.

⁵¹ Kamiński, *Helena*, 68.

⁵² Hryhorii Hrabovych [George Grabowicz], *Do istorii ukrains'koi literatury: doslidzhennia, esei, polemika* (Kiev, 2003), 269-290.

Kamiński was able to capitalise on it. Apparently, the Polish-language public was eager to watch productions that would quench their thirst for the exotic, but at the same time present stories with which they could easily identify as noble-born citizens and landowners (aspiring or real). The arrival of the Cossack brigands on stage heralded new, violent esthetics which were met with mixed responses, but the overall success enjoyed by this play showed that the Classicist theatre was in retreat.

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The next author with whom I am going to deal here is also one of the most interesting literary personalities of his time. Tymon Zaborowski came from a middling-sort landowning family from Eastern Galicia.⁵³ He was born in 1799 on his family estate in Lychkivtsi (Polish: Liczkowce) on the western banks of the Zbruch, the river that served as the border between the Austrian and Russian Empires. Unusually for the region, the village of Lychkivtsi was populated mostly by Latin Catholics. Zaborowski studied in the prestigious Liceum in Kremenets' in the nearby region of Volhynia in the Russian Empire, where he was a member of a student writing club. Then he worked for a while as a government official in Warsaw, at that time the capital of the rump Kingdom of Poland. After that, he returned home, where he committed suicide in 1828.

During his short life he wrote several literary works, most of which were collected and published only in the 1930s by a Polish literary scholar in one hefty volume (she only omitted one 'pornographic' poem, but if one were hard pressed, the manuscript survives in Lviv).⁵⁴ Few of Zaborowski's works were printed during his lifetime, but he was not an unknown poet: his works circulated in manuscript copies and he was universally recognised as an accomplished artist. This points to an important point that is often overlooked: even well into the nineteenth century, print was by no means the only means for circulating information. The old sociability with its peculiar forms and vessels, such as formal visits, gossip, fairs, assizes and amateur theatres formed another layer of the public sphere, which continued to function quite efficiently and was by no means isolated from the more 'modern' channels.⁵⁵

⁵³ For Zaborowski's biography see Maria Danilewiczowa, *Tymon Zaborowski: życie i twórczość (1799-1828)* (Warsaw, 1933); Joanna Maternia, 'Tymon Zaborowski,' in Stanisław Makowski, ed., *Krzemieniec: Ateny Juliusza Słowackiego* (Warsaw, 2004), 218-230; Barbara Czwórnióg-Jadczak, "Tymon Zaborowski," in Kostkiewiczowa & Goliński, *Pisarze*, 639-652.

⁵⁴ For a similar treatment of traditional forms of communication in Spanish America see François-Xavier Guerra, "Forms of Communication, Political Spaces, and Cultural Identities," in Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen, eds, *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Washington, 2003), 3-32.

⁵⁵ Tymon Zaborowski, *Pisma zebrane*, ed. by Maria Danilewicz (Warsaw, 1936).

Zaborowski functioned in this layer and had he lived longer, he might have made a successful transition to another level.

His works are still more Classicist than Romantic, but one notices that a change was already in the air. Especially characteristic is Zaborowski's interest in his region's history. This in itself was not something completely unheard of in the age of Enlightenment, but the persistence with which he returned to this topic was indeed symptomatic of the new times. For instance, he used the seventeenth century, when the region was invaded by the Ottomans, as a pretext for writing patriotic odes. However, he was most fond of the early medieval Rus', especially the pagan period and the times just after the arrival of Christianity.

Zaborowski's Slavophile fascinations were to have an unusual afterlife. In 1848, a large (2,5 m tall), limestone statue representing a four-faced deity was found in the Zbruch river in Lychkivtsi. It is a completely unusual object with a strange, eclectic ornamentation and no comparable counterparts anywhere in Eastern Europe. Archeologists and historians have been arguing about its proper attribution ever since, but most of them would like to believe that it is the ancient Slavic god Svantovitus who was known to have been worshipped on the now German isle of Rügen (some 1200 km northwest from Lychkivtsi). The Lychkivtsi statue still stands in the Archeological Museum of Cracow where it is the most prized possession. It was only a couple of years ago that Ukrainian archeologists based in Kiev published two papers in which they argued quite convincingly that the idol from Lychkivtsi was not sculpted by the ancient Slavs, but was instead most probably commissioned by Tymon Zaborowski.⁵⁶ Its discovery twenty years after his death was a deception, either accidental or deliberate. Though Cracow-based archeologists are dismayed, if proven true, this story would make the Lychkivtsi idol one of the most spectacular monuments of early Romantic culture in Eastern Europe.

However, it is not for his neo-pagan longings that I mention Zaborowski here. The reason is his manuscript drama about the Cossack hetman Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi. The piece comes from 1823 and occupies 43 pages in the modern edition. According to the dedication, it was Zaborowski's first finished play.⁵⁷ He followed the Classicist rules in an exemplary fashion: the events take place during one night, there are only four characters and no violence is shown on the stage. Overall, it is a model but flat example of literary Classicism, though the

⁵⁶ Oleksij (Oleksii) Komar and Natalia Chamajko (Khamaiko), *Idol ze Zbrucza: zabytek z epoki romantyzmu?* (Rzeszów, 2013).

⁵⁷ Tymon Zaborowski, *Bohdan Chmielnicki*, in Zaborowski, *Pisma zebrane*, 318.

author's fondness for settings full of rocks suggests Romantic inclinations.⁵⁸ The two most important Cossack protagonists are Bohdan Chmielnicki himself and his son Tymotej (I use here the Polish spelling of names that are present in Zaborowski's text). The latter is the closest to a Romantic hero that can be found in the piece: young, noble-spirited and tormented by an internal conflict. One should also note that Zaborowski's name Tymon (Greek: *Tímon*) was closely related to the latter protagonist's name, Tymotej (Greek: *Timótheos*) and both were derived from the Greek verb *timáō*, to honour. This might have impressed the poet and affected his treatment of this figure.

The two passions that fuel Tymotej's internal struggle are, on the one hand, his hatred of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility, members of whom wronged his parents (especially his mother whom they disgraced), and, on the other, his love for his wife, the Moldavian Princess Helena, presented as an angelical creature. Both emotions belong to the wider realm of family love, but the marital one could be said to have more to do with selfish self-fulfillment, whereas the filial one is both more violent and more altruistic or patriotic.

Tymotej is a secondary figure in comparison with his father Bohdan. Hetman Chmielnicki is presented as a tragic but undeniably wise and noble statesman who transforms his private struggle for amends into an all-out national revolution. The nation and fatherland in question are identified as the Slavs and Poland: ostensibly the two are more or less interchangeable. Chmielnicki rejects the vision of becoming a Eurasian conqueror and empire builder⁵⁹ and instead declares that 'Poland is my fatherland, whereas freedom is my element.'⁶⁰ His ultimate goal is to crush the Commonwealth dominated by the magnates and build a new one in its place where 'liberty and aurora of peace'⁶¹ would reign.

Poland had to collapse, but from its rubble must / Rise a new edifice of a Ruthenia united with Poland. / This intention, sword and book of human laws in hand / I plan to support with all the might of Slavs [...] The violators of laws will fall – the nation will survive / And free it shall continue the erased history of free ancestors.⁶²

Another crucial detail is that Zaborowski's Chmielnicki does not mention God, but 'Supreme Beings! You celestial powers / That can bind with an invisible chain / These many worlds animated with spirit.'⁶³ In short, Zaborowski presents Chmielnicki as some sort of

⁵⁸ Zaborowski, *Bohdan Chmielnicki*, 323, 332.

⁵⁹ Zaborowski, *Bohdan Chmielnicki*, 339.

⁶⁰ Zaborowski, *Bohdan Chmielnicki*, 332.

⁶¹ Zaborowski, *Bohdan Chmielnicki*, 334.

⁶² Zaborowski, *Bohdan Chmielnicki*, 335, 340.

⁶³ Zaborowski, *Bohdan Chmielnicki*, 338.

neo-pagan and a visionary leader of democratic revolution that never was, but which the author wishes was otherwise. Eventually, betrayed by another Cossack leader, Chmielnicki loses, but the deeper cause of his downfall is not clear. One hint is given in the already mentioned fragment in which he rejects the possibility of building an empire extending to India and China.⁶⁴ This decision is presented by him as a rebellion against the verdicts of fate. In the world of Classical and Classicist drama such a rebellion, even if motivated by compassion for the oppressed,⁶⁵ falls under the rubric of hubris and cannot go unpunished.

The Cossack colouring was not developed by Zaborowski. In fact, Bohdan and Tymotej are surrounded in the play by the Moldavian knights from the entourage of Helena, rather than the Zaporozhian Cossacks. Chmielnicki is an indistinct, tragic hero. His one original trait is his political agenda of liberty and peace which makes him a sort of democratic hero of the Commonwealth. It is here that it becomes clear that the Cossacks are not a completely meaningless label. They have been selected by Zaborowski because of associations that were useful for his purposes. There is no trace of the fears and prejudices that have been exploited with such a skill by Jan Nepomucen Kamiński. Instead, Zaborowski's Cossacks evoke the glorious Polish-Lithuanian past and epitomise the democratic struggle of the disenfranchised masses against the great lords' oppressive power. They are, at the same time, both familiar and exotic.

The myth of Zaporozhian freedom is indeed present in the tragedy, one just has to look carefully. At one point, Chmielnicki's faithful lieutenant Wodowicz explains that he who was brought up in the Zaporozhia and thus filled with the love of truth will never become a flatterer.⁶⁶ Elsewhere, Chmielnicki talks of 'the free shrubs of Zaporozhia,' suggesting a link between Ukraine's nature and the Cossacks' love of freedom.⁶⁷ The Zaporozhian way of life is unequivocally associated with being straightforward, free and courageous, traits that can be opposed to the duplicitous and effeminate ways of courtiers and aristocrats.⁶⁸ Also, it is always clear that Chmielnicki and his Cossacks are of Ruthenian ethnicity, which is separate from the Polish, however the nature of the relationship between the Poles and the Ruthenians is far from transparent as they are very close and form one historical and political entity. That Zaborowski did not manage to develop the Cossack colouring was caused by the limitations

⁶⁴ Zaborowski, *Bohdan Chmielnicki*, 339.

⁶⁵ Zaborowski, *Bohdan Chmielnicki*, 333.

⁶⁶ Zaborowski, *Bohdan Chmielnicki*, 321.

⁶⁷ Zaborowski, *Bohdan Chmielnicki*, 335.

⁶⁸ A similar observation was made by Grabowicz, *History and Myth*, 63.

imposed by his ambition to write a highbrow, Classicist tragedy, not by his lack of interest in the Cossack identity.

Zaborowski's drama is a historically valuable piece that depicts in resolutely positive terms a charismatic male leading a democratic rebellion against the traditional social order. The subversive character of the work becomes especially evident when we compare it with Kamiński's *Helena*. In order to render his topic serious and lofty, Zaborowski employs the format of a Classicist tragedy, which he fills with Cossack content and a revolutionary message. Overall, it is not a convincing artistic achievement, but it does document the author's pursuit of a political drama that would convey his fascination with masculine leadership in charge of the violent masses fighting for emancipation. Even before the arrival of full-blown Romanticism the Cossack myth seems to have been the best vessel for such messages.

7.5. Romanticism come

The rise of Polish-Language Romanticism in Galicia coincides politically with a period of relative tranquility and political optimism which is epitomised by the Bohemian Prince August Longin von Lobkowitz who held the post of imperial governor of the Crownland from 1823 to 1832. Lobkowitz was a Polonophile of sorts and when, in 1831, a revolution in the rump Kingdom of Poland was followed by a war with Russia, the governor (not without Metternich's tacit consent) allowed Galicia to become a safe haven for Poles from the north. Whatever the original causes and intentions behind it, Prince Lobkowitz came to stand for the relative liberalism and benevolence of the Austrian authorities of that period. His departure in September 1832, followed by the Münchengrätz Convention, heralded a policy change and from that moment on the aspiring revolutionaries based in Galicia saw the Austrian government as an enemy no less malicious than its Russian counterpart.⁶⁹ Elsewhere in Europe, the Kingdom of Poland included, the revolutions and wars of 1830-1831 formed a clear break between the period of optimistic post-Congress hopes and that of Romantic anti-system conspiracies, but in Galicia the change materialised only in the course of 1833.

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The first truly romantic rendering of the Cossack theme offered to the Galician public was released in 1826. It was a short epic poem (three cantos) *Hajdamacy (The Haidamaks)* published by Stanisław Jaszowski in the third volume of his collection *Zabawki rymotwórcze*

⁶⁹ For Prince Lobkowitz and his governorship in Galicia see Iryna Vushko, *The Politics of Cultural Retreat: Imperial Bureaucracy in Austrian Galicia, 1772-1867* (New Haven, 2015), 105-126.

(*Rhyme Entertainments*). The author was born in 1803 in the village of Chyzhky, not far from Sambir, an area populated by Ruthenian-speaking and Greek Catholic petty nobles whose economic status and lifestyle was close to that of peasants. Jaszowski's standing was not as modest. He was a son of a noble-born, low-level court official in Przemyśl.⁷⁰ In the early 1820s he graduated from Lviv University and became an active participant in the Polish-language literary life. Though none of his works were appreciated as artistically valuable, he was nevertheless an important innovator at the threshold of Sentimentalism and Romanticism. Among others, he is credited with the first Polish-language review of Aleksandr Pushkin. More importantly, he was an enthusiast of Ossian and an author of pieces set in the early medieval Rus'. He also wrote an epic poem, *Mulatka (The Mulatto Girl)*, about the Haitian war of independence in which some Polish troops participated as part of Napoleon's force (an enterprise that was met with universal hostility by the otherwise Francophile public opinion of the former Commonwealth).

Hajdamacy is a surprisingly passable piece for an author who is regarded as a mediocre poet, though of course a far cry from the namesake Ukrainian poem by Taras Shevchenko (published in 1841). However, the poem seems to be completely detached from the political sphere. One can easily see certain political ideals at work in Zaborowski's *Bohdan Chmielnicki*, a drama about a powerful, but isolated, democratic hero struggling for a more just society. The task is somewhat more difficult with Kamiński's *Helena*, but even here it is possible to deduce a vision of society and a set of political values, although they were not explicitly articulated. No such thing seems to be available in Jaszowski's *Hajdamacy*. Apparently, it is an exercise in writing an entertaining ballad modelled after Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* or Scott's *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. Its main protagonist is an unusually attractive young Cossack ('His face would compete with a pretty girl') named Stefan.⁷¹ During a Haidamak raid he saves a magnate's daughter from being slaughtered, hides with her in her family's crypt and then brings her to the safe haven of her aunt's castle. In the end, it turns out that Stefan himself is another nobleman's son that was kidnapped by the Cossacks as a child. Unsurprisingly, he marries the maiden whom he saved.

The most important innovation is that the poem fully exploits the Cossack colour, a device that was still fledgling in Kamiński's and Zaborowski's work. There are descriptions of the lush steppe, the Cossacks' ways and their progress through the plains. These elements

⁷⁰ For Jaszowski's biography see Poklewska, *Galicja romantyczna*, 58-83 and Maria Janion, "Jaszowski Stanisław," *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Vol. XI, 87.

⁷¹ Stanisław Jaszowski, *Zabawki rymotwórcze* (Lviv 1826), 78.

seem to be at least as important as the banal plot, but overall there is no added meaning behind them, they are just esthetic. The Cossacks are not ‘us,’ nor do they seem to stand for any relevant ‘others’ that could be identified by the contemporary reader. They are simply savages that adorn the Polish-Lithuanian past, making it both more brutal and dangerous, and more poetic and knightly. They play the role that could be otherwise given to the American Indians or Tatars. The liminality of the Cossack figure is completely lost.

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The next important appearance that the Romantic Cossacks make in the Galician public sphere takes place one year later. This time it is not the original made-in-Galicia product, but a few poems by Józef Bohdan Zaleski reprinted in the second volume of Jan Julian Szczepański’s *Polihymnia*, a pioneering six-volume anthology of Polish-language poetry. Szczepański, a mediocre poet, but an important disseminator of Romantic esthetics, is in some ways similar to Jaszowski.⁷² His background was more modest than Jaszowski’s, as we only know that he was born in 1796 in the town of Rozdil, some 55 km from Lviv, but we do not possess any details about his parents. Still, he managed to graduate from Lviv University where he had belonged to a Polish-language writing club where he would translate Schiller and author some poems of his own. Then he worked as a Polish teacher at the Lviv Trade College and as an occasional journalist. During his lifetime he would publish many different books, mostly for teaching children languages (French, German, Italian, Polish), but also a brochure about the Austrian *Sparkassen* and a cookbook. Doubtless, Szczepański’s most important contribution was the above mentioned collection of contemporary Polish-language poetry, *Polihymnia*, which featured Romantics alongside Classicists. A whole volume was devoted to Adam Mickiewicz, the leader of the Romantic movement soon to rise to the position of a national bard, and it was there that Mickiewicz’s programmatic *Ode to Youth* from 1820 was printed for the first time. It was said that the six volumes of Szczepański’s anthology were present in almost every Lviv household.

As for Józef Bohdan Zaleski whose Cossack poems Szczepański reprinted, he has already been mentioned in the chapter on Michał Czajkowski. The contemporaries considered him a core member of the so-called Ukrainian School (together with Goszczyński and Malczewski) and recognised him as one of the leading Polish-language poets. Nowadays, he is read only by specialists, but in 1827 Zaleski was certainly ‘the Cossack poet.’⁷³ Born into a

⁷² For Szczepański see Poklewska, *Galicja romantyczna*, 56; Monika Stankiewicz-Kopec, “Szczepański Jan Julian,” *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Vol. XLVII/3, No. 194, 328-330.

⁷³ For Zaleski see Mikołaj Mazanowski, *Józef Bohdan Zaleski: życie i dzieła* (Saint Petersburg, 1901).

modest noble family in the village of Bohatyрка, some 120 km from Kiev in the Russian Empire, he was the youngest of thirteen children and his mother died whilst giving birth to him. His father chose to send him to live with wealthier relatives and so he was brought up by his aunts. After attending a *gimnazjum* in Uman' (Polish: Humań), where he met Seweryn Goszczyński and Michał Grabowski, the young Zaleski settled down in Warsaw where he participated in anti-government conspiracies. During the revolution and war of 1830–1831 he served as a soldier and member of the Polish parliament. After the revolutionised Kingdom of Poland had been defeated, he emigrated to Paris and joined the Polish Democratic Association (TDP). An active participant of Polish emigre life, he was interred at the Montmartre Cemetery in 1886.

The Cossack Ukraine depicted in those few poems by Józef Bohdan Zaleski is not far from that of Jaszowski's. It is also a poetic land of the past, perfect for the development of Cossack masculinity unrestrained by the state and family. Characteristically, Ukraine is the only fatherland that is referred to here, but it is a Polish-Lithuanian Ukraine, where both the Cossacks and the nobles feel at home. It is difficult to tell the difference between the two, as both rush through the steppes, heroically fight the Tatar savages, and are interred in the mounds that dot the plains (pointing to a peculiar combination of nature and history). For this reason, in a study published during the Stalinist period, a renowned Polish literary scholar characterised Józef Bohdan Zaleski as a retrograde author eulogising the unrealistic social solidarity and depicting, in the words of Seweryn Goszczyński, a sort of glossy, effeminate living-room Cossacks. This may all be true, but there are also other elements. In one poem, *Wzgórek pożegnania* (*A Hill of Farewell*), a young man is departing to become a Cossack.⁷⁴ He was orphaned by his father and disinherited by his step-father. Only his mother and sister bid him farewell, but the narrator intimates that the boy will have to perish. Disinheritance, solitary masculine struggle, vile, male usurpers that exert their power over women, unavoidable tragic fate – these are all stock motifs of the revolutionary democratic culture of the time that were employed by the conspirators and their sympathisers to define their socio-political plight.

In another poem, *Dumka Mazepy* (*Mazepa's Ballad*), a young Cossack is presented at the very moment of abandoning the king's service and departing from Warsaw to join the Cossack leader Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi in his fight against the Commonwealth.⁷⁵ The

⁷⁴ Jan Juliusz Szczepański, ed., *Polihymnia czyli piękności poezji: autorów tegoczesnych dla miłośników literatury polskiéy* (Lviv, 1827), 43-46.

⁷⁵ Szczepański, *Polihymnia*, 50-55.

protagonist recounts his thoughts, opposing the indolence and oppressiveness of the Polish-Lithuanian lords to the robust masculinity, bellicosity and love of freedom of the Zaporozhian Cossacks. The Cossack spirit is doubtless savage, but they have risen not on a whim, but because they received only oppression and slavery in return for their faithful service.

Józef Bohdan Zaleski's poems had some limited revolutionary potential. The Cossacks he depicted were easy to associate with the masculine spirit, love of freedom and a socio-political disenfranchisement – terms in which the young sympathisers of democratic conspiracies liked to think of themselves. However, in comparison with what was to be written in the late 1830s, it was still all very timid.

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Michał Suchorowski is the most enigmatic author of all mentioned here.⁷⁶ He was born in 1797 in the town of Velyki Mosty, some 50 km from Lviv. Though I do not possess any precise information about his parents' standing, the relatively happy fates of his siblings (a painter in St Petersburg, a physician in a small Galician town, two low-level Austrian bureaucrats and a mother of a future Latin Catholic bishop), together with his own good education suggest that the family was of noble birth and not extremely poor. In 1827, Suchorowski graduated as a doctor of law from the University of Padua and started a lawyer's career in Lviv. A few years later, involved in some sort of fraud, he was stripped of the right to practice his profession. In 1839, he was found guilty of armed robbery and murder (with four accomplices) and sentenced to twenty years in prison which he served in the Moravian fortress of Špilberk (now part of the city of Brno) until its closure in 1855. Apparently, his case was purely criminal and had no political dimension.

Suchorowski published several unusual works during his lifetime, among them: a project of universal orthography for all the Slavic languages (Lviv, 1863), a multilingual volume with songs celebrating the millennium since the Christianisation of Slavs by Saints Cyril and Methodius (Lviv, 1862), and a collection of light dramas (Vienna, 1831). Evidently, Suchorowski was a convinced Slavophile and an avid eulogist of the Habsburgs, whom he presented as successors to Commonwealth's kings (he produced a genealogical summary showing their descent from John III, the liberator of Vienna) and thus the best suited to unite the Central European Slavs.

Suchorowski's contribution also stands out because it is the only piece here that was ostensibly designed for pure entertainment. His vaudeville *Wanda Potocka czyli schronienie*

⁷⁶ For Suchorowski's biography see Vasyl' Shchurat, *Koliivshchyna v pol's'kii literaturi do 1841 r.* (Lviv, 1910), 12-15.

w *Lasku św. Zofii* (*Wanda Potocka or the Refuge in the Forest of Saint Sophia*) was published in Lviv in 1832, when Suchorowski was still a respectable barrister.⁷⁷ Apparently, the play was never staged.

The eponymous protagonist of the piece is a mute girl who saves the city of Lviv from the Haidamaks. This choice of topic was an easily recognisable reference to the opera *La muette de Portici* (*The Mute Girl of Portici*, premiered in Paris in 1828, music by D. F. Auber, libretto by G. Delavigne) about the Neapolitan revolution of 1647.⁷⁸ In the 1830s *La muette de Portici* was one of the key symbols of rebellion: for example, the unrest that led to the establishment of liberal Belgian monarchy started during the performance of this opera in Brussels. Portraying a mute girl ready to sacrifice herself for the sake of others Suchorowski addressed one of the most popular motifs in the revolutionary culture of his time.

Neither the plot as a whole, nor specific developments of the story could have seemed plausible to the public, but it probably did not matter too much. The main goal was to amuse and excite and so the action oscillates between frenetic violence and carefree burlesque. The drama opens with an overture no doubt shocking to a public steeped in the Classicist decorum that tended to suppress any acts of overt violence. It is, in the author's own words, 'an awful picture' representing 'a rocky and solitary wilderness.'⁷⁹ The orchestra plays an *allegro furioso* while a group of Haidamaks slaughter a youth and then force his mute sister to kneel and swear that she would remain silent. To repeat: a mute girl is forced by the Cossacks to swear that she will remain silent. There is no dialogue here, just music and actors' movements. From the very first moment violence and unintended absurdity seem to be the guiding principles of Suchorowski's drama.

Wanda Potocka tells the story of a Haidamak party that, according to a local tradition recounted by the author in the preface, came from Ukraine planning to sack Lviv in June 1769. That any real Haidamaks ever got so close to Lviv is very unlikely, but during the Poland-Lithuania's civil war of 1768–1772 such rumors could have been circulating. In any case, the fact that the events took place on the outskirts of Lviv was probably meant to provide some additional pleasure to the public, who would recognise familiar places such as the Church of Saint Sophia and its namesake forest. At the same time, the author tries to make some use of the exotic Cossack character: in the first scene after the overture, the Haidamaks

⁷⁷ Michał Suchorowski, *Wanda Potocka, czyli schronienie w Lasku św. Zofii* (Lviv, 1832).

⁷⁸ Germain Delavigne, *La muette de Portici, opera en cinq acts* (The Hague, 1833).

⁷⁹ Suchorowski, *Wanda Potocka*, 9.

sing in Ruthenian about the joy of Cossacks attacking their Polish enemies. The latter are simultaneously enjoined not to take any precautions and to keep drinking wine.

To make the story even more tortuous and illogical, the text emphasises that the Haidamak party is composed of representatives of all kinds of peasants that would have been recognisable to the Galician public and none of whom would have been associated with the Ukrainian Cossacks proper: the Mazurians (Polish-speaking Latin Catholics of Eastern Galicia), the Cracovians (Polish-speaking Latin Catholics of Western Galicia), the Ruthenians (Ruthenian-speaking Greek Catholics of Eastern Galicia), and the Mountaineers (most probably, the Ruthenian-speakers of the Eastern Galician Carpathians). Thus, the play conveys that the Haidamaks are simply commoners wronged by their superiors and that their actions are a protest against injustices (which are listed in detail by a Haidamak lieutenant).⁸⁰ In this case, the markers of Cossack identity do not represent any profound ethnic separateness, rather they serve as a means to stage resistance. Like Tymeńko in Kamiński's *Helena*, the Suchorowski's Haidamaks are portrayed as victims of oppression, pushed to appalling criminal activities by unjust masters. Still, in contrast to Kamiński's rendering, these Haidamaks are not agency-less monsters, but ordinary commoners let loose. Now that they find themselves beyond the bounds of lawful order, they want to get what their masters always kept away from them: valuable goods and attractive women. In accordance with the vaudeville convention, the whole situation is presented very lightly.

Although the tale is not thought through very carefully, its final effect is nevertheless interesting. The Haidamaks are not embellished in any way. They are presented as savage, repulsive and driven by selfish motivations, such as greed and lust. Yet, the social context of the peasantry's oppression is not concealed, which makes the Haidamaks' actions to some extent understandable. To add yet further dissonance, the whole story is presented as a cheerful revue.

The protagonists of the play are the Haidamak leader, Szwaczka and his lieutenant, Mykoła, the overture's mute, Wanda Potocka (evidently, no relation to the illustrious family of Counts Potocki) and Jagusia, the flirtatious wife of a jealous and simple-minded milkman. It is these two women who stage the resistance to the Haidamaks and save the city.

The choice of women as heroines serves several purposes. First of all, it enables Suchorowski to make the whole story more playful. The competition between the two sides represented by men and women allows him to exploit the erotic tension between them. On the

⁸⁰ Suchorowski, *Wanda Potocka*, 11-12.

one hand, the Haidamaks' manly vitality allures the female protagonists, on the other, it is stated explicitly that the brigands want to appropriate not only the valuable goods, but also the attractive, young women of the Lviv elite, quite a departure from the earlier sensibility which allowed only a hint towards sexual violence. Eventually, the fact that they are defeated in battle by armed females amounts to a complete embarrassment and failure of the Haidamaks.

I would argue that the female protagonists fulfill yet another important role. They are by definition representatives of the disempowered sections of nineteenth-century society. What is more, their two leaders, the mute Wanda and the merry Jagusia, are both commoners. It is their loyalty to their city and to their compatriots, and it is their skilful mobilisation of the noble girls under their protection that saves Lviv. In the Haidamaks, Suchorowski portrayed the wronged commoners who rejected society's rules and violently reached for power and goods that were always denied to them. This is how a respectable bourgeois imagined the revolution. With his commoner female protagonists the author offered an alternative vision: that of empowerment through patriotism. By rising to defend the social order and their home city, the women become patriotic agents. This is symbolically marked by the fact that they carry rifles and wear the traditional square hats of the Polish-Lithuanian cavalry.⁸¹

That patriotism should be the overriding passion is suggested by Suchorowski's treatment of Jagusia. Though a married woman, she consistently flirts with a Haidamak lieutenant whom she considers a noble-born Polish-Lithuanian cavalryman. As soon as she learns of his real identity and intentions, she turns decidedly hostile. On the one hand, the issue of marital fidelity is taken very lightly here: a handsome defender of the fatherland might expect to be awarded some unusual favours by dissatisfied wives of ignorant milkmen. On the other, any dealings with the enemy are unacceptable, no matter how attractive he might be.

The biggest merit in saving the city from the Haidamaks is accorded by Suchorowski to the mute Wanda who, due to her disability, is ostensibly even more powerless than other commoners, but becomes a heroine thanks to her patriotic dedication.⁸² This showcases the right sort of commoners' emancipation suggested by the author. My reading is confirmed by the scene in which Jagusia, after killing some of the ringleaders, turns to the remaining Haidamak prisoners:

⁸¹ Suchorowski, *Wanda Potocka*, 63.

⁸² Note a similar function fulfilled by Katrin in Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* (I thank Alexandra Ortolja-Baird for this observation).

JAGUSIA (*looking carefully at the Haidamaks*): What do I see here, am I not misled by my eyes? Here's our Ruthenian and there are the Lvivians. And it is you who dared to raise your arms against us? Ingrates! Do you have hearts and courage to stain your hands with the blood of your brethren? Did the Polish and Ruthenian soil feed you, so that you turned it into ashes and soaked it with the blood of your fathers and mothers?

H Aidamaks (*falling on their knees*): We beg you to forgive us!

JAGUSIA (*moved*): O no! It was the vile mammon of this world that blinded you, treasures and riches. Rise, brothers! (*they do*) There are heroic hearts beating in your chests. Give me your hands, take the guns and let's hurry together to save the city.

H Aidamaks (*taking guns*): Hurrah!⁸³

Jagusia's example enables the wicked commoner revolutionaries to become empowered commoner patriots. Another characteristic detail is that ethnic markers are not erased altogether (in another scene Jagusia even says something in Ruthenian),⁸⁴ but rather amalgamated and presented as pertinent to one overarching nationality, that of the former Poland-Lithuania (or perhaps Galicia).

Suchorowski's Haidamaks stand for social revolution. The revolution itself is presented in a very simplified, vulgarised manner, not as a profound change in the way in which the politics is done and society organised, but as a violent takeover of goods and women by the disenfranchised commoner men. The Haidamaks' masculinity is unquestionable and even impressive, but ultimately destructive. Actually, they play a secondary role that can be properly interpreted only in the polemic context offered by the presence of commoner females who stand for an alternative route to empowerment, that of civic participation and sacrifice. Similarly to Gogol', Suchorowski questions the myth of noble brotherhoods of free males and subverts the then predominant identification of political freedom, political virtue and masculinity.

It is this piece, written by the most obscure of authors, that goes beyond the commonsensical gender order of its times and captures the crucial opposition between revolutionary democracy and post-1830 liberalism, as well as the latter's main attraction: its promise to combine progress and emancipation with the preservation of social hierarchies. A similar counterintuitive cocktail of staunch populism and hostility towards any openly subversive activities was devised only in the later 1830s by the new sort of Ruthenian activists and then taken up by their ideological inheritors in the early 1860s. Among the Polish-speaking Latin Catholics it was to emerge even later, in the 1870s, when Stanisław

⁸³ Suchorowski, *Wanda Potocka*, 66.

⁸⁴ Suchorowski, *Wanda Potocka*, 38.

Stojałowski launched his peasant periodicals. Thus, though riven with unintended absurdities, the play proves to be an innovative political text, successfully conveying the anti-revolutionary ideology of liberal patriotism. For the context of the early 1830s it can serve as a fair illustration of how fundamentally hostile the agendas of democracy and liberalism in the *Vormärz* were.

7.6. Romanticism victorious

The 1830s and 1840s were a period of intense conspiratorial work in Galicia. After the end of the Polish-Russian War of 1831, thousands of emigres from the Kingdom of Poland were scattered all around Europe, mostly in France, but also in Belgium, the German Confederation and in those territories of the former Commonwealth that lay beyond the borders of the Russian Empire, that is in the Free City of Cracow (formally independent until 1846), the Austrian Crownland of Galicia and the Prussian Grand Duchy of Poznań (since 1848 *Provinz Posen*). The emigres were mostly young, single males without professions and as such exceptionally susceptible to the allure of conspiratorial and revolutionary activities.⁸⁵

The 1830s and 1840s were also the first time in which the Polish-Lithuanian intellectuals had to face serious claims questioning the rightful belonging of the non-Polish-speaking territories of the former Commonwealth. The most shocking experience was the abolition of the Greek Catholic Church in the Russian Empire and the forceful conversion of most of its faithful to Russian Orthodoxy.⁸⁶ This process was just beginning and in Galicia it was much less disconcerting than across the eastern border, but nevertheless it did provoke some responses.

Finally, in the 1830s Romanticism became the order of the day. Its followers no longer needed to justify their allegiance, but there was also a price to this. They ceased to experiment and contented themselves with executing accepted esthetics. This tendency is magnified by the fact that the finest writers chose to remain in exile where they had more freedom of expression. Thus, the brand of Romanticism practiced at home lost its subversive energy.

During this late period, the first important volume in which the Galicians could encounter the Cossacks was Waclaw Michał Zaleski's collection of folk songs, *Pieśni polskie*

⁸⁵ On the emigre 'culture of single males' see Alina Witkowska, *Cześć i skandale: o emigracyjnym doświadczeniu Polaków* (Warsaw, 1997).

⁸⁶ For an overview of Russian intellectuals' attitudes towards national questions see Henryk Głębocki, „Imperium Rosyjskie wobec kwestii narodowych a problem ewolucji rosyjskiej idei narodowej (w epoce wojny krymskiej),” in Jerzy W. Borejsza and Grzegorz Bąbiak, eds, *Polacy i ziemie polskie w dobie wojny krymskiej*, 28-62, where an exhaustive bibliography can be found in note 96 on page 55.

i ruskie ludu galicyjskiego (Polish and Ruthenian Songs of the Galician People), published in 1833, but which was fruit of several years of work. Waclaw Michał Zaleski (no relation to Józef Bohdan) was born in 1799 in the town of Oles'ko, some 70 km from Lviv.⁸⁷ His family had an excellent pedigree reaching as far back as the sixteenth century and boasting several ancestors holding important offices and marrying members of other powerful houses. However, at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth century they had long lost their lands and Waclaw Michał's father leased an estate from an aristocrat, a common practice among the middling sort of Polish-Lithuanian nobles. Waclaw Michał Zaleski was a prodigy, graduating at all levels *summa cum laude* and then making a career in the Austrian bureaucracy. In July 1848 he was to be the first native of Galicia nominated as imperial governor of the Crownland.

Zaleski was one of the best-read men of his time, equally at home in Polish and German, and proficient in several other languages. His favorite thinker was Herder and as early as 1820 he wrote unpublished pieces that were seemingly more Romantic than Sentimental which makes him one of the pioneers in this respect. Among those early works one can find several Cossack-themed short poems, as well as an unfinished tragedy about Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi.⁸⁸

Waclaw Michał Zaleski was, on the one hand, a convinced patriot of Poland-Lithuania, while on the other, sympathetic to the plight of the common people. This combination could have made him a revolutionary democrat, but he chose otherwise. Apparently, he preferred evolution to revolution. In contrast to Jan Nepomucen Kamiński who eulogised the benevolent paternalism of the landed nobility (the class to which everybody in the former Commonwealth aspired, though not many succeeded in reaching it), Waclaw Michał Zaleski seems to have trusted more in enlightened bureaucracy. As it happened, the only enlightened bureaucracy at hand was that of Austria.

Though Waclaw Michał Zaleski did not write the songs in his collection himself, the volume as a whole was his work, a carefully designed product of Galician Romantic culture. Indeed, it was one of its most spectacular achievements, resonating far beyond the borders of the Crownland: one of its avid readers in the early 1830s was Nikolai Gogol'. Zaleski opened his important introductory essay with a recollection of his childhood spent in the countryside.

⁸⁷ For Waclaw Michał Zaleski see Kazimierz Ostaszewski-Barański, *Waclaw Michał Zaleski (1799-1849): zarys biograficzny* (Lviv, 1912).

⁸⁸ Ostaszewski-Barański, *Waclaw Michał Zaleski*, 282, 288-289, 300.

Thanks to this experience, he wrote, he had learnt to love folk poetry.⁸⁹ Next, he explained that for a number of historical reasons, Polish-Lithuanian culture lacked a truly national literature, as since the Renaissance all of its luminaries had been writing in a Western European manner and in complete detachment from their nationality (very similar claims were made in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century about Russian literature).⁹⁰ ‘Our history is a nation’s pathology, or rather a pathology of its head; of its physiology, the nation’s healthy life, we have only an impression.’⁹¹ It was only recently, with the appearance of Mickiewicz and Józef Bohdan Zaleski, that the Polish-language literature had started to become truly national. The German-language epigraph of the essay is taken from Herder and states that only a literature drawing on the people can be truly popular (*volkmässig*) and that without the people there can be ‘no public, no nation, no language and no poetry.’⁹² Invoking Brodziński, Chodakowski and Vuk Karadžić, Zaleski explains that his aim is to contribute to the process of nationalising the Polish-language literature by making folk songs, which best capture the national essence, easily available. Though he is much more sober than his predecessors in his assessment of folk songs as a depository of accurate, historical information,⁹³ he nevertheless describes them as ‘the most perfect expression of the national life [...] keys to the national temple,’ containing ‘sacred truths’ that need to be deciphered ‘just like the Egyptian hieroglyphs.’⁹⁴

Zaleski published together in one hefty volume (1496 songs and almost 600 pages) pieces in Polish and Ruthenian dialects, printed in the Latin Antiqua type, predominant in Polish-language prints (as opposed to the German Fraktur). Later generations of Polish readers might sense that Waclaw Michał Zaleski privileged the Ruthenian-language songs over the Polish-language ones. The collector, who himself emphasised that he came from an area where Ruthenian was the dominant tongue of the common people,⁹⁵ did not perceive the Ruthenian ethnicity (the existence of which he did not deny) as a separate nationality, but rather a variety of a diverse and inclusive Polish-Lithuanian nation. Consequently, it is arguable that the way in which Zaleski organised his volume and the choice of alphabet and

⁸⁹ Zaleski, *Pieśni*, iv.

⁹⁰ Zaleski, *Pieśni*, v.

⁹¹ Zaleski, *Pieśni*, vii.

⁹² Zaleski, *Pieśni*, iii.

⁹³ Zaleski, *Pieśni*, xv-xvi.

⁹⁴ Zaleski, *Pieśni*, xvii.

⁹⁵ Wolff, *Idea of Galicia*, 117.

type were not an act of conscious appropriation with which he would attempt to claim the Ruthenian peasants for his nation, he simply ‘believed that they belonged together.’⁹⁶

The scarcity of Cossack-themed songs in Zaleski’s imposing volume is a good illustration of how marginal the topic was in the genuine folk culture of the Galician Ruthenians. Their contents have already been brought up in the section devoted to the Galician Ruthenian folk representations of Cossacks and there is no need to repeat it here. However, the way Zaleski located the Cossack pieces in his work is very revealing. The collector divided the folk songs into two overriding categories: feminine and masculine. The feminine songs occupied pages 1 to 476, whereas the masculine ones, pages 479 to 516. The predominance of the feminine element shows that the popular culture was associated with this sphere, as more private, intimate and genuine (*Gemeinschaft*-like), in contrast to the more public and artificial (*Gesellschaft*-like) high culture of the modern Western European type. In fact, one of the most widespread *topoi* in the folkloric writings of the time is that of a grandmother or old nurse recounting legends, fairy tales and superstitions to a child and thus immersing them in the genuine popular spirit. This is, for instance, how Leopold Sacher-Masoch justified his allegiance to the Ruthenian nationality: that he acquired it from his peasant nanny Handscha.⁹⁷

However, the Cossack topics were different. Almost all the Cossack-themed pieces in *Pieśni polskie i ruskie ludu galicyjskiego* are in the masculine section. The only exceptions are two songs meant to accompany the *Kozachok* dance. Apparently, they ended up in the feminine section simply by virtue of being dances, an activity which did not seem masculine enough to Zaleski. Indeed, in his feminine division there are also other types of songs that one would not necessarily associate with femininity, for example songs of the mountaineer brigands (*opryshky*). What clearly differentiates the songs identified by the collector as masculine is that they are unequivocally narrative, they describe some particular events, either historical, legendary or completely private.⁹⁸ The key characteristic of the Cossack songs as perceived by Wacław Michał Zaleski, is that they were rare examples in which the common people overcame the inherently non-public and intimate condition of its existence and transformed individual lived experiences into a story that could be recounted as a masculine public activity, a knightly struggle of the popular freedom fighters.

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⁹⁶ Wolff, *Idea of Galicia*, 118.

⁹⁷ Vushko, *Cultural Retreat*, 174; Larry Wolff, *Idea of Galicia*, 120-122.

⁹⁸ Zaleski, *Pieśni*, xxxii-xxxiii.

The author that is perhaps best demonstrates the way in which the Cossacks were used in the Galician literature of the 1830s is Lucjan Siemieński.⁹⁹ He was born in 1807 in the village of Kam'iana Hora, some 50 km from Lviv. His father was a middling-sort nobleman that leased an estate from an aristocrat. In the 1820s, the young Siemieński attended a gimnazjum in Lublin, Kingdom of Poland, and later travelled to visit his relatives in the Russian Empire, reaching as far as Odessa. In 1831, he fought as a volunteer in the Polish-Russian war and after that he returned to Galicia where he became active in anti-government plots. It was there that he befriended Seweryn Goszczyński, a leading conspirator and the author of *Zamek kaniowski (The Castle of Kaniv)*, perhaps the most influential Polish-language work combining the Cossack theme with a vision of violent revolution. Goszczyński's name dots the pages of this chapter, as he seems to have been the key disseminator of the Cossack myth, as well as related Slavophile-cum-democratic ideas in Galicia. Originally from the Russian Empire, he was a resident of the Crownland in the 1830s and an active member of *Ziewonia*, a neo-pagan, Slavophile literary group to which Lucjan Siemieński also belonged. *Ziewonia* managed to publish two almanacs in the 1830s.¹⁰⁰ Siemieński and Goszczyński were not the only members of the group interested in the Cossack topics, but were joined by the *Ziewonia*'s coordinator, August Bielowski, as well as such authors as Count Ludwik Jabłonowski and Aleksander Leszek Dunin-Borkowski.

Siemieński's trajectory, though not necessarily typical, is very symptomatic of Galician nobles' political trajectory. In 1848, after spending several years in exile, he made a complete U-turn and adopted the more restrictive brand of Galician conservatism. He became a contributor of *Czas (The Time)*, a moderately right-wing daily paper published in Cracow that was to become the Polish-language reference newspaper of the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁰¹ At that time Siemieński would rework and censor the pieces he had published in his youth in order to blunt their radical thrust. Overall, Siemieński's most successful work was a collection of tales about Poland's history intended for children: *Wieczory pod lipą czyli historia narodu polskiego opowiadana przez Grzegorza z pod Raclawic (Evenings under the Linden or the History of the Polish Nation Recounted by Grzegorz from nearby of Raclawice)*, the first version of which was published in 1845.

⁹⁹ For Siemieński see Maria Janion, *Lucjan Siemieński poeta romantyczny* (Warsaw, 1955) and Elżbieta Kiślak, "Siemieński (Siemiński) Lucjan Hipolit," *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Vol. XXXVII/1, No. 152, 23-28.

¹⁰⁰ For *Ziewonia* see Poklewska, *Galicja romantyczna*, 170-201.

¹⁰¹ For *Czas* see Wolff, *Idea of Galicia*, 188-230.

Siemieński's Cossack-themed works come from the earlier period of his life when he was still a revolutionary conspirator in Lviv, under the strong influence of his fellow writer and clandestine activist Seweryn Goszczyński. In 1835, Siemieński published a short story titled *Wieś Serby* (*The Village Serby*) in the *Rozmaitości* (*Varieties*), a supplement to the *Gazeta Lwowska* (*The Lviv Gazette*). Three years later a poetical collection of his own entitled *Dumki* (*Ballads*) appeared in Prague. Most of its contents were unorthodox translations from Little Russian folk songs published by Maksimovich in the Russian Empire.

Siemieński's works are written in a more distinctly Cossack form than those published in the preceding periods. One can see that there is already a stable and universally recognisable repertoire of Cossack motifs and narrative devices on which the authors can draw. At least in part, this enrichment and stabilisation can be attributed to the better acquaintance of the urban public, including encompassing Siemieński and his readers, with Ukrainian folk culture.

Another striking feature of Siemieński's Cossack works is its radical thrust. He heralds the approaching violent revolution so openly that it leaves the present-day reader wondering about the efficacy of Austrian censorship, especially given the fact that it often suppressed some truly innocent texts. When Siemieński is not following the folk songs in describing the Cossacks as manly, solitary warriors, disinherited wandering knights, or captives at the mercy of infidels, he leaves no doubt that they represent the militant people that would sooner or later overthrow the unjust regime. In the *Dumki* there are only two pieces that are Siemieński's original compositions: *Napierski* and *Czerniawa* (*Rabble Riot*). The first describes the execution of an obscure historical personage, Aleksander Kostka-Napierski.¹⁰² He was a leader of an anti-noble uprising that broke out among the Latin Catholic mountaineers of the Tatra foothills region during the Khmel'nyts'kyi's Uprising. The topic was especially attractive to the Polish-Lithuanian revolutionary democrats, as it allowed them to erase the ethno-confessional dimension of the greatest Cossack uprising and present it as a Commonwealth-wide social revolution. *Czerniawa*, in turn, is the last poem of the volume, which suggests that it is meant as some sort of summary or epilogue. It describes how the peasants long for a bloody overthrow of the nobles' power.¹⁰³ It is clear that the change must be violent and that there is an insurmountable fear and hostility between the masters and their subjects, though Siemieński also introduces a noble-born revolutionary plotting with the peasants.

¹⁰² Lucjan Siemieński, *Ogrody i poeci (wybór pism)*, ed. by Maria Janion (Warsaw 1955), 15-17.

¹⁰³ Siemieński, *Ogrody i poeci*, 28-29.

The Village Serby short story could seem innocuous if Siemieński had not invested great effort into charging it with his anti-noble politics.¹⁰⁴ On the surface, it is merely a sensational piece about a Haidamak leader's amour and his consequent capture by the Polish-Lithuanian military. However, not only is the central Haidamak protagonist presented as a positive figure, but more importantly he is identified as Ivan Gonta, one of the main villains in Polish-Lithuanian historical memory: the Cossack commander responsible for the slaughter of thousands of noble and Jewish civilians in Uman' in 1768. The young ensign, Gonta's main competitor, is a cowardly aristocrat, motivated only by lust and haughtiness: he pays a greedy miller to have his pretty, young wife, but what he does not know is that she is Gonta's lover. True, there is also the figure of the ensign's righteous, noble-born servant, but this only serves to emphasise the corrupt nature of the world dominated by powerful rogues of illustrious birth.

There is an evident gender dynamic in the story. Gonta and his Cossacks represent the masculine sphere, whereas the miller's wife and the lecherous ensign, the feminine. Gonta's masculine environment is characterised by freedom of movement and transparent rules that allow fair confrontations of equal males. Gonta perishes, because he lets himself be lured into the treacherous feminine realm where his masculine skills are neutralised. Indeed, at the end of the story it is suggested that the miller's wife was a witch who, from the very beginning meant to destroy the Cossack leader. This is left unresolved, but in any case, it cannot be denied that on the one hand there stands a manly, freedom-loving Cossack, while on the other, an effeminate but arrogant noble lecher.

The politicised use of the Cossack and similar symbols culminates in the early works of Siemieński. He constructs a clear opposition between the Cossacks' masculinity, bellicosity and love of freedom, on the one hand, and the effeminacy, immorality and oppressiveness of the nobles and their servants, on the other. There can be no doubt that Siemieński, as a narrator, fervently sympathises with the former realm. The picture offered by him is black and white and excludes everything that does not fit his ideal of virile revolutionary firmness. In comparison with this one-dimensional vision, it is easier to appreciate the playful gender dynamics of Suchorowski's vaudeville that enabled him to convey an alternative vision of civic emancipation.

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¹⁰⁴ Siemieński, *Ogrody i poeci*, 78-102.

The final author that I will study here is Wincenty Pol, mostly revered for his *Pieśń o ziemi naszej* (*The Song about Our Land*) published in 1843 in Poznań. Pol's biography is an example of how attractive the Polish-Lithuanian identity was in the nineteenth century. It also shows that one of the surest paths to adopting this identity came from revolutionary activities, though later the subversive element could be eventually discarded like Wittgenstein's ladder.

Wincenty Pol was born in 1807 in the city of Lublin, which was part of Galicia until 1809, when it was conquered by the Duchy of Warsaw (in 1815 it was transformed into the Kingdom of Poland).¹⁰⁵ His father, Franz Xaver Poll, was an Austrian official of Scottish and Prussian origin. In 1809, he proved exceptionally loyal to the House of Habsburg or perhaps, exceptionally hostile to Napoleon. In order to keep his position and property under the rule of Warsaw, Franz Xaver Poll would have to swear *homagium* to the new authorities, an acceptable and widespread practice at that time. Instead, he forfeited his suburban estate in Lublin and emigrated to Lviv. In recognition of Franz Xaver's loyal service, Emperor Francis I ennobled the whole family as Polls von Pollenburg in 1815. Wincenty's mother, Eleonora née Longchamps de Bérier, was the daughter of a French merchant and banker long established in Lviv.¹⁰⁶ As can be seen, Wincenty's family was an example of cosmopolitan Habsburg loyalists, not an obvious nursery for Polish-Lithuanian nationalism.

In 1830, Wincenty Pol travelled to Vilnius in the Russian Empire where there was an important Polish-language university. There he became a German language lecturer, but soon the country descended into chaos caused by the Polish-Russian war of 1831. Pol joined the Lithuanian insurgents and after some unsuccessful confrontations with the Russians they had to escape to Prussia where they were interned for a couple of months. Here he translated thirty Polish and Ruthenian folk songs into German that were later published in Leipzig. In the subsequent years he was involved in several conspiratorial activities, mostly in Galicia. At that time he came to know Seweryn Goszczyński whom he admired less for his Cossackophile poetry as for his agility in conspiratorial work.¹⁰⁷

According to Pol himself, it was only in 1834 when he visited Cracow that he eventually resolved to be Polish rather than German.¹⁰⁸ Already in 1833, a collection of his Polish-language patriotic poems had been published in Paris as *Pieśni Janusza* (*The Songs of*

¹⁰⁵ For Pol's biography see Jan Hanik and Janina Rosnowska, "Pol (Pohl, Poll, Pol von Pollenburg) Wincenty Terencjusz Jakub," *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Vol. XXVII/2, No. 113, 255-263.

¹⁰⁶ For Pol's family history see Isabel Röskau-Rydel, *Niemiecko-austriackie rodziny urzędnicze w Galicji 1772-1918 : kariery zawodowe, środowisko, akulturacja i asymilacja* (Cracow, 2011), 288-309.

¹⁰⁷ Danuta Sosnowska, *Seweryn Goszczyński: biografia duchowa* (Wrocław, 2000), 75-76.

¹⁰⁸ Röskau-Rydel, *Niemiecko-austriackie rodziny urzędnicze*, 298.

Janusz). Written while he was closely involved with revolutionary conspiracies, they can serve as a document of his state of mind at that time.

At the turn of 1830s and 1840s, Wincenty Pol seems to have lost faith in the revolutionary ideal and started to gravitate towards the right, just like Siemieński would a few years later. A part of public opinion would see his political evolution and especially his friendly contacts with some Austrian bureaucrats as national treason. At the same time, he came to be interested in the professional study of geography. It was in that period that he wrote and published the already mentioned *Pieśń o ziemi naszej*, followed by serious academic works on the geography of the former Commonwealth and neighbouring regions. However, Pol did not manage to get the university position that he coveted. In February 1846, he happened to be visiting his landowning friend in Western Galicia and fell victim to the peasants that rose against the nobles whom they suspected (quite rightly, in many cases) to be plotting against the Austrian authorities. Pol was severely beaten, but was saved by the Austrian military, though all his papers covering several years of intense research were burnt.

In 1848 Pol sided with the moderate constitutionalists and the next year he was eventually nominated as professor of geography at the University of Cracow. However, the authorities dismissed him only four years later. Soon after, in 1855, he published the epic poem *Mohort* about a faithful Polish-Lithuanian soldier serving on the Ukrainian borderland in the 1760s. He had been working on this piece since 1840. Despite political controversies resulting from his moderately conservative and resolutely anti-revolutionary stance, Wincenty Pol died as a universally revered figure. In 1881, nine years after his death, Pol's body, together with that of Lucjan Siemieński, was exhumed and interred in the newly established Crypt of the Meritorious Poles in the Skałka Church in Cracow, a national pantheon organised by conservative autonomists governing Galicia at that time. For a couple of years, those two democrats-turned-conservatives would be the only modern figures buried there (accompanied only by the fifteenth-century chronicler Jan Długosz).

Interestingly, the revolutionary democratic activities of the 1830s did not leave a strong imprint on Pol's works from that period. During the same decade, Lucjan Siemieński depicted the Cossacks as manly individualists and peasant freedom fighters. He overtly lionised the leaders of the 1768 Ukrainian unrest that was universally remembered as a string of massacres perpetrated by benighted, fanatical mobs, a calamity universally attributed to Russian agents. In this respect, Siemieński was actually more radical than the mainstream Polish-Lithuanian democrats and closer to the utopian socialist Gromada Humań based on Jersey. No such fascination seems to play an important role in Pol's revolutionary

imagination. In his *Pieśni Janusza*, the default association that the term Cossack evokes is that of fearsome, irregular marauders of the Russian Imperial army.¹⁰⁹ Where Michał Czajkowski chose to depict the Volhynian Cavalry of Karol Różycki as a sort of Polish-Lithuanian Cossacks, not even a trace of this image is found in Pol's poems about that unit. For him they are insurgent noblemen, at the same time rakish and pious.¹¹⁰ Again, the Cossacks appear only as Russian soldiers.¹¹¹

On the other hand, the Zaporozhia is mentioned in the introductory poem as one historical region of the old Commonwealth.¹¹² Also, at least two other poems, without explicitly mentioning the Cossacks, do employ the motifs and devices unequivocally associated with the Cossack-inhabited steppes, such as falcons and burial mounds.¹¹³ Cossack tropes are used as an element of the Polish-Lithuanian nation-building imagery, but not necessarily suggesting any particular model of socio-political organisation, just the poetic past betokening a great future. In the single instance in which the Cossack rebellions are mentioned explicitly, an endnote, they are described as Ukraine's 'desecrating hand grabbing arms against her own motherland,'¹¹⁴ clearly not a model for any patriotic or nation-building enterprise.

Three poems about Count Waław Seweryn Rzewuski are the only more detailed rendering of Cossack themes. Rzewuski was a Polish-Lithuanian aristocrat famous for his extravagance and fondness for life on horseback. He was born in 1784 in Lviv, the son of Seweryn Rzewuski, one of the three leaders of the reactionary Confederation of Targowica, a faction that plotted with Catherine the Great to overturn the Enlightenment reforms of 1791. Even today, Targowica remains a synonym of national treason, and being Seweryn Rzewuski's son was an unusual stigma.

After the Congress of Vienna, Count Waław Rzewuski spent a few years in Syria where he was buying Arab horses for his stud. Back in his estates in the Podilia in the Russian Empire, he would wear Arab clothes and live according to the Arab ways. He also left a beautifully illustrated manuscript treatise on horse breeding *Sur les chevaux orientaux et provenants des races orientales*. It was rumoured that he had converted to Islam, but nothing certain could be known. Gradually, Rzewuski's Arab lifestyle was transformed into a Cossack

¹⁰⁹ Wincenty Pol, *Pieśni Janusza. T. 1* (Paris, 1833), 123-128.

¹¹⁰ Pol, *Pieśni Janusza*, 129-132, 165-170.

¹¹¹ Pol, *Pieśni Janusza*, 168-169.

¹¹² Pol, *Pieśni Janusza*, 8.

¹¹³ Pol, *Pieśni Janusza*, 14-15, 51-53.

¹¹⁴ Pol, *Pieśni Janusza*, 237.

one. When the war of 1831 broke out, Waław Rzewuski organised an insurgent cavalry unit. He went missing in action in the battle of Dashiv in May 1831 and his body was never found which only strengthened his legend.

Rzewuski is the only 'real' Cossack of Pol's *Pieśni Janusza* or rather the only personage portrayed as such. The three pieces devoted to him are presented not as Pol's own compositions but those of Waław Widort, a bard and torban-player in Waław Rzewuski's service. In the first poem, Rzewuski is referred to as Tadż Ulfechr (a Polish rendering of his Arab nickname Taj al-Fahr, the Crown of Glory) and depicted as a Cossack longing for Ukraine during his Middle Eastern wanderings.¹¹⁵ In the second, he is portrayed as the Hetman Golden Beard, a larger-than-life Cossack hero that fights the mob of Muscovite invaders.¹¹⁶ His Cossack traits have nothing to do with any political ideology, they just make him exceptionally poetic and heroic. Rzewuski is by no means a democratic hero, but a great lord *par excellence*, so elevated that he can permit himself the extravagance of the Cossack-Bedouin lifestyle.

The third and last poem focuses on his beautiful mare Guldia.¹¹⁷ The author does not exploit the seemingly obvious topics of loyalty and intimacy with non-human nature. Rather, what is emphasised is the femininity and erotic-like allure of Guldia, additionally sugared with nostalgia. The poem eulogises the old Ukraine where such a Cossack-Bedouin Count could have lived. It is clearly stated that there is no return to it, that the days in which oxymoronic figures of this sort used to exist are beyond reach, on the other side of the rift caused by the war of 1831. The piece on Guldia closes the triptych which suggests its being a sort of summary.

The Cossack lifestyle is a way in which an extraordinary man expresses his unusual personality and his privileged relationship with his native land. That this male hero is an aristocrat and that his condition is presented as unattainable in the corrupted modern realities, points in an unequivocally conservative direction, even if the author himself was unaware of it.

Pol's most influential work was his *Pieśń o ziemi naszej*, published for the first time in the Prussian Grand Duchy of Poznań in 1843, but reprinted several times. It is a descriptive poem in which the author brings together all the fragmented lands of the former Commonwealth. One needs to remember that in the early 1840s not only were they divided

¹¹⁵ Pol, *Pieśni Janusza*, 141-146.

¹¹⁶ Pol, *Pieśni Janusza*, 147-150.

¹¹⁷ Pol, *Pieśni Janusza*, 151-153.

between four states, but also into various territories within those states, wherein different legal and administrative regimes functioned. Pol, who was building a parallel career in academic geography, aimed to codify the national space that most of his readers would never see with their eyes (in the 1880s this task would be undertaken in a more scholarly manner by the authors of the monumental *Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and the Neighboring Slavic Countries*). In the 1840s, intellectuals from other nations, especially the Russians, started to make arguments reclaiming the non-Polish-speaking areas dominated by the Polish-Lithuanian landowning class, whereas the 1839 destruction of Greek Catholic Church in Russia proved that the government in Saint Petersburg had the capacity to inflict deep wounds in the Polish-Lithuanian heritage of the region. The architecture of Pol's poem suggests that he treated this pressure seriously and meant to defy the Russians. The so-called *Ziemie Zabrane* (*The Forfeited Lands*), the territories incorporated directly into the Russian Empire (as opposed to the rump Kingdom of Poland, autonomous until the 1870s), enjoy a notably privileged share of space. The description starts with Lithuania (that is today's Lithuania and Belarus) and then descends southwards to present-day Ukraine. Only after describing its three historical components in detail, Volhynia, Ukraine (in the narrow, nineteenth-century Polish sense of the term) and Podilia, does it move westwards along the Carpathians. It is only in the final part of the poem that a generic description of the core Polish-Lithuanian lands is provided. Characteristically, it is not only the ethnographic Poland (predominantly Polish-speaking and Latin Catholic) that is treated with such neglect. There is no detailed description of Lviv and Galicia, which suggests that at that time a Galician poet did not see it as part of the poetical borderland or in any way endangered by foreigners' encroachments.

The Cossacks appear only in the section devoted to Ukraine (that is today's West Central Ukraine). Or rather, traces of the Cossacks. True, at one point a Cossack is mentioned explicitly, but it is obvious that this is no real Cossack, but a lord's servant, the so-called manor Cossack, referred to in this way, the same as one speaks of the hotel Schweitzer or courtly haiduks.¹¹⁸ Otherwise, there is only the wide breath of the steppes, evoking freedom and adventure, and the Eastern Christian built environment. Also the inhabitants of Ukraine are credited with being more robust and vital thanks to the fact that the blood of Cossack officers runs in their veins. This is all that is left of the Zaporozhian legend.¹¹⁹ The situation is somewhat paradoxical: on the one hand, the Cossack colour (wide steppes, Eastern

¹¹⁸ Wincenty Pol, *Pieśń o ziemi naszej* (Poznań, 1843), 45.

¹¹⁹ Pol, *Pieśń o ziemi naszej*, 47.

Christianity, vitality) is the defining feature of Ukraine, on the other, there are virtually no Cossacks there. The same tendency can be observed in the epic poem *Mohort* which Pol published only in the 1850s, but which he was already writing at that time. Its fourth canto describes how the protagonist fights the Haidamaks in 1768, but they are only mentioned in passing as rebel peasants that can be easily defeated by the Polish-Lithuanian knights.¹²⁰ The Ruthenian commoner fighters fade away, becoming an agencyless prey of the noblemen. A Cossack Ukraine without the Cossacks – perhaps the ultimate embodiment of the Polish-Lithuanian nationalist longings of the time.

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Despite the political dynamic described above, the Cossacks never ceased to excite the Polish-language public. Perhaps the best proof is the emphatically negative but also mesmerising and explicitly sexualised portrayal of Zaporozhians offered by Henryk Sienkiewicz in his hit novel, *With Fire and Sword* published in the 1880s.¹²¹ Lest we stray too far from the *Vormärz* Galicia, let us consider the evidence provided by Celina Treter, a noble girl from a landowning family, born around 1830 and raised in the vicinity of Lviv. In 1839, she started to document her experiences and thoughts with watercolour paintings which she collected in an album that she called *A Young Girl's Life from 1839 to 1853 in Loni*.¹²² Her pictures oscillate between a warm matter-of-factness and a mild satire, never approaching the insurrectionary bravado or messianist martyrology usually associated with the nineteenth-century Polish-language culture. For instance, her vignettes of the revolution of 1848 (when she was around eighteen) depict the struggle as a fundamentally unserious affair, a pleasant but grotesque costume party.¹²³ Otherwise, Treter portrays the men from her milieu as neat, elegant and well-behaved, but never really exciting. At best, they are *cajetilla*-like toffs, but more often uncle-like bores. One such male's portrait is dated 14 February 1848 and captioned: 'Love is hot water that cools down after a while.'¹²⁴

There is, however, a notable exception to the sobriety in young Treter's oeuvre. In 1853, in a separate notebook, she copied with her own hand a few Ruthenian-language songs

¹²⁰ Wincenty Pol, *Poezyje Wincentego Pola* (Cracow, 1855), 101-123.

¹²¹ Henryk Sienkiewicz, *Ogniem i mieczem* (Warsaw, 1884), 8 volumes; see also Roman Koropeckyj, "The Image of Bohdan Khmelnytsky in Polish Romanticism and Its Post-Romantic Reflex," in Amelia Glaser, ed., *Stories of Khmelnytsky Competing Literary Legacies of the 1648 Ukrainian Cossack Uprising* (Stanford, 2015), 110-126.

¹²² Celina Dominikowska née Treter, *Życie młodej dziewczyny od 1839 roku do 1853 w Loni*, Biblioteka Narodowa w Warszawie, manuscript AFRys.15/I, also available online <https://polona.pl/item/25435985/0/> (retrieved 31.10.2016).

¹²³ Dominikowska née Treter, *Życie młodej dziewczyny*, 43r, 48r, 54r, 57r.

¹²⁴ Dominikowska née Treter, *Życie młodej dziewczyny*, 41r.

from a volume published in Warsaw by Tymko Padura.¹²⁵ This was a contemporary poet originating from the Russian-ruled Ukraine who wrote successful Cossack-themed pieces in both Polish and Ruthenian. Treter adorned her mini-collection of Padura's poems with a drawing of Ukrainian Cossacks dated 9 April 1853 (Picture 10).¹²⁶ While artistically a far cry from her best works, the picture reveals how she imagined the undisciplined masculinity of these commoner warriors. A bard sits besides a well playing a bandura as three Cossacks stand around him, one of them with a pipe. Another Cossack dances a kozachok. Yet another one can be seen in the background returning from a hunt with two geese. The scene is located at what seems to be a peasant farm. All men in the picture have dark facial hair and wear distinctive Cossack clothes, combining military and peasant elements. Self-confident, virile and negligent of elite propriety rules, they remind us of Sarmiento's Facundo and Monvoisin's Federalist gaucho soldier, quite a contrast with the way in which Treter depicted the males surrounding her in her real life – either as fops or jovial uncles.



10. A group of Cossacks drawn by Celina Treter in 1853

¹²⁵ Tymko [Tomasz] Padura, *Ukrainky z nutoju Tymka Padurry* (Warsaw, 1844).

¹²⁶ Tymko [Tomasz] Padura, *Ukrainky z nutoju Tymka Padury*, Biblioteka Narodowa w Warszawie, manuscript Mus. 16, 2r, also available online <https://polona.pl/item/42406593/6/> (retrieved 31.10.2016).

The contents of Treter's *A Young Girl's Life* attest to her being keenly aware of political struggles transpiring around her, not least the one caused by the emerging Ruthenian national movement, emphatically opposed to the resurrection of a united Poland-Lithuania (hers is probably the oldest surviving graphic depiction of the yellow-blue banner that was to become the Ukrainian national flag).¹²⁷ It is thus quite probable that the young lady's decision to copy the Ruthenian-language works of a Polish-Lithuanian patriotic poet was her own very private attempt at appropriating the Ruthenian folk culture for the cause of Polish-Lithuanian nationalism. What I find much more interesting here, however, is how she mixed the military and peasant elements to reproduce an eroticised vision of rebellious, non-elite males. The representations of Cossacks and stories about their adventures could be used for political purposes, but did not have to. The fact that around the middle of the nineteenth century most Polish-language political activists chose to abandon them, does not mean that the images lost any of their power. What made them so effective throughout the century, both in politics and in entertainment, was that they promised a possibility of a masculine subjectivity very different from the one known to the nineteenth-century elites. As is attested by the case of Celina Treter, this dream attracted not only the blasé bourgeois or enraged commoner men, but also some very talented, perspicacious and well-born young women.

7.7. Enter Ruthenians

At the turn of August and September of 1914, members of several paramilitary organisations from Eastern Galicia were formed into a separate unit within the framework of the Austro-Hungarian army: the Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen (*Ukrains'ki Sichovi Stril'tsi* or *Ukrainische Sitschower Schützen*). Simultaneously, Polish Legions were formed in Cracow. This fact is quite telling about the profound changes that took place in Galicia during the nineteenth century. First of all, at the beginning of the twentieth century there coexisted two separate nations jostling for power in the Crownland and influence in Vienna: nobody would expect their members to fight in the same nationally-aligned units. Secondly, the Ruthenians already preferred to be called Ukrainians, a name that had at least two advantages: it clearly differentiated them from the Russians and at the same time emphasised their unity with the Orthodox population of Russian-ruled Ukrainian lands. Lastly, the label of Sich: this was a reference to the historical headquarters of the Zaporozhian Cossacks located on the eyots of Dnieper. When one consults the photographs of the Sich Riflemen there is hardly

¹²⁷ Dominikowska née Treter, *Życie młodej dziewczyny*, 49r.

anything Cossack about them, they look like ordinary Austrian soldiers of the time. The name of Sich had been employed since the beginning of the twentieth century by a network of Ukrainian paramilitary organisations modelled after their Polish and Czech counterparts. In 1914 it simply stood for any military or paramilitary activity of young Ukrainian males. Though watered down by inevitable banalisation, the Cossack characteristics suggested by the term Sich was inextricably connected with Ukrainian valour. Every Ukrainian soldier was now a Sich man, a Cossack, and no other criteria needed to be fulfilled.

This whole situation would have been quite a surprise for anybody living in Eastern Galicia at the beginning of the previous century. In the first decade of the nineteenth century only a couple of high officials of the Greek Catholic Church suggested that the Ruthenians formed a nation separate from the Polish-Lithuanian one. The heritage of early medieval Rus' and the resulting kinship with the non-Austrian inheritors of this tradition were important elements of their vision, but they would not have been very happy about emphasising the connection with the Zaporozhian Cossacks: anarchical rebels and fervent defenders of Orthodox Christianity, Greek Catholicism's main competitor. Indeed, as was noted by Andriy Zayarnyuk, as late as 1848 '[n]owhere ... does one find stories of Ukrainian Cossack and Hetmans' employed by Ruthenian nation builders.¹²⁸ In this section I will sketch how the ideologies of Ruthenian nation were formulated in the first five decades of the nineteenth century and the modest role of Cossack myth in this process.

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In fact, the Ruthenians did not need to enter Eastern Galicia, it was their land and they had always been there. What they needed to do was to redefine themselves and lay claims for the country in which they had been living since time immemorial, but which had been invented only very recently, a generation or two before. Galicia as a whole was a product of Enlightenment Austrian statecraft, though not devoid of some Baroque ornamentation. The Crownland was carved out from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772, the year of the so-called first partition. In the Commonwealth, the eastern part of the new Austrian possession had formed the bulk of the Ruthenian Palatinate, a relatively affluent province, by no means peripheral, rather a south-eastern pillar of the very core of Poland-Lithuania. That it was a core region does not mean that it was homogeneous. Two main religious communities coexisted there: Latin and Greek Catholics, the latter traditionally referred to as Uniates or simply, Ruthenians. The Latin Church was more prestigious and nobility-oriented, whereas

¹²⁸ Zayarnyuk, *Ukrainian Peasantry in Galicia*, 38.

the Greek Church was associated with peasants, burghers and petty nobles.¹²⁹ In reality, the delimitation was not clear. These were two malleable labels rather than two completely separate groups. An individual could attend both a Greek and a Latin church, depending on situation, for example, if the preferred church was very far one would not bother travelling without good reason. There were also two dominant tongues: Polish and Ruthenian. Both were known and used, to a varying degree, by the majority of nobles, peasants and burgesses, though Ruthenian, an unregulated vernacular, was associated with a lower social position and less formal communication registers.

What must be emphasised is that in Eastern Galicia almost everybody was in some sense Ruthenian: even the highest echelons of Latin Catholic nobility would employ this identification to underline their attachment to their homeland and their descent from medieval knights and princes of Western Rus'. All this is not to deny that the Galician Ruthenian nobles were, in the words of Roman Szporluk, 'political Poles,' but rather to nuance it by emphasising that they were early modern Commonwealth Poles with a twist.¹³⁰

The partition of 1772 and the creation of Galicia resulted from a geopolitical deal between Austria, Prussia and Russia. However, the Viennese government sought to justify its acquisition in accordance with the *ancien-régime* diplomatic decorum. It was argued that the newly created territory was actually restored to its lawful heirs, because in the Middle Ages the Western Rus' polity of Halych and Volodymyr (hence the official Austrian names Galicia and Lodomeria) had been ruled by kings of Hungary. The Ruthenian heritage lay at the very foundation of the Austrian claim to Galicia, even if virtually everyone in Europe understood that this was not the true cause of partition.¹³¹ From the very beginning, the Austrian authorities strove to strengthen the Greek Catholic clergy which had been treated as evidently inferior to its Latin counterpart. The government created new education opportunities for Greek Catholic clerics and in 1806/1807 it secured the elevation of the bishopric of Lviv to independent archbishopric and metropolitanate. The Greek Catholic priests catered to the bulk of lower-class Eastern Galicians and the state wanted these individuals to become a more efficient tool in its hands. By offering the Greek Catholic priests a quality education the Austrian government managed to drastically ameliorate their socio-cultural situation.¹³²

¹²⁹ For relatively late examples of this hierarchy see Danuta Sosnowska, *Inna Galicja* (Warsaw 2008), 45-46, 73.

¹³⁰ Roman Szporluk, *Zaleski Lecture: Poland in Modern Ukrainian History 1795-1991*, delivered in Cambridge, MA, 19.11.2011, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiPY5x2P3Xs> (last retrieved 29.03.2016).

¹³¹ Larry Wolff, *Idea of Galicia*, 13-62; Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, MA 2016), 26-27, 71-75.

¹³² Jan Kozik, *The Ukrainian National Movement in Galicia, 1815-1849* (Edmonton, 1986), 23-27.

Already in Polish-Lithuanian times, the leadership of the Greek Catholic Church, due to its relatively weak position, was much more royalist than its Latin Catholic counterpart. After 1772, the Greek Catholic prelates transferred their loyalty from the Commonwealth's kings to Austria's emperors. In terms of their cultural makeup they did not differ from the Polish-Lithuanian elite of Galicia, but they chose to present themselves as leaders of the pious Ruthenian nation, separate from the ever rebellious Poles. They were hostile to Napoleon and heralded Austria as the best of all possible fatherlands. The way in which they understood their Ruthenian identity was very conservative and had nothing to do with the emancipation of the commoners or vernacular Ruthenian.¹³³ Still, despite all the limitations, it was precisely those prelates who formulated the first nation-building ideology for Galician Ruthenians, no small an achievement.

Thus, before the 1830s the Ruthenian nation was invoked only by the Josephinist ecclesiastics of the Greek Catholic Church, referred to as the party of Saint George (after the Greek Catholic Cathedral of Saint George in Lviv) or later, as the Old Ruthenians. Among the Galician volunteers joining the Polish army in 1831 there was no lack of Greek Catholic students and petty nobles. Greek Catholics were also very numerous in the democratic conspiracies of the 1830s and 1840s. Indeed, it was from among them that some of the most radical activists were recruited. They would be the first to write in the vernacular Ruthenian tongue and circulate explicitly political texts directed to the common people. Two important authors of such Ruthenian-language brochures, Kacper Cięglewicz and Michał Popiel, eventually became fervent opponents of the Ruthenian national movement that emerged in 1848, not least because it overtly rejected the anti-Habsburg thrust of the Polish-Lithuanian democrats.

It was only in the mid-1830s that a small milieu of precarious intellectuals came together in Lviv who, following the example of Serbs and Slavic peoples from other parts of Austria, wanted to codify a literary language modelled after the vernacular spoken by the Galician Ruthenian commoners.¹³⁴ The leaders of this group were young seminarians Iakiv

¹³³ For an overview of this period see Mykhailo Vozniak, *Prosvitni zmahania halyts'kykh Ukraintsev v 19 vitsi (do 1850 r.)* (Lviv 1912), 1-17; Vadym Adadurov, "Svit politychnykh pohliadiv Antoniiia Anhelovycha. Dokumenty do vyvchennia fenomenu impers'koi identychnosti sered dukhovenstva Halychyny naprykintsi XVIII-na pochatku XIX st.," *Naukovi zapysky UKU*, Vol. 2 (2010, series *Istoriia*), No. 1, 299-336; Mar'ian Mudryi, "Avstrorussynstvo v Halychyni: sproba okreslennia problemy," *Visnyk Lvivs'koho Universytetu. Serii istorychna*, Vol. 35-36 (2000), 571-604; John Paul Himka, "The Greek Catholic Church and Nation-Building in Galicia, 1772-1918," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 8, No 3/4 (December 1984), 426-452. The interpretation of facts is mine.

¹³⁴ For the Triad see Kozik, *Ukrainian Movement in Galicia*, 51-125; Wolff, *Idea of Galicia*, 119-120.

Holovats'kyi, Markiian Shashkevych and Ivan Vahylevych, the so-called Ruthenian Trinity, and it is with them that the usual narrative about the Ruthenian nation-building in Galicia starts. All three were born in the early 1810s into families of Greek Catholic village priests and met while studying in the seminary in Lviv. In 1836, they published a Ruthenian almanac titled *Rusalka dnistrovaia* (*The Dniester Nymph*) in Budapest, which contained pieces in vernacular printed with modernised Cyrillic types modelled after the Russian and Serbian alphabets. The Galician censor forbade its distribution in the Crownland because the Greek Catholic ecclesiastical establishment did not wish to have a new literary standard based on the commoners' tongue: the only Ruthenian language acceptable to the Polish-speaking prelates was the Ruthenian version of Church Slavonic used in liturgy and religious books, and printed with the traditional Cyrillic Azbuka types. Tormented by life adversities and the ill will of their ecclesiastical superiors, the Ruthenian Trinity rapidly disintegrated. However, they managed to prove that it was feasible to create a modern, autonomous public sphere for the Galician Ruthenians.

The key event that closes this period is the so-called Galician Slaughter that took place in the western Polish-speaking part of the Crownland in February 1846. The noble conspirators, steered by emissaries of the emigre TDP (Polish Democratic Association), wanted to start a revolution that would both emancipate the peasants and liberate Poland-Lithuania, but the peasants suspected that it was a landowners' cabal aimed against the Austrian state, the commoners' sole protector. Not only did the peasants attack parties of noble insurgents, they also plundered hundreds of manors. This was a watershed moment.¹³⁵ Nobody expected that the peasants' hatred of the nobility would be so strong and that they would be able to grasp the initiative on their own (indeed, it was later suggested that the Austrian officials had organised the whole movement from above). Moreover, if any widespread peasant violence had been feared, in accordance with the predominant stereotypes and historical memory, it should have taken place among the Eastern Galician Ruthenians, not the Western Galician, Polish-speaking Latin Catholics. Andriy Zayarnyuk suggests that a good deal of Polish nation-building efforts in the later decades were devoted to erasing the memory of 1846, removing the guilt of fratricide from the ethnically Polish peasants and vilifying the Ruthenians, if not as direct perpetrators of the slaughter, than at least as the nation endowed with all the bad traits ascribed by the noble tradition to the licentious peasant

¹³⁵ Stefan Kieniewicz, *Ruch chłopski w Galicji w 1846 roku* (Wrocław, 1951); Wolff, *Idea of Galicia*, 141-187; Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, 157-162; Zayarnyuk, *Ukrainian Peasantry in Galicia*, 1-39; Łuczewski, *Odwieczny naród*, 187-205; Trencsényi, Janowski et al., *Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, 222.

rabble.¹³⁶ The trauma of 1846 dissuaded the Polish-Lithuanian democrats from agitation among the peasantry and so they completely abandoned this front when 1848 came. Lastly, the calamity of the Galician Slaughter was a devastating embarrassment for the democratic movement, seriously undermining its credibility.

The progressive-leaning sectors of the Eastern Galician intelligentsia had to look for alternatives. One option was formulated by Iakiv Holovats'kyi in his programmatic German-language article that appeared in summer 1846. The author accused the Greek Catholic prelates of neglecting the interests of the Ruthenian nationality and called upon the Austrian government to introduce daring reforms, most importantly abolishing the *corvée*, whilst simultaneously offering the Galician Ruthenians a liberal brand of Austroslavism.¹³⁷

On the eve of 1848, the Ruthenian national allegiance was still confined to relatively small numbers. Perhaps, it was entertained as one option among many by wider circles, but this we do not know (for now). Nevertheless, it was no longer this unconditionally loyal and passive identification that had been championed by the Josephinist clergymen. The arguments raised by the few Ruthenian liberals pushed the prelates and their followers into a debate that was inevitably changing the political landscape by the very virtue of taking place. The slogan of the Ruthenian nation was transformed into a field of fruitful competition between two clearly articulated ideologies: the Church-oriented Enlightened conservatism on the one hand and the liberal Austroslavism on the other. The setting was ready for a mass agitation.

But what about the Cossacks?

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The short answer to this question is that they are to be found with the Ruthenian Trinity. Its members were virtually the only Galician Ruthenian nation builders that paid some attention to the Cossack question. In this respect the historiographical clichés are fully vindicated. It is widely accepted that in the writings of those three authors one can find many influences of the Polish-language culture of the time.¹³⁸ However, the fascination of the Polish-language authors with Cossack topics had a very limited impact on them. The motifs of this kind appear in their writings only occasionally. Actually, again in accordance with the standard narratives, only Markiian Shashkevych turned to them more often.

Ivan Vahylevych touched upon the Cossack topics in his essay on Ruthenian folk songs. It is a historical narrative very close to that which we know from Gogol's writings,

¹³⁶ Zayarnyuk, *Ukrainian Peasantry in Galicia*, 22-39.

¹³⁷ Kozik, *Ukrainian Movement in Galicia*, 167-171.

¹³⁸ Kozik, *Ukrainian Movement in Galicia*, 29-50, 127-135.

most probably because they both drew on the same historical works published in the Russian Empire and available from the Ossolineum Library in Lviv. According to this interpretation, the Cossacks were a spontaneous response of the people of Rus', who had been robbed of their traditional elite, princes and knights, by Tatar attacks. The Cossack songs on which Vahylevych focuses are described as an expression of robust national essence and also 'a knightly noise blowing from the Zaporozhia.'¹³⁹ On the whole, however, it is not a situation that could be assessed in positive terms, but a result of the catastrophic Mongol invasions. The empowered, commoner freedom fighters are desperados who, their chests covered in blood, struggle to restore their former society. It is not the ideal of the Zaporozhian Cossack republic, but the early medieval monarchy of Kiev which must be pursued.

In Iakiv Holovats'kyi's oeuvre I have encountered only one story, allegedly of genuinely folk origin, in which the Cossacks make an appearance.¹⁴⁰ It is a small picture in which they plunder a Jewish inn and the narrative focus is on the Jewish innkeeper. The Cossacks are not even portrayed there, but what is clear is that both a Jewish entrepreneur and a noble-born officer of a private militia are afraid of them. Whatever their actual characteristics, the Cossacks are a force which terrifies the peasants' oppressors and annuls the power that they normally wield.

Though Iakiv Holovats'kyi himself does not seem to be fascinated with the Cossack myth, his brother Ivan certainly was. He addressed Iakiv as *sokole mii syzen'kyi* (*my grey falcon*), an overt reference to the Cossack folklore.¹⁴¹ He was also a fervent fan of Józef Bohdan Zaleski, though he deplored the fact that the poet was writing in Polish, rather than Ruthenian. Still, he could not help but copy Zaleski's whole poems in his letters to Iakiv: 'Well, as there's room, I'll write down at least one ballad. [...] And another ballad...'¹⁴²

The poems that excited Iakiv Holovats'kyi covered a wide range of topics. There was one about the past (and possibly future) greatness of Poland-Lithuania united with Ukraine, another about the author's love for Slavdom, mediated by his attachment to the martyred Poland-Lithuania and robust Ukraine, yet another about the historical deeds of the Zaporozhian Cossacks in the Polish-Lithuanian service, and finally, one describing the sadness of a young Cossack emigrating from Ukraine (a topic especially dear to Ivan Holovats'kyi who himself lived in Vienna).

¹³⁹ *Tvory Markiiiana Shashkevycha i Iakova Holovats'koho* (Lviv 1913), 342.

¹⁴⁰ *Tvory Shashkevycha i Holovats'koho*, 179.

¹⁴¹ Iakiv Holovats'kyi, *Korespondentsiia Iakova Holovats'koho v litakh 1835-49*, ed. by Kyrylo Studyns'kyi (Lviv, 1909), 101.

¹⁴² Holovats'kyi, *Korespondentsiia*, 118-119.

Ivan seems to have most liked the poem that combined the Polish-Ukrainian patriotism with Slavophile sentiments and vague millenarian promises. It contained descriptions of the 'dry sea' of the Ukrainian steppe,¹⁴³ which symbolised not only nature and purity, but also masculine freedom. By and large, the poet's Slavophilia and obscure prophecies endowed his works with a flair of universal relevance that spoke well to his generation's expectation that their nation (no matter which one it was) would play a central role in the rejuvenation of Europe. For Ivan Holovats'kyi, Zaleski's works were an example of how to shape a proud and autonomous Ruthenian voice with the use of references to the historical Cossack glory and exoticism of Ukraine.

Markiiian Shashkevych's oeuvre in particular stands out as regards the Cossack motifs. Not only was he interested in Cossack topics, but he also applied the Cossack literary devices in an original way. He was not merely copying the Polish-language authors of the time, but rather developed his interests in parallel to them. For instance his manuscript sketch on the history of the Zaporozhians and the Sich¹⁴⁴ points to his acquaintance with the Russian-language historiography of the time, most importantly with Dmitrii Bantysh-Kamenskii.¹⁴⁵ However, it cannot be denied that Shashkevych was well acquainted with Polish-language literature dealing with the Cossacks. The best proof of this is the fact that he translated into Ruthenian a fragment of Goszczyński's *Zamek kaniowski*¹⁴⁶ and that he chose an epigraph from Józef Bohdan Zaleski for the ballads section in *Rusalka dnistrovaia*.

In Shashkevych's own composition *Pohonia (The Chase)*, the Cossack is presented as a young and knightly warrior who rushes through the steppes to liberate his sister kidnapped by the Tatars. Though, thanks to his extraordinary horsemanship and fighting skills he manages to catch up and kill the kidnapper, his sister perishes and he chooses to emigrate. Freedom and masculinity are presented as inevitably mixed with grief and exile. Otherwise, Shashkevych's use of the Cossack poems seems to be simpler and more optimistic. In the poem *Pobratymovi*, dedicated to Mykola Ustyianovych, the references to Cossack Ukraine convey the promise of freedom, memory of past glories and the greatness of the fatherland that is not confined to the Eastern Galician backwater but extends to the limitless Pontic

¹⁴³ Holovats'kyi, *Korespondentsiia*, 117.

¹⁴⁴ *Tvory Shashkevycha i Holovats'koho*, 129.

¹⁴⁵ Cyryl Studziński [Kyrylo Studyns'kyi], *Geneza poetycznych utworów Markiana Szaszkiewicza* (Cracow, 1896), 34, 40.

¹⁴⁶ *Tvory Shashkevycha i Holovats'koho*, 39-42.

steppes. The wind blowing from that direction ‘will fly and sing and tell the whole world about the Ruthenian glory’ (*rus'ka slava*).¹⁴⁷

‘The Ruthenian glory’ seems to be the key concept here. The Ruthenians will again be proud of their identity and will take their due place on the world stage. In other words, they will become a nation again, peer to other nations and endowed with inalienable national honour. Caspar Hirschi suggests that the European nation-building discourses are genetically related to what he identifies as the overheating of the late medieval economy of honour. The centrality which Shashkevych ascribes to the Ruthenian glory resonates well with the Swiss scholar’s proposition. Even if Hirschi’s explanation were not valid in all European contexts and cases, for the Galician Ruthenians it seems to work well.

In the late Middle Ages a free male’s honour, that is the right to be respected, was asserted by the ability to challenge the honour of others and to counter the challenges against one’s own. One could only challenge members of the same estate, but within those confines everyone was equal (as far as matters of honour were concerned). The best exemplification of this stratified egalitarianism was the late medieval tournament in which, on the one hand, only the noble-born knights could participate but on the other, every participant could challenge anybody else and could be challenged accordingly. In theory (and sometimes in practice), a lowly knight of impeccable pedigree could joust with a king. On the other hand, challenges from the members of other estates, especially the inferior ones, were transgressions that should be ignored and at the same time punished (quite a difficulty in practice). The ideology of nation was formulated in such socio-cultural circumstances by ascendant humanist intellectuals of non-noble origin as a way to endow every free male with a share of national honour, no matter his original estate. Unlike in the binary visions that differentiated only between ‘us’ and an impure ‘them’ (as for instance, the medieval Christian worldview), the nations were imagined as multiple collective persons peer to and competing with each other.¹⁴⁸

The *Vormärz* Galician society was dominated by the Polish-Lithuanian nobility which was a very peculiar estate, on the one hand quite egalitarian, numerous and inclusive, but on the other, still excluding most people, not unlike the late medieval knights. The notion of nobility coexisted in it and interacted with other categories, such as nationality and citizenship. We should not forget that the Polish-Lithuanian heritage was in constant flux and tension with the Austrian forms and norms. In this complex situation the budding Ruthenian

¹⁴⁷ *Tvory Shashkevycha i Holovats'koho*, 21-23.

¹⁴⁸ Hirschi, *Nationalism*, 78-100.

intelligentsia occupied an unequivocally underprivileged position, not least because in its bulk it was composed of married parish priests, a peculiar status that further complicated their sense of masculinity and political empowerment (the latter denied to them also by their own ecclesiastical superiors).¹⁴⁹

The ideologies that I dub imperfectly as late Polish-Lithuanian nationalism, emphasised inclusiveness and openness, but at the same time set difficult entry tests for the newcomers. Most adherents of the Polish-Lithuanian nation reasoned similarly to their contemporary German liberal nationalists of whom Pieter Judson writes that they demanded: 'Be free, but be like us.'¹⁵⁰ While the logic of the Polish-Lithuanian nation building was kindred to the German one, its specific content was more distant, because in the first half of the nineteenth century the Polish-Lithuanian nation was still to a large extent a noble estate. This circumstance hindered the internalisation of this national ideology by the individuals and groups who could not claim the noble status. The lowly Ruthenian priests were like the late medieval arrivistes, incapable of challenging the noble-born knights and courtiers and thus of asserting their individual honour. What young Greek Catholic clerics could do was to challenge the Polish-Lithuanian nation as a whole in the name of a new collective person of honour, the Ruthenian nation (of which they envisioned themselves as leaders). It was the social status, not the ethnic markers (language and ecclesiastical rite), that motivated the young Ruthenian clerics to embark upon their nation-building adventure. The move was facilitated by the fact that the talk of Ruthenian nation had already been introduced by the Greek Catholic prelates and Austria was in the process of refashioning itself as a monarchy of peoples.

Thus, the national emancipation championed by the Ruthenian Trinity was also a social emancipation of the subalterns. The young clerics wanted to elevate the peasant tongue, at the same time searching for a lexicon that would transform the peasants from passive, contemptible victims of oppression into proud agents of national cause and bearers of national glory. Actually, it was not so much about the peasants as about the young clerics' own sense of place: the members of the Ruthenian Trinity were constructing a new platform of respectability for themselves, one that would elevate them much above the position of lowly village priests that had been given to them.

¹⁴⁹ For an interesting, though by no means satisfying, discussion of this question see Sosnowska, *Inna Galicja*, 43-58, 73-89.

¹⁵⁰ Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries*, 268.

The Cossack myth contributed in two different ways to the construction of Ruthenian glory. First of all, it presented the Ruthenian commoners as knightly warriors who had unquestionable achievements of their own and were respected, if not necessarily liked, by the privileged classes. Such was the message of Shashkevych's historical poems about Nalyvaiko and Khmel'nyts'kyi.¹⁵¹ It is especially evident in the latter, where the famous Hetman is portrayed at the very moment of imposing his will on Lviv, the city in which the young Ruthenian clerics would experience their powerlessness on so many occasions.

The Ukrainian Cossacks helped to fortify the Ruthenian glory in yet another manner. By appropriating the Cossacks, Shashkevych transformed the Galician Ruthenians from a small underprivileged community, languishing in an underdeveloped corner of the Monarchy, into a large nation straddling the Austro-Russian border and boasting great prospects for the future. Their situation became comparable in scale with that of partitioned Poland-Lithuania, their most important reference. In other words, with the help of Cossacks Shashkevych won the badly needed respectability for his planned nation. The Cossack devices enabled him to fully articulate 'the Ruthenian glory.'

7.8. Conclusions

The Ruthenian authors did not fully exploit the revolutionary potential of the Cossack figures. In fact, well into the second half of the century the Carpathian mountaineers remained a much more convincing shorthand for the masculine Ruthenian *Volk*.¹⁵² The reason for this is that until the beginning of the 1860s neither of the two competing ideologies of the Ruthenian nation was democratic, let alone revolutionary. True, the members of the Ruthenian Trinity and their satellites strove for the emancipation of their people, but not through violence. What they sought from the Cossacks was just another confirmation of respectability that was their due as a legitimate European nation. The revolutionary democracy was still a very Polish-Lithuanian enterprise, associated strongly, though by no means exclusively, with the tradition of noble insurgencies.

As we have seen, the Polish-language depictions of the Cossacks produced in Galicia were very diverse, both in their ideological drive and in other dimensions. This is because, as was noted by George Grabowicz, 'the Cossack myth is a nexus of Romantic themes and antinomies. It is on the one hand the vision of freedom, of communion and even integration with nature, of exotic life and bold exploits. It is also a grim vision, of the bloodshed of

¹⁵¹ *Tvory Shashkevycha i Holovats'koho*, 15-17.

¹⁵² Wolff, *Idea of Galicia*, 126-127.

fratricidal war, and the sadness of the destruction of a heroic way of life.’¹⁵³ Still, the authors tended to agree that the Cossacks represented an expressly masculine commoner agency which posed a vital threat to the social hierarchy dominated by the nobility. Some writers welcomed it, others feared it, but they did agree on a minimal definition. What the Cossacks stood for was not merely a dream of a more just society, but that of the violent struggle against the old order and the ideal of rebellious masculinity. Such a combination could appeal only to the revolutionary democrats and as it happened, the only revolutionary democrats in Galicia were Polish-Lithuanian nationalists. Of course, in reality not all Polish-Lithuanian nationalists were revolutionary democrats, but as regards the 1840s, one might easily think so. As was famously observed by Prince Metternich, *le polonisme* ‘is nothing but a formula, a word behind which is hidden the Revolution in its most brutal form [...] [which] preaches the overturning of all the bases upon which society rests.’ In Metternich’s eyes, the insurrectionary plots of Polish-Lithuanian nationalists amounted to nothing less than a ‘vast communist conspiracy.’¹⁵⁴

Indeed, the question of the commoners’ struggle against unjust social arrangements was articulated by various Polish-language authors, with a varying degree of political awareness and sympathy (or antipathy). The early pieces of Lucjan Siemieński mark the high point of the tendency to lionise the Cossacks as peasant freedom fighters. In the works of Wincenty Pol, who was also close to the revolutionary democratic ideology of Polish-Lithuanian nation, we see the tide already starting to ebb. First, in *Pieśni Janusza* the Cossacks lose their emancipatory thrust and then they almost completely disappear. In Pol’s later pieces there is only some Cossack colour without the Cossack themselves and the violent commoners fighting against the nobility are transformed into an indistinctive mob of bloodthirsty, faceless nonpersons. This harmonised well with the wider political situation: in the aftermath of 1846 the Polish-Lithuanian revolutionary democrats would need a lot of time to regain self-confidence.

While nationalisms were conceptualised in this chapter as political ideologies, or vessels for specific political demands and aspirations, the opposite is also true: political ideologies, such as revolutionary democracy, can be used as vessels for nationalist demands and then discarded when they lose their nation-building potential. This is exactly what happened to so many (though by no means all) Polish-Lithuanian revolutionaries in Galicia, who abandoned or toned down their democratic ideals for the sake of the (conservatively

¹⁵³ Grabowicz, *History and Myth*, 27.

¹⁵⁴ Wolff, *Idea of Galicia*, 147, 151.

defined) national interests. The treatment of the Cossack figures in the literary texts of the period can serve as an almost faultless litmus test for each writer's attitude towards democracy in any given moment.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the way in which the Zaporozhian Cossacks and Haidamaks are represented in Galicia is determined not so much by the national choices of the authors, as by their attitude towards the dream of violent social revolution. In other words, whether a writer is a revolutionary democrat or a reformist liberal. This non-nationalist, partisan divide is primary and fundamental. The nation-building ideologies are erected on its basis and profoundly conditioned by it. It is not, however, a case of simple equivalence and continuity. In the Galician Ruthenian imaginary of the *Vormärz*, the Cossack motifs do not occupy centre stage. In the somewhat unusual case of Markiian Shashkevych the representations of Zaporozhian Cossacks serve to enhance the respectability of Ukrainian commoners and to elevate them to the status of legitimate nation.

The Cossack myth was embraced by the Galician Ruthenians only in the 1860s, when a new brand of Ruthenian populists emerged in opposition not only to the Polish-Lithuanian nationalists, but also the Ruthenian liberals and conservatives. Though not necessarily revolutionary, these new populists were unequivocally democratic and eagerly took up the Cossack-related symbols and stories. They drew directly on the work of Ukrainian nation builders from the Russian Empire, not least that of Shevchenko, however the Polish-language renderings of the Cossack theme remained an omnipresent substratum until the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁵⁵

Ideologically, the Poles switched places with the Ruthenians. In the early 1860s the Polish-Lithuanian revolutionary democrats regained momentum for a short while, but after the disaster of the January Uprising in the Kingdom of Poland (1863–1864) they would become reliable collaborators of the Galician conservatives who transformed the now autonomous Crownland into the best of all possible Polish fatherlands. In the imagination of such docile democrats there was no place for the rebellious Cossacks. It was the Ruthenian populists who stepped into the shoes of militant defenders of the people and took over the Cossack symbols and stories. Eventually, they managed to impose their nation-building ideology on the Galician Ruthenian public and the Cossack motifs became virtually

¹⁵⁵ Ostap Sereda, "Hromady rannikh narodovtsiv u Skhidnii Halychyni (60-ti roky XIX st.)," *Ukraina: kul'turna spadshchyna, natsional'na svidomist', derzhavnist'*, Vol. 9 (2001), 378-392; idem, "From Church-Based to Cultural Nationalism: Early Ukrainophiles, Ritual-Purification Movement and Emerging Cult of Taras Shevchenko in Austrian Eastern Galicia in the 1860s," *Canadian American Slavic Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Spring 2006), 21-47.

tantamount with the Ukrainian nationhood, as it was called since the end of the nineteenth century. This shift can explain the choice of name for the Ukrainian Sich Rifleman of 1914.

The fluctuating presence of the literary Cossacks showcases the changing attitudes towards the dream of democratic revolution and its relationship with various nation-building ideologies. The 'rudimentary democracy' of manly individualists marked by 'a stamp of savage independence' was close to many hearts in the nineteenth century, not only that of Colonel Mitre. On several occasions, both Polish and Ruthenian democrats tried to make this dream come true and shape their nations accordingly. Eventually, it was the latter that succeeded in establishing this particular mythology as the imagery defining their national community. However, we should not draw too many bold conclusions. In the course of nineteenth and twentieth century, neither the Argentines, nor the Poles, nor the Ukrainians proved exceptionally successful in building truly democratic institutions. Clearly, ideology is not everything and perhaps that is fortunate.

8. Conclusions: The Knights of the Dandelion



11. An Argentine *payador*, Barcelona, 1886



12. A Ukrainian *lirnyk*, Warsaw, 1861

Both Argentine *Payadores* and Ukrainian *lirnyky* were non-elite bards associated with the gaucho and Cossack heritage of their fatherlands. As the pictures above show, by the second half of the nineteenth century they came to be represented in the mass media in very similar ways, as genuinely popular preservers of the true national spirit, the folkloric essence of their communities. In fact, these figures remained powerful symbols well beyond the confines of their native lands. Both prints reproduced here were primarily destined for publics outside of Argentina and Ukraine. That of the gaucho *payador* was published in Spain, while that of the *lirnyk* was produced in the rump Kingdom of Poland. For the Spaniards and Poles the gaucho and Cossack imagery was at the same time exotic and ‘ours.’ As such, it promised exciting adventures, encounters, conquests and (re-)establishment of home and family. The publics of Warsaw and Barcelona were not merely curious, but otherwise uninvolved, foreign connoisseurs of exoticism. Even though the Spanish Empire no longer ruled the River Plate and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth did not even exist, large segments of intellectuals and activists in Poland and Spain believed that their nations had serious political and cultural stakes in Ukraine and Argentina, respectively. The contents of genuine folk culture allegedly preserved by the *lirnyky* and *payadores* were of the utmost importance for the Polish and Spanish prospects, or so it was believed by many.

Eventually, neither Polish nor Spanish nation and empire builders were to succeed in their efforts to reintegrate the spaces and communities of the shattered *ancien-régime* polities which they claimed to be their nations' inheritance. Many factors contributed to their failure. Not least of them seems to be that the very logic of folkloric essence, allegedly preserved by the local subaltern bards, was put to better use by the competing, anti-imperialist visions of nation building. But this is another, no less fascinating story. Here, I would only like to point out the striking similarity of the two representations. They are both woodcuts made on the basis of photographs, claiming to capture some authentic truth about their objects. However, these are highly stylised cultural artifacts conveying notions of subaltern masculinity and folkloric purity with the help of such characteristics as facial hair, loose clothes, cheap musical instruments, and decaying walls overrun by wild plants.

Among others, the two pictures evidence how well integrated the two regions were in the wider Europeanate sphere, despite being so distant one from another. By this I do not mean that they both simply mimicked the achievements of the 'Western core,' as is so often suggested by the narratives about the Atlantic space. While I am convinced that it is useful to consider the Spanish American and East European developments as part of the same continuum as the Western European and North American ones, I do not wish to reinforce the sense that the Spanish Americans, as well as the Southern and Eastern Europeans, were merely passive receivers, followers and imitators. Rather, I see them as participating in the same open-ended network of ideological exchange and struggle which I have chosen to name Europeanate (not European). Obviously, this was not (and still is not) a world of equal partners, but neither should we believe that there was (is) one clearly discernible centrifugal gradient of progress and civilisation. As is noted by Nicola Miller, 'there are bound to be significant variations in the degree and nature of power wielded by different actors, but it is misleading to assume that images are created and controlled solely by the powerful.'¹

Vectors of movement have always been multiple and multidirectional. Many of them ran away from the alleged centres, others crossed the porous boundaries of the Europeanate network, which should not be imagined as a solid unit, but rather a densification of communicative connections, itself embedded in and linked to other similar systems (most importantly to the Western Islamic sphere). The persistent presence of Muslims and Jews in many Eastern European societies, including those which are consistently depicted as almost

¹ Nicola Miller, "Conclusion," in Axel Körner, Nicola Miller and Adam I. P. Smith, *America Imagined: Explaining the United States in Nineteenth-Century Europe and Latin America* (New York, 2012), 234.

completely overwhelmed by the dominant Christian Churches (like Poland and Russia), is just one case in point.

I hope that with this study I have managed to show that it is possible to write a cultural history of politics in Europe and beyond that is transnational and translocal, but not obsessed with the issue of the 'West.' This is important because it allowed me to focus on the question of parallel, though not identical, developments in reaction to shared secular stimuli, rather than connections and transfers.

*

My study deals with the ways in which actors interact with symbols and myths, and how they appropriate and transform them for their diverse purposes. By focusing on individual authors and presenting them as mediators, both decoders and encoders of contents, I hope to have shown how one myth was adjusted for many, often contradictory, purposes. It cannot be said that the Cossack and gauchos were simply democratic heroes because, at times, they could be embodiments of conservative and hierarchical tradition (though traces of egalitarianism inherent in them never completely disappear, even when they are used by self-proclaimed opponents of liberal progress). Neither would it be legitimate to state that those figures annul the contradictions of individual and collective, liberty and belonging, violence and peace, West and East, America and Europe, civilization and barbarism, because they can be also used to emphasise them. Nor would it be precise to ascribe certain visions of Cossacks and gauchos to clearly defined political orientations, for example the vilification to the progressive state builders and the glorification of their conservative opponents as, for example, revolutionary democrats could extol the Cossacks and gauchos as well as the conservatives, even though in many ways they were much closer to the anti-revolutionary progressives.

The evidence gathered in this dissertation suggests that the Cossacks and gauchos were two kindred myths, flexible and internally varied, but not to the extent of losing their unique and recognisable characteristics. Stabilised, as we know them, in the later Enlightenment, they represented anarchic males inhabiting the frontier between the realm of civilisation and savagery and were exceptionally skilled in horse-riding. The meanings and uses of these mythologies were so varied because they developed in dynamic polemic contexts shaped both by 'external' socio-economic circumstances and the 'internal' logic of rhetorical exchange. Luis Pérez opposed his gaucho patriotism to the Unitarian savagery, not least because he had to counter the identification of this social group with barbarism, as it crystallised during the long siege of Buenos Aires in 1829. He also needed to differentiate his

preferred hero, Juan Manuel de Rosas, from the martyred governor Dorrego and the gaucho label allowed him to juxtapose the image of healthy and efficacious man of countryside with that of good-natured but inept urbanite. Nikolai Gogol's complex assessment of the ancient Ukrainian Cossacks was modulated by his family traditions, his attachment to the Russian Imperial cause, his repressed fascination with Latin Catholicism and, eventually, his rejection of revolutionary liberalism which made ample use of Cossack stories and symbols. The neglect of this author's unique trajectory and of the context in which he formulated his vision has led to a spectacular, generations-long misreading of his work. These are just two examples, but they show that outside of the polemic contexts in which the utterances were formulated, specific representations of Cossacks and gauchos lose their meaning (but also acquire new ones).

The symbols and myths themselves become fields of struggle where various parties aim to emphasise certain aspects and tone down others and so establish their preferred interpretations and impose them upon the public opinion. So, for instance, Juan Bautista Alberdi hijacked Domingo Sarmiento's own descriptions of gauchos and Argentina to show that Sarmiento had championed impracticable political solutions and that some sort of compromise with the caudillos was inevitable. Similarly, Polish-Lithuanian democrats appropriated the unequivocally negative Polish-language memory of seventeenth-century Cossack rebellions to formulate a 'native' vision of the violent social revolution which many of them longed for. In many cases, the actor's location within the mythological spectrum (their evaluation of key aspects of the politically-laden story) serves as a much better indicator of their position than their declared ideological or partisan allegiance.

Though most texts dealt with in this dissertation were produced by people who belonged to the educated elite, it is clear that both in Argentina and in Ukraine the subaltern masses had their own visions of gauchos and Cossacks. They were quite distinct from the elite Romantic ones, most importantly in that they granted much less importance to the extreme individualism of gaucho and Cossack heroes. In fact, the representations of Cossacks and gauchos offered by Pérez or the Ukrainian peasants are much less democratic than the elite ones, as they champion an explicitly hierarchical social order. Rather than universal equality, they offer universal respectability guaranteed by healthy vertical bonds. This was a promise, not a reality, but Luis Pérez had good reasons to prefer it to the Unitarians' liberal vision of rational citizens, equal before the law. He knew that the liberal order left all the power in the hands of a limited elite possessing specific cultural and material resources, whereas the

masses had to suffer the burden of military service and other forms of exploitation masquerading as civic duties and contractual obligations.

Discrepancies in meaning notwithstanding, the very existence and vitality of images of and stories about the Cossacks and gauchos enabled the elite and non-elite actors to communicate through them. Quite often, either side understood them differently, like Juan Manuel de Rosas and Luis Pérez, but the differences could be glossed over by both parties thus allowing a pragmatic miscommunication to take place. Of course, the opposition of elite and non-elite should not be absolutised, as it is always relative and, in fact, similar compromises over meaning can be also observed between actors that belong to the same sphere.

Each set of sources dealt with in my chapters allowed me to emphasise different aspects of Cossack/gaicho myths. The verse journals of Luis Pérez exemplify how the gaicho ideal was used to criticise an oppressive and allegedly effeminate liberal state and fantasise about an organically hierarchical and emphatically masculine society guaranteed by a charismatic male leader 'of our own.' In turn, for Nikolai Gogol' the Cossacks stand, first and foremost, for freedom from family and state obligations. He uses the Cossack myth as a shorthand for republicanism and liberalism (which he collapses into one) and warns that the exclusionary misogyny inherent in them must have dire consequences. Sarmiento and Czajkowski explicitly oppose the Cossacks and gauchos to the progress of civilisation and the rise of modernity, imagined as a homogenous realm inhabited by atomised individuals. Where the two authors differ is the overall valuation of changes: Sarmiento presents modernity as a happy world of tomorrow dominated by civilised but expressly masculine subjects while Czajkowski, in turn, sees the modern order as oppressive, soulless and impeding true masculinity. In Austrian Galicia, the Cossacks embody rebellious commoner masculinity and they come to symbolise the rejection of liberal society dominated by landed nobility. Originally adopted as a totem by Polish-Lithuanian revolutionary democrats, they could also be used by Ruthenian liberal populists, though most of the latter remained reluctant to indulge too much in promoting such an explosive myth.

As is clear, the practical implications of Cossack/gaicho stories and images were by no means preordained. On the one hand, the rebellious commoners on horseback could stand for violent, social revolution, as was the case with the Russian liberals, Polish-Lithuanian revolutionaries and most conservatives. On the other, they could represent the idealised populist emendation of the oppressive state built by the arrogant urbanites, as championed by Luis Pérez. In both cases, we see a clear opposition between the growing state and bourgeois

society and their Cossack/gaicho foil. On a more general level, the world of Cossacks and gauchos is a contraposition to modernity, depicted as mechanistic, 'wooden' or soulless. On the Cossack/gaicho side, there is the charismatic Brigadier Rosas or Otaman Nekrasa with their natural-like *maña*, on the other, the forcible conscription orchestrated by some distant, snooty fops. In various circumstances, either side of the equation can stand for quite an array of political proposals. In Michał Czajkowski's novels, modernity and progress were usually embodied by effeminate, urbanite outsiders: in the 1830s such a protagonist represented Russia's monarchic imperialism, in the 1870s, Poland-Lithuania's revolutionary democracy.

Amorphous and malleable as they were, the stories of Cossacks and gauchos proved powerful vehicles for politics, both as explanatory devices and as tools for the mass mobilisation of followers. As is evidenced by the example of Michał Czajkowski, even high-ranking diplomatic agents could imagine the planned insurgency as a Romantic Cossack tale and still be treated seriously by their superiors. Others, like Sarmiento, used the figures of anarchic horsemen as monsters, rather than as models to follow and it worked equally well. Later, the dream of rebellious frontier masculinity on horseback would prove an important ingredient of the clout surrounding colonial enterprises: even some Zionists at the beginning of the twentieth century liked to imagine themselves as Cossacks and oppose this new self-understanding to the allegedly emasculated Eastern European Jewishness. Differences in the treatment of Cossack/gaicho masculinity can be mapped on the partisan divides of each environment. The match will never be perfect, as even one person, depending on the situation, could vacillate from one position to another, but with the passing of time the lines became more defined and inflexible.

Individuals and their vacillations feature prominently in my work. Though focused on stories and images, I devote much attention to actors and their environments. These contexts are crucial in unpacking the political ambitions of the texts under consideration, but there is more to this. My protagonists composed their works as mythographers. They reassembled available contents and tailored them for their own particular ends, albeit never fully controlling all the meanings within them. Their textual productions were interventions in the worlds around them, but also in their own self-understandings. Several biographies described in my thesis may strike us as extraordinary and undermining predominant national categorisations, both in Eastern Europe and in the Southern Cone. Though it is tempting, I would be cautious about presenting my heroes' point of departure as characteristic of premodern or borderland ways of belonging, because such terms suggest that there exists one normative and modern manner of 'having identities.' The latter assumption would reinforce

the clear-cut divide between the modern and premodern realms which, I would argue, we should never take for granted. It would also mystify the daily effort of collective and individual actors to cultivate national labels and political order based on them. In truth, the real-life fulfillment of such clear-cut and homogenous national communities has always been (and still is) rather the exception than the rule. I would prefer to say that when it comes to national identifications, my protagonists had slightly more room for maneuver than say, Finns born in the late 1980s, but perhaps no more than contemporary British citizens. By means of writing (and, to a lesser extent, visual arts) the actors whom I study sought to clarify their allegiances and define their limits. For such purposes stories and images of violence were especially efficient. Though most of my protagonists would not care to admit it, as authors they proved very creative, transforming societies around them and building entirely new communities. The worlds that shaped them were complex and heterogeneous, their itineraries long and convoluted, and thus the realities these individuals themselves helped to forge proved no less complicated and diverse than the ones they had abandoned.

In this context, the worn-out question of Eastern European nationalisms and nation building presents itself in a new light. It would be tempting to simplify matters and delimit the nationalisms in question as distinct political ideologies with clearly discernible positions on the figure of Cossack: the Ukrainian nation building would be pro-Cossack, the Polish-Lithuanian, anti-Cossack, and the Russian, patronisingly ambivalent. However, when we look more carefully it turns out that within every current there was an array of opinions regarding the Cossack figures and specific judgments on them resulted from other ideological contingencies than simply the chosen national allegiance. In fact, none of these nation-building projects was solid and homogenous, but rather so very diverse and internally conflicted that we should rather speak of several competing nationalisms within each denomination. It was the partisan competition over meanings ascribed to representations of Cossacks and gauchos (Unitarians vs. Federalists in Argentina, progressive absolutists vs. liberal constitutionalists in Russia, reformist liberals vs. revolutionary democrats in Austrian Galicia) that allowed the definition of national communities. Nations did not crystallise around a single ideological proposal or a single myth, but rather as a consequence of strife and controversy.² Politics in the Ukrainian lands, divided between two imperial monarchies, was not so different from that in the independent and republican Argentina.

² Sarmiento, with whom I do not agree very often, offers a similar interpretation of nation building in Switzerland: '...Switzerland as a state is less than a republic, an *olla podrida*, [a Spanish stew, but literally: rotten pot] composed of most contradictory elements. [...] The only bond that unites all those heterogeneous

As has been suggested by Tulio Halperín Donghi, in the River Plate partisan labels were originally more powerful than the all-Argentine national identification, which formed only after decades of conflict following independence.³ As my study of Cossack-themed works from Galicia suggests, in Eastern Europe the partisan divides were also of primary importance, while the particular national identifications were only a secondary result of them. Before the 1830s there was, for example, a discernible Polish-Lithuanian identification. Similarly, there did exist robust, nationalism-like Spanish American and Buenos Aires allegiances. Although one can easily establish a convincing filiation, these older labels should not be confused with the new identifications and self-understandings that were forged in the following period: Argentine, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian. Perhaps, it was unavoidable that such nations were shaped, but the exact meaning of those names and the limits of the communities using them were established through partisan struggles and ideological debates, both intra- and inter-denominational.

In my interpretation, politics, understood as a competition between supporters of differing visions of socio-economic organisation, regains its due weight, whereas the ethno-confessional markers are no longer seen as the driving force behind national divisions. Eventually, clearly delimited and ethnically differentiated national communities did emerge, but even then the traces of their partisan origins would not disappear completely. By this I do not wish to suggest that there was a direct filiation between specific political ideologies and national identifications. Argentine nationalism was neither Federalist nor Unitarian, but an outcome of their struggle. Similarly, one cannot simply reduce the Polish nationalism to revolutionary democracy, Ukrainian nationalism to liberal populism, and Russian nationalism to progressive absolutism. Nevertheless, the specific configuration of political proposals available in the 1830s and 1840s conditioned the contents of each national field and left indelible traces in them. In brief, my explanation of nation-building processes can be summarised as: party politics first.

In contrast to Eastern Europe, in the River Plate differences of language and confession did not play such a prominent role. Nevertheless, ethnicity, especially the social

elements is the struggle of two great parties which in diverse ways stir the Christian world, [and are] well represented in the [Swiss] Federal Diet.' Sarmiento identifies the two parties as Jesuit or moderate and Protestant or liberal and describes how they both make identical claims about the salvation of Switzerland, even though their political agendas are completely different. In this way their heated rivalry actually strengthens Swiss unity, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Viajes por Europa, África y América 1845-1847* (Buenos Aires, 1886), 318-319.

³ Tulio Halperín Donghi, "Argentine Counterpoint: Rise of the Nation, Rise of the State," in Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen, eds, *Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Washington, 2003), 33-53.

construct of race, overlapped in a somewhat similar way with social status and significantly affected the actors' self-understandings and their partisan choices. Eventually, the factional-cum-ideological rivalry did not lead to the emergence of two separate nations, though for a short period (1852–1861) two competing states existed. Had they survived longer, such an outcome would have been logical: a Unitarian nation of the city of Buenos Aires and its immediate surroundings, dedicated to the cause of progress and European civilisation, and a Federalist 'gaucho' nation of the pampas and the Littoral, striving to preserve the original American ways and liberty. This never came to be, even though the two visions of nationhood and political organisation were so disparate that one could hardly imagine their reconciliation. Instead of attempting a genuine fusion, the Argentines learnt how to live with ideological and mythological contradictions: how to imagine themselves as gauchos and as exterminators of gauchos at the same time. Nothing better illustrates this than the canonisation of Sarmiento as the author of *Facundo*. Juan Bautista Alberdi articulated this tension by calling his great competitor a 'Plutarch of caudillos or political criminals of his country.'⁴ In a strange way the denunciation of gauchos as barbarians was firmly tied to their elevation as a key national symbol. Sarmiento became, on the one hand, the champion of progress and a critic of savagery, while on the other, the prophet of the pampas (a formulation of Ricardo Rojas).

Overall, my research on the Cossacks and gauchos as symbol and myth suggests that political struggles need to be studied as a cultural phenomenon, but they should never be reduced to this one dimension. It was only by paying so much attention to the very specific social, legal and economic contexts that I managed to approximate the meanings conveyed by the nineteenth-century stories of free horsemen of the plains. However, the specific uses of Cossack/gauche representations and the particular attitudes of individual actors towards key aspects of that mythology often prove more revealing about their location on the political scene than declared ideological or partisan allegiances.

My most important finding regards the mythological content of stories about the Cossacks and gauchos. These myths were so widespread in the nineteenth-century political struggles because they collapsed a promise of radically individualistic masculine subjectivity, free from the constraints of family life and state order, with claims about organic community and embeddedness in the nature of the fatherland. From the political point of view, the fact that this complex mixture was wrapped in figures that were emphatically commoner and

⁴ Quoted after Elizabeth Garrels, "Sarmiento, el orientalismo y la biografía criminal: Ali Pasha de Tepelen y Juan Facundo Quiroga," *Monteagudo*, 3rd Epoch, No. 16, 2011, 75.

dignified, undermining the age-old *decorum* that hitherto impeded the literary construction of 'serious' plebeian characters, is of utmost importance.

The stories of Cossacks and gauchos addressed some of the most pressing tensions caused by the expansion of nineteenth-century state and the growing complication of bourgeois society, and repackaged them with fashionable ethnicist elements. They conflated individual longings with collective struggles and spoke to the tensions of their time. Thus, they helped to imagine the modern world and its 'non-modern' foil and thus to stabilise the new fields of political encounter and masculine subjectivity. Nowhere is this opposition more explicit than in Sarmiento's oeuvre but, in fact, all the authors drew on it in one way or another.

The contrast between the mechanistic and oppressive today and the allegedly more personalised and organic arrangements of the past, was part and parcel of Europeanate visions of modernity and the Cossack/gaicho myths were by no means the only ones to be activated for those purposes. We could also name here the idealised depictions of 'medieval' Catholic spirituality or the purity and calm of the peasants' existence. The Cossacks and gauchos did offer, however, an unusually attractive combination that could not be found elsewhere. They conflated the negative mirror of modernity with such elements as adventure, freedom from family responsibilities, male bonding, the privileged relationship with the nature of the fatherland, radical political liberty, knightly status and emphatic equality. One could, at the same time, imagine oneself as an anarchic cosmopolitan and a patriot, a knight and a commoner freedom fighter, a libertine and a defender of the faith, a free particle and an firmly rooted plant. Drawing on Gogol' who toyed with the idea of naming his protagonist Taras Dandelion (*kul'baba*), we could call this paradoxical mix a promise of dandelion knighthood.

The results of my research would suggest that the most powerful ingredients of this cocktail were: the rejection of state and family, the claim to be truly native, and the promise of liberating repressed masculine instincts. Only the Cossacks and gauchos offered this peculiar combination as a foil to progress and civilisation. I consider the identification of this mythologem and its role in delimiting the disciplinary vision of modernity to be my central achievement.

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