

Summary of the Dissertation

Title of the Thesis:

Gogol and Słowacki's Ukraine: self-creative processes.

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Keywords:

Ukrainian identity, Nationalism, Romanticism, Nikolai Gogol, Juliusz Słowacki, Class.

Introduction:

This dissertation explores the construction of Ukrainian identity in the private letters of Gogol and Słowacki. Both authors are examined within the literary context as key figures of the Ukrainian school in Russian and Polish literature. The study analyzes their portrayal of Ukrainian identity through the lens of postcolonial theory.

Objective:

The main objectives include drawing parallels between Ukrainian identity within the Polish and Russian literary contexts while considering alternative identifications outside a strictly national framework. The study seeks to move beyond the binary opposition of two national identities and instead aims to preserve both syncretism and hierarchical dynamics.

Research Questions

- How did Gogol's and Słowacki's early life experiences in ethnically Ukrainian territories, including their familiarity with local customs and time spent in the region, shape their perceptions of their identities?
- Are personal letters an effective medium for examining the processes of identity construction?
- As contemporaries, both of whom represented Ukraine in their literary works, do Gogol and Słowacki present similar approaches to constructing Ukrainian identity?

Hypothesis:

- The interaction between class, morality, and national identity plays a key role in shaping prenational identifications.
- There was an asymmetrical relationship between Ukrainian and Russian identities and between Polish and Ukrainian identities.

Methodology:

This dissertation employs a postcolonial approach to examine the 19th-century relationships between Ukraine, Poland, and Russia. The analysis focuses on the private correspondence of Gogol and Słowacki through close reading of their letters. Regarding the corpora, the 1952 edition of Gogol's *Complete Collection of Works* and the 1962 edition of Słowacki's correspondence, edited by Eugeniusz Sawrymowicz, have been considered. Methodological concepts such as self-creation and accommodation are applied to explore how the authors constructed and negotiated their identities within their epistolary writings.

Results:

The analysis revealed that Gogol's correspondence demonstrates a strong interplay between Ukrainianness, morality, and class. Gogol adapts his identity based on his correspondents' backgrounds, performing different identities depending on their origins. His view of Ukrainianness remains prenatal, shaped by local rather than national affiliations. In contrast, Słowacki's portrayal of Ukrainianness is more pronounced in his literary works than in his personal letters. The relationship between Ukrainian and Polish identities in Słowacki's writings is influenced by the social hierarchies in right-bank Ukraine.

Conclusion:

The thesis demonstrates that framing Gogol and Słowacki primarily within Russian, Polish, or Ukrainian national canons is limiting. A historical perspective requires a broader interpretation of Ukrainianness, incorporating the concept of "national indifference." Using letters as a medium proved particularly effective in Gogol's case, revealing strategies of accommodation and how he tailored his self-presentation depending on his correspondents. This study contributes to understanding identity construction in a prenatal context.