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**Nikolai Gogol's and Juliusz Słowacki's Ukraine:
Self-creative Processes**

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Introduction: The Ukrainian identity of Nikolai Gogol and Juliusz Słowacki

In the first half of the 19th century, Ukraine occupied a unique position as a cultural and territorial space between Polish and Russian influences. This period was particularly significant as it predated the rise of exclusive national identities and allowed for the coexistence of multiple cultural loyalties and identities. Two major literary figures of this era, Nikolai Gogol and Juliusz Słowacki, born in 1809 in Ukrainian territories under Russian Empire rule, offer fascinating case studies of how Ukrainian identity was constructed and negotiated during this period. This thesis focuses on how they present Ukrainian identity in their private letters.

By “Ukrainian identity”, we refer to the cultural associations tied to the fact that both writers were born in Ukrainian territories. Central to our scope are questions of language, familiarity with traditions and folklore, and their affinity to the Ukrainian milieu. However, we do not seek to define a national identity for these authors, as the concept of national identity was still in its early stages of development.

This comparative study focuses on Gogol and Słowacki because of their dual significance: they were both influential figures in their respective literary traditions while maintaining complex, though markedly different, relationships with their Ukrainian homeland. They were born in two regions of Ukraine, Poltava and Volhynia, which were part of the Russian Empire. Mykola/Nikolai Hohol/Gogol was born in Velyki Sorochyntsi, in the region of Poltava, while Juliusz Słowacki was born in Kremenets, Volhynia, both in 1809. Being born in a culturally Ukrainian territory gave them access to Ukrainian folklore and the Ukrainian language. Moreover, it influenced how they described their origins and native soil. Born in Ukraine but writing in different languages, Polish and Russian, they were still influenced by a prenatal way of representing national identity when having multiple loyalties and identities was still possible.

The first part of Słowacki's literary production is devoted to Ukrainian landscapes and folklore. Among these, *Ukrainian dumka* (*Dumka ukraińska*, 1827), and *The song of the Cossack girl* (*Piosnka dziewczyny kozackiej*, 1829) are inspired by Ukrainian folklore. At this time, Słowacki explored the Ukrainian theme as a direct influence of the exponents of the so-called Ukrainian School of Polish romanticism, especially the works of Malczewski and Goszczyński. His interest in Ukraine was not limited to folklore and Ukrainian nature; it also involved the complex relationship between Poles and Ukrainians. The play *Salomea's Silver Dream* (*Sen srebrny Salomei*, 1843) is one of the most significant attempts to reconstruct both perspectives on the tragedy of Koliivshchyna.

Gogol also broadly explored the Ukrainian theme in his literary works, starting with the collection of tales *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka* (*Вечера на хуторі близ Диканьки*, 1832). In 1835, he published a second collection of short stories dedicated to Ukraine, *Mirgorod* (*Миргород*, 1835), including the historical novella *Taras Bulba* (*Тарас Бульба*). Ukraine inspired his literary works and was an object of academic interest. In 1834, he wrote *A Glance at the Composition of Little Russia* (*Взгляд на составление Малороссии*, 1834), as part of a larger unrealized project to write a History of Little Russia. He also aspired to a career as a professor of Ukrainian history at the University of Kyiv.

While Ukraine features prominently in Gogol's and Słowacki's literary works, the mere presence of Ukrainian themes does not necessarily reflect their personal identification with Ukraine. Indeed, Ukrainian subjects were widely explored in Russian and Polish literature during this period, even by writers who had no direct connection to the region. Therefore, to examine how these writers constructed their Ukrainian identity, we must look beyond their published works to their private correspondence.

Personal letters offer a particularly rich ground for analyzing identity construction, as they operate on two levels: they capture the writer's self-representation and their carefully crafted presentation to specific recipients. This dual nature of

correspondence occupies a unique space between literary creation and biographical documentation. Unlike other autobiographical genres like diaries, letters offer a distinct advantage for studying identity construction: they demonstrate how self-representation is actively negotiated through interaction with different correspondents.

In the nineteenth century, letter-writing often served as a laboratory for literary creation. Moreover, since letters were frequently read aloud in salons and literary circles, they functioned as a form of semi-public self-presentation. Given these characteristics, Gogol's and Słowacki's private correspondence provides an invaluable source for examining how they articulated and negotiated their relationship with Ukrainian identity.

Numerous studies have been conducted on Gogol's Ukrainian identity in post-Soviet Ukraine and among the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States and Canada. The examination of Gogol's Ukrainian identity originated within Ukrainian diaspora scholarship, where it carried significant political implications. These scholars undertook the complex task of repositioning Gogol within the Ukrainian literary tradition, challenging his conventional categorisation as exclusively a Russian writer. Their work represented a broader effort to reclaim and recontextualise Ukrainian cultural figures who had been absorbed into Russian literary history.

In two articles published in *Rada* between 1908 and 1909 *The great humorist and the small fools* (*Великий юморист і малі недотепи*, 1908¹) and *The great Ukrainian* (*Великий українець*, 1909) Serhii Yefremov underlines the necessity of including Gogol in the Ukrainian national canon, as Russian nationalists use him as a symbol of the possibility of including Ukrainian streams in the Russian sea. According to Malaniuk, this first generation considered Gogol to be a propagator of the Ukrainian national movement. In contrast, the second generation interpreted him as an example of the Little Russian syndrome².

¹ Єфремов, С. (1908). *Великий юморист і малі недотепи. Гоголь і націоналісти*.

² Єфремов, С. (1909). *Великий українець*.

In 1971, George Luckyj published the monograph *Between Gogol and Sevchenko: Polarity in the Literary Ukraine, 1798–1847*, which was devoted to the comparison between Gogol and Shevchenko as representatives of two different perspectives on Ukraine, imperial and national. Thus, this book could also be influenced by the 20th-century Ukrainian representation of the duties of a Ukrainian intellectual. In this sense, Shevchenko was always used as an example for future generations of Ukrainian writers and opposed to Gogol, who was seen as a traitor selling his homeland to gain a position in the Empire. In 1995, Yurii Barabash wrote about the connection between Gogol and his contemporary Ukrainian literature³. The book was essential to trace the depth of the connection between Gogol and Ukrainian literature.

A significant movement forward in the studies on Gogol, with a fundamental application of postcolonial studies for the interpretation of the Russian-Ukrainian relationship during the 19th century, was Edyta Bojanowska's *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*⁴. The book, published in 2007, displayed all the major literary works written by Gogol analysed according to a postcolonial approach and trying to reconstruct a Ukrainian hidden transcript. In 2021, Yuliya Ilchuk published the monograph *Nikolai Gogol: Performing Hybrid Identity*⁵. Ilchuk developed Bojanowska's study and included a deep analysis of Gogol's Ukrainianisms in Russian, adopting a stylometric analysis of Gogol's letters to identify the hybridity of Gogol's Russian language.

Scholars such as Oleh Ilnytzyk⁶ and Taras Koznarsky studied the intricacy of Gogol's Ukrainian identity in Canada. In particular, Ilnytzyk wrote an article⁷ on Gogol being a postcolonial writer, laying the basis for a different way of interpreting Russian language literature written in Ukraine, even in imperial times. In July 2024, Ilnytzyk published a book entitled *Nikolai Gogol: Ukrainian Writer*

³ Barabash, I. (1995). Почва и судьба: Гоголь и украинская литература: у истоков.

⁴ Bojanowska, E. M. (2007). *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*. Harvard University Press.

⁵ Ilchuk, Y. (2021). *Nikolai Gogol: Performing Hybrid Identity*. University of Toronto Press.

⁶ Ilnytzyk, O. (2024). *Nikolai Gogol: Ukrainian Writer in the Empire: A Study in Identity*. De Gruyter.

⁷ Ilnytzyk, O. (2002). Cultural Indeterminacy in the Russian Empire: Nikolai Gogol as a Ukrainian Post-Colonial Writer. *Paul D. Morris (Hg.): A World of Slavic Literatures: Essays in Comparative Slavic Studies in Honor of Edward Mozejko, Bloomington IN*, pp. 153–171.

in the Empire, in which he argued that Gogol was never a member of “Russian culture” but a Ukrainian “imperial actor”⁸.

In Ukraine, Volodymyr Zvyniatskovsky wrote a monograph on Gogol’s Ukrainian identity⁹ and a collection of essays on Gogol’s Ukrainian myth¹⁰. In 2023, he published a book on the literary relations between Ukraine and Russia, focusing primarily on Gogol as a major figure¹¹. Tamara Hundorova studied Gogol’s literary works as an example of Little Russian Kitsch, a form of folklorization of Ukrainian literature accepted and consumed by Russian imperial culture¹². She is particularly renowned for introducing the use of postcolonial studies in Ukraine.

Ryabchuk, Naydan, and Polishchuk also addressed the question of Gogol’s belonging to a particular national canon. Each scholar challenges the prevailing interpretation of Gogol’s Russian identity as the product of an ideological framework which serves to reinforce Russian cultural hegemony¹³.

Interest in Słowacki’s ties to Ukraine has been more sporadic. Studies have been conducted, especially in Ukraine, to examine the influence of Kremenets on Słowacki’s literary production. One of the first attempts to analyse the Ukrainian theme in Słowacki is Evhen Rychlik’s *Ukrainian motifs in the poetry of Juliusz Słowacki* (Українські мотиви в поезії Юлія Словацького, 1929), published in Nizhyn in 1929¹⁴. One of the most complete publications on the theme is *Ukraine*

⁸ Illytzyk, S. (2024). *Nikolai Gogol: Ukrainian Writer in the Empire: A Study in Identity*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.

⁹ Звinyaцьковський, В. Я. (1994). Николай Гоголь. Тайны национальной души. Киев: Ликей. Zvyniatskovsky also wrote many articles on Gogol’s identity, namely: Звinyaцьковський, В. Я. (2009). «Дайте людям архетип...» Н. Гоголь и Т. Шевченко: атавистическое подсознание национально ответственных личностей. In НВ Гоголь и русская литература. Девятыя Гоголевские чтения: К 200-летию со дня рождения великого писателя. Сб. докладов Международной научной конференции, Москва 1–5 апреля (p. 136); Звinyaцьковський, В. Я. (2010). В чем же наконец существо «украинства» Гоголя и в чем его особенность. НВ Гоголь и его творческое наследие; Звinyaцьковський, В. Я. (2021). “ЗНАЕТЕ ЛИ ВЫ УКРАИНСКУЮ НОЧЬ?” (УКРАИНА ПУШКИНА И ГОГОЛЯ). Культура и текст, (2 (45)), 34–39.

¹⁰ Звinyaцьковський, В. Я. (2010). Побеждающий страх смехом: опыт реставрации собственного мифа Николая Гоголя. *Звinyaцьковський ВЯ–К.: Лыбидь*.

¹¹ Звinyaцьковський, В. Я. (2023). *Лекции по истории русско-украинских литературных связей*.

¹² Гундорова, Т. (2009). Микола Гоголь і колоніальний кітч. *Гоголезнавчі студії*.

¹³ Поліщук, Я. (2007). Палімпсест Гоголя. *Слово і Час*; Рябчук, М. (2011). Постколоніальний синдром: спостереження. Yuri Marchenko; Naydan M. M. (2010), «When You Google Gogol, you Never Get ‘Hohol’: The Re-colonization of a Ukrainian Writer », *Ukrainian Quarterly*, 66, 1-2, pp. 5-15.

¹⁴ Рихлік Є. (1929). *Українські мотиви в поезії Юліуша Словацького*. Ніжин.

in *Słowacki's poetry (Ukraina w poezji Słowackiego, 1930)* by Adrian Czermiński, published in 1930, in which the author explores the Ukrainian theme throughout Słowacki's literary works. An article by Jakóbiec, *Juliusz Słowacki's Slavic world (Świat słowiański Juliusza Słowackiego, 1959)* observes the role of Ukraine in Słowacki's slavophilistic vision. Mateusz Jurkowski authored an article on Ukrainianisms in Słowacki's language¹⁵.

The most recent publication devoted to the relationship between Słowacki and Ukraine is *Słowacki and Ukraine (Słowacki i Ukraina, 2003)*, a collection of articles on different themes, encompassing literary works and biographical facts. Several publications using a postcolonial theoretical framework have recently been published on Słowacki's most significant Ukrainian play, *Sen srebrny Salomei*. Among those, we remember Dariusz Skórczewski¹⁶ and Michał Kuziak¹⁷.

The comparison between the two authors was attempted only by George Grabowicz in his doctoral dissertation in 1975¹⁸ but never published. In his doctoral thesis, Grabowicz compared the two literary phenomena of the Ukrainian schools in Polish and Russian romanticism, focusing mainly on the cossack theme. Gogol and Słowacki are interpreted as the major representatives of the schools and are given particular attention and space. This is the only example of a comparison between the two writers regarding the Ukrainian theme, at least in an academic form, if we do not consider Petro Kralyuk's publicist article, which identifies Słowacki as the Polish Gogol¹⁹.

¹⁵ Jurkowski, M. (1974). *Ukrainizmy w języku Juliusza Słowackiego*. Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, pp. 105–133.

¹⁶ Skórczewski, D. (2011). „Sen srebrny Salomei”, czyli parada hybryd. *Pamiętnik Literacki. Czasopismo kwartalne poświęcone historii i krytyce literatury polskiej*, (1), 47–75.; Skórczewski, D. (2010). Kilka myśli o romantyzmie i Słowackim z poskolonializmem w tle. *Świat Tekstów. Rocznik Słupski*, (8), 117–143.

¹⁷ Kuziak, M. (2012). Sen srebrny Salomei Słowackiego. Mapy tożsamości. In *Geografia Słowackiego* (Fundacja Akademia Humanistyczna, Instytut Badań Literackich Polskiej Akademii Nauk ed., 246–258). Dorota Siwicka, Marta Zielińska. Kuziak also wrote a comprehensive collection of essays on the Postcolonial approach applied to Słowacki's literary works: Kuziak, M. (Ed.). (2010). *Słowacki postkolonialny*. Teatr Polski.

¹⁸ Grabowicz, G. G. (1975). *The history of the myth of the Cossack Ukraine in Polish and Russian Romantic literature* (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University).

¹⁹ Petro Kralyuk published an article comparing the two figures of Gogol and Słowacki, calling Słowacki “our Polish Gogol”: Кралюк П. Юліуш Словацький: наш польський Гоголь. Друг

Gogol's letters did not receive significant attention, especially with regard to the Ukrainian theme. William Mills Todd, author of a monograph on the familiar letter in the 19th century, wrote an article on Gogol's epistolary practices²⁰. Oksana Svyrydenko wrote several articles on Ukrainian Romantic epistolography, including the genre of the letter-confession in Gogol's epistolography²¹. As we mentioned, Ilchuk attempted to analyse the presence of Ukrainianisms in Gogol's language by considering the entire corpus of his letters through a stylometric analysis. Other studies on Gogol's letters concentrate on the writer's relationship with some particular figures²².

Śłowacki's letters, and to a large extent, the letters addressed to his mother, have been the object of many studies. Among them, we remember Kazimierz Cysewski²³, Marek Troszyński²⁴ and Zbigniew Sudolski²⁵. Despite numerous studies on Śłowacki's letter-writing, no one mentions his connections to Ukraine.

Читача. 28.05.2009. URL: <https://vsiknygy.net.ua/review/966/>. Kralyuk also wrote the book Кралюк, П. (2015). *Таємний агент Микола Гоголь, або про що розповідає «Тарас Бульба»*. Видавництво Старого Лева., testifying an interest for Gogol and its recanonization within Ukrainian literature also in the public sphere.

²⁰ Todd, W. M. (1969). Gogol's Epistolary Writing. *Columbia Essays in International Affairs: The Dean's Papers*, 5, pp. 51–76; Todd, W. M. (1999). *The familiar letter as a literary genre in the age of Pushkin*. Northwestern University Press.

²¹ Svyrydenko, O. (2020). «Котляревщина» як бурлескна практика та її елементи в епістолярній романтичній манері. *Theoretical and didactic philology*, (31), 113–119; Svyrydenko, O. (2019). Іронічний пафос романтичного листа. *Theoretical and didactic philology*, (30), 62–72; Svyrydenko, O. M. (2018). THE ROLE AND PLACE OF LYRIC ELEMENT IN PANTELEIMON KULISH'S EPISTOLARY PROSE, 234; Svyrydenko, O. (2020). Західноєвропейська епістолярна публіцистика кінця XVIII–початку XIX ст. та її роль у становленні романтизму. *Theoretical and didactic philology*, (32), 125–132; Svyrydenko, O. (2017). «ПИСЬМА О КИЕВЕ» М. МАКСИМОВИЧА В КОНТЕКСТІ РОМАНТИЧНОЇ ЕПІСТОЛЯРНОЇ ТРАДИЦІЇ. *Theoretical and didactic philology*, (26), 152–161.

²² Дерюгина, Л. В. (2023). МА Максимович – адресат писем НВ Гоголя (из комментария). *Литературный факт*, (2 (28)), 89–102.

²³ Kazimierz Cysewski, already mentioned for his using of the concept of autokreacja to analyse epistolography, authored many articles on the letters of the Polish romantics, including Śłowacki's: Cysewski, K. (1997). Listy Śłowackiego do matki – problem obrazu autora. In *Poetyka przemiany człowieka i świata w twórczości Juliusza Śłowackiego* (Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna ed., pp. 150–156). Śliwiński Marian.; Cysewski, K. (1997). Teoretyczne i metodologiczne problemy badań nad epistologafią. *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1, 95–110.

²⁴ Marek Troszyński recently edited the new edition of Śłowacki's letters for the complete set of works, published by PWN. Other works on the subjects are: Troszyński, M. (Ed.). (1999). *Śłowacki współczesny* (Instytut Badań Literackich ed.).

²⁵ Sudolski, Z. (1987). Główne tendencje w rozwoju epistolografii romantycznej w Polsce: Mickiewicz–Kraśiński–Śłowacki–Norwid. *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, 31(2 (257)).; Sudolski, Z. (1988). Juliusz Śłowacki jako epistolograf. In *Dziewiętnastowieczność: z poetyk polskich i rosyjskich XIX wieku: prace poświęcone X Międzynarodowemu Kongresowi Sławistów w Sofii* (Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk ed., pp. 253–267). Czuplejewicz Eugeniusz, Grajewski

This review of existing scholarship reveals two significant gaps. First, despite their shared temporal and geographical context, comparative analyses of these writers remain remarkably limited, with Grabowicz's unpublished doctoral thesis being the only major comparative study. Second, while their correspondence has attracted scholarly attention, the question of Ukrainian identity construction in their letters remains largely unexplored. These gaps are particularly significant given the current scholarly debates surrounding Ukrainian national identity, highlighting the need to carefully examine identity formation in the pre-national period.

This thesis examines the construction of Ukrainian identity in the private correspondence of Gogol and Słowacki through several interconnected research questions. The first involves how Gogol and Słowacki represented their Ukrainian identity in their private letters, considering the influence of their addressees. Primary among these is how both writers articulated their relationship to Ukraine in their letters, particularly how these representations shifted according to their correspondents. The study analyzes these self-representations within their historical context, investigating how the writers understood and deployed the concept of 'Ukrainian,' and how they mentally mapped Ukrainian space.

This analysis is grounded in understanding identity as historically contingent, acknowledging the distinct ways identity was conceptualized within Polish and Russian literary circles of the period. The comparative framework necessitates careful consideration of these different cultural spheres. Therefore, Ukraine is seen from a postcolonial perspective and finds itself in a subaltern position among the Polish and Russian spheres of influence.

In showing the merging and untangling of the Polish, Russian and Ukrainian identities, we aim to present a process without evaluating it. We are not trying to confirm or negate the writers' belonging to a particular national identity. In Gogol's case, the focus is not on determining whether he was 'truly' Russian or Ukrainian

Wincent.;Sudolski, Z. (1996). *Opowieść biograficzna*. Ancher.; Sudolski, Z. (1997). *Polski list romantyczny*. Wydawnictwo Literackie.

but on understanding how he navigated his origins in a territory whose population largely spoke a different language and maintained distinct cultural traditions.

This study proceeds from the premise that Ukrainian origins significantly shaped these writers' cultural identities and self-understanding. Rather than engaging in debates about their placement within national literary canons, we examine how their works and self-representations reflect the complex cultural interactions of their time. This approach challenges the rigid categorization of literature according to national belonging, instead highlighting how cultural boundaries were fluid and often shaped by political hierarchies.

Our comparative framework draws on postcolonial theory to examine the power dynamics between dominant and subaltern cultures in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe. Following Ilnytkyj's conceptualization of Gogol as a postcolonial writer, we employ theoretical models that can accommodate the complexity of cultural positioning in imperial contexts. This framework allows us to analyze how writers like Gogol could simultaneously participate in imperial cultural production while maintaining connections to their Ukrainian origins. Such an approach clarifies the hierarchical relationships between cultures and how writers navigated these power structures.

This theoretical frame enables us to move beyond reductive binary categorizations (Russian/Ukrainian, Polish/Ukrainian) to examine how cultural identities were negotiated within imperial power structures. It allows us to analyze how these writers maintained multiple cultural affiliations while operating within hierarchical systems that privileged certain cultural expressions over others. Through this lens, we can better understand how personal background and broader political-cultural contexts shaped factors such as language choice, cultural references, and self-presentation.

As previously noted, in seeking to understand the dynamics within the Ukrainian triangle²⁶, a critical methodological approach will be the postcolonial framework,

²⁶ We are adopting this terminology, which mirrors Beauvois's term *trójkał ukraiński*, to indicate the relationship between the 19th century formations that correspond to nowadays Ukraine, Poland and Russia.

which “helps us trying to gain theoretical sense out of the past, interrogating the colonial past, without forgetting it”²⁷. Here, the colonial past refers to Ukraine’s experience under the political rule of the Russian Empire and the social dominance of the Polish nobility. Postcolonial studies provide valuable tools for analyzing this triangle of nationalities and addressing Ukraine’s subaltern position within it. A particularly relevant concept is Homi Bhabha’s “Third Space”, which frames Ukraine as a liminal, creative space – an area of cultural encounter where Ukraine could engage with and reshape the narratives of its neighbours to forge its own. As Bilenky describes, Ukraine formed its national identity by “unmaking” the identities imposed by neighbouring cultures²⁸.

In the analysis, we must deal with a very different type of correspondence from the point of view of dimension and variety of addressees. While we have access to 1350 letters from Gogol to 107 addressees, Słowacki’s main addressee was his mother, and the number of letters still preserved is relatively lower, namely 280.

This difference is full of consequences: firstly, it is evident that we have more examples of representation of Ukraine and Ukrainian identity in Gogol’s correspondence, whereas, in Słowacki’s, the number is lower. Also, the number of addressees is quite relevant. We observe more distinctively a form of *accommodation* in Gogol’s letters, wherein he adapts his self-representation according to the letter’s recipient. His correspondence reveals a range of identities and a transformation of his sense of self over time.

In analyzing these letters, we will draw not only on a postcolonial framework but also on other methodological tools. One is the concept of *autokreacja*, as it was used by Jerzy Jarzębski, which refers to the conscious or unconscious self-representation typical of autobiographical narratives. Another key tool is the sociolinguistic concept of *accommodation*, which describes how individuals

²⁷ Gandhi, L. (2018). *Postcolonial theory: A critical introduction*. Columbia University Press, pp. 4–5.

²⁸ Bilenky, S. (2020). *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations*. Stanford University Press.

modify their behaviour and self-presentation based on the audience, adjusting their identity according to the recipient of the communication.

This study's originality lies in its comparative scope and methodological approach. While these contemporary writers have been examined separately, their comparative analysis remains largely unexplored. Moreover, our focus on private correspondence provides unique insights into identity construction. Nineteenth-century letters, operating at the intersection of biography and literature and often reaching audiences beyond their nominal recipients, served as crucial spaces for self-presentation and identity formation.

This thesis is organized into four chapters. The first chapter focuses on the historical and literary context surrounding Ukraine. It outlines the key events that led to Ukraine coming under the control of the Polish nobility and the Russian Empire, and it further explores the concept of the Polish-Ukrainian-Russian triangle within a postcolonial framework. The Habsburg influence in Galicia, while significant, lies beyond this study's scope. The literary context follows with a brief overview of the importance of Ukrainian folklore in ethnographic research in Russia and Poland. This section also discusses the concept of Ukrainian schools in Russian and Polish literature, highlighting a parallel phenomenon across the two dominant literatures. The chapter introduces the main authors and defining features of these literary schools, concluding with the concept of Orientalism as a useful lens for analyzing portrayals of Ukraine in Russian and Polish literature.

The second chapter examines the concept of identity, with a particular focus on national identity. After introducing national romanticism as a transnational phenomenon, it will explore the distinct paths of national ideas in Poland, Ukraine, and Russia. These identities will be analyzed within a triangular framework (as established in the previous chapter), presenting Ukrainian identity as one shaped by dismantling elements of the other two. Special attention will be given to the concept of Little Russian identity and various prenational identities that existed during this early phase of nation-building. The development of Ukrainian national identity will be discussed in depth to contextualize the experiences of Gogol and Słowacki within a broader historical backdrop. The chapter will also address the

challenges of adopting a national framework to analyze pre-national identification, with Gogol as an example of a figure who has been retrospectively nationalized. Additional categories, such as morality and class, will be explored as alternative forms of identification useful for examining representations of Ukrainian identity.

The third chapter will finally concentrate on the two writers, exploring their lives and literary works from the point of view of the deployment of Ukrainian themes and the “creation of national narratives”. The chapter will be divided into two main parts: the first concerning the biographies of the two writers, while the second will be devoted to literary works. The biographical section will investigate the significance of Ukraine in the lives of the two writers, including factual events and memories of their native land. The literary section explores themes in their works that also appear in their self-representations within their letters.

The fourth chapter focuses on an analysis of the correspondence. It opens with an overview of Romantic epistolography in Poland, Russia, and Ukraine, followed by a discussion of the methodological concepts of self-creation and accommodation. The chapter then turns to Gogol’s correspondence, examining his use of Ukrainianisms and their significance. It explores identity-defining expressions, revealing how Gogol’s perception of Ukrainianness carries moral associations, particularly linked to idleness. Additionally, certain addressees, such as Mykhailo Maksymovych, appear to be central in shaping Gogol’s reflections on his identity. For Słowacki, the focus is primarily on his depiction of Kremenets, his birthplace and personal homeland, in his letters. The construction of Ukrainian identity in Słowacki appears to be mostly a literary self-creation.

Each chapter of the dissertation is structured to complement and build upon the others, ensuring that they function as an integrated whole. The primary aim of the first three chapters is to provide a comprehensive context and a solid foundation for the analysis of the letters, which is the central part of the thesis. The dissertation’s main objective is to explore how Gogol and Słowacki reflected upon their Ukrainian origins. To achieve this, it is necessary to have a broader

perspective on how Ukraine was represented in contemporary literature and how Ukrainian identity was developing in both national and pre-national terms.

Chapter 1: The literary and historical context

This chapter will delve into the literary and historical context that created the basis for the formation of Ukrainian identity and led to the rise of independent Ukrainian literature. This chapter aims to understand the historical context in which Mykola/Nikolai Gogol and Juliusz Słowacki developed their identity and how this context affected their perception of themselves and Ukraine. It will be divided into two major subthemes: the historical and the literary context. In both subthemes, we will focus on Ukraine and its relationship with Poland and Russia²⁹. The methodology we will employ to analyse this encounter is rooted in postcolonial theory. From our perspective, Ukraine lies on a cultural fault line, i.e., it finds itself at the crossroads between *Slavia Latina* and *Slavia Orthodoxa*³⁰. The complexity of this position arises from the efforts of the two major forces in the area, Poland and Russia, to incorporate Ukraine into their political and cultural influence.

The chapter will be structured as follows. Initially, we will consider the relationship between Poland, Ukraine and Russia to be triangular, and we will study the different sides of the triangle: the Polish-Ukrainian side, the Russian-Ukrainian side and the position of Ukraine within the triangle, i.e. how Ukraine developed its own cultural identity in the interaction among the two different hegemonic forces. It is necessary to reflect on the most influential historical events that led to the subaltern position of Ukraine. The historical subtheme will end with a note

²⁹ In this work, the terms "Ukraine," "Poland," and "Russia" are used with an awareness of their historical fluidity and the complexity of their definitions during the early 19th century. These names did not refer to fully independent nation-states as we understand them today, but rather to regions with complex political, social, and cultural identities. In this context, "Ukraine" refers to a geographical and cultural region under the influence of the Russian Empire and, earlier, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The term "Ukrainian" is used cautiously to describe regional identities connected to language, culture, and folklore, rather than a fully-fledged national entity. "Poland" refers to the territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which had been partitioned by the neighbouring powers (Russia, Prussia, and Austria) at the end of the 18th century. Thus, Poland as a state did not exist during the time in question, but Polish identity persisted through language, culture, and political aspirations. The use of "Russia" corresponds to the Russian Empire, which included parts of what are now considered Ukraine, Poland, and other Eastern European regions. In this context, "Russia" also connotes the imperial and colonial power that shaped the identities of these neighbouring regions.

³⁰ Picchio, R. (1991). *Letteratura della Slavia ortodossa: IX-XVIII sec* (Vol. 30). Edizioni Dedalo, pp. 5–85.

on using the postcolonial approach to reflect on this area's history. The second part of the chapter provides an overview of the Ukrainian theme in Polish and Russian literature. The subchapters will cover literary forms that became particularly productive regarding the representation of Ukraine. Initially, we will consider the impact of Western tradition and Romantic ideas in shaping the role of Ukraine in the imagination of Russia and Poland. The first will examine the image of Ukraine in travelogues, while the second will explore an essential source for Romantic Nationalism: the study of folklore. Further, we will consider the formation of Ukrainian literary schools in Polish and Russian literature. The conclusive part will discuss the concept of orientalizing as a common trait for these literary representations of Ukraine.

This triangulation did not provide a space for Ukrainian culture to thrive but constricted it to a form of folklorization and simplification. This particular asset caused Ukrainian literature to assume often non-literary functions, as it had to compensate for the absence of a political platform. Our reflection will centre on Ukraine, examining the ramifications of dual political and cultural influences and delving into possible postcolonial readings.

1. The Russian-Ukrainian-Polish triangle

Ukrainian history has been profoundly shaped by its geographical location, characterised by a lack of natural borders that rendered it both as crossroads of cultures and vulnerable to the ambitions of neighbouring powers. After the Tatar invasion of Kyivan Rus in 1240, the territory that comprises modern-day Ukraine saw the arrival of various peoples. The most significant encounter was probably with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Muscovy (and later the Russian Empire), owing to Ukraine's geographical position and cultural affinities with both formations. Ukraine's geographical location positions it in a state of in-betweenness, still influencing how it is perceived and perceives itself today.³¹ In

³¹ See: Riabczuk, M. (2015). *Ukraina. Syndrom postkolonialny*, pp. 8–19.

this sense, Ukraine could be defined as a contact zone, i.e., as Pratt formulated it:

[Contact zones are] social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they lived out in many parts of the world today.³²

Ukraine functioned as a contact zone for the two antagonising forces of Russia and Poland. This led to hybrid phenomena, such as the creation of the Uniate Church, which acknowledged papal supremacy but retained orthodox liturgy.

Ukraine's representation has long been linked to the idea of Borderlands, both in Polish and Russian political imaginations³³. Poland considered Ukraine part of its political map, namely its eastern borders, the *kresy*. In this belief, the cultural differences between the two countries were not evaluated, as Poland considered Ukraine a part of a greater Poland, with some cultural differences. The Polish *kresy* are still present in today's political discourse and reflected upon with nostalgia³⁴. The same applies to Russia, where Ukraine was initially viewed as the Empire's western border, only becoming fully integrated into its territory after the partition of Poland.

In this chapter, we will consider the different sides of the Polish-Ukrainian-Russian triangle, investigating the historical connection between the three countries³⁵ and the cultural influence of this encounter.

1.1 The Polish-Ukrainian side

The invasion of Kyiv by the Mongols in 1240 marked the end of Kyivan Rus'. By the fourteenth century, most of its territories, including Kyiv (1363), were annexed

³² Pratt, M. L. (1991). *Arts of the Contact Zone*. Profession, 33–40.

³³ Kamusella, T. (2019). *The Russian okrainy (Окраины) and the Polish kresy: objectivity and historiography*. Global Intellectual History, 4(4), 347–368.

³⁴ Bakula, B. (2007). Colonial and Postcolonial Aspects of Polish Discourse on Eastern "Borderlands". In: J. Korek (red.) *From sovietology to postcoloniality: Poland and Ukraine from a postcolonial perspective*. Stockholm: Södertörns högskola, pp. 41–57.

³⁵ The geographical units discussed here do not correspond precisely to modern political boundaries or nation-states. These territorial designations and practical definitions, such as "countries", are used for analytical convenience while recognizing the complex historical evolution of political, cultural, and social formations in these regions.

to Lithuania. In 1569, the Lublin Union transferred these Ukrainian lands from Lithuania to Poland. This event was full of consequences, as it created the conditions for the development of the Ukrainian nation. Nonetheless, while the Union between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland was negotiated and harmonious, the incorporation of Ukraine was imposed unilaterally³⁶.

Between the Lublin Union of 1569 and the Bohdan Khmelnytsky uprising of 1648, social tensions intensified as Ukrainian magnates Polish noble customs and the Polish nobility expanded their presence in Ukrainian lands³⁷. The Commonwealth continued to be a republic of two states (*Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów*) while being formed by three ethnic groups (the Poles, Lithuanians, and Ruthenians³⁸). As a nobiliary Republic, it excluded one of the most important social forces in Ukraine, the Cossacks, despite their important role in defending Lithuania's southern borders and later the Commonwealth. As they saw their rights being neglected, the Cossacks started to rebel against the Polish dominion. Although right-bank Ukraine was central to the 1648 uprising, Poland regained it in 1667, and in 1713, a new Szlachta order was established³⁹.

Central events

A central event which influenced the relationship between Poles and Ukrainians in the right bank was the *Haidamaky* rebellion. Cossackdom had ceased to exist in the right bank, and the few remaining cossacks served the *szlachta*. Without leadership to challenge the *szlachta*'s power, a new social phenomenon emerged: the *Haidamaky*. Initially, it was a minor issue involving peasants fleeing their landlords and robbing the nobles, but it gradually grew into a significant threat to the right bank *szlachta*. Their number grew after the expiration of the

³⁶Snyder, T. (2002). *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999*. Yale University Press, p. 109.

³⁷ *Ivi*, p. 112.

³⁸ The term "Ruthenians" (rutheni) was historically used to describe the ancestors of modern Ukrainians and Belarusians in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, distinct from its current usage.

³⁹ Subtelny, O. (2009). *Ukraine: A history*. University of Toronto Press, p. 189.

fifteen-to-twenty-year exemptions from peasant obligation, which motivated many peasants to join the *Haidamaky*⁴⁰. In addition, they received support from the Zaporozhian Sich. Their presence was hazardous for Poland in times of international conflict.

1768 is the year of the greatest uprising of the Ukrainian peasants against the Polish lords. Led by Maksim Zalizniak, the *Haidamaky* surrounded the town of Uman to enact a merciless massacre of thousands of people who took refuge in the town⁴¹. This event held a peculiar significance for the Polish romantics, as it showed the dark side of the idyllic Ukraine and exposed the shortcomings of the Polish nobility. Many democratic romantics grappled with the guilt of their ancestors' refusal to consider the establishment of a commonwealth encompassing three statal entities, including Rus' as the third entity. The feeling of guilt was so strong among the emigrates that there were groups of democrats who adopted the name Uman to symbolize their efforts at redemption. Among romantics, there was a prevailing belief that the dissolution of the Commonwealth was a consequence of the mistreatment of Ukrainian peasants, prompting efforts to reform their rapport with the people, either through spiritual introspection or by marrying women from peasant backgrounds.⁴²

Cultural influences

The Polish control in right-bank Ukraine permeated the social life, in which a Polish or Polonized nobility had social power over the Ukrainian people and influenced the educational system. As part of the Imperial project to incorporate the Polish nobles into the Russian Imperial elite, they were put in charge of the educational system in Right-bank Ukraine, giving them complete control over the type of education they could implement in the region. Since these territories were primarily under the administration of the *szlachta* and boasted a higher number of nobles than other regions, a shared sense of urgency arose for establishing

⁴⁰ *Ivi*, pp. 191–192.

⁴¹ *Ivi*, p. 193.

⁴² Janion, M., & Żmigrodzka, M. (2001). *Romantyzm i historia*. Słowo/Obraz Terytoria., pp. 114–115.

new schools in the area. The idea was also that the Polish national identity could continue to thrive and be predominant in the region through the educational system. Prince Adam Czartoryski, who was Alexander I's minister of foreign affairs between 1804 and 1806, had a prominent role in the educational system of the new imperial provinces, including the University of Vilnius, which was a very important centre for education at the time.

In 1803, five schools were established in right-bank Ukraine: three in Volhynia (Zhytomyr, Luck and Kremenets) and two in Podole (Vinnytsia and Kamianets). These schools had to become "academic schools" and to be directly managed by the University of Vilnius⁴³. One of them, the Lyceum in Kremenets, was particularly important. Tadeusz Czacki decided to open this lyceum to establish a stronghold for Polish culture in the region. The Lyceum had a very peculiar education programme, including lectures on astronomy at the university level⁴⁴.

1.2 The Russian-Ukrainian side

The inclusion of Ukraine in the Russian Empire was not the fruit of a sudden conquest but the result of a set of treaty and alliance agreements that put Ukraine unwillingly under the control of Muscovy and later of the Russian Empire. The Cossacks stipulated different agreements with the powers surrounding the territory of Ukraine, such as the Poles, Swedes, Russians, and Tatars.

The Pereiaslav agreement could be considered to be one of these agreements. Still, it was also the main reason for the annexation of Ukraine, and it was used as a symbol of Russian-Ukrainian unity in the Russian Empire as well as in the Soviet Union. It was stipulated in 1654 by Bohdan Khmelnytsky with the tsar of Muscovy. According to Ukrainian historiography, the treaty was intended as an

⁴³Daniel, B. (2005). *Trójkąt ukraiński. Szlachta, carat i lud na Wołyniu, Podolu i Kijowszczyźnie 1793–1914*, p. 220.

⁴⁴ After the 1830–1831 Polish Uprising, which was led, among the others, by Adam Czartoryski himself, Russia deprived the Polish nobility of many of its educational centres, including the University of Vilnius, which closed in 1832 and the lyceum of Kremenets, closed in 1834. This led to the opening of a new university in Kyiv, transferring the professors of the lyceum to Kyiv, as well as the lyceum's library, collection of statues and even trees from the botanical garden. The Polish language was banned as a language of instruction in the new University in Kyiv, named after Prince Volodymyr the Great, who was considered by Russian historiography to be the founder of the Russian state as well as Orthodoxy.

alliance between two autonomous entities, at most a temporary Muscovite protectorate, but not inclusion into the Russian state. Nonetheless, the Russian tsar could not accept this kind of bilateral agreement, as, in contrast to the Polish king, he was an absolute ruler and considered it shameful to lower himself to the level of his subjects⁴⁵. The tsar interpreted the treaty as the will of the Ukrainian people to cede the dominion of Ukraine. Hence, the Russian interpretation of this act is very different: according to Russian historians, especially in Soviet times, it represented the liberation of Ukraine from the Polish yoke after its separation from Northern Slavic people after the end of Kyivan Rus'⁴⁶. The two readings of the Pereiaslav agreement reflected the different approaches of the two parts: while Khmelnytsky was trying to find an alliance, Muscovy was advancing in its imperial project of gathering the lands of Rus'. This project has its eastern correspondent in the gathering of the land of the Golden Horde by establishing agreements with nomadic political entities, usually being read differently by the two parts⁴⁷.

Central events

Dnieper Ukraine (the left-bank Ukraine) was deprived of the structure of the Hetmanate during Catherine II's government⁴⁸. Already in 1775, the Empress issued the Fundamental Law for the administrative restructuring of the Empire to establish a uniform administrative framework across the entire realm⁴⁹. In 1780, the Empress abolished the Hetmanate and the Crimean Khanate, leaving Left-bank Ukraine to be governed in alignment with the practices observed in other regions of the Russian Empire⁵⁰. This had a profound influence on the Ukrainian society, which witnessed a profound change in its autonomy. In 1793, a medal struck in honour of Catherine II read, "I have recovered what was torn away". This

⁴⁵ Subtelny, O. (2009). *Ukraine: A history*. University of Toronto Press, p. 134.

⁴⁶ Kappeler, A. (2014). *The Russian empire: A multi-ethnic history*. Routledge, p. 61.

⁴⁷ *Ivi*, p. 64.

⁴⁸ For further reference on the abolishment of the Hetmanate see: Kohut, Z. E. (1988). *Russian centralism and Ukrainian autonomy: imperial absorption of the Hetmanate, 1760s-1830s*.

⁴⁹ Magocsi, P. R. (2010). *A history of Ukraine: The land and its peoples*. University of Toronto Press, p. 323.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

inscription implies that Ukraine has always been part of Russia and has been separated from it only due to a historical accident⁵¹.

Cultural influence

The Polish Uprising of 1830–1831 led to different questions; one was the loyalty of the Ukrainian peasants towards the Empire. Persuaded by the Polish nobility that they would regain their freedom, many participated in the uprising. The Russian strategy involved employing religion to bond Ukrainian peasants more tightly to the empire. For this reason, many Uniates were converted to Orthodoxy to interrupt the religious union between them and the Polish catholic nobility. In 1839, the Uniate church council called for the reunification of the Uniates with the Russian Orthodox Church under the blessing of the tsar. The Russification followed the Orthodoxization. Orthodox seminaries were using Russian as the language of instruction. The following strategy to gain complete control over these territories was to integrate the Polish nobility into the Imperial elite: to do so, they were given the same rights as the Russian elite, and before the Uprising, Poles also had control over education. The idea of the Empire was to strengthen its influence in these borderlands and to diminish the presence of the Polish language and culture. The university aimed to become a centre for the instruction of the new cadres who needed to become loyal to the empire and its official national identity. Consequently, many manuscripts were published regarding the western provinces of Volhynia, Podolia, and right-bank Ukraine, which are historically Russian lands. Nevertheless, instead of becoming a centre for the development of a Russian identity, it became one for the Ukrainian identity.

1.3 Ukraine in the triangle

Ukraine developed its own cultural identity in the interaction between the two hegemonic forces of Poland and Russia. Despite its elite being either Polonized

⁵¹ Subtelny, O. (2009). *Ukraine: A history*. University of Toronto Press, p. 203.

or Russified, the interest in Ukrainian folklore and antiquity slowly created the conditions for the development of a national consciousness.

In the first half of the 19th century, Ukraine was, therefore, fully integrated into the Russian Empire, while socially still partly under the control of the Polish nobility. The large majority of the inhabitants of Ukraine were part of the lower strata of the population. As a result, the cultural elite of Ukraine, which at the time consisted of the highest state of society, did not have a significant role in leading the country. This was particularly true for the right bank, where there was not an actual Ukrainian elite, while in the left bank, the foundation of centres of higher education and the presence of the former *starshyna*⁵² created the basis for the development of an initial stage of formation of Ukrainian national identity.

The foundation of the University in Kharkiv in 1805 had a great impact on the development of Ukrainian intelligentsia. This University was funded by a group of local gentry, among them Vasili Karazin, who succeeded in raising the funds and lobbying the emperor Alexander I for permission. Most of this intelligentsia was related to the former cossack *starshyna*, who found themselves in an impoverished position and decided to revolve to high education. Members of the intelligentsia with diverse backgrounds, particularly those of peasant origin, were extremely rare at the time. The elite comprised small circles of intellectuals who apparently did not have much influence in society. Despite these premises, the actual impact that these intellectuals had on the formation of a Ukrainian national identity was very significant⁵³.

1.4 Social differences

In understanding the complicated relationship between Russia, Poland and Ukraine, it is necessary to consider the social construction of the Empire. The largest social group of the Empire was the peasantry, comprising the vast majority of the population. The other social strata were the nobility, the townspeople and

⁵² General title applied to persons holding positions of authority in a Ukrainian Cossack regiment and in the administration of the Hetman state (1648–1782). Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, & Kubijowicz, W. (1984). *Encyclopedia of Ukraine-Vol. 1*. University of Toronto Press.

⁵³ *Subtelny, O. (2009). Ukraine: A history*. University of Toronto Press, pp. 223–224.

the civil servants. As we already mentioned, the number of Ukrainians being part of the higher strata of society was relatively small. In the right bank, the vast majority of the nobles pertained to the Polish *szlachta*, while in the left bank, among the nobles, only a few were descendants of the Cossack Starshyna. Generally speaking, the majority of the ethnically Ukrainian people were living under a condition of servitude in both right-bank and left-bank Ukraine. Their number also increased because Catherine the Second made nobles only the higher ranks of the former Hetmanate, whereas the lower ranks became part of the peasantry. In 1783, Catherine the Second prohibited Left Bank peasants from abandoning their lords under any conditions, thus leading to a new enserfment of the Ukrainian peasants⁵⁴. As a result, a high number of ethnically Russian people were in positions of power in left-bank Ukraine⁵⁵.

In the right-bank Ukraine, there was not a proper Cossack elite, and the pre-existing presence of a solid Polish nobility continued, with the Szlachta obtaining the status of nobility in the Russian Empire⁵⁶. In these territories, the gap between the nobility and the people was vast due to historical reasons⁵⁷. Polish nobles began losing their privileges only after the 1830–1831 Polish uprising, which left the less wealthy among them reduced to impoverished peasants⁵⁸.

The presence of a consolidated Polish nobility in western Ukraine before the uprising had consequences for the different status of Ukrainians in the Russian Empire. According to Kappeler, the Russian Empire divided its own subjects

⁵⁴ *Ivi*, p. 184.

⁵⁵ Magocsi, P. R. (2010). *A history of Ukraine: The land and its peoples*. University of Toronto Press, pp. 351–354.

⁵⁶ *Ivi*, pp. 334–349.

⁵⁷ The Counter-Reformation contributed to this trend, creating a new religious difference between Roman Catholic Ukrainian lords and Orthodox Ukrainian peasants. In the 16th century, many exponents of the Ukrainian gentry converted from Orthodoxy to Protestantism, as the Polish nobility did. Nonetheless, after the counter-reformation, the Polish nobility converted to Roman Catholicism, while the Ukrainian one did not come back to Orthodoxy. Another social difference was originated by the different law system present in Ukraine, in contrast to Lithuania. While in Lithuania, the landlords could defend their properties by using the Commonwealth, as well as the Lithuanian law, such regulations did not exist for Ukraine. In the decades after 1569, a few Polish families gained huge landholdings in Ukraine. In contrast to the rest of the Commonwealth, where the Nobility formed the 10% of the population, in Ukraine it counted only the 2%. (Snyder, T. (2002). *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999*. Yale University Press, p. 111.)

⁵⁸ Snyder, T. (2002). *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999*. Yale University Press, p. 119–120.

using different criteria: political loyalty, estate and social criteria, and cultural criteria (religion, way of life, and language)⁵⁹. The social one was particularly significant.

Because the two parts of Ukraine had different social structures, with right-bank Ukraine being under the control of Polish nobility, they also had different ranks in the hierarchy. The Ukrainians in left-bank Ukraine were associated with the second rank, which means the ethnic groups with elites that did not conform to the model of the Russian nobility. An example of an ethnic group that conformed to the model of the Russian nobility was the Poles before the uprising of 1830–1831 when they lost much of their recognition because of their political disloyalty. Ukrainians in the eastern region had only two choices: assimilate with the Russians to secure a more influential role within the empire, thereby becoming “little Russians”. In the opposite case, those who decided not to sacrifice their national “costumes” and their language could lose their nobility and be assimilated to the peasants or considered *inorodtsy*⁶⁰. The Ukrainians living in western Ukraine had a completely different situation: being an ethnic group consisting predominantly of peasants and dependent on the elites of other ethnic groups, they were on the lowest rank of the hierarchy. For a long time, the centre would not even recognize those ethnic groups, giving recognition only to the elite ruling them.

In the left-bank Ukraine, the elite was given the same status as the Russian nobility and increasingly considered to be Russian. This created a hiatus between the nobles and the peasants, who were believed to be the only representatives of the Ukrainian culture. This led to the association of Ukrainian culture only to the lesser strata of society and, consequently, in both Russian and Polish perspectives, the Ukrainian people were seen as rural and simple people. The

⁵⁹ Kappeler, Andreas et al. (eds.). *Culture, Nation and Identity: The Ukrainian– Russian Encounter, 1600–1945*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, p. 162.

⁶⁰ The word *inorodtsy* had several meanings. In official context, it designated a set of ethnicities who composed a different legal category. Informally, however, it was used to define all the non-Russian subjects of the Empire, often in a pejorative sense. Slocum, J. W. (1998). Who, and when, were the Inorodtsy? The evolution of the category of “aliens” in imperial Russia. *The Russian Review*, 57(2), 173–190.

mass of Ukrainian people started to be called *khokhly*⁶¹, a derogatory term used by the Russians to describe the uncivilized Ukrainian peasants⁶². Being Ukrainian was deemed to be synonymous with being a peasant⁶³. This image of being an uncultivated and inferior peasant people was internalized by many Ukrainians, who felt the necessity of adopting the Russian culture, seeing as more advanced and desirable, to overcome the inferiority complex⁶⁴.

1. 5 A Postcolonial reading?

The definition of the relationship between Russia, Poland, and Ukraine as colonial is a subject of debate. Traditionally, the term “colony” denotes the exploitation of a foreign territory by a dominant colonial power characterized by distinct cultural, linguistic, and ethnic differences. Thus, applying the same concept to describe the relationships between Russia and Ukraine and Poland and Ukraine may be considered problematic. Nonetheless, in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said explains how the concept of colonies should be used not only for overseas dependencies but also in describing the hegemonic/subaltern relationship of contiguous territories⁶⁵. The same idea was further developed by Etkind, who defined the Russian Empire as an example of internal colonization.

According to Etkind, the idea of the Overseas Empire being more imperialist than terrestrial imperialism is far from the truth. Considering the technological advancements of the times, the communication between the peripheries of a terrestrial empire, such as the huge Russian one and its capital, was even more complicated than between an overseas empire such as Great Britain and India. Russia applied the most common forms of indirect rule to its territory: coercion

⁶¹ A derogatory Russian term for Ukrainians. *Khokhol* literally means a sheaf or tuft of cereal stalks and is derived from an old Slavic word. As a term used to describe Ukrainians, it may have originally referred to the customary tufts of hair worn by the Cossacks, called *oseledtsi*. Although it was primarily used by Russians to denigrate Ukrainians, at times, especially in the 19th century, it was used by Ukrainians as a term of self-identification. *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, vol. 2 (1988).

⁶² Kappeler, Andreas et al. (eds.). *Culture, Nation and Identity: The Ukrainian–Russian Encounter, 1600–1945*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, p. 168.

⁶³ Kohut, Z. E. (1988). *Russian centralism and Ukrainian autonomy: imperial absorption of the Hetmanate, 1760s–1830s*, p. 303.

⁶⁴ Kappeler, Andreas et al. (eds.). *Culture, Nation and Identity: The Ukrainian–Russian Encounter, 1600–1945*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, p. 174.

⁶⁵ Said, E. W. (2012). *Culture and imperialism*. Vintage. p. xxii.

and exoticization of its population⁶⁶. The colonial experience comprises two fundamental components: culture and politics. It is the coalition of cultural hegemony and political domination that enforces colonialism⁶⁷.

The Russian Empire used different discourses to justify its imperial expansion. One was the historical discourse, through which the empire found a justification for the annexation of territory either because it had been inhabited by peoples close to the Russian one (the Finns) or because they were believed to be part of the same people (as in the case of Ukrainians). The second one is geographical contiguity which was used especially to find a justification for Russia's expansion eastward. The third is the civilising mission, which is less frequent in the discourse related to the Western or Southern countries, as they had a much older history and tradition than the Russian Empire itself⁶⁸.

Hrytsak contends that the postcolonial paradigm is inapplicable to Ukraine, as it was never a peripheral colony but had a prominent role and was at the core of the Empire. He argues that only the Hasburg-controlled territories of Ukraine reflect the colonial experience⁶⁹. On the other hand, Gerasimov believes that the colonial situation could be identified as an epistemological problem despite of the actual colonial experience⁷⁰.

In the case of Poland, the definition of its relationship with Ukraine as colonial is still under debate. Hieronym Gral stands out as a prominent voice opposing the idea of a potential colonial reading of the Polish Commonwealth. He highlights the shared ancestry of the ruling dynasties in right-bank Ukraine as a crucial point in refuting the notion of Polish ethnic domination over Ukrainians⁷¹.

Nonetheless, the position has been opposed by many scholars who defended the use of the postcolonial theory in relation to the Polish literature of the times.

⁶⁶ Etkind, A. (2013). *Internal colonization: Russia's imperial experience*. John Wiley & Sons, pp. 5–6.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸ Sobol, V. (2022). *Haunted empire: Gothic and the Russian imperial uncanny*. Cornell University Press, pp. 18–19.

⁶⁹ Hrytsak, Y. (2015). The postcolonial is not enough. *Slavic Review*, 74(4), pp. 732-737.

⁷⁰ Gerasimov, I., Glebov, S., & Mogilner, M. (2013). The postimperial meets the postcolonial: Russian historical experience and the postcolonial moment. *Ab Imperio*, 2013(2), 97-135.

⁷¹ Hieronim, G. (2016). Rzeczpospolita szlachecka—twór kolonialny?, w: *Perspektywy postkolonializmu w Polsce. Polska w perspektywie postkolonialnej*, 275–299.

In particular, many scholars, such as Bogusław Bakula, Tomasz Zarycki and Jan Sowa, consider the Kresy, or Borderlands of Poland, to admit a postcolonial reading. Jan Sowa explores the reluctance within Polish discourse to view the Borderlands in such terms, attributing this hesitation to various factors. One of the main reasons for this is the national image of Polish history, which traditionally represents Poland as a victim of other powerful nations and not as the oppressor of others⁷².

Nevertheless, it is important to set apart the relationship between Ukraine and Russia and the one between Poland and Ukraine. In the case of Russia, we deal with a land Empire that, at the time of the annexation of Ukraine, was made of a huge territory, including Siberia, the Caucasus. In the case of Poland, we see a Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in which the Polish Nobility has a hegemonic role, but the relationship between Poland and Ukraine in the 19th century is more socially than politically connotated. According to the eighth census of the population of the Russian Empire the internal division of the three “Polish” governorates, Volhynia, Kyiv and Podole, was defined according to three ethnic groups: Ukrainian peasants, Polish Szlachta and Jews. The number of Poles was ten times less than that of Ukrainian peasants, thus creating a raging social conflict between the two groups. According to Beauvois, the relationship between Ukrainians and Poles could be compared to the one between serfs and lords, with Ukrainians being in a state of slavery. The situation of the Ukrainian peasants was a matter of conflict between the opposing imperialisms of Poland and Russia: a war for the control of the souls, in the administrative sense⁷³.

To conclude, we may affirm that the two imperialisms were different but merged in the symbolic significance that Ukraine had for both of them. The annexation of Ukraine defined the success of the two countries’ imperialist missions. In the case of Russia, being Ukraine an orthodox Eastern Slavic country with a large legacy from the Kyivan past, it was a necessary component of the Russian Empire, as

⁷² Sowa, J. (2011). *Fantomowe ciało króla: Peryferyjne zmagania nowoczesna, forma*, Kraków: Universitas, p. 329–330.

⁷³ Daniel, B. (2005). *Trójkąt ukraiński. Szlachta, carat i lud na Wołyniu, Podolu i Kijowszczyźnie 1793–1914*, pp. 255–259.

well as a necessary part of the Russian identity. This historical perspective finds its basis in Karamzin's representation of the Russian state. The historian displayed Kyivan Rus' as the ancestor of modern Russia, thus presenting the modern territory of Ukraine as the ancient Russian state⁷⁴. This association created the basis for the identification of Russia with Ukraine and, consequently, the necessity for a Russo-Ukrainian unity.

The Eastern Slavic unity constituted the necessary foundation of the Empire itself. As a result, it was important to preserve its stability and avoid any possible formation of a different national identity. Ukraine needed to be included in the Russian identity as a "Southern variant" of the unity, eliminating the Ukrainian culture and language and incorporating it into the Russian one. Without this unity, Russia would have been detached from its past, mining the foundation of its state.

The Polish project had similar roots and included the necessity of perpetuating the geographical entity of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and also redefining the Polish identity, encompassing the Lithuanian and Ruthenian ones, according to the formula *natione polonus gente ruthenus*. In the case of Poland, the project could be defined as national more than imperial. Poland was determined to reconstruct itself in its pre-partition borders, and the only viable means of achieving this goal was to retain the former territories of the Commonwealth.

We could summarise the situation in the 19th century of the relationship between these three countries by saying that Russia emerged from a condition of backwardness into one of an empire. On the other hand, Poland declined from being a great power in the region but still had an influential social elite. Ukraine was struggling to find its own space in the region, while both Russian and Polish societies denied its political autonomy and identity. Russia asserted its position from a stance of strength and hegemony. At the same time, throughout much of the nineteenth century, Poland argued for its cause under political subordination. Still, it maintained social dominance, particularly in Polish territories and regions

⁷⁴ Верстюк, В. Ф., Горобець, В. М., & Толочко, О. П. (2004). Україна і Росія в історичній ретроспективі. *Українські проекти в Російській імперії*/ВФ Верстюк, ВМ Горобець, ОП Толочко, р. 266.

like Eastern Galicia and Right Bank Ukraine. Conversely, Ukraine entered the discourse from a position of both political and social subordination⁷⁵.

2. The Literary Context

In this section, we will examine Ukraine's role within the literary landscape of the early 19th century. The literary works under review could be classified within various national literary canons, as they were written in Polish and Russian, while consistently focusing on Ukraine – its history, traditions, and natural scenery. Most writers from the Ukrainian schools of Polish and Russian literature were born in Ukraine. However, their inclusion in the Ukrainian canon varied depending on how this canon was portrayed throughout different periods in Ukrainian literary history.

The Ukrainian literary system can be described as polycentric, encompassing works written in multiple languages. This characteristic stems not only from Ukraine's later development of a distinct national canon but also from the Baroque era's legacy of internationalism. Literature in Ukraine has been composed in various languages, including Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, Latin, and Church Slavonic⁷⁶. In the 17th century, most Ukrainian writers used Polish as a major code⁷⁷. At the beginning of the 19th century, Ukrainian literature was functionally bilingual, with Russian often used more frequently than Ukrainian⁷⁸. Even if the language started to play an important role in separating the two literary canons, Ukrainian literature is still characterized by the use of multiple languages, particularly Russian⁷⁹. Plurilingualism and the possibility of multiple loyalties created a polycentric literary system in which the same authors could work at the

⁷⁵ Shkandrij, M. (2001). *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and the discourse of empire from Napoleonic to postcolonial times*. McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, p. 22.

⁷⁶ Shkandrij, M. (2020), Channel Switching: Language Change and the Conversion Trope in Modern Ukrainian Literature, *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*, 6, 1, pp. 39–58.

⁷⁷ Грабович, Г. (1997). *До історії української літератури: дослідження, есе, полеміка = Toward a History of Ukrainian Literature*. Основи, p. 19.

⁷⁸ Грабович, Г. (1995, травень). Семантика котляревщини. *Сучасність*, №5. p. 70.

⁷⁹ Puleri, M. (2016). *Narrazioni ibride post-sovietiche: Per una letteratura ucraina di lingua russa*. Firenze University Press, p. 95.

centre of the Ukrainian literary system while simultaneously participating in other national literature⁸⁰.

As a result, the literary works of these two schools are challenging to categorize within a specific national literary system. It is more accurate to view them as products of prenational literary systems or as a form of late regionalism, as defined by Riabchuk⁸¹. This regionalism was characterized by being Little Russian or Orthodox and Eastern Slavic rather than Ukrainian or Russian, thus remaining distinct from the national categories we recognize today.

Chyzhevsky's *History of Ukrainian Literature* draws a line between an ethnolinguistic codification of the national canon of Ukrainian literature and a different representation of the Ukrainian past, in which Ukrainian culture is not identified only by the use of the Ukrainian language but seen as the product of the encounter of different cultures on the territory of Ukraine⁸².

Therefore, the schools of Polish and Russian literature are often viewed as Ukrainian literature written in other languages. Nonetheless, we aim to underline the conflict between their belonging to the Ukrainian canon and, contemporarily, constructing an image of Ukraine which contributed to its political subalternity. Shkandrij defined these schools as “aiming at domesticating Ukrainian history and folklore within their own [Russian and Polish] literatures”⁸³. The role of these schools is twofold: they contributed to creating the basis for Ukrainian literature and a Ukrainian imagination of Ukraine itself, and they also constituted the basis for foreign domination of it. Here, the contribution of these writers “having two souls” (as Gogol and Słowacki) is central: they worked for both the literary

⁸⁰ Brogi Bercoff, G. (2013), *Constructing Canons: Ruthenian Literatures of the 17th–18th Centuries in Plurilingual Context*, in Garzaniti M. et al. (eds.), *Contributi italiani al XV Congresso Internazionale degli Slavisti: Minsk, 20–27 Settembre 2013*, Firenze University Press, Florence: 251–274.

⁸¹ Рябчук, М. (2000). Від Малоросії до України. *Парадокси запізнілого націотворення*. Київ: Критика, p. 65.

⁸² Chyzhevsky's *History* included not only the literary works of Romanticism written in Russian and Polish, but also authors who were writing in the territory of Ukraine and who were not taking part in the nation-building. (Pavlyshyn, M. (2016). *Literary history as provocation of national identity, national identity as provocation of literary history*, p. 82–82).

⁸³ Shkandrij, M. (2001). *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and the discourse of empire from Napoleonic to postcolonial times*. McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, pp. 30–31.

canons, on the one hand contributing to the development of Ukrainian literature and on the other to the incorporation of the latter in dominant literature. With this idea in mind, we will delve into the formation of literature around Ukraine. This literature started with travel accounts written by Russian or Polish writers, who were inspired by and sought to emulate the Grand Tour tradition of their Western counterparts, the Englishmen and Germans travelling to the South of Europe in search of natural beauty and inspiration. They found their place of exoticism in Ukraine or, in the case of Russian literature, also in the Caucasus.

2.1 Travelling through uncanny

The desire to travel through Ukraine in Russian literature may be explained by the recent annexation of Ukraine to the Russian Empire and the desire to discover a new land. This explains not only the fascination for Ukraine but also the interest in the Baltics, which became the setting of many Russian Gothic novels written in the first half of the nineteenth century, as well as the fascination for the Caucasus. The interest in Ukraine differs from the desire to explore these territories. The Baltics were seen as “windows to European culture” and valued for their cultural connection to German culture and architecture, while Ukraine’s allure lay in its historical significance for Russia. Ukraine was a significant territorial acquisition for the Russian Empire, as it provided a direct link to the historical legacy of Rus’. Here, we can detect the influence of Karamzin’s *History of the Russian state*, which was published in 1816–1817 and represented Rus’ as the predecessor of the Russian state. Yet, the encounter with Ukraine could be described as “uncanny”: Ukraine was simultaneously seen as familiar and foreign. What was particularly shocking for the Russian travellers was that Little Russia, as they call it, did not resemble the ancient Rus’ they hoped to find.

In contrast, its inhabitants, the Little Russians, differed from the Russians in every aspect, including the language⁸⁴. The lack of ruins of the Kyivan past did not stop the Russian travellers from trying to find a connection between the Little Russians

⁸⁴ Верстюк, В. Ф., Горобець, В. М., & Толочко, О. П. (2004). Україна і Росія в історичній ретроспективі. *Українські проекти в Російській імперії*/ВФ Верстюк, ВМ Горобець, ОП Толочко, р. 278.

and Great Russians. This ideal unity between the two migrated westward. The inhabitants of the former Polish provinces of Kyiv, Podillia and Volhynia were included in this idea of a Southern variant of Russia⁸⁵.

The travellers were trying to find what they considered their ancient civilization in Ukraine, their correspondent to Greece or Italy. Participation in Western civilization also depended on the possibility of discovering a classical past, which, in the case of Russia, could be found in the travels to Ukraine. These travels, either to Eastern Ukraine (Odesa, Crimea, and Taurida) or to Western Ukraine (the former regions of the Rzeczpospolita), reconnected the travellers to the supposed ancient past of the Empire⁸⁶.

The first apparition of the Ukrainian theme in the travelogues written by Russian authors was influenced by the interest in voyage literature started by the English writers. Under the influence of literary works such as Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768), Russian authors, such as Karamzin and Radishev, wrote travelogues and travel literature. With this Western influence in mind, it is therefore argued that Ukraine was needed for the Russian imagination as an equivalent to Southern Europe, which was the main destination for European intellectuals. In the search for a space of inspiration and the creation of literary imagination, Ukraine embodied this necessity. In 1798, Jakov Markovich was the first to make this comparison. In *Notes on Little Russia* (Записки о Малороссии, ее жителях и произведениях, 1798) he wrote: "Their land [of the Little Russians] is in Russia what Italy is in Europe"⁸⁷. The frequent comparisons between Ukraine and Italy are the first way the Ukrainian theme is approached⁸⁸. This could be seen as the beginning of the Ukrainian theme. This "discovery" of Ukraine through the travelogues exemplifies colonial literary

⁸⁵ *Ivi*, p. 279.

⁸⁶ *Ivi*, p. 283.

⁸⁷ Маркович, Я. (1798). *Записки о Малороссии, ее жителях и произведениях*, p. 59.

⁸⁸ Сиповский, В. Д. (1928). *Україна в російському письменстві* (Vol. 58). 3 друк. Української Академії Наук, p. 18.

practices. As Grabowicz mentions, Ukraine is created by these descriptions, and it is as if it never existed before being described by the Russian travellers⁸⁹.

Moreover, Ukraine is described as a province of Russia, and the description is constructed through a systematisation of Ukraine inside a system of similarities and contrasts. Ukraine is an appendix of Russia, and it was created in opposition to the Capital and the centre. As Grabowicz writes: "It [Ukraine] is everything (idyllic, patriarchal, natural and musical) the Capital is not, but at the same time it is "our Italy" and therefore a province of the Empire⁹⁰". It is worth noting that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Italy was believed to be a geographical expression and not a national state.⁹¹ Therefore, the opposition is still not national; it is an opposition between the centre and periphery. Before Ukraine could speak about itself, it was first described by travellers coming from outside, and these descriptions posed a first layer in the representation of Ukraine. The Romantic representation of the South as the repository of the past, as opposed to the modern and active North, is present in the travelogues and the Ukrainian literary schools.

Grabowicz defines this phase of the Russian-Ukrainian literary relationship as the pre-reception phase: it can be dated between the turn of the 19th century and the Decembrist uprising in 1825 or even up to the Polish uprising of 1830–1831. This phase is characterised by Ukraine's lack of agency in the relationship, whereas Russia completely objectifies it and never considers it a voice in the dialogue⁹².

In the case of Polish literature, the interest in exploring Ukraine can be dated back to the 16th century. Sebastian Klonowicz's *Roxolania* (1584) is a description of the costumes of the Ruś czerwona, and it focuses on the life and habits of the peasants. Other instances of Polish interest in Ukrainian folklore are Szymon

⁸⁹ Грабович, Г. (1997). *До історії української літератури: дослідження, есе, полеміка*. = *Toward a History of Ukrainian Literature* Основи, p. 88.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁹¹ Ferretti, F. (2014). Inventing Italy. Geography, Risorgimento and national imagination: the international circulation of geographical knowledge in the nineteenth century. *The Geographical Journal*, 180(4), 402-413.

⁹² Grabowicz, G. G., & Rudnyckyj, J. B. (1999). *Problems with the Horizon of Expectations: The Russian Reception of Early 19th Century Ukrainian Literature*. University of Manitoba, Educational Support Services, Communication Systems. p. 4.

Szymonowic's idylls, *Sielanki* (1614) and Bartłomiej Zimorowic's *Roksolanki* (1654)⁹³. A later example of Polish travel literature is Stanisław Trembecki's *Sofiówka* (1806), a description of the park which belonged to the magnates Potocki near Uman. Compared to Russian travelogues, written at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, the Polish ones have an older tradition and represent Ukraine as a region of the Polish Commonwealth.

2.2 An Ethnographic Approach

The interest in the study of the customs and traditions of the Ukrainian people could be said to have been both intellectual and institutional⁹⁴. As in the case of anthropology in general, the necessity to collect information about the life of the common people is usually linked to the necessity of mapping colonised spaces⁹⁵. The reconstruction of Ukrainian folklore could then be attributed firstly to the personal interest of some members of the elites, brought by a common fascination with the life of the people, inspired by the literary movement of Romanticism, but also by the necessity of the Russian Empire to map the recently annexed territories of Ukraine.

The Romantics' interest in the life of common people corresponded to their desire to find a "Golden Age" marked by purity and untouched by civilization. Consequently, they started idealising common folk, such as peasants and indigenous peoples, as embodying purity and sincerity. This romanticised view of the "noble savage" reflected their belief in the innate goodness and authenticity of common people, who were seen as embodying universal human and national values⁹⁶.

The interest in Ukrainian ethnography started initially as the private interest of some individuals. Among the precursors of the ethnographic research on Ukrainian folklore, very influential, particularly for what regards the impact on

⁹³ Grabowicz, G. G. (1980). The History of Polish-Ukrainian Literary Relations: A Literary and Cultural Perspective. *Poland and Ukraine: Past and Present*, edited by Peter J. Potichnyj. Edmonton and Toronto: The Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, p. 111.

⁹⁴ Mykhaylyak, T. (2021). *Etnografia e antropologia ucraina*. Roma: CISU, p. 33.

⁹⁵ Lewis, D. (1973). *Anthropology and colonialism*. *Current anthropology*, 14(5), 581–602.

⁹⁶ Hroch, M., The 'identity reader' project, in Hroch, M., Kopeček, M., & Trencsényi, B. (2007). *National Romanticism: The Formation of National Movements*. Budapest: Central European University Press, p. 6.

contemporary literature, was Adam Czarnocki (1784–1825), better known as Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski. His interest in Slavic folklore led him to conduct expeditions in Western Ukraine, where he collected numerous folk songs. Among his publications, he authored in 1818 *On Slavdom Before Christianity (O Słowiańszczyźnie przed chrześcijaństwem)*, which became an important reference for the Polish romantics.

At the beginning of the 19th century, ethnographic research started to be institutionalised. The first centre for studies of Ukrainian folklore was Kharkiv, where the university was established in 1805 and was destined to serve as the capital of Ukrainian culture. At the University of Kharkiv, notable figures such as historian Gavril Petrovich Uspenskyi and later Izmail Ivanovich Sreznevskyi held teaching positions. In 1834, the University of Saint Vladimir was founded in Kyiv. Its first rector was Mykhailo Maksymovych, a central figure in the development of Ukrainian studies and Gogol's close friend⁹⁷.

In Galicia, the only part of Ukrainian which pertained to the Habsburg Empire, the development of ethnography was connected to the influence of Czech scholars such as Ján Kollár, who was also the principal ideologue of Pan Slavism, and Pavel Josef Šafařík⁹⁸.

The interest in Ukrainian folklore inspired a Ukrainian trend in Russian and Polish literatures. Within the ideology of panslavism, Ukraine was seen as an embodiment of an uncontaminated Slavic soul. This belief was motivated by the presence in Ukrainian folklore of a treasure of traditional folksongs, which maintained intact traditions and customs from ancient times. The significance of folksongs was particularly underlined by Herder, who believed that:

All the peoples that are not polished sing and act. What they act, they sing their deeds. Their songs are the archive of the people, the treasure of their science and religion, of their theogonies and cosmogonies, of the mighty deeds of their fathers, and of the events of their

⁹⁷ Maksymovych published three collections of Ukrainian folksongs, the first in 1827 with the collaboration of Gogol (*Malorossiskye pesni*), the second (*ukrainskye narodnye pesni*) in 1834 and the last one also in 1834 with the title *Sbornik ukrainskich pesen*.

⁹⁸ Mykhaylyak, T. (2021). *Etnografia e antropologia ucraina*. Roma: CISU, pp. 27–32.

history. They are the imprint of their heart, the image of their domestic life in joy and in suffering, in the bridal bed and in the grave⁹⁹.

According to Chyzhevsky¹⁰⁰, the Polish interest in Ukrainian folksongs was sparked by the lack of indigenous Polish folksongs. The Poles used Ukrainian folklore as a basis for their own Romantic tradition. According to Stepan Burachek, the editor of the pro-governmental journal *Маяк* (*Маяк*, 1840-1845), Ukrainian folk poetry was more abundant and valuable than Russian folk poetry due to the country's isolation, as it was surrounded by Poles, Lithuanians, and Muscovites¹⁰¹.

The presence of dumas¹⁰² in Russian and Polish 19th-century literature reflects a tendency to incorporate Ukrainian folklore as a part of Polish national literature and Russian literature. Ukrainian culture was integrated into the Russian and Polish one in a similar way as the land was first divided between the two countries¹⁰³.

2.3 Ukrainian literary schools in Poland and Russia

The fascination towards Ukraine sparked a similar phenomenon in Russia and Poland – the Ukrainian literary schools. In both cases, we are not looking at organized literary schools but rather at a literary movement that was only later defined as a school. The representatives of these schools were mostly writers born in Ukraine but participating in Russian or Polish literature. Chyzhevsky believed this to be symptomatic of the national decline of Ukraine¹⁰⁴. At the same time, the exploration of Ukrainian themes in the literary stage made possible a consequent revival of Ukrainian literature and identity. The discovery of folklore

⁹⁹ Thiesse, A. (2021). *The Creation of National Identities: Europe, 18th –20th Centuries*. Brill, p. 25.

¹⁰⁰ Chyzhevsky, D. (1975). *A history of Ukrainian Literature*, p. 453.

¹⁰¹ Bilenky, S. (2020). *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations*. Stanford University Press, p. 199.

¹⁰² The *duma* is a form of historical song very typical of Ukrainian oral heritage.

¹⁰³ Kirschbaum, H. (2017). "Žanrovye imperializmy. Spor o prinadležnosti dum"[Genre-Imperialismen. Diskussionen über die Zugehörigkeit der Dumy]. *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 144, 77–92.

¹⁰⁴ Chyzhevsky, D. (1975). *A history of Ukrainian Literature*. p. 449.

and national themes was further developed and created the basis for a national awakening¹⁰⁵.

According to Chyzhevsky, the Ukrainian school of Russian literature influenced Ukrainian Romanticism more than the Polish one, whose influence did not extend outside the Polish horizons¹⁰⁶. The Russian exploration of Ukrainian folklore was more profound. It provoked a serious interest and research on Ukrainian folklore, which later gave the basis for a reevaluation of Ukrainian history and tradition, sparking the beginning of the first phase of Ukrainian national formation.

2.4 Ukrainian literary school in Russia

In Russia, the interest in Ukraine was ignited by the exotic and, at the same time, the familiar status of the country. Among the writers of this school, many were from Ukraine, and many Russian writers took part in this literary phenomenon. Ryleev was one of the first exponents of this school. He wrote the duma *Bohdan Khmelnytsky* under the influence of Niemcewicz's duma. His literary activity ended after the Decembrist revolt when he was hanged. Also, Pushkin contributed to this school with his representation of Mazepa in the poem *Poltava*. In the twenties, many Ukrainian authors adopted Ukrainian themes. They were fashionable in Saint Petersburg at the time, and many authors, including Gogol, decided to write about Ukraine to gain a place in the literary environment.

Orest Somov (pseudonym, Porfirij Bajskij, 1793–1833), a native of Poltava, deployed different types of Ukrainian material in his literary production, including ethnographical and historical sources. The interest in ethnography was shared also by Mykola Markevich (1804–1860), who published *Ukrainian melodies* (Украинские мелодии, 1829), a collection of Romantic ballads in the Russian language with Ukrainian themes. Markevich aimed at increasing the authenticity of his work, by accompanying it with a complete description of Ukrainian folk beliefs. Gogol's presence in this school is extremely relevant, as his literary works

¹⁰⁵ *Ivi*, 449.

¹⁰⁶ *Ivi*, p. 454.

inspired many writers, even if they hardly could be considered his equal¹⁰⁷. For example, Evhen Hrebinka (1812–1848), who published three collected editions, was a follower of Gogol. Although he lacked Gogol's talent, he enjoyed significant popularity. His most notable works are likely his ethnographic sketches depicting the lives of small Ukrainian landowners. Among the different contributions to the Ukrainian literary school, we can also mention some works composed on Ukrainian themes by important Russian literary figures. An interesting depiction of the Ukrainian past can be found in Bulgarin's (1789–1859) works. His novels are devoted to the Sich and to Mazepa, who is portrayed in his writings as a Ukrainian Machiavelli. The Russian historian Pogodin published *Petrus (Петрусь, 1831)*, a novel in which the main characters speak Ukrainian. The author studied the language with the help of Maksymovych.

Also, many figures from Ukrainian literature contributed to this phenomenon. Among them, we can mention Borovykovsky, Kostomarov, Afanasiev-Chuzhbynsky, Kulish, Storozhenko and even Shevchenko, who accompanied their main production in Ukrainian with some works in Russian language. Others wrote exclusively in Russian. The main topics of this production were, as seen before, ethnographic and historical. Antony Pogorelsky developed ethnographic themes in his novel *The Clostereid maiden (Монастырка, 1830–1833)*, in which he explores the customs and traditions of Ukrainian landowners. Several writers specialized in historical themes, such as Petr Golota, who authored works like *Ivan Mazepa (Иван Мазепа, 1832)*, *Nalivaiko, or The Times of Troubles in Little Russia (Наливайко, или Времена бедствий Малороссии, 1833)*, and *Khmelnysky, or the Incorporation of Little Russia (Хмельницкие, или Присоединение Малороссии, 1834)*. Aleksandr Churovsky composed *Zaporozhian Raids: Ukrainian Tales from the Era of the Hetmanate (Запорожские наезды: украинская быль из времен Гетьманщины, 1837)*, while Aleksandr Kuzmich wrote *The Cossacks (Козаки, 1843)*, *Raid on the Steppe (Набег в степи, 1844)*, and *Khmelnysky (Зиновий-Богдан Хмельницкий, 1846)*. Vasily Korenevsky also made his mark with *Hetman*

¹⁰⁷ *Ivi*, p. 451.

Ostrianitsa (Гетман Остріяниця, 1846). Other representatives of the school moved from Romanticism to Naturalism and Realism. Notably, among these are the works of Kovalevsky and Kotliarevsky, who focus on Ukrainian life¹⁰⁸.

Russian critics, such as Nikolai Nadezhdin, Nikolai Polevoi, Vasilii Ushakov, and Osip Senkovsky, along with the Ukrainian Andrii Storozhenko (Tsarynny), were hesitant to recognize the products of these Little Russian writers to be part of the canonical literature and started reluctantly to define it as “Little Russian letters” [slovesnost’] or later “Little Russian literature” [literatura]. To minimise the influence of this Little Russian school of letters (Ushakov), these critics usually dismissed it as a minor form of literature, childish and naive, and classified it as humoristic¹⁰⁹. Gogol’s *Evenings at the farm near Dikanka* was initially received as a pure form of entertainment. A characteristic of this literature was the use of Ukrainian or a hybrid language in-between Russian and Ukrainian, considered humoristic by the critics. This language was usually explained with the assistance of glosses, explanatory notes, and lexica¹¹⁰.

Ukrainian literature functioned as the lower style in Aristotle's genre theory within All-Russian literature¹¹¹. It was relegated to lower genres such as comedy and satire. This explains the initial role of Ukrainian literature as a subgenre or appendix of All-Russian literature. This subordinate position was accepted by Russian critics like Belinsky, who deemed the language inadequate for expressing higher sentiments and unsuitable for higher styles. Belinsky acclaimed Ukrainian writers, such as Gogol, who used Russian as their primary literary medium.

¹⁰⁸ Chyzhevsky, D. (1975). *A history of Ukrainian Literature*, p. 453.

¹⁰⁹ Koropeckyj, R., & Romanchuk, R. (2017). Harkusha the Noble Bandit and the “Minority” of Little Russian Literature. *The Russian Review*, 76(2), p. 300.

¹¹⁰ *Ivi*, p. 301.

¹¹¹ Рябчук, М. (2000). Від Малоросії до України. *Парадокси запізнілого націотворення*. Київ: Критика, p. 31.

2.5 The Ukrainian school of Polish romanticism

Polish literature witnessed a similar phenomenon, i.e. the so-called Ukrainian school of Polish Romanticism. Similarly to the Russian one, the school emerged as a literary category retrospectively as its representatives did not form a compound literary movement. However, the writers included in this literary phenomenon maintained personal connections and would often influence one another's work. The first mention of the Ukrainian school of Polish literature came from Aleksander Tyszyński's didactic poem *An American in Poland (Amerykanka w Polsce, 1837)*, published in Saint Petersburg. Tyszyński tried to distinguish different literary movements within Polish literature and decided that the best way to describe them was to associate them with the different origins of their representatives. Thus, he divided Polish writers into regional schools: the Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Galician, Pulawian and Cracovian schools. Each school was further described in terms of style and spirit. The Ukrainian school is described by a series of characteristics, such as wilderness and gloominess, very different from the "love, friendship and sweetness" of the Lithuanian school or "happiness and life" of the Cracovian¹¹².

According to Tyszyński, the Ukrainian school is characterised by a fascination with blood and crimes. It first introduced Polish literature to subjects and visions such as hetmans, cossacks, Tatars, steppes, and names of villages and rivers still unheard in Poland. He identifies Malczewski, Goszczyński, Gosławski, Zaleski, and Zaborowski as its main representatives¹¹³.

Following Tyszyński's classification, Michał Grabowski, a central figure in the literary environment, developed a new categorization, providing a new definition of the Ukrainian school.

[...] przejmują całkiem duch i barwę właściwej poezji ukraińskiej, jednej z najdoskonalszych gałęzi samorodnej poezji słowiańskiej, więc z pierwszych z całego świata [...] polscy poeci

¹¹² Tyszyński, O szkołach poezji polskiej, in A. Tyszyński, *Amerykanka w Polsce*, St. Peterburg, 1837, p. 46.

¹¹³ *Ivi*, p. 47.

ukraińscy przejęli tę właściwość szczerze, unarodowili ją sobie [...] gdzie zastali tylko pieśni gminne, budują epopeję i romans¹¹⁴.

First, the definition of Ukrainian poetry as one of the most perfect branches of indigenous Slavic poetry is seen in the tradition of Panslavic ideas elaborated, among others, by Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski. The definition *Polscy poeci ukraińscy* [Polish Ukrainian Poets] offers an image of syncretism between the two cultures: they are Polish poets of Ukrainian origins. Grabowski argues that the poetry of these poets from Ukraine played a crucial role in integrating Ukrainian themes into Polish literature, elevating it from folk songs to esteemed literary works. This movement, primarily led by Polish-speaking poets in Ukraine, contributed to the Polish national project by enriching its cultural landscape. Years later, in 1837, Grabowski offered another important remark about this school, especially about its Warsaw branch: namely, that Polish romantic poetry was not influenced by German romanticism, as it took its sources from the folk songs of its native lands.

Like the Ukrainian school of Russian literature, the Polish one was composed of writers of different backgrounds. Some of them were of Ukrainian origin, others identified as Poles, but the majority came from the Borderlands. These territories corresponded to nowadays western Ukraine (Volhynia, Podolia) and the Kyiv region. Their provenience partly determined the choice of Ukrainian themes, and, additionally, it provided them with direct knowledge of Ukrainian traditions and customs. Chyzhevsky even accounted for the general nostalgia of the Polish exiles for their homeland as a determinant factor for the development of a Ukrainian school in Polish literature¹¹⁵. Since most of them were born in Ukraine, their longing was directed to this land, not Poland. Of course, the definition of Poland at the time was broader and covered a territory that corresponded to pre-partitioned Poland. Among the writers of the Ukrainian school of Polish

¹¹⁴ They fully capture the spirit and essence of authentic Ukrainian poetry, one of the most refined branches of indigenous Slavic poetry, and so among the firsts worldwide [...] Polish Ukrainian poets assimilated this characteristic sincerely, nationalizing it [...] where they found only folk songs, they construct epics and romances] Grabowski M.(1840), O szkole ukraińskiej poezji, in Ibidem, *Literatura i krytyka*, t. I, Wilno, pp. 37-39.

¹¹⁵ Chyzhevsky, D. (1975). *A history of Ukrainian Literature*, p. 453.

romanticism, the most influential were Antoni Malczewski (1793–1826), Bohdan Zaleski (1802–1886) and Seweryn Goszczyński (1801–1876).

According to Tyszyński, Bohdan Zaleski was the founder of the Ukrainian school. He was born in Bohatyrka (Kyvian Governorate) in Ukraine, where he spent the first 18 years of his life and then moved to Warsaw. In opposition to the other representatives of the Ukrainian school, whose gloominess was already seen as their main sign by Tyszyński, Zaleski depicts Ukraine as the land of milk and honey. Ukraine plays an important role in Zaleski's historiosophical and panslavistic vision. He does not doubt the importance of Poland (depicted as the Pan-Slavic nation, of which Ukraine is only a part). On the other hand, he underlined the cultural differences and the higher status of Ukraine in the Slavic world.

A good example is the poem *U nas inaczej!* in which the poet expresses his recognition of the supremacy of Poland over Ukraine and all the other Slavic countries (*Ojczyzna lasza / To wszechsłowiańska królowa i nasza*) and underlines his loyalty, but at the same time shows that this belonging is only political. The conjunction "ale" signifies a division between political and individual loyalty. While the poet is loyal to Poland as if it is to his Queen, he will always dream about Ukraine, which is underlined to be very different from Poland: a heaven on earth.

U nas inaczej! Och! Ojczyzna lasza

To wszechsłowiańska królowa i nasza!

Bracia, zginiemy za nią, kiedy skinie,

Ale śnić będziem o swej Ukrainie.

Nie ma bo rady dla duszy kozaczej,

U nas inaczej – inaczej – inaczej!

U nas inaczej! I bujnie i miło; [...]

U nas inaczej! Jakoś lżej, weselej [...]¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶[It is different here! Oh! The motherland of the Poles/She is the all-Slavic queen and ours!]

Zaleski was an important figure at the time and also one of Nikolai Gogol's correspondents, to whom he wrote in Ukrainian. Słowacki was also influenced by him, especially in his representation of Ukraine in *Beniowski*, portrayed as a spiritual mother feeding his poet-son.

Zaleski's vision of Ukraine differed strongly from the other two main representatives of the Ukrainian school. Goszczyński and Malczewski's Ukraine is characterised by wilderness and gloominess. Seweryn Goszczyński is the author of a poetic tale, *Zamek Kaniowski (The castle of Kaniów)*, that portrays the events of the Cossack revolts of 1768, the so-called Koliivshchyna. The poem constantly refers to Ukrainian folklore, but the portrayal of Cossack revolts was so terrifying that it shocked many of his contemporaries. His portrayal of the Cossacks is largely of romantic inspiration. As Gogol's *Taras Bul'ba*, which is inspired by the Corse Matteo Falcone¹¹⁷, Goszczyński's sources are to be found in the romantic fascination for criminals and bandits.

Antoni Malczewski, born in 1793 in Warsaw, spent the first years of his life in Volhynia and studied at the renowned Lyceum in Kremenets. His main literary work is *Maria*, which also inspired the works of Słowacki. His knowledge of Ukraine is limited to Volhynia, therefore his description of the Ukrainian costumes is mostly derived from his readings rather than his observations. According to Elżbieta Feliksiak, Malczewski interprets Ukraine as a *pars pro toto* of the Polish Commonwealth, whose history is profoundly interrelated with the Polish one since the Piast dynasty, despite being characterised by cultural differences¹¹⁸. In Malczewski's *Maria*, Ukraine is the incarnation of the North (considering Madame de Stael's dichotomy between North and South). The plot is full of horrific images,

Brothers, we'll die for her when she nods,/But we'll dream of our Ukraine./For the Cossack soul can't help it,/It's different with us – different!/It's different here! And lush and pleasant; [...]/It's different here! Somehow lighter, happier.] Zaleski, B. (1877). *Pisma*. Nakł. księgarni Gubrynowicza i Schmidta, p. 188.

¹¹⁷ Давиденко, Г. Й. (2009). Проблема зради і трагічної смерті в історичній повісті М. Гоголя Тарас Бульба і новелі П. Меріме Матео Фальконе. *Література та культура Полісся*, (54), 99–105.

¹¹⁸ Feliksiak, E. (2012). Ukraina w „Marii” Antoniego Malczewskiego,[w:] „*Szkoła ukraińska*” w romantyzmie polskim. *Szkice polsko-ukraińskie*, red. S. Makowski, U. Makowska, M. Nesteruk, Warszawa.

such as the one of the corpse of Maria, representing the possible overcoming of the borders between life and death.

Among the representatives of the school, many scholars include Juliusz Slowacki, as Ukrainian themes are present in many of his literary works. He was also influenced by the work of Malczewski and was in contact with the other writers of the school. His juvenile poems *Dumka ukraińska* (1826) and *Piosnka dziewczyny kozackiej* (1829), as well as his later poem on a mysterious Cossack Hetman *Żmija* (1832), were highly inspired by the tragic vision of the world created by Malczewski. Grabowski included also Tomasz August Olizarowski, Tymon Zaborowski, Aleksandr Groza and Tomasz Padura in the Ukrainian school.

2.6 The orientalization of Ukraine

Said first developed the concept of Orientalism in 1978¹¹⁹. By this term, the scholar defined the phenomenon, typical of the Western cultural complex, of representing the Orient (as opposed to the West) in a stereotyped way regarded as embodying a colonialist attitude. Western intellectuals constructed the concept of the Orient. The Orient is represented as one unified culture, uncivilized and in need of civilizing mission. It is often depicted with feminine attributes, passive, less modern and objectified. In the era of Romanticism, this process of orientalization extended to the cultures of Southern Europe, which were perceived as nostalgic remnants of a glorious past, yet devoid of any future. While historians of the period viewed Northern cultures as embodying an active, masculine essence, they saw Southern cultures as representing a passive femininity.¹²⁰ Ukraine was represented in a similar way in Polish and Russian literature. It was seen to be culturally inferior, not really having its own national literature or intelligentsia. Ukraine was seen as a Slavic Italy, full of colourful traditions, dances, national costumes and a pleasant climate. The cultural

¹¹⁹ Said, E. W. (2014). *Orientalism*. United States: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

¹²⁰ Верстюк, В. Ф., Горобець, В. М., & Толочко, О. П. (2004). Україна і Росія в історичній ретроспективі. *Українські проекти в Російській імперії*/ВФ Верстюк, ВМ Горобець, ОП Толочко, p. 280.

similarity between the three nations made Ukraine a folk version of Russia or Poland, where the two major nations had to find their lost national soul. This need for their own Orient was also influenced by Western European Romantics¹²¹. The orientalization of Ukraine could be defined as the literary correspondent to its political subalternity.

2.7 The development of independent Ukrainian literature

Despite Ukrainian literature being considered an appendix of Russian literature, this did not eliminate the possibility of an independent development of a Ukrainian literary movement. In this case, the philological and ethnographic studies had a major role, and in general, the interest in the Ukrainian language and, more specifically, the dialect of Poltava, which became the basis for the standardization of the Ukrainian language. The Baroque, which was a literary movement that was very present in 18th-century Ukraine, was international. Though the art and literature produced in this century in Ukraine were distinct, the lack of interest in linguistic and prosodic research did not encourage the development of a distinct literary language as was the case in Russia with the work of Lomonosov and Trediakovsky¹²². Only with the romantics a standardization of the literary language and the development of a distinct literary canon started to be developed.

The first literary work published in modern Ukrainian language was Kotliarevsky's *Eneida* (Енеїда, 1798), a mock-heroic poem. The poem is a parody of Virgil's *Aeneid*, where Kotliarevsky transformed the Trojan heroes into Zaporozhian Cossacks. This work laid the foundation for the development of literature written in the modern Ukrainian language. Moreover, its portrayal of Cossack culture contributed to the gradual evolution of Ukrainian national consciousness. As Pavlyshyn notes, the representation of the Cossackdom as a Golden Age

¹²¹ Kuziak, M., & Nawrocki, B. (2016). *Romantyzm środkowoeuropejski w kontekście postkolonialnym* (Vol. 1). Instytut Badań Literackich PAN. Wydawnictwo, p. 33.

¹²² Luckyj, G. S. N. (1971). *Between Gogol' and Sevchenko: polarity in the literary Ukraine: 1798–1847*. Harvard Series in Ukrainian Studies, vol. 8, p. 188.

characterized by egalitarianism and freedom helped shape early cultural narratives about Ukrainian identity and autonomy¹²³.

A central figure in Ukrainian literature written in Ukrainian was Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861). He was born into a peasant family with an extraordinary artistic talent that helped him to free himself from enslavement. The first collection of poems to appear in Saint Petersburg was *Kobzar* (*Кобзар*, 1840, second edition in 1844). Later, in 1841, he published also the poem *Haidamaky* (*Гайдамаку*), which described the events of the Koliivshchyna. He participated in the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius and firmly opposed the Russian Empire. The poet's persecution and exile during Tsarist rule contributed to his martyrdom and primary position in the pantheon of Ukrainian literature. According to Grabowicz, Shevchenko's predominance in Ukrainian literature has no correspondence in other national canons¹²⁴.

It is important to note that Shevchenko was almost contemporaneous with Gogol and Słowacki, being born only five years later. Grabowicz considers him to be, as Gogol and Słowacki, a creator of the Ukrainian myth, with the difference of it being the core of his poetry. In contrast, for Gogol and Słowacki, this myth is only present in some parts of their literary production¹²⁵. The passage here is from a personal (and prenational) vision of Ukraine towards a national vision of the latter, which Shevchenko largely embodies. According to Luckyj, Shevchenko gave Ukrainian literature a direction, as he was concerned with national, social and historical issues and less interested in a pure humanistic interpretation of literature¹²⁶.

¹²³ Pavlyshyn, M. (1985). The Rhetoric and Politics of Kotliarevsky's "Eneida". *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 10(1), 9, p. 18.

¹²⁴ George G. Grabowicz, *The Poet as Mythmaker: A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Taras Shevchenko*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1982, pp. 1-2.

¹²⁵ In Słowacki, the myth of Ukraine is present in the later cantos of *Beniowski* and in *Sen Srebrny Salomei*. On the other hand, in Gogol it is present only in *Evening at the farm near Dikanka* and *Mirgorod*. George G. Grabowicz, *The Poet as Mythmaker: A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Taras Shevchenko*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1982, p. 46.

¹²⁶ Luckyj George, *Between Gogol' and Sevchenko: Polarity in the Literary Ukraine: 1798-1847*, Harvard Series in Ukrainian Studies, vol. 8 (Munich, 1971), pp. 189–190.

3. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to map the historical and literary context in which Gogol and Słowacki wrote and defined their own identity. This context is characterized by the subaltern position of Ukraine within the Polish-Ukrainian-Russian triangle and by the gradual development of a separate Ukrainian identity. Ukraine is still in the process of gaining a distinct identity and a distinct representation. The complex history of Ukraine and its experience of being colonized both by Poland and Russia can be detected in the mental representation of the two writers' homeland.

The beginning of distinct Ukrainian literature intertwined with the production of Ukrainian themes in Russian and Polish literature. This blurriness influenced the literary production of the two writers who belonged to these literary schools and, simultaneously, laid the basis for the formation of Ukrainian literature. The triangulation of Ukraine should be seen mainly in postcolonial terms as a historical moment of Ukraine's political and cultural subalternity to the neighbouring powers of Poland and Russia.

Chapter 2: Conceptualizing identity

This chapter examines the methodological challenges in studying Ukrainian identity in the early 19th century, with particular attention to the broader socio-political context that frames the experiences of Gogol and Słowacki. The analysis seeks to reconstruct the general conditions under which both writers developed their identities. Although the two writers contributed to shaping Ukrainian national consciousness, it is overly simplistic to interpret their identities solely through the framework of nationalism. As we will discuss in Chapter Four, both writers diverge significantly from a purely national conception of identity.

Identity during this period was multifaceted and cannot be understood through a purely modern lens of nationalism or ethnicity. The identities we are investigating exist along a spectrum between prenatal and national forms of identification. Prenatal identifications – moral, social, and religious – are deeply intertwined with emerging national consciousness and, therefore, must be considered part of the larger process of identity formation. These dimensions of identity are not separate from the development of national identities but are instead closely linked to them. To understand this broader process, we will first provide a brief overview of the development of national identities in the context of Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian relations.

Classifying Gogol and Słowacki as representatives of any specific national identity would be misleading, given that strict nationalist thinking had not yet fully crystallized during their time. Even though the 1840s saw the gradual emergence of nationalistic ideas, other forms of identification continued to exert significant influence. This chapter, therefore, has two objectives: first, to reconstruct the formation of national identities, and second, to examine alternative forms of identification. Our focus is not solely on the tension between Russian and Ukrainian nationalism, or between Polish and Ukrainian nationalism, but rather on the blurred space of prenatal identities that later contributed to the development of Ukrainian, Russian, and Polish nationalisms.

One of the primary aims of this chapter is to avoid a presentist perspective on identities and instead focus on cultivating a new understanding of identity that aligns with historical expressions of identity in the early 19th century.

1. A definition of identity and national identity

Although identity is the central focus of this analysis, it remains a complex and elusive concept. This section aims to elucidate its nuances in relation to our specific focus. Identity is inherently intertwined with the notion of otherness and is challenging to articulate in positive terms; it often becomes clearer when contrasted with what it is not. In the context of national identities, especially within closely related cultural contexts, identity primarily defines itself in contrast to neighbouring cultures. Thus, identity emerges in relation to alterity, forming a spectrum ranging from identity to alterity. Societies fluctuate between moments of openness and closure, influenced by their capacity to engage with alterity. During periods of instability, societies typically emphasise identity and distance themselves from alterity.

The concept of identity is depicted as a fixed, ongoing process of recognition, perpetually shaped by interactions with others. Consequently, identity is understood as situational and narrative, constructed through ongoing encounters with alterity and the subsequent narration of these experiences. Identity serves as an abstract reference point for identification processes¹²⁷, functioning as a tool to manage chaos and impermanence. Thus, identity seeks to assert uniqueness and endurance, albeit in an approximate manner¹²⁸.

Societies exhibit varying relationships with identity over time, often prioritising it during disorientation or rapid change. Viewing the formation of national identity as a response to societal upheaval can be particularly insightful. The weakening of feudal and patriarchal bonds and the decline of religious authority precipitated

¹²⁷ Sparti, D. (1996). *Soggetti al tempo: identità personale tra analisi filosofica e costruzione sociale*, p. 184.

¹²⁸ Remotti, F., & Remotti, F. (2010). *L'ossessione identitaria*. Bari: Laterza, p. XXI.

the historical emergence of the nation, which finds its roots in the Romantic Movement in Europe¹²⁹.

Benedict Anderson's conceptualisation of national identity as an imagined community proves particularly relevant within this framework. Anderson argues that nations are essentially imagined communities: even in the smallest nation, not all individuals personally know each other. He further characterises nations as limited, sovereign and as communities. The nation is imagined as limited due to its defined and finite borders, which delineate its territorial extent and separate it from other nations. Its sovereignty derives influence from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, emphasising its independence and authority as a self-governing entity. Furthermore, the nation is viewed as a community, fostering a sense of horizontal comradeship among its members, who share common identities, values, and aspirations.

Anderson identifies three central societal changes that facilitated the rise of imagined communities: the diminishing significance of religion as a defining communal factor, the advent of the print revolution, which promoted horizontal readership and facilitated the spread of vernacular languages, and the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie, the first class to conceptualise and nurture imagined communities¹³⁰.

This conceptual framework is particularly apt for analysing Romantic Nationalism, where community representation hinges on political representation and the evolving socio-cultural landscape. The period under study here represents a transitional phase characterised by porous borders and an incipient development of horizontal comradeship.

¹²⁹ Hroch, M, The 'identity reader' project, in Hroch, M., Kopeček, M., & Trencsényi, B. (2007). *National Romanticism: The Formation of National Movements*. Budapest: Central European University Press, p. 7.

¹³⁰ Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities*, revised edition.

1.1 National identities at the time of Romanticism

The nineteenth century marked the emergence of the concept of nation and the rise of a new literary movement known as Romanticism. Initially originating in Germany, Romanticism was a reaction against the universalism of the Enlightenment and aimed to strengthen a sense of unity in a politically and culturally diverse nation like Germany. The movement subsequently spread across Europe, resulting in the creation of national identities as a transnational movement. Each nation shaped its national identity according to a set of necessary characteristics. One can outline its fundamental components, namely:

a history that establishes the continuity with the great ancestors, a series of heroes that were paragons of the national virtues, a language, cultural monuments, a folklore, major sites and a typical landscape, a specific mentality, official representations (the national anthem and the flag), and picturesque elements (costume, culinary specialties, or an emblematic animal¹³¹)

The states that gained sovereignty later than others demonstrate the prescriptiveness of this list by adopting every symbol to characterise their nation. In the 19th century, Nationalism spread throughout Europe, facilitated by the simultaneous birth of the Romantic movement. Romanticism is a response to the need for national formation. Joep Leerssen conceptualises Romantic Nationalism as follows:

Romantic nationalism is the celebration of the nation (defined by its language, history, and cultural character) as an inspiring ideal for artistic expression; and the instrumentalization of that expression in ways of raising the political consciousness¹³².

The close links between Nationalism and Romanticism can be explained by their shared interest in the lives and expressions of common people, particularly through folklore, as well as the significance of the land and its impact on various populations. Romanticism manifested in the elevation of folklore from lower to

¹³¹ Thiesse, A. M. (2021). *The Creation of National Identities: Europe, 18th–20th Centuries* (Vol. 26). Brill, p. 3.

¹³² Leerssen, J. (2013), «Notes toward a definition of romantic nationalism», *Romantik: Journal for the study of Romanticisms*, 2(1), p. 20.

higher literature and the renewed importance of vernacular languages, spurred by a growing readership across Europe.

Romantic writers favoured their native languages and created works to validate the history and presence of specific peoples in their homeland, often using “newly-discovered” manuscripts and epic narratives to reconstruct cultural roots. Conversely, these literary works significantly influenced national consciousness and helped unify people based on nationality. Thus, there is a clear interdependence between the political (art inspired by nationality) and the poetic (art used for nationalistic purposes).

Miroslav Hroch reconstructed the different phases of nationalism, identifying common stages in the development of national consciousness. The first phase, Phase A, particularly relevant to this dissertation, was driven primarily by scholars and folklorists interested in antiquities and folklore. Although this phase is often considered prenatal, it laid the groundwork for the later development of national consciousness. Studies on history and folklore were crucial for creating a shared knowledge of the nation – its history, customs, and language – without which a unified image of the nation and its key characteristics would be impossible. This phase represented a reconnection between lower and higher cultures, as scholars, typically from the upper strata of society, gained access to the traditions and languages of common people. Hroch defines the second phase, Phase B, as the period of patriotic agitation, followed by Phase C, where the idea of nationalism spreads widely among the masses¹³³.

1.2 Romantic nationalism in Eastern Europe

Nationalism first developed in Germany due to the unifying role of language in a territory very diversified from a political point of view. The process of nationalisation in Central and Eastern Europe was influenced by the fact that most people were part of huge land empires, such as the Ottoman Empire, the

¹³³ Hroch, M. (1985). Social preconditions of national revival in Europe: A comparative analysis of the social composition of patriotic groups among the smaller European nations, pp. 22–23.

Habsburg Empire, and the Russian Empire. In opposition to nation-states in Western Europe, that meant the coexistence of dominant groups and non-dominant ethnic groups. The latter often did not have literature written in their language or a social structure, and their representatives constituted almost exclusively the lower strata of the population¹³⁴.

When considering our triad, the different configurations of the three ethnic groups correspond to a different take on nationalism. In the case of the Russian Empire, we deal with a complex merging of national and imperial identity, or as Anderson said, a “national identity stretched over the gigantic body of the empire¹³⁵”. Unlike other empires, such as the Habsburg Empire, the Russian Empire did not initially oppose the emergence of various nationalisms within its borders. It was not concerned with creating an official form of nationalism until the forties. In the thirties, the first fracture was brought about by the Polish uprising in 1830–1831, which played a huge role in the following closure and creation of an official Russian nationality.

On the other hand, Poland found nationalism an expedient to reconstruct the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, whereas Ukraine, in its double position of subalternity, needed to construct its nationality by unmaking the other two¹³⁶. In considering Romantic nationalism in Poland, Ukraine and Russia, it is necessary to observe the main differences between the three Nations and, therefore, the corresponding differences in the construction of the national projects. We will return to the development of national identities in Poland, Ukraine, and Russia after a brief overview of the limits of using national identity as a category to analyse the early nineteenth century.

2. Between Nationalisms: a distortion of our understanding of 19th-century identities

¹³⁴ Hroch, M., & Pańko, G. (2003). *Małe narody Europy: perspektywa historyczna*. Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, p. 7.

¹³⁵ Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities*, revised edition, p. 91.

¹³⁶ Bilenky, S. (2020). *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations*. Stanford University Press, p. 40.

When addressing the problem of identity in the early 19th century, particularly in relation to Ukrainian identity and prominent figures in world literature such as Nikolai Gogol, there is often a tendency to present the question of identity using presentist terminology. This tendency arises from the inclination to retroactively apply modern national categories to a period in which national identity, as we understand it today, was far less defined. Throughout the 20th century, much scholarship and public discourse have examined figures like Gogol in terms of their inclusion within national canons, often treating identity as fixed and easily assignable to one nation or another.

This approach reflects a broader effort to claim authors for national literary traditions by attributing to them a specific identity, whether Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, or otherwise. The inclusion of an author's work in a national canon becomes both a cultural and political act, often motivated by the need to legitimize that author's contribution to a particular national narrative. The case of Gogol is especially relevant to this discussion, as his identity has been a point of contention in both Ukrainian and Russian scholarship.

This tendency to retrospectively apply national categories is not limited to Gogol. It is also evident in scholarship on Juliusz Słowacki, as some studies emphasize his "Polishness" in an attempt to solidify his place in the Polish literary canon. This drive to categorize authors according to national identity can be seen across both publicist and academic discourse, as scholars and critics alike seek to assign specific national allegiances to figures whose identities were often far more fluid and complex.

In this section, we will examine these limitations by focusing on Gogol as a key example, though the argument extends to other authors. By challenging the automatic application of national categories, we can better understand the multi-layered and often ambiguous identities characteristic of intellectuals in the early 19th century. This approach allows us to move beyond rigid definitions and consider the broader, more fluid nature of identity during this period.

2.1 Gogol between Russian and Ukrainian Nationalism

The debate over Gogol's national identity intensified with the development of national projects in Ukraine and Russia, particularly in the 20th century. Given his prominence in world literature, determining whether Gogol belongs to the Ukrainian or Russian cultural sphere became central to both countries' efforts to shape their cultural and national identities. For Ukraine, in particular, resolving this debate has held significant symbolic weight, as Gogol's identity and his literary legacy have been seen as key to asserting Ukraine's cultural relevance on the global stage.

Gogol's identity can be seen as a litmus test for understanding the complex choices faced by Ukraine's cultural elites. On one hand, he is seen as a symbol of Ukraine's rich contribution to world culture. On the other hand, his association with Russian literature underscores Ukraine's subordination to Russian influence. This duality has made Gogol a contested symbol in Ukrainian history, with discussions of his identity emerging even during periods of extreme political upheaval, perhaps precisely as a response to them. In the second half of June 1943, a debate on Gogol took place in the literary club of Lviv, at the time under Nazi occupation. This debate, reported by Barabash, was not so significant for its content as for the very fact that it took place under those political conditions and represented Gogol as a symbol of the betrayal of the nation¹³⁷.

The significance of Gogol's role in the nation-building efforts of both Ukraine and Russia has led to a tendency to analyse his identity through a presentist lens. In the Ukrainian case, literary history is given a central role in shaping national identity. As Pavlyshyn claims:

[...] part of the legitimization of a nation may rest upon its capacity to generate such dignified human products as a national literature. Finally, such institutions of literary life as publishing and criticism produce a canon of especially worthy authors and literary texts that may be regarded as embodying national aspirations. Such a canon, and respect for its components, can become one of the unifying symbols of the nation and one of the objects of national education. Ukrainian literature played all of these roles vis-à-vis the Ukrainian nation, and Ukrainian literary histories,

¹³⁷ Барабаш, Ю. (2004). Гоголь у літературній свідомості українського зарубіжжя: Нариси сприйняття та інтерпретацій/Юрій Барабаш. Сімферополь: Кримський Архів, pp. 6–10.

with some notable exceptions, focused on ways in which literature advanced the national project¹³⁸.

Here, we will focus on two issues: the polarization of Gogol's identity in Russian and Ukrainian publicist and academic discourse and the moral condemnation of Gogol's hybrid identity in Ukrainian studies.

Gogol's identity has been debated since his inclusion in the Russian literary canon. Since he started being perceived as one of the main writers of the Russian canon, his Ukrainianness has been undermined and covered up. After his works were canonized, especially in the late 19th century and throughout Soviet times, Gogol became firmly rooted in the Russian literary tradition. Scholars have widely recognized him as a "Russian" author, a process that could be termed the "Russification" of Gogol, effectively distancing him from the Ukrainian cultural context that shaped him. This issue has been studied by Michael Naydan, who, in his article *When You Google Gogol, You Never Get 'Hohol': The Re-Colonisation of a Ukrainian Writer* analyses various Ukrainian, Russian and international online encyclopaedias to observe which nationality is attributed to the writer. Comparing Gogol's situation to that of writers such as James Joyce or Oscar Wilde, Naydan notes that the United Kingdom, as a post-colonial empire, realises that taking Joyce's ethnicity into account in no way eliminates the writer's contribution to English literary culture. Russia, on the other hand, still immersed in a kind of neo-colonialism or remnants of a post-colonial loss-of-empire syndrome, struggles to accept Gogol's Ukrainian identity¹³⁹.

In contrast, scholars in Ukrainian studies have emphasized his Ukrainian heritage, placing his national identity at the centre of their interpretation of his work. These divergent approaches have produced highly nationalized readings of Gogol's identity, often ignoring the complex, hybrid character he embodied.

¹³⁸ Pavlyshyn, M. (2016). Literary history as provocation of national identity, national identity as provocation of literary history: The case of Ukraine. *Thesis Eleven*, 136(1), 74–89.

¹³⁹ Naydan M. M. (2010), «When you Google Gogol, you never get 'Hohol': the re-colonization of a Ukrainian writer», *Ukrainian Quarterly*, 66, 1–2, pp. 5–15.

In this sense, studies such as Bojanowska's central research *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian And Russian Nationalism*, move from this same basis. According to Bojanowska, Gogol's work was influenced both by Ukrainian and Russian nationalism, and it contributed to the development of the two national movements¹⁴⁰. Whereas we do not doubt Gogol's influence on Russian and Ukrainian nation-building, we believe that considering Gogol as a Ukrainian or Russian nationalist is far from truth.

In his review of Bojanowska's work, Ilnytkyj argues that framing Gogol within a binary opposition between Russian and Ukrainian nationalism is reductive. Instead, he posits the existence of a third category: the imperial identity¹⁴¹. Ultimately, Ilnytkyj contends that the national idea during Gogol's time was not yet fully developed:

At the risk of repeating myself, I draw attention to what will happen when we take into consideration that the word 'Russian' above is not identifying Great Russians but the two East Slavic peoples of the empire collectively. That would mean that Gogol is modeling the empire-state not on Great Russian national characteristics but the Ukrainian. For some this may not be an adequate sign of Ukrainian patriotism or nationalism (which purportedly is required to show evidence of autonomy and separatism), but in the first half of the nineteenth century, when neither Russians nor Ukrainians had a clear picture of their national identity in the imperial state, this, in my view, was pretty close to the real deal at the time¹⁴².

Although Ilnytkyj acknowledges in his review of Bojanowska that the national idea was not yet fully developed in the first half of the nineteenth century, *in Nikolai Gogol: Ukrainian Writer in the Empire* (2024), he continues to rely on a national framework.

In this work, he sought to address the complexity of Gogol's identity by exploring the supranational identity structures within the Russian Empire. Nevertheless, even in this study, discussions on Gogol's identity remain dominated by a national

¹⁴⁰ Bojanowska, E. M. (2007), *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*, Harvard University Press, p. 17.

¹⁴¹ Ilnytkyj, O. S. (2007). The nationalism of Nikolai Gogol': Betwixt and between?. *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 49(3-4), pp. 360-362.

¹⁴² *Ivi*, p. 364.

perspective. Ilnytskyj's argument that Gogol was fundamentally a Ukrainian nationalist can be seen as a form of presentism¹⁴³.

Frequent comparisons with Taras Shevchenko further complicate this polarized reading of Gogol's identity. While Shevchenko is often celebrated as the embodiment of Ukrainian national consciousness, Gogol is cast as a figure who "betrayed" the Ukrainian people by writing in Russian and pursuing a career within Russian imperial literary circles. The narrative of Shevchenko as the "good" Ukrainian and Gogol as the "bad" Ukrainian is deeply ingrained in modern national discourse¹⁴⁴. However, it ignores the broader socio-political context in which both figures operated. Although present-day academic discourse might find such a narrative compelling, given the centrality of national identity in the current debate, it misrepresents how identity was perceived during the early 19th century. Even figures like Mykhailo Maksymovych, who contributed to the early stages of Ukrainian national consciousness, phase A, as theorized by Hroch, cannot be neatly classified as nationalists in the modern sense.

Even Shevchenko presented a more nuanced identity than the conventional characterization typically attributed to him. Grabowicz argues that the duality of Shevchenko's writing stems from his personal complexity rather than his bilingualism (Ukrainian-Russian). The scholar challenges the presumed superiority of Shevchenko's Ukrainian works, attributing this assessment to nationalistic bias that overlooks the merit of his Russian compositions, such as 'Slepaja' (The Blind Woman) and the sophisticated passages of his Russian-language Diary¹⁴⁵.

¹⁴³ Ilnytskyj, S. (2024). *Nikolai Gogol: Ukrainian Writer in the Empire: A Study in Identity*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, p. 35

¹⁴⁴ On Zabuzhko public claims about Gogol's nationality: <https://suspilne.media/269045-oksana-zabuzko-rozkritikuvala-risenna-zalysiti-v-skilnij-programi-rosijskih-pismennikov/> [03.07.2023]; <https://newtimes.ru/articles/detail/2700/> [03.07.2023].

¹⁴⁵ Grabowicz adopts a different criterion to distinguish between the two personalities in Shevchenko: adjusted and non-adjusted, which could be seen as synonymous with our idea of accommodation. Shevchenko presents a form of adjustment to Imperial society which permits him to reflect with intellectual distance about Ukrainian history. At the same time, the non-adjusted

Indeed, even Shevchenko, widely regarded as Ukraine's quintessential national prophet, emerged from an intricate pre-national worldview.

To properly understand Gogol's identity, it is crucial to situate him within the broader context of pre-national identities in the early 19th century. During this time, the modern concept of a unified national identity – whether Ukrainian or Russian – was still in its infancy. Individuals like Gogol lived in a context where identity was defined by a multitude of factors, including class, religion, and loyalty to the Russian Empire, rather than the strict national categories that would emerge later. To retroactively label Gogol as a nationalist, whether Ukrainian or Russian, oversimplifies his complex place within the cultural and political landscape of his time.

3. A Multiplicity of Loyalties: A Layered Concept of Identity

Before the spread of nationalism, embracing multiple identities was a natural part of participating in multinational empires and states. Usually, subjects of an empire or a state had both a local and a multinational identity. An example of this phenomenon is the common Polish expression “*natione polonus, gens ruthenus*”, which means that a citizen of the Commonwealth could pertain to two different spheres: the general Polish identity and the more local Ruthenian or Lithuanian identity. These local identities were considered a variant of the common Polish one and, consequently, of secondary importance.

In thinking about how identity was perceived during the Commonwealth, we must underline that this experience shaped the Ruthenian nobles¹⁴⁶. That means they were predisposed to believe in a similar order of loyalties when they encountered Muscovy and the Russians. Also, the Russian Empire was not a national state and presented the characteristics of a dynastic-estate polyethnic empire. Adopting multiple identities was common, particularly among social climbers who

self is characterized by a deep emotional feeling towards the matter of his writing, and it is a “rebellious personality”, which Grabowicz considers to be a core element of Shevchenko's poetry.

¹⁴⁶ Kappeler, Andreas et al. (eds.). *Culture, Nation and Identity: The Ukrainian– Russian Encounter, 1600–1945*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, p. 63.

embraced situational identities. Their affiliation with Russian identity often served as a strategic adaptation to the demands of the Tsar, who required conformity to Russian language and culture¹⁴⁷. The same concept of Little Russia was an intellectual justification for this type of multiple identities. The possibility of these multiple identities continued even during the spread of nationalism. The birth of modern Ukrainian nationalism theoretically no longer permitted multiple loyalties, but in practice, embracing them was still very common¹⁴⁸.

3.1 Little Homelands

The traditional multiple loyalties are strictly related to the phenomenon of the Little Homelands. A little homeland is a term that defines someone's regional identification. The Polish sociologist Stanisław Ossowski distinguished between an ideological homeland and a private homeland, with the first encompassing the imagined community described by Benedict Anderson¹⁴⁹. In contrast, the second one includes only the territories with which the person has a physical connection. The concept of Little Homeland mirrors the local identity, which was highly present in Polish Romanticism. In Juliusz Słowacki's case, as we will see, his private homeland corresponds to his native town, Kremenets.

3.2 From All-Russian identity to Russian identity

In the development of the Russian identity, we should consider the transformation from an imperial type of identity to the development of a Russian national identity in the 1840s. The formation of national identity within the Russian Empire was a complex process, as it did not occur within a nation-state but rather within a multiethnic empire. However, being Russia a land empire, its definition of national borders and community varied. The possibility of having multiple loyalties changed, which was no longer permitted after the profound impact of nationalism on Europe.

Within the Russian Empire, it became no longer possible to be a Little Russian, as the All-Russian identity was slowly being replaced by a restrictive Russian

¹⁴⁷ *Ivi*, p. 174.

¹⁴⁸ *Ivi*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁹ Ossowski, S. (1946). *Analiza socjologiczna pojęcia ojczyzny*. *Myśl Współczesna*, pp. 201–226.

identity that, despite encompassing all the orthodox Slavs, could no longer accommodate distinct East Slavic identities¹⁵⁰. Russia was trying to construct an imperial nation, which Miller defines as a “nation-building project conceived and implemented in the imperial core”¹⁵¹. Thus, the imperial nation did not aim to include all the empire’s subjects.

In the second decade of the 18th century, the concepts of nation and empire entered simultaneously in the Russian political discourse. There was no tension between the two concepts during the whole century¹⁵². The idea of nation started to be substituted by a vaguer idea of nationality (*narodnost'*) only after the Polish uprising of the 1830–1831, and only later in the 1860s and predominantly in the 1880s did the idea of nation had a comeback and became a central discourse for the Empire¹⁵³.

Kappeler argued that the concept of the Russian nation was ambiguous and could be understood in several ways: (1) as encompassing all subjects of the empire; (2) as referring to members of the privileged estates, following the pre-modern concept of *natio*; (3) as identifying Russian-Orthodox individuals, specifically Great Russians; or (4) as including all East Slavs, in line with the traditional interpretation of Rus'¹⁵⁴.

3.3 Polish identity and the legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

At the beginning of the 19th century, Polish national identity remained closely tied to the borders of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, even though it had disappeared on European maps after the three partitions of Poland. For Polish intellectuals, however, the idea of Poland endured, encompassing not only the Polish heartland but also Lithuania, Belarus, and Right-bank Ukraine. This

¹⁵⁰ Kappeler, Andreas et al. (eds.). *Culture, Nation and Identity: The Ukrainian– Russian Encounter, 1600–1945*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, p. 305.

¹⁵¹ Miller, A., & Berger, S. (2015). *Nationalizing empires*, p. 4.

¹⁵² *Ivi*, pp. 18–19.

¹⁵³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁴ Andreas Kappeler, “Bemerkungen zur Nationalbildung der Russen”, in A. Kappeler, ed., *Die Russen. Ihr Nationalbewusstsein in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Cologne, 1990), p. 21.

imagined map of Poland continued to incorporate these “provinces,” even as it began to adopt a more ethnically based conception of national identity.

Like the national movements in 19th-century Germany and Italy, Poland, lacking statehood, initially defined itself as a national culture. Polish nationalism was, therefore, intertwined with a struggle for political independence. However, Poland’s case was unique: while Polish Romantics sought to reconstruct the nation-state, their vision was not of an ethnically homogeneous state but of a revival of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a historically multicultural polity. At the same time, the Polish national project was still linked to the Polish language, Catholic religion, and a growing emphasis on a more ethnically Polish identity.

3.4 Ukrainian identity: unity and distinctiveness

The idea of the Russian identity developed only in the mid-19th century, but the premises for constructing an all-Russian identity were already established. The concept of a united Russia and Ukraine did not originate in Russia. Instead, it emerged from the need to assert a claim over the legacy of Kyivan Rus'. This notion can be traced back to the 16th century when efforts were made to establish a link between Muscovite rulers and Byzantium¹⁵⁵. The Muscovites did not claim an ethnic affinity between Ukrainians and Muscovites and did not consider Kyiv a lost territory. The Ukrainians first introduced the idea of unity as part of a defensive strategy against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Ukrainian clergymen were trying to find protection from the only truly independent Orthodox monarch to defend the rights of the Orthodox in the commonwealth.

Consequently, the Ukrainian clergy tried to present a religious, historical and dynastical unity with the Muscovites while preserving the idea of Ukrainian distinctiveness¹⁵⁶. The most influential work was the *Sinopsis*, published by the Cave Monastery of Kyiv in 1674. It treated Ukraine as part of a larger Orthodox

¹⁵⁵ A first attempt could be exemplified by The tale of the princes of Vladimir (1520–1530), which introduced a new genealogy for the Rus’ princes, presenting them as the descendants of the Roman Emperor Augustus. Kohut, Z. E. (2001). Origins of the Unity Paradigm: Ukraine and the Construction of Russian National History (1620-1860). *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35(1), p. 70.

¹⁵⁶ *Ivi*, pp. 71-72.

Slavo-Russian people, inhabiting a territory called “Rossia”, which encompassed both Muscovy and Little Russia¹⁵⁷.

The *Sinopsis* was reprinted 30 times before 1836, 21 times in Saint Petersburg, becoming a popular publication. In Karamzin’s *History of the Russian State*, the idea of the Russian state began with Kyivan Rus. However, he did not try to explain what happened to Ukraine in the five centuries when it was not united with Russia. This task was undertaken by Nikolai Ustrialov, who produced the first officially approved textbook, in which he demonstrated the “Unity of Polish, Lithuanian and Russian history” and showed the Russian character of the Southwest territory of the Empire. Ustrialov managed to merge the idea of nationhood with the idea of dynastic unity. Further development of the concept of what happened to Ukraine after the Tatar invasion of Kyiv was taken into account by Pogodin, who, in 1856, advanced the theory of the massive emigration of the population of Kyiv towards the northeast and the progressive settlement of tribes from the Carpathian mountains during the fourteen and fifteen centuries, thus explaining the differences between Russians and Ukrainians, as well as presenting the Russian as the real descendants of the inhabitants of Kyivan Rus. Other scholars attributed the differences between Great Russians and Little Russians to the corrupting influence of Polish-Lithuanian culture¹⁵⁸.

The Ukrainian side of this discourse on unity and distinctiveness could be exemplified by *Istoria rusiv*, which is the first attempt to reconstruct the history of the Russian and Ukrainian people and to trace a common origin, but also to underline the greater antiquity and relevance of the Ukrainians. Among the national mystifications of the time, *Istoria rusiv* contributed immensely to Ukrainian nation-building. The text, which begins with anti-Ukrainian remarks in the introduction, contains many anti-Muscovite statements, including the claim of Kyivan Rus to be Ukraine’s legacy and the description of the glorious past of the Cossack Host¹⁵⁹. While this text was influential in the development of a distinct

¹⁵⁷ Kohut, Z. E. (2001). Origins of the Unity Paradigm: Ukraine and the Construction of Russian National History (1620-1860). *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35(1), p. 73.

¹⁵⁸ *Ivi*, pp. 73-74.

¹⁵⁹ Plokhy, S. (2006). Ukraine or Little Russia? Revisiting an Early Nineteenth-Century Debate. *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 48(3-4), pp. 335-353.

Ukrainian identity, its role was probably to help the integration of the Cossack elite into the Russian nobility¹⁶⁰.

3.5 The Little Russian Identity

The concept of Little Russia is an important factor to consider when exploring the development of a Ukrainian identity within the Russian Empire. The idea of Little Russia emerged from a religious and administrative distinction between Little Russia (Ukraine) and Great Russia (Muscovy), which marked the distance between the two administrative entities and Byzantium. Later, it was used to describe the Ukrainians as a branch of an All-Russian identity. The Little Russian identity was the natural development of the creation of a new social class of nobility, who was often linked to the old Polish *szlachta*, but then became almost completely Russified.

As in Homi Bhabha's interpretation of the identity of the colonized elites, Little Russians tried to conform to the Imperial status of the elite while losing their connection to the native customs. Therefore, this kind of nobility started to lose its rights to the older system and live in a condition of hybridity, mimicking the Russian elite. This type of identity, which Gogol also depicts in his *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, did not develop suddenly. In the beginning, the idea of Little Russia was not a synonym for a condition of subalternity, as it became later and remained codified in Ukrainian culture¹⁶¹.

The Little Russian identity developed simultaneously with the concept of Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia as “branches of one Eastern Slavic and Orthodox tree.” The idea of an Eastern-Slavic orthodox unity developed from the internal hierarchy of the Russian Empire, which was dependent on the social and religious hierarchies. In the religious hierarchy of the empire, the Orthodox were the most prominent of the groups, and the further the religious group was from Orthodox Christianity, the stronger the discrimination against this group. The most discriminated groups

¹⁶⁰ *Ivi*, p. 352.

¹⁶¹ Malaniuk defined “Malorossiistvo” as a condition of subalternity towards Russia which he considered to be the cause of Ukrainian political subordination.

were the non-Christian ones, whereas the Orthodox Slavs had a privileged position in the hierarchy. During the 19th century, however, the lines between the Russians and the other Orthodox Slavs blurred until the perceived differences between Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians were non-existing¹⁶².

4. The Role of Class and Social Status

Class plays a central role when considering pre-national identities, particularly in how Ukrainians were represented within the Russian Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The largest ethnic groups in the Russian Empire were Russians and Ukrainians, constituting approximately sixty million and twenty million rural inhabitants and accounting for more than eighty and ninety per cent of the population, respectively¹⁶³. It is crucial to recognize that representations of minority groups in these regions were not merely tied to ethnic or religious differences but were also deeply rooted in class distinctions. In the case of Ukrainians, this class dimension was especially significant. In Russian Imperial and Polish literature, Ukrainians were frequently depicted as belonging to a lower social class, which had profound implications for their cultural and social identity.

As scholars like Makowski often emphasize¹⁶⁴, the divisions between different groups were perceived more as social rather than strictly ethnic. This notion challenges modern conceptions of Ukrainian identity, which tend to focus on national or ethnic boundaries. The division between the Polish nobility and Ukrainian people mirrors the aristocratic-based form of nationalism developed in Poland. In social terms, the “soul” of the Polish nationality was its gentry, whereas the rest of the population, the “folk” (lud), constituted its “body.” The metaphor of

¹⁶² Kappeler, Andreas et al. (eds.). *Culture, Nation and Identity: The Ukrainian–Russian Encounter, 1600–1945*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, p. 173

¹⁶³ Worobec, C. D. (2003). Conceptual observations on the Russian and Ukrainian peasantries. in Kappeler, Andreas et al. (eds.). *Culture, Nation and Identity: The Ukrainian– Russian Encounter, 1600–1945*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press.

¹⁶⁴ Makowski, S. (2012). „Szkoła ukraińska” w romantyzmie polskim. *Szkoła ukraińska” w romantyzmie polskim. Szkice polsko-ukraińskie/Pod red. S. Makowskiego,-Warszawa*.

Poland's "body" and "soul" permeated the definition of Polish nationality, though with underlying spiritualistic and messianic connotations¹⁶⁵.

There is a strong connection between racism and class dynamics: the concept of racism itself originated from class distinctions. Rather than being applied solely to relationships between different nations, it has been more often used to categorize those under the control of the ruling class – such as colonized peoples – or individuals from different nationalities living within the same state, like the Jews¹⁶⁶.

In the early 19th century, Ukrainians were often associated with the peasantry, which had lasting consequences for their representation in literature and society.

This association between "Ukrainianness" and lower status can be observed in the literary treatment of the Ukrainian language, often used in lower genres, especially comedies. Ukrainian was considered a "low" language, indicative of a lower social standing, and this connotation further reinforced the idea that Ukrainian identity was linked to subservience or marginalization within the broader imperial frameworks. The language became a social hierarchy marker, where speaking Ukrainian was associated with rural or uneducated populations, in contrast to the more prestigious Russian or Polish languages, reserved for the elite¹⁶⁷.

This connection between class and language is deeply intertwined with issues of self-representation. Being associated with the lower classes carried significant social stigma, and this, in turn, impacted how Ukrainians perceived and portrayed themselves. The intersection of class with identity thus became a crucial element in the formation of early Ukrainian consciousness. The negative implications of being tied to a lower class not only affected external perceptions but also shaped

¹⁶⁵ Bilenky S. (2020), *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations*, Stanford University Press, p. 125.

¹⁶⁶ Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities*, revised edition, pp. 149–150.

¹⁶⁷ Bercoff, G. B. (2005). La lingua letteraria in Ucraina: ieri e oggi. *Studi slavistici*, p. 121.

internal self-conceptions, often leading to a sense of moral inferiority, as will be explored further in the following section.

4.1 Moral and Religious Dimensions of Identity

In examining the construction of Ukrainian identity, it is essential to consider not only the impact of class but also how morality was intertwined with both nationality and class distinctions. In many cases, the moral standards of a society are dictated by the behaviours and norms of the ruling classes. This dynamic was especially pronounced in multinational empires such as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Russian Empire, where the dominant cultures imposed their moral codes on the subject populations. In the Ukrainian context, these imposed moral judgments often resulted in negative categorizations of Ukrainians, reinforcing their subordinate social and cultural status.

The ruling classes frequently portrayed Ukrainians as morally deficient, particularly in Polish and Russian cultural discourse. Common stereotypes included idleness and slyness, which were attributed to Ukrainians in a way that suggested a broader moral inferiority. These stereotypes were not just reflections of ethnic or class differences; they carried moral weight, further marginalizing Ukrainians within the imperial hierarchies.

For instance, the negative representation of the Cossacks had a significant role in abolishing the Cossackdom. Both in *Istoria Rusiv* and in Beauplan's 17th-century *Description of Ukraine*, Cossacks were represented as having an immoral lifestyle, which included excessive alcohol consumption, the exclusion of women from the Sich, and their economy's apparent lack of necessity for productive labour¹⁶⁸.

The moral dimension of Ukrainian identity is further complicated by how interest in Ukrainian culture was perceived within Polish and Russian societies. An enthusiasm for Ukrainian culture, particularly among the elites, was often viewed

¹⁶⁸ Pavlyshyn, M. (1985). The Rhetoric and Politics of Kotliarevsky's "Eneida". *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 10(1), 9, p. 18.

as harmful or dangerous. This cultural fascination sometimes referred to as “Ukrainomania,” was treated as a kind of moral and cultural disease. In Polish and Russian circles, those who became overly passionate about Ukrainian culture were regarded with suspicion as if their interest in Ukrainian matters was a sign of moral degradation or deviation from the dominant cultural norms. This is the case in the article *Ukrainomania as a moral disease of the Nineteenth Century*, in which Kraszewski became a vocal critic of the “Ukrainian school”, describing and dismissing Ukrainian themes in the works of writers not native to the region¹⁶⁹.

This concept of “Ukrainianomania” highlights the extent to which Ukrainian identity and culture were not only marginalized but pathologized. To express an interest in Ukrainian culture or to engage with it meaningfully was to risk being seen as morally corrupt or culturally suspect. The negative connotations surrounding Ukrainian culture were thus reinforced through both class and moral judgments.

5. The Limits of Nationalism: Identity Before and Despite National Movements

As we conclude this chapter, it is essential to broaden our understanding of national identity, particularly in the context of the early 19th century. While we have focused on the importance of class, morality, and the complexities of identity, it is equally important to consider the concept of national indifference¹⁷⁰. The idea that national identity was not a central concern for all individuals – particularly those from lower classes or regions on the shifting borders of empires – is crucial. National movements and the concept of national identity were often the domain of the higher classes, who had the education, resources, and political stakes to engage with such ideas. For much of the general population, however,

¹⁶⁹ Jozef Ignacy Kraszewski, "Studyia literackie," ["Literary Studies"] in his *Wybor Pism*. Section X (Warsaw, 1894), p. 238.

¹⁷⁰ Zahra, T. (2010). Imagined noncommunities: National indifference as a category of analysis. *Slavic review*, 69(1), 93–119.

national questions were of little importance, and people's everyday lives were largely unaffected by the movement of borders or the shifting allegiances of the empires that ruled over them.

This national indifference is especially relevant in border regions that had experienced shifts between imperial powers. In these areas, where multiple loyalties and languages coexisted, most of the population did not necessarily align with a specific national identity. The fluidity of these identities and the indifference toward national movements challenge the assumption that nationality was a clear or pressing concern for all. This was particularly true in the Ukrainian territories, where the local population often navigated their lives within broader imperial frameworks, focusing on immediate concerns rather than abstract notions of national allegiance.

When considering the works and visions of nationality expressed by authors such as Nikolai Gogol and Juliusz Słowacki, it is important to note that, although they did not belong to the lower classes, their relationship with nationality was still complex and, in many ways, pre-national. While they were part of the intellectual elite, their visions of identity did not fully align with modern nationalist categories. In some respects, both Gogol and Słowacki exhibited a form of national indifference, as a clear sense of national belonging did not always drive their engagement with national questions. This is particularly evident in Gogol's reflections on the use of the Ukrainian language in his writing. Although he was born into the Ukrainian cultural space, his decision to write primarily in Russian reflects a distance from the idea of constructing a purely national identity based on language. Similarly, intellectuals like Mykhailo Maksymovych demonstrated an attachment to Ukrainian culture and identity that was still far removed from the more developed concept of Ukrainian nationalism that would emerge later.

Thus, the notion of national indifference offers an intriguing lens through which to view the supranational identities of figures like Gogol, Słowacki, and other Ukrainian intellectuals of the time. Their pre-national identities suggest that their engagement with national ideas was often fluid and contingent rather than absolute.

Chapter 3: Gogol's and Słowacki's Ukraine

This chapter aims to understand the role of Ukraine in the life and literary production of Gogol and Słowacki. We will explore Ukraine as a tangible geographical presence in the writers' lives and as a mythical, symbolic entity within their literary narratives. In examining Gogol's literary works, we will consider how his fictional portrayal of Ukraine reflects the inner tensions we later find in his letters. In Słowacki's case, we will try to understand whether his poetic persona differs from how he addresses identity in his private correspondence. Generally, we will review the elements of their fiction that resonate with the themes of Ukrainianness explored in their letters and observe how their literary style or focus evolves in ways that correlate with their private thoughts in their letters.

After addressing Ukraine as both a real and imagined space, the next chapter will focus on what lies between, i.e. the narration on Ukraine that we can identify in the correspondence of the two writers. Ultimately, the letters will be a space for exploring the semi-conscious formation of the writers' identities.

1. Personal experience

Understanding Gogol and Słowacki's personal experience in Ukraine is relevant to our study as it provides context for their perception of Ukraine. The letters we will analyse are reconstructions of reality and self-presentations, often rooted in or developed from real events. The connection between biography and autobiography is complex, especially in epistolography. In our biographical considerations, we will focus on the writers' connections to Ukraine, both personal and literary, rather than a chronological succession of events. This approach will help us better understand the significance of the Ukrainian theme in their lives and, consequently, the letters.

1.1. Space, time and memory in Gogol and Słowacki's Ukraine

Nikolai Gogol and Juliusz Słowacki were born in 1809 in Poltava and Volhynia, respectively. These culturally Ukrainian territories were part of the Russian Empire at the time. The different environments in which they were raised, and especially the duration of their stay in Ukraine, had a profound role in the presence of Ukraine in their literary works and the construction of their identities.

It is important for our comparison to trace the most important factors that have lately shaped the image of Ukraine in Gogol and Słowacki's life: space, time, and memory.

As imagined by Gogol, Słowacki, and their contemporaries, Ukrainian borders are quite different from their present form, and our use of the term "Ukraine" could feel like presentism. The nature of this comparison makes it necessary to present the two writers' imagined maps of Ukraine.

In Słowacki's case, the toponymic references to Ukraine were rather vague. If we take into account Słowacki's drama set in Kremenets, *The Golden skull* (*Złota czaszka*, 1866), Konięcpolski announces to the guardian of the city of Kremenets that he arrived from Ukraine.

Konięcpolski (wchodzi)

Niech będzie Jezus Chrystus pochwalony!

Strażnik

Na wieki wieków! – Kto waćpan jesteś?

Konięcpolski

Jestem wojak Mości Dobrodzieju!

Strażnik

A z jakich stron?

Konięcpolski

Z Ukrainy¹⁷¹.

¹⁷¹ **Konięcpolski (enters)** / May Jesus Christ be praised! // **Guardian** / For ever and ever! – Who are you? // **Konięcpolski** / I am a warrior, Your Majesty! // **Guardian** / And from where? // **Konięcpolski** / From Ukraine. (Słowacki, Juliusz (1809–1849) *Dzieła Juliusza Słowackiego*. T. 6, 1904, p. 151).

This suggests that the writer considers Volhynia and Ukraine two different things and that the name Ukraine defines only the Black Sea region, the Dnieper basin, or the land of the Zaporizhian Cossacks, which the poet admired. In other instances, we notice that the toponym Ukraine also includes Volhynia, Podillia, and his hometown of Kremenets. In a letter to his mother dated August 21, 1838, he writes that the wife of his Parisian friend, Mrs. Moszczeńska, “went to Ukraine for business and wanted very much to be in Kremenets¹⁷²” A character from the *Excerpt from the poem about Mr Ostrich* (Fragment poematu o panu strusiu, 1846–1847) is called a “true Ukrainian”, yet he does not live by the Dnieper, but in Podillia¹⁷³.

In Gogol’s letters, we see how Ukraine or Little Russia refers almost univocally to the left-bank Ukraine. The right-bank Ukraine was largely unknown and considered culturally Polish. In a letter to Tarnovsky, he expressed his discontent with Russian newly annexed areas of right-bank Ukraine. He defined Russian cartography to be a “very unpleasant thing”:

Дядюшка объявил, что совершил-де какой-то странный карьер и находится, несмотря на древность фамилии, учителем в Волынской, или Литовской или Гродненской губернии. Я, зная сам, что русское землеописание есть самая неблагопристойная вещь, не утруждал его вопросом, что значит именно Волынская, и что Литовская, и что Гродненская и в которой из них должен обретаться ты и решился было писать к твоей маменьке в славную губернию Антоновку. Но Рудановский с письмом твоим весьма во время упредил меня. Итак, ты находишься в Житомире! Житомир! Клянусь Иисусом, если мне не во второй раз только приходится произносить это имя¹⁷⁴. (To Tarnovsky 2 October 1833, Saint Petersburg)

Another important influential factor is the amount of time they lived in Ukraine. Słowacki’s Ukrainian period can be limited to seven years of his life, while he spent most of his childhood in Vilnius, where he also studied – a time period which

¹⁷² Słowacki, J. (1962). *Korespondencja Juliusza Słowackiego*, t. 1, oprac. E. Sawrymowicz, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław, p. 403.

¹⁷³ Павличко, Д. В. (2017). Український патріотизм Юліуша Словацького. *PRECARPATHIAN BULLETIN OF THE SHEVCHENKO SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY Word*, (4 (40)), p. 414.

¹⁷⁴ The uncle declared that he had made some strange career move and was, despite his ancient surname, working as a teacher in either Volhynian, Lithuanian, or Grodno province. Knowing myself that Russian geography is the most improper thing, I didn't trouble him with questions about what exactly Volhynian, Lithuanian, or Grodno meant and in which of them you were supposed to be found, and had decided to write to your mother in the glorious province of Antonovka. But Rudanovsky, with your letter, preceded me just in time. So you are in Zhitomir! Zhitomir! I swear by Jesus, if this isn't only the second time I have to pronounce this name.

amounted to thirteen years¹⁷⁵. In contrast, Gogol spent twenty-four years in Ukraine, studying at the Lyceum in Nizhyn. His Russian period lasted only seven years, while he spent the remaining eleven abroad¹⁷⁶. This had a huge impact on their literary works as Gogol had a deeper connection and a better understanding of the subject, while Słowacki relied especially on literary sources.

We must acknowledge the significance of memory in their perception of Ukraine. Despite being forced to leave their homeland and spending most of their lives abroad, their memories of Ukraine were vital to their everyday lives. As mentioned earlier, Słowacki's time in Ukraine was relatively brief, yet the memories of his hometown, Kremenets, persisted throughout his lifetime. These reminiscences of Ukraine feature prominently in Słowacki's personal correspondence and literary creations, often serving as a lens through which he interprets reality and frequently draws comparisons during his travels. The poet felt an extreme connection to the landscapes of his childhood. As he once expressed in a letter to his mother dated April 27, 1834, the memory will accompany the poet throughout his life, "chasing him like a conscience"¹⁷⁷. While staying in Geneva, Słowacki sketched a view of Kremenets based on his memories¹⁷⁸. Images of his Ukrainian years seem to reappear in the poet's imagination constantly: as the poet travels from Jordan to Damascus, he unexpectedly perceives a resemblance to the Pińsk marshes. While roaming the heaths of Brittany, he envisions the landscapes of Volhynia, drawing parallels between tamarisks and junipers and recognizing "flowers from Ukraine" in the valley's buttercups.¹⁷⁹ While describing Lithuania in *An Hour of Thought* (*Godzina Myśli*, 1832–1833), images of Ukraine suddenly appear. Słowacki's memories of Volhynia and Podolia seem deeply ingrained in his imagination. These vivid images strongly influence the poet's perception of reality.

¹⁷⁵ Groszyński, M. (2014). *Słowacki: poza kanonem*. Słowo/obraz terytoria, p. 24.

¹⁷⁶ Луцький, Ю. О. (2002). Страдництво Миколи Гоголя, зnanого також як Ніколай Гоголь. *Гоголезнавчі студії*, p. 9.

¹⁷⁷ Słowacki, J. (1962). Korespondencja Juliusza Słowackiego, t. 1, oprac. E. Sawrymowicz, *Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław*, p. 241.

¹⁷⁸ Sawrymowicz, E. (1960). *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Juliusza Słowackiego*. Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, p. 74.

¹⁷⁹ Groszyński, M. (2014). *Słowacki: poza kanonem*. Słowo/obraz terytoria, p. 368.

In the case of Gogol, memory plays a different role. Although references to Ukraine are less frequent, it still holds an idealized place in Gogol's vision of Europe and is often compared to Italy.¹⁸⁰ As we showed in the first chapter, this comparison was common then. Ukraine was seen to embody Italy's characteristics in the Western Romanticism vision: it was seen as the repository of classical beauty, conservative habits and a land blessed with a warm and pleasant climate.

In his writings, instead of a straightforward comparison between the two regions, we see a kind of emotional migration: the deep feelings of patriotism and love that Gogol initially expressed for Ukraine are redirected towards Italy. Gasparov suggests that Ukraine's idealized features dissolved into the image of a new, enchanted land. He argues that Gogol's affection for Ukraine and later Italy stems more from a deep sense of alienation than genuine devotion to either place, viewing them as escapes from a harsh reality¹⁸¹.

However, we contend that Gogol's connection to Ukraine was very real, as evidenced by his enduring interest in Ukrainian history and culture. As political and cultural pressures grew in the Russian Empire, Gogol's ability to freely express his love for Ukraine became increasingly constrained. The Russification of Ukrainian identity and the political tensions between Ukrainian and Russian nationalisms made it more difficult for him to maintain his early Ukrainian patriotism publicly. This tension likely led to what we might call a "reimagination" of his patriotic feelings.

1.2 The role of Ukraine in Słowacki's life: Idyll, syncracy and horror

Ukraine held various meanings in Słowacki's life, and in this section, we will outline some of the features that likely shaped his perception of Ukraine and his identity. Słowacki's Ukraine appears in three dimensions: as an idyllic childhood

¹⁸⁰ Gasparov, B. (1999). Alienation and Negation: Gogol's View of Ukraine. *Gogol: Exploring Absence: Negativity in 19th Century Russian Literature*, p. 119.

¹⁸¹ Ibidem.

heaven, a place of cultural syncretism, and a site of asymmetrical ethnic relationships.

In Słowacki's life, Kremenets, as well as Mickuny and Wierzchówka, embodied that "nest in the East" (*gniazdo na wschodzie*), which functioned as a point of reference for the poet. As we will demonstrate in the analysis of the correspondence, Słowacki uses images of Kremenets as a lens through which he interprets every land he encounters during his travels.

However, Słowacki's nest did not end with Kremenets but included other Eastern territories. During the summers, as a child, he would usually go with his mother to Mickuny and Wierzchówka, the estates of Mrs. Bécu's friends, the Michalskis, in the Mohyliv County in Ukraine. During his university years, the poet occasionally visited Bołtup, a village near Oszmiana, associated with Jędrzej Śniadecki¹⁸². According to Pini, Słowacki remembered these places as the heaven of his youth. His vision of Ukraine, as well as his knowledge of songs and customs, largely came from Wierzchówka. These references appear later in *Beniowski*¹⁸³. Ukraine, therefore, is first portrayed as the representative of the poet's childhood, and it remains strongly associated with it.

Here, we see the opposition between Ukraine and Lithuania, with the first embodying the poet's childhood and the second his years of maturity. This creates a sort of mythical geography in which Ukraine has a predominant place in the poet's experience. His deep connection to the "miasto nieustannej tęsknoty" led Słowacki to present himself—at least in his literary persona—as the poet of Ukraine.

However, Słowacki's Ukraine was characterized by what Makowski defines as "cultural synocracy"¹⁸⁴. Despite Ukraine being considered part of the ideal Poland for Słowacki, it still retained its distinct cultural characteristics. The Ukrainian

¹⁸² Sawrymowicz, E. (1960). *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Juliusza Słowackiego*. Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, p. 24.

¹⁸³ Pini, T. (1909). *Młodość Słowackiego*. Staraniem i nakł. Komitetu Obchodu Setnej Rocznicy Urodzin Juliusza Słowackiego, p. 12.

¹⁸⁴ Makowski, S., Makowska, U., & Nesteruk, M. (2012). "*Szkoła ukraińska*" w romantyzmie polskim: *szkice polsko-ukraińskie*. Wydział Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, p. 22.

element was integrally part of his everyday life in Kremenets. He knew Ukrainian customs and songs from direct experience.¹⁸⁵ Słowacki later recalled his mother's songs in Kremenets and Vilnius, accompanied by piano, including those about Hrych and Pan Potocki, as the culture closest to his heart.

Słowacki had a strong connection to the theology and rituals of the Greek-Slavonic Church. His grandparents were likely Greek Catholics, as he was baptized – most probably according to the Eastern rite – by the Uniate priest Bazyli Sobkiewicz. The priest served as a chaplain at the Volhynian Gymnasium, conducting Eastern rite services in the school church after the church was taken over by Orthodox authorities in 1805. In Kremenets, there was a custom during Christmas time when students went around with a *vertep*, the traditional Ukrainian puppet theatre. Słowacki later confessed that he owed his “Shakespearean fervor” to this Kremenets *vertep*.

Baroque-Byzantine processions, celebrated on Holy Saturday at midnight on the terrace of the gymnasium church by priest Bazyli Sobkiewicz, also had a significant impact on the poet's imagination¹⁸⁶. What Skórczewski defined as the parade of hybrids in describing *Sen Srebrny Salomei* was a vivid memory of what the poet experienced in his native land where the Ukrainian and Polish elements would live side by side. Also, the other poets of the Ukrainian schools who were born in formerly Polish Ukrainian lands experienced this syncretism.

However, compared to the other poets of the Ukrainian school, Słowacki deeply felt the asymmetrical relation of these elements. Volhynia had a strong Polish influence, and the Lyceum in Kremenets was founded to propagate Polish culture in a was culturally and ethnically Ukrainian land¹⁸⁷. Attempting to find the origins of the poet's peculiar sensibility, we can argue that his understanding was influenced by the poet's direct experience of this class struggle.

¹⁸⁵ Czerwiński, A. (1930). *Ukraina w poezji Słowackiego*. Nakładem autora, pp. 6–7.

¹⁸⁶ Makowski, S. (2005). Krzemienieckie źródła twórczości Juliusza Słowackiego. *Rocznik Towarzystwa Literackiego imienia Adama Mickiewicza*, 40, p. 93.

¹⁸⁷ Daniel, B. (2005). *Trójką ukraiński. Szlachta, carat i lud na Wołyniu, Podolu i Kijowszczyźnie 1793–1914*, p. 228.

His uncle Jan Januszewski participated in the November uprising in Różycki's unit. After the division was broken up, he wandered into the forests and was murdered on 23 May 1831 by a peasant whom he had taken for a guide¹⁸⁸. The news of his death reached Kremenets at the end of October 1831, but Hersylia and Teofil Januszewski kept it hidden from the family for a long time¹⁸⁹. This news would serve as an inspiration for the poet to write *Duma on Waclaw Rzewuski* (*Duma o Waclawie Rzewuskim*, 1832). At least, that is how he explained the genesis of the poem in a letter to his mother dated July 30 of that year¹⁹⁰. We could, therefore, believe that the poet was aware of the class struggle and, like other Polish democrats, felt a necessity to expiate the nobility's sins against the people.

Observing these features of Słowacki's connection with Ukraine, we can attempt to understand how they interacted with the poet's creation of his own identity and representation of Ukraine. The ethnic and social conflicts, as well as the syncretism of life in the borderlands, influenced his vision of Ukraine. Słowacki saw Ukraine as land conquered by the Poles but recognized its distinctiveness. However, in depicting himself as the poet of Ukraine, his models were rather literary. This contributed to his self-description: he described himself as a Polish poet born in Ukraine, as was the case for the poets of the Ukrainian school.

1.3 The role of Ukraine in Gogol's life: from the successor of a Cossack to Russian Imperial writer

Gogol was born into a noble family with Cossack roots, which he later referenced in his works. He studied at the lyceum in Nizhyn, only returning to Vasylivka during the summers. The Ukrainian climate, natural beauty, and the speech of the local people are memories that profoundly influenced his early works,

¹⁸⁸ Sawrymowicz, E. (1960). *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Juliusza Słowackiego*. Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, p. 675.

¹⁸⁹ Inglot, M. (2011). Dwie ojczyzny – dwa patriotyzmy (Słowacki–Norwid). *Prace Literackie*, (51), p. 102.

¹⁹⁰ Sawrymowicz, E. (1960). *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Juliusza Słowackiego*. Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, p. 139.

particularly his first collection of short stories, *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, where he captures the essence of the Ukrainian night.

Initially, however, Gogol's love for Ukraine was not prominent. While studying in Nizhyn, he dreamed of leaving Little Russia to pursue a literary career in St. Petersburg. For Gogol, the imperial capital symbolized opportunity. He was the son of a writer, and his talent for acting made him popular among his schoolmates. He was aware that he was obliged to move to the Capital to gain a literary career, as was the case for his classmates.

The move to St. Petersburg marked a profound shift, introducing a sense of alienation he would never fully overcome. Yet, during this time in the city, his interest in Ukraine began to emerge as he avidly gathered information on the history and folklore of Little Russia.

This period also sparked a personal reflection on his family's Cossack heritage, as Zvinyatskovsky has noted¹⁹¹. Gogol began to see himself as having a unique mission rooted in his Cossack ancestry – a noble duty, in his eyes, to serve his country. Over time, however, the notion of this mission expanded beyond Ukraine, aligning with a broader imperial vision. After receiving recognition from the tsar, Gogol aspired to become a writer for the entire Russian Empire, a commitment that led to an increasingly complex and ultimately painful literary career, culminating in the burning of his final manuscript.

This evolving relationship between Gogol and his homeland reflects a broader shift in his identity – from an attachment to Ukraine to a loyalty to an all-Russian entity that included Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. Yet, Ukraine remained integral to his identity and sense of mission throughout his life.

Ukraine also played a significant role in how others perceived Gogol. He was often described as Ukrainian, both within Russia and abroad. His accent, customs, and even his laughter marked him as unmistakably Little Russian, as noted by his acquaintances. Gogol lived knowing the tension between how he

¹⁹¹ Zvinyatskovsky, V. J. (2023). Лекции по истории русско-украинских литературных связей. Masaryk University Press, p. 83.

wanted to be seen – as a Russian writer and educator of all the Russian people – and how he was perceived, often needing corrections for his Russian grammar and syntax.

2. Literary works

This section will examine Gogol and Słowacki's literary works, emphasizing the interdependency between literature and epistolography. Letters and diaries can often serve as a laboratory for literary creation. Simultaneously, analysing the literary texts can shed light on how the writers construct their self-image in their letters. We will present selected passages from their works that provide insight into how Gogol and Słowacki portray Ukrainians and Ukraine. These portrayals will later be compared to the self-representations found in their correspondence.

2.1 Ukrainian themes in Gogol's literary works

This section examines the evolution of the Ukrainian theme in Gogol's writing. Initially, we will reflect on why Gogol turned to this theme and how it played a central role in his literary career. We will later explore how this theme shapes the writer's gradual transformation into an imperial writer. A central focus will be laid on *Evenings at the Farm near Dikanka*, which marked the beginning of Gogol's success after the failure of his first published work, *Hans Küchelgarten*. Gogol's decision to write about Ukraine was not merely a personal or nostalgic choice but also a calculated response to the literary trend of the time, which romanticized Ukraine. In support of this, he wrote to his mother asking for details about the customs of the Little Russians, seeking to ground his work in the folklore and traditions of the region and to establish himself in the literary circles of the imperial capital.

2.1.2 Between self-exoticization and hidden transcript: Ukrainian masks in the Capital

Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka could be seen as Gogol's attempt to become an imperial writer, leveraging his provincial origins to gain acceptance within the imperial centre. Apparently, Gogol enters the Saint Petersburg literary scene by

offering his intimate knowledge of Ukrainian life as a cultural token. However, beneath this surface lies a more complex subtext. *Evenings* manifests two dynamics simultaneously: self-exoticization and hidden transcript. These two strategies operate concurrently, and this tension is particularly evident in the structure of the work.

As Koropecyjk and Romanchuk have demonstrated, the structure of *Evenings* mirrors that of the Ukrainian *vertep*, or puppet theatre¹⁹². Each of the two books is prefaced by Rudyi Panko, a character whose introduction serves as the primary point of contact between *Evenings* and the external world, offering a lens through which the Ukrainian context is framed for a broader, imperial audience. Through these prefaces, Rudyi Panko offers a glimpse of Ukrainian life to the Russian imperial gaze, drawing parallels between the two worlds and offering a glossary to facilitate the Russian readers' understanding. This gesture reveals his strategic negotiation with the imperial centre, inviting the Russian readership into the tales while subtly asserting the distinctiveness of Ukrainian culture.

Using a glossary for Russian readers was not uncommon at the time. Kotliarevsky and Gogol's father, Vasiliy Gogol adopted the same practice. According to Ilchuk, the presence of the glossary performs a double task:

Panko accompanies his prefaces to Books One and Two with glossaries of Ukrainian words (about 130 entries). This demonstrates not only that the text itself activates the process of language variation, but also that its discourse is directed toward the other – a metropolitan Russian reader¹⁹³.

In this case, we encounter a paratext that explicitly incorporates the notion of a foreign, Russian readership. It is constructed with this audience in mind, seeking to appeal to them while simultaneously reflecting a degree of resistance to the imperial centre.

However, beneath this surface, a more complex narrative unfolds in which Ukrainian identity is subtly asserted and defended. This tension between self-

¹⁹² Koropecyjk, R., & Romanchuk, R. (2003). Ukraine in Blackface: Performance and Representation in Gogol's Dikan'ka Tales, Book 1. *Slavic Review*, 62(3), 525–547.

¹⁹³ Ilchuk, Y. (2021). *Nikolai Gogol: Performing Hybrid Identity*. University of Toronto Press, p. 77.

exoticization and hidden transcript is fundamental to the structure of the work. Ruyi Panko, for instance, exhibits characteristics that suggest a desire to engage the reader, yet he also subtly pushes back against the values of the “central” world. He functions as a mediator between the two worlds. He emphasizes, for example, that life in Dikanka is, in many respects, superior to that in Saint Petersburg while also acknowledging stereotypes about Ukrainians, such as ignorance, without directly challenging them.

2.1.3 Fear of Hybridization

In Gogol’s works, there is a clear division between the authentic, traditional world of Ukrainian society and those who attempt to straddle the line between cultures. He often portrays such “in-between” figures, like the townsman in the pea-green coat, Makar Nazarovich, or the student who pretends to speak only Latin (ending words with *-us*), in a negative light. These men, trying to assimilate into a world that is not theirs, are neither fully part of their community nor worthy of respect. For Gogol, they represent outsiders – men who are alienated from the traditional values he reveres and who are often depicted as imitating the manners and styles of imperial figures. This imitation, however, is not simply a matter of class aspiration but takes on an almost diabolic quality, as though mimicry itself is unnatural and suspicious.

A particularly telling example is the figure of Makar Nazarovich – a character who can be seen as a mimic man. Mimicry, according to Homi Bhabha, is the act of copying the colonizing culture, behaviour, manners, and values by the colonized¹⁹⁴. Mimic men are appropriate objects of a colonialist chain of command, authorized versions of otherness¹⁹⁵.

Makar Nazarovich’s desire to dress like the governors and conform to imperial norms is portrayed with disdain. In Gogol’s narrative world, mimicry is often linked with evil or moral corruption. In the introduction to *Christmas Eve*, the devils are

¹⁹⁴ Bhabha, Homi K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, p. 86.

¹⁹⁵ Bhabha, H. (1984). *Of mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse*, p. 129.

depicted courting the witches, mimicking the courtship of young men during a ball. The man in the pea-coloured coat is thus excluded from the tightly knit Ukrainian society Gogol depicts – a society where everyone is bound by shared customs and values, leaving no room for those who, through their imitation, betray the authenticity of the community. In *Old-fashioned Landowners*, Gogol criticized “those low Little Russians who tear themselves out of tar, traders, fill the chambers and public offices like locusts, tear the last penny from their fellow countrymen, fill St. Petersburg with snitches, finally make capital and solemnly add to their surname ending the syllable -ov instead of -o”¹⁹⁶.

According to Bojanowska, Gogol has more in common with Makar Nazarovich, than with any other character in the Tales¹⁹⁷. They both are Russified gentlemen from the Poltava region. However, in *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, Gogol tried to impersonate the character of Rudyi Panko. As Bojanowska claims, Gogol deliberately presents himself as Rudyi Panko in the preface, positioning himself as a loyal representative of Ukrainianness using a technique reminiscent of Scott¹⁹⁸. Rudyi Panko serves as an alter ego for Gogol, sharing characteristics such as red hair, with “Panko” potentially derived from his grandfather’s name, Panas¹⁹⁹. In this way, Gogol hides himself behind the image of the beekeeper, while embedding aspects of himself in this character.

Through Rudyi Panko, Gogol can show himself as the spokesman of Ukrainians, someone who knows Ukrainian customs and habits firsthand, and, on the contrary, present his contemporaries, writers of the Ukrainian school, as mere followers of a fashion. The ‘in-between’ figure, the gentleman in the pea-green coat, symbolizes the writers who used the Ukrainian theme to advance their careers in Saint Petersburg. By depicting himself as the truest Ukrainian, he distances himself from the other writers of the Ukrainian school²⁰⁰. One such

¹⁹⁶ Гоголь, Н. В. (1937). Миргород/Гоголь НВ *Полное собрание сочинений: [В 14 т.]*. М., Л, 2., p. 15.

¹⁹⁷ Bojanowska, E. M. (2007). *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*. Harvard University Press, p. 49.

¹⁹⁸ *Ivi*, p. 45.

¹⁹⁹ *Ivi*, p. 40.

²⁰⁰ *Ivi*, p. 50.

hybrid figure could be his former teacher in Nizhyn, Kulzhynsky, the author of *Malorossiiskaia derevnia*, whom we will discuss further in the next chapter.

In portraying the gentleman in the pea-green coat, Gogol presents a fear of hybridity. It reflects Gogol's fear of alienation. The Ukrainian world of Dikanka and the Russian world of Saint Petersburg are depicted as completely separate, even existing in different chronotopes. The figure in between represents a high form of hybridity and is seen as negative. So, in portraying someone similar to himself, Gogol also conveys his fear of his hybridity.

2.1.4 Othering of Russians

In *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, Russians are consistently depicted as the "Other", remaining outside the boundaries of Ukrainian society. While the prefaces invite Russians into the tales, they are portrayed with a clear sense of distance. Interestingly, the prefaces feature high society, likely directed at imperial readers, but within the tales themselves, the Moskali (Russian soldiers) are lower-ranking figures. Despite their rank, they still represent the imperial system, reinforcing the idea of Russian presence as intrusive or negative. The character of the "Moskal" emerges as an ethnic stereotype, much like the Jew or the Gypsy.

As Mirsky writes, before the centralising reforms of Catherine, Ukrainian civilisation remained very distinct from Great Russian. The people had their rich store of folk poetry, their professional itinerant singers, their popular puppet theatre, their highly developed artistic handicrafts. Wandering scholars strolled the land; churches were built in the old native and in the "Mazeppa" baroque style. The one language spoken was Ukrainian, and the moskal was an exotic figure so seldom seen, that the name was synonymous with soldier²⁰¹.

For instance, in *Sorochintsy Fair*, the Moskal is depicted as caressing his beard with one hand while the narration abruptly breaks off, leaving the reader to imagine his disreputable actions. This rhetorical device, known as aposiopesis, could imply that Gogol intentionally avoided fully exposing the character's

²⁰¹ Mirsky, D. S., & Prince, S. (1931). *Russia: a social history*, pp. 232–233.

misdeeds, perhaps to avoid offending the audience. Such restraint in language recalls Gogol's private letters to Maksymovych, where he referred to Russians pejoratively as *katsapy* (male goats), a derogatory term used to depict them as uncouth and rough. The *Moskal's* long beard is a common image, reinforcing these negative stereotypes.

Gogol's use of aposiopesis or self-censorship also reflects his hidden transcript, where Russian characters are subtly criticized without explicitly stating their negative traits. The rhetoric of "not saying" or leaving certain insults unsaid adds a layer of complexity to his critique of Russians. This opposition between Russians and Ukrainians echoes a theme prevalent in Gogol's letters.

Russians are often depicted as low-ranking soldiers or vulgar figures, sharply distinct from the elites of Saint Petersburg. For instance, in *A May Night*, a scribe refuses to repeat certain vulgarities, saying: "[S]uch words – it's a shame to repeat them; a drunken *moskal* will fear to reel them off with his profane tongue" (словом, сказать стыдно; пьяный москаль побоится выбросить их нечестивым своим языком; PSS 1, 169)²⁰². This portrayal aligns Russians (or *Moskals*) with filth, thievery, and even devilish traits. The image of Russians as corrupt, crude, or untrustworthy was a common motif in Ukrainian literature of the time, as seen in Kotlyarevsky's *Eneida*²⁰³.

2.1.4 The gradual abandonment of the Ukrainian theme

Taras Bulba plays a crucial role in understanding Gogol's sense of messianic mission, particularly in how it reflects the expansion of his ideological scope. The text exists in two distinct editions: the first was published in 1835, while the second appeared in 1842. The changes between these editions are key to understanding Gogol's evolving vision.

²⁰² Bojanowska, E. M. (2007). *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*. Harvard University Press, p. 56.

²⁰³ *Ivi*, p. 55.

In the earlier version, Cossack history is portrayed as firmly tied to Ukrainian history. However, in the second edition, this narrative shifts toward a broader, imperial mission, with many of the revisions emphasizing the Russification of the Cossacks. *Taras Bulba* becomes a symbolic figure, embodying not just the Cossack warrior but also the Tsarist Cossack, fighting to defend Orthodoxy against Catholicism. The focus shifts from Ukrainian distinctiveness to the unification of Orthodox Slavic peoples under the banner of Rus'. This marks a central moment in Gogol's literary trajectory, signalling a transition from a primarily Ukrainian to a pan-Russian worldview.

Another central turning point in Gogol's literary production is *The Inspector General*, his first significant work centred on Russian themes. It achieved widespread acclaim, even receiving the personal approval of Tsar Nicholas I. This work reshaped Gogol's self-conception as an all-Russian writer with a national mission to instruct and morally elevate his countrymen. After the success of *The Inspector General*, his subsequent works carried this heavy burden of understanding and educating 'All-Russia,' with varying degrees of success.

Dead Souls represents one of the more ambitious outcomes of this mission, though it was received as a comic work. Gogol envisioned it as the first part of a much larger project, with its structure echoing Dante's "Inferno," waiting for future instalments to complete its grand moral and national purpose. Finally, his later work, *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*, epitomizes his desire to fulfil a civilizing mission. Notably, Gogol was shocked by the negative reception of this work, revealing his blindness to both the literary society's expectations and the way his contemporaries perceived his work. This disconnection would persist in his later years, marking the tragic irony of his career.

2.2 Ukraine in Słowacki's literary system: an ever-present topic

In the case of Słowacki, the Ukrainian theme is present throughout his literary career. Initially, it appeared more frequently in his early works when he aligned

himself with the literary trend surrounding Ukraine. However, as a writer, the Ukrainian theme gained greater depth and significance as he matured. He also began to explore the political situation in Ukraine in ways other representatives of the Ukrainian school of Polish Romanticism had not addressed.

2.2.1 Ukraine as an idyllic presence in Słowacki's literary production

In his earliest Ukrainian-themed literary works, Słowacki attempted to embody and express himself through the voice of the Ukrainian people, though literary motifs still shape him.

On the 26 of August 1826, he wrote his poem, *Ukrainian duma* (*Duma ukraińska*, 1826), devoted to the Ukrainian theme²⁰⁴. It is also the poet's first preserved work and his second after an invocation to the moon (*Księżyc*, 1825)²⁰⁵. Along with *Song of a Cossack Girl* (*Piosnka dziewczycy kozackiej*, 1829), it was written with the inspiration of the Polish poets of the Ukrainian school. Possible influences on this early poem include the works of Zaleski and Malczewski. Early Słowacki can be seen as a follower of Zaleski's style, while the melancholy tones characteristic of Malczewski's writing are also evident in *Ukrainian duma*, which closely resembles Malczewski's *Maria*. Słowacki's deep fascination with Malczewski and his work is apparent throughout his literary career, as the influence of *Maria* can be traced from his earliest compositions to his later writings²⁰⁶.

Although he took inspiration from the already available literary models, Słowacki also had a first-hand knowledge of the genre of *duma*. In Ukrainian folklore, traditional folk songs are typically divided into two main genres: the *duma* and lyrical songs. Słowacki's early works, *Ukrainian duma* and *Song of a Cossack Girl*, reflect this distinction. The *duma* is characterized by its use of rhyme and its focus on historical or epic themes, and Słowacki's *Ukrainian duma* adheres to these conventions. Also, the theme of *Ukrainian duma* corresponds to the

²⁰⁴ Słowacki, J. (1959). *Dzieła, t. 1, Liryki i inne wiersze*, oprac. Krzyżanowski J., Wrocław, pp. 15–21.

²⁰⁵ Słowacki, J. (1959). *Dzieła, t. 1*, pod redakcją Juljusza Kleinera, Lwów, Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, p. 21.

²⁰⁶ Pini, T. (1909). *Młodość Słowackiego*. staraniem i nakł. Komitetu Obchodu Setnej Rocznicy Urodzin Juliusza Słowackiego, p. 26.

classification of *duma* in three periods (before Khmelnytsky /Turkish *duma*, Khmelnytsky *dumas*, Russian *dumas*)²⁰⁷. For what regards its theme, the *duma* reflects the times of Turkish domination, but we also observe the presence of Polish domination:

Jesteś giermkim wojewody,
Lecz nie ciężka twa niewola²⁰⁸

In *Ukrainian duma*, Słowacki already draws a parallel between the figure of the Cossack and that of the poet, as seen in his reflection on the death of the Cossack Ruńko:

Takie tylko łyzy, niestety,
Skoro świt zabłyśnie złoty,
Roszą smutny grób sieroty,
Grób Kozaka – grób poety.

Here, he equates the Cossack's fate with the poet's, as if their shared suffering and loss blended their identities. His personal experience can explain the poet's familiarity with the genre. The *Duma* is inspired by the traditional *dumy* that Słowacki often heard in his mother's salon. Salomea Bécu had a particular fondness for these folk songs, as did other members of Słowacki's family, including Aleksandra Bécu and Jan Januszewski. Słowacki himself was familiar with many *dumy*, and their influence is reflected in this early poem. Kleiner notes that the opening stanzas are especially melodic, almost as if the poet was singing them in his mind²⁰⁹. Marek Piekarski also suggests that the *Duma* seeks to

²⁰⁷ Дмитренко, М. К., & Скрипник, Г. А. (Eds.). (2009). *Українські народні думи: у п'яти томах*.

²⁰⁸ You are the governor's squire, / Still, your bondage is not heavy

²⁰⁹ Słowacki, J. (1959). *Dziela, t. 1*, pod redakcją Juljusza Kleinera, Lwów, Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, p. 22.

replicate the style of traditional Ukrainian folk songs, with the use of similes (*porównania*) being a key indicator of this influence²¹⁰. These similitudes are often connected to the life of the protagonist; an example of this is:

W cichem szczęściu dni twe płyną,
Jak ta czysta Dniepru woda.

Song of a Cossack Girl, written in Warsaw on December 28, 1829²¹¹, follows the structure of a folk song. While it shares thematic connections with Ukrainian *Duma*, it serves primarily as a commemorative song for the death of the girl's lover.

These early works reflect the Romantic fascination with folklore and attempt to recreate the structure of folk songs and the *duma* tradition. In these poems, Słowacki does not aim univocally at mastering the formal aspects of versification. He aspires to embody the role of the Ukrainian bard, which will later evolve into the legendary figure of Wernyhora. This ambition is particularly evident in *The Viper* (*Żmija*, 1832), a poem that depicts Cossack life and their battles against the Turks. The poem feels more formal than personal, though certain moments evoke the *duma* tradition with frequent "song-like" expressions. One such example can be found in its opening lines²¹².

Niejeden rybak wieczorną doba,
W Czertomeliku płynąc ostrowy,
Słyszał przed sobą, słyszał za sobą

²¹⁰ Piekarski, M. (1909). *Mistrzostwo formy u Juliusza Słowackiego*. staraniem i nakł. Komitetu Obchodu Setnej Rocznicy Urodzin Juliusza Słowackiego, p. 56.

²¹¹ Słowacki, J. (1959). *Dzieła, t. 1*, pod redakcją Juljusza Kleinera, Lwów, Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, pp. 33–34.

²¹² Słowacki, J. (1959). *Dzieła, t. 2*, pod redakcją Juljusza Kleinera, Lwów, Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, p. 28.

Spiew słodszy, miłszy niż szum dniewrowy²¹³.

In the *Explanation of the Poet*, Słowacki explains his poetic method:

Niekiedy, idąc za duchem poezji ludu ukraińskiego, chcąc obraz żywiej wystawić, porzucam sposób opisowy i opowiadanie wkładam w usta sternika kozackiego, nie sądzę zaś, aby taka wolność imaginacją czytelnika obrażać miała²¹⁴.

By doing so, he blends imagination with authentic sources, stepping into the voice of the Cossack. This approach not only grounds Słowacki's artistic identity in Ukrainian poetic traditions but also positions him as a Cossack-poet, singing the history of his people. Thus, *The Viper* serves as a significant stepping stone in Słowacki's development, illustrating his effort to channel the spirit of Ukrainian poetry as more than just a stylistic exercise. It is a way to enter the collective soul of the Ukrainian people²¹⁵.

2.2.2 Beniowski and the self-creation of the writer's homeland

In *Beniowski*, Słowacki moves beyond the folk themes of his early works to engage more directly with Ukraine's political and cultural hybridity. Though primarily centred on the Koliivshchyna, *Beniowski* is also a profoundly ironic poem that offers commentary on his literary contemporaries, particularly the poets of the Ukrainian school.

In *Beniowski*, Słowacki presents a literary self-creation of his homeland. This invocation of Ukraine as his motherland contrasts with Mickiewicz's depiction of Lithuania, presenting Słowacki's vision of himself as a poet uniquely tied to the Ukrainian landscape and its cultural heritage. More than just a geographical

²¹³ Many a fisherman in evening hours,/ Sailing through Chertomelyk's islands,/ Heard before him, heard behind him/ A song sweeter, lovelier than Dnieper's murmur.

²¹⁴ Sometimes, following the spirit of the poetry of the Ukrainian people, in order to present the image more vividly, I abandon the descriptive way and put the story in the mouth of the Cossack helmsman, but I do not think that such freedom of imagination should offend the reader (Słowacki, J. (1959). *Dzieła*, t. 2, pod redakcją Juljusza Kleiner, Lwów, Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, p. 86).

²¹⁵Słowacki, J. (1959). *Dzieła*, t. 2, pod redakcją Juljusza Kleiner, Lwów, Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, pp. 27–86.

setting, Ukraine becomes a literary construct through which Słowacki expresses his individuality as a writer. By aligning his identity with Ukraine, Słowacki challenges the dominant narrative within Polish literature, positioning himself in opposition to Mickiewicz's Lithuanian school.

2.2.3 Sen srebrny Salomei: *hybridity in act*

Sen srebrny Salomei is fundamental to understanding Słowacki's depiction of Ukraine and his construction of a Ukrainian element in his identity.

The drama was written in a burst of inspiration and dedicated to his mother, Salomea Bécu. Słowacki gifted it to her as a present for her name day. Salomea Bécu often shared her dreams with her son, and in a letter to Teofil²¹⁶, she recounted one that may have inspired *Sen srebrny Salomei*. In this dream, she envisioned graves, dead people, and an overall macabre atmosphere. However, she was displeased when she received the drama, finding it too dark and unsettling. Słowacki had not anticipated this reaction from her.

Sen srebrny Salomei explores themes that are central to Słowacki's evolving understanding of Ukraine's historical and social tensions. Described by Skórczewski as a "parade of hybrids"²¹⁷, the drama's characters often possess dual Polish-Ukrainian identities. However, the ethnic divide between Poles and Ukrainians remains stark, with Polish identity associated with nobility and Ukrainian identity tied to the peasantry. This social divide is evident in the character of the princess, who feels embarrassed by her grandmother's ignorance of Polish language, forcing her to use what she calls the "peasant language". Nachlik argues that this detail is autobiographical, reflecting Słowacki's complex relationship with his Ukrainian heritage²¹⁸.

²¹⁶ Słowacki, J., Makowski, S., Sudolski, Z., & Sawrymowicz, E. (1960). *W kręgu bliskich poety: listy rodziny Juliusza Słowackiego*, p. 57.

²¹⁷ Skórczewski, D. (2011). „Sen srebrny Salomei”, czyli parada hybryd. *Pamiętnik Literacki. Czasopismo kwartalne poświęcone historii i krytyce literatury polskiej*, (1), 47–75.

²¹⁸ Nachlik J., Ukrainskie i polskie elementy w Snie srebrnym Salomei Juliusza Słowackiego, in *Słowacki i Ukraina* (2003), red. Maria Woźniakiewicz-Dziadosz, wydawnictwo uniwersytet Marii Curii-Skłodowski, Lublin, p. 56.

What sets *Sen srebrny Salomei* apart from other works on the Ukrainian theme is Słowacki's recognition of the political subjugation of Ukraine under Polish landlords. In the drama he writes: "my polacy posiadacze te kraine". While other contemporaries, such as Mickiewicz in his Parisian lectures²¹⁹, acknowledged this reality, Słowacki goes further by granting agency to the Ukrainian people, legitimizing their right to resist domination. At the same time, he masterfully presents both the Polish and Ukrainian perspectives, portraying the inevitability of conflict between the two groups. Ukraine is seen by Słowacki in his literary works as from a double national perspective, and consequently Ukraine itself becomes double²²⁰.

In one key passage, "*Ach Ukraina nie będzie*", Słowacki expresses the impossibility of a united Ukraine within the framework of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This vision of a republic of three peoples – Poles, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians – is unattainable, as mutual understanding between the two nations seems out of reach.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the prominence of Ukrainian themes in the works of Gogol and Słowacki and Ukraine's influence on their personal lives. Despite their diverse cultural backgrounds, these authors share notable similarities.

Firstly, both writers engaged with Ukrainian literary traditions in Polish and Russian Romanticism. Initially, they adhered to established literary canons. Later, they repositioned themselves as authentic intermediaries of Ukrainian culture. Additionally, as Grabowicz notes, both authors developed a profound Ukrainian myth in their works.

However, key differences exist between Gogol and Słowacki. Gogol's cultural ties to Ukraine were stronger than his connection to the Russian Empire. In contrast,

²¹⁹ Mickiewicz, A. (1955). Wykład XV. Literatura słowiańska, kurs pierwszy, półrocze I, przeł. L. Piwiński, *Dziela t. VIII*. Warszawa, 186, pp. 6–7.

²²⁰ Ziemia K., Sicz i miejsca kozaczyzny in Siwicka, D., & Zielińska, M. (2012). *Geografia Słowackiego*. Instytut Badań Literackich Polskiej Akademii Nauk, p. 293.

Słowacki, coming from Polish nobility, had a less pronounced relationship with Ukrainian traditions.

Chapter 4: Analysis of the Correspondence

This chapter aims to analyze the two writers' private correspondence and to recognize different examples of self-creation of their identity or representations of Ukraine. The two correspondences will be analyzed separately and only ultimately compared. As there was no correspondence between the two writers, it must be underlined that the comparison is motivated by the affinity of the two writer's situation in terms of chronology, direct affiliation to Ukraine and the presence of Ukrainian motives in their literary works.

A similar analysis could be adopted to analyze the main literary figures participating in the hybrid phenomenon of the Ukrainian schools of Russian and Polish romanticism. Still, we decided to analyze these two literary phenomena as the most prominent and recognizable figures. This decision was motivated by the necessity of selecting a corpus of letters that could permit an adequate amount of letters to identify possible variations but also not exceed the measure for this particular project. Further, it would be possible to continue a similar analysis encompassing more authors.

This analysis will focus on the concept of identity, specifically the interpretation of Ukrainian identity by Gogol and Słowacki. Identity here will be understood as a dynamic process encompassing three dimensions: individual, interpersonal, and environmental. From the outset, identity is viewed as a dual process of recognition – self-perception and external identification.

Self-perception refers to an individual's internal sense of belonging to a particular group or community, often based on shared elements like language, traditions, common experiences, or a sense of homeland. It involves how one views oneself within the context of a collective identity.

An individual is recognized or excluded from a specific community, through external identification, which is often dictated by societal or institutional norms. This recognition is typically governed by externally imposed categories or criteria, such as those created by the state or a ruling authority.

However, this process is not static; it evolves in response to shifting external conditions. Factors such as political transitions, revolutions, wars, or large-scale migration can change how individuals perceive themselves and how others identify them.

Given the nature of epistolary writing, this study will emphasize two core aspects of identity formation: self-perception, which we will examine through the lens of self-creation, and external identification, approached through the concept of accommodation.

While acknowledging identity as a three-dimensional phenomenon – personal, interpersonal, and environmental – the primary focus of this analysis will be on the individual's self-creation, particularly the desire to belong to a specific community. As explored in the third chapter, the Ukrainian theme is central to the lives and works of both Gogol and Słowacki. This section will extend that exploration to their letters, investigating whether the significance of Ukraine is similarly reflected in their epistolary practices. Epistolography is a valuable source for analysing self-creative processes, as it is a narrative form, and often mediates reality through literary expression.

Letters written by authors are not literary works in themselves, yet they can still be analyzed as such. Even if their structure is unintentional and often dependent on causality, the artistry can be found in the letter's text, in the function of each element and its semantic power²²¹. In this case, the recipient of the letters should be considered an element of the text's poetics²²².

The first part of this chapter will be devoted to letter-writing in the 19th century in Poland and the Russian Empire, focusing especially on Gogol and Słowacki as epistolographers. Furthermore, we will present the methodological framework through which the analysis was developed and, ultimately, show the analysis of the correspondence.

²²¹ Cysewski, K. (1997). Teoretyczne i metodologiczne problemy badań nad epistolografią. *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1, p. 101.

²²² *Ivi*, p. 106.

1. Letter-writing in the Nineteenth Century

Letter-writing became a central part of the life of the higher classes, especially after the diffusion of a modern postal system, which allowed for more frequent communication at a lower cost. The need for distant communication was growing due to frequent political migrations, such as the Polish emigration following the 1830–1831 uprising or the growing trend of the “Grand Tour,” which saw many nobles eager to explore the classical world of Southern Europe. These travels led the letters to become a major form of communication.

Along with letter-writing, a tradition of prescriptive texts on epistolary etiquette emerged. Often, they were based on French and classical sources. However, the spread of these manuals did not influence the writing of the higher classes as much as it did with the writing of the middle classes²²³.

It is mainly literature that influenced the epistolary culture at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. The publication of Rousseau’s epistolary novel *The New Eloise* (1761) stimulated a new sensibility. So did the author’s *Confessions*, which, as an autobiographical account, shows his life through the prism of his spiritual tensions. Finally, of no minor importance is the influence of Laurence Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey* (1769), which contained a collection of journey impressions. In general, the spread of the epistolary novel induced writers to adopt the habit of introspection and led to the development of a new autobiographical and individualistic current²²⁴.

The letter entered literature, assuming sometimes the role, as the formalists would formulate, of a laboratory for literary creation. The bond between letters and literature is particularly strong in the case of literary figures. Writers like Pushkin used letters to express a peculiar tone or expression, and literary forms permeated their letter-writing. Letters were also used as a medium for self-

²²³ On letter manuals in general, see Dauphin, C. (1997). Letter-writing manuals in the nineteenth century. *Correspondence: Models of Letter-Writing from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 112–157.

²²⁴ Sudolski, Z. (1991). Polski list romantyczny – odkrywanie wielkiej karty naszej literatury. In W. Magnuszewski (Ed.), *W świecie literatury romantycznej*. Wydawnictwo WSP, pp. 233–234.

presentation and self-creation, as they were often read by a wider audience than the addressee in the salons of the higher classes.

Another typical form of letter-writing in the 19th century was the letter-confession. This form of writing is central to identifying forms of self-creation. The writer of the letter-confession imagined a strong bond between him and the letter's addressee, creating a higher degree of intimacy. Sometimes, this intimacy was substituted by a total lack of boundaries between the addresser and the addressee. The letter-confession would take a diaristic form and present itself as a private diary sent to someone. Rybicka defines it as an "ex-communication", a form of communication where the addressee disappears to leave space for the self-expression of the addresser²²⁵.

Letter-writing usually followed prescriptive forms, although the style could change abruptly, even in letters written by the same author. There is also a significant difference between objective and subjective letters, i.e., letters written to express pragmatic purposes or to communicate interior needs. This second type of writing was common in the 19th century, whereas some letters combine the two typologies.

This section will concentrate on letter-writing in Poland and the Russian Empire. Poland was under the control of the Russian Empire and presented a separate, even if comparable, epistolary tradition. In 19th-century Ukraine, on the other hand, Russian sources influenced most of the Ukrainian production, which was mostly bilingual.

1.1 Letter writing in the first half of the Nineteenth century in Poland

In Poland, the custom of letter-writing and its importance from a literary perspective can be dated back to the 18th century. Although some "native forms" of letter-writing already existed, such as King III Sobieski's "sarmatic epistolography", the major influence came from French manuals and epistolography novels. Madame de Sevigne's letters were published by Wilhelm

²²⁵ Rybicka, E. (2004). *Antropologiczne i komunikacyjne aspekty dyskursu epistolograficznego*, p. 49.

Bogumił Korn with the title *Le Corespondant français ou modèles de lettres françaises... avec des notes polonaises*. This collection of letters showed that it was possible to present someone's private correspondence as a literary work, and it also proved influential among the philomates in Vilnius²²⁶.

Romantics adopted the form of the letter-confession and developed the epistolary genre. As a result, epistolography during the 19th century can be divided into four moments, all directly linked to the influence of the Polish romantic bards.

The first phase is dominated by the early letters written by Mickiewicz and is characterized by an approach to the conventions of the confessional letter. The second phase spans roughly from 1830 to 1841 and sees the contemporary development of three collections of letters: those of Mickiewicz, Krasiński, and Słowacki. Mickiewicz continues to display his brilliant style, infused with subtle humour and incorporates philosophical-moral reflections, bringing him closer to Towianism. During this period, Krasiński and Słowacki write letters fully romantically. From the early 1840s to 1859, the third phase was substantially dominated by Towianism, to which Słowacki and Mickiewicz converted in 1842. The fourth phase (1859–1883) was undisputedly led by Norwid, who replaced the confessional letter practice with intellectual conversation²²⁷.

1.2 Słowacki as an epistolographer

Czesław Miłosz defined Słowacki's correspondence as one of the best examples of Polish romantic prose²²⁸. As a typical form of romantic writing, most letters correspond to the "subjective type" and the letter-confession. Most of Słowacki's letters are addressed to his mother and attempt to meet her expectations. The same interest in letter-writing appeared after his mother complained of the lack of details in his juvenile letters²²⁹.

²²⁶ Sudolski Z. (1997). *Polski list romantyczny*. Wydawnictwo Literackie, pp. 9-10.

²²⁷ Sudolski, Z. (1987). Główne tendencje w rozwoju epistolografii romantycznej w Polsce: Mickiewicz–Krasiński–Słowacki–Norwid. *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, 31(2), pp. 34–35.

²²⁸ Miłosz, C. (1983). *The history of Polish literature*. Univ of California Press, p. 237.

²²⁹ Sudolski, Z. (1988). Juliusz Słowacki jako epistolograf. In E. Czaplejewicz & W. Grajewski (Eds.), *Dziewiętnastowieczność: z poetyk polskich i rosyjskich XIX wieku : prace poświęcone X Międzynarodowemu Kongresowi Słowistów w Sofii*. Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, pp. 255–256.

His correspondence could be divided into a romantic and a Towianist phase, the second beginning in 1842 and his conversion to Towianism²³⁰. In the first phase, Słowacki portrayed himself in a romantic fashion. He posed as a dandy and his self-descriptions are directly inspired by Romantic literary models²³¹. In Słowacki's writings, the image of a dandy is often contrasted with depictions of solitude. The two images do not exclude each other and are both part of the image of the Romantic hero²³².

After his conversion to Towianism in 1842, Słowacki's correspondence underwent a radical change. According to Pigoń, Towianism creates its epistolary theory, in which the letter becomes a perfect form of action and an instrument of evangelization²³³.

Słowacki's letters change both in content and tone. However, this does not become preachy as in Mickiewicz or Norwid, and rather, it remains lyrical-reflexive. From being a dandy, he becomes a mystic, but without becoming a "master", as in Mickiewicz²³⁴. It can be said that Słowacki's epistolography remains less sectarian from a linguistic and stylistic point of view. The poet attributes a mystical role to correspondence, that of connecting two souls.

1.3 Letter writing in the Russian Empire

Russian Imperial epistolary tradition began with Lomonosov, who collected and published his correspondence. In his "Introduction to the Use of Church Books in Russian" (1758), he prescribed the lowest style for the epistolary genre.

The development of letter-writing, especially in its subjective form, not concerning pragmatic matters, was connected to the improvement of postal communication throughout the Empire. The postal system expanded, especially with Catherine

²³⁰

²³¹ Dąbrowska, D. (2012). Autokreacje Juliusza Słowackiego w listach do matki. In I. Sikora & A. Czajkowska (Eds.), *Metaliterackie listowania. List jako dokument świadomości literackiej pisarza*. *AJD*, p. 51.

²³² Szelwach, G. (2004). Samotność Słowackiego w listach do matki. *Przegląd filozoficzno-literacki*, 10(4), p. 283.

²³³ Sudolski, Z. (1987). Główne tendencje w rozwoju epistolografii romantycznej w Polsce: Mickiewicz–Kraśiński–Słowacki–Norwid. *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, 31(2), p. 47.

²³⁴ *Ibidem*.

II, who continued Peter I's work, pushing Imperial communications to a district level. With her contribution, the developments in the horse relay networks between 1775 and 1825 brought the basis for its apogee in the half of the 19th century²³⁵. As shown in V. P. Piadyshev's 1827 *Geographical Atlas of the Russian Empire*, there were 567 post stations, as well as 576 "post houses", concentrated largely in Finland and Ukraine²³⁶.

In the second half of the 18th century, Sentimentalism spread in the Russian Empire and influenced letter-writing conventions. In contrast to the objective letters written by Lomonosov, the sentimental letters were characterized by subjectivity, introspection and sentimentality, as in Radishchev's personal letters²³⁷. Regarding its composition, the sentimental letter did not differ from Lomonosov's antecedent: the letter had to contain only one topic with the exception of a series of answers to the addressant's questions²³⁸.

As in Poland, letter-writing customs were taught through manuals heavily influenced by Western models, especially French. This is the case of Sokolski's manual *The Office and Mercantile Secretary, or a Collection of the Best and Generally Used Letters (Кабинетский и купеческий секретарь, или Собрание наилучших и употребительных писем, 1788)*, which was based on situations and etiquette of its French models²³⁹.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the familiar letter (дружеское письмо) reached its apogee. This ironic and colloquial writing style was cultivated by the Arzamasians, a group of intellectuals to which significant personalities of Russian Literature, such as Pushkin, Karamzin, Vyazemsky, and Zhukovsky, belonged.

The Arzamasians composed letters for two different audiences, who will read the letters at two different times: the immediate recipient and later the broader public

²³⁵ Randolph, J. (2017). Communication and Obligation: The Postal System of the Russian Empire, 1700–1850. *Information and Empire. Mechanisms of Communication in Russia, 1600–1850*, pp. 155-183.

²³⁶ "Post stations," *Town Planning on an Imperial Scale*, accessed September 1, 2024, <https://imperia.omeka.fas.harvard.edu/document/676>.

²³⁷ Todd, W. M. (1969). Gogol's Epistolary Writing. *Columbia Essays in International Affairs: The Dean's Papers*, 5, p. 57.

²³⁸ *Ibidem*.

²³⁹ Todd, W. M. (1999). *The familiar letter as a literary genre in the age of Pushkin*. Northwestern University Press, p. 35.

- either posterity or contemporaries. Under Nicholas I, the delay was compulsory as the people mentioned in the letters could hinder their publication. Thus, Arzamasians' letters underwent a series of metamorphosis as they reached their final recipient²⁴⁰.

The development of the Russian Imperial system was directly proportional to the conquest of new territories, which needed to be connected to the core of the Empire. Ukraine, as we mentioned earlier, was connected through posthouses.

In the 19th century, letter-writing in Ukraine was predominantly bilingual. The use of the Ukrainian language, as seen in Mazepa's love letters to Motria Kochubei²⁴¹, gradually diminished over time. Ukrainian was increasingly replaced by Latin, French, and particularly Russian, which became the standard for official communications and interactions with Russian writers and officials. Ukrainian was primarily used in correspondence to express closeness to the correspondents. For instance, Maksymovych wrote to Shevchenko in Ukrainian, and Gogol used Ukrainianisms in letters to his schoolmates in Nizhyn to convey familiarity with his compatriots.

Initially, the use of Ukrainian in letter writing was confined primarily to humorous contexts, often mimicking peasant speech. It was Shevchenko who pioneered the adoption of Ukrainian as a genuine mode of epistolary communication, rarely employing it merely for comedic effect²⁴².

However, the changing political landscape of the 1840s and 1850s made it risky to use Ukrainian in correspondence. In a letter dated April 6, 1855, to the Polish revolutionary Zygmunt Sierakowski, Shevchenko expresses his regret over being unable to reply in Ukrainian.

²⁴⁰ Todd, W. M. (1999). *The familiar letter as a literary genre in the age of Pushkin*. p. 72, p. 76.

²⁴¹ Мазепа, І. С. (1917). *Переписка з Мотрею Кочубеівною в Батурині*.

²⁴² Шевельов, Ю. (1984). *Передмова*. In Ю. Луцький (Ed.), *Вибрані листи Пантелеймона Куліша українською мовою писані = Selected Letters of Panteleimon Kulish (in Ukrainian)*. Укр. вільна акад. наук у США, pp. 21–22.

Благодарю тебя за твое ласковое, сердечное украинское слово, тысячу раз благодарю тебя. Рад бы я отвечать тем же сердцу милым словом, но я так запуган, что боюсь родного милого звука. Особенно в настоящее время я едва и как-нибудь могу выражаться²⁴³.

The letters written in Russian by Ukrainians still conserved some linguistic characteristics of Ukrainian, such as the use of the vocative²⁴⁴:

Хотелось бы долго, вечно беседовать с вами, единая сестро моя! (Shevchenko to Varvara Repnina); Прощайте, мой добрый, мой незабвенный друже! (Shevchenko to Pleshcheyev)²⁴⁵.

Generally speaking, 19th-century epistolography in Ukraine was deeply influenced by the Imperial models.

1.4 Gogol as an epistolographer

Despite Gogol's epistolography amounting to a third of all the works written by the author, studies on his letters have been scarce. They focused especially on his use of letters in his literary works and on the concept of "letters as a laboratory for creative writing", often used by the formalists²⁴⁶. Letters are usually present in Gogol's literary works as a parody of the sentimentalist letter. This is the case of the dog's letter in "Diary of a Madman".

Gogol's letters differ significantly from the familiar letters used by the Arzamasians and Pushkin²⁴⁷. The ironic spirit and use of vulgarisms, inner jokes, and other characteristics common to the Arzamasian style are present in Gogol's correspondence, but they do not characterize it. Some features of the familiar letter occur in Gogol's correspondence to his classmates from Nizhyn, in the early

²⁴³ I thank you for your affectionate, heartfelt Ukrainian word, I thank you a thousand times. I would be glad to answer you with the same sweet word, but I am so frightened that I am afraid of my own sweet sound. Especially nowadays I can hardly express myself in any way. Шевченко Т.Г. (2003) Повне зібрання творів у 12-и томах. К.: Наукова думка., т. 6, р. 90.

²⁴⁴ Ветрова, Е. (2008). Умови вибору етикетних одиниць в епістолярній спадщині українських письменників XIX ст. *Лінгвістичні студії: зб. наук. праць. Вип. 16*, 162.

²⁴⁵ I would like to talk to you for a long, eternal time, my only sister! (Shevchenko to Varvara Repnina); Farewell, my kind, my unforgettable friend! (Shevchenko to Pleshcheyev).

²⁴⁶ Todd, W. M. (1969). Gogol's Epistolary Writing." *Columbia Essays in International Affairs: The Dean's Papers*, 5, pp. 51–76.

²⁴⁷ Todd, W. M. (1999). *The familiar letter as a literary genre in the age of Pushkin*.

period. However, the style of Gogol's correspondence varies significantly throughout the decades.

In general, if we had to distinguish between objective and subjective letters, we must consider most of Gogol's letters to be of the subjective types, even if also the former is present, and, in general, there is a frequent juxtaposition of the two. The same Gogol, as his contemporaries, recognized the existence of these two types of letters.²⁴⁸

From the beginning of his correspondence, Gogol understands the necessity of assuming a pose (or to "accommodate the recipient of the letter", a phenomenon we will investigate later). In a letter from the 1st of March 1828, he presents himself in a multifaceted manner, implying the centrality of the viewpoint of the addressees on how they would perceive Gogol's personality²⁴⁹.

Only later did he consider the possibility of his letters being published, and accordingly, he began writing with his future audience in mind. This is particularly true for the 40s and helps us situate some letters, such as the letters to Smirnova (1844), written with the idea of a broader public or a salon. Letters were usually copied and transmitted among the social circles of nobility. Unlike Gogol, the Arzamasian group wrote with two addressees in mind: the recipient of the letters and the public that would read this letter. In the case of Gogol, this double recipient is not considered, or at least not in every letter.

Letters were not of secondary importance for Gogol, especially in the 40s. While he could not create new literary works, he attributed letters to a significant place in his literary production. This is what motivated the writer to write *Selected passages from Correspondence with Friends* (Выбранные места из переписки с друзьями, 1847). Also, he could consider letters to be already available material for creating new literary work.

²⁴⁸ Todd, W. M. (1969). Gogol's Epistolary Writing.?. *Columbia Essays in International Affairs: The Dean's Papers*, 5, 68.

²⁴⁹ There at home I am considered capricious, some kind of unbearable pedant who thinks that he is more intelligent than anyone, that he is created in another way than most people. Do you believe it, inside I laughed at myself along with you. Here they call me a humble one, an ideal of modesty and patience. In one place I am the quietest, the most modest and polite; in another I am gloomy, pensive, uncouth, etc. – in a third garrulous and annoying in the extreme. Some think I am smart; others think I am stupid.

Svyrydenko notes that Gogol attempted to merge two epistolary styles: the letter-confession and the didactic epistle²⁵⁰. This hybrid approach significantly influenced the composition of *Selected Passages*. Barabash defines the style of Gogol's letters in *Selected Passages* as 'confession-sermon', for two genres are intertwined, organically merged in it²⁵¹.

2. Methodology

In the analysis, we would use various methodologies to explore the varieties of identities and identifications and the different ways Ukraine is presented in the correspondence. The main foundation for this study lies in a postcolonial reading of Polish-Ukrainian-Russian relations and the use of some key concepts in postcolonial studies, such as mimicry and hybridity²⁵². Anderson's idea of imagined communities and maps is also an important methodological framework²⁵³.

The analysis is a close reading of the letters in the two writers' corpora of collective works. It is a contextual analysis that tries to situate the texts within their historical and cultural contexts to understand how they engage with and differ from colonial narratives and stereotypes.

2.1 Postcolonial studies and letter-writing

Examining letter-writing through a postcolonial lens reveals intriguing insights. The practice of epistolography inherently involves spatial movement, often between the mainland and colonies or between the mainland and the West (as in Gogol's travels). This movement is significant not only as a medium of communication but also because it relies on the imperial postal system, designed to connect the Empire with its colonies (with some colonies receiving preferential

²⁵⁰ Свириденко (2019), О. М. ГЕНЕЗА ТА ФУНЦІЇ РОМАНТИЧНОГО ЛИСТА-СПОВІДІ І ЛИСТА-ПРОПОВІДІ. ВЧЕНІ ЗАПИСКИ ТАВРІЙСЬКОГО НАЦІОНАЛЬНОГО УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ ІМЕНІ В. І. ВЕРНАДСЬКОГО, Том 30 (69) № 1, Частина 2, р. 46-52.

²⁵¹ Барабаш, Ю. Я. (1993). Гоголь. Загадка "прощальной повести", р. 23.

²⁵² Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge; Bhabha, H. (1984). *Of mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse*.

²⁵³ Anderson B. (2016), *Imagined Communities*, Verso Books.

treatment). The connection between epistolography and Imperialism has been thoroughly studied for the British Empire²⁵⁴. Yet, there are no studies on this regarding the Russian Empire.

In her work on the British Empire, Cecilia Morgan observes that the location of these letters within imperial spaces and their preservation in various archives reflect multiple narratives of imperial expansion²⁵⁵.

The imperial authorities' control over this movement often limits self-expression. For instance, Shevchenko's use of Russian instead of Ukrainian in his letters and Słowacki's fear of censorship when writing to his mother in Volhynia, demonstrate this constraint. Consequently, subalterns use the postal system while recognizing it as an instrument of control, employing strategies and hidden transcripts to resist.

Letter-writing also facilitates dialogue between correspondents and creates potential encounters between different sides of the colonial dynamics. Moreover, it offers significant opportunities for self-creation, allowing individuals to align themselves with imperial demands or distance themselves from them.

2.2 The concept of self-creation in epistolography

In the analysis, we will attempt to show how Gogol and Słowacki represented their Ukrainian identity in their letters. An important methodological framework for this task is the concept of self-creation. With this expression, we mean the possible identifications with Ukrainianness presented by the authors as a way to create their individuality and to trace the borders of their "imagined community". An important aspect of "self-creation" is that it is rooted in the process of narration and self-narration, and it can be both conscious and unconscious. This is to say

²⁵⁴ On letter-writing in the British Empire, see: Pearsall, S. (2008). *Atlantic families: lives and letters in the later eighteenth century*. OUP Oxford; Teltscher, K. (2004). *Writing home and crossing cultures: George Bogle in Bengal and Tibet, 1770–1775. A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840.*; Macdonald, C. (2008). *Between religion and empire: Sarah Selwyn's Aotearoa/New Zealand, Eton and Lichfield, England, c. 1840s–1900. Journal of the Canadian Historical Association, 19(2), 43–75*; Rappaport, E. (2004). 'The Bombay Debt': Letter Writing, Domestic Economies and Family Conflict in Colonial India. *Gender & History, 16(2), 233–260*; Bush, B. (2007). *Women Writing Home 1700–1920: Female Correspondence across the British Empire*.

²⁵⁵ Morgan, C. (2013). 'Write me. Write me.': Native and Métis Letter-Writing Across the British Empire, 1800–1870. In *Critical Perspectives on Colonialism*. Routledge, p. 152.

that presenting oneself as a Ukrainian could be a conscious or unconscious act. It could be a strategy for self-othering (or to diverge from the addressee, as in the accommodation theory we will explain in the following paragraph) or to feel closer to the addressee (to converge). The practice of self-creation involves a process, narration and self-narration, and in the case of correspondence, it is highly dependent on the “other’s self-creative processes”.

In our interpretation of letters as literature and epistolary communication as a dialogical form, even in the case of the letter-confession, which, even in its apparently monological form, still involves the addressee as the major audience of the “diary sent to someone to read”²⁵⁶.

Self-creation is a central part of letter-writing, in the sense that every form of autobiographical writing involves a degree of fictionality, and presenting oneself in an epistolary form means to create a self and to respond to another self-creation. The interaction between correspondents in epistolary exchanges facilitates a mutual construction of identities. This is the case with correspondence between Gogol and Maksymovych or between Słowacki and his mother. Both parties in the correspondence remain aware of their epistolary interaction’s inherent constructed and fictitious nature.

As Anita Całek formulates, creating a self-representation in a letter thus expresses the way the sender exercises symbolic power over their representation in the presence of the recipient, influencing both the recipient (through self-representation) and themselves (in the process of self-creation, which occurs within the “self-creative community”, or mutual construction of identities²⁵⁷). Self-representation is therefore directed towards the recipient, while self-creation is self-reflective, i.e. it is a formulation of one’s own self-narrative for oneself²⁵⁸.

The same process of self-creation could be adopted in literature and simultaneously transferred in epistolary practice (and this is the case of Gogol and the construction of Rudy Panko) or could be only a literary invention (as it is

²⁵⁶ Rybicka, E. (2004). *Antropologiczne i komunikacyjne aspekty dyskursu epistolograficznego*, p. 46.

²⁵⁷ Całek, A. (2019). *Nowa teoria listu*, p. 167.

²⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

the case for Słowacki's creation of a Ukrainian self in opposition to Mickiewicz's Lithuanian persona). Self-creation is, therefore, a complex system of self-identification processes, and it is also part of character construction if we have to interpret epistolary writing as a form of literature, as we decided to do.

According to Całek, self-representation and self-creation happen in the social sphere, which is epistolary communication. Self-presentation is easier to identify through letter analysis, as it is persuasive in nature. On the other hand, self-creation results from the internalization of a specific, imagined self-image. The "self-creation" occurs in the eyes of the epistolary Other, with the change intended to take place within the sender²⁵⁹.

The expression 'autokreacja', which we are translating as "self-creation", was first used in Poland by Jerzy Jarzębski in 1984 in his book *The Novel as self-creation* (*Powieść jako autokreacja, 1984*). Although the book is mainly devoted to Gombrowicz's works and how this phenomenon occurs in them, his definition is also useful for our purposes. Jarzębski emphasises the fleeting nature of the boundary between literature and biography and how, especially in paradocumentary works, it is difficult to understand whether the subject matter corresponds to the truth or is instead a creation of the author²⁶⁰.

Kazimierz Cysewski understands by self-creation that phenomenon, which is particularly evident in autobiographies, whereby the author suggests a certain self-image through formal expedients of various kinds, even those that are not very obvious or implicit²⁶¹. Therefore, defining something as self-representation is always a hypothesis about the writer's intention. The question then arises as to whether or not the author is trying to convince the reader by forcing him to accept a mask he has created as accurate. Sometimes, the interpretation of this phenomenon is not simple. There may be moments where the author consciously creates an image of himself, while others are not intentional, although they may

²⁵⁹ Całek, A. (2019). *Nowa teoria listu*, p. 168.

²⁶⁰ Jarzębski J. (1984). *Powieść jako autokreacja*. Wydawnictwo Literackie, pp. 412–413.

²⁶¹ Cysewski, K. (1997). Teoretyczne i metodologiczne problemy badań nad epistolografią. *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1, p. 104.

be interpreted in the same way. Cysewski used the term self-creation to investigate 19th-century Polish romantic epistolography²⁶².

We decided to adopt the term self-creation instead of Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning. In Greenblatt, the term self-fashioning is used to describe a phenomenon present in the 16th-century middle-class society of Western Europe. The term "self-fashioning" describes the process of constructing one's identity and public persona according to a set of societal norms and the conscious effort to emulate a praised model in society²⁶³. In the original formulation of "self-fashioning", the idea of fashioning oneself resulted from modernity and its new interest in subjectivity compared to earlier eras. This idea was further questioned by many scholars who have adopted the term to describe similar phenomena in other contexts and historical periods, such as Brugge, who believed that the idea of self-fashioning should not be time-specific or culture-specific but indicate a way of expressing the self that was always part of human nature²⁶⁴.

In Greenblatt's formulation, self-fashioning indicates self-consciousness about fashioning human identity as a manipulable and artful process. The process of self-fashioning implicates the crafting of a distinctive personality and a characteristic address to the world. The fashioned personality tries to adhere to a model authority in society and to dissociate from otherness and alienness. By these two terms, Greenblatt clarifies that he means "what is the opposite of the model authority". The self-fashioned identity is, therefore, the product of the tension between authority and the alien²⁶⁵.

Ilchuk adopts Greenblatt's concept of "self-fashioning" to describe Gogol's representation of the self in the 1830s. Ilchuk conceptualizes the idea of a "hybrid self-fashioning", which brings together Greenblatt's concept with Homi Bhabha's

²⁶² On Cysewski's use of self-creation see: Cysewski, K. (1986). Uwagi o listach Cypriana Norwida. *Studia Norwidiana*, 3, p. 133; K. Kazimierz, C. (2000). Problem autokreacji w listach Zygmunta Krasińskiego [w:] *Sztuka pisania. O liście polskim w XIX wieku*, red. Sztachelska J., Dąbrowicz E., Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok, p. 73.

²⁶³Greenblatt, S. (2012). *Renaissance self-fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*. University of Chicago Press, pp. 3–9.

²⁶⁴ Delbrugge, L. (2015). *Self-Fashioning and Assumptions of Identity in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* (Vol. 59). Brill, p. 3.

²⁶⁵ Greenblatt, S. (2012). *Renaissance self-fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*. University of Chicago Press, p. 9.

concept of “hybridity”²⁶⁶. According to this, Ilchuk presents Gogol’s self-fashioning as ambivalent, continuously shifting its reference point from adhering to the demands of Russian society and representing the “Other”. In her analysis of Gogol’s self-fashioning, she focuses on Gogol’s external self-presentation. Ilchuk shows the significance of adopting a peculiar hairstyle²⁶⁷ as a symbol of Gogol’s desire to present himself as the Other²⁶⁸. The same is attributed to Gogol’s indecent humour, which presented him as an outsider to society ²⁶⁹ . Simultaneously, the writer renounced his surname Yanovski, recognizing the potential risks associated with Polish heritage in the aftermath of the 1830–1831 uprising.²⁷⁰ . These are, to Ilchuk, signs of Gogol’s intentional “hybrid self-fashioning”.

In the case of Gogol’s letters, the concept of self-fashioning could be adopted to describe the writer’s effort to adhere to the societal norms of an imperial writer. On the other hand, given the non-normative status of Ukrainianness, we believe that self-creation is more adequate to describe the phenomenon of the writer representing his connections to Ukraine. Also, self-creation is very useful in determining the role of letter-writing in creative processes, as autobiography is always a construction of the self and a narration. As in self-creation, the act of writing to another shapes the writer’s own identity, even without their awareness. The addressee receives a version of the addresser’s personality while, at the same time, the addresser’s sense of identity is transformed by this creation. Therefore, the addresser is co-created by the addressee and influenced by the addressee’s own creation. In Gogol’s case, we observe how the presentation of oneself as Ukrainian has a transforming effect on Gogol’s identity.

In having to present himself in a double way, being an imperial writer and a khokhol, the process creates a duplication of Gogol’s selves: he becomes two. This is true for the early letters, in which the separation of the two identities was

²⁶⁶ Ilchuk, Y. (2021). *Nikolai Gogol: Performing Hybrid Identity*. University of Toronto Press, p. 42.

²⁶⁷ A tuft of hair elevated over his forehead, which Gogol’s contemporaries unanimously called the khokhol. Ivi, p. 61.

²⁶⁸ Ivi, pp. 61-64.

²⁶⁹ Ivi, p. 65.

²⁷⁰ Ivi, p. 47.

possible: he could be an imperial writer and a Little Russian, and the two identities were separated. Constructing two identities in front of the addressees (coming from different environments, being Russians and Ukrainians) created the complex situation of the double soul we observe in the '40s. The two identities converged, but an actual harmonization of the two was impossible, creating a schizophrenic identity.

2.3 Accommodation in Gogol's letters

The sociolinguistic concept of accommodation posits that individuals tend to adapt their speech patterns to match those of their interlocutors. This linguistic adjustment is often motivated by a desire to gain approval or enhance social acceptance from the listener.²⁷¹ The most common form of accommodation is convergence, in which the speaker conforms his own manner of speech to the one of his addressee²⁷².

This concept is beneficial in analyzing Gogol's letters, and especially the use of different language structures leaning to Ukrainian or Russian, as demonstrated by Ilchuk in her stylometric analysis of the letters²⁷³. Gogol adopts strategies of convergence when communicating with different audiences and tries, even unconsciously, to adequate his language and topics to the language and expectations of his recipients. In epistolary communication, the recipient's role is equally significant to the sender's in shaping the discourse and constructing meaning. We could say with Krauss that:

the addressee is a full participant in the formulation of the message – that is, the vehicle by which meaning is conveyed – and, indeed, may be regarded in a very real sense as the cause of the message. Without the addressee that particular message would not exist. But the message, in the concrete and particular form it takes, is as much attributable to the existence of the addressee as it is to the existence of the speaker²⁷⁴.

²⁷¹ Giles, H., Coupland, J., & Coupland, N. (Eds.). (1991). *Contexts of accommodation: Developments in applied sociolinguistics* (Vol. 10). Cambridge University Press.

²⁷² Llamas, C., Mullany, L., & Stockwell, P. (Eds.). (2006). *The Routledge companion to sociolinguistics*. Routledge, p. 96.

²⁷³ Ilchuk, Y. (2021). *Nikolai Gogol: Performing Hybrid Identity*. University of Toronto Press, 175–177.

²⁷⁴ Krauss, R. M. (1987). The role of the listener: Addressee influences on message formulation. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 6(2), p. 96.

According to Todd, Gogol presents a form of accommodation, which the scholar defines as “tailoring his letters to the taste and interests of his addressees”, in a broader sense ²⁷⁵ . Gogol adopted this strategy in his letters to many correspondents, including Maksymovych. However, in the case of Zhukovsky, Gogol displays all the possible range of his epistolary imagination.

Gogol is knowledgeable about the features of “proper letter-writing”, as is also visible in Gogol’s mastering of the characteristics of the sentimental letter in his short story “Diary of a Madman” but decides not to adequate his writing completely to the rules of the genre. While Gogol’s letters are tailored to their intended recipients, they frequently diverge from conventional expectations. His correspondence reveals a distinctive personal aesthetic and a surrealistic perspective that often transcends the customary bounds of epistolary discourse. We could say that Gogol’s intentions generally lean towards a convergence strategy, but they depend on the writer’s personality, which was often anticonventional.

3. The analysis of the correspondence: preliminary information

When writing this dissertation, the number of Gogol’s preserved letters is 1350, addressed to 107 different correspondents. This number refers to the 1952 edition of Gogol’s Collection of Works in 14 volumes, edited by the Institute of Literature, which is the most used source for the writer’s correspondence. The new edition of the Collection of Works in 23 volumes is currently in the state of publication, but the volumes devoted to the writer’s correspondence have still not been published. We also have access to 450 letters written to Gogol from 83 correspondents²⁷⁶. These letters are preserved in the 1988 edition of Gogol’s correspondence in two volumes and the Collection of Works of the authors of the letters.

²⁷⁵ Todd, W. M. (1969). Gogol’s Epistolary Writing.”. *Columbia Essays in International Affairs: The Dean’s Papers*, 5, p. 74.

²⁷⁶ Ilchuk, Y. (2021). *Nikolai Gogol: Performing Hybrid Identity*. University of Toronto Press, p. 105.

In the case of Słowacki, the number of preserved letters is substantially smaller: More than 280 letters have been preserved from Słowacki's correspondence, of which 131 were addressed to his mother, almost half, while the others are addressed to 57 addressees, most frequently Teofil and Hersylia Januszewski, his uncles²⁷⁷. This means that our corpora are quite differentiated. Apart from the quantity, in which we can observe Słowacki's correspondence being almost 1/5 of Gogol's, the number of correspondents will result in a less varied form of correspondence. The fact that his mother is his main correspondent is important data, which we will elaborate on in the section dedicated to Słowacki's correspondence.

In this study, we will consider the following editions of the letters. Concerning Gogol, we will use the correspondence collected in the Complete Collection of Works from 1952, in five volumes: the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth. Also, the correspondence collected in the two volumes from 1988, including some letters from Gogol's correspondents, will be considered to comment on Gogol's letters.

Regarding Słowacki's correspondence, we will consider the two-volume edition published in 1962–1963 and edited by Eugeniusz Sawrymowycz. The latest edition of the letters by Marek Troszyński, though published in 2022, was later retracted from circulation due to textual irregularities, leaving the earlier edition as the sole accessible version.

The following analysis will consider separately the two correspondences, considering possible parallels between the two only in the conclusions.

Gogol's letters will be classified into early letters (1820–1835), mid-life letters (1835–1846), and late letters (1847–1852). This periodization is linked to the common division of the writer's oeuvre into an early period, before he moved to Europe in 1836, a mid-life period, in which he wrote most of *Saint Petersburg's Tales* and *Dead Souls*, and a late period, during which he worked on the second

²⁷⁷ Sudolski, Z. (1988). Juliusz Słowacki jako epistolograf. In E. Czaplejewicz & W. Grajewski (Eds.), *Dziewiętnastowieczność: z poetyk polskich i rosyjskich XIX wieku: prace poświęcone X Międzynarodowemu Kongresowi Słowistów w Sofii*. Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, pp. 255–256.

volume of *Dead Souls* and *Selected Passages from the Correspondence with Friends*²⁷⁸. This subdivision appears to be beneficial also for the analysis of the correspondence: Gogol's migration to Europe brought a new self-image of his own identity, whereas the late period is characterized by the idea of a mission of becoming an Imperial writer.

4. Analysis of Gogol's correspondence

This section examines the primary themes that shed light on Gogol's self-creative and accommodating strategies in his correspondence. The analysis focuses on recurring elements throughout his letters, including Ukrainianisms, the connection between Ukrainianness and morality, and the Southern/Northern dichotomy. Particular emphasis is placed on the moral aspect, with a dedicated section exploring the relationship between idleness and Ukrainianness.

Moreover, the study is structured around specific periods of Gogol's life, categorized into three phases: early letters, mid-life letters, and late letters. The early period, which receives the most attention, is characterized by Gogol's prominent expression of his Ukrainianness. A segment is devoted to the exchanges between Gogol and Maksymovych, who served as a significant influence on Gogol's Ukrainian identity. The second period corresponds to Gogol's moving abroad and his time in Rome. This section analyses the intersection of Italian and Ukrainian imagery in Gogol's conceptualization of an imagined community. In addition, we examine the letter to Smirnova regarding Gogol's dual nature, which is frequently cited in discussions of his identity. The final section considers Gogol's reaction to the inclusion of his portrait in the Ukrainian almanac *Molodyk*.

²⁷⁸ Ilchuk, Y. (2021). *Nikolai Gogol: Performing Hybrid Identity*. University of Toronto Press, p. 175.

4.1.1 The use of Ukrainianisms in Gogol's letters

Ilchuk described Gogol's Russian as "hybrid",²⁷⁹ heavily influenced by his native Ukrainian. His language reflected the linguistic habits of the upper classes in left-bank Ukraine, where the elite primarily used Russian but was also familiar with and spoke vernacular Ukrainian. This diglossia was context-dependent: Russian was required in formal settings, while Ukrainian could be used in informal contexts, such as with family or servants. The coexistence of both languages led to the development of a hybrid form of Russian, shaped by Ukrainian syntax, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Despite efforts to maintain standard Russian in formal communication, this hybrid language also surfaced in these settings.

Barabash illustrates how Gogol's hybrid language is derived from the linguistic habits of his family of origin. Letters written by Gogol's father, Vasilyi Gogol, to his mother, Mariia, reveal that although they used Russian as their primary language of communication, it was heavily infused with Ukrainian expressions. A clear indication of the hybridity in his father's language is a glossary of Ukrainian words with Russian explanations that he prepared for the readers of his Ukrainian literary works. Even in these explanations, Ukrainian syntax and structure strongly influenced the Russian language²⁸⁰. Barabash highlights how this linguistic environment shaped Gogol's use of Russian, as the primary language spoken in the family was a hybrid form of Russian.

The writer never fully mastered Russian, as noted by his contemporaries. Maksymovych observed that Gogol's command of Russian was no better than his Ukrainian before he rose to prominence in Russian literary circles²⁸¹. Gogol believed it necessary to have someone edit his work, feeling that his lack of fluency in Russian was a personal failing. Both critics and supporters frequently pointed out his numerous mistakes in the language. As stated by Ilchuk, these criticisms had the function of portraying the colonized at the margins of the

²⁷⁹ Ilchuk, Y. (2021). *Nikolai Gogol: Performing Hybrid Identity*. University of Toronto Press, p. 3.

²⁸⁰ Barabash Iu. (1995), *Pochva i sud'ba: Gogol' i ukrainskaia literatura: u istokov*. Nasledie, pp. 69–70.

²⁸¹ *Ivi*, pp. 74–75.

dominant discourse²⁸². Gogol could never fully participate in the Great Russian canon, because of his Little Russian origins.

Nevertheless, Gogol participated in the canon through this hybrid language. It was his ability to use the Russian language that enabled him to gain a position in the Russian letters. Thus, Gogol's hybridization of language served as a tool in his literary works. According to Ukrainian writer Oksana Zabuzhko, understanding both Russian and Ukrainian is essential for fully appreciating Gogol's writing²⁸³. This linguistic hybridization, especially in *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka* and *Mirgorod*, had a dual purpose: to domesticate the Ukrainian context to Russian readers and to embed Ukrainian elements into the Russian cultural sphere. Ilchuk argues that Gogol's use of Ukrainianisms in his works highlights his skill in crafting texts that could be interpreted differently by Russian and Ukrainian audiences:

Comprising several idiolects, Gogol's literary language was a polycoded structure in which Ukrainianisms and idiolects formed one pattern of reference for Russian readers and another for Ukrainian ones²⁸⁴.

Thus, we can infer that Gogol's use of Ukrainianisms in his literary works was largely intentional. When considering letter-writing, we observe the presence of intentional and unintentional Ukrainianisms. In his correspondence, the hybridity of the language is primarily influenced by his addressees. As mentioned earlier, Gogol adapts his style to suit his correspondents, a tendency reflected in his language's hybridity.

Ilchuk's stylometric analysis of Gogol's letters identified the fluctuations of hybridity in Gogol's writing. She observed that Ukrainian syntax is present, especially in the letters addressed to his family and fellow Ukrainians. The scholar defines Gogol's conception of language as "interactionist", as in his letters he adopted a deliberate hybrid form of Russian when writing to Ukrainians and a normative form of Russian when writing to Russians²⁸⁵.

²⁸² Ilchuk, Y. (2021). *Nikolai Gogol: Performing Hybrid Identity*. University of Toronto Press, p. 102.

²⁸³ Zabuzhko O. <https://newtimes.ru/articles/detail/2700/> (06.09.2024).

²⁸⁴ Ilchuk, Y. (2021). *Nikolai Gogol: Performing Hybrid Identity*. University of Toronto Press, p. 92.

²⁸⁵ *Ivi*, p. 103

This is evident in the letters addressed to Gogol's Ukrainian fellows or his family. In contrast, the writer tried to stick to a more standardized version of Russian in letters addressed to Russians. Ilchuk noticed that the letters to his mother are the ones in which a higher level of hybridization can be observed²⁸⁶. On the contrary, letters addressed to his close Russian friend Zhukovsky use a more standardized form of Russian.

This fluctuation could be attributed to a form of accommodation, in which, mostly unconsciously, the writer adjusted their writing to match their correspondents. In addition to the use of a hybrid Russian language, the writer also deliberately used Ukrainian words and expressions. We are going to focus on this particular case, i.e. the intentional use of Ukrainianisms.

Intentionality is crucial for understanding the possibilities of a self-creative process. The use of Ukrainian expressions can be seen as a strategy for expressing his Ukrainian identity to his audience. Notably, he used intentional Ukrainianisms only when writing to Ukrainian friends and family. This suggests that presenting himself as Ukrainian was particularly important within his Ukrainian circle, but not with his Russian correspondents. Therefore, Gogol aimed to present himself as Ukrainian to Ukrainians and adapt as Russian to Russians. Ultimately, his desire for convergence outweighed his desire for divergence.

It is also possible that Gogol's use of a more Ukrainized language in letters to Ukrainians simply reflected a more relaxed environment, allowing him to express himself freely without the pressure of self-correcting his language. While this likely holds true for his unintentional use of Ukrainianisms and the incorporation of Ukrainian structures, as Ilchuk's analysis suggests, we could argue that the use of intentional Ukrainianisms carries a different, more deliberate significance, as it represents a conscious choice.

Gogol wrote the vast majority of his letters in Russian, with only a few exceptions. He wrote two letters to Balabina in Italian and one letter to the Polish poet Zaleski

²⁸⁶ *Ivi*, p. 106.

in Ukrainian. As we mentioned earlier, the use of Ukrainian in letter-writing was not spread among the Ukrainian intellectuals, who were bilingual but preferred Russian for official communication.

The use of languages other than Russian is not limited to Ukrainian. According to Vishniakova, in Gogol's epistolary writing, many borrowings from foreign languages are present, among which 120 are from Italian, 27 from Latin, 25 from German and 10 from Ukrainian²⁸⁷.

We identified three categories of intentional Ukrainianisms in Gogol's correspondence: mockery (or *skaz*), convergence, and direct quotes from Ukrainian folksongs. Most of them are found in the early letters (1820–1835), when the writer was still in direct contact with his Ukrainian friends and family.

In his early letters, the Great Russian colonial discourse influences Gogol's vision of Ukraine. Ukrainian, seen as a provincial language, is employed to underline the speaker's lower origins and mimic their speech. Ukrainian is usually adopted for comic expedients.

This humoristic use of Ukrainian could be compared to the *kotlyarevshchyna*, the style adopted by Kotliarevsky's imitators²⁸⁸. In agreement with Grabowicz's definition, *Kotlyarevshchyna* performed an important psychological role. This style was used as a mask-shield, which enabled the author to act subversively towards the authority, but also emphasized the author's cultural code. Using a mask enabled the author to express himself and his separateness²⁸⁹. Sometimes, as reported by Franko, the mask stuck to the face of the author and became part of it.

²⁸⁷ Вишнякова, Е. А. (2018). Поэтика мультязычия в эпистолярной русской классике XIX века (на примере писем НВ Гоголя). In *ДИАЛОГ КУЛЬТУР: ПОЭТИКА ЛОКАЛЬНОГО ТЕКСТА*, p. 169.

²⁸⁸ Grabowicz dedicated an article on the role of *Kotlyarevshchyna* in Russian-Ukrainian Literary relations, as well as tracing the history of the term itself: Grabowicz, G. G. (2003). Subversion and self-assertion: The role of *Kotlyarevshchyna* in Russian-Ukrainian literary relations. In Kappeler, A., Kohut, Z. E., Sysyn, F. E., & Von Hagen, M. (eds). *Culture, nation, and identity: the Ukrainian-Russian encounter (1600-1945)*. Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, pp. 215-228

²⁸⁹ Грабович, Г. (1997). До історії української літератури: Дослідження, есе, полеміка. К.: *Основи*, 327.

Gogol's use of Ukrainianisms is equivalent to certain functions of *Kotlyarevshchyna*, such as the *Ethnic Self-assertion*²⁹⁰. Ukrainianisms enable the writer to inscribe himself in the Ukrainian tradition. As Grabowicz claims, *Kotlyarevshchyna* is a degree of Ukrainianness²⁹¹ and this style presents the writer as a Ukrainian writer.

This mocking mode, incorporated in the Ukrainian discourse, despite originating from the internalization of a colonial stereotype, became a strategic way of creating a “national” bond between Gogol and his addressees. Consequently, Ukrainianisms in Gogol's letters could be seen both as an expression of Ukrainianness and the internalization of a colonial stereotype.

In his study of Kulish's letter-writing, Shevelov describes the tendency to use Ukrainian as a “peasant language” in correspondence, especially for letters written using both Russian and Ukrainian.

Stylistically speaking, correspondence in the Ukrainian language of the 19th century was born (as well as literary and narrative prose in general) from the imitation of a peasant – or rather “muzhik-like” – stylized monologue-narrative or dialogue – in its literary exaggerated form. The features of this “muzhik-like” narration, or should we say, à la moujik, are well studied in connection with the prose of Kvitka-Osnovianenko, or Gulak-Artemovsky, or Yevhen Hrebinka, fully relate to the epistolary genre written by, for example, Kvitka or Yanova Kuharena. Such features include dialogue, an excess of vulgarisms or diminutives, repetition of the same word, orderly and enumerative syntax, avoidance of foreign words through descriptive or imprecise native counterparts [...] either through folk phonetics or folk etymology, [...], an excess of exclamations, proverbs, self-interruptions, etc.²⁹²

This stylistic expedient creates the mask of the provincial narrator, similar to the one Gogol created with his fictional Rudy Panko. Gogol attempts to impersonate a “Ukrainian jester,” using a Ukrainian identity as a comic mask. These elements

²⁹⁰ Grabowicz, G. G. (2003). Subversion and self-assertion: The role of Kotliarevshchyna in Russian-Ukrainian literary relations, p. 220.

²⁹¹ Грабович, Г. (1997). До історії української літератури: Дослідження, есе, полеміка. К.: Основи, р. 329.

²⁹² Шевельов, Ю. (1984). Передмова. In Ю. Луцький (Ed.), *Вибрані листи Пантелеймона Куліша українською мовою писані = Selected Letters of Panteleimon Kulish (in Ukrainian)*. Укр. вільна акад. наук у США, р. 21.

express a sense of closure between the two correspondents, as in the case of Kulish's letters to Shevchenko²⁹³.

One of the first examples of Ukrainianisms is in Gogol's letter to his aunt Varvara Petrovna Kosiarovska (13. 09. 1827). In these letters, Gogol mimics and parodies the speech of Ksenia Fedorovna Timchenko, Gogol's neighbour, called here with the playful nickname "Chtsiuchtsiushka". Ksenia is said to complain that the dog Pupua (Pupura, defined *ostroumnaya* – witty- in the letter from 13. 09. 1827) was more beloved than her and an unknown *Kaiaiaiushka*.

Э, мини казав Чцюцюшка, э... каже э... мене, каже, ништо уже юбить, каже, Пупую юбять юшке, чим мене и Каяяюшку, э ... отако э, каже, Чцюцюшка э, бачете, шо вона каже, э... э... А панич нежинський мини письмо пише, э... А шо, чи вы бачили? – Ось воно. Э ... Э...²⁹⁴»

This example makes evident the use of a style that would later very common in Gogol's literary production: the *skaz*. According to D. Iofanov, the interjection "e", used to imitate Kseniia's speech can be found in the later literary production, as in the discussion between Dobchinski and Bobchinski²⁹⁵. The technique was, therefore, first fixed in this letter. Here, Gogol is not only using Ukrainian, but he is also trying to imitate the accent from the Poltava region.

Regarding this particular letter, E.A. Vishniakova commented that Gogol's use of Ukrainian is connected not only to his humoristic intentions but also to his desire to create something that is culture-specific²⁹⁶ and, therefore, to establish a connection to the correspondents. Barabash interprets this letter as an example of Gogol's connection to his family and neighbours, and the playful mockery of Kseniia indicates the connection and the inner jokes of the family that Gogol displays despite having left Vasylivka when he was only 9 years old²⁹⁷.

²⁹³ *Ivi*, p. 23.

²⁹⁴ Um...Chtsiuchtsiushka called me, Um... she says... no one loves me, she says, everyone loves Pupua more than me and Kaiaiaiushka, eh... Like this, she says, Chtsiuchtsiushka, you see what she says, um... um... And the young master from Nizhyn writes me a letter, um... And what, have you seen it? – Here it is. Um... um... [Unless otherwise noted, the translations are by the author of this dissertation.]

²⁹⁵ Iofanov, D. M. (1951). *Н.В. Гоголь, детские и юношеские годы*. Izd-vo akademii nauk Ukrainской SSR, p. 255.

²⁹⁶ Вишнякова, Е. А. (2018). Поэтика мультязычия в эпистолярной русской классике XIX века (на примере писем НВ Гоголя). In *ДИАЛОГ КУЛЬТУР: ПОЭТИКА ЛОКАЛЬНОГО ТЕКСТА*, pp. 167–180.

²⁹⁷ Барабаш, Ю. Я. (1993). Гоголь. Загадка "прощальной повести", p. 262.

Similarly, in a letter to his former fellow from Nizhyn written from Saint Petersburg, Gogol imitates the speech of a Ukrainian Orthodox priest. As in the case of the imitation of Kseniia Timchenko, the imitation conveys a sense of familiarity between the two correspondents. In opposition to the former example, here, Gogol is not trying to imitate the form of speech but simply uses Ukrainian writing according to the conventions of the time:

Что поп, который говорит: чого-б такы сыдять так? вы б такы або гралы, або танцювалы и так, и так²⁹⁸. (To Tarnovskij 07.08.1834 SPB)

Gogol's employment of Ukrainianisms in his correspondence serves a secondary purpose: fostering a sense of intimacy between himself and his recipients. This linguistic strategy can be interpreted as a form of accommodation, particularly evident in his letters to former classmates from Nizhyn Lyceum. Ukrainian expressions function primarily as a shared, familiar language in these contexts. A notable example of this usage can be observed in Gogol's letter to Vasily Vasilevych Tarnovsky, a Ukrainian ethnographer and fellow Nizhyn alumnus. In the opening of the letter, where Gogol apologizes for his recent lack of correspondence with his friend, he incorporates a brief parenthetical remark:

Э, Василь! А що, як бы гимназия сгорела (To Tarnovskij 07.08.1834 SPB)²⁹⁹

This note to Tarnovsky could be interpreted as an inner joke shared among former schoolmates and in general as an attempt to reconstruct the former bond with the friend.

While writing to Maksymovych, Gogol used some Ukrainianisms such as соняшники or цибуля to perform a similar task. The idea behind the use of Ukrainian in the context of this letter is also to attract Maksymovych to take the position of professor in Kyiv. He also mentions traditional Ukrainian food to make his argument more appealing.

²⁹⁸ What about the priest who says: 'Why sit around like this? You should either play or dance, one way or another'.

²⁹⁹ Hey, Vasy! And so, as if the gymnasium burned down.

Чего ж больше? А воздух! а грибы! а рогиз! а соняшники! а паслин! а цыбуля! а вино хлебное, как говорит приятель наш Ушаков.<...> Это просто роскошь!³⁰⁰ (to Maksymovych 12. 02. 1834)

Other examples of Ukrainianisms used to convey a sense of community are to be found in other letters addressed to former friends from Nizhyn Lyceum. In a letter to Prokopovych³⁰¹, who finished the school only one year later than Gogol, the writer used the adjective *красенький* in regards to his friend Prokopovych. The word *красенький* is said to be an old-style expression, probably recalling the times when they both lived in Nizhyn.

Мне очень жаль, что я нанесь тебя столько хлопот и беспокойств, мой добрый, мой милый... я хотел было сказать по старому *красенький*, да вспомнил, что мы оба уже устарели, и что может, твои педагогические заботы извели твою краску, которую так приятно было моему сердцу зреть на твоих щеках. Но все же в именах, данных во время нашей юности, есть сладость, от которой не хочется отказаться³⁰². (To Prokopovych, 15 April 1835, Rome)

In a letter to Danilevsky, we observe another example of this use:

Новости, объявляемые в письме Василия Прокоповича, отличаются какою-то нестройностью, что Плюшар* обанкрутился и Энциклопедический лексикон лопнул, что Базиль, воротившись из Кавказа, обсчитал Афанасия* и уехал в Смирну консулом, что

³⁰⁰ What more could you want? And the air! And the mushrooms! And the cattails! And the sunflowers! And the nightshade! And the onions! And the bread wine, as our friend Ushakov says. [...] This is simply luxurious!

³⁰¹ On the correspondence between Gogol and Prokopovych: Петухов Е., *Николай Васильевич Гоголь, Заметки о письмах его к Прокоповичу (1832 - 1851)*, Русская старина : ежемесячное историческое издание. - С.-Петербург, 1870-1918. Г. 23 1892, Т. 76, [кн. 10-12], октябрь-декабрь. - 1892, pp. 470–474. https://www.prlib.ru/item/362589#v=d&z=3&n=5&i=1772717_doc1_0EEA31EB-10E8-42DE-848F-EC5CEBADD596.tiff&y=1026.3125&x=543.1666666865349

³⁰² This letter is not included in the *Complete collection of works* from 1952. It was published in the first volume of *Russkoe slovo* from 1859: Kuselev-Bezborodko, G. A., & Blagosvetlov, G. E. (1859). *Russkoe slovo*. Izd. Gr, pp. 107-109. <https://books.google.ru/books?id=aSwVAAAAYAAJ> [I'm very sorry that I've caused you so much trouble and worry, my good, my dear... I wanted to say, as in old times, *красенький* [krasnen'kiy, meaning "little red one"], but then I remembered that we have both grown old, and that perhaps your pedagogical concerns have drained the colour that my heart so enjoyed seeing in your cheeks. But still, in the names given during our youth, there is a sweetness that one doesn't want to give up.]

Мокрицкий* уже *пыше*³⁰³ св. Себастьяна так же хорошо, как и штанишки (всё это слова Васьки) [...] ³⁰⁴ (А. С. ДАНИЛЕВСКОМУ. Рим. Апрель 14 <н. ст.> 1839.)

The letter, addressed to Danilevsky, referenced a letter written by Prokopovych that had since been lost. In their epistolar exchange, the use of the Ukrainianism “пыше” refers both to Danilevsky and Prokopovych’s Ukrainian origins and to the painter Apollon Nikolaevych Mokrytsky, who was also educated in the Nizhyn Lyceum and was later appointed as an academician of painting at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture.

The third category contains direct quotes from folksongs. Gogol began collecting Ukrainian folksongs while still a pupil at the Lyceum in Nizhyn. The impulse of collecting songs grew once he moved to Saint Petersburg as he understood that the Ukrainian theme could have helped him gaining a career as a writer in the capital of the Empire. Later, it was the friendship with Maksymovych, one of the most important figures for Ukrainian ethnography that he began a serious activity in collecting songs and helped Maksymovych with his second collection of Ukrainian folksongs (1834). Two personal collections of Southern Russian and Ukrainian songs have been found after Gogol’s death³⁰⁵. In this case, as underlined by Vishniakova³⁰⁶, the Ukrainianisms represent Gogol’s philological research and should be considered “reported text”. Sometimes there is a juxtaposition between citations from the Ukrainian folk songs and the Ukrainian text used to convey familiarity. As in this use of a Ukrainian song to greet Maksymovych:

³⁰³ In the 1952 edition of Gogol’s complete works, it is reported “уце пыше”, while in the first volume of *Vestnik Evropy* (1890) https://www.prlib.ru/item/323462#v=d&z=3&n=5&i=2893074_doc1_24C3E7D3-A371-4FBC-A227-A3F6D555B906.tiff&y=-28.3125&x=587.6666660308838 is written *уже пыше*. We believe the 1890 edition of this letter to be a better source, and we will use this version. *Вестник Европы*. - Г. 1 1866 (9 марта)- Г. 53 1918. Санкт-Петербург, 1866-1918. pp. 574–578.

³⁰⁴ The news announced in Vasily Prokopovich’s letter is characterized by a certain incoherence: that Plyushar has gone bankrupt and the Encyclopedic Lexicon has collapsed, that Basil, having returned from the Caucasus, cheated Afanasy and left for Smyrna as a consul, that Mokritsky now paints St. Sebastian as well as he does trousers (all these are Vaska’s words).

³⁰⁵ They have been published by the Academy of sciences in 1908 with the title “Songs collected by Nikolaj Gogol. Вишнякова, Е. А. (2018). Поэтика мультязычия в эпистолярной русской классике XIX века (на примере писем НВ Гоголя). In *ДИАЛОГ КУЛЬТУР: ПОЭТИКА ЛОКАЛЬНОГО ТЕКСТА*, p. 177.

³⁰⁶ Вишнякова, Е. А. (2018). Поэтика мультязычия в эпистолярной русской классике XIX века (на примере писем НВ Гоголя). In *ДИАЛОГ КУЛЬТУР: ПОЭТИКА ЛОКАЛЬНОГО ТЕКСТА*, p. 177.

Ой, чи живы, чи здорови / Все родычи гарбузови?³⁰⁷ (to Maksimovic 22.03.1835 SPB)

Finally, we will consider the only letter written entirely in Ukrainian. The letter was addressed to Bohdan Zaleski, a representative of the Ukrainian school of Polish romanticism. Vishniakova believes that Gogol wrote the letter in Ukrainian because he did not know Polish and so Ukrainian serves as a language of communication³⁰⁸.

According to Gasparov, this letter further supports the comic effect that Gogol associates with the use of Ukrainian. Gasparov defines this letter as “depicting two Ukrainian country dwellers who correspond to each other in Paris”. He also believes that: “Gogol intersperses their Ukrainian with especially colourful “local” words, even underlining them in precisely the way he treats comically idiosyncratic Ukrainianisms in *Evenings at the farm near Dikanka*”³⁰⁹.

Дуже – дуже було жалко, що не застав пана земляка дома. Чував, що на пана щось напало – не то *сояшныця*, не то *завійныця* (хай їй прысниться лысый дидько), та тепер, спасибо богови, кажут начей-то пан зовсим здоров. Дай же боже, щоб на довго, на славу усій козацкій земли давав бы чернецького хлиба усякій болизни и злыдням. Та й нас бы не забував, пысульки в Рим слав. Добре б було, колы б и сам туды колы-небудь примандрував. Дуже, дуже близький земляк, а по серцю ще блыжчий, чим по земли³¹⁰.

Мыкола Гоголь. (To Bohdan Zaleski, second half of February 1837)

Having explored the various uses of Ukrainianisms in Gogol’s correspondence, it is important to emphasise the connection between these linguistic choices and his self-creation processes. Through using Ukrainianisms to achieve a ‘comic effect’, we discern one of Gogol’s Ukrainian masks: the Ukrainian jester. This comic deployment of Ukrainian functions as a protective mask, embodying one

³⁰⁷ Oh, are they alive and well / All the pumpkin’s relatives?

³⁰⁸ *Ivi*, p. 175.

³⁰⁹ Gasparov, B. (1999). Alienation and Negation: Gogol’s View of Ukraine. *Gogol: Exploring Absence: Negativity in 19th Century Russian Literature*, p. 115.

³¹⁰ Very, very sorry that I didn’t catch my fellow countryman at home. I heard that something had befallen you – either *soiashnytsia* [a type of stomach illness] or *zaviinytsia* [possibly referring to a type of fever or headache] (may a bald devil dream of it), but now, thank God, they say that you are completely healthy. God grant that it be for a long time, for the glory of all the Cossack land, and may he give monastic bread to all illnesses and misfortunes. And may you not forget me, and send little letters to Rome. It would be good if you could wander there sometime. My very, very close fellow countryman, and even closer to the heart than by land.

of his constructed Ukrainian personas. As Gasparov observed, there is a discernible relationship between Gogol's use of Ukrainianisms in his personal letters and *Evenings*³¹¹. The persona that emerges in these letters closely mirrors that of Rudy Panko, an alter-ego of Gogol³¹².

4.1.2 Ukrainianness: a moral question?

As observed in the second chapter, pre-national identities allowed for multiple forms of identification. It was possible to identify as Ukrainian and still be regarded as a loyal citizen of the Russian Empire. During the 1830s, Russian authorities even encouraged the expression of Ukrainian identity as a strategy to counter Polish nationalism in the territories acquired after the partitions of Poland³¹³. For the Empire, portraying Ukrainian identity as non-exclusive and complementary to the Great Russian identity was essential. This approach served several purposes: it established a historical continuity between Kievan Rus and the Russian Empire and framed the conquest of Ukraine as a restoration of the ancient Rus borders.

This led to the creation of a hybrid identity, known as Little Russian. The Little Russian gentry demonstrated a form of dual loyalty, being faithful to the Empire while simultaneously fostering a sense of Little Russian patriotism. However, these two identities were not equal. Ukrainianness carried a moral dimension, often imbued with colonial imagery and negative connotations, especially for those who resisted assimilation into the Little Russian identity. In the eyes of Great Russians, a distinct Ukrainian identity was perceived as problematic. This attitude is evident in early 19th-century Great Russian travelogues and grew even more pronounced in the 1830s and 1840s. The imperial centre would not tolerate

³¹¹ Gasparov, B. (1999). Alienation and Negation: Gogol's View of Ukraine. *Gogol: Exploring Absence: Negativity in 19th Century Russian Literature*, p. 115.

³¹² Bojanowska, E. M. (2007). *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*. Harvard University Press, p. 40.

³¹³ Remy, J. (2009). Government Promotion of Ukrainian Studies: the Careers of Izmail Sreznevskii, Osyp Bodians'kyi and Amvrosyi Metlyns'kyi, 1825–1855. In *Defining Self: Essays on Emergent Identities in Russia. Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries*. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, p. 254.

a separate Ukrainian nationality unless it was seen as complementary to the Great Russian one.

For Gogol, his connection to Ukraine did not translate into a national vision of Ukrainian identity. As George Luckyj argues, Gogol's self-perception remained pre-national. The Ukrainian patriotism he expressed in his 1830s letters to Maksymovych should not be mistaken for Ukrainian nationalism. Although he praised Ukraine's history and heritage, he continued to identify as an imperial writer³¹⁴.

To fully understand how Gogol presented his Ukrainianness, it is more fruitful to consider identifications beyond the national framework. One of the most important of these is morality. Gogol frequently employed moral distinctions that positioned Ukrainianness in stark contrast to Russianness, reflecting the complex nature of his identity.

This concept should be considered intersectionally, as morality is often defined by the higher classes. Consequently, in the context of Russian domination over Ukraine, Russian customs and language were seen as embodying dignifying concepts as opposed to Ukrainian customs.

In general, Ukrainian culture was seen as a peasant, lower culture, lacking moral attributes to make it acceptable to the higher classes. However, presenting the situation as a binary opposition (Great Russian-moral / Ukrainian-immoral) is incorrect. As we tried to demonstrate in the second chapter, the boundaries between these identities were often blurred. However, multiple loyalties and identities were still arranged in a hierarchical order.

The two positions could find a space in-between in the Little Russian identity, which could be seen as an embodiment of Homi Bhabha's concept of the mimic man. This is particularly evident in Gogol's position, who often situates himself between imitation and mockery of the ruling class. As a representative of the Little Russian gentry, the idea of correct behaviour and morality corresponded to the

³¹⁴ See: Ilnytzkyj, S. (2024). *Nikolai Gogol: Ukrainian Writer in the Empire: A Study in Identity*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG.

use of the Russian language and the adoption of Russian customs. However, especially in the early letters and in the depiction of Russians in his first collections of short stories, the writer often challenges the Russian hegemony in morality. As we mentioned in the third chapter, Russians are often presented as immoral individuals in comparison to the Ukrainians.

Gogol's correspondence reveals a consistent pattern in his portrayal of morality, often linking it to the conduct expected of an exemplary imperial subject. One notable aspect of this moral framework is the emphasis on the correct usage of the Russian language, which Gogol presents as a key attribute of proper behaviour within the imperial context.

On the other hand, stereotypical Ukrainian behaviour was often marked by immorality, in Gogol's perception. In this section, we will focus on the specific characteristics of this perceived immorality, particularly its association with doubleness, slyness, and language use. The following section will explore the most prominent theme—idleness—in greater depth.

Gogol's letter to Smirnova, written in 1844, supports the thesis of a possible connection between immorality and Ukrainianness. In this letter, written in Frankfurt on the 24th of October 1844, Gogol initially tries to defend himself from what he believes to be an accusation. When asked to identify himself as a Russian or a Khokhol, Gogol fears his contemporaries might interpret his double nature as a sin, viewing him as double or Machiavellian. Ultimately, Gogol identifies his double identity as the cause for his being more sinful than others.

Gogol's letter from the 24th of October is the first answer to Smirnova's question. A second answer will follow only two months later, in December. Gogol's first answer follows the scheme that Barabash has noticed in Gogol's mid-life and late letters³¹⁵. It is constructed as both a didactic epistle and a letter-confession. The first part of the letter addresses some issues of Smirnova's private life and

³¹⁵Barabash argues that the same scheme is present in *Selected Passages*. Барабаш, Ю. Я. (1993). Гоголь. Загадка “прощальной повести”, p. 23.

advises her on supporting her sister. After a long digression, the writer starts the second part of the letter, this time in the form of a letter-confession.

The question itself, “Descend into the depths of your soul and ask yourself if you are truly Russian or a khokhlik” is felt by Gogol as an accusation, to which the writer tries to defend himself. Gogol underlines the brotherly relationship between him and Smirnova and invokes their spiritual bond, according to which their relationship should be characterized by mutual support rather than accusation. Gogol interprets the doubleness as an abomination, and he would have wanted Smirnova to help him overcome what he perceived as aberrant.

Вы говорите: «Спуститесь в глубину души вашей и спросите, точно ли вы русский или хохлик». Но скажите мне, разве я святой, разве я могу увидеть все свои мерзости? Для этого-то и существует истинно братская любовь, истинно братская помощь, чтобы указывать нам наши мерзости и помогать нам избавляться от них. Зачем же вы не помогли мне, зачем же вы не указали их мне? Не стыдно ли вам? Я с вами не так поступал: упрекая вас, я вам объявил, в чем вас упрекаю³¹⁶.

The accusation of duality and Smirnova’s question stems from discussions surrounding the new edition of Gogol’s literary works. A. Tolstoi, in particular, characterized them as the product of a Ukrainian attempting to mock Russians, evident in the portrayal of Taras Bulba and the idyllic depictions of Ukraine in *Evenings* or *Mirgorod*. Literary salons contrasted these portrayals with the harsh representations of Russia and Russians in the *Petersburg Tales*, *Dead Souls*, and *The Inspector General*. This literary portrayal of Russians, also observed by Bojanowska³¹⁷, seemed to contradict Gogol’s aspiration to establish himself as an Imperial writer.

Основываясь на словах ваших, что Плетнев на меня досаждает, я думаю, что часть упреков относится по делу издания моих сочинений. Если так, то на этот счет скажу вам только, что

³¹⁶ You say: “Descend into the depths of your soul and ask yourself if you are truly Russian or a khokhlik [diminutive/pejorative for Ukrainian].” But tell me, am I a saint? Can I see all my abominations? This is precisely why true brotherly love and true brotherly help exist – to point out our abominations and help us get rid of them. Why didn't you help me? Why didn't you point them out to me? Aren't you ashamed? I didn't treat you this way: when reproaching you, I told you what I was reproaching you for.

³¹⁷Bojanowska, E. M. (2007). *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*. Harvard University Press, p. 237.

знаю: что это до сих пор неразрешимая загадка, как для них, так равно и для меня. Знаю только, что меня подозревают в двуличности или какой-то Макиавелевской штуке³¹⁸.

Gogol concludes the first response to Smirnova, saying that he is probably more sinful than others because he has combined these two natures: the one of the Khokhlik and the Russian one.

Вы меня все-таки больше знаете. Вы знаете, что я могу быть ближе всех других к гордости, знаете также, что проступков может быть у меня больше, чем у всех других, потому что я, как вам известно, соединил в себе две природы: хохлика и русского³¹⁹.

In the second response to Smirnova, the moral discourse is still present. The difference is that this time, after a pause of two months, the two natures are seen to be equally morally good and even able to gain a higher morality if combined.

На это вам скажу, что сам не знаю, какая у меня душа, хохлацкая или русская. Знаю только то, что никак бы не дал преимущества ни малороссиянину перед русским, ни русскому пред малороссиянином. Обе природы слишком щедро одарены богом, и как нарочно каждая из них порознь заключает в себе то, чего нет в другой – явный знак, что они должны пополнить одна другую. Для этого самые истории их прошедшего быта даны им непохожие одна на другую, дабы порознь воспитались различные силы их характеров, чтобы потом, слившись воедино, составить собою нечто совершеннейшее в человечестве³²⁰.

The equality between the two natures is considered only later by Gogol, as the moral attributes of Ukrainianness are often discussed, especially in the early letters. Also, Bojanowska, in her introduction to *Nikolaj Gogol: Between Russian and Ukrainian nationalism*³²¹, underlines the moral question as being very closely

³¹⁸ Based on your words that Pletnev is angry with me, I think that part of the reproaches relates to the matter of publishing my works. If so, I'll only say that I know this: it's still an unsolvable riddle, both for them and for me. I only know that I'm suspected of being two-faced or of some kind of Machiavellian trick.

³¹⁹ You know me better than others after all. You know that I can be closer to pride than anyone else, you also know that I may have more transgressions than anyone else, because, as you know, I have combined two natures within myself: that of a khokhlik and a Russian.

³²⁰ I'll tell you that I myself don't know what soul I have: Ukrainian [khokhlatskaia] or Russian. I only know that I would grant primacy neither to a Little Russian over a Russian nor to a Russian over a Little Russian. Both natures are generously endowed by God, and as if on purpose, each of them in its own way includes in itself that which the other lacks – a clear sign that they are meant to complement each other. Moreover, the very stories of their past way of life are dissimilar, so that the different strengths of their characters could develop and, having then united, could become something more perfect in humanity. (PSS 12, 419) The translation is taken from Bojanowska E. (2007: p. 2).

³²¹ Bojanowska, E. M. (2007). *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*. Harvard University Press, p. 1.

related to the national one. She believes that Gogol equates his imperfect Russianness with moral failing.

The fear of being perceived as double is also present in a letter to Pletnev written on the same day as the first response to Smirnova, 24 October 1844.

Теперь, так как приговор уже произнесен надо мною, я не стану оправдываться: пускай покамест прогуляются по свету слухи о моей двуличности и подлости³²². (To Pletnev, 24 October 1844)

In a letter to Shevyrev dated March 4, 1847, from Naples, Gogol expresses similar concerns about being perceived as double. This apprehension may allude again to the concept of divided soul. The letter also addresses Pogodin's negative reaction to his portrayal in Gogol's *Selected Passages*.

Разве и теперь не называют меня даже близкие мне люди лицемером, Тартюфом, двуличным человеком, играющим комедию даже в том, что есть святейшего человеку³²³. (A Shevyrev, 4 marzo 1847, Napoli)

As noted in this chapter, Gogol's use of Ukrainian syntax challenged him as an author striving to establish himself within the Pantheon of Russian literature. In reviewing Gogol's letters, we see him depicting his struggle to master the Russian language, even asking Prokopovich to serve as his Russian language teacher. In line with Zvinyatskovsky's interpretation, this can be viewed as a deliberate performance by Gogol, adopting the "Little Russian" persona³²⁴. This is particularly noteworthy since Prokopovich was also from Little Russia, and both had studied at the Nizhyn Lyceum. It indicates that Gogol intentionally sought to be viewed by his contemporaries through the lens of his Ukrainian (Little Russian) identity. However, this act reflects Gogol's ambivalence – on the one hand, he endeavoured to conform to Russian cultural and linguistic expectations, but on the other, he used his Ukrainian identity as a way to differentiate himself.

³²² Now, since the verdict has already been pronounced upon me, I will not justify myself: let the rumors about my duplicity and meanness roam the world for a while.

³²³ Even now, don't even people close to me call me a hypocrite, a Tartuffe, a two-faced person who plays a comedy even with what is most sacred to man.

³²⁴ Звinyaцковский, В. Я. (1994). *Николай Гоголь. Тайны национальной души*. Киев: Ликей, p. 100.

For example, in *Taras Bulba*, Gogol wanted to use the Ukrainian word “chuty” rather than its Russian equivalent “slyshat’”, marking a conscious linguistic divergence, and only ultimately opted for the Russian version “to which the readers were more accustomed.”

При корректуре второго тома прошу тебя действовать как можно самоуправней и полновластней: в Тарасе Бульбе много есть погрешностей писца. Он часто любит букву и; где она не у места, там ее выбрось; в двух-трех местах я заметил плохую грамматику и почти отсутствие смысла. Пожалуста, поправь везде с такою же свободою, как ты переправляешь тетради своих учеников. Если где частое повторение одного и того же оборота периодов, дай им другой, и никак не сомневайся и не задумывайся, будет ли хорошо, — всё будет хорошо. Да вот что самое главное: в нынешнем списке слово: слышу, произнесенное Тарасом пред казнью Остапа, заменено словом: чую. Нужно оставить попрежнему, т. е.: Батько, где ты? Слышишь ли ты это? Слышу. Я упустил из виду, что к этому слову уже привыкли читатели и потому будут недовольны переменою, хотя бы она была и лучше³²⁵. (To Prokopovich, Gastein, 27/15 July 1842)

This difference is also evident when considering different periods in Gogol’s life. In his early letters and works like *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, we see his divergence from Russian imperial expectations, where he performs his identity as a learner of Russian, underscoring his distinction. However, by the 1840s, Gogol’s strategies shifted towards convergence with Russian norms. The moral aspect of this shift becomes more pronounced, as later letters reveal Gogol perceiving his inability to write proper Russian as a moral failing rather than the playful or humorous act it had been earlier.

О себе покуда могу сказать немного: соображаю, думаю и обдумываю второй том «Мертвых» д<уш>». Читаю преимущественно² то, где слышится сильней присутствие

³²⁵ When proofreading the second volume, I ask you to act as independently and authoritatively as possible: in *Taras Bulba* there are many errors from the scribe. He often favors the letter 'и'; where it is out of place, remove it; in two or three places I noticed poor grammar and almost a complete lack of sense. Please, correct everywhere with the same freedom as you correct your students' notebooks. If there are frequent repetitions of the same turn of phrase in periods, give them another, and do not doubt or hesitate about whether it will be good - everything will be good. And here's what's most important: in the current copy, the word 'слышу', pronounced by Taras before Ostap's execution, has been replaced with the word 'чую'. We need to leave it as before, that is: 'Father, where are you? Do you hear this? I hear.' I overlooked the fact that readers have already become accustomed to this word and therefore will be dissatisfied with the change, even if it might be better."

русского духа. Прежде, чем примусь сурьезно за перо, хочу назвучаться русскими звуками и речью. Боюсь нагрешить противу языка³²⁶. (To Pletnev, 20.11.1848, Moscow)

The connection between morality and nationality in Gogol, or at least the perception of him by his contemporaries, is closely tied to the notion of slyness. Slyness was commonly viewed as a stereotypical trait of Ukrainians during that time, and many of Gogol's peers described him as possessing this characteristic. This image of Gogol as "sly" is often highlighted in various memoirs that have come down to us³²⁷.

However, what is important to note is that Gogol himself did not appear to reflect much on this stereotype in his private correspondence. This makes it particularly intriguing, as it suggests that while others attributed this trait to him, Gogol's epistolary self-reflections centred more on other aspects of his character.

The trait that Gogol most often identified with in relation to his Ukrainian identity was not slyness, but rather laziness or idleness. He frequently presented himself as a lazy Ukrainian, embodying a sense of moral inadequacy through this characteristic. This contrast between the external perception of slyness and his self-ascribed laziness adds a layer of complexity to how Gogol navigated his identity in relation to the moral expectations of his time. In the following section, we will explore the theme of laziness and idleness in greater detail, as it is a significant and multifaceted aspect of Gogol's self-presentation.

4.1.2.1 Idleness and Ukrainianness

As we suggested in the previous section, Gogol interpreted his Ukrainian identity more as a moral attribute than a national one. Correlations between Ukrainian identity and idleness emerge, and Gogol attributes his idleness to his being Ukrainian throughout his correspondence. In this section, we will show the colonial significance of idleness and present the instances of this correlation in

³²⁶ I mostly read what strongly conveys the presence of the Russian spirit. Before I seriously take up the pen, I want to immerse myself in Russian sounds and speech. I fear to sin against the language.

³²⁷ For mentions of "slyness" in Bojanowska's book, see pp. 87, 102, 156, 258, 303 in Bojanowska, E. M. (2007). *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*. Harvard University Press.

Gogol's letters. Simultaneously, we will present the differences that occur in the three periods.

The concept of idleness is a fundamental aspect of the colonial experience³²⁸.

As Shkandryj mentions:

The quiet, simple, rough Ukrainian folk who had lived close to the soil for many generations were almost invariably criticized by the metropolitan traveller for idleness. It was the most tirelessly invoked trait invented to account for their inferiority to Russians, and it was implicitly offered as the reason for their inability to maintain statehood³²⁹.

In his analysis of idleness in British imperialism, McClintock noticed that the discourse of idleness is used to distinguish between desirable and undesirable labour. Pressure to work was, more accurately, pressure to alter traditional habits of work³³⁰. Catherine the Second made nobles only the higher ranks of the former Hetmanate, whereas the lower ranks became part of the peasantry. In 1783, Catherine II prohibited Left Bank peasants from abandoning their lords under any conditions, thus creating the condition of a new enserfment of the Ukrainian peasants. The alteration of the habits of the peasants and their enserfment led to their dehumanization and the creation of the stereotype of Ukrainian proverbial idleness.

As Shkandryj reports³³¹, Russian travellers compared Ukrainian peasants to animals, especially oxen, underlining their idleness. Pavel Sumarokov wrote "The slowness characteristic of this people, which displays itself in their walk and all their actions, comes, as I suppose, from their being around oxen from their earliest days, those lazy creatures, which accustom them to such conduct."³³² And Dolgoruky commented that "The ox is the living representation of the

³²⁸ For idleness as a way to justify colonial experience in the British Imperial context: Fludernik, M., & Nandi, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Idleness, Indolence and Leisure in English Literature*. Springer.

³²⁹ Shkandryj, M. (2001). *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and the Discourse of Empire from Napoleonic to Postcolonial times*. McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, pp. 77-78.

³³⁰ McClintock, A. (2013). *Imperial leather: Race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial contest*. Routledge, p. 252.

³³¹ Shkandryj, M. (2001). *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and the Discourse of Empire from Napoleonic to Postcolonial times*. McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, p. 78.

³³² Sumarokov, P. (1803). *Досуги крымского судьи, или Второе путешествие в Тавриду* (Vol. 1). Imp. tip. p. 64. Quoted from Shkandryj, M. (2001).

khokhol, who is just as bestial [skoten] and lazy. If an ox is not pushed, it will spend days and nights on the same spot.³³³”

Gogol’s self-identification as a “lazy Ukrainian” can be interpreted as a dual process. On the one hand, it represents a form of accommodation, indicating his convergence and adaptation to the expectations of his correspondents. On the other hand, it serves as an act of self-creation, reflecting his adoption of a distinct Ukrainian identity.

Idleness in Gogol’s early letters

In the early letters, Gogol presents both Little Russian patriotism and a self-deprecating attitude towards his Ukrainian identity. As in most of his correspondence, Gogol adopts an accommodation strategy, adapting his speech to his correspondents.

The “lazy Ukrainian” stereotype appears in letters to both Great Russian and Ukrainian recipients. However, the purpose of this stereotype differs based on the audience.

When writing to Great Russians, Gogol’s adherence to this stereotype can be interpreted as a form of mimicry, aligning with Imperial expectations of Little Russian behaviour. Conversely, in his correspondence with fellow Ukrainians, Gogol’s use of this stereotype, along with his comic deployment of Ukrainianisms, serves to establish a stronger connection with his compatriots.

In one of his first letters, Gogol defines laziness as being “common to almost all Little Russian”:

Предупреждаю вас, чтобы и не искали там чего-нибудь моего, потому что я уже с давнего времени не участвую в сем журнале, как потому во-первых, что занятия мои по службе увеличились, так и потому, что мной в остающееся мне свободное время овладевает **общая всем почти малороссианам проклятая лень**, с которой доселе я был в

³³³ Dolgorukii, Prince I. M. (1870). *Славны бубны за горами, или Путешествие мое кое-куда 1810 года*. Университетская типография. p. 59. Quoted from Shkandrij, M. (2001).

непримиримой вражде и которая, кажется, ныне смеется над моим усилием преодолеть ее³³⁴. (10. 10. 1830, to his mother)

The laziness is seen by Gogol as a product of Little Russia, as he mentions two years later in a letter addressed to Dmitriev:

Сегодня будет месяц, как я нахожусь здесь, и хотя еще не успел побывать у кого бы следовало (чему причиною **лень, вывезенная мною из Малороссии**), однако ж виделся с Пушкиным³³⁵. (30. 11. 1832, to Dmitriev)

Gogol would repeatedly link this sudden laziness to his native country in letters addressed to his mother and his friend Danilevsky.

Когда проснусь, то одеваюсь; потом завтракаю; часа через четыре или пять обедаю; когда же наступит ночь то ложусь спать; и так каждый день проходит. Не делаю совершенно ничего; может быть, я из дому вывез с собою лень³³⁶. (To his mother, 8. 2. 1833)

Я вывез, однако ж, из дому, всю роскошь лени и ничего решительно не делаю. Ум в странном бездействии³³⁷. (8. 2. 1833)

In a letter to Maksymovych (12.02.34) laziness is said to be a characteristic of all the compatriots:

Ты рассмотри хорошенько характер земляков: они ленятся, но зато, если что задолбят в свою голову, то навеки. Ведь тут только решимость: раз начать, и всё...³³⁸

Idleness in Gogol's mid-life letters

The attitude towards idleness is still present in mid-life letters, but it is often redirected from the Little Russian to the All-Russian man. In mid-life letters and

³³⁴ I warn you not to look for anything of mine there, because I have not participated in this journal since a long time, both because, firstly, my occupations in my service have increased, and also because in the free time that remains to me I am seized by a cursed laziness common to almost all Little Russians, with which until now I was in irreconcilable enmity and which, it seems, now laughs at my efforts to overcome it.

³³⁵ Today it will be a month since I have been here, and though I have not yet had time to visit anyone I ought to have (the reason for which is laziness, brought by me from Little Russia), yet I have seen Pushkin.

³³⁶ When I wake up, I get dressed; then I have breakfast; after four or five hours I have dinner; when night comes, I go to bed; and so every day goes on. I do nothing at all; perhaps I brought laziness with me from home.

³³⁷ I have taken out of home, however, all the luxury of laziness, and do nothing at all. My mind is in a strange state of inactivity.

³³⁸ You should take a good look at the character of your fellow countrymen: they are lazy, but if they get something in their heads, they will do it forever. There is only determination: just start once and that's it...

especially in late letters, Gogol advocates for an All-Russian identity that also encompasses the Ukrainian one. The reason for this change can be seen both in the change of the public discourse (from a displayed ukrainophilia used especially as a tool against the Polish influence in the territories of nowadays western Ukraine), but also because of Gogol moving abroad and “widening” his imagined community. In the letters written from Western Europe, it is common for Gogol to use a common terminology for Russians and Ukrainians, expressed with the adjective *Russkij* or the use of the term *Rus’*. However, there is still a trace of the former correlation between idleness and Ukrainianness.

Gogol, as is quite typical in mid-life and late letters, starts associating characteristics that were first attributed only to Ukrainians to the All-Russian man. Therefore, laziness, which was at the beginning only a characteristic of Ukrainians, is now one of the moral fallacies of All-Russian men.

Покамест вот вам слова, которые вечно должны звучать в ушах ваших. **Есть у русского человека враг**, непримиримый, опасный враг, не будь которого, он был бы исполином. **Враг этот – лень**, или, лучше сказать, **болезненное усыпление, одолевающее русского**. Много мыслей, не сопровождаемых воплощением, уже у нас погибло бесплодно. Помните вечно, что всякая втуне потраченная минута *здесь* неумолимо спросится *там*, и лучше не родиться, чем побледнеть перед этим страшным упреком³³⁹. (To Aksakov, March 1841, Rome)

Недостатки ваши могут быть разве только в неподвижности и лени, одолевающей русского человека во время продолжительного бездействия, и в трудности подняться на дело. Но в той же русской природе есть способность, поднявшись на дело, совершить его полно и окончательно, русский сидень делает в малое время больше, чем какой-нибудь труженик, работающий всю жизнь. К тому же бездействие не составляет вашего характера³⁴⁰. (To Nascokin, 20/8 July 1842)

³³⁹ For now, here are the words that should forever sound in your ears. **The Russian man has an enemy**, an unforgiving, dangerous enemy, without which he would be a giant. **This enemy is laziness**, or rather, **a morbid drowsiness that overcomes the Russian**. Many thoughts, unaccompanied by implementation, have already perished fruitlessly among us. Remember forever that every minute wasted in vain *here* will be unforgivingly called to account *there*, and it's better not to be born than to pale before this terrible reproach.

³⁴⁰ Your shortcomings might only be in the immobility and laziness that overcomes the Russian man during prolonged periods of inaction, and in the difficulty of rising to action. But in that same Russian nature, there is an ability, once risen to action, to accomplish it fully and completely; a Russian who has been idle can

However, the association between idleness and Ukrainianness still occur, as we can see in a letter to Shevyrev from 1843:

И как я вспомню, чего мне стоило вытребовать и получить из Петербурга рукопись «М<ертвых> д<уш>» после того как она уже целый месяц была пропущена комитетом... **И притом Никитенко, при всем доброжелательстве, малороссиянин и ленив**, его нужно было подталкивать беспрестанно личными посещениями. Всё это заставило меня печатание производить в Петербурге³⁴¹. (to Shevyrev, 28 February 1843, Rome)

Idleness in late-life letters (1847–1852)

In his later letters, the theme of idleness weighs heavily on Gogol, particularly because he struggles to work on his literary projects and finds it increasingly difficult to continue writing. While idleness remains a recurring theme, in this later period it frequently becomes associated with the notion of the All-Russian man.

Хотя вы человек (как все мы, **грешные русские** люди мужеска пола) **несколько ленивый** на подъем, но авось доброе расположение ваше ко мне пересилит лень и заставит вас не только отвечать на письмо мое, но даже выполнить мою просьбу³⁴². (To Sollogub, 16 March 1847, Naples)

In conclusion, when discussing Gogol's hybrid identity, it is important to consider the various identifications and, especially, the moral connotations that being Ukrainian had at the time. The diminishment of Ukrainian culture as a direct result of its conquest and the abolition of the Hetmanate created a division between an Imperial, all-Russian higher culture, and a lower, folk culture. The dissonance between the two aspects of Gogol's hybrid identity can be better understood by exploring the intersection of class and morality.

do more in a short time than some labourer working all their life. Moreover, inaction does not constitute your character.

³⁴¹ And when I remember what it cost me to demand and receive the manuscript of “Dead Souls” from Petersburg after it had already been approved by the committee for a whole month... **And moreover, Nikitenko, for all his goodwill, is a Little Russian and lazy**, he needed to be constantly prodded with personal visits. All this forced me to have the printing done in Petersburg.

³⁴² Though you are a man (as we all are, sinful Russian men of the male sex) somewhat lazy on the rise, but maybe your good disposition to me will overpower your laziness and make you not only answer my letter, but even fulfil my request.

4.1.3 Southern/Northern Opposition

The Southern/Northern dichotomy influences the representation of Ukraine in Gogol's letters. Sobol argues that while the West/East opposition³⁴³ started replacing the previous Southern/Northern opposition during the Enlightenment, the latter was still productive, especially in how the Russian Empire perceived itself³⁴⁴. As its cultural proximity to Western Europe was unsure, the Empire portrayed itself as a Northern country. This self-identification did not emerge independently but was in constant dialogue with Europe.³⁴⁵

Cultural self-identification with the North began in Petrine times and continued with Catherine II, who reoriented the Russian Empire to the North to oppose the Ottoman Empire. This reorientation is still present in Karamzin's *Letters of a Russian Traveller*, in which the narrator includes Russia in the community of Northern nations, such as England, Sweden, and Denmark³⁴⁶.

Southern Russia was a common geographical metaphor for indicating Ukraine in the thirties and forties. Many Ukrainians adhered to this custom and used the South/North divide to present the differences between Ukraine and the Russian Empire.

As Bilenky reports:

For many Ukrainians, especially for those with Little Russian identities, the Great Russia/Little Russia divide was reflected in two geographic metaphors. First, "South" and "North" became a common designation of Ukraine and Russia, respectively. Venelin himself drew an ethnic distinction between "Southerners" and "Northerners" from the perspective of a South/North geographical divide³⁴⁷.

This terminology was prevalent among intellectuals of the time. Maksymovych, for instance, adopted it in his private correspondence and academic writing,

³⁴³ See: Wolff, L. (1994). *Inventing Eastern Europe: The map of civilization on the mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford University Press.

³⁴⁴ Sobol, V. (2022). *Haunted empire: Gothic and the Russian imperial uncanny*. Cornell University Press, p. 15.

³⁴⁵ Boele, O. (1996). *The North in Russian romantic literature* (Vol. 26). Rodopi, p. 34.

³⁴⁶ Ivi, p. 16.

³⁴⁷ Bilenky, S. (2020). *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations*. Stanford University Press, p. 68.

defining Kyiv as the “mystical South.” Similarly, Kulish divided Russia into southern and northern provinces.

Probably influenced by these ideas, Gogol incorporated the terms Southern and Northern Russian in his academic writing “A Glance at the formation of Little Russia”:

И вот южная Россия, под могущественным покровительством литовских князей, совершенно отделилась от северной. Всякая связь между ими разорвалась; составились два государства, называвшиеся одинаким именем – Русью³⁴⁸.

Gogol often employs this terminology in his letters, which accounts for a precise identification and distinction between Northern and Southern Russia.

The distinction was similar to the representation of Southern and Northern Europe in contemporary writings. This paradigm drew heavily on the notion that climatological and geographical factors significantly influence human characteristics and societal development. While this concept has roots in Classical antiquity, it gained renewed prominence during the Romantic era, particularly through the works of Western thinkers such as Herder, Mallet, Madame de Staël, and Montesquieu. Montesquieu, in particular, presents the difference between Southerners and Northerners in terms of morality: as temperatures drop, men are said to be less receptive to external impulses and the heat is said to provoke an abundance of crime³⁴⁹.

Ukraine embodies a Russian South and presents particular features in Gogol's letters. One of the most significant is the climate. The southern climate of Ukraine, invoked in *Evenings at the farm near Dikanka*, is presented as miraculous for Gogol's health.

Пилюли же не почитает он нужным теперь по благорастворенности малороссийского воздуха и потому что – время для них прошло³⁵⁰. (2.05.1831, to Danilevsky)

³⁴⁸ And so southern Russia, under the mighty patronage of Lithuanian princes, completely separated from northern Russia. All connection between them was severed; two states were formed, called by the same name – Rus'.

³⁴⁹ Boele, O. (1996). *The North in Russian romantic literature* (Vol. 26). Rodopi, pp. 32–33.

³⁵⁰ The pills, however, he no longer deems necessary due to the favorable purity of the Little Russian air and because their time has passed.

Another important characteristic is the abundance of harvest and food. Gogol represents Ukraine as a land of fertility:

Здоровье мое, кажется, немного лучше, хотя я чувствую слегка боль в груди и тяжесть в желудке, может быть, оттого, что никак не могу здесь соблюсти диеты. Проклятая, как нарочно, в этот год, плодovitость Украины соблазняет меня беспрестанно, и бедный мой желудок беспрерывно занимается варением то груш, то яблок³⁵¹. (to Pogodin, 2. 09. 1832)

The abundance of food and the warm climate was seen as the cause of a lack of inconveniences that made the Southern Russians more inclined to suffer from the sin of idleness, a discourse connected to the idea of Ukrainian and idleness that we discussed in the previous section.

The first mention of this innate idleness in the life of the Little Russians is from 1827. Here, Gogol observes how the generosity of the southern climate preserves the mind of his inhabitants from having to think about some of the problems faced daily by the northerners, provoking an eternal yet satisfying feeling of nothingness:

Не знаю, может ли что удержать меня ехать в Петербург, хотя ты порядком пугнул и пристращал меня необыкновенною дороговизною, особливо съестных припасов. Более всего удивило меня, что самые пустяки так дороги, как-то: манишки, платки, косынки и другие безделушки. У нас, в доброй нашей Малороссии, ужаснулись таких цен и убоялись, сравнив суровый климат ваш, который еще нужно покупать необыкновенною дороговизною, и благословенный малороссийский, который достается почти даром, а потому многие из самых жарких желателей уже наостряют лыжи обратно в скромность своих недалних чувств и удовольнились ничтожностью, почти вечною³⁵². (26. 06. 27)

Gogol also tried to portray this nothingness in his *Old-fashioned landowners*: a timeless society governed by different rules, not like the modern Saint

³⁵¹ My health seems to be a little better, although I still feel some pain in my chest and a heaviness in my stomach, perhaps because I can't manage to stick to a diet here. The cursed abundance of Ukraine this year continually tempts me, and my poor stomach is constantly busy digesting pears or apples.

³⁵² I do not know whether anything can keep me from going to St. Petersburg, though you have frightened and frightened me with the extraordinary dearness of foodstuffs in particular. What surprised me most of all was that the most trifling things were so expensive, such as manisks, handkerchiefs, kerchiefs, and other trinkets. We, in our good Little Russia, were horrified by such prices and were afraid, comparing your harsh climate, which still has to be bought with extraordinary costliness, and the blessed Little Russian climate, which is almost free, and that is why many of the most ardent wannabes are already setting their skis back to the modesty of their short-lived feelings and are satisfied with nothingness, almost eternal.

Petersburg, but satisfied with its own traditions and not trying to keep up with modernity.

In presenting himself, Gogol also adopted the terminology Southern-Northern. An interesting self-creation is present in a letter to Danilevsky from the 10th of March 1832. In the letter, written to his fellow Ukrainian Danilevsky, Gogol presents himself as having “a Southern heart” and a “Northern Mistress”. While some commentators interpreted this phrase literally, suggesting a reference to a female acquaintance³⁵³, it is more aptly understood as a metaphorical construct. The “Northern Mistress” is, in fact, a personification of Saint Petersburg. Gogol characterizes the city as more tormenting and brilliant than the “Caucasian mistress” of Danilevsky, who was stationed in the Caucasus for military service at the time.

Может быть ты находишься уже в седьмом небе и оттого не пишешь? Черт меня возьми, если я сам теперь не близко седьмого неба и с таким же сарказмом, как ты, гляжу на славу и на все, хотя моя владычица куда суровее твоей. Ес-ли бы я был, как ты, военный человек, я бы с оружием в руках доказал бы тебе, что **северная повелительница** [Saint Petersburg, Empire] **моего южного сердца** томительнее и блистательнее твоей кавказской³⁵⁴ [...]

The self-creation in this letter is particularly interesting as it presents the embedding of the Ukrainian subject in the Russian Empire. The metaphor of a “Southern heart” governed by a “Northern Mistress” eloquently captures the tension between his Ukrainian origins and his life in the Imperial capital.

The Southern/Northern dichotomy features prominently in Gogol’s early correspondence, reflecting his initial struggles to navigate an unfamiliar cultural landscape. This opposition served as a framework for understanding and articulating his experiences as he adapted to life in Saint Petersburg.

³⁵³See: Гоголь, Н. В. (2014). *Комментарии к письмам*. Directmedia, p. 146. See also: Mann, I. (2004). Гоголь: труды и дни: 1809–1845, p. 254

³⁵⁴ Perhaps you're already in seventh heaven and that's why you're not writing? The devil take me if I'm not close to the seventh heaven myself now, and with the same sarcasm as you, I look at glory and everything else, although my mistress is far more severe than yours. If I were a military man like you, I would prove to you with weapons in hand that **the northern mistress of my southern heart** is more tormenting and more brilliant than your Caucasian one.

However, the significance of this dichotomy evolves following Gogol's relocation to Italy in 1836. While the Southern/Northern contrast persists in his writings, it acquires new dimensions and implications. Italy, as a Southern European country, introduces a broader geographical and cultural perspective to Gogol's understanding of "Southernness".

4.2 Thematic analysis concerning a specific period

4.2.1 Gogol's early letters

The first section of the letters is written from 1819–1820 to 1835. According to the different addressees, Gogol's early letters could be divided into three main groups: letters to his family (mother and uncle Kosiarovsky); letters to his new Russian acquaintances (Zhukovsky, Pushkin, and Dmitriev); and letters to Ukrainian classmates (Vysotsky, Danilevsky, and Prokopovych) and associates (Maksymovych and Tarnovsky)³⁵⁵.

The most quoted of all Gogol's letters regarding the writer's identity is probably the one written to Smirnova in 1844, where he describes himself as having a double soul: Russian and Ukrainian. However, this "double soul" could not be seen as innate in Gogol's self-conception, but rather as a result of a long journey in perceiving his own identity.

In the first part of his letters (1820–1835), the early ones, we observe a strong attachment to a solely Ukrainian identity, which partly mirrors the portrayal of the two identities in the writer's initial literary works. Just as we see a polarisation in the world of *Evening at the farm near Dikanka*, where the Moskals and the Russians from Saint Petersburg are depicted as distant, and in the case of the latter, completely opposed to the Ukrainians, a similar divide is evident in Gogol's early letters. This division is linguistic (we/they), and it is also depicted through metaphors related to geographical positions (north/south) and climate (the warm Ukraine contrasted with the cold and unwelcoming Saint Petersburg). Such

³⁵⁵ Ilchuk, Y. (2021). *Nikolai Gogol: Performing Hybrid Identity*. University of Toronto Press, p. 105.

language is particularly employed when conversing with fellow Ukrainians. The dichotomy between Ukrainians and Russians would later evolve into the writer incorporating the concept of Rus' – a union of Eastern Slavic cultures – into his discourse. We will delve deeper into Gogol's usage of the term Rus' in subsequent sections of this thesis.

Gogol's early letters could be considered a laboratory for constructing and deconstructing his Ukrainian identity. His correspondents often define the possibility of constructing the writer's identity. The primary space for constructing a Ukrainian identity is found in his correspondence with fellow countrymen, particularly in the letters addressed to Maksymovych. The early letters (1820–1835) could be divided into numerous themes. We will focus on the opposition between the Centre and the periphery, visible especially in the letters written from Ukraine, on the Othering of Russians and Maksymovych's role as a catalyst for Gogol's Ukrainian identity.

4.2.1.1 Early letters from Ukraine (1820–1829)

While exploring Gogol's early letters, it's crucial to distinguish between the first part of letters written from Ukraine (1820–1829) and the second part composed from Saint Petersburg (1829–1825). These two parts reveal markedly different perceptions of his homeland. The letters from Ukraine, many of which come from Nizhyn, where Gogol was studying and addressed to his mother, do not exhibit a particular inclination towards Ukrainian culture and language. His passion for all things Ukrainian would only emerge after he departs from Ukraine. It is characteristic of Gogol to require this sense of distance in order to feel a connection to a familiar environment; later in life, he would express similar sentiments regarding Russia. He often felt he could only write about Russia when away from it. He likely needed this distance to establish a meaningful connection with his surroundings.

4.2.1.1.1 Little Russian Village

Before he moved to the Capital, Gogol's Experience of the Russian Empire was limited to his knowledge of Vasylivka and the Nizhyn Lyceum. Ukraine existed as a periphery of the Imperial centre, Saint Petersburg and the young Gogol, along with his fellow classmates, saw that career advancement was possible only in the Empire's Capital³⁵⁶.

In the early letters, Gogol remarks on the opposition between the capital and the province, especially in his correspondence with Vysotsky³⁵⁷. The ethnic component is not yet part of Gogol's representation of Ukraine and Russia. Ukraine and its language are seen as a provincial space, deviating from the norm, represented by the centre, Saint Petersburg.

At this time, Gogol does not express a particular interest in the Ukrainian theme. The young writer shows more interest in European Romanticism, a passion that will be fully developed in the poem *Hans Küchelgarten* (1827).

Despite this lack of interest, Gogol presents a strong reaction towards the publication of *Malorossiyskaya derevnya* by his teacher of Latin Ivan Grigorevich Kulzhynsky. The book was published at the beginning of 1827 in the February edition of *Moskovskiy telegraf* (1827, 13, 3, pp. 230–236). Gogol and his classmates had the chance to read it as it was published, as Gogol writes about it in a letter from the 19th of March 1827 addressed to his friend Vysotsky:

Теперь у нас происходят забавные истории и анекдоты с Иваном Григорьевичем Кулжинским. Он теперь напечатал свое сочинение под названием Малороссийская деревня. Этот литературный урод причиною всех его бедствий: когда он только проходит через класс, тотчас ему читают отрывки из Малороссийской деревни, и почтенный князь бесится, сколько есть духу; когда он бывает в театре, то кто-нибудь из наших объявляет громогласно о представлении новой пьесы; ее заглавие: Малороссийская деревня или Закон дуракам не писан, комедия-водевиль. Несколько раз прибегая к покровительству и защите конференции и наконец видя, что его жалобы худо чествуют, решился униженно и смиренно просить нашей милости не рушить стихотворное его спокойствие и не срамить

³⁵⁶ As Gogol reminds in a letter from the third of June 1830, 25 of his classmates from Nizhyn moved to Saint Petersburg to gain a career in the Capital.

³⁵⁷ Самойленко, Г. В. (2018). Нежинские письма Н. Гоголя к Г. Высоцкому: к проблеме жизненных и творческих связей. *Література та культура Полісся. Серія: Філологічні науки*, (91), 36-87.

печатный бред его, а особливо не запираеть его в канцелярии с майором Шишкиным, как до сего делано³⁵⁸.

In this letter, Gogol appears to hold a very negative view of his teacher and his teacher's work, which could be considered part of the Ukrainian-themed literature of the time. There could have been numerous reasons for this hostility. One could argue that Gogol, who was not a brilliant pupil, was showing a negative attitude towards his teacher.

In the memoir *Memories of a Teacher* (*Воспоминания учителя*, 1854), published by Kulzhynsky in *Moskvitianin*³⁵⁹, it is noted that Gogol showed little interest in his education. He was reportedly observed reading books under his desk and spent all three years of Kulzhynsky's Latin instruction in the same class (Latin Syntax) without advancing to the next level. As a result, Kulzhynsky concluded that Gogol learned very little from formal education besides basic participation in a structured academic environment. He attributed Gogol's later success as one of the most influential figures in Russian literature entirely to his innate talent. From this memoir, we can infer that Gogol was largely disinterested in his education but was not mistreated by Kulzhynsky or other teachers, who seemingly chose to overlook his misbehaviour.

Consequently, the animosity Gogol felt towards *The Little Russian Village* must be found in the book itself. Yabukina believes that Gogol was probably envious of the literary success of his young teacher, who was not yet 24 when he published *Little Russian Village*³⁶⁰. Kulzhynsky already authored many books on

³⁵⁸ We now have amusing stories and anecdotes with Ivan Grigorevich Kulzhynsky. He has now published his work entitled *The Little Russian Village*. This literary monster is the cause of all his misfortunes: when he passes through a class, passages from the *Little Russian Village* are immediately read to him, and the honourable prince goes mad as much as he has spirit; when he is in the theatre, one of ours announces loudly the performance of a new play; its title is: *The Little Russian Village, or The Law is not written to Fools*, a vaudeville comedy. Having several times resorted to the patronage and protection of the conference, and finally seeing that his complaints are poorly honoured, I decided to humiliatingly and humbly ask our grace not to destroy his poetic tranquillity and not to shame his printed delirium, and especially not to lock him up in the chancellery with Major Shishkin, as has been done up to now.

³⁵⁹ Кулжинский, И. Г. Воспоминания учителя//Москвитянин.–1854. Т, 6, 1-16. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433078553108&seq=134&q1=%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%8F>

³⁶⁰ Якубина, Ю. В. (2017). Гоголь и Кулжинский: биографико-литературный дискурс, р. 73. <http://lib.ndu.edu.ua:8080/dspace/bitstream/123456789/429/1/6.pdf>

Ukraine and was an exponent of what could be defined as Ukrainian literature in the Russian language³⁶¹. According to Speransky's list of Kulzhynsky's literary works³⁶², the Ukrainian theme in his literary production was not limited to Little Russian Village. His later works, although, display profound anti-Ukrainian messages³⁶³.

The *Little Russian Village* has a prior role in Kulzhynsky's literary production. It is divided into different sections, reflecting the life of the Ukrainian people and tracing the use of Little Russian expressions. According to Vladimir Danilov, Little Russian Village could be read as a source for Gogol's *Evenings at the farm near Dikanka*³⁶⁴.

Maksymovych, under the pseudonym Pec Halukovsky, published a review of *Little Russian Village* in the Journal *Moskovsky telegraf* in 1827³⁶⁵. According to Maksymovych, the book's main problem is a lack of deep understanding of the theme – especially regarding Ukrainian songs and folklore and an idealised vision of Ukraine. Maksymovych sarcastically remarked that the people of Little Russia would finally have the opportunity to love their homeland more profoundly through the perspective of a Muscovite, despite having no familiarity with Moscow or Saint Petersburg³⁶⁶. According to Ju. V. Yakubina, the letter from the 19th of March 1827 could be considered an example of Gogol's opposition between the

³⁶¹ Грабович, Г. (1997). *До історії української літератури: дослідження, есе, полеміка = Toward a History of Ukrainian Literature*. Основи.

³⁶² In 1825 he contributed to the "Дамский журнал" with the poem *Казацкая песня*. After the publication of *Little Russian Village*, Kulzhynsky published *Казацкие шапки* (*Damsky zhurnal*, 1829, n. 32), *Терешко – Малороссийская повесть* (*Дамский журнал*, 1829, n. 34–35), *Тедюша Мотовильский – украинский роман* (Moscow, 1833), *Кочубей – драма в трех действиях* (*Russkaya beseda*, tom 1, 1841), *Семен Середа – куренной атаман запорожского войска* (*Москвитянин*, tom IV, 1852), *Поездка в Москву и Петербург* (*Благовест*, 1884, in which he describes the encounter with the Ukrainian poet V. N. Zabela and introduces two of his songs). Данилов, В. К. (1908). характеристике ИГ Кулжинского и его литературной деятельности / Вл. Данилов. [https://iht.knu.ua/library/ks/1907/pdf/kievskaya-starina-1907-10-F-\(9120-9143\).pdf](https://iht.knu.ua/library/ks/1907/pdf/kievskaya-starina-1907-10-F-(9120-9143).pdf)

³⁶³ Varabash, I. (1995). Почва и судьба: Гоголь и украинская литература: у истоков, р. 65.

³⁶⁴ Данилов, В. К. (1908). характеристике ИГ Кулжинского и его литературной деятельности/Вл. Данилов, р. 22.

³⁶⁵ *Moskovsky telegraf* (1827, n. 13), pp. 230–236. <https://electro.nekrasovka.ru/books/6210816/pages/238>

³⁶⁶ *Ivi*, p. 236.

Province and the Capital, a central theme in his early correspondence to Vysotsky (to whom this letter was addressed)³⁶⁷.

This likely explains Gogol's resentment toward Kulzhynsky's work. Rather than being a serious ethnographic study of the Ukrainian theme, it was more of an exploitative exotification by a Russian writer. Zvinyatskovskij, underlining that Kulzhynsky was a Russian writer writing on Ukraine, defines him as the antipode of Gogol³⁶⁸.

According to Barabash, Gogol's hostility towards Kulzhynsky's *Little Russian village* derives from the book's Ukrainophobia³⁶⁹. The book portrays Ukrainian customs and traditions in a highly negative light and describes the Ukrainian language as a corrupted form of Russian.

Thus, although Gogol had not yet developed a strong interest in the Ukrainian theme, he already recognized how it could be exploited in a simplistic, exoticizing manner. This likely explains why he and his classmates from Nizhyn viewed the *Little Russian Village* as a "literary monster" and mocked it whenever possible. They probably felt their teacher was creating an unrealistic image of their homeland.

Additionally, this may have stemmed from a sense of being "provincialized", a feeling particularly evident in Gogol's early letters, where he expresses dreams of leaving Nizhyn for Saint Petersburg. For a young man from Little Russia eager to mentally escape the provinces and imagine himself in the capital, portraying his homeland as an idyllic, unrealistic paradise would have been unappealing.

4.2.1.1.2 Mykhailo Maksymovych's role as a catalyst for Gogol's Ukrainian identity

One of the most significant correspondents influencing Gogol's Ukrainian identity was Mykhailo Maksymovych. He was born in the region of Poltava in 1804 and participated in the literary circle of Saint Petersburg where he also curated the

³⁶⁷ Якубина, Ю. В. (2017). Гоголь и Кулжинский: биографико-литературный дискурс.

³⁶⁸ Zvinjackovskij, V. J. (2023). Лекции по истории русско-украинских литературных связей, р. 91.

³⁶⁹ Barabash, I. (1995). Почва и судьба: Гоголь и украинская литература: у истоков, pp. 61–67.

альманах Денница. Maksymovych was acquainted with the central literary figure of the time – Pushkin, and was known in the Slavophile circle.

While maintaining close ties with Russian Imperial culture, Maksymovych played a central role in the development of Ukrainian studies in Ukraine, particularly in Kyiv and Kharkiv. Initially educated as a botanist and zoologist, he shifted his focus to Ukrainian ethnography and the collection of folk songs. He was appointed professor at the University of Moscow in 1833 and later became professor of Russian letters and rector of the recently founded University of Saint Vladimir in Kyiv in 1834. During his academic career, he worked on three collections of folk songs³⁷⁰. He applied his scientific approach to song analysis derived from the natural sciences. Maksymovych's interest in folk songs could be interpreted as romantic regionalism.

According to his use of terminology, he believed in the unity of Southern and Northern Russians. Until the end of his life in 1873, he never advocated for a separation between the Russian and Ukrainian identities. The scholar was close to Uvarov and took part in the constitution of the Minister of Education's triad of autocracy, orthodoxy and nationality. He aimed to solidify the relationship between Russian and Ukrainian, integrating Ukrainian heritage as a fundamental aspect of the Imperial identity. This might be interpreted as a form of Russo-Ukrainian unity and Ukrainian distinctiveness, a strategy of integration in the Imperial elite³⁷¹.

He consistently emphasized the differences between the two cultures. This strategy can be viewed as a conservation approach: fearing the loss of access to

³⁷⁰ Maksymovych worked on three collections of folksongs. The first was *Little Russian songs (Malorossiskie pesni)* published in 1827. After this publication, he started in 1829 to collect new songs for his next collection, which he gathered with the help of Gogol, *Ukrainian popular songs (Ukrainskye narodnye pesni)*, published in 1834. Later, he worked on his third collection, *Collection of Ukrainian songs (Sbornik ukrainskikh pesen)*, published in 1849. (Максимович М.А. *Малороссийские песни*, изданные М. Максимовичем. Москва: В типографии Августа Семена при Имп. медико-хирург. акад, 1827. - XXXVI, 234, [9] с. - В № 109847 нумерация стр.: после 224 5-8, 225-234, 1-4, 9; Максимович М.А. *Украинские народные песни, изданные Михаилом Максимовичем*. Ч. 1. кн. 1: Украинские думы ; кн. 2 : Песни козацкие былевые ; кн. 3 : Песни козацкие бытовые. - Москва: В Университетской типографии, 1834. - XI, [1],180 с; Максимович М. А. *Сборник украинских песен*, издаваемый Михайлом Максимовичем. Ч. 1. - Киев: В типографии Феофила Гликсберга, 1849. - [4], 114, [2] с.)

³⁷¹ Kohut, Z. E. (2001). *The question of Russo-Ukrainian unity and Ukrainian distinctiveness in early modern Ukrainian thought and culture* (Vol. 280). Kennan Institute, Woodrow Wilson Institute.

Ukrainian culture, Maksymovych deemed it safer to align it closely with Russian culture for preservation. The scholar, one of the first collectors of the Ukrainian past, could be considered a representative of phase A in Hroch's classification of stages of national construction³⁷².

Maksymovych's strategy evolved over time, showing a continuous development toward fostering a brotherhood between Ukraine and Russia. This progression is evident in his early articles on Russian and Ukrainian folk motifs in Igor's tale in the 1830s and culminates in the renowned "philological letter" to Pogodin in the 1850s. In this letter, he staunchly endeavours to bring forth the Ukrainian characteristics of Church Slavonic and redefine Ukraine's role in Pogodin's representation of Kyivan Rus'.

The idea behind this strategy was to defend Ukrainian identity from total assimilation and to insert it into an all-Russian perspective, where the Ukrainians would have a function of "older Russian civilization". Concerned that Ukrainian heritage might be erased from Russian history, Maksymovych postulated a historical Russian-Ukrainian unity, extending even to the Kievan era, in his philological correspondence with Pogodin:

If I had to choose the easiest of two evils, I would rather agree to recognise the sameness of Northern and Southern Russia in ancient pre-Tatar times than to divide them and break their closest kinship to such an extent as is done in your present system³⁷³.

Gogol and Maksymovych met in 1829, and their correspondence started in 1832. Initially, their epistolary exchange was devoted to collecting Ukrainian folk songs. Gogol helped Makymovych with the collection of folk songs that would later form his second collection *Ukrainian popular songs (Ukrainskye narodnye pesni, 1834)*³⁷⁴.

³⁷² Hroch, M. (1985). Social preconditions of national revival in Europe: A comparative analysis of the social composition of patriotic groups among the smaller European nations, pp. 22–23.

³⁷³ Толочко, О. (2004). Києво–Руська спадщина в історичній думці України початку XIX ст. Владислав Верстюк, Олексій Толочко. Українські проекти в Російській імперії. 250–351. "Если бы пришлось мне из двух зол выбирать легчайшее, то я лучше согласен признать безразличие всей Северной и Южной Руси в древнее дотатарское время, чем раз-рознять их и разрывать ближайшее их родство до такой степени, как это сделано в твоей нынешней системе."

³⁷⁴ Maksymovych's introduction to this anthology characterized Gogol as both the author of the *Dikanka Tales* and an historian of Little Russia.

Their friendship transcended this common interest, rooted in a shared affection for Ukraine. Their correspondence is noteworthy as it is the space in which Gogol shows his deep affection for Ukraine and frequently highlights distinctions between Russians and Ukrainians. As we do not have access to Maksymovych's letters to Gogol, we can only imply a similar mode of expression in Maksymovych. His influence is crucial in tracing Gogol's construction of Ukrainian identity. Ilnytzkyi claims that Gogol's letters to Maksymovych are among his most "patriotic"³⁷⁵. The relationship with Maksymovych is revelatory in understanding the writer's perception of his Ukrainian identity.

In Gogol's letters to Maksymovych, it is possible to observe a space in which Gogol could freely express his "Ukrainian distinctiveness" without contradicting his faith in the Imperial project. Notably, Gogol adopts a form of accommodation in his letters to Maksymovych, trying to comply with Maksymovych's horizon of expectations.

Gogol typically refers to his friends from Ukraine as "Zemliak", meaning compatriot³⁷⁶. This holds especially true for Maksymovych, whom Gogol has called "Zemliak" since the beginning of their correspondence.

The correspondence to Maksymovych consists of 26 letters written by Gogol, mostly between 1832 and 1835. One is from 1840, and two are from 1850, when the two met after a long break.

Initially, the letters focus on their shared historical and philological interests, and in particular their interest in Ukraine as a subject of research. Gogol displays a strong attachment to Ukraine. He is actively working on his history of Ukraine, anticipating it to be an extensive piece of writing but ultimately producing only a short introduction *A Glance at the Making of Little Russia (Взгляд на составление Малороссии, 1834)*.

³⁷⁵ Ilnytzkyj, O. (2002). Cultural Indeterminacy in the Russian Empire: Nikolai Gogol's as a Ukrainian Post-Colonial Writer. *A World of Slavic Literatures: Essays in Comparative Slavic Studies in Honor of Edward Mozejko, Slavica, Bloomington IN*, p. 160.

³⁷⁶ The term *zemliak* goes through an evolution in Gogol's usage: in the first letters written from Ukraine and St. Petersburg it only refers to his Ukrainian friends and relatives, in the letters written from abroad he also uses this term to refer to Russians.

*Историю Малороссии я пишу всю от начала до конца. Она будет или в шести малых, или в четырех больших томах. Экземпляра песен галицких здесь нигде нет; мой же собственный у меня замотал один задушевный приятель*³⁷⁷. (12. 02. 1834)

Expressions of Ukrainian Identity in Gogol's Letters

The history of Ukraine significantly shapes Gogol's perception of the country. Initially viewing Ukraine as a provincial place, Gogol spent months dreaming about the capital before relocating to Saint Petersburg. While his initial interest in Ukraine was pragmatic, driven by the fashionable appeal of Ukrainian folklore at the time, he later embraced a genuine fondness for Ukraine.

Теперь я принялся за историю **нашей единственной, бедной Украины**. Ничто так не успокаивает, как история. Мои мысли начинают литься тише и стройнее. Мне кажется, что я напишу ее, что я скажу много того, чего до меня не говорили³⁷⁸. (9. 11. 1833)

The fascination with Ukraine, especially its Capital, is so strong that Gogol considers moving to Kyiv with Maksymovych. In his mind, Ukraine becomes a symbol of antiquity and beauty.

Благодарю тебя за всё: за письмо, за мысли в нем, за новости и проч. Представь, я тоже думал. **Туда, туда! в Киев! в древний, в прекрасный Киев!** Он наш, он не их, не правда? Там или вокруг него деялись дела **старины нашей**³⁷⁹. (20.12.33)

To convince Maksymovych to enjoy his stay in Kyiv as a professor, Gogol invokes several elements, such as "our Ukraine" and "the fathers' graves."

Еще просьба: ради всего нашего, ради нашей Украины, ради отцовских могил, не сиди над книгами. Чорт возьми, если они не служат теперь для тебя к тому только, чтобы отемнить свои мысли³⁸⁰. (27.06.34)

³⁷⁷ I am writing the whole history of Little Russia from beginning to end. **It will be either in six small or four large volumes.** There is no copy of the songs of the Galicians anywhere here; I had my own copy sealed by an intimate friend.

³⁷⁸ Now I have embarked on the history of our one, poor Ukraine. Nothing soothes like history. My thoughts begin to flow more quietly and coherently. I feel that I will write it, that I will say many things that have not been said before me.

³⁷⁹ Thank you for everything: the letter, the thoughts in it, the news, etc. Imagine, I was thinking the same thing. There, there! To Kyiv! To ancient, beautiful Kyiv! It's ours, it's not theirs, isn't it? There or around it, the works of our antiquity took place. [this letter, frequently misinterpreted as evidence of Gogol's anti-Russian views, actually targets Germans residing in Kyiv at the time, not Russians].

³⁸⁰ Another request: for the sake of all that is ours, for the sake of our Ukraine, for the sake of my father's graves, do not sit over books. Damn it, if they do not serve you now only to darken your thoughts.

Gogol often expresses nostalgia for Ukraine, describing it with the historical term “Hetmanshchyna,” connected to the past history of Ukraine and the period of the Hetmanate.

[...] хотел даже ехать осенью непременно в Гетьманщину [...] Хотя душа сильно тоскует за Украиной³⁸¹. (14. 08. 1834)

In opposition to the fondness Gogol reveals for Ukraine, letters to Maksymovych are full of negative connotations towards Russia and Russians. He refers to Russia as “Katsapiia”, a pejorative term derived from “katsap”³⁸², which mockingly alludes to the traditional bearded Russian Orthodox priest.

Бросьте в самом деле **кацапию**, да поезжайте в **гетьманщину**³⁸³. (2. 7. 1833)

Furthermore, Gogol’s letters paint Moscow unfavourably and juxtapose it against Kyiv.

Что ж, едешь или нет? **влюбился же в эту старую толстую бабу Москву, от которой, кроме щей да матерщины, ничего не услышишь**. Слушай: ведь ты посуди сам по чистой совести, каково мне одному быть в Киеве. Земля и край вещь хорошая, но люди чуть ли еще не лучше, хотя не полезнее для нездорового человека, каков ты да я³⁸⁴. (12. 03. 1834)

A reluctance to teach Russian history is evident in Gogol’s letters to Maksymovych.

Право, странно они воображают, что различие предметов это такая маловажность и что, кто читал словесность, тому весьма легко преподавать математику или врачебную науку; как будто пирожник для того создан, чтобы тачать сапоги. **Я с ума сойду, если мне дадут русскую историю**. Если же они меня поведут далее и не отправят теперь же, то, признаюсь, я брошу всё и откланяюсь. Бог с ними со всеми. И тогда махну или на Кавказ, или в доли Грузии, потому что здоровье мое здесь еле держится. Ты знаешь Цыха? кто это Цых? кажется, Погодин его знает. Нельзя ли как-нибудь уговорить Цыха, чтобы он взял

³⁸¹ [...] I even wanted to go to Hetmanshchyna in autumn [...] Though my soul longs for Ukraine.

³⁸² On the term Katsap see: Worobec, C. D. (2003). Conceptual observations on the Russian and Ukrainian peasantries. in Kappeler, Andreas et al. (eds.). *Culture, Nation and Identity: The Ukrainian– Russian Encounter, 1600–1945*. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press.

³⁸³ Leave Katsapiia altogether and go to Hetmanshchyna.

³⁸⁴ Well, are you going or not? **You’ve fallen in love with that fat old woman Moscow, from whom you hear nothing but soup and profanity**. Listen: just judge for yourself in good conscience what it would be like for me to be alone in Kiev. The land and the region are good things, but the people are almost even better, though not more useful for unhealthy people like you and me.

себе, или просил, или бы по крайней мере соглашался бы взять кафедру русской истории³⁸⁵. (28. 05. 1834)

The same sentiment is reiterated in a subsequent letter, in which he writes that he would prefer to teach botany or pathology rather than Russian history.

Чорт возьми, если бы я не согласился взять скорее ботанику или патологию, нежели русскую историю. Если бы это было в Петербурге, я бы, может быть, взял ее, потому что здесь я готов, пожалуй, два раза в неделю на два часа отдать себя скуке. Но, оставляя Петербург, знаешь ли, что я оставляю? Мне оставить Петербург не то, что тебе Москву: здесь всё, что дорого, что было мило моему сердцу; люди, с которыми сдружился и которых алчет душа; всё, что привычка сделала еще драгоценнейшим. Бросивши всё это, нужно стараться всеми силами заглушить сердечную тоску; нужно отдалять всеми мерами то, что может вызывать ее. И ты вдобавок хочешь еще, чтоб самая должность была для меня тягостью. Если меня не будет занимать предмет мой, тогда я буду несчастлив. Я очень хорошо знаю свое сердце, и потому то, что для другого кажется своенравием, то есть у меня следствие дальновидности³⁸⁶. (10. 06. 1834)

Gogol's Evolving Concept of Fatherland

As evident from Gogol's sentiments, he strongly feels the difference between the two cultures and languages. In a letter advising Maksymovych on translating Ukrainian folksongs into Russian, Gogol believes that the languages differ, especially in their "spirit".

Есть пропасть таких фраз, выражений, оборотов, которые нам, малороссианам, кажутся очень будут понятны для русских, если мы переведем их слово в слово, но которые иногда

³⁸⁵ They imagine that the distinction of subjects is so unimportant, and that he who has read literature can easily teach mathematics or medicine; as if a pie-maker were made to grind boots. **I'd go mad if they gave me Russian history. If they take me further and don't send me away now, I confess I shall drop everything and bow out.** God be with them all. And then I'll either go to the Caucasus or to the valleys of Georgia, because my health can hardly keep up here. Do you know Tsykh? Who's Tsykh? I think Pogodin knows him. Can't you somehow persuade Tsykh to take the chair of Russian history, or ask for it, or at least agree to take it?

³⁸⁶ **Heck, if I hadn't agreed to take botany or pathology rather than Russian history. If it had been in Petersburg, I might have taken it, because here I am ready, perhaps, twice a week for two hours to give myself up to boredom.** But in leaving Petersburg, do you know what I'm leaving? Leaving St. Petersburg is not like leaving Moscow for you: here is everything that is dear, that was dear to my heart; people with whom I have befriended and whose soul longs for; everything that habit has made even more precious. Having abandoned all this, one must try to stifle the heart's longing with all one's might; one must keep away with all one's might the things that can cause it. And thou wilt, in addition, make the office itself a burden to me. If I am not occupied with my subject, then I shall be unhappy. I know my heart very well, and that is why what to another seems to be wilfulness to me is a consequence of foresight.

уничтожают половину силы подлинника. Почти всегда сильное лаконическое место⁴ становится непонятным на русском, потому что **оно не в духе русского языка**; и тогда лучше десятью словами определить всю обширность его, нежели скрыть его³⁸⁷. (20. 04. 1834)

Помни, что твой перевод для русских, и потому все малороссийские обороты речи и конструкцию прочь³⁸⁸! (20. 04. 1834)

Gogol envisions transforming Kyiv into a “Russian Athens”, aligning with Maksymovych’s survival strategy:

Да превратится он в русские Афины, богоспасаемый наш город! Да, отчего до сих пор не выходит ни один из московских журналов³⁸⁹? (7. 01. 1834)

Folklorization of Ukraine

Gogol’s perception of Ukraine is often influenced by how the country was perceived and described in the Russian Empire. The representation of Ukrainians is, therefore, quite often similar to a caricature, with descriptions such as the “sly” or “lazy” Ukrainian.

Тот художник, **малоросс в обоих смыслах**, про которого я вам говорил и который один мог бы сделать национальную виньетку, пропал как в воду, и я до сих пор не могу его отыскать. Другой, которому я поручил, наляпал каких-то чухонцев и так гадко, что я посовестился вам посылать. **О Русь, старая рыжая борода, когда ты поумнеешь**³⁹⁰? (12. 12. 1832)

³⁸⁷ There is an abyss of such phrases, expressions, and turns of phrase, which to us, the Little Russians, seem very understandable to Russians, if we translate them word for word, but which sometimes destroy half the force of the original. Almost always a strong laconic place becomes incomprehensible in Russian, because it is not in the spirit of the Russian language; and then it is better to define its vastness in ten words than to hide it.

³⁸⁸ Remember that your translation is for Russians, and therefore all Little Russian turns of speech and constructions away!

³⁸⁹ May it turn into a Russian Athens, our God-saved city! Yes, why are none of the Moscow magazines still published?

³⁹⁰ From the artist, **a Little Russian in both senses**, whom I told you about and who alone could have made a national vignette, disappeared like into the water, and I still cannot find him. The other, to whom I entrusted him, made some Chukhonians, and so ugly that I decided to send it to you. **O Rus, old red beard, when will you wise up?**

An interesting example of self-creation is a letter where Gogol invites Maksymovych to wear the national dress and dance the tropak to return to their original element.

Посылаю тебе Миргород. Авось либо он тебе придется по душе. По крайней мере я бы желал, чтобы он прогнал хандрическое твое расположение духа, которое, сколько я замечаю, иногда овладевает тобою и в Киеве. **Ей богу, мы все страшно отделились от наших первоначальных элементов.** Мы никак не привыкнем (особенно ты) глядеть на жизнь, как на трин-траву, **как всегда глядел козак. Пробовал ли ты когда-нибудь, вставши поутру с постели, дернуть в одной рубашке по всей комнате тропака**³⁹¹? (22. 03. 1835)

The letters to Maksymovych hold a special place in Gogol's correspondence, as they most openly convey his feelings of love and nostalgia for Ukraine. They demonstrate a clear interest in Ukrainian history and a comparatively weaker connection to Russian history, suggesting a sense of detachment from the "Russian imagined community". In these letters, Gogol constructs a symbolic space for "compatriots", often using the first-person plural (e.g., "our beloved Ukraine", "we Little Russians"). Maksymovych can be seen as a catalyst for Gogol's Ukrainian identity, with his influence on Gogol being particularly notable.

Considering both Maksymovych's impact on Gogol and the fact that this kind of defensive posture was common among Ukrainian intellectuals at the time, it seems likely that Gogol adopted a similar strategy. His embrace of All-Russian identity was not one of assimilation; he was never fully "Russian", but rather always Ukrainian, or at least someone with a "double soul" (both Russian and Ukrainian), but never solely Russian. In this context, we can agree with both Grabowicz and Ilnytskyi, who suggest that the term *russky* carries an ambivalent meaning. Gogol's conception of All-Russian identity can thus be seen as reflecting a clear distinction between Ukrainian and Russian identities. This notion of the "double soul" acknowledges the distinct development of both

³⁹¹ I'm sending you Mirgorod. Perhaps you will like it. At least I wish it would drive away your moping mood, which, as I notice, sometimes takes hold of you in Kiev. By God, we have all become terribly distant from our primordial elements. We can't get used (especially you) to look at life as at the grass, as the kozak always did. Have you ever tried, when you got out of bed in the morning, to dance a tropak all over the room in one shirt?

nations, who were later united without true assimilation – a view shared by Maksymovych as well.

4.2.2 Mid-life letters (1836–1846)

4.2.2.1 Italy-Ukraine: the overlay of two motherlands

As Boris Gasparov observed³⁹², following the publication of *Mirgorod*, Gogol began distancing himself from his Ukrainian identity, replacing Ukraine with Italy as his ideal homeland. Kutik finds Gogol's identification of Italy with Ukraine intriguing, suggesting that the writer seemingly merges the two³⁹³. Kutik attributes this "Gogolian invention" – the blending of Ukraine with Italy – to the Platonic myth of the androgynous being. In his view, the two homelands could merge into a unified whole, representing the female and male components of this unity³⁹⁴.

Instead of being Gogol's original invention, we believe the overlay of the two homelands falls into a specific parallel between Ukraine and Italy, representing the South. The first corresponds in the literature of Russian Romanticism to what the second is in Western Europe and, to some extent, also in Russia, especially thanks to the popularity of Madame de Stael's *Corinne ou l'Italie* (Corinne, or Italy, 1807).

The Southern/Northern contrast observed in Gogol's earlier letters is also evident in his correspondence from Italy. In a letter to Balabina, written from Vienna on September 5, 1839, Gogol continues to emphasize the distinction between Southern and Northern cultures. Unfortunately, we do not have access to Balabina's letter. However, it seems that she reminds Gogol of his previous belief that poetry could only be found in the South. In response, Gogol defends himself against this claim, asserting that the North actually provides the greatest poetic

³⁹² Gasparov, B. (1999). Alienation and Negation: Gogol's View of Ukraine. *Gogol: Exploring Absence: Negativity in 19th Century Russian Literature*, p. 114.

³⁹³ Morson, G. S., & Kutik, I. (2005). *Writing as exorcism: the personal codes of Pushkin, Lermontov, and Gogol*. Northwestern University Press, p. 89.

³⁹⁴ *Ivi*, p. 92.

inspiration, but only for the strongest individuals. He admits this is not his case, as he was frequently unwell.

Из вашего письма (которое расшевелило во мне кое-что старого, за что вас благодарю) видно, что вы приняли то, что я сказал в частности о юге и севере, за решительное положение, что поэзия только на юге. Нет, на севере, может быть, еще более и чаще загоралась она. И для того, чьи силы молоды, и душа чувствует свежесть, для того север – разгул. Но вы простите прежние слова тому несчастному, чья душа, лишившись всего, что возвышает ее (ужасная утрата!), сохранила одну только печальную способность чувствовать это свое состояние³⁹⁵.

Gogol's sketch *Rome* focuses on the Southern/Northern opposition. Although, as Mann reminds us, it is difficult to say whether we are dealing with the prince's or Gogol's views³⁹⁶. What we can observe is a convergence between the prince's observations on the contraposition between Paris and Rome and Gogol's own observations. There is also quite a similarity between Gogol's dream about leaving Ukraine to gain a career in Saint Petersburg and the prince's desire to leave Italy, attracted by the modernity of France. The comparison between Saint Petersburg and Paris is also present in Gogol's correspondence. The two are considered similar because of the climate, harsh in both Paris and Saint Petersburg:

Всё наделал гадкий парижский климат, который, несмотря на то, что не имеет зимы, но ничем не лучше петербургского³⁹⁷. (30 March 1837, Rome)

As we have already seen, climate is a central characteristic for Gogol, whose health led him to seek a warmer one.

Since the beginning of his stay in Italy, Gogol has usually depicted Italy quite similarly to Ukraine. The correlation between the two countries seems to be

³⁹⁵ From your letter (which stirred up something old in me, for which I thank you) it's clear that you've taken what I said particularly about the south and north as a definitive statement that poetry exists only in the south. No, in the north, perhaps, it ignited even more often. And for one whose strength is young, and whose soul feels freshness, for that one the north is a revelry. But forgive the previous words of that unfortunate one whose soul, having lost everything that elevates it (a terrible loss!), has retained only the sad ability to feel this state of its own.

³⁹⁶ Манн, Ю. В. (1995). «Необходимость Италии» для Гоголя. *Литература: еженед. прилож. к газете «1 сентября»*, (24), 12, p. 225.

³⁹⁷ It was all caused by the nasty Parisian climate, which, despite not having a winter, is no better than that of Saint Petersburg.

echoed by an idealization of the South, as well as its climate and more conservative habits.

Gogol resided in Rome between 1837 and 1846, spending four and a half years there and returning nine times. According to Giuliani, his time in the city can be divided into two distinct periods: the first from March 1837 until his stay in Russia in August 1841, and the second from October 1842 until May 1846, when he chose to relocate to Naples.³⁹⁸

Especially at the beginning of his stay, Rome is seen through the images of Ukraine. In the letter below, addressed to his Ukrainian friend Danilevsky, the overlay of Ukraine to Italy characterized Gogol's first approach to Italy. The main characteristics common between the two are an old-fashioned way of life and old buildings. Gogol presents a personal fascination both with antiquity and with the absence of modernity.

Что сказать тебе вообще² об Италии? Мне кажется, что будто бы я заехал к старинным малороссийским помещикам. Такие же дряхлые двери у домов, со множеством бесполезных дыр, марающие платья мелом; старинные подсвечники и лампы в виде церковных. Блюда все особенные, все на старинный манер. Везде доселе виделась мне картина изменений. Здесь всё остановилось на одном месте и далее нейдет³⁹⁹. (To Danilevsky, 15 April 1837, Rome)

The opposition between Rome and Paris mirrors the one between Ukraine and Saint Petersburg. Paris represents modernity, which contrasts with Rome, which represents antiquity. Gogol does not silence his preference for antiquity and Rome.

³⁹⁸ Джулиани, Р. (2009). *Рим в жизни и творчестве Гоголя, или Потерянный рай*. Новое лит. Обозрение, pp. 231-243.

³⁹⁹ What can I tell you about Italy in general? It feels as though I've visited old Little Russian landlords. The same decrepit doors in the houses, full of useless holes that smear your clothes with chalk; old-fashioned candlesticks and lamps resembling those in churches. The dishes are all unique, prepared in the old style. Everywhere else I've seen the picture of change, but here everything has stopped in one place and goes no further.

Полковник больше человек современный, воспитанный на современной литературе и жизни; я больше люблю старое. Его тянет в Париж, меня гнетет в Рим⁴⁰⁰. (3 June 1837, Rome)

We propose that Gogol's fascination with Rome's antiquity conceals a deeper longing to relive his life in Ukraine. Unable to return to Ukraine, he sought refuge in what he perceived as a "distant Ukraine". At the time, Italy was home to a large community of Russian Empire citizens, particularly painters, making it easier for Gogol to immerse himself in this familiar environment rather than return to Ukraine. This choice was likely more acceptable to Saint Petersburg's society, than the idea of moving to Kyiv, as he planned in letters to Maksymovych.

The correlation between Italy and Ukraine also counts other characteristics that the writer usually attributed to Ukraine. The concept of idleness, also generally attributed in the Southern/Northern axis to the inhabitants of warmer climates and generally correlated to Ukrainianness, is presented in Gogol as a characteristic of the Italians as well.

Прошлый год был голод. Итальянцы ленивы. Папа на днях раздавал хлеб народу⁴⁰¹. (to his mother, 12 June 1837, Rome)

Italy is presented by Gogol as his new homeland. Everything he had lived in Russia and Saint Petersburg seems like a dream. The lack of Ukraine in this description makes it possible to see this longing for a homeland as Gogol's longing for Ukraine. Since it is impossible to come back to Ukraine, Gogol finds his own Ukraine in Italy.

Если бы вы знали, с какою радостью я бросил Швейцарию и полетел в мою душеньку, в мою красавицу Италию. Она моя! Никто в мире ее не отнимет у меня! Я родился здесь. – Россия, Петербург, снега, подлецы, департамент, кафедра, театр – всё это мне снилось. Я проснулся опять на родине и пожалел только, что поэтическая часть этого сна: вы да три,

⁴⁰⁰ The colonel is more of a modern man, shaped by contemporary literature and life; I prefer the old. He is drawn to Paris, while I feel attracted to Rome.

⁴⁰¹ Last year there was a famine. The Italians are lazy. The Pope recently distributed bread to the people

четыре оставивших вечную радость воспоминания в душе моей не перешли в действительность⁴⁰². (to Zhukovsky, 30 October 1837, Rome)

Rome embodies both the former homeland, Ukraine, and the celestial homeland, of which Gogol will write in his late letters. In a letter to Balabina, Gogol defines Rome to be the homeland of his soul.

И когда я увидел наконец во второй раз Рим, о, как он мне показался лучше прежнего! Мне казалось, **что будто я увидел свою родину**, в которой несколько лет не бывал я, а в которой жили только мои мысли. Но нет, это всё не то, не свою родину, **но родину души своей я увидел**, где душа моя жила еще прежде меня, прежде чем я родился на свет⁴⁰³. (To Balabina, April 1838, Rome)

According to Lotman, Gogol's description of the Roman people in *Rome* echoes both the description of the cossack Sich in *Taras Bulba* and of the Ukrainian villagers in *Evening at the farm near Dikanka*. The Sich is depicted as embodying traits like vitality and a disregard for material possessions. Gogol praises the lively spirit of the Roman people in much the same way he celebrates the energy of the Sich⁴⁰⁴.

4.2.2.2 Gogol's Reaction to His Portrait in *Molodyk*: Identity and Self-Image

In 1844, a portrait of Nikolai Gogol was published in the Ukrainian almanac *Molodyk*⁴⁰⁵, as well as in the eleventh edition of *Moskvitianin* in 1843. This event, particularly the *Molodyk* publication, provoked a strong negative reaction from Gogol.

⁴⁰² If only you knew with what joy I left Switzerland and flew to my darling, my beautiful Italy. She is mine! No one in the world can take her from me! I was born here. – Russia, St. Petersburg, the snow, scoundrels, the department, the podium, the theatre – all of that was a dream to me. I have woken up again in my homeland and only regret that the poetic part of that dream – you and three or four others who left eternal joyful memories in my soul – did not become reality.

⁴⁰³ And when I finally saw Rome for the second time, oh, how much better it seemed to me than before! It felt as if I had returned to my homeland, where I hadn't been for several years but where only my thoughts had lived. But no, that's not quite right – it wasn't my homeland I saw, but the homeland of my soul, where my soul had lived before me, even before I was born into the world.

⁴⁰⁴ Лотман, Ю. М. (2000). *Собрание сочинений*. Т. 1: Русская литература и культура Просвещения, р. 305.

⁴⁰⁵ Белинский, В. Г. (1955). *Молодик на 1844 год*, украинский литературный сборник. Издаваемый И. Бецким. В пользу Харьковского детского приюта. Санкт-Петербург. В тип. К. Жернакова. 1844, р. 16. <http://escriptorium.univer.kharkov.ua/handle/1237075002/3915>

In a letter to Yazykov dated October 1, 1844, Gogol expressed his displeasure:

Скажи Шевыреву, чтобы он объявил в Москвитяnine, что мне крайне было неприятно узнать, что без моего спросу и позволения в каком-то харьковском повременном издании приложили мой портрет и какие-то facsimile записки или тому подобное. Чтобы он объявил, что подобным мошенничеством не занимались прежде книгопродавцы, каким ныне занимаются литераторы. Я несколько раз отказывал книгопродавцам на их предложение награвировать мой портрет, кроме того, что мне не хотелось этого, я имел еще на то свои причины, для меня слишком важные. И уж ежели бы пришлось мне позволить гравировку портрета, то, вероятно, это бы сделано было только для Москвитянина, а не для другого какого-либо издания, и притом мне даже вовсе неизвестного. Попроси также Погодина, чтобы он написал письмо к Бецкому в Харьков, он его кажется знает, с запросом, каким образом и какими путями портрет мой зашел к нему в руки. Всё нужно сделать скорее. Затем прощай. Пока еще нет времени писать больше. До другого письма. Будь здоров, трезв и бодр духом и бог да хранит тебя⁴⁰⁶.

Gogol had previously refused requests from booksellers to engrave his portrait, indicating a desire to manage his public persona carefully. According to Jurij Mann, Gogol's reluctance to allow the publication of his portrait was connected with the author's desire to avoid public attention. In the scholar's view, Gogol did not feel prepared to publicly present himself in front of his readers, despite the fact that many knew him personally and were familiar with his appearance. We believe that Gogol's sense of disorientation is more linked to his appearance in the portrait itself and, secondly, to its publication in *Molodyk*.

In the same journal, Kostomarov published an article reviewing contemporary Ukrainian literature, marking the first literary assessment of Ukrainian literature to date. The review, titled *A Survey of Works Written in the Little Russian Language* (Обзор сочинений писанных на малороссийском языке), was

⁴⁰⁶ Tell Shevyrev to declare in Moskvtianin that it was extremely unpleasant for me to learn that my portrait and some facsimile notes or the like were enclosed in a contemporary publication in Kharkov without my request or permission. That he should declare that such fraud was not formerly practised by booksellers, as it is now practised by literati. I have several times refused booksellers their offer to engrave my portrait, except that I did not want it, I had my own reasons, too important for me. And if I had had to allow the engraving of my portrait, it would probably have been done only for Moskvtianin, and not for any other edition, and even unknown to me. Ask Pogodin also to write a letter to Betsky in Kharkov, as he seems to know him, asking how and by what means my portrait came into his hands. Everything must be done as soon as possible. Then farewell. There is no time to write more yet. Until another letter. Be well, sober and cheerful in spirit, and God bless you.

published under the pseudonym Jeremiia Halka. Ivan Becky, the editor of *Molodyk*, chose to include a portrait of Gogol in one of the pages, associating him with the publications. According to Luckij, Gogol was quite displeased with the unauthorized use of his portrait in *Molodyk*, as he found the association with Ukrainian literature distasteful⁴⁰⁷.

Considering the writer's description of the portrait itself, it could be argued that the discomfort associated with it was also connected to Gogol's mutating self-image. If we compare Gogol's self-description in this letter with his typical self-fashioning in the 1830s – described by Ilchuk as distinctly Ukrainian – it seems likely that Gogol, particularly during this period when he was accused of harbouring Little Russian sympathies in his famous letter to Smirnova, was concerned about appearing overly Ukrainian in his outward image.

Не скрою даже и того, что помещенье моего портрета именно в таком виде, то есть налитографированного с того портрета, который дан мною Погодину, увеличило еще более неприятность. Там я изображен, как был в своей берлоге назад тому несколько лет. Я отдал этот портрет Погодину как другу, по усиленной его просьбе, думая, что он, в самом деле, ему дорог как другу, и никак не подозревая, чтобы он опубликовал меня. Рассуди сам, полезно ли выставить меня в свет неряхой, в халате, с длинными взъерошенными волосами и усами? Разве ты сам не знаешь, какое всему этому дают значение? Но не для себя мне прискорбно, что выставили меня забулдыгой. Но, друг мой, ведь я знал, что меня будут выдирать из журналов. Поверь мне, молодежь глупа. У многих из них бывают чистые стремления; но у них всегда бывает потребность создать себе каких-нибудь идолов⁴⁰⁸.

⁴⁰⁷ Luckyj, G. S. N. (1971). *Between Gogol' and Sevchenko: polarity in the literary Ukraine: 1798–1847*, p. 164.

⁴⁰⁸ I will not even conceal the fact that the placing of my portrait in just such a form, i.e., cast from the portrait which I gave to Pogodin, increased the trouble even more. There I am represented as I was in my den a few years ago. I gave this portrait to Pogodin as a friend, at his strong request, thinking that it was indeed dear to him as a friend, and in no way suspecting that he would publish me. Judge for yourself, is it useful to expose me to the world slovenly, in a dressing-gown, with long dishevelled hair and a moustache? Don't you know the importance of all this? But it's not for myself that I feel sorrowful for being portrayed as a drunkard. But, my friend, I know, I will be ripped out of the magazines. Believe me, young people are stupid. Many of them have pure aspirations; but they always have a need to create some idols for themselves.

4.2.2.3 The letter to Smirnova: a declaration of multiple loyalty

While reflecting on Gogol's association between morality and Ukrainianness, we commented on his first reply to the famous Smirnova's letter, in which Gogol was asked to reveal whether he has a Russian or Little Russian soul. In this section, we investigate in detail the second reply, this time considering the concept of multiple loyalties to guide us in interpreting Gogol's answer.

Gogol's second reply to Smirnova, written on December 24, 1844, is frequently cited as evidence of his double identity. In it, he famously declares that he embodies both a Ukrainian and a Russian soul.

To better understand what led to this famous assumption, it is necessary to draw back to the context that created the question itself. Although Gogol is responding to Smirnova, he is, more precisely, addressing the literary salons of Saint Petersburg. In reviewing Smirnova's letter, we can see that Gogol employs a strategy of divergence in his response. Smirnova, herself Ukrainian, acknowledges Ukraine's past independence in her letter and expresses her understanding of Gogol's sense of belonging to Ukraine.

Но ведь и я родилась в Малороссии, воспиталась на галушках и варениках, и как мне ни мила Россия, а все же я не могу забыть ни степей, ни тех звездных ночей, ни крика перепелов, ни журавлей на крышах⁴, ни песен малороссийских бурлаков. Все там лучше, чем на севере, и все чрез Малороссию пройдем мы в Константинополь, чтобы сдружиться и слиться с западными братьями славянами. **А как и когда забудется, что некогда Украина была свободна.** Бог весть! Итак, никто более меня не понимает вашего – может быть, вами самими неузнанное чувство и таящееся от вас самих⁴⁰⁹.

After the first reply, which concentrates on the moral aspect of this double identity, only two months later Gogol will elaborate on the one in which he merges the

⁴⁰⁹ But I was also born in Little Russia, raised on dumplings and varenyky, and no matter how dear Russia is to me, I still cannot forget the steppes, the starry nights, the call of quails, the cranes on the rooftops, or the songs of the Little Russian barge haulers. Everything there is better than in the north, and we will pass through Little Russia on our way to Constantinople to unite and blend with our western Slavic brothers. And how or when will it be forgotten that Ukraine was once free? Who knows! So, no one understands your feelings better than I do – perhaps even feelings you haven't fully recognized yourself, hidden from even you.

Ukrainian and the Russian parts of his soul. This response could be seen as public and correct from the point of view of the Russian imperial project.

I'll tell you that I myself don't know what soul I have: Ukrainian [khokhlatskaia] or Russian. I only know that I would grant primacy neither to a Little Russian over a Russian nor to a Russian over a Little Russian. Both natures are generously endowed by God, and as if on purpose, each of them in its own way includes in itself that which the other lacks – a clear sign that they are meant to complement each other. Moreover, the very stories of their past way of life are dissimilar, so that the different strengths of their characters could develop and, having then united, could become something more perfect in humanity. (PSS 12, 419)

He describes himself as the result of two merging peoples – Ukrainian and Russian – each with distinct histories and customs, but which reached their most complete expression through uniting into a single people.

Gogol's second reply can be an extension of his academic reflections in his fragment *Glance at the Formation of Little Russia*. His “double soul” does not merely signal a torn identity; it also reflects a historical view of the formation of Ukrainian and Russian identities, influenced by scholars such as Maksymovych. Maksymovych's ideas, which emphasized the unity between Russians and Ukrainians, likely shaped Gogol's thinking, contributing to the sense of dual loyalty in his self-presentation.

It is important to consider that Gogol's expression of this “double soul” should not be reduced to a simple choice of allegiance. Instead, it is emblematic of his desire to be perceived as a loyal subject of the Russian Empire. In this regard, Gogol's self-creation mirrors that of Maksymovych, who could not entirely separate himself from his Ukrainian roots despite participating in the Imperial discourse. This dual identity reflects a broader intellectual strategy common among Ukrainian intellectuals of the time: balancing multiple allegiances within an imperial context that had not yet fully imposed the modern concept of exclusive national loyalty.

Thus, Gogol's “double soul” can be interpreted not as a sign of indecision or conflict between two parts of his identity but as an assertion of multiple loyalties.

This perspective was more viable before the rigid notions of nationality that later required conforming to the Imperial official nationality.

5. Analysis of Słowacki's Correspondence

This part of the analysis focuses on Słowacki's correspondence. Unlike Gogol's letters, Słowacki's provide fewer examples for exploring his construction of "Ukrainianness." This may be due to the smaller number of surviving letters compared to Gogol's and the fact that most of Słowacki's correspondence was addressed to his family, particularly his mother.

As a result, we can infer that Słowacki's sense of Ukrainianness is more closely tied to the creation of his literary persona rather than a personal vision of identity. His self-representation in the letters is primarily linked to his literary works.

Strategies of accommodation are evident throughout his correspondence, especially in his letters to his mother. These strategies often reflect a convergence towards the recipient's expectations, with less divergence compared to Gogol's approach to accommodation.

The analysis is structured around several sub-themes. First, it addresses the significance of Kremenets as Słowacki's "little homeland." This is followed by an examination of his self-representation, where he identifies as a Volhynian. The analysis further explores Słowacki's interactions with other poets of the Ukrainian school within Polish Romanticism.

Subsequently, the focus shifts to Słowacki's use of Ukrainianisms in his letters, and his depiction of the distinctions between Ukraine and Lithuania. This contrast is essential to the construction of his personal myth, which he positions in opposition to that of Mickiewicz. Finally, the section examines the theme of literary self-creation as it emerges in Słowacki's correspondence.

5.1 Kremenets as Słowacki's Little Homeland

During his life, Słowacki lived in a state of economic, as well as psychological, dependence on his mother⁴¹⁰. Ewa Nawrocka claims in her article *'[...] List to nie słowo'. O listach Słowackiego do matki* that the alleged dependence of the son in the letters responds to the needs of the mother⁴¹¹. Reconstructing Salomea Becu's character within the letters, we notice a manipulative attitude: she blames her son for a lack of sincerity, for avoiding writing to her on purpose, and for abandoning her. When she sends him money, she accompanies it with sorrowful letters, emphasizing the material sacrifices she has made for her son. This, unconsciously or not, leads Słowacki to adopt forms of accommodation. Alina Kowalczykova underlines the great difference between the relationship with Salomea Becu, which appears in the correspondence and in the poet's personal diary⁴¹².

Katarzyna Wybraniec notes how Słowacki's letters follow a fixed pattern⁴¹³. They are written as if to fulfil the recipient's expectations. First, they respond to his mother's desire for detailed descriptions of places and people, sometimes even in the form of gossip. In addition, they are written in a literary form and seem to express everything in the poet's heart, apart from what might offend the mother's sensibility. This was to comply with Salomea Becu's literary taste and interest in details, as she was not pleased with the laconic style of Słowacki's juvenile letters.

The consistent presence of images of Kremenets in Słowacki's letters could be interpreted as a way to adhere to Salomea Becu's expectations. Kremenets was the town where the poet's mother lived, and it represented the bond between

⁴¹⁰ Ziemia, K. (2002). Salomea Bécu i Młody Słowacki. In A. Czyż & E. Podrez (Eds.), *yobraźnia jako jaźń twórcza. Studia z etyki, literatury i sztuki*. NERITON, pp. 129-155.

⁴¹¹ Nawrocka, E. (2000). „[...] List to nie słowo”. O listach Słowackiego do matki. In J. Sytachelska & E. Dąbrowicz (Eds.), *Szutka pisania: o liście polskim w wieku XIX*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, p. 118.

⁴¹² Kowalczykova, A. (1999). *Słowacki*. Wydawn. Nauk. PWN, p. 33.

⁴¹³ Wybraniec K. (2000), *Kobieta jako adresat listów Juliusza Słowackiego*. In J. Sytachelska & E. Dąbrowicz (Eds.), *Szutka pisania: o liście polskim w wieku XIX*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, p. 144.

mother and son. As he emigrated, he constantly reminded Kremenets in letters to Salomea to maintain the connection between the two:

Czasem natężam tak moją imaginacją, że was widzę – widzę Krzemieniec – dywaniki rozkwitające pod waszymi rękami – i przez wiele godzin dnia z wami jestem⁴¹⁴. (23–24 August 1833, Geneva)

Słowacki traced images of foreign lands by contraposing them to already-known images of his native town. As Luiza Oliander claims, Słowacki uses images of Kremenets to describe Europe to his mother, as she could not have travelled there. His descriptions are made by juxtaposing foreign images with familiar images⁴¹⁵.

For instance, in a letter written from Naples Słowacki likens the city to the letter “ę” as a way to help the city materialize before his mother’s eyes – a technique noted by Oliander as well⁴¹⁶. In the same letter, he clarifies that she might struggle to envision the city, being accustomed to her simple life in Volhynia:

Oto masz, droga moja, wyobrażenie Neapolu. Nie wiem, czy ty, co jak biedna jaskółka mieszkaś w glinianym domku – w cichej dolinie krzemienieckiej – będziesz mogła z tych kilku słów utworzyć sobie jaki obraz⁴¹⁷. (to his mother, 20 June 1836 Neaples)

In other instances, foreign landscapes are recreated by overlaying them with familiar ones, reinforcing the bond between him and his mother. In this way, Kremenets undergoes a process of transfiguration in his letters. In a letter written on August 21/23, 1834, the poet asks his mother to envision the mountains of Switzerland, where he was at the time, instead of those surrounding Kremenets.

Całuję rączki kochanego Dziadunia – niech pomyśli o wnuku i spojrz na Zamkową Górę. Mamo, a ty przy księżycu wystaw sobie, że na waszych górach stoją inne góry, ze śniegu – że na tych

⁴¹⁴ Sometimes I strain my imagination so much that I see you – I see Kremenets – the little rugs blossoming under your hands – and I am with you for many hours of the day.

⁴¹⁵ Оляндер, Л. (2015). Світ і людина в епістолярії Юліуша Словацького: Listy do matki (Листи до матері). *Київські полоністичні студії*, (26), p. 421.

⁴¹⁶ *Ivi*, p. 418.

⁴¹⁷ Here you have, my dear, an image of Naples. I don't know if you, who like a poor swallow live in a clay house – in the quiet valley of Kremenets – will be able to create any picture for yourself from these few words.

białych imaginacyjnych górach ja jestem – i że stamtąd patrzę na mały domek, który jest twoim mieszkaniem⁴¹⁸. (to his mother, 21/23 August 1834)

However, it would be inaccurate to think that the importance of Kremenets relates only to the presence of the poet's mother. Słowacki found it necessary to remember and recreate his homeland. He constructed a series of legends around the town: Kremenets is re-imagined. For Słowacki, self-creating his homeland was a way of giving it importance, comparing it to literary images and recreating the homeland while being distant. His hometown also features in his literary works, and its landscape functions as a poetic attribute. In the introduction to *Balladyna*, Kremenets castle appears as the embodiment of the poet's creative powers:

Bo ileż to razy, patrząc na stary zamek koronujący ruinami górę mego rodzinnego miasteczka, marzyłem, że kiedyś w ten wieniec wyszczerbionych murów nasypię widm, duchów, rycerzy; że odbuduję upadłe sale i oświecę je przez okna ogniem piorunowych nocy, a sklepieniom każę powtarzać dawne co Sofoklesowskie niestety! A za to imię moje słyszane będzie w szumie płynącego pod góra potoku, a jakaś niby tęcza z myśli moich unosić się będzie nad ruinami zamku⁴¹⁹.

Słowacki's memories of Kremenets are only partly based on his personal experiences and are largely reimagined. He frequently merges images of Kremenets with literary imagery, drawing from sources like Shakespeare and Ossian. These literary images are not merely used to describe the town; rather, literature is portrayed as an intrinsic part of Kremenets's identity. Through this fusion, Słowacki connects fragmented memories of the town with literary references, allowing him to reconstruct his childhood. These composite

⁴¹⁸ I kiss the hands of my dear Grandfather – let him think of his grandson and look at Zamkowa Mountain. Mother, and you, in the moonlight, imagine that on your mountains stand other mountains, of snow – that on these white imaginary mountains I am standing – and that from there I look at the small house which is your dwelling.

⁴¹⁹ For how often it was that I would gaze at the ruins of the old castle that stood on a hill overlooking my home town, and dream that one day I would populate the ring of shattered walls with specters, spirits, and knights; that I would rebuild the broken chambers and through the window illuminate them with the fire of lightning-filled evenings, and would command the ceilings to repeat the ancient Sophoclean “Alas!” And at the same time my name would be heard in the murmur of the stream flowing at the foot of that hill, and, as it were, a rainbow of my thoughts would hover over the castle ruins. (Translated by Bill Johnston. Cochran, P. (Ed.). (2009). *Poland's angry romantic: two poems and a play by Juliusz Słowacki*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, p. 32.

memories then serve as a lens through which he interprets reality, blending past images with new ones through repetition and superimposition. In this way, the poet creates a personal myth around Kremenets: it embodies a poetic homeland.

For example, Słowacki presents the Kremenets *vertep*, the traditional Ukrainian nativity play, as the inspiration behind his Shakespearean fervour.

Nie wiem dlaczego, ale ciągle myślałem o wigilii u prefekta Jarkow, którą kiedyś jadłem będąc dzieckiem. Potem przyszła mi na myśl wielka babuni piekarnia – czeladź śpiewająca kolędy – potem wertep krzemieniecki, ktoremu może winien jestem moj szekspirowski zapal. (To his mother, Florence, 1838, 2 January)⁴²⁰.

The mountains, Zamkowa and Czercza, are presented in pure romantic fashion and connected with Ossianic imagery:

Wszak to wzgorze między Gorą Zamkową i Czerczą, gdzie miał biały stanąć kościółek, zawsze czeka na kamień pierwszy na kilka trumien. – Krol bawarski wystawił teraz kościółek podobny i nazwał go pałacem Walhalli. – Niech więc nasze wzgorze czeka i co roku okrywa się wonną konwaliją, i odbija echemi śpiewania słowikow, ukrytych w Czerczy zaroślach, a tymczasem synowie Osjana mają mieszkanie w chmurach⁴²¹. (To his mother, 2–3 January 1838, Florence)

Additionally, Słowacki references Dante's *Inferno* in his depiction of Kremenets, comparing it to the "gate of hell." The specific location of this gate, between the Czercza Mountain and the Basilian monastery, is intentional. In this area, a road led out of Kremenets toward the West and North, symbolizing emigration's challenging and often tragic journey.

Między Czerczą, a Bazylijanami stoi dla mnie ta brama Danta, na ktorej jest napisano: Lasciate ogni speranza; ja też, raz przeczytawszy napis, odwróciłem się zalany łzami i poszedłem dalej – i coraz dalej idę – więc tak oddalającemu się błogosław ty, droga, i wejdź na górę najwyższą, i

⁴²⁰ I don't know why, but I kept thinking about the Christmas Eve at Prefect Jarkowski's, where I had been as a child. Then I remembered grandmother's large oven, the servants singing kolędy [Christmas carols], Kremenets's *vertep*, which perhaps is responsible for my Shakespearean fervor.

⁴²¹ Surely, that hill between Zamkowa Góra and Czercza, where a white little church was supposed to be built, is still waiting for the first stone and for a few coffins. – The King of Bavaria has now built a similar church and called it the Walhalla Palace. – So let our hill wait, and every year cover itself with fragrant lilies of the valley, and echo the songs of nightingales hidden in the thickets of Czercza, while in the meantime the sons of Ossian dwell in the clouds.

błogosław mu, ażeby Bog ciebie widział bliżej i błogosławieństwo twoje – aby mi kiedy jakiś anioł zły nie powiedział na wejściu do wieczności: „Smutna była, żeś ją opuścił”⁴²².

As mentioned, Kremenets is Słowacki’s Eastern nest in his literary writings, but its Ukrainianness is not central in his correspondence. Kremenets is not so much a symbol of “Ukrainianness” as it is a part of Słowacki’s personal myth.

5.2 “We Volhynians are brave lads”

When examining Słowacki’s relationship with Ukrainian identity, a notable contrast emerges between his self-creation in literary works and personal correspondence. Unlike Gogol, who explicitly addressed his Ukrainian identity in his letters, Słowacki’s epistolary self-creation is more nuanced, with his regional identity primarily manifesting through cultural markers and memories of Volhynia.

A particularly revealing episode appears in his letter from November 7, 1834, where he recounts an evening at Mrs. Wodzińska’s home. During this social gathering, a lady identified him as Volhynian based on his distinctive style of dancing the mazurka:

A propos – ostatni list zakończyłem donosząc wam, że jestem zaproszony do pani Wodzińskiej na wieczór. Otóż na tym wieczorze napróżd zrobiono mi komplement taki (a bardzo ładne i różowe usta mówiły, jak następuje): „Znaczno, że Pan z Wołynia Wołyniak – Wołynianin, bo po wołyńsku tańczysz mazurka”. Nie chciałem Wołyniowi ujmować sławy, jaką z mego tańcu odnosi, i ukloniwszy się powiedziałem: „Ha, prawda, że my Wołyniacy, to dziarskie chłopcy...” Trzeba widzieć moją teraz cienką postawę, aby sobie wystawić, jak mi te junackie słowa były do twarzy⁴²³.

⁴²² Between Czercza and the Basilian Monastery, there stands for me that gate of Dante, upon which is written: "Lasciate ogni speranza" (Abandon all hope); I too, having read the inscription once, turned away, overwhelmed with tears, and went further — and keep going further still — so bless me, you, my dear, as I move away, and climb to the highest mountain, and bless me so that God sees you closer and your blessing — so that some evil angel does not tell me at the gates of eternity: "She was sad because you left her."

⁴²³ About that – I ended my last letter telling you that I was invited to Mrs. Wodzińska’s for an evening. Well, at this evening, first they paid me a compliment (and it was very pretty and pink lips that spoke as follows): “It’s clear that you’re from Volhynia, a true Volhynian, because you dance the mazurka in the Volhynian style.” I didn’t want to diminish Volhynia’s fame that it gained from my dancing, so I bowed and said: “Well, it’s true that we Volhynians are brave lads...” You should see my now slender figure to imagine how well these bold words suited my face.

The passage's self-deprecating tone and Słowacki's ironic embrace of the Volhynian stereotype suggest a complex relationship with his regional identity.

According to Makowski, Słowacki would have never defined himself as Ukrainian but rather as Volhynian, as this letter shows. According to the scholar, his representation of Ukraine was not ethnic but mostly socially connotated with the differentiation between the lower and higher strata of the population. The ethnic element appeared only after 1840, while the writer worked on *Beniowski*⁴²⁴. Makowski believes that in Słowacki's vision, Polish and Ukrainian cultures functioned as an integrated unity between the nobility and the people⁴²⁵.

In Słowacki's correspondence, direct references to Volhynia are relatively sparse, with his hometown of Kremenets receiving more attention. When Volhynia does appear, it often emerges through sensory memories and emotional associations, as evidenced in this September 15, 1830 letter to his mother:

Staruszek jeden, po polsku ubrany, siedział w końcu stoła – zdawało mi się, że kochany Dziadunio był na jego miejscu. Winogrona, kawony, melony Wołyń mnie przypominały i jeszcze bardziej dopomagały iluzji⁴²⁶. (To his mother, 15 September 1830, Warsaw)

5.3 Słowacki and the other poets of the Ukrainian school of Polish Romanticism

On the 16 of February 1842, Słowacki was included among the poets of the Ukrainian school in *Dziennik domowy*⁴²⁷. Despite his interest in Ukrainian themes, he frequently criticized, even quite harshly, the works of Goszczynski and Zaleski and often tried to distance himself from the works of the other poets. This holds particularly true for his work *Beniowski*, in which deliberately inserts a

⁴²⁴ Makowski S. (2003). Ukrainizm młodego Słowackiego. in Idem. *Słowacki i Ukraina*. Wydawnictwo uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowski. Lublin, p. 10.

⁴²⁵ *Ivi*, p. 11.

⁴²⁶ An elderly man, dressed in Polish fashion, sat at the end of the table – it seemed to me that beloved Grandfather was in his place. The grapes, watermelons, and melons reminded me of Volhynia and contributed even more to the illusion.

⁴²⁷ Kamiński, N. L. F. (Ed.). (1842, February 16). Kraszewski, Krasieński, Czajkowski. *Dziennik Domowy*, 3(4), 29-36. <http://polona.pl/preview/2ccebca2-ef3e-46a9-890a-1fffb37a330a>.

Ukrainian word (середина – in the middle, inside) for rhyming purposes – the very technique he criticized in Zaleski's work.

Jak złoty, piękny domów jest syreden! –

Ukraińskie to słoweczko, nie moje.

Wywołał je tu rym przez dźwięki bliźnie,

Nie miłość, którą mam ku Kozaczyźnie⁴²⁸.

He dedicated an article entitled *O poezjach B. Zaleskiego* (On the poetry of Bohdan Zaleski, 1842) to Bohdan Zaleski, criticising his writings and topics⁴²⁹. The article was written in 1842, probably as a response to the positive reviews that Zaleski received in 1841 in *Dziennik Narodowy* after the publication of his collection of poems *Poezycj, 1841*⁴³⁰. Słowacki argues that his own, quite harsh, review is to give Zaleski access to eternal glory after his death while he already had public recognition in his life. Among Słowacki's comments, three seem particularly interesting in terms of understanding his depiction of the Ukrainian theme in his private letters.

Słowacki criticizes Zaleski for invoking quite rarely Poland as his homeland:

[...] poeta opisał nam naprzód swoje wykarmienie przez matkę Ukrainę i rusałki [...] O! pieści Polska – pieści – kiedy nie pamięta imię swego poety... pieszczotliwa to matka – co wyglądała, ciągle pytając: a kiedyż on mi zaspiewa? a kiedyż głos jego usłyszę... smutna to matrona, której nie można było dziecinnym dźwiękiem odpowiedzieć.

⁴²⁸ You'd see a golden, chaste, and pretty syreden! (This little word, imported from Ukraine, I use because it chimes like two twin rabbits –I have no general joy in Cossack habits). (translated by Mirosława Modrzewska and Peter Cochran in Cochran, P. (Ed.). (2009). *Poland's angry romantic: two poems and a play by Juliusz Słowacki*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, p 201.)

⁴²⁹ Słowacki, J. (1959). *Dzieła* (J. Krzyżanowski, Ed.; Vol. 11). pp. 139–147.

⁴³⁰ Sawrymowicz, E. (1960). *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Juliusza Słowackiego*. Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, p. 409.

Słowacki is referring to the fact that Zaleski's regionalism is concentrated almost only on Ukraine. Thus, Słowacki presents Poland as Zaleski's betrayed mother.

Słowacki's second major criticism targets Zaleski's linguistic choices, particularly his use of Ukrainian expressions. Far from viewing this hybridization as enrichment, Słowacki perceives it as a mark of linguistic poverty:

Co do piękności języka – dorzucenie kilku wyrazów ruskich do rymu nie jest bogactwem – jest to ubóstwo raczej, które musiało pożyczać – bogactwo zależy na śmiałych i pięknych wyrażach – i na otwartych samogłoskach, nie zaś na skupieniu krótkich jednosylabowych słów i na sprowadzeniu razem tętniących spółgłosek, tak ażeby każda miara wierszowa była garstką zbitych razem w jedne dźwięków⁴³¹...

Słowacki's notes in the *raptularz* reveal his complex relationship with Ukrainian elements in poetry, seen as venomous and foreign:

- Różne trucizny i tony nie nasze – ukraińszczyzna w poezji –

wswoić trzeba w siebie lud ruski –⁴³²

Słowacki then draws a parallel between the Ukrainian school and England's Lake Romantics, using this comparison to articulate an alternative vision for Zaleski's potential. He imagines that Zaleski might have become the Ariosto of the Dnieper Cossacks had he balanced his Ukrainian independence with proper literary study:

Ogólnikując to wszystko – możemy powiedzieć, że Bohdan, mogąc być bardzo wysoko – gdyby się był kształcił na wzorach, a swojej ukraińskiej samodzielności nie stracił – mogąc być Ariostem Kozaków dniewprowych – tak że kiedyś ślepy lirnik śpiewałby jego długi poemat ludowi – a lud przyklaskiwałby lub płakał dobrodusznie – jak neapolitańskie lazarony, gdy im obdarty poeta o śmierci konia Rolandowego zaśpiewa; mając przed sobą taką przyszłość – dobrowolnie prawie stanął przy wielotomowym Książninie – a jeszcze i przed Karpińskim z drogi ustąpił⁴³³.

⁴³¹Regarding the beauty of language – adding a few Ruthenian expressions for rhyme is not richness – it is rather poverty that had to borrow. True wealth depends on bold and beautiful expressions – and on open vowels, not on the concentration of short monosyllabic words and the bringing together of throbbing consonants, so that each verse measure is a handful of sounds clumped together...

⁴³² Various poisons and tones not our own – Ukrainianness in poetry – one must internalize the Ruthenian people (Słowacki, J., Troszyński, M. (1996). *Raptularz 1843-1849*. Topos, p. 114).

⁴³³ Generalizing all this – we can say that Bohdan, who could have been very high – if he had been educated on models, and had not lost his Ukrainian independence – could have been the Ariosto of the Dnieper Cossacks – so that one day a blind lyricist would sing his long poem to the people – and the people would applaud or weep good-naturedly – like the Neapolitan lazarons, when a shabby poet sings to them about the death of Roland's horse; with such a future ahead of him – he voluntarily almost stood by the multi-volume Książnin – and even before Karpiński he stepped aside.

Słowacki's relationship with Zaleski's work reveals a complex duality: while his early poetry shows clear signs of influence from Zaleski's Ukrainian themes, his later criticism suggests a deep-seated unease with Zaleski's singular devotion to Ukraine. This tension likely originated from Słowacki's own ambivalent position – drawn to Ukrainian themes yet anxious about their potential to overshadow broader Polish cultural identity. In a way, Zaleski's work served as a mirror for Słowacki's own unresolved questions about cultural loyalty and poetic authenticity in the borderland context.

Kuziak argues that Słowacki's complex relationship with Polish identity was deeply rooted in the historical trauma of Poland's lost statehood. The poet's awareness of this fractured national identity was further complicated by his recognition of other ethnic groups' rights to cultural autonomy⁴³⁴.

As Makowski noticed, Słowacki considered himself the continuator of Malczewski's work⁴³⁵. Słowacki was extremely fond of Malczewski's *Maria* and considered him to be, along with Mickiewicz, the bard of Polish literature. Compared to the poet's consideration of Mickiewicz, we notice a complete and undoubted admiration of Malczewski, who Słowacki defined in Beniowski as the eulogist of Ukraine.

In his correspondence, Słowacki's identification with Malczewski transcends mere admiration to become almost mystical. According to Marta Białobrzaska, Słowacki recognized their similarities – both were born in the southeastern borderlands, raised in Kremenets, and gifted with poetic talent. Słowacki viewed these shared experiences with Malczewski as more than mere coincidence – they represented a profound artistic destiny. He envisioned himself not simply following Malczewski's footsteps but carrying forward and fulfilling his predecessor's poetic vision⁴³⁶.

⁴³⁴ Kuziak, M. (2010). *Słowacki postkolonialny*. Teatr Polski, pp. 58 – 59.

⁴³⁵ Makowski, S. (1996). Słowacki: kontynuator Malczewskiego. *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, 40(2), pp. 411–429.

⁴³⁶ Białobrzaska, M. Pamięć o Marii i Antonim Malczewskim w poetyckiej refleksji Juliusza Słowackiego. In *Pamięć Juliusza Słowackiego*. Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, pp. 181–182.

Patrząc co dnia na szczyt Mont-Blanc, przychodzi mi często na myśl Malczewski, który po śmierci jednym poematem tak urósł, że prawie głową przewyższa naszych poetów. Przebiegając opisane wejścia na górę Mont Blanc, znalazłem na ostatniej karcie między wyliczonymi bohaterami tego trudnego przedsięwzięcia imię Malczewskiego, ale skałeczone tak, że gdybym skąd innąd o jego wędrowce na górę nie wiedział, to bym się był o tożsamości osoby nie domyślił... Nie wiem dlaczego, ale myśl o Malczewskim została głęboko w moich dumaniach utkwiona. Zdaje mi się, że jest coś podobieństwa między nami, ale burza jeszcze mnie nie złamała⁴³⁷. (15 July 1833 – Geneva)

5.4 Use of Ukrainianisms

A general use of stylized forms of provincialisms or folklorisms is abundant in the Polish romantic movement⁴³⁸. Despite the poet's criticism of Zaleski's use of Ukrainian expressions, Słowacki's literary works contain numerous expressions from the Ukrainian language. According to Czermiński, Słowacki's use of expressions from Ukrainian in his literary works gradually grew from an absence of Ukrainianisms in his first works, despite their Ukrainian theme, to an abundance in his late works, especially in *Król-duch* and in *Beniowski*⁴³⁹.

In contrast, Słowacki's letters contain a relatively limited use of Ukrainianisms.

Marian Jurkowski distinguishes between unconscious and conscious use of Ukrainianisms by Słowacki⁴⁴⁰. The first category is unintentional and is largely tied to Słowacki's early exposure to the borderland speech from childhood. According to Makowski, this Polish-Ukrainian diglossia was an integral part of the culture of Kremenets. The Polish language (język pański – the language of the gentry) and the Ukrainian one (język chłopski – peasant language) were understood and used by both strata of the population⁴⁴¹. Additionally, as

⁴³⁷ Looking every day at the summit of Mont-Blanc, I often think of Malczewski, who after his death with a single poem grew so tall that he almost surpasses our poets by a head. While reading through the description of the ascent of Mont Blanc, I found Malczewski's name on the last page among the listed heroes of this difficult endeavor, but it was so distorted that had I not known of his mountain journey from elsewhere, I would never have guessed his identity. I don't know why, but the thought of Malczewski has lodged deep in my reveries. It seems to me there is something of a resemblance between us, though the storm has not yet broken me.

⁴³⁸ Skubalanka, T. (1984). *Historyczna stylistyka języka polskiego: przekroje*, pp. 215–218.

⁴³⁹ Czermiński, A. (1930). *Ukraina w poezji Słowackiego*. Nakładem autora, pp. 73–83.

⁴⁴⁰ Jurkowski, M. (1974). *Ukrainizmy w języku Juliusza Słowackiego*. Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, p. 128.

⁴⁴¹ Makowski S. Ukrainizm młodego Słowackiego. in Idem (2003). *Słowacki i Ukraina*: Wydawnictwo uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowski. Lublin, p. 11.

Jurkowski points out, the unintentional use of Ukrainianisms can be attributed to the fact that, during the Romantic period, many Ukrainian borrowings became part of the Polish literary language⁴⁴².

An example of an unconscious Ukrainianism appears in Słowacki's letter from June 14/15, 1837, addressed to his mother. In this letter, he recalls his grandmother's words:

Wracam z mojej wschodniej podróży zupełnie odarty: jak Babka mówiła, **spanachawszy** manatki⁴⁴³.

The verb *panachać* (from Ukrainian: to tear, to rip into pieces) appears here as a natural part of family discourse. This use of Ukrainianism can be seen as a form of accommodation. The poet attempted to recreate a familiar atmosphere with his mother. Notably, in *Sen srebrny Salomei*, the character of Salomea's grandmother also speaks Ukrainian, which is portrayed as a negative trait⁴⁴⁴. In other instances, Słowacki unconsciously incorporates Ukrainian words. One such example is *bodiaki* (thistles), where the Polish equivalent would be *oseł*:

Gniazda takie spokojnych ludzi, dla duchów przelatujących przez ziemię są nadzwyczaj niebezpieczne – wabią, zachęcają do spokojnego szczęścia, każdy grat przyczepia się do surduta podróżnego chwytą, usiłując zatrzymać, jak te nasze ukraińskie **bodiaki**, czepiające się koni rozhukanych – ale ktoż się da zatrzymać **bodiakom**?⁴⁴⁵ (From a letter to his mother, Paris, Monday, October 2, 1843.)

Another example of unconscious use is *czerep* (skull), where the more common Polish term is *czaszka*. The same word is also attested in most of Słowacki's literary works⁴⁴⁶.

⁴⁴² Jurkowski, M. (1974). *Ukrainizmy w języku Juliusza Słowackiego*. Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, p. 128.

⁴⁴³ I return from my eastern journey completely stripped: as Grandma used to say, having torn up my belongings.

⁴⁴⁴ Nachlik J., *Ukrainie i polskie elementy w Śnie srebrnym Salomei Juliusza Słowackiego*, in *Słowacki i Ukraina* (2003), red. Maria Woźniakiewicz-Dziadosz, wydawnictwo uniwersytet Marii Curii-Skłodowski, Lublin, p. 56.

⁴⁴⁵ Nests like these, of peaceful people, are extremely dangerous for spirits passing through the earth – they entice, encourage a quiet happiness, every trinket clings to the traveler's coat, trying to hold on, like our Ukrainian thistles clinging to wild horses – but who would let themselves be stopped by thistles?

⁴⁴⁶ Jurkowski, M. (1974). *Ukrainizmy w języku Juliusza Słowackiego*. Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, p. 117.

Patrząc na ten twardy **czerep** zdaje mi się, że już umarłem, i dlatego medalion ten wisi w moim pokoju⁴⁴⁷.

(From a letter to his mother, Paris, Saturday, November 10, 1841.)

As for what Jurkowski calls intentional Ukrainianisms, we can include Słowacki's deliberate use of the word *dumka*. For example, in this letter, he asks his mother for some songs:

Kobietom tutejszym niezmiernie się Hryć podoba – także pieśń o Potockim, ale ja znajduję, że ją Mama lepiej ułożyła. Jeżeli macie jakie **dumki** z muzyką, ładne a mało znane, to mi przyślijcie⁴⁴⁸.

(From a letter to his mother, Paris, Thursday, October 20, 1831.)

Compared to his literary works, the intentional use of Ukrainianisms is relatively rare in Słowacki's correspondence. This suggests that his use of Ukrainian elements was primarily an artistic choice, and unlike Gogol, he showed little interest in adopting Ukrainian expressions for convergence in everyday communication.

5.5 Słowacki and the construction of a Ukrainian identity as oppositional towards Mickiewicz's Lithuanian identity

As previously noted, the poet's identification with Ukraine is more a product of literary invention than a reflection of his private life. One possible reason for constructing Ukraine as his homeland could be a desire to create a powerful personal myth to rival Mickiewicz's mythologization of Lithuania.

While the poet spent relatively few years in his native Kremenets, significantly less time than in Lithuania, he deliberately constructed Ukraine as his spiritual homeland through his writing. Słowacki's deep connection to his mother is a crucial point in understanding Słowacki's choice of Kremenets and Ukraine as his private homeland. His mother was born and spent her entire life in Kremenets. Thus, Kremenets was the address for the letters he consistently wrote to his

⁴⁴⁷ Looking at this hard skull, it seems to me that I have already died, and that is why this medallion hangs in my room.

⁴⁴⁸ The women here are extremely fond of "Hryć" – as well as the song about Potocki, but I find that Mother composed it better. If you have any *dumki* with music, nice and little-known, please send them to me.

mother throughout his life⁴⁴⁹. As Troszyński suggests⁴⁵⁰, Ukraine can be seen as a symbol of the poet's mother and childhood. On the other hand, Lithuania represented his father and stepfather, who were both associated with the University of Vilnius.

Lithuania symbolized the end of childhood innocence, marked particularly by the traumatic death of his friend Ludwik. This opposition first appears in *Godzina Myśli* (1833), where Słowacki interweaves his Vilnius experiences with Kremenets landscapes, creating a complex tapestry of memory and imagination⁴⁵¹.

According to Alina Kowalczykova, the choice of Kremenets would help Słowacki to create a distinctive personal myth to contrast Mickiewicz's myth. While Mickiewicz could showcase Vilnius, Lithuania and the river Niemen as part of his personal myth, Słowacki produced an opposite myth, in which he could claim Kremenets, Ukraine and the river Ikwa. Kowalczykova also shows how Kremenets was a perfect reverse image of Vilnius: it also had three mountains (Zamkowa, Czercza and Łysa, the counterparts of Vilnius's Zamkowa, Trzykrzyska and Bekieszowa, the latter also called Łysa), it also displayed the ruins of an ancient castle and, at least in Słowacki's imagination, it could rival with Vilnius when it comes to the number of towers⁴⁵².

Słowacki's correspondence reveals how deeply the opposition between Ukrainian and Lithuanian identities penetrated his personal and artistic life. His letters, particularly those to Zygmunt Krasiński and Joanna Bobrowa, demonstrate three crucial aspects of this rivalry:

In his February 1841 letter to Krasiński, Słowacki's antagonism reaches its peak with his provocative suggestion: "Let's join hands and throw this drunk Lithuanian bard off Parnassus" ["Weźmy się za ręce i zrzućmy z Parnasu tego pijanego barda litewskiego"]. This dismissive characterization of Mickiewicz as a "drunk

⁴⁴⁹ Troszyński, M. (2014). *Słowacki: poza kanonem*. Słowo/obraz terytoria, p. 29.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ivi*, pp. 48-49.

⁴⁵¹ *Ivi*, p. 29.

⁴⁵² Alina Kowalczykova, *Słowacki*, Wydawnictwo naukowe PWN, Warszawa, 1999, p. 13.

Lithuanian bard” reveals personal animosity and a broader cultural critique, positioning Lithuanian poetry as less refined or civilized than his Ukrainian-influenced work.

The June 1841 letter to Joanna Bobrowa describes a dramatic confrontation with the Lithuanian literary circle in Paris. After criticizing them in *Beniowski*, Słowacki reports that “the Lithuanians decided to either kill or humiliate me” to challenge him to a duel. This incident demonstrates how literary rivalry extended beyond mere poetic competition to broader cultural and personal antagonisms, with the Lithuanian identity becoming synonymous with his literary opponents.

Zaledwo przyjechałem do Paryża, wrogi moje, wychłostane_w pierwszej i w trzeciej pieśni Beniowskiego, wydawcy „Młodej Polski”, jezuickiego dziennika, a obszerniej biorąc jeszcze rzecz, Litwini – postanowili zabić mnie lub upokorzyć – jakoż na drugi dzień zaraz przysłali mi jednego z eleganckiej litewskiej młodzieży, aby mię wyzwiał, ten z miną bardzo dumną i zimną oddał mi bilecik, który tu w liście Pani posyłam – abyś widziała, do jakiej otwartej wściekłości przyszedli ci jezuici, którzy mię dotąd bezimiennie po różnych pismach kęsal⁴⁵³. (To Joanna Bobrowa, 16 June 1841, Paris)

Most revealing is Słowacki’s December 1842 letter to Krasieński, where he frames his departure from Lithuania to Kremenets as a symbolic journey from north to south, specifically describing Kremenets as “my Athens” [“do moich Athen”]. This classical allusion is significant in several ways. It positions Kremenets as a centre of culture and enlightenment and implies a movement from a barbaric north to a civilized south. Generally, it creates a cultural geography where Ukraine represents classical civilization while Lithuania represents a more primitive northern culture:

[...] ale gdybyś ty jednak wiedział, jak ten szlachcic litewski wśród sosnowych lasów wyciągnął z myśli bożej wszystko – i wszystko odtworzył na nowo – z prostotą pastuszą – i z pohamowaną w sobie ludzkością – wziąłbyś go pewno za Pana i przewodnika... [...] Niech się spytają lasów sosnowych w Litwie o ten ogień i żywot – a teraz powiedz im, niech mnie nie dręczą. Młokos

⁴⁵³ Barely had I arrived in Paris when my enemies, who were whipped in the first and third cantos of *Beniowski*, the publishers of 'Young Poland', a Jesuit newspaper, and taking the matter more broadly, the Lithuanians – decided to either kill me or humiliate me – and indeed, the very next day they sent one of the elegant Lithuanian youth to challenge me. He, with a very proud and cold demeanor, handed me a note, which I am sending to you in this letter – so that you can see to what open fury these Jesuits have come, who until now had been biting at me anonymously in various writings.

jeszcze, skończywszy w uniwersytecie moje nauki, niczym nie odznaczony – opuszczałem Litwę na zawsze; i wozkiem pocztowym leciałem na południe, do mego Krzemieńca – do moich Athen – abym w nich szerzej odetchnął i przygotował się do walki żywota⁴⁵⁴. (To Krasinski, 14 December 1842, Paris)

This letter demonstrates that Słowacki did not just view his Ukrainian roots as a coincidence of birth. His connection to Ukraine profoundly influenced how he saw himself as a writer and engaged in literary debates. The transformation of Kremenets into “his Athens” represents the culmination of this self-creation, elevating his hometown from a biographical detail into a symbol of cultural and artistic sophistication.

⁴⁵⁴ But if you knew, however, how this Lithuanian nobleman in the midst of the pine forests took everything out of God's thought - and recreated everything anew - with the simplicity of a shepherd - and with humanity restrained within himself - you would surely take him for your Lord and guide... [...] Let them ask the pine forests of Lithuania about this fire and life - and now tell them, let them not torment me. Still a youngster, having completed my studies at the university, unawarded - I left Lithuania for ever; and by mail-cart I flew south, to my Kremenets - to my Athens - to breathe more widely there and prepare myself for the battle of life.

Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to examine the construction of Ukrainian identity in the letters of Nikolai Gogol and Juliusz Słowacki. The research has shown significant differences in how Ukrainianness is portrayed in their correspondences. Gogol's letters reveal a gradual evolution of his Ukrainian identity and a general opposition between the construction of Ukrainian identity and the image of the Imperial writer. On the other hand, Słowacki's letters lack direct representations of Ukrainian identity, even though it permeates his literary works.

The historical context helps explain this divergence. In Volhynia, traditionally part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Ukrainian identity was subordinated or absorbed into Polish identity. The notions of "multiple loyalties" and "Little Homeland" were especially strong in Right-bank Ukraine, where Polish-Ukrainian distinctions also aligned with class structures.

Meanwhile, on the left bank, a legacy of Little Russian patriotism and memories of the Hetmanate were still resonant among the gentry. After the abolition of the Hetmanate, Russian colonial discourse increasingly associated Ukrainians with the peasantry. The strengthening and defining of an official discourse of nationality in the Russian Empire created a more polarized Russian-Ukrainian identity division. Gogol's identity retained elements of Little Russian patriotism and was influenced by figures like Mykhailo Maksymovych, leading him toward a multi-loyalty identity model.

This study suggests that Polish-Ukrainian and Russian-Ukrainian hybrid identities are fundamentally different, while similar in appearance. Polish-Ukrainian identity predates the Russian-Ukrainian hybrid and reflects a Polish-centric (and defined by the centre), culturally blended model. In contrast, the Russian-Ukrainian identity emerged later, shaped by the periphery rather than the centre. Scholars like Zenon Kohut underscore the Russo-Ukrainian unity as a concept developed

by Ukrainian intellectuals who viewed Kievan Rus as a shared legacy, placing Ukrainians as “older brothers” in this narrative.

Another factor contributing to the difference in representation is the nature of each writer’s correspondence. Gogol’s letters, preserved in larger quantities and addressed to a wider array of correspondents, afford a richer space for identity construction than Słowacki’s, primarily written to his mother. In Gogol’s letters, the expression of Ukrainian identity often varies depending on the addressee, with his identity as Ukrainian particularly surfacing in letters to former classmates from Nizhyn.

Analyzing each author individually, several key findings emerge. In Gogol’s correspondence, applying a strict national framework appears less effective than considering the roles of morality and class in his self-presentation as Ukrainian. Gogol frequently links Ukrainianness with idleness, a theme recurrent in his correspondence across the three periods studied. His early letters show a strong identification with Ukrainianness, including the use of Ukrainianisms and differentiation between Ukrainians and Russians, particularly in letters to Maksymovych. In his mid-life letters, a gradual distancing from Little Russian patriotism and a shift toward the role of an Imperial writer is apparent. However, he compares Ukraine with Italy, reflecting a re-emerging Ukrainian theme. In later letters, he more strongly aligns with the model of an Imperial writer.

The research on Słowacki’s correspondence has shown that self-creative processes are almost non-existent in private correspondence, compared with the writer’s self-creation of Ukrainian identity in literary works. The strong attachment to Kremenets and references to “Little Homeland” could be seen as Słowacki addressing his mother’s sentiments rather than self-fashioning an explicit Ukrainian identity. Słowacki uses his local identity in opposition to Mickiewicz’s Lithuanian identity. Thus, his literary self-creation may reflect less of an authentic identification and more of an artistic strategy.

This study provides a basis for future research on Ukrainian identity through letters, emphasizing how correspondence serves as both a space for self-

creation and for accommodating addressees' perspectives. This exploration of epistolary identity construction offers insights into how Ukrainian identity was performed and perceived in personal writing.

In literary studies, the analysis suggests how personal correspondence can serve as a counterpoint to literary works, offering insights into the interplay between private and public self-fashioning among writers. The notable difference between Słowacki's literary Ukrainian themes and their absence in his letters indicates the value of examining writers' cultural identifications across different genres of writing.

For historical scholarship, these cases contribute to our understanding of Polish-Ukrainian and Russian-Ukrainian identity formation in borderland regions. The examples of class-based identity construction and multiple loyalties observed in these writers' works and letters suggest additional complexity in the development of national consciousness in the 19th century. Further, aspects of these historical cases may offer relevant insights for contemporary discussions of cultural hybridity and transnational identities. Gogol's careful navigation of his Ukrainian heritage within Imperial Russian contexts, and Słowacki's strategic deployment of regional identity, illustrate specific ways individuals might manage multiple cultural affiliations. While these patterns emerge from a particular historical moment, they may help inform our understanding of how cultural hybridity can operate in both historical and contemporary contexts.

One strength of this study lies in its comparative approach to Ukrainian hybrid identities within Polish and Russian frameworks. This comparison enhances understanding of Ukraine's distinct hybrid identity formations, shaped by Polish noble and Russian imperial hegemony.

The study's primary limitation is its focus on Gogol and Słowacki alone. Including additional authors could enrich the representation of Ukrainian identity in epistolary contexts and broaden the comparative scope. A possible study development could be comparing Gogol and Shevchenko's private correspondence. Although they were almost contemporaries, Shevchenko

entered the literary milieu only a few years after Gogol and developed a different presentation of Ukrainianness.

Further research could delve deeper into the ongoing discourse on Gogol's identity, positioning this study as a fresh direction within that field. Expanding on the influence of letters in identity formation among other Ukrainian school poets or examining other correspondences could offer more nuanced insights into Ukrainian identity in the 19th-century literary landscape.

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