



# "You laugh, but I cry:" Nikolai Gogol and Taras Shevchenko's Poetics of Transition

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“You laugh, but I cry:”  
Nikolai Gogol and Taras Shevchenko’s Poetics of Transition

A dissertation presented

by

Sara Jo Powell

to

The Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the subject of  
Slavic Languages and Literatures

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2021 – Sara Jo Powell

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## **“You laugh, but I cry:” Nikolai Gogol and Taras Shevchenko’s Poetics of Transition**

### **Abstract**

Nikolai Gogol and Taras Shevchenko have both been named as fathers of Russian and Ukrainian literature. Yet in their supposed roles as founding fathers, they have been seen in very different lights. Gogol is perceived as the quintessential trickster, Shevchenko the national poet *par excellence*. Moreover, Gogol has been characterized as believing that Ukraine, or “Little Russia,” should serve as a companion to Great Russia, and Shevchenko as a Ukrainian nationalist. Despite these different portrayals, both authors were contemporaries who shared their national origin, spending their childhoods in Ukraine, and adulthoods principally in Russia. In my dissertation, I argue that a close comparison of Gogol’s and Shevchenko’s works reveals aspects of their poetics otherwise unnoticeable, particularly a common interest in the liminal, and highlights important similarities in the two authors.

In Chapter I, I survey existing literature comparing both writers, as well as establish a definition of the liminal that I use through the subsequent dissertation. In the second chapter, I compare two works from Gogol’s and Shevchenko’s first periods, *Taras Bulba* and *Haidamaky*, and find that they share a poetics of destabilizing trauma. In Chapter III, I compare *Dead Souls*, “Dream,” and “Cold Ravine,” all the authors’ second periods. They reveal a shared focus on flux, temporal, structural, and otherwise. Chapter IV focuses on *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* and “The Artist.” Comparing the two reveals Gogol’s and Shevchenko’s poetics of disenchantment.

Finally, I read *Dead Souls, Part Two* and “Should we not then cease, my friend,” and discuss the last period of Gogol’s and Shevchenko’s writings. I argue that throughout their lives, both authors thematize the liminal, and in this final period, they focus on psychological liminality. Comparing their works allows this theme to become apparent and show how it takes different forms throughout both authors’ lives.

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## A Note on Romanization and Personal Names

Throughout my dissertation I have used the modified Library of Congress system to romanize Russian, Ukrainian, and, on occasion, Russian and Ukrainian Church Slavonic. Personal names, when not familiar to the English-speaking reader, have followed the same format (e.g., Andrei Aleksandrovich Kraevskii). Those that have a common English spelling predating the Library of Congress system (e.g., Lev Tolstoy) have been written as such. Names with spellings that differ in Russian and Ukrainian have been given in the form most commonly used in scholarship pertaining to that individual. For Gogol himself, I have chosen that spelling most familiar to the English reader – written with a “g” rather than an “h” and without the final soft sign. Choices of Romanization are meant to read easily in English, rather than principally convey information about nationality and ethnicity.

## Chapter I

### Introduction: Gogol, Shevchenko, and a Comparison of Contemporaries

Joseph Frank writes that comparative Tolstoy and Dostoevsky (Tolstoyevsky) studies are “innumerable” and that “the two writers have been opposed to each other in a seemingly infinite variety of ways.”<sup>1</sup> As the giants of 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian “realism,” the great fathers of the Russian novel, they are spoken of together so frequently that one hardly need justify such a comparison. For example, they were famously set at odds in Mikhail Bakhtin’s *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, in which he claimed that in contrast to Dostoevsky’s polyphony, “Tolstoy’s world is monolithically monologic.”<sup>2</sup> Many of Bakhtin’s examples pit Dostoevsky’s and Tolstoy’s works against each other, picking out the differences between them in order to show some new aspect of Dostoevsky’s poetics. And Bakhtin is only one in a long line of scholars who have found that comparison clarifies aspects of both authors’ styles and philosophies. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it seems only natural in the West to imagine the two great novelists as each other’s foils.

There are other pairings that are similarly well established. Hegel and Herder are often compared, for even as Hegel criticizes Herder, Herder’s influence on him cannot be denied.<sup>3</sup> Goethe and Schiller are an even more popular pairing in criticism of German literature. Their comparison is aided by their extensive correspondence, which allows scholars to examine some

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Frank, “Tolstoyevsky,” *The Hudson Review* 42, no. 4 (Winter, 1990): 651.

<sup>2</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, trans. and ed. Carol Emerson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 56.

<sup>3</sup> Claire Pages, “From Hegel to Herder: principle of historicity. Reflections on the relations between the historical philosophies of Herder and Hegel,” *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 111, no. 4 (Nov., 2013): 613-660.

of their direct interactions.<sup>4</sup> Hemingway and Faulkner are so often compared that they are used to exemplify opposite poles in English style, those of asyndetic parataxis and polysyndetic hypotaxis.<sup>5</sup> Like Herder and Hegel, Hemingway and Faulkner were not well acquainted, yet their works provide ample ground for comparison.<sup>6</sup> Both pairs' lives were intertwined by their time period and their culture, each man's writing a counterpoint to the other's.

But what of Nikolai Gogol? Perhaps one might compare him to Pushkin, as has been done in the past.<sup>7</sup> Taras Shevchenko might similarly be compared to Mickiewicz, the national poet of Poland.<sup>8</sup> Both these comparisons have produced considerable scholarship but have not created the breadth of literature that Tolstoyevsky scholarship has. In my dissertation I propose that fertile ground for Tolstoyevsky-style scholarship exists in the comparative study of these two 19<sup>th</sup> century giants – Gogol and Shevchenko. In comparing the two, I reveal aspects of their poetics that are otherwise hidden from the reader, particularly their interest in the liminal.

If Tolstoy and Dostoevsky are great novelists, then Gogol and Shevchenko are the fathers

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<sup>4</sup> See Ian C. Loran, "Publication of the Goethe-Schiller Correspondence," *Modern Language Notes* 67, no. 5 (1952): 300-04 for more on the Goethe-Schiller letters.

<sup>5</sup> "Hemingway vs. Faulkner," *Guilford College Hege Library & Learning Technologies*, Dec. 8, 2015, <https://library.guilford.edu/writingmanual>.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Fruscione, *Faulkner and Hemingway: Biography of a Literary Rivalry* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2013), 3.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, A. S. Dolinin, "Pushkin and Gogol' on the Question of their Personal Relations," *Soviet Studies in Literature* 23, no 3-4 (1987): 117-136., or Edyta Bojanowska, "Equivocal Praise and National-Imperial Conundrums: Gogol's 'A Few Words About Pushkin,'" *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 51, no. 2/3 (Jun.-Sep., 2009): 177-201. For a slightly broader comparison, Georgii Panteleimonovich Makogonko's *Gogol' i Pushkin* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1985) is a good example.

<sup>8</sup> Often, comparisons between Mickiewicz and Shevchenko are drawn in the course of other analyses, such as in H. D. Verves's *T. H. Shevchenko i Pol'shcha* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1969). The direct comparison is seen in George G. Grabowicz, "Iz problematyky symbolichnoi avtobiohrafii u Mitskevycha i Shevchenka," *Radians'ke literaturoznavstvo* 3 (Apr., 1989): 27-35. The comparison is fairly common in Ukrainian literary analysis, particularly Ukrainianist spheres in the West, but has not made it into the mainstream of other nationally based literary criticism.

of Russian and Ukrainian literature.<sup>9</sup> Just as Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé famously wrote that Russian literature came “from Gogol’s overcoat,”<sup>10</sup> Shevchenko has been heralded as the *bat’ko* (father) of all Ukrainian literature, and indeed of Ukraine itself.<sup>11</sup> This is particularly the case in popular academic or quasi-academic texts which seek to assert a single nation’s claim on either author. In their supposed roles as founding fathers, however, Gogol and Shevchenko are seen quite differently. Gogol is a “verbal trickster” or a “social rebel,” someone whom the critic can confidently depict as an enigma, whose precise identity has evaded all other critics and thus is ready for determination.<sup>12</sup> He himself encouraged this idea, writing in a letter “I present a puzzle to all, no one has worked me out in truth.”<sup>13</sup> Shevchenko is, on the other hand, as George Grabowicz puts it, an “almost paradigmatic” example of a national poet, a category that is inherently resistant to academic investigation and to critical reception.<sup>14</sup>

Like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Gogol and Shevchenko were contemporaries. They were

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<sup>9</sup> This label is as reductive when applied to Gogol and Shevchenko as is calling Tolstoy and Dostoevsky Russia’s “great novelists.” There is a grain of truth, no doubt, but it is not the whole story.

<sup>10</sup> This line is often misattributed to Dostoevsky (or sometimes Turgenev). Yet it comes from de Vogüé, who possibly first heard it from M. Markevich. See Alexander Dolinin, “Who Was the One to Say We Have All Come From Gogol’s ‘Overcoat,’” *Russkaia literatura* 3 (2018): 163-170. This particular notion - that Gogol founded Russian realism - has been queried and picked apart numerous times. My interest, here, is not in the veracity of the statement, but rather in the fact that the statement was made. Whether or not Gogol is a prototypical Russian realist, it is one of his most well-known masks, and parallels Shevchenko’s role as *bat’ko* astonishingly well.

<sup>11</sup> See George G. Grabowicz, “Introduction,” in *Taras Shevchenko v krytytsi: Posmertna krytyka*, vol. II (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2016) for an exploration of this topic.

<sup>12</sup> Sven Spieker, “Review: *Dead Souls: An Anatomy of Disorder*,” *Slavic Review* 53, No. 2 (1994): 569-570.

<sup>13</sup> “*‘Ja pochitaius’ zagadkoiu dlia vsekh, nikto ne rasgadal menia sovershenno.*” Letter to his mother, 1 March 1828. Nikolai Gogol, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 14 tomakh* (Moscow; Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1937-1952) (Hereafter, *PSS*), vol 10, 123.

<sup>14</sup> George G. Grabowicz, “Taras Shevchenko: the Making of the National Poet,” *Revue Des études Slaves* 85, no. 3 (2014): 422. And, more completely, in “National Poets and National Mystifications,” in *Literární mystifikace, etnické mýty a jejich úloha při formování národního vědomí* (Uherseke Hradiště, CZ: Studie Slovákého Muzea, 2001), 7-24.

both born in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both from semi-rural/rural areas of Ukraine, and both lived much of their adult lives in Russia. They both spoke Ukrainian and Russian, and both wrote, at least partially, about their experiences in Ukraine. Both authors moved through cultures and classes in their lives, through space and time, experiencing monumental shifts in their personal circumstances. When set against one another, one can see how these shifts are dramatized in their writing, and how important these shifts are to both of them. However, Shevchenko wrote primarily in Ukrainian, and his Russian language novels were largely judged inferior to his Ukrainian poetry. Gogol embraced Russian as a literary language, and declared that:

I myself do not know what kind of soul I have, khokhol [Ukrainian] or Russian. I only know that I would give priority neither to the Little Russian (Ukrainian) over the Russian, nor the Russian over the Little Russian (Ukrainian). Both natures are so full of the gifts of God, and as if on purpose each of them separately includes in itself something the other has not – a clear sign that they should be together.<sup>15</sup>

In fact, as Yuliya Ilchuk writes, Gogol “deliberately juxtaposed [the two cultures] within his language and manipulated the perception of his personality and national identity by other people.”<sup>16</sup> In contrast, Shevchenko had no obvious dual nature, no conflict of souls. His writing in Russian was often functional, rather than literary. His poetic works are full of references to himself as Ukrainian, while his Russian ones make no parallel claims.

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<sup>15</sup> “*Sam ne znaiu, kakaia u menia dusha, khokhlatskaia ili russkaia. Znaiu tol'ko to, chto nikak by ne dal preimushchestva ni malorossiianinu pered russkim, ni russkomu pered malorossiianinom. Obe prirody slishkom shchedro odareny bogom, i kak narочно kazhdaia iz nikh porozn' zakliuchaet v sebe to, chto net v drugoi – iavnyi znak, chto oni dolzhny popolnit' odna druguiu.*” Letter to A. O. Smirnova, 24 December 1844. *PSS*, vol. 12, 419.

<sup>16</sup> Yuliya Ilchuk, “Gogol’s Hybrid Performance: The Creation, Reception and Editing of *Vechera na khutore bliz dikan'ki* (Evenings on a farm near Dikan'ka) (1831-1832)” (PhD diss. The University of Southern California, 2009), 16.

Shevchenko spent between 1847 and 1857 in exile in Orenburg and Novopetrovsk (now Fort Shevchenko on the Mangyshlak Peninsula in Kazakhstan), as a punishment for poetry that was considered insulting to the Emperor and his family; and as a response to his participation in the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius, a pan-Slavist and proto-Ukrainianist group. Gogol, on the other hand, spent significant time after 1832 away from Ukraine and Russia in places of his own choosing. Indeed, he wrote to Vasilii Zhukovskii, Nikolai Danilevskii, and to Marya Balabina, among others, about how much he adored Rome, how it was his “soul’s homeland” (“*rodina dushi*”),<sup>17</sup> and how, though he had few friends in Rome, he had never been so happy.<sup>18</sup> Gogol delighted in his self-chosen travel, writing some of his greatest works abroad. (This is not to say that the works that Shevchenko composed while in exile were not of the highest caliber. They were. But he never rejoiced in his separation from European Russia, and particularly from Ukraine. Moreover, exile, for Shevchenko, meant he was isolated from his friends and forced to go only where the army and Emperor willed him to go – he was essentially a prisoner of his situation.)

These similarities in origin, but dramatic differences in life trajectories have served as a major source for critical analysis in the works that do compare Gogol and Shevchenko. Indeed, criticism of both authors independently has spent substantial time investigating their national allegiances and personal identities. This is not surprising – as prominent members of literary and artistic society, they were notable, to some extent, for their provincial origin in Ukraine. The critical focus on identity has been so exclusive that the very periodization of their works has relied on their changing attitudes towards Ukraine and towards the Russian Empire as a whole.

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<sup>17</sup> Letter to M. P. Balabina, undated, April 1838. *PSS*, vol. 11, 144.

<sup>18</sup> Letter to A. S. Danilevskii, 2 February 1838. *PSS*, vol. 11, 121.

For Gogol, this has produced a periodization that relies heavily on the subject-matter of his works. His early works are seen as dealing with Ukraine, the middle and late with Russia. For Shevchenko, his early works have been seen as focusing on a mythologized Cossack past, and as decidedly pro-Ukrainian. The middle portion of his works, phases two or three, have been characterized as pan-Slavic and more revolutionary, and the late as more personally contemplative.<sup>19</sup>

In my dissertation, I propose that periodizations of the authors' works should not be based on their struggles with identity alone. I argue that when Gogol and Shevchenko are compared, one finds they share an attitude towards their ever-changing worlds – one of disquiet. Moreover, their literary developments take similar paths, and conclude in similar locations.. Gogol and Shevchenko share a poetics of liminality. Those moments of literature which capture and transport the reader and thus reveal the author's deepest, most unstable, and ever-changing interior are key to their works. It is the particular presentation of the liminal that marks each period of their works. When one compares works from both authors' early, middle, and late periods, one finds that in each period they share a particular form of the poetics of liminality and transition. In the early, this is a poetics of destabilizing trauma; in the middle, a poetics of flux; and in the late, a poetics of disenchantment. These shared poetics do not eliminate their national and social differences, but they do reveal important similarities in their written works.

There is a conceptual block to extensive comparison of Gogol and Shevchenko. A general tendency in literary analysis is to avoid direct comparison of poetry and prose. Indeed, critics such as Northrop Frye have claimed that poetry and prose have different “radicals of

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<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the entries in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine* for excellent summaries of the traditional periodizations.

presentation,” that is, present fundamentally different relationships between author and audience, and, as a corollary, have foundational differences in their mimetic forms.<sup>20</sup> Frye is just one critic among many, all of whom have attempted to differentiate prose and poetry theoretically, and in doing so have contributed to the idea that the two forms belong to fundamentally different spheres. Comparison of Gogol and Shevchenko has thus far been hampered, to some extent, by a belief in the difficulty of directly comparing their works. Much of literary critical theory, after all, has been written from the perspective of poetic or prose analysis, but not both.<sup>21</sup>

My dissertation compares poetry and prose directly, and aims to find their similarities, rather than differences. While the superficial similarities between Gogol and Shevchenko as people are self-evident, in my dissertation I show that these similarities run far deeper and are intrinsic to their literary works. Their poetics of liminality transcends poetic or prose forms. They examine moments of transition in a wide variety of contexts, and share narrative structures and topics which unite their works.

Comparisons of Herder and Hegel reveal how both of their works substantially contributed to a secular understanding of philosophy, despite both of their interest in the divine.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, comparisons of Gogol and Shevchenko reveal how, while the two of them might be thought to depict tableaux of Ukrainian or Russian life, set pieces, landscapes in a capsule, in fact

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<sup>20</sup> Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 247.

<sup>21</sup> Examples include Bakhtin’s “The Epic and the Novel,” Bloom’s *The Anxiety of Influence*, Shklovskii’s *O teorii prozy*, and Zola’s *The Experimental Novel*. It is important to note that I am in no way suggesting that the theories put forward in these works cannot be applied to the forms not under discussion. My aim, instead, is to point out how common it is for critics to focus on one of the two forms to the exclusion of the other, or to establish, as Frye attempts to, their fundamental differences.

<sup>22</sup> Clare Thérèse Pellerin, “The Philosophies of History of Herder and Hegel” (Master’s thesis, The University of Saskatchewan, 2005).



their writings are preoccupied with the idea of transition, with those moments that mark the shift between great life events, and which delve into the deepest reaches of the human mind.

In demonstrating how important liminality is to each period of both Gogol's and Shevchenko's works, and to their oeuvres, I intend to open up a new aspect of their poetics and suggest new ways of comparing and understanding the two as examples of Russian and Ukrainian 19<sup>th</sup> century thought. Just as comparisons of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy add to the understanding of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian novel, my analysis of Gogol and Shevchenko will add to the interpretation of early-to-mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Ukrainian-Russian literature's themes.

There is an extensive bibliography of Shevchenko analysis and criticism. Perhaps less than one might think, given his wide acknowledgement as the national poet of Europe's largest country, yet the body of work is not small, and is growing by leaps and bounds in the post-Soviet period. Gogol, too, has been the subject of extensive research, although he, like Shevchenko, has been given less attention than one might expect. Works comparing the two, however, are few and far between. The last monograph length piece in the English language was published in the 1970s by George Luckyj. In the ensuing fifty years, while research on the two authors has continued separately, very few scholars have compared them.

This is, I believe, an unfortunate gap in critical analysis. That is not to say that the past fifty years of Gogol and Shevchenko scholarship has been terribly lacking. On the contrary, I draw on those fifty years heavily in this dissertation, allowing them to inform a comparative reading of Gogol's and Shevchenko's works. Yet this comparative analysis adds a dimension to both authors' works that is not readily seen without such a juxtaposition.

Gogol scholarship is relatively more diverse than that on Shevchenko and involves

scholars from a wider variety of backgrounds.<sup>23</sup> Books such as Simon Karlinsky's *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol* revolutionized and revitalized Gogol studies in the 1970s. At the same time Luckyj was publishing his comparison of Gogol and Shevchenko, which was largely focused on their national identities and their place within (or outside of) the developing Ukrainian national movement.

Since that time, however, there have not been extensive comparative works. A single piece written after 1985 is indexed in the American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies. Works that focus on one of the two authors often mention the other, as do those that focus on Ukrainian nationhood and literary development, but these articles and monographs do not primarily expand comparative Gogol-Shevchenko studies, but instead peripherally add to them. There are works that more directly compare the two authors in Ukrainian, but these are not accessible to scholars who cannot read Ukrainian (including many Gogol specialists).

In preparing my dissertation, I completed a broad-ranging analysis of literature that deals with the two authors together, and an extensive (although more targeted) survey of the critical works dealing with both individually. The most commonly discussed theme in these comparative works is identity. As Charles C. Bernheimer notes, Gogol introduced this theme himself, writing in his letters that the self he was presenting to the world was not actually his true self.<sup>24</sup> Thus the search for Gogol's true identity began with his own comments, and was to some extent initially

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<sup>23</sup> See works from authors as diverse as Russianist Iurii Mann (e.g. *Gogol': zavershenie puti: 1845-1852* (Moscow: Aspekt Press, 2009)), Ukrainianist Mykola Tomenko (e.g. *Ukrains'kyi romantyk Mykola Hohol'* (Kyiv: Heneza, 2009)), comparative literature scholar Molly Brunson (e.g. "Gogol Country: Russia and Russian Literature in Perspective," *Comparative Literature* 69, no. 4 (2017): 370-393), and psychiatrists Rami Bou Khalil and Ruwan Jayatunge (e.g. "Pathology and autopathography: The case of Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852)," *Journal of Medical Biography* 26, no. 3 (2018): 145-146.)

<sup>24</sup> Charles C. Bernheimer, "Cloaking the Self: The Literary Space of Gogol's 'Overcoat,'" *PMLA* 90, no. 1 (Jan., 1975): 54.

orchestrated by the writer himself.

Very early critical analysis of Gogol debated every aspect of his work in an attempt to see if it conformed to their perception of the author's identity. D. B. Saunders writes that early Ukrainian reviewers were fascinated by how well they felt Gogol's works depicted their society, while Russian reviewers were more interested in the differences between Russia and Ukraine that they saw Gogol as dramatizing. They focused not on the minutiae that indicated authenticity to Ukrainian readers, but rather on those aspects of Gogol's work that confirmed their perceptions of his overall identity (or the identity of his pseudonymous narrators).<sup>25</sup>

Interest in Gogol's identity continued in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1926, Clarence A. Manning wrote an essay on the subject in *The Slavonic Review*. Manning took for granted many elements of Gogol's biography that have since been disputed – his supposed close friendship with Pushkin comes to mind – yet reading his essay establishes that Gogol's identity was a topic of interest even after the dawn of the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup>

There are few articles from the '20s through the '50s dealing with Gogol's identity or the periodization of his works. One might speculate that political changes during the period influenced this. In the USSR, Stalin's rise; the formalists', RAPP's, and the Proletkult's disappearances; Socialist Realist oriented criticism; and push-back against *korenizatsiia* after the '20s all possibly influenced this.<sup>27</sup> In the West, the beginnings of New Criticism, and influence

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<sup>25</sup> D. B. Saunders, "Contemporary Critics of Gogol's Vechera and the Debate about Russian narodnost' (1831-1832)," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 5, no. 1 (Mar., 1981): 67.

<sup>26</sup> Clarence A. Manning, "Nicholas Gogol," *The Slavonic Review* 4, no. 12 (Mar., 1926): 573-587.

<sup>27</sup> RAPP, the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, was a creative union formed in the twenties that attempted to censor Russian authors who were not sufficiently proletarian (whatever that might mean). They were also part of an attempt to promote less experimental works during and following the futurists and formalists fall from official grace. The Proletkult was another artistic group promoting proletarian art, albeit one that arose much earlier than RAPP. It originated in 1917 and was semi-autonomous, fighting full integration into the Soviet government. Far more avant-garde than RAPP, it was less prone to censorship, and dissolved earlier. *Korenizatsiia* was a policy

from the formalist and structuralist critics (both ex-pats from the USSR and home-grown scholars) may have contributed. Exploring this trend might be a good topic for future research, but here it suffices to say that there is a gap in the literature on Gogol's identity during the period.

Interest in Gogol's identity picked up again in the late '70s and early '80s and has only become more pronounced since the end of the Soviet Union. Even *The New York Times* was interested in Gogol, publishing the translation of an essay by Henri Troyat (a Russian-born French writer and scholar) on Gogol's "divided soul."<sup>28</sup> In the 70s, not only did attention return to Gogol's identity, but also to his readers and his attempts to shape their responses to his works. Just as Gogol's identity has been debated, the precise ways in which he reacted to and interacted with his readers is still an area of critical analysis. These two elements of Gogol's work, Michael R. Kelly holds, are inexorably intertwined. He writes, "Gogol's sense of aesthetic disquietude reflects at least in part his evolving efforts to shape his readers and their responses to his works."<sup>29</sup> The focus on identity creation and the effect it has had on Gogol's readers has continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>30</sup>

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instituted during the 1920s to emphasize the place of non-Russian nationalities in the Soviet political structure. It promoted education in non-Russian languages in their historical locales and emphasized the need for each national group to adopt a socialism with its own national character, one that could add to greater socialist whole of the Soviet Union. Reactions to *korenizatsiia* ranged from delight among previously oppressed national minorities to intense dislike among Russians outside Russia who suddenly found themselves a minority group whose language was not promoted. *Korenizatsiia* was also problematic in areas where a previously dominant national culture was suppressed, or ethnic minorities were suddenly put in power without any warning and were forced to adapt to the change and to the dislike of their fellows. This last issue was particularly prominent in Soviet Central Asia, especially modern-day Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>28</sup> Henri Troyat, "Divided Soul: The Life of Gogol," Translated by Helen Muchnic, *The New York Times*, December 23, 1973, 179.

<sup>29</sup> Michael R. Kelly, "Gogol and His 'Necessary' Readers: Collective Creation and a Return to Self," *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* 40 (2006): 1.

<sup>30</sup> See Yulia Ilchuk, "Gogol's Hybrid Performance," Roman Koropecyk and Robert Romanchuk, "Ukraine in Blackface: Performance and Representation in Gogol's Dikan'ka Tales, Book 1," *Slavic Review* 62, no. 3 (Autumn,

A similar, yet not identical pattern holds in Shevchenko studies (and some of the same scholars participate in research on Shevchenko's identity, notably Iurii Barabash). Early critics did not speculate on the poet's identity to nearly the same extent that Gogol's readers did. Instead, understanding of Shevchenko as a person was fairly limited. Mykola/Nikolai Kostomarov, a close personal friend of Shevchenko's, delivered a eulogy upon his death that, while ostensibly speaking about Shevchenko the person, helped establish the long-lasting image of Shevchenko the *batko*, the father of the Ukrainian Nation, the prophetic voice of the *narod*.<sup>31</sup>

George Grabowicz argues that early reception of Shevchenko was driven in part by Kostomarov's characterization of the poet as genius and martyr.<sup>32</sup> While other early critics such as Panteleimon Kulish approached Shevchenko's work with more skepticism, most followed Kostomarov's track and saw Shevchenko as a symbol of Ukrainian-ness, rather than a complex individual. This resembles the early reception of Gogol. Early criticism of both centered around their national, social, and cultural identities, although in Shevchenko's case that identity was not under much debate, but rather was a starting point for understanding him.

For Shevchenko, his identity as specifically Ukrainian was to some extent subdued inside

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2003), 525-547, or Iurii Barabash, "'Svoego iazyka ne znaet...' ili Pochemu Gogol' pisal po-russki?" *Voprosy literatury* 1 (2011): 36-58 for recent investigations into Gogol's identity.

<sup>31</sup> *Narod* (spelled identically in Russian and Ukrainian) is a challenging concept to translate, but one essential to the understanding of both Gogol and Shevchenko, as it features so prominently in their popular characterizations. Meaning something between people, nation, and folk, it shares the proto-Slavic root \*rodъ with *rodina* (motherland), *roditi* (to birth or create), *rid/rod* (sort, kind, type), and many kinship terms, such as *roditel'* (father, parent). All of these related words underline a sort of metaphorical kinship among members of the *narod*, one that goes beyond that of the English "nation."

<sup>32</sup> See Grabowicz's essay "Insight and Blindness in the reception of Ševčenko: the Case of Kostomarov," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 17, no. 3/4 (Dec., 1993): 279-340, for his argument on the matter. Kostomarov, a respected Russian historian and Ukrainian writer, had something of an outsized impact on early Shevchenko reception. Kostomarov was not the only one of Shevchenko's friends to have an outsized impact on his reception. Panteleimon Kulish, a close friend, Ukrainian writer, and literary critic, too, had a dramatic impact on Shevchenko's literary afterlife. See, for example, Panteleimon Kulish, "Lysty z khutora. Lyst III. Choho stoit' Shevchenko iako poet narodnii." in *Taras Shevchenko v krytytsi*, vol. II, ed. by George Grabowicz, 123-129 (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2016).

the USSR, and his role as a serf-turned-poet/painter who abhorred serfdom and all its parts was emphasized. Outside the Soviet Union, however, nationalism became a focus of some critics. Nevertheless, everywhere some investigations that supposedly looked at Shevchenko's identity were in truth reflections of the critics' own desires and beliefs.<sup>33</sup> Questions of nationalism and national identity have become interwoven into the study of Shevchenko's works, and this has continued in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the years since the *Maidan*, Shevchenko's image and writing has been a source of pride and inspiration in Ukraine.<sup>34</sup> Depictions of the poet are rife in popular media, his portrait painted on walls through Kyiv's streets. At almost the same time that these nationalistic interpretations have proliferated in popular media, investigations of the poet's identity in critical literature have grown more nuanced.<sup>35</sup>

Identity has taken pride of place in literature that compares the two writers. Indeed, many of the critical works that examine both Gogol and Shevchenko have narrowed this focus further to the two author's political and national allegiances. Early Soviet comparative studies and discussions of the two tended to emphasize both writers' supposed "liberalizing" tendencies. In Tomsk, for example, two influential professors used talks on the writers and so called "Shevchenko evenings" as a forum to promote their own political views.<sup>36</sup> This is just one

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<sup>33</sup> George S. N. Luckyj, "Shevchenko Studies One Century after the Poet's Death," *Slavic Review* 21, no. 4 (Dec., 1962): 722-23.

<sup>34</sup> The *Maidan*, also called the *Revoliutsiia Hidnosti* (Revolution of Dignity), and the *Evromaidan*, was the 2013-2014 political movement that resulted in erstwhile President Viktor Yanukovich's flight from Ukraine, and the reorganization of the government in order to fight corruption. It also, indirectly, led to the Russian occupation of Crimea and the war in the Donbas (the Ukrainian oblasts of Luhans'k and Donets').

<sup>35</sup> See Michael A. Moser, "Some Notes on Code Switching in the Letters of Taras Shevchenko," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 32/33, part 2 (2011-2014): 541-547, Michael A. Moser, *Taras Ševčenko und die moderne ukrainische Schriftsprache: Versuch einer Würdigung* (Munich: Ukrainische Freie Universität, 2008), or Liudmyla Belins'ka, "'Mala vitchyzna' u zhytti Tarasa Shevchenka: Rytualy povernennia," *Visnyk L'vivs'koho Universitetu* 15 (2014): 24-30 for examples.

<sup>36</sup> A. O. Stenov and S. F. Fominykh, "Chestvovaniia pamiati N. V. Gogolia (v 1902 i 1909 gg.) i 'Shevchenkovskie

example of how superficial comparative examinations of both Gogol's and Shevchenko's identities were used to serve critics' political purposes during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Luckyj's *Between Gogol and Shevchenko* presents a more nuanced approach to this issue. In it, he argues that Gogol and Shevchenko demonstrate two different approaches to nationalism in their works. His book's primary comparison between Gogol and Shevchenko is that of their attitudes towards Russia and the ways in which their writings engage with these attitudes. He names Gogol a "Little Russian," a man of the Empire who saw Ukraine's proper place as a companion to Russia, adding flavor to its high culture. Luckyj considers Shevchenko a "Ukrainian," whose works demonstrate his devotion to a political nationalism.<sup>37</sup>

Other comparisons, while not always focusing as tightly on the Ukrainian national project, are similarly preoccupied with national identity. Jaroslav Rudnycky demonstrates this trend when he writes that Shevchenko was a contemporary of Gogol and "lived the same life," yet that his "greatest aspiration was liberty, individual and national."<sup>38</sup> Other recent works also show nuance not present in early readings of the two.<sup>39</sup> There has been a shift in the popular understanding of Gogol, a shift towards acknowledging his and Shevchenko's similarities without attempting to paint both of them as "fighters for the liberation movement."<sup>40</sup>

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vechera' kak instrumentarii politicheskoi identichnosti liberal'noi professury g. Tomska," *Rusin* 54 (2018): 139.

<sup>37</sup> George Luckyj, *Between Gogol' and Shevchenko: Polarity in the Literary Ukraine. 1798-1847* (Munich: W. Fink, 1971), 192.

<sup>38</sup> "Il était contemporain de Gogol; comme lui il se rendit à St-Petersbourg, y vécut la même vie," "Sa plus grande aspiration était la liberté, individuelle et nationale." Jaroslav B. Rudnycky, "Gogol et Chevtchenko: deux hommes — deux symboles," *Etudes Slaves et Est-Européennes / Slavic and East-European Studies* 1, no. 3 (1956): 161.

<sup>39</sup> See works by Iurii Barabash, for example.

<sup>40</sup> "Bortsy za osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie." A. O. Stenov and S. F. Fomiykh, 127.

Some works by the two have attracted more of this attention than others. Gogol's *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka* (*Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki*, 1831 and 1832), for example, has received substantial analysis, but his late *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* (*Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druz'iami*, 1847), which provoked readers' ire and opprobrium, has not prompted anywhere near as much discussion of the work's artistic or literary qualities. Conversations about it, such as they are, have focused instead on Gogol's changing views and political orientations. Shevchenko's shorter lyrics have received varied and extensive review, with methodologies ranging from that of the Soviet school classroom to that of the theorist Benedict Anderson.<sup>41</sup> Yet some of his long narrative works, his few Russian language poems, and his prose works have received far less attention.<sup>42</sup>

For example, *The Mad Maiden* (*Prychynna*, 1837), Shevchenko's first published poem, has received little analysis. Early critics focused on the poem's supposed artistic lack and saw it primarily as a stepping-stone to later greatness. In contrast, a later poem such as "To the living, to the dead..." (*I mertvym, i zhyvym...* 1845) has received structurally based analyses, as well as those centered in political science, psychology, and philosophy. Just as some of Gogol's works have received far more attention than others, so too has the criticism of Shevchenko's poems been unevenly distributed.

Broadly, however, comparative works on the two focus on their identities, and generally concern an individual period of each author's writings. In Gogol's case, *Evenings* and *Mirgorod*

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<sup>41</sup> Rory Finnin uses the work of Benedict Anderson in his article "Nationalism and the Lyric, Or How Taras Shevchenko Speaks to Compatriots Dead, Living, and Unborn," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 89, no. 1 (Jan., 2011): 29-55.

<sup>42</sup> Excepting his diary, which, while written in Russian prose, has been used as the source of considerable detail about his life and writing habits.



are the focus of critical thought on his identity, and thus these and other works from his early period have received attention in comparisons of the two authors. For Shevchenko, his middle phase (1843-5), which deals with Ukrainian national identity and pan-Slavism, is the locus of analysis. My dissertation offers a new perspective on questions of identity by looking at changes or transitions in identity in the authors' works, rather than static presentations. More importantly, I examine identity-based periodization through a new lens, finding that a comparison of each respective period in the authors' works shows that each period is characterized by a very similar poetics of liminality.

I examine Gogol and Shevchenko's works through the lens of liminality, and broadly, as examples of the literature of transition. Transition is here understood as "a figure for a process whereby the familiar is relentlessly exposed to the unfamiliar, incorporating an undefined, undefinable excess into a previously articulated system."<sup>43</sup> Liminality, as the center of transitional moments and processes, is the concentrated core around which a transition rotates. I combine definitions of liminality drawn from anthropology, sociology, psychology, and literary studies in my dissertation. Here, I summarize those definitions and survey liminality's rich intellectual history for the reader.

Ukraine as a site of liminality is hardly an obscure notion.<sup>44</sup> It exists on the border between East and West Slavic, with an East Slavic language filled with West Slavic borrowings.

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<sup>43</sup> Jonathan Levin, *The Poetics of Transition: Emerson, Pragmatism, and American Literary Modernism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), Preface.

<sup>44</sup> Even the name suggests as much. The most commonly accepted etymology understands modern Russian/Ukrainian *Ukraina* as coming from the Old East Slavic *ukraina*, from the prefix "u" (at) and root "krai" (edge or rim). *Ukraina* itself is thus an edge or borderland. Vasmer's etymological dictionary includes this etymology. An alternative put forward by scholars such as Hryhoriy Pivtorak argues that the prefix should be understood as indicating "in," and therefore *Ukraina* should be seen as indicating "in the territory" rather than at the border. (Pivtorak, *Pokhodzhennia ukrainysiv, rosiian, bilorusiv ta ikhnikh mov: Mify i pravda pro tr'okh brativ slov'ians'kykh zi "spil'noi kolysky"* (Kyiv: Akademiia, 2001))

It touches the Carpathian Mountains to the West, and the Black Sea to the South. It has been ruled by powers North, West, and South, yet has maintained an individual culture. Religiously, Ukraine sits between the Roman Catholic West and Orthodox East. Maria Ruxandra Stoicescu writes that Ukraine serves as an excellent case study of liminality in international relations, precisely because, though its geographical and political status may not immediately bring liminality to mind, “Ukraine underline[s] the importance of the link between images that represent liminality and the narratives surrounding them.”<sup>45</sup> While Robert Pyrah disputes the notion that Ukraine’s geographical location does not directly suggest liminality, arguing that it does to the Western historian, he affirms the idea that Ukraine is, to the outsider, fundamentally a locus of liminality.<sup>46</sup> Both of these papers are, however, focused on Ukraine’s liminal status in the international community. They say little of literature, of culture, and, of course, have nothing at all to say about Shevchenko and Gogol. They focus on Ukraine’s geopolitical liminality as a given, as a fundamental characteristic of how the country functions in the wider world, and simply accept the liminality that Shevchenko and Gogol investigate and query throughout their works.

Liminality was first brought to the attention of the anthropological and political science communities by Arnold van Gennep in 1909. Van Gennep argued that every change of state (a “stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognized”) accompanied by a rite can be broken down into three stages.<sup>47</sup> First comes a separation from the community, then the

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<sup>45</sup> Maria R. Stoicescu, *Liminality in International Relations: A Comparative Analysis of Discursive Articulations in the Geopolitical Visions of Romania, Turkey, and Ukraine* (Geneva: Institut des hautes études internationales et du développement, 2009), 9.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Pyrah, “From ‘Borderland’ via ‘Bloodlands’ to Heartland? Recent Western Historiography of Ukraine,” *The English Historical Review* 129 (2014): 139.

<sup>47</sup> Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 94.

liminal/threshold state, and finally a state of aggregation.<sup>48</sup> Van Gennep shows that common to many rites of passage is that the first stage includes a dramatic reenactment of death, a symbolic end to the past life that can range from a performance of the death process to the full enactment of funerary rituals, to a death in truth.<sup>49</sup> This death, figurative or real, serves to separate a person from their “normal” status within the community, and to leave them in a state of separation, in which they are left without communal definition, without markers of status, and without any place in the social structure of society.

Victor Turner, a later scholar of the liminal, notes that “the symbols that represent [the liminal personae] are, in many societies drawn from the biology of death, decomposition, catabolism, and other physical processes that have a negative tinge, such as menstruation.”<sup>50</sup> The liminal state is one which can only be depicted with the language of death and the rhetoric of the ultimate removal from society, yet it is a state experienced by a person still cognizant of their own actions, still living and breathing. This, then, grants the person in the liminal state freedom from the constraints of their own societal norms, while at the same time removing all social protections those norms provide.

Van Gennep’s and Turner’s work with liminality, with the liminal person who is re-formed during a rite of passage, points at a psychological and social state that persists during the period of ritual liminality. This psychological state has been extended to be understood as a

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<sup>48</sup> Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. by Monika B. Vizedom, and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 21

<sup>49</sup> van Gennep, 91-110.

<sup>50</sup> Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*,” in *Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion: an Anthropological Study of the Supernatural*, ed. by Arthur Lehmann and James Myers (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Pub. Co., 2001), 48.

fundamental function of the human consciousness. Jeffrey Miller writes that the liminal “transcendent function” “serves an invaluable psychological purpose: to transition psyche from a conflicted set of circumstances to one that allows us to resolve (or at least more comfortably tolerate) the conflict” – the individuation and the core of the individual’s journey towards reconciliation of the unconscious and conscious mind.<sup>51</sup>

Miller draws on Van Gennep and Turner to apply their description of the ritual process to the very similar process that takes place inside an individual’s psyche during times of change and stress. While Turner focuses on external rituals that signal ritual forms of becoming – the change from childhood to adulthood, the change from unmarried to wedded, etc. – Miller shows that even those changes that occur only within the mind of a single individual go through stages that include a moment or period of liminality. This period is one of limitless possibility, where even the most absurd notions may be held to be true. “The liminal experience” he says, “is one where psyche straddles the boundary, with *both* death and birth, and with *neither* death nor birth.”<sup>52</sup> Liminal spaces are moments of transgression over one’s own psychological boundaries, in which the self-image can be reformed after the demise of the old self-conception.

Thus, the liminal is both a psychological state – that of transgression beyond one’s own limits – and a social state, marked by existence outside the natural social order of society, and by removal from the normal order of life. And yet, it is clear it is also a political and geographical state, at least as Stoicescu and Pyrah use it. They see the liminal as denoting existence on the borders of the normal, at the bounds of what a state is, or can be. The “in-betweenness” of the

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<sup>51</sup> Jeffrey C. Miller and Joan Chodorow, *The Transcendent Function: Jung’s Model of Psychological Growth through Dialogue with the Unconscious* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press), 104.

<sup>52</sup> Miller and Chodorow, 105.

liminal self, or ritual personae, or nation is one and the same. It is a state of possibility, of contradictions where all paths are possible, but only one will be finally realized.

In my work on the liminal in Shevchenko and Gogol's writings, I draw on Miller's definition of psychological liminality and van Gennep/Turner's work on liminality in the community. I also broadly engage with continental philosophy of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, envisioning liminality in Mark Meyers words as, "an ontological position that [straddles and mediates] between the dichotomous positions of being-for-itself and being-in-itself."<sup>53</sup>

More specifically, I am principally interested in the specific states of liminality portrayed by Gogol and Shevchenko in their early/mid 19<sup>th</sup> century lives. Both wrote during the heyday of Romanticism in Europe. Both Gogol and Shevchenko had close contact with Romanticism and were, to some extent, members of the movement. Shevchenko has been directly identified as a Romantic poet, and his interest in nature, folk tales, and national identity all support this characterization. Gogol's Romantic leanings have been a subject of extensive critical debate, but the influence of Romantic poets such as Pushkin on his works is clear.<sup>54</sup> Richard Rorty and Ulf Schulenberg depict 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism as a movement concerned primarily with new vocabularies and new ways to create meaning. In particular, Schulenberg writes that "by

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<sup>53</sup> Mark Meyers, "Liminality and the Problem of Being-in-the-world: Reflections on Sartre and Merleau-Ponty," *Sartre Studies International* 14, no. 1 (2008): 78.

<sup>54</sup> There is, of course, considerable historical debate over Gogol's status as either a romantic or a realist. John Kopper captures the problem well in his essay "The Thing-In-Itself in Gogol's Aesthetics," where he shows that "If the *differens* behind Lotman's distinction [in the recoding work of texts] is reference to a construct of world supposedly exterior to the subject, then Gogol's work is 'realist'... But in Gogol the textual universe itself appears to be a product of a mental process, and hence is 'Romantic'" (60). Tatiana V. Barnett captures the way in which Gogol sat on the temporal boundary between Romanticism and realism in writing that he "belonged to the literary generation of the 1830-40s, when the romantic dichotomy of *dream and reality* was painfully breaking into a *dream and a reality*" (157). This is all to say that while Gogol certainly does not qualify as a wholehearted Romantic, he cannot, and should not, be separated from them. Kopper, "The Thing-In-Itself in Gogol's Aesthetics," in *Essays on Gogol: Logos and the Russian Word*, ed. by Susanne Fusso and Priscilla Meyer (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 40-62; Barnett, "Rome Above Rome: Nikolai Gogol's Romantic Vision of the Eternal City," in *Romanticism and the City*, ed. by L. H. Peer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 157-178.

introducing new sets of metaphors and by making the idea of constant *gestalt* switches look attractive, the Romantic poets initiated a new way of speaking which no longer had use for notions like ‘foundation,’ ‘reality,’ ‘real essence,’ ‘intrinsic nature,’ ‘fitting the world,’ and ‘correspondence of language to reality.’”<sup>55</sup> Jonathan Levin, a theorist of the literature of transition, references the very *gestalt* switches Schulenberg describes when he writes “transition should instead bring the familiar into contact with the unknown, a process that extends knowledge further into the mysterious margin of things even as it defamiliarizes the very categories through which that movement is conducted.”<sup>56</sup>

Transition and its center point, liminality, are processes that are primarily concerned with the strange, the odd, and the abnormal; they lead to the incorporation of new information into a preexisting system, and to radical new languages of meaning. They are processes of morphing a strange, weird event into something that can be easily understood. Transitions, as I have described them, are fundamentally incorporations of the strange and the unusual into the normal and the everyday. If they are transitions between states, as Van Gennep imagines rituals to be, they are transitions that render a new state like marriage normal, where before it would have been strange and alien. If they are transitions of the mind, they are ones that take alien beliefs and incorporate them into one’s world view, movements that familiarize the unfamiliar and estrange the normal.

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<sup>55</sup> Ulf Schulenberg, “‘Becoming Poets of Our Own Lives’: Pragmatism and Romanticism,” *AAA: Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 34, no. 2 (2009): 300. I do not entirely agree with Rorty when he argues that the Romantics were inherently anti-metaphysical. While this may be the case in English-language poetry (and even then, it seems a reach to call P. B. Shelley anti-metaphysical) it is clearly *not* the case in at least some Russian Romanticism. This, however, does not alter the value of his and Schulenberg’s insights into some of the qualities of Romantic poetics, and particular, in how that poetics influenced the pragmatists, and thus does not obviate their appropriateness in this context.

<sup>56</sup> Levin, 3.

Liminality is discordant. It is a moment when what is expected to be normal is realized as strange, and thus must be removed from one's worldview. It is not solely the assumption of new aspects of knowledge into one's framework, but also the expulsion of previously assumed beliefs when those beliefs prove to be false. Important here is the fact that there is a moment in the process of transition *between* the exposure to the unfamiliar and the incorporation of that new thing into the totality of one's worldview and existence. It is this center that is the essence of transition, the thing that makes transitions so distinct and emotionally charged. As Levin puts it, during transitions, knowledge extends into the "mysterious margin." That moment of expansion is altogether strange and new; though it lasts but a second, its traces persist and change that which comes after them.

This mysterious margin is strange, uncomfortable, and perhaps *uncanny*. In Sigmund Freud's 1919 essay on the uncanny, he argues that the uncanny, or the *unheimlich* in German, is primarily an uncovering of the covered, a moment when the familiar and the homelike becomes unfamiliar and strange.<sup>57</sup> He provides an extensive list of those things which might produce the sensation of the uncanny. Among these he lists dismembered limbs that seem self-animated, excessive good fortune, a wish fulfilled improbably, the evil eye, and even psychoanalysis itself.<sup>58</sup>

Freud depicts the "undefined, undefinable excess" that is so essential to the understanding of transitions in his essay on the uncanny. Yet not all transitions involve

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<sup>57</sup> This is, obviously, an oversimplification of Freud's argument. Yet for me, just as for many of the critics who have followed Freud, little value can be found in the connection he makes between the uncanny and the castration complex. It provides an interesting thought experiment, and a window into the type of analytical work Freud was doing at the dawn of the 20s, but as a way of analyzing literature, it is not very fertile ground.

<sup>58</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Das Unheimliche," *Imago. Zeitschrift für Anwendung der Psychoanalyse auf die Geisteswissenschaften* V 5/6 (1919): 313-318.

estrangement or the uncanny *per se*. If, as Levin says, the excess that must be incorporated into one's system of thought is undefinable, estrangement and the uncanny cannot completely depict in what way and how a transition functions. These are, nonetheless, relatively good bywords for an experience that often occurs during moments of liminality, relatively good depictions of how one feels at that moment between moments before the transition is completed.

Levin describes transitions as processes that bring known and unknown together, that transfer known to unknown and vice versa. George Szirtes relates it to the classical ode, noting that the poetics of transition is, in a way, made up of the same strophe, antistrophe, and epode as the ode itself.<sup>59</sup> The whole cycle is the transition; beginning, middle, and end (as much as any transition ends before it begins anew) are all a part of the process. I, in this work, am most concerned with the moment between beginning and end, the moment of utter uncertainty and liminality. This is part of a larger whole of change and alteration, one that creates a poetics that is unwilling to be stagnant, but instead slides and morphs.

In Gogol's short story "May Night, or the Drowned Maiden" ("*Maiskaia noch', ili Utoplennitsa*, 1829-1830) this three-part structure is put on display. In the story, a young woman has drowned herself out of despair that her stepmother is a witch and has her beloved father under her spell. The drowned maiden has subsequently become the ghostly leader of a group of dead maidens – and the work solidifies its Romanic tone. When she, one day, gets a hold of her evil stepmother, the witch transforms into one of the ghost girls, rendering the maiden unable to tell her apart from the others. The first state, that of her stepmother as adult witch, is changed into the final state, that of her stepmother as ghost girl and seeming member of the drowned maiden's followers. In between these two states is the liminal moment itself, the struggle

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<sup>59</sup> George Szirtes, "New Life: The Poetics of Transition," *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 9 (November 2011): 1622.



between the good maiden and the evil witch, which forces the latter to change state. A violent moment, Gogol writes that the maiden “dragged [the stepmother] screaming into the water,” before the stepmother transforms.<sup>60</sup> Yet the stepmother is not the only one changed after the encounter. Where before the drowned maiden was the relatively happy leader of her followers, she now spends the nights asking those whom she encounters if they will help her pick her stepmother out from the crowd of her followers. For the stepmother, she is in hiding, now a wolf among sheep where before she was free to work her evil charms. This change of state, this transition, is dramatized through physical transformation, a transformation which is uncanny, unnatural, weird.

As the transition in “May Night” underlines, liminal moments are marked by discontinuities and breakthroughs of the other. Levin describes William James’s theory of thought as a set of continuities marked by disruptions. James shows how thought (and its children, literary works) can be split into “substantive” and “transitive” parts.<sup>61</sup> The substantive parts are what I, following Levin and Van Gennep, have called states of being. They are those elements of life we describe as thoughts, the nouns, the statements, the objects of the sentence “I’m thinking about ‘x.’” The transitive parts are related to the substantive ones as “a passage, a relation, a transition from or between it and something else.”<sup>62</sup> These transitive parts are often felt or seen as disruptions and discontinuities as is the stepmother’s move from woman to ghost maiden.

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<sup>60</sup> “*s krikom utashchila v vodu.*” *PSS*, vol. 1, 158.

<sup>61</sup> Levin, 48.

<sup>62</sup> William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1, ed. by Frederick H. Burkhardt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 236.

Care must be taken in order to avoid being overly reductive, however. Levin writes that “a moment of transition may ultimately have what will eventually come to be defined as politically progressive consequences, but as it unfolds it remains undetermined in ways obscured by such retrospective characterizations.”<sup>63</sup> Critical analysis of Gogol and Shevchenko has been so commonly focused on those political consequences (progressive consequences in Shevchenko’s case, conservative in Gogol’s) that those consequences and attitudes have indeed obscured elements of their writing.

In this work, I emphasize the common aspects between the liminal moments in their works and their shared use of the basic transitional structure. This is particularly important, as it is tempting to categorize transition by the subject transitioning or the trigger of the transition, rather than by the process itself. This negates the very valuable features of transitions that are revealed by a more focused comparison.

Transitional moments themselves are key here. In my dissertation, I argue that Shevchenko and Gogol are both writers of transition. Moreover, transitions of identity, like that of the stepmother in “May Night,” are a marked aspect of both authors’ writings, one that is revealed through comparison of the two. Beyond this, both authors’ bodies of work demonstrate pervasive dissatisfaction with the forms and formulations of their literary milieu. In Gogol’s shifting national and ethnic identity, in Shevchenko’s responses to and against Russian critics, I read a fluctuating aesthetic that is best described as poetics of transition. In participating in a literary world that claimed Ukrainian and Russian writing both formed a literary community, yet judged the merits of each national literature differently, Gogol and Shevchenko found homes in flexibility, change, and a core sense of “striving.”

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<sup>63</sup> Levin, Preface.

In Chapter II, “(Re)writing the Past: *Taras Bulba*, *Haidamaky*, and the Poetry of Destabilizing Trauma,” I examine two works from each author’s first period. In this chapter are works that reckon with the past, which confront historical events and recent geo-political happenings. It is through the historical and mytho-historical that both authors confront identity, the world around them, and the world that brought them into being. Both authors had decided interests in history, as demonstrated by Gogol’s nonfiction writing, and Shevchenko’s archeological and cultural sketches. In this chapter I examine early works that deal with history, Gogol’s *Taras Bulba* (*Taras Bul'ba*, 1835) and Shevchenko’s *Haidamaky* (1839-1841).

The central focus of this chapter is a close reading of the two works’ parallel narratives. Both works feature scenes of filicide, and in both works it is a protagonist that kills his own child or children. In *Haidamaky*, after the Haidamaks take Uman, Gonta kills his two sons because of their Polish-Catholic origins. In *Taras Bulba*, Taras kills one of his sons because that son has abandoned the Cossacks to side with the Poles. While Gonta and Taras have dramatically different reactions to their children’s deaths, both incidents include moments of liminality in which the protagonists transition from righteous soldiers to fathers of dead children.

This is one example of the sorts of destabilization central to both works’ plots. In this chapter, I also examine historical trauma, destabilizations of genre, and formal aspects of their works. I conclude the chapter by arguing that both works highlight discontinuity and instability, pairing new and old, historical and modern in order to create works which explore liminality in multiple forms. Both works also use these transitional states in order to reckon with Ukraine’s traumatic past, albeit in different ways.

In Chapter III, “Time’s Arrow: *Dead Souls*, “Dream,” “Cold Ravine,” and the Poetry of Flux,” I look at three works from Gogol and Shevchenko’s middle periods. Both authors

continue to investigate the historical past in their second periods. However, in this period, Gogol and Shevchenko emphasize the instability of historical narrative, and the importance of the historian. In these works, time and narrative are in flux, and time turns back on itself, shifting rapidly between fantasy and reality, occasionally vanishing into timeless oblivion.

Narratorial identity is another source of flux during this period. I discuss how the narrators are created and their identities established in all three works, and moreover, how those narrators then go on to highlight moments of liminality in all three works. In this chapter I argue that the constant transitions of narratorial identity create an aesthetic *mélange* which produces, for the reader, a deep sense of disquiet and instability.

I conclude by discussing genre once again. I find that all three works play with generic conventions to create a sense of continual transition. Both works emphasize authorial perspective, and the right of the author to manipulate the forms they have inherited. This corresponds with a broader trend in Gogol and Shevchenko's middle period works. Both writers use their works in this period to destabilize conventions and expectations. They write works which find their places in the spaces *between* set form and function, using that liminal space to delve into the world of infinite possibility.

In Chapter IV, "Searching Anew: *Selected Passages*, *The Artist* and the Poetry of Disenchantment," I move on to each author's final period. I examine two works in which the authors turned towards new readerships and sought out new audiences. *The Artist* (*Khudozhnik*, 1856), written in Russian, was a semi-autobiographical prose novel Shevchenko produced while in exile. *Selected Passages* was similarly a departure for Gogol, containing no prose fiction, but rather a series of essays or exercises in what might be called creative non-fiction. I argue that these works and this period is marked by a poetry of disenchantment.

All poetry is a poetry of enchantment, yet to write a poetry of disenchantment, as Baudelaire does, or as Wordsworth does in his Rhine cycle, is to write a poetry of age, of disillusionment, of weariness and of loss.<sup>64</sup> It is a poetry that requires the reader to find their own enchantments within it. It is also, in this case, a poetry that represents both authors' disillusionment with their own readership.

Both authors also demonstrate disenchantment with their own authorial identities. Shevchenko investigates his own past in "The Artist," looking at his years studying in St. Petersburg under the tutelage of famous painter Karl Briullov. He examines the course of an artist's life, and in doing so, reflects on the dark turn his own life has taken, and in particular how it has changed from his idyllic days of study. He looks through the lens of "The Artist" to the life of the writer, and tries to reckon with its course. In *Selected Passages*, Gogol, too, examines the course of his own life, and in particular, his existence between Russian and Ukrainian identities. He also focuses on his political identity, and its correspondence, or non-correspondence, with his perceived political sentiments. For both Gogol and Shevchenko, these third periods are ones of disenchantment, where metaphors and means are broken and twisted. These works find themselves in unsettled territory, in the liminal space in which there is no sure pole or center to which they must adhere.

Finally, in the work's conclusion, "Boundaries and Borders: *Dead Souls*, Part II, "Should we not then cease, my friend," and the Poetry of Liminality," I discuss Gogol's unpublished and mostly destroyed sequel to *Dead Souls* and Shevchenko's final poem "Should we not then cease, my friend" ("*Chy ne pokynut' nam, neboho*, 1861), written almost on his deathbed. I look at how

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<sup>64</sup> Christopher E.J. Simons, "Enchantment and Disenchantment in Wordsworth's 1820 Rhine Poems," *Christianity and Culture* 48 (Dec., 2016): 169-223.

these final writings represent liminality *in toto*, and are the culmination of both authors' explorations of transitional moments throughout their writings. In this final chapter I bring my work to a close, ending my investigation of Gogol and Shevchenko at the end of their lives and careers.

Throughout each chapter I return to questions of identity and narratorial stance. I find that Gogol and Shevchenko both explore liminality and transition from multiple angles throughout their careers, and a careful examination of these explorations allows similar periodizations of their works. Finally, I closely read works from both authors that deal with history, both personal and national. I document their changing attitudes towards the historical past and show how those attitudes are similar.

## Chapter II

### (Re)writing the Past: *Taras Bulba*, *Haidamaky*, and the Poetry of Destabilizing Trauma

Rudy Pan'ko, the narrator of Nikolai Gogol's first collection of stories, *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, is a kind-hearted, "simple" Ukrainian. As Yulia Ilchuk writes, the power and appeal of Pan'ko's character shaped Gogol's public persona for years after the publication of the *Dikanka Tales*, creating an image of the writer that centered on his Ukrainian (or more exactly, Little Russian) otherness.<sup>65</sup> This image was especially prominent during the first phase of Gogol's writing, which includes the *Dikanka Tales* and *Mirgorod* (1835).

Gogol and Shevchenko have been seen as presenting two fundamentally different cultural stances, especially in the first period of their works. Some scholars such as Roman Koropecyk and Robert Romanchuk have characterized Gogol's early, Ukrainian-centric work as part of a "little-Russian" literature, one written in Russian for a wider imperial audience. Works such as the second edition of *Taras Bulba* exemplify this little-Russian literature, creating the image of an exoticized Ukrainian hero who is, nonetheless, a member of the Russian community and Russian history.<sup>66</sup> The second cultural stance, well characterized by early Shevchenko, is one that emphasizes Ukraine's unique culture, and does not see the need for all Ukrainian literature to fit into the all-Russian milieu. Shevchenko's first poetry collection, *Kobzar* (1840), is focused closely on these details of Ukrainian life and existence, presenting them not as exotic in

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<sup>65</sup> Yulia Ilchuk, "Nikolai Gogol's Self-Fashioning in the 1830s: the Post-Colonial Perspective," *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 51, no. 2/3 (2009): 214.

<sup>66</sup> See Koropecyk and Romanchuk, "Ukraine in Blackface" for more on this sort of little-Russian literature. Note that the second edition of *Taras Bulba*, published in 1842, differs substantially from the first version. It is generally seen as more "Russianized" and includes a pivotal death scene not found in the 1835 version.

comparison to Russian norms, but rather as elements of a world familiar to the readers. This stance presumes separate and coequal Russian and Ukrainian cultures, which sometimes share participants. One can see this in Shevchenko's communication to different audiences through his choice of language. *Haidamaky*, a major early narrative poem, exemplifies such communication through language, and by focusing on a pivotal moment in Ukrainian, not Russian, history.

Despite what appears to be a dichotomy, scholars such as Edyta Bojanowska have argued that the Ukrainian/little-Russian split is only part of the story. Beyond these explicitly different cultural stances, there is a shared dissatisfaction with form, metaphor, and established chronology. That is to say, both Gogol and Shevchenko demonstrate an uneasiness with simple answers, with their own established personae, and with the modes to which they have become accustomed. Moreover, they are consistently interested in non-linear dreamtime, and with identity formation. This is present even in the earliest periods of their works, when their subject matter most clearly focused on Ukraine, seen through different lenses.

Just as *Haidamaky* and *Taras Bulba* can be seen as exemplifying the little-Russian/Ukrainian divide, they are also powerful examples of the stylistic elements that unite both Gogol's and Shevchenko's corpuses. In a close reading of *Taras Bulba*, which was originally published as part of Gogol's second collection of works, *Mirgorod*, and of *Haidamaky*, a stand-alone narrative poem by Shevchenko, I show how the poetics of liminality extends to their treatment of historical or pseudo-historical narratives. Both works demonstrate an interest in trauma's destabilizing force, and the ways in which that destabilization can be portrayed in fiction. This shared destabilization transcends characterizations of Gogol as an advocate of the little-Russian mentality and Shevchenko as a proto-Ukrainian-nationalist and marks them as sharing a deep similarity. They share broken rhymes and incomplete similes, and frequently miss



logical links between passages in these two works, all of which add to the destabilizing aesthetic of both.

My analysis of *Haidamaky* and *Taras Bulba* moves from general to specific. I first examine evidence of historical trauma and destabilization in their works, drawing on history as they knew it. I then move to destabilization of genre conventions. Both works are historical fiction, but as one is a novella, and one is a narrative poem, the expectations of their genres differ.<sup>67</sup> I then discuss plot-specific types of trauma, focusing primarily on the protagonists of each work. Finally, I examine formal aspects of their works: syllabification; sentence, paragraph, and stanza structure; and word choice. In these I find concrete examples of destabilizing trauma less connected to plot and setting. These elements together create a picture of Gogol's and Shevchenko's first periods as marked by destabilization, as characterized by a stylistic element so strong that it brings them together, even as their literary-political stances draw them apart.

Both *Taras Bulba* and *Haidamaky* depict Cossack rebellions against the Poles over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During this period parts of Ukraine were semi-independent polities. What follows is a short introduction to the history of the period. I have included this in order to provide historical background as a way to understand the world in which both works are set. More importantly, understanding the ways in which Gogol and Shevchenko shape and reinterpret the past differently is essential to understanding how their two poetics of destabilization lead, in their early works, to the Ukrainian/Little Russian dichotomy.

*Taras Bulba* and *Haidamaky* dramatize attempts by Ukrainian Cossacks to retain their independence during periods when that independence was increasingly being threatened. They

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<sup>67</sup> For more on genre issues during the period, see Jurij Streidter, "Poetic Genre and the Sense of History in Pushkin," *New Literary History* 8, no. 2 (Winter, 1977): 295-309.

are each unusual within their author's corpus. *Taras Bulba* is the only one of Gogol's finished and published works to deal directly with the past in a fictional manner. Gogol's catalogue of works does include the unfinished "Hetman" ("*Get'man*," ca. 1830) and the posthumously published sketches for a tragedy set in the Zaporozhian Sich.<sup>68</sup> Among the works published during his lifetime, however, *Taras Bulba* is unique as a piece of historical fiction. This is particularly notable, as Gogol worked as a history teacher or professor several times throughout his life and was known to remark on his interest in the subject; he intended to write a history of Ukraine, but this project was never realized.

I do not intend to claim that Gogol was in any way a competent professor of history – his good lectures were so few and far between that he lost his position at the university in St. Petersburg after only a short time there. But his interest is often remarked on both by others around him and by himself, publicly and in letters. As with all elements of Gogol's self-portrayal, it is difficult to confirm this interest with certainty, but it is mentioned consistently enough that it seems highly likely to have been genuine.

Shevchenko, too, was fascinated by history, and had a professional interest in the subject. As an artist, he documented archeologically and culturally significant places in Ukraine. During his exile, he served as a member of the first Russian expedition in the Aral Sea, and was instrumental in recording the voyage and the cultures the expedition encountered in his artwork. Several of his artistic works directly depict historical events, and others imagine historical

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<sup>68</sup> Panteleimon Kulish, a friend and associate of Shevchenko's, published some of Gogol's play in *Osnova* almost a decade after his death (oddly just about a month before Shevchenko's own death in March (O.S. February) 1861). These fragments, however, were not well ordered, and not all applied to the proposed tragedy. Exactly the course that the work would have taken is still not entirely clear. Paul A. Karpuk, "Reconstructing Gogol's Destroyed Tragedy on a Theme from the History of Zaporozhe," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 41, no. 4 (Winter, 1997): 580-603.

settings.<sup>69</sup>

This is, to some extent, true about his poetic works as well. While Shevchenko did not devote nearly as many poems to the practically ethnographic investigations of his own and other cultures' pasts as he did artworks, he did write several historically focused works. Notable among these are "Taras's Night" ("*Tarasova nich*," 1838), "Ivan Pidkova" (1839), "Heretic" ("*Ieretyk*," 1845), *Hamaliia* (1842), *Nazar Stodolia* (1843), and, most importantly here, *Haidamaky*.

*Haidamaky*, the longest of Shevchenko's narrative poems, takes the form of a romantic tale, one whose exotic setting is the not-so-distant past. Its semi-historical narrative takes place in Right Bank Ukraine, and fictionalizes the events of the *Koliivshchyna*, a Cossack rebellion and period of intense conflict in the Polish-controlled Right Bank. The Haidamaks were bands formed from the lower classes in Right Bank Ukraine, and sometimes led by Cossack officers. They led several major rebellions against Polish nobility in 1732, 1750, and 1768, and (occasionally) assisted in Left Bank-led raids as well. Most of the Haidamak rebellions were directed against Roman Catholics (Polish and sometimes Ukrainian Greek Catholic) and Jews.

The 1768 uprising, the *Koliivshchyna*, was by far the largest and bloodiest of the three central Haidamak rebellions. It was triggered in part by the Confederation of Bar. A group of Polish nobles gathered at Bar, in Podolia, in order to fight Russian influence and defend the traditional rights of the Polish nobility. They formed a group opposing the government, a legal right of theirs in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and declared war on Russia in the name of Poland. In Ukraine, this sparked military conflict between Polish forces dispatched by King

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<sup>69</sup> Shevchenko's art and its portrayal of history has been a subject of some considerable scholarly interest. For a starting point, see Victor O. Bunyak's article "Shevchenko the Artist," *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 7 (1965): 143-58.

Stanisław Augustus, and the Confederation. The conflict spread, and over the ensuing years, between 1768 and 1772, the Commonwealth was thrown into chaos. Eventually, the Confederation's fight with the crown and several related issues led to the First Partition of Poland and the end of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

As the Commonwealth began what soon became a civil war, a group of Ukrainian Cossacks joined together under the command of Maksym Zalizniak, a Zaporizhian Cossack. In part a reaction directly to the Confederation of Bar, and in larger part a reaction to the poor conditions in Right Bank Ukraine, what started as a small uprising soon became a full-blown rebellion. The Haidamaks quickly took several towns, and two months into the rebellion, they took the walled town of Uman. This was partially possible because a leader of the Uman militia, Ivan Gonta, chose to join the Haidamaks, rather than remain loyal to his Polish commanders.

Despite the Haidamaks' previous reluctance to kill non-combatants, after the Haidamak forces gained control of Uman, a three-day slaughter ensued. The majority of the Jewish population of the city died in the rebellion, as did a maximum of 13,000 other inhabitants of the city.<sup>70</sup> It is possible that Gonta saved those Jewish and Polish children he could find, although it is unclear exactly whom he protected. After what has been called the Massacre of Uman, the rebellion continued. In late June, just days after the capture of Uman, Russian forces began to move against the Haidamaks. The Haidamaks were at least partially under the impression they had the support of the Empire, and so Zalizniak, Gonta, and another leader, Semen Nezhyvyi, met with Russian officers willingly. They were arrested on the spot, and the rebellion easily quashed without their leadership. Eventually, Gonta was tortured and executed, and Zalizniak exiled to Siberia. Much like in Shevchenko's other historically and ethnographically focused poems, in

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<sup>70</sup> The exact number is almost impossible to determine, given the vastly conflicting accounts.

*Haidamaky*, he weaves together myth, fiction, and historical information about the *Koliivshchyna* to paint a picture of the past that comes alive to the reader.<sup>71</sup> It is not the most literal interpretation of history, however.

*Taras Bulba* is similarly semi-historical. It is set in the Zaporozhian/Zaporizhian Sich, a mostly autonomous Cossack community named, metonymically, for a fortress that existed in the southern part of modern-day Ukraine from about 1471 to 1775. Throughout its almost three-hundred-year history, the Sich – officially known as the Free Lands of the Zaporizhian Host of the Dnieper Delta – attempted to defend itself from incorporation into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (as had happened to the Cossacks on the right bank of the Dnieper), the Ottoman Empire, the Crimean Khanate, and the Russian Empire.

Between the establishment of the Sich in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, and the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Sich was mostly autonomous. After 1583 it was part of Lesser Poland, although not without protest. In 1648, Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky rebelled against Poland, and established the Cossack Hetmanate. Nominally more independent than the Sich had been under Polish control, the Hetmanate encompassed the traditional area of the Sich along with most of central Ukraine.

The Treaty of Pereiaslav, in 1654, split the Cossack Host into the Cossack Hetmanate in the North, and Zaporizhia, or the Sich, in the South. Just thirteen years later, the Treaty of Andrusovo placed the Sich under Russian and Polish co-control. For the next one hundred years, tensions mounted in the area, especially after the rebellion of Cossack Hetman Ivan Mazepa at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, after the war between the Russian Empire and the Ottomans

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<sup>71</sup> Roman Koropecyk notes three main types of sources in *Haidamaky*. Historical tracts and written works inform the work, as do Shevchenko's own personal conversations and the tales he has heard through his life. Some of the information in the poem also seems directly drawn from the novel *Wernyhora*, by Michał Czajkowski, and thus has a fictional basis. "A Note on a Note in Taras Shevchenko's 'Haidamaky,'" *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 32/33 (2011-2014): 457-460.

in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Sich lost its independence entirely to the Empire.

Set in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, *Taras Bulba*, which appears to take place before the Treaty of Andrusovo, is backgrounded by one of the most chaotic times in Ukrainian history. Despite its exaggerated and heightened language, it emerged as a popular depiction of the period.<sup>72</sup> Like *Taras Bulba*, early reactions to *Haidamaky* show that some readers saw the work as one almost of historical fact, rather than fiction.<sup>73</sup> Volodymyr Antonovych, a prominent historian of about a generation after Shevchenko, noted that both writers had been mistakenly read as attempting to portray historical fact, and that this was a fundamental misinterpretation of the function of poetry. Yet still such analyses persisted. Indeed, in the early twentieth century, intense polemical wars were waged on the background materials Shevchenko must have used to write *Haidamaky*. The historicity of the work has been challenged throughout its existence in part by debating the origin of the information Shevchenko used to create the narrative in the work, and through commentary claiming the unimportance of this very subject. Grabowicz, in particular, has argued that the work deals with historical *memory*, rather than the factual (or officially accepted) past.<sup>74</sup>

A similar revision in Gogol criticism that has occurred over the past odd century and a half. More recently, Gogol's depictions of provincial Russia and the quasi-historical portraits of Ukraine drawn in *Taras Bulba* have been shown to be created things, fictionalized and often not fully factually informed. These works are, as Anne Lounsbery puts it, "historically shaped (but

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<sup>72</sup> See Eva Lynn Singer, "Reconciling the Exotic 'Other' in Nikolai Gogol's *Taras Bulba*" (Master's thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 2015), for a more in-depth discussion of this exaggeration.

<sup>73</sup> Volodymyr Antonovych, "Shevchenko and Ukrainian History," in Luckyj, *Shevchenko and the Critics*, 91-95. Antonovych is writing in the 1880s and notes that readers (even educated ones) were prone to confuse events in *Haidamaky* with historical facts even then, despite those facts having happened only just beyond living memory (in 1768-9).

<sup>74</sup> See George G. Grabowicz, *Shevchenkovi "Haidamaky": Poema i krytyka* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2013).

aesthetically transformed).”<sup>75</sup>

Shevchenko and Gogol were not, nor were they attempting to be, historians. Gogol’s genuine attempts in that area were published after *Taras Bulba* and can be easily distinguished from his fictional works. Shevchenko never pretended to write academic history. Yet, as Lounsbery notes, Gogol’s works were historically shaped. It is partially in the aesthetic transformation of that history that I find the destabilization that I argue characterizes much of both authors’ early works. It is also, however, in the narratives of the stories themselves that destabilization appears.

*Taras Bulba* begins as the eponymous hero, Taras, awaits his sons’ return home from Kyiv, where they have been studying at the Academy.<sup>76</sup> After they return home, he and his sons travel to the Sich itself. During the period from the late 16<sup>th</sup> to early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Sich had two primary capitals/fortifications. It is unclear which one is referred to in *Taras Bulba*, and both are now submerged under the Kakhova reservoir in Ukraine. Gogol’s description of the place does not seem to indicate where exactly Taras and his sons visit. Instead, he focuses on their actions – while at the Sich, Taras inspires and bullies his fellow Cossacks into a raid into Polish controlled territory.

The novella then takes the reader most of the way across central Ukraine, to Dubno, now in Ukraine’s Rivne oblast. Given the period in which the story is set, it is clear that Taras and his fellow Cossacks venture into the heart of Polish Ukraine. This is an incursion, not a defense. And yet, given that it is still a venture into the traditional lands of Ukraine, it is also in some way a

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<sup>75</sup> Anne Lounsbery, “‘No, This is Not the Provinces’: Provincialism, Authenticity, and Russianness in Gogol’s Day,” *The Russian Review* 64, no. 2 (Apr., 2005): 361.

<sup>76</sup> Entertainingly, some of the secondary sources for this dissertation were published by scholars from that very same Academy, in its modern form as NaUKMA.

defensive move in that it is an attempted defense of Ukrainian independence in the Right Bank. It is an implicit assertion that both Left and Right Bank Ukraine are part and parcel of the same community.

After Taras and his sons arrive outside Dubno, they besiege the city. There, a Tatar woman appears in the middle of the night at one of the son's, Andrii's, bedside. She tells Andrii that a Polish girl he was once in love with is starving behind the city walls. Andrii sneaks into Dubno, and once inside, decides to join the Polish side of the battle.

Taras finds out from a Jewish merchant that Andrii has joined the Poles. During a battle, he executes Andrii. In the same battle, Ostap, Taras's other son, is captured, and after torture and imprisonment, executed. He remains stoic throughout, but finally calls out to his father to save him just before he dies. Taras is unable to do so, and returns home, both his sons dead.

The new Hetman wants to make peace with the Poles, and Taras warns they cannot be trusted. The Hetman ignores Taras's concerns, which, of course, prove well-founded. In the revised 1842 edition, the Poles finally burn Taras at the stake as he proclaims his faith and his belief in little Russia. (He is not executed in the earlier version of the novella, but the Poles do indeed turn on the Ukrainians.)

*Taras Bulba* and *Haidamaky* share many plot points. In the beginning of *Haidamaky*, the reader is introduced to the protagonist, an orphan named Yarema. He is in love with the daughter of the churchwarden of his village, Oksana. He decides to go seek his fortune and defend his countrymen as part of the Haidamak uprisings. He vows love to Oksana, although he makes it clear that he knows that she is of different social status and that he cannot be with her as he is of no standing himself. Just after he leaves, Polish forces come to his hometown, and burn it down. Oksana herself is taken prisoner by the Poles, carried off away from her home.



Yarema quickly rises through the ranks of the Cossacks, doing well. He is given the name Halaida by Zalizniak, who features prominently in the poem. Yarema then learns that Oksana has been captured and goes to rescue her. After freeing her from the Poles, he takes her to Chyhyryn, then capital of the Hetmanate. In Chyhyryn, he installs Oksana in a monastery. The reader finds out that not only has Oksana's father been killed, but she herself has been raped. Oksana and Yarema are married, but just after they wed, Yarema leaves and returns to the ranks of the Haidamaky to support Zalizniak, his role model and father figure. There, Yarema and the rest of the Haidamaks go to raid and despoil Uman. The bloody attack begins with a siege. During Zalizniak's push against the town, Gonta decided to join the Haidamaky and fight the Poles. This narrative is broken up by numerous authorial digressions, in which the author discourses on various aspects of culture and society. It also includes moments of song and examples of camp life, snatches of conversations that interrupt a continuous plot.

After loosely chronicling Yarema and Oksana's relationship, the narrative switches point-of-view for a short time, and Gonta becomes the focus of the third person limited perspective. Gonta, who has betrayed his command and joined with the Ukrainian forces out of fellow feeling, is a troubled man. During this brief section of *Haidamaky*, the reader learns that Gonta has killed his own children for being Catholic and being raised in a Polish fashion. He mourns their death and bemoans what he feels was the necessity of killing them. He has sacrificed his command, his loyalty, and even his children to his belief in the Haidamak cause. It is this sacrifice that bears the principle focus of this portion of the poem.

The narrator then begins to speak directly to the audience once again. The narrator laments how the Haidamak rebellion brought no justice to Ukraine, and how instead injustice has flourished in the years since the rebellions. Ukraine is quiet now. And yet, people still remember.

Taras Bulba tells the world it will remember him with his dying breaths, that freedom is just beyond the horizon. Similarly, the end of *Haidamaky*, does Shevchenko. The old Haidamaks sing by a riverside and promise that all will eventually be well. They promise a future that is born of the justice that the Haidamaks wanted for their people, a future that is just around a corner.

In these two narratives, the historical past is a malleable substance. Both works alter history, change it as it is known to their authors and readers. They carry a sense of destabilization, a traumatic relationship with the world as it has been given to them, with the memories and images transmitted by an earlier age. Later in this chapter, I will discuss ways in which both works twist genre expectations, create moments of destabilization for their readers. I will discuss the ways in which the very language of the works conveys traumatic destabilization. Here, I discuss how the historical past is a source of a destabilized sensation that permeates both works, that catches them between historical fact and fiction in a no-man's-land of transition and confusion.

The historical past plays into an oft-remarked-upon element of Shevchenko's poetics – his creation of a new mytho-historic past. While this is characteristic of Romanticism generally, and while much of Shevchenko's work is indeed Romantic, Shevchenko restructures his folkloric and historical meanings, clarifying and remaking them to serve his own, new purposes.<sup>77</sup> In *Haidamaky*, Shevchenko rewrites the *Koliivshchyna*, making it more heroic yet terribly horrific, an aching memory of trauma. In doing so, he also rewrites the Polish romantic work on the subject, *Wernyhora* (1838), which romanticizes the alien savagery of the Ukrainian

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<sup>77</sup> Lisa Efimov Schneider, "An Examination of Shevchenko's Romanticism," in Luckyj, *Shevchenko and the Critics*, 443-444.

Cossacks, and generally creates something of a melodrama.

Although Shevchenko depicts the Haidamaks as heroic, he also repeats horrific stories that were not, in fact, historical. In this case, he retells Gonta's filicide as part of *Haidamaky*. In *Wernyhora*, a footnote claims that Gonta murdered his sons for being Catholic. Roman Koropec'kyj shows Shevchenko copied this footnote almost wholesale into a note in the early editions of *Haidamaky*.<sup>78</sup> Later, when the poem was published as part of the 1860 edition of Shevchenko's works, the footnotes were removed. The removal of the footnotes emphasizes the importance of the sacrifice and murder of Gonta's sons, independent of any historical context.

This murder, which Shevchenko recounts in all its graphic sadness, plays a climactic role in the poem. The fact that it never truly happened is rather irrelevant. What is relevant is that Shevchenko portrays it in a new way, twisting a moment of "history" away from its supposed events. "My sons, my sons/Look at Ukraine/you died for her/and I with you,"<sup>79</sup> Gonta weeps, laying his two sons to rest under cover of darkness. He mourns them alone, while all his friends celebrate a victory over the Poles only a little way away. He hides his sadness from his companions, companions who saw him kill these very same sons just a little while ago for being Roman Catholic and allied with the Poles. Although Gonta commits the murder he believes is right, he is traumatically destabilized by the results. Much like the biblical sacrifices of Abraham and God (through Jesus), Gonta's sons' deaths fundamentally reorder his world. Yet unlike

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<sup>78</sup> Koropec'kyj, "A Note on a Note," 458.

<sup>79</sup> "Syny moi, syny moi/Na tu Ukrainu/Dyvitiesia, vy za nei/I ia za nei hinu." Taras H. Shevchenko, *Zibrannia tvoriv u shesti tomakh*. Edition consisting of the first six volumes of *Povne zibrannia tvoriv: u 12 t.* edited by M. H. Zhulyn's'kyi, 2001-2014 (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2003) (Hereafter ZT), vol. 1, 182. In the original 1841 publication "podybitsia" (perfective) appears in place of "dyvitiesia" (imperfective.) It is unclear when the change occurred, as it is not included in the text notes in the 2003 edition of Shevchenko's collected works, nor is it included in the volume analyzing the text's history that accompanies the facsimile reprint of the 1841 edition. It is also not commented on in the description of the poem's different variants, although the difference is obvious when comparing the 1841 and 2003 printings.

Abraham's performance of sacrifice with Isaac, there is no rainbow for Gonta himself. The narrator's hope for a new future for Ukraine is no new covenant with God, but it is *hope*.<sup>80</sup>

Here, Gonta demonstrates a central element of the Haidmak rebellion as Shevchenko portrays it. There is no stability. There is no fairness in this system, no matter how many Poles are killed, how many Roman Catholics. Murder, here, does not produce stability, nor does it fulfil Gonta's need to do right by his people. The historical past is unstable and the progenitor of generational trauma, and its characters recognize that. It is inadequate to celebrate murder and decimation, even the characters inside Shevchenko's work recognize that. No matter how bloodthirsty they often appear, in the climactic section of the work, Shevchenko shows that they cannot find stability in that bloodlust.

And thus, in this example, both of these sorts of destabilization are present – that of the characters and that of the author and the work. For Shevchenko, the historical past must be directed, rewritten, reformed. It cannot be left in the stable position it has so far occupied. In responding to *Wernyhora*, Shevchenko feels the trauma of the past, and must convey it to his readers in terms that are more explicit than the ones he is reading. Leonid Livak argues that Gogol was pleased with his ability to set aside the historical past in favor of emotional resonance. Yet despite supposedly setting the historical past aside, *Taras Bulba* clearly demonstrates that history's destabilizing and affecting qualities. "Everything in 'Taras Bul'ba' looked realistic, because it corresponded to the aesthetic and cultural expectations of Gogol's interpretive community," Livak writes.<sup>81</sup> This facsimile of historicity masks a warping of

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<sup>80</sup> See Grabowicz, *Shevchenkovi "Haidamaky,"* 240-250 and 270-306 for more on *Haidamaky*'s biblical associations and on sacrifice in the narrative.

<sup>81</sup> Leonid Livak, *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination: A Case of Russian Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 105-106; 108.

historical past that is centered on maximizing emotive returns and conveying the unstable nature of those emotions.

And yet, it does interpret history. While it has been claimed that *Taras Bulba* “has no historical framework; actually, it has no history whatsoever,”<sup>82</sup> this reflects the fact that *Taras Bulba*’s historical frame is not solely that of fact, and it neglects the historical information that clearly informs the narrative’. In the same article that argues *Taras Bulba* is a-historical, the author notes that Gogol’s writing is mythopoetic.<sup>83</sup> It creates a past of archetypes and ideals, where Taras himself can be a man of the 15<sup>th</sup> century who exists and functions during a period that may include the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, in *Taras Bulba*, conflicts between the Poles and the Ukrainians that stretched over centuries are boiled down to a few interactions. In the triumph of Taras’s indomitable will, in his unwillingness to be cowed even at the stake, there is a compression of two hundred years of struggle against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a struggle that centers on the maintenance of a separate Ukrainian identity and the trauma of each generation’s safeguard of that identity.

*Haidamaky* deals with the destabilizing trauma of Cossack history as it effects Shevchenko’s contemporary readers. *Taras Bulba* shows the destabilizing nature of the present in its treatment of Cossack history. The Cossacks of *Taras Bulba* are deeply devoted to one another, will die for one another, and will not suffer their honor to be demeaned. Even as they commit violent atrocities against their enemies, they are stirred by speeches of valor, faith, and camaraderie. The Cossacks cheer as Taras toasts them, saying, “Yea, let us drink together for our

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<sup>82</sup> Romana Bahrij-Pikulyk, “Superheros, Gentlemen or Pariahs?: The Cossacks in Nikolai Gogol’s ‘Taras Bulba’ and Panteleimon Kulish’s ‘Black Council,’” *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 5, no. 2 (Fall, 1980): 31.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

own glory, so that our grandsons and the sons of those grandsons say that there was once upon a time, those who were not shamed by brotherhood, and did not betray their own. And to faith, Gentlemen-brothers, to faith!”<sup>84</sup> Even as historical Cossacks were perhaps not as valiant as Taras and his fellows, they serve as a template that allows Gogol to excoriate their “more civilized nineteenth-century Russian descendants, who lived in a world obsessed with materialism, refinement, and sex.”<sup>85</sup> While in this quote Rosenshiel names those affected by the work as “Russian,” it is not the Russians for whom this is most true, but rather those who are direct inheritors of Taras’s world, Gogol’s Little Russian fellows.

The exaggeration of the Cossacks’ noble characters in *Taras Bulba* serves as a counterweight to the lack of nobility implied to exist in the contemporary world. It also plays an important role as genre marker. Their manipulation of genre conventions and the way both works fail to fulfill those conventions marks *Taras Bulba* and *Haidamaky* even more strongly as works focused on destabilization and disturbance.

To understand how *Taras Bulba* and *Haidamaky* destabilize genre conventions, one must first understand exactly what their genres are. They are both historical fiction – that much is clear. They take place in the past and include enough historical detail to confirm it is *our* past, the past of the world as it is, the world without magic, without fantasy, without monsters or fairies. In this, both works differ from many of the other pieces produced by their authors. And in this, one finds the basis of their genres.

The play with historical detail in both works is one source of destabilization. Yet

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<sup>84</sup> “*Da uzhe vmeste vyp'em i za nashu sobstvennuiu slavu, chtoby skazali vnuki i syny tekhnukov, chto byli kogda-to takie, kotorye ne postydili tovarishchestva i ne vydali svoikh. Tak za veru, pane-bratove, za veru!*” PSS, vol. 2, 130.

<sup>85</sup> See Gary Rosenshiel, *The Ridiculous Jew: The Exploitation and Transformation of a Stereotype in Gogol, Turgenyev, and Dostoevsky* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 32.

historical fiction, as a genre, is more than simply a collection of historical details set within a fictional framework. György Lukács writes that the historical novel was inaugurated by Walter Scott, and through Scott, the practice of using an ordinary man to dramatize history was established. The historical novel, for Lukács, is an epic of everyday life, where the transformation of social reality is seen through the eyes of the average people of that society.<sup>86</sup>

Historical fictions are emotive by nature. They are set apart from works of pure history by their focus on the affective aspects of historical existence, by their attempt to answer the question “what was it like?”<sup>87</sup> Yet they also speak to the readers contemporary concerns, to the problems and issues of the time they were written.<sup>88</sup>

So much of the discourse surrounding historical fiction is concerned with prescriptive definitions – elements that the work must contain. It *must* be set fifty years in the past. It *must* be set two generations in the past. It *must* be set at least half a generation ago. It *must* include at least some attempt at historical accuracy. It should be plot-driven, not character-driven. It should seek to include both “accuracy and illusion.”<sup>89</sup> It may not even be a genre; perhaps it is only a convention-less indication of setting!<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> György Lukács, *Istoricheskii roman* (Moscow: Literaturnyi kritik, 1937-8).

<sup>87</sup> Grant Rodwell, *Whose History?: Engaging History Students through Historical Fiction* (Adelaide, AU: University of Adelaide Press, 2013), 51-52.

<sup>88</sup> Sarah Johnson, “Defining the Genre: What are the Rules for Historical Fiction?,” Paper presented at The Associated Writing Programs Annual Conference, March 2002, <https://historicalnovelsociety.org/guides/defining-the-genre-what-are-the-rules-for-historical-fiction/>.

<sup>89</sup> Richard Lee, “History is but a fable agreed upon: the problem of truth in history and fiction,” Paper presented at the Romantic Novelists’ Association Annual Conference, York, UK, 2000, <https://historicalnovelsociety.org/guides/but-a-fable-agreed-upon-speech-by-richard-lee/>.

<sup>90</sup> For a short discussion of this perspective, see Marianne Kavanagh, “So, What Exactly IS Historical Fiction?,” *Historia Magazine*, 25 May, 2018, <http://www.historiamag.com/what-is-historical-fiction/>.

As absurd as that final idea may seem, it gives one a sense of the controversy over the very meaning of historical fiction. Clarity can be found more easily in its sub-genres. Romana Bahrij-Pikulyk dichotomizes historical prose into the historical romance and the historical novel. The historical novel, she writes, is just the sort of novel Scott described and wrote. It centers on “common, everyday, middle-class reality, has a non-heroic hero, a plot that issues from character, and a deromanticizing style.” In contrast, the historical romance “present[s] illusionary worlds in which the heroes remain heroes and succeed in all sorts of incredible adventures and where action consists of a fantastic succession of events.”<sup>91</sup> This is functionally the same difference described by Scott in his “Essay on Romance,” in which he separates romance and novel primarily by the types of events they recounts – romances are those stories which “turn upon marvelous and uncommon incidents,” novels instead depict “the ordinary train of human events.”<sup>92</sup>

In this case, *Taras Bulba* is a historical romance. Taras himself is not an everyday sort, not the farmer or the common Cossack. He is a dashing hero, a leader of men whose adventures are so incredible as to thrill and disturb the reader. Taras sneaks into Warsaw and disguises himself in order to visit his son, he leads his men on numerous raids against much larger forces, and finally, dies a hero’s death, complete with dramatic speech. As a historical romance, the many historical inaccuracies of the world, and the blatant disregard for obvious chronological inconsistencies found in the work, such as the reference to the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, which was not founded until 1615, do not destabilize its genre.<sup>93</sup> Yet the work defies many of the other

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<sup>91</sup> Bahrij-Pikulyk, 30-31.

<sup>92</sup> Walter Scott, *Essays on Chivalry, Romance, and The Drama* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1887), 65.

<sup>93</sup> Or in 1632. The exact date the Academy was founded is debated.



conventions of historical romance, those conventions that step beyond what differentiates romance from novel. The historical romance asks the reader to draw their own conclusions about history. It paints a fictional world that draws the reader in and asks the reader, just as a work of literary fiction might, to make their own evaluations of the characters within.<sup>94</sup>

*Taras Bulba* is nothing if not didactic. In it, Gogol creates a world in which it is impossible to sympathize with the Poles, and terribly hard to come to any conclusion about the Jews that Gogol himself does not dictate. In describing Yankel's expanding presence in the area, Gogol writes that:

He had already found himself there as a leaseholder and innkeeper; he had gradually gathered all the surrounding nobles and gentlemen into his hands, gradually sucked almost all the money, and had made his Jewish presence strongly felt in the vicinity. At a distance of three miles on all sides there was not a single hut remaining in order: everything had fallen and become decrepit, everything had been drunk away, and all that remained was poverty and rags; as though after a great fire or plague the whole area had crumbled. And if Yankel had lived there for ten years, he probably would have emptied the whole province.<sup>95</sup>

There is no question here about either the attempt or intention – the readers' reaction to Yankel is dictated before the description of his living situation even begins. This is not to say that historical romance can contain no didacticism. But it is a genre that does not presume or prescribe its readers feelings towards historical characters – there is no reason that the reader *must* feel the same way about the Jews of the 16<sup>th</sup> century that Gogol seems to expect as normal for his

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<sup>94</sup> See Max Saunders and Richard Stang, eds., "Creative History and the Historic Sense" in *Ford Madox Ford: Critical Essays* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2002), 4-14.

<sup>95</sup> "On uzhe ochutisia tut arendatorom i korchmarem; pribral ponemnogu vsekh okruznykh panov i shliakhtichei v svoi ruki, vysosal ponemnogu pochtu vse den'gi i sil'no oznachil svoi zhidovskoe prisutstvie v toi strane. Na rasstoianii trench mil' vo vse storony ne ostavalos' ni odnoi izby v poriadke: vse valilos' i driakhlelo. Vse poraspivalos', i ostalas' bednost' da lokhmot'ia; kak poslu pozharu ili chumy, vyvetrilsia ves' kraj. I esli by desiat' let eshche polozhil tam Iankel', to on, veroiatno, vyvetril by i vse voevodstvo." *PSS*, vol. 2, 150.

contemporaries, not if this were a work which conformed simply to the dictates of historical romance. Instead, Gogol uses this description apophatically, in order that the evil or distasteful nature of the Jew make the Cossack seem even more appealing.<sup>96</sup> Instead of functioning as a member of a complex, multicultural and multiethnic society, as Yankel might in a more standard historical romance, he is instead a stereotype, set up as a foil to the heroic Taras.

Gogol's didacticism is connected to another way in which he breaks the standard mold of the historical romance. Helen C. White writes that historical romance is escape, that it takes one away from the problems and concerns of one's everyday.<sup>97</sup> And yet, in Taras's speech while being executed by the Poles, there is nothing stronger than the recall to the present, an appeal to the Slavophile perspective and to the Slavophile/Westernizer conflict of Gogol's own time. "The novel is less a paean to a way of life that has been lost," Rosenshiel says, "than a glorification of the Russian soul and spirit as embodied in the primitive Cossack defenders of Russian land and religion (Russian Orthodoxy). Gogol does not describe the Cossacks from historical record; he imaginatively refashions them for their ideological and religious roles."<sup>98</sup>

The Cossacks themselves push the work outside the bounds of historical romance, and in fact, destabilize the genre. As Bahrij-Pikulyk notes, in historical romance, the heroes *succeed* at what they intend to accomplish. And yet, each section of *Taras Bulba* ends with the death of a Cossack – first Andrii, then Ostap, then Taras. Ostap and Taras die somewhat heroically, but if their mission was to free Ukraine and the Orthodox world, as Taras's final speech makes it out to

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<sup>96</sup> Rosenshiel, 38.

<sup>97</sup> Helen C. White, "The Writing of Historical Romance," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 40, no. 2 (Winter, 1956-57): 83.

<sup>98</sup> Rosenshiel, 32.

be, they fail utterly. There is no triumph of the historical character here, no great climactic battle where the hero leads his people to victory. Instead, there is death and loss, a trauma that will abide until Gogol's period, so powerful that it overrides the more conventional possible courses the novella could take.

This is the central way in which *Taras Bulba* destabilizes genre expectations. It cannot provide a story in which the heroes "succeed in all sorts of incredible adventures." It is instead a chronicle of failures. Taras fails to father good Cossack boys. He fails to rescue the one good Cossack son he does have. He fails to stop the Hetman from making a bad deal with the Poles. And in the end, he fails to save even himself. By virtue of its very historical setting, *Taras Bulba* cannot satisfy the need of a historical romance. For, as is clear from the history of the Sich, the history of the Zaporizhian Cossacks is not one of continual success, and any attempt to make it so would lead to a different sort of trauma – the hollow ring of a bad story, one which cannot be believed, and which does not reflect the reality of Gogol's time.

"The romancer's task," White says, "...requires the imaginative excitement that will carry you into the scene; yet it requires also the homeliness that will convince you that, incredible as it seems, you are really there."<sup>99</sup> In order to fulfill this task, Gogol must break the rules of the historical romance genre, for the history of Ukraine does not allow for this sort of homeliness *and* for a story of incredible successes. And part of the reason Gogol cannot quite fulfill the requirements of the historical romance with *Taras Bulba* is that it, like *Haidamaky*, is also something of an epic. Not a classical one, by any means, but it does include "catalogues of warriors, extended epic similes, and long formal speeches," which are markers of an epic.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Helen C. White, 85.

<sup>100</sup> Rosenshield, 31.

Moreover, the epic is marked by its “simplicity of construction, concentration of action into a short time, and the use of episode and dialogue.”<sup>101</sup>

*Taras Bulba* begins *in media res*, as any good epic does. Indeed, *Taras Bulba* starts in the middle of a conversation, as Taras chides his sons about their clothing. The reader enters the action immediately, as though joining in on a story that started long ago. *Haidamaky*, while not literally beginning *in media res*, begins with what approximates an invocation to the muse, ending the first stanza with “And [my soul] loved to sing about your fate.”<sup>102</sup> The narrative, which finally begins with the section “Halaida,” also opens with a line of dialogue, a series of instructions to Yarema.

Both works solidify their epic nature with programmatic statements of their purpose. Like Virgil’s “Of arms and the man I sing,”<sup>103</sup> Shevchenko’s narrator directly addresses the topic of the poem. Rejecting commercially successful themes, he says “I’ll sing – the sea plays/the wind blows/the steppe blackens, and the tomb/speaks with the wind./I’ll sing, and returning/from the high graves/the Cossacks have covered/the wide steppe all the way to the sea.”<sup>104</sup> Perhaps less pithy than “of arms and the man” or “Sing, goddess, of the anger of Achilles,”<sup>105</sup> but nonetheless programmatic.

Gogol is even less forthright in the thesis statement of *Taras Bulba*, but it can be

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<sup>101</sup> Kate Milner Rabb, *National Epics* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and co., 1896), preface.

<sup>102</sup> “*I pro vashu doliu liubyla spivat*,” *ZT*, vol. 1, 129.

<sup>103</sup> “*Arma virumque cano*”

<sup>104</sup> “*Zaspivaiu - more hrae,/Viter povivae,/Step chornie, i mohyla/Z vitrom rozmovliae./Zaspivaiu - rozvernulas'/Vysoka mohyla,/Az do moria zaporozhtsi/Step shirokyi vkryly*,” *ZT*, vol. 1, 130.

<sup>105</sup> The opening lines of the *Iliad*, “*mēnin aeide Thea Pēlēiadeō Achilēos*”

discerned in the line, “in a word, Russian character here acquired a mighty, wide scale, a stalwart appearance.”<sup>106</sup> *Taras Bulba* is a refutation of Petr Chaadaev and other Westernizers’ accusations that Russia had no history, that inspiration and leadership must be drawn from Western Europe, as Russia had none to give on its own.<sup>107</sup> This statement of Russian (via little-Russian) character is as much a programmatic statement of intent as makes sense in this sort of prose epic.

It is a program well executed: Pavlyna Dunai writes that “during the first third of the twentieth century, as, in fact, over the whole history of his texts, M. Hohol’ acts as not only one of the indicators of national consciousness, but also a radical shaper of it.”<sup>108</sup> *Taras Bulba* does its job well, as does *Haidamaky*. As Grabowicz writes, the end of *Haidamaky* confirms its leaning towards the collective, towards its origin in collective agony, rather than towards the individual or lyrical, and in this way is a work in the epic mode.<sup>109</sup> Yet just as both works include the trappings of an epic, and both are successful in the sort of nation forming that an epic aspires to, they both leave their epics as unfulfilled; they fail to satisfy the criteria that would clearly mark both works as entries into the epic genre.

The epic is an imprecise genre. It is to some extent culturally dependent.<sup>110</sup> However, as Bakhtin points out in “The Epic and the Novel,” the epic is removed from its readers, a depiction

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<sup>106</sup> “Slovom, russkii kharakter poluchil zdes’ moguchii, shirokii razmakh, diuzhuiu naroznost’,” PSS, vol. 2, 48.

<sup>107</sup> Rosenshield, 32-33.

<sup>108</sup> “M. Hohol’ protiahom pershoi tretyny XX st., iak vlasne, i usiei istorii buttia ioho tekstiv, vystupae ne lyshe odnym iz indykatoriv zminy natsional’noi vsidomosti [23, c. 9], a i zaradnym ii formuvachem” P. O. Dunai, “Povist’ M. Hoholia ‘Taras Bul’ba’ iak natsiotvorchyi tekst (10-20-ti roky XX st.),” *Literatura ta kul’tura Polissia* 53 (2009): 21.

<sup>109</sup> Grabowicz, *Shevchenkovi* “Haidamaky,” 188.

<sup>110</sup> Gregory Nagy, “Epic as Genre,” in *Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World: The Poetics of Community*, ed. by Margaret Beissinger, Jane Tylus, and Susanne Wofford (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 28.

of a heroic past that is walled away from the present.<sup>111</sup> In this sense, it is the polar opposite of the historical romance. If the romancer's task is to bring readers to the past, let them taste, see, and smell it, the epic poet or writer's duty is to make that past a lofty and strange thing, far from the norms of everyday life. Isidore Okpewho writes that the epic "is fundamentally a tale about the fantastic deeds of a man or men endowed with something more than human might operating in something larger than the normal human context, and it is of significance in portraying some stage of the cultural or political development of a people."<sup>112</sup>

Neither *Haidamaky* nor *Taras Bulba* satisfy a reader who looks for the lofty, distant triumphs of an Achilles or an Aeneas, or even a Beowulf or an Igor' Sviatoslavich. In just the same way that *Taras Bulba* cannot both feel real to the reader and also depict a series of successes, it also cannot look from a lofty height on the past while also maintaining its psychological realism, its place in the literature of the romantic era. *Haidamaky*, as the story of events just outside of living memory, is even more unable to achieve the epic's distant vantage point. It cannot fulfill a reader's expectations if they look for a new national epic, and it does not do so – Shevchenko consistently reminds the readers, through the voice of the narrator, that much of the work is based in stories he himself heard from older members of his community. Grabowicz asserts that *Haidamaky*'s epic nature (*epichnist'*) is found in the poem's embodiment of this community. Yet he contrasts this to earlier assessments by other scholars that focus on the poem's *epopeinist'*. *Epichnist'* here refers to the quality of an *epos*, a poetic genre between lyric and drama, or, more importantly, to heroic folksongs and tales that reveal the qualities of a

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<sup>111</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Epic and the Novel: Towards a Methodology for the Study in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. By Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991).

<sup>112</sup> Isidore Okpewho, *The Epic in Africa: Toward a Poetics of the Oral Performance* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1979), 34.

culture. In contrast, *epopeinist'* refers to *epopeia*, a great work of art with “depth of coverage” and a massive scale.<sup>113</sup> *Haidamaky* has the form and something of the function of the *epos*, as a deep representation of Ukrainian culture and memory. Yet it is not the nation-defining epic that is the *Iliad*, or even the sort of generational representation that is *War and Peace*, the quintessential *epopeia*. It is epic in one sense, but not in the other.<sup>114</sup>

Bohdan Rubchak calls *Haidamaky* “reminiscent of a *Bildungsroman*, based as it is upon the ‘discovery’ and moral education of a leader, a romantic hero.”<sup>115</sup> The *Bildungsroman*, a chronicle of self-discovery and growth, certainly describes an aspect of *Haidamaky*’s plot – those parts dealing directly with Yarema, might, as Rubchak argues, depict the growth of a leader. Indeed, the *Bildungsroman* is not such a poor description of *Taras Bulba*, at least in as much as *Taras Bulba* is the story of Ostap, who goes from an academy student to a martyr for the Ukrainian cause over the course of the first two parts of the story.

But what of Gonta? In *Haidamaky* the *Bildungsroman*,<sup>116</sup> what role does Gonta play, and what use is the section that focuses on him and him alone. It does not add to Yarema’s growth, nor does it play a role in establishing his psychological veracity. And what, importantly, of Taras? While Ostap is a key character in *Taras Bulba*, he is not the protagonist. And no one could accuse Taras of great personal growth over the course of the novella. Yet again, both works

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<sup>113</sup> Ivan Kostiantynovych Bilodid, ed. *Slovnyk ukrains'koi movy: v 11 tomakh*, vol. 2 (Kyiv: Naukova Dumka, 1970-1980), 285. Also see Grabowicz, *Shevchenkovi* “*Haidamaky*,” 162-167.

<sup>114</sup> Here also one thinks of the distinction between the Greek “*épos*” and “*epopoií*.” *Épos*, speech or song, is different from *epopoiíā*, the epic poem. While the distinction in Ukrainian is somewhat different, it is notable that *Haidamaky* contains many fragments of song and speeches, a patchwork of folk thought and meaning – it is a speech and a song.

<sup>115</sup> Bohdan Rubchak, “Shevchenko’s Profiles and Masks: The Ironic Roles of the Self in the Poetry of *Kobzar*,” in Luckyj, *Shevchenko and the Critics*, 410.

<sup>116</sup> I don’t mean to suggest that Rubchak viewed *Haidamaky* solely as a *Bildungsroman*. He doesn’t indicate this in “Shevchenko’s Profiles and Masks” but his suggestion that it is, is a compelling one, and should be investigated.

fail to satisfy the basic constraints of the genre. They are not truly *Bildungsromane*, nor epics, nor historical romances or novels. Both works destabilize genre conventions, finding their place in the margins between conventional forms.

Maya Johnson suggests that the very fact that Gogol breaks the rules of the historical novel in *Taras Bulba* “push[es] it into the realm of myth.”<sup>117</sup> Likewise, Rory Finnin argues that another of Shevchenko’s historical works, “Kavkaz” is a mythologization of Caucasian history.<sup>118</sup> Finnin’s interest in the mythological elements of Shevchenko’s works is not unusual. The interplay between history and mythology appears in the criticism of George Grabowicz, Oksana Zabushko, and Liudmyla Belins'ka, among others. Yet myth is not exactly genre, and cannot account for the totality of these works, for their minutia and references to the present. Even as myth-making, these works are caught in a mysterious, marginal space, as they bring the reader back to the present too often to be truly mythical.

“It is the principle of complementarity here that defines epic as genre, in opposition to the genre of tragedy. Analogously, it is the principle of complementarity that defines tragedy as genre, in opposition to the genre of comedy, and so on,” Gregory Nagy writes.<sup>119</sup> And this is the key to the fundamental ways in which *Haidamaky* and *Taras Bulba* do not correspond to any one genre. Genre is defined by its opposition and differentiation from other genres. Yet neither of these works differentiate between mythic and historical, epic and everyday. They both occupy

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<sup>117</sup> Maya Johnson, “Review of Romana Bahrii [Bahry] *Shliakh Sera Val'tera Skotta na Ukrainu* (‘*Taras Bul'ba*’ *M. Hoholia i “Chorna Rada” P. Kulisha v svitli istorychnoi romanistyky Val'tera Skotta*),” *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 18, no. 1 (Summer, 1993): 255.

<sup>118</sup> Rory Finnin, “Mountains, Masks, Metre, Meaning: Taras Shevchenko’s ‘Kavkaz,’” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 88, no. 3 (Jul., 2005): 396-439.

<sup>119</sup> Gregory Nagy, “Epic as Genre,” 27.



the nebulous space between genres, the odd center where conventions fade away.

In this odd center, plot structure is not dictated by convention, nor are there constraints on what and how a work should begin and end. *Haidamaky* was published without a conclusion for its heroes, without an answer for Oksana and Yarema. While the reader hears of Zalizniak's death, and Yarema's mourning, there is no conclusion for one of the driving motivations of the tale – Yarema and Oksana's love story. This instability is inscribed into the characters themselves. In Yarema's rescue of Oksana and their subsequent marriage, Oksana's trauma is never fully investigated, and its relationship to the larger trauma of the nation present in the story is not fully explored. There is no consummation of their marriage, and thus Oksana's rape is left without a happy complement, without any sort of conclusion that heralds new life and renewal.

Yarema returns to the Haidamaks after marrying Oksana, despite that being his dream and goal at the beginning of the poem. To misquote a good film that led to several bad films, the belonging he seeks is in front of him, not behind.<sup>120</sup> The poem highlights how he seeks Zalizniak's approval, instead of the stability of his wife and marriage. Even then, he finds trauma and instability. Zalizniak eventually dies, and, after Yarema buries him, he cannot keep from looking back at Zalizniak's burial mound. He is not satisfied by a proper death and burial – there is something he has left unfinished.

Gonta's regret and trauma after killing his sons is a mirror here to Yarema's disquiet and instability throughout the later parts of the poem. Yet it is also a mirror to Taras Bulba, and to an entirely different presentation of dissatisfaction and unease about Ukraine's past. Taras Bulba, of course, is also filicidal. He kills his son when his son chooses a Polish woman over the

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<sup>120</sup> J. J. Abrams's *The Force Awakens* (San Francisco: Lucasfilm, Ltd./Santa Monica, CA: Bad Robot Productions, 2015).

brotherhood of the Sich. Yet he reacts in a dramatically different fashion than Gonta when confronted with his dead son's body. His surviving son suggests that they bury his brother, and Taras responds, "they'll bury him, and without us,"<sup>121</sup> suggesting that the Poles will bury his son Andrii. He goes on to consider his options, musing "should he be thrown to the ferocious wolves, or given those honors which brave men are owed, whoever they may be."<sup>122</sup> This is the only hint in this scene that Taras feels any parental responsibility towards his son's corpse. Yet Taras is not without regret.

As he looks down on Andrii's broken body, he thinks of what has gone wrong. He muses to himself "how could he not have been a Cossack?"<sup>123</sup> He was strong and powerful, yet he chose a Polish woman over his family and country. This lament, this moment of sadness for the son Taras wanted, but didn't have, is the last mention but one of Andrii in the work. He appears once again in the work when Taras and his regiments flee from the Poles near the end of the novella. Among the Poles is the brother of Andrii's beloved, who tosses himself after the fleeing Cossacks, dying in the process. Taras, however, is captured, and watches as his fellows row away.

This is the only mention of Andrii in the work after his death – a mention that is itself bound up in death. Taras's son's death is no climactic moment. Rather, it is his failure to be the Cossack that Taras wanted him to be, which is the focus of Taras's trauma. It is the lack of his participation in the Sich hierarchy that begets regret, not the necessity of his death. This different

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<sup>121</sup> "Pogrebut ego i bez nas," PSS, vol. 2, 144.

<sup>122</sup> "kinut' li ego na raskhishchen'e vorkam-syromakham ili poshchadit' v nem rytsarskuiu doblec', kotoruiu khrabryi dolzhen uvazhat' v nem by to ni bylo," PSS, vol. 2, 144-145.

<sup>123</sup> "Chem by ne Kozak byl?" PSS, vol. 2, 144

type of destabilizing trauma extends throughout the work. It is an instability of place and purpose, of discordance between the world Taras thinks should exist, and the world as it is. If Yarema is searching for belonging, for a place in the world, Taras is searching for the world to conform to what he believes it should be.

When Taras, Ostap, and Andrii first arrive at the Sich, he is dissatisfied with the rest of the Cossacks, with their unwillingness to go to war or raid the Poles. Later, he finds his son is inadequate as a Cossack. His world is upended and his life destabilized when he is rescued from the Poles and Ostap, his other son, is not. Eventually the trauma of that separation dictates that he cannot continue his duties without finding Ostap.

When Taras goes to Warsaw to find Ostap, his inability to reckon with the world as it is, rather than how he thinks it should be, is crystallized. The narrator tells the reader that Taras was “in a strange, unknown situation. He felt uneasy for the first time in his life.”<sup>124</sup> Here, unease precedes instability, and the trauma and displacement Taras feels in a place he believes is foreign, and alien to what *should* be. Indeed, when he finally returns to the Sich, he believes that the Hetman is a fool for signing any treaty with the Poles. He believes the Cossacks are too timid, are inadequately aggressive. For Taras, his life is destabilized after the trauma of his son’s death, and after that point, he finds fault with the world around him consistently, finds that it does not measure up to his expectations. For Yarema, instability is located in his own life, and the lives of his community. His trauma comes from how his community interacts with the world. One is external, one internal, but both central characters are marked by this destabilization, and it follows them throughout their narratives.

The genre-and-plot-destabilizing traumas of both works are underlined by discontinuities

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<sup>124</sup> “*On byl v strannom, nebyvalom polozhenii: on chuvstvoval v per’vyi raz v zhizni bespokoistvo,*” PSS, vol. 2, 156.

in language, sentence structure, and syllable pattern. A regular syllable pattern is established, and then a line suddenly misses a syllable, leaving the reader without the stability of that regular pattern. A rhyme scheme begins and then dissolves away without any concluding couplet or stanza. A sentence merges into the next, unfinished, yet completed. A list includes a long diatribe against the Poles, and then, abruptly, a line about the Jews, as though the Polish offenses against Orthodoxy could not possibly satisfy the reader, and a far worse offense must be invoked.<sup>125</sup> The discontinuities and dissatisfying conclusions to lines, lists, and passages serve to further the general dissatisfactions of the works. In *Haidamaky*, one sees this principally in Shevchenko's use of syllabic structure and rhyme.

Maksym Rylsky writes that during his early periods, Shevchenko preferred to write *kolomyika* verse, 12-11 foot verse, or *dumy* verse.<sup>126</sup> In *Haidamaky*, all three are present, and add to the destabilizing influence of the poem's versification. *Kolomyika*, or Ukrainian folk ballad verse, is typically comprised of couplets of 14 syllables, usually with end-rhyme. There is a caesura after the eighth syllable, which also leads to *kolomyika* verse being written as 8+6, 8+6. This is the principal fashion in which Shevchenko uses the verse, and it makes up a substantial portion of *Haidamaky*'s verse.

Take, for example, the section "Holy Day in Chyhyryn" ("*Sviato v Chyhyryni*"). It begins with 12-11 syllabification, moves to *kolomyika* verse, back to 12-11, then to a short period of 8-9 syllable alternating lines, to prose, then to straight 6 syllable lines, back to *kolomyika* interspersed with prose, to a short interlude mainly made up of 10 syllable lines, then to an 8-9 structure, before finally returning to *kolomyika* in the last 9 lines of the section. While the bulk of

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<sup>125</sup> PSS, vol. 2, 165-166.

<sup>126</sup> Maksym Rylsky, "Shevchenko's Ballad 'At Catherine's,'" in Luckyj, *Shevchenko and the Critics*, 294.

the section *is* written in *kolomyika* verse, it is not the only rhythm by any means, nor is it perfectly consistent in its 8-6 lines – syllables are lost at opportune moments, leaving the reader hanging, waiting for a final beat that will never come.

The opening of the section is a regular 11-12, except for the fifth line, “the poor ruin of Cossack glory” (“*kozats'koi slavy ubohykh ruin*” ln 833). This is on the short end at 11 syllables. The missing syllables pull the reader up short, disrupting the rhythm already established. The line feels particularly short given the preceding ones – 12 syllable lines are on the long end, after all. Yet it is not only the syllabification that creates a sense of dissatisfaction and incompleteness here. The line rhymes with “Chyhyryn” earlier in the stanza, which only further emphasizes the feeling of loss and inadequacy – the rhyme reminds the reader that by Shevchenko’s day, Chyhyryn itself was a ruin. Finally, it includes a grammatical ambiguity that further disrupts the flow of the poem. In the previous line, Shevchenko writes “for you would not recognize” (“*bo vy b ne piznaly*”). Because the negative construction requires the object of “*piznaly*” to be in genitive, the following line “the poor ruin of Cossack glory” consists entirely of nouns and adjectives in genitive case. Two of the words must be genitive because of possession, two because of negation. Thus, it is possible to read the lines either as “for you would not recognize/the poor ruin of Cossack glory” or “for you would not recognize/the Cossack glory of the poor ruin.” The ambiguity of whether the ruin is glorious, or whether glory has been ruined is tangible here. Later in this section of *Haidamaky*, in the center of the most regular part of the poem, in which *kolomyika* meter runs continuously, a shorter line draws the reader up short, giving a very similar feeling of inadequacy.

Incompleteness is highlighted in the final portion of “Holy Day in Chyhyryn.” Beginning at the line “Tsu-tsu, madman. Come to your senses!” (“*Tsu-tsu, skazheni, Skhamenit'sia!*”), and

continuing on until the final twelve lines of the section, the poem is written in alternating lines of 8 and 9 syllables. While each line alone does not have particularly meaningful syllable pattern, added together the 8/9 couplets make a line that is reminiscent of dactylic hexameter with a caesura after the eighth syllable. In fact, many of the lines in this section consist of mixed dactyls and amphibrachs, with an amphibrach at the end of the line being common. While stress in Ukrainian is not as strong as in Russian or English, and while it is more variable, with a greater percentage of words able to be stressed on several syllables, there is a decided tendency in this section to follow a 6 or 7 stress-per-couplet pattern. This further confirms this section as being written in what seems to be a play on dactylic hexameter. As dactylic hexameter is the classical heroic meter, used for epics, this section underlines the genre concerns discussed previously. It is especially fitting in this portion of “Holy Day in Chyhyryn,” as it marks the moment when carousing turns to Christian piety.

Even in this passage, when heroic meter fulfills a need for solemnity, there is a moment of discontinuity. In the very center of the passage there is a couplet almost missing a syllable.

|                                            |                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Dity nekhreshcheni rostut',</i> (8)     | Children grow, unbaptized                        |
| <i>Kozats'ki dity; a divchata!</i> (9)     | Cossack children; and the girls!                 |
| <i>Zemli kozats'koi krasa</i> (8)          | Beauties of Cossack land                         |
| <i>U liakha v'iane, iak persh maty</i> (9) | Wither with the Poles, like their mothers before |
| <i>I nepokrytaia kosa</i> (8)              | And uncovered hair                               |
| <i>Stydom sichet'sia; kari ochi</i> (9)    | Is cut with shame, brown eyes <sup>127</sup>     |

Here, Shevchenko relies on the *ï* at the end of “*kozats'koi*” to get the correct syllable count, leaving the line feeling somewhat truncated. More interestingly, this almost missing syllable is associated with Cossack glory or beauty here, emphasizing the loss of Cossack rights, and the dissatisfaction of Haidamak dreams. Metrically, if read as having a missing syllable, “beauties of the Cossack land” is made up of two dactyls, followed by a single stressed foot – a dactyl

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<sup>127</sup> ZT, vol. 1, 155-156.

missing its final two unstressed syllables. (One might read this as trochee, iamb, anapest, but this seems unhelpful, given that this stanza is principally written in ternary meter.) Yet read correctly, it is iambic tetrameter. Given that many of the lines in this stanza end in amphibrachs, the iamb feels like nothing so much as an unsatisfied amphibrach, an amphibrach missing its final foot. Taken with the next line of the poem, the couplet completion, and including the *ï* as a syllable, the couplet becomes four iambs, an amphibrach, and two dactyls. Even read in this way, the end of “beauties of the Cossack land” leads to a sense of unfulfillment, as it creates the only non-ternary foot.<sup>128</sup> No matter the way this line is read, it is unstable, as though those kidnapped Cossack girls have stolen away any sense of firmness.

*Haidamaky*’s rhyme scheme is also a source of discontinuity and instability in the poem. By abandoning regular rhyme schemes in the middle of stanza, Shevchenko leaves the reader waiting for the conclusion of a rhyming pattern that will never come. In the same stanza including “beauties of the Cossack land” a relatively consistent rhyme scheme of either AbAb or AbbA is established early on. However, by interspersing un-rhyming lines, Shevchenko pulls the reader up short, halting the flow of the poem and leaving the reader aching for more. For example, the line “Remember the righteous hetmans” (“*Zhadaite pravednykh het'matniv*”), occurring 11 lines after “Beauties of the Cossack land,” does not rhyme with any line near it. It is preceded by lines rhyming aBBa, where both sets of rhymes are imperfect (*hore-hori* and *sud-nesut*’) and followed by a slightly more straightforward CdCD (*lezhit'-stoit*’, *Bohdana-nema*) which, while not perfect, are much closer. “*Het'maniv*,” however, stands completely alone, without even a slant rhyme in sight. The abrupt cessation of the rhyme scheme, coupled with the

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<sup>128</sup> Interestingly, there is an extra foot in this couplet, and the total is seven stresses, perhaps in compensation for the missing syllable.

equally abrupt resumption, leaves the reader searching for a resolution to the rhyme.

Interestingly, this break in formal poetic structure once again corresponds to a mention of the Cossacks, and thus again underlines the breakup of Cossack self-rule. As Shevchenko leaves “*Het'maniv*” standing alone, he emphasizes the loss and trauma of the hetmans themselves, and their absence in his own day.

The Cossacks are a locus of uncertainty and unfulfillment in *Taras Bulba* as well. Gogol is not able to bring the same structural irregularities to play in *Taras Bulba* – as a prose work, it is limited. Yet he is able to achieve a similar effect through the use of metaphor and simile, building false equivalencies that morph one thing into another, and then abruptly back again, an analogy unfulfilled.

On page 131, Gogol describes the Cossack host on the eve of battle with the Poles, after drinking a toast to faith and brotherhood.

They did not think of greed or the spoils of war now, nor of which of them would be lucky enough to get gold or weapons, embroidered kaftans and Cherkessian horses; but were thinking to themselves – like eagles perched on the tops of steep, high mountains, from which, far away the endless sea is visible, strewn with galleys, boats and all sorts of craft like little birds, surrounded on all sides with barely visible shoreline, with coastal cities like gnats, and forests like little grass. Like eagles, they looked about themselves at the whole field, and at their fate, darkening in the distance. It will be, the whole field with its siege<sup>129</sup> and its roads will be covered in their protruding bones, richly washed with their Cossack blood and covered in broken carts, split swords and spears. Far scattered will the forelocked heads be, with their locks twisted and caked in blood running to their mustaches. The eagles, stooping, will rip and tear out their Cossack eyes.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Gogol uses the Ukrainian “*obloga*” here, rather than the common Russian “*osada*. ”

<sup>130</sup> “*Ne o korysti i venom pribytku teper' dumali oni, ne o tom, komu poschastlivitsia nabrat' chervontsev, dorogogo oruzh'ia, shitykh kaftanov i cherkesskikh konei; no zagadalisia oni - kak orly, sevshie na verzhinakh obryvistykh, vysokikh por, s kotorikh daleko vidno rasstilaiushcheisia bespredel'no more, usypannoe, kak melkimi ptitsami, galerami, korabliami i vsiakimi sudami, okrazhdennoe po storonam chut' vidnymi tonkimi pomor'iami, c priverezhnymi, kak moshki, gorodami i sklonivshimisia, kak melkaia trava, lesami. Kak orly ozirali oni vokrug sebia ochami vse pole i cherneiushchuiu vdli sud'bu svoiu. Budet, budet vse pole c oblogami i dorogami pokryto torchashchimi ikh belymi kostiami, shchedro obmyvshis' kozatskoiu ikh krov'iu i pokryvshic' razbitymi vozami,*



I quote the passage in its entirety here, for the transformation from Cossack to eagle, and then back to Cossack again is best seen as a whole. In this transformation, the straightforward metaphor of Cossacks as eagles is broken as the Cossacks die on the field of battle, and the eagles destroy their bodies. Gogol makes *quite* clear in *Taras Bulba* that the destruction of a body after death is a fate one only wishes on ones' bitterest enemies. This leaves the reader with the tantalizing possibility that the Cossacks are their own worst enemies, that their misfortunes are all of their own making. Indeed, one could say that these misfortunes, these traumas are their fate, in much the same way that the Haidamaks' defeat seems inevitable by the end of *Haidamaky*.

In this passage, Gogol creates the exact opposite of what Carl Proffer describes as a magical transformation of being. Proffer writes that Gogol often begins a simile and then slowly equates the two objects in the simile until they are not simply like one another, they *are* one another.<sup>131</sup> This is not a simile that slips into metaphor, and then metaphor into reality. Yet it is also not either type of destabilizing simile Greta Matzner-Gore writes about in her article on Gogolian instability. She describes Gogolian similes as “too much information” or “not enough information.” In a “too much information” simile, an object will be compared to so many things that it cannot be understood to be like any single one of them at all. In a “too little information” simile, the object cannot be compared to anything at all. It is “without a name, without a form, without an identity.”<sup>132</sup>

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*raskolotymi savliami i kop'iami. Daleche raskinutsia chubatye golovy s perekruchennymi i zapekshimisia v krovi chubami i zapushchennymi knizu usami. Budut, naletev, orly vydirat' i vydergivat' iz nikah kozatskie ochi,*” PSS, vol. 2, 131.

<sup>131</sup> Carl Proffer, *The Simile and Gogol's Dead Souls* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), 83.

<sup>132</sup> Greta Matzner-Gore, “Gogol's Language of Instability: ‘The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarreled with Ivan Nikiforovich’ and the Problem of Identity,” *Slavic and East European Journal* 58, no. 1 (2014): 25.

Neither of these descriptions apply to the simile here. Instead, it is unsatisfied, the Cossacks who have become birds are abruptly Cossacks again, dead and dying on the ground while the birds rip them to pieces. The reader is left with an abrupt end of a simile, signaled only by the unlikeliness of Cossacks tearing out other Cossacks' eyes. The Cossacks have been described, and yet readers have been left without any idea if the simile is still continuing as the eagles attack the Cossacks. Uncomplete, unsatisfied, the simile adds to the instability of the narrative, rather than to its descriptive brightness. The disgust and horror of the simile only adds to the trauma of the events being described. Moreover, it emphasizes the destabilizing force of the very language of the work, a force that pushes *Taras Bulba* into a place beyond the boundaries of normal speech. The discordance between beginning and end of the passage creates the very essence of a liminal moment in literature.

Throughout the work, simile and metaphor are sites for transitional poetics. Just ten pages on, another appears:

Quietly he fell into the hands of the Cossacks holding him, and a stream of his young blood rushed out, like costly wine brought up from the cellar in a glass jar by careless servants, who slip right in the doorway and break the precious jar: all the wine spills on the ground, and the master runs over clutching his head, having reserved it for the best moment in his life, when, God willing, in his old age he will meet with the friends of his youth, in order that they together remember the past, a different time when revels were different and better than now...<sup>133</sup>

Unlike in the previous example, this time there is no confusion between Cossack and

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<sup>133</sup> “*Tikho sklonilsia on na ruki podkhvativshim ego kozakam, i khlynula ruch'em molodaia krov', podobno dorogomu vinu, kotoroe nesli v skliannom sosude iz pogreba neostorozhnye slugi, podskol'znulis' tut zhe u vkhoda i razbili doroguiu sulleiu: vse razlilos' na zemliu vinu, I skhvatil sebia za golovu pribezhavshii khoziain, sberegavshii ego pro luchshii sluchai v zhizni, chtoby, esli privedet bog na starosti let vstretit'sia s tovarishchem iunosti, to chtoby pomianut' by vmeste s nim prezhnee, inoe vremia, kogda inache i luchshe veselilsia chelovek...*” PSS, vol. 2, 141.

eagle, between subject and object. Instead, the simile takes over the narrative, and grows its own little narrative as though in a well tilled garden. It becomes a vignette in its own right. Over the course of the simile, dying Kukubenko's lifeblood gives way to wine in truth, and the little tragedy of the wine takes over from the larger tragedy of a battle being lost. And yet, in this passage, it is difficult to tell what is meant. Is Kukubenko's death a tragedy because he will never see that moment when old friends meet again, as the wine he is compared to will never do? If so, should he have been buried, stored as the wine was? Who is Kukubenko's master, who has failed to protect him from the hands of careless servants?

Because the simile grows a life of its own, these questions grow with it. Without the vignette of spilled wine, there would be no need to ask these questions. Yet the questions do appear, as does the need to know more of Kukubenko. Gogol does not satisfy this need. There is no resolution, no backstory to go along with this vivid image. Even more so than in the previous example, this simile is a source of discontinuity and trauma.

Little destabilizations occur on smaller scales throughout the work. In Part VIII, the narrator gives great lists of Cossacks, of places they raided, of riches they won.<sup>134</sup> Yet these lists do not connect one to another. There is no way to tell if Mykola Gustyi went to Moldavia, or perhaps it was Ivan Zakrutyguba ("Twisted-Lip"). These great catalogues of people and places lend an epic feel to the work, but they are fragmented, broken jewels that cannot be strung together on a necklace. The reader is overwhelmed by them, confused, and fundamentally, cannot tell one from the other.

Missing connections, warped similes, broken rhymes, and lost syllables all work together to make both *Taras Bulba* and *Haidamaky* rife with disconnections, gaps, breaks, and confusions.

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<sup>134</sup> PSS, vol. 2, 126-128.

As they frequently occur during references to the Cossacks or Ukraine's past, these devices act as loci for trauma in the narratives. They are the backbone of transitional, dislocated poetics in both works. However, the works in question are not only attempts at portraying what it is to be Ukrainian, but also at determining it. And they do so in different ways, to different ends.

The destabilizing trauma of the two protagonists can be broken down as trauma of self, and trauma of the other, or of one's fellows. Yarema has trouble finding his place, is orphaned, and cannot settle. Moreover, the stories he has told himself about success – marriage to Oksana and a last name to call his own, are destabilized in the narrative. They do not, in fact, lead to the fulfillment he has sought. Instead, the only hint of fulfillment comes at the end of the poem, after the narrator laments that Ukraine is asleep. In this sleep, Ukraine has forgotten its essence; the events depicted in *Haidamaky* have been so destabilizing as to eliminate any memory or understanding among the Haidamaks' descendants.<sup>135</sup> Ukraine as a nation is still, "everything is quiet" ("vse zamovklo"). Then the poem turns – "only" the narrator says, "sometimes in the evening, old Haidamaks walk along the Dnieper's groves, and walking, sing." They sing that all will be well, that all Yarema wanted will be well. They reassure the man who could never find stability, who fought for the Haidamak cause to the last, that all will be well.

This ultimate affirmation that Yarema's disquiet will be resolved and that his trauma is not eternal is juxtaposed with the image of a sleeping, deaf Ukraine. Ukraine's sleep is the opposite of Yarema's possible satisfaction. Thus, it is a waking Ukraine, one that is not solely rebellious, but rather awakened from its torpor, that will finally fulfill the promise of the narrative. It is not through rebellion solely – Yarema shows the reader clearly that is not enough to satisfy. Yet, the old Haidamaks sing that Yarema's house is well built, that it is not one to fall

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<sup>135</sup> See Grabowicz, *Shevchenkovi "Haidamaky,"* 211-239 for more on memory in the poem.

to pieces at a single gust of wind. The final moments of *Haidamaky* promise a future for Ukraine where it is not sleeping and is not a quiet little land without freedom, but instead is a fulfillment of the Haidamak desires.

In contrast, it is not alleviation of trauma which *Taras Bulba* promises. There is no slow sleep, no promise of a future awakening. It is that very disturbance that marks Taras for who he is. He rides across the steppe, twirling weapons and leading his men for one last charge. He is larger than life, a swashbuckling, hard-drinking, dramatically realized patriarch, who has no true desire for peace and comfort. Just as Gogol himself was made to seem a “clever little Russian,” a “*khitrii maloros*,” by the Great Russian culture around him, he creates in Taras a different sort of stereotype, the foreign hero, the alien, yet oh-so-familiar leader of men. He exoticizes Taras, using Taras’s dissatisfaction with the world around him to set him apart from the calm, civilized world of those reading about him. Yet at the same time, he creates in Taras a man who is deeply perturbed when the world does not fit his beliefs of how it should work, a man who is truly traumatized and changed by his realization of otherness in those around him.

Yarema’s instability and trauma in his own life is mirrored in the deep trauma that has created sleeping Ukraine. Yet it is also resolved in the narrative – it is a part of a Ukrainian poem, written for Ukrainian people, who live in the Ukraine of the 1840s. It gives these people resolution, speaks directly to them. Taras Bulba’s traumatic destabilization is never resolved, however. He dies just as he lived (in the 1840s redaction). The old Cossacks talk of him after his death, but offer no resolution. Taras himself is not for them. He is a pirate, a scoundrel, a scallywag with the best motivations. A figure of minor literature reaching out to the major, to readers from a world far from his own. His trauma is part and parcel of being “little Russian” and in fact marks him as such.

No matter the reason for the destabilizing trauma, however, both works make it a central aspect of their narratives. Both writers use formal, narrative-based, and background-based elements of discontinuity and instability to create a broken and jagged oeuvre, one which does not fulfill genre constraints but bursts beyond them, the new and old, strange and normal, Cossack and non-Cossack in the whirling juxtapositions that form the core of the poetics of change and liminality.

### Chapter III

#### Time's Arrow: *Dead Souls*, "Dream," "Cold Ravine," and the Poetry of Flux

Gogol's and Shevchenko's second periods are notable for encompassing some of both author's most prominent works. In Gogol's case, this is *Dead Souls*, his masterpiece novel. For Shevchenko, one of these is the work for which he was eventually arrested and exiled, "Dream," which includes a satiric and unflattering encounter with the royal family. In this chapter, I argue that these works, and Gogol and Shevchenko's second periods more generally, are marked by depictions of flux, temporal, genre-related, and tonal. Moreover, they depict history as a flux state, not the destabilizing trauma it is in their first periods. Not only are these second periods untied by the prominence of their works, and their portrayal of flux, elements of both author's lives during these periods correspond, including their moves outside of Russia. Unlike Shevchenko, for whom a move home to Ukraine heralds the creation of his most prominent and well-regarded works, it is a move away from home that does the same for Gogol. Yet for both writers, it is a move that heralded this new phase of artistic production.

A trip home to Ukraine in 1843 marked the beginning of Shevchenko's second literary period. He had been living in St. Petersburg, attending the Imperial Academy of the Arts. He had been in Russia since 1831, when he and his master Pavlo Engelgardt had moved to St. Petersburg from Vilnius. In the forties, after being freed from serfdom and studying at the Imperial Academy of the Arts, Shevchenko was finally able to return to his homeland. This trip, and the ones Shevchenko took in the subsequent few years, coincide with a shift in his poetics which marks his "most creative period,"<sup>136</sup> that of the *Try lita* (*Three Years*).

Early interpretations of this period focus on its humanist elements, in contrast to the

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<sup>136</sup> Rylsky, 294.

Cossack themes that marked his earlier works.<sup>137</sup> Other critics have suggested that all Shevchenko's poetry before his exile should be considered part of the same period, and that the period of his exile and that following it should be understood as the other two periods of his writing. Yet as Shevelov pointed out, Shevchenko's poetics is not so easily broken into thirds, especially thirds based on Shevchenko's attitude towards the Cossack past.<sup>138</sup> This is particularly apparent as the *Try lita* period contrasts substantially with the period before it, yet the subsequent period does not display the same sort of disparity. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, critics focus on the political aspects of this period, and its divergence from Shevchenko's initial work. 20<sup>th</sup> century critics, such as Bohdan Rubchak complicate this characterization. Rubchak writes that the *Try lita* period was "dominated by desperate searching and painful doubt. Such tortuous internal quests continued until his last poem, although in later works they occasionally were mellowed by more mature skepticism."<sup>139</sup>

Gogol's second period can, similarly, be seen as contrasting sharply with the earlier arc of his work. The earlier period, as I discussed in chapter two, has been seen as dealing with Ukraine, and included both the *Dikanka Tales* (1831, 1832) and *Mirgorod* (1835). These works center on Gogol's homeland, and are filled with the folkloric and the fantastic. One might, as Bely did, separate out this period from the later ones by use of color, or one might define periods in Gogol's work by setting. One might also use genre, and argue that the second period, marked by *Arabesques* (*Arabeski*, 1835) and the Petersburg tales broadly, is perhaps more realistic, although this characterization is suspect when one considers the fantastic elements of "The

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<sup>137</sup> See Borys Hrinchenko, "What were Shevchenko's National Ideals?" in Luckyj, *Shevchenko and the Critics* for an early discussion of this possible characterization.

<sup>138</sup> George Shevelov, "The Year 1860 in Shevchenko's Work," in Luckyj, *Shevchenko and The Critics*, 324.

<sup>139</sup> Bohdan Rubchak, "Shevchenko's Profiles and Masks," in Luckyj, *Shevchenko and the Critics*, 412.



Portrait” (“*Portret*,” 1835) or “The Nose” (“*Nos*,” 1836). One might even define this second period of Gogol’s work by its relationship to its terminus, that is to say, to *Dead Souls* (*Mertvyie Dushi*, 1842).

*Dead Souls* exerts an almost overpowering influence over all of Gogol’s work. It is the benchmark against which his writing is judged, his magnum opus. Yet despite its overwhelming importance in Gogol’s oeuvre, and indeed, in the canon of Russian literature as a whole, it was not written in Russia – or even Ukraine. This second period of Gogol’s writing is bisected by his move outside the borders of the Russian Empire. For twelve years, from 1836 to 1848, Gogol lived abroad, spending much of the time in Rome. *Arabesques* was published just before his departure from the Russian Empire, and his move came directly after the premier of *The Inspector General* (*Revizor*, 1836), whose reception upset him greatly. Gogol then returned to Russia for a short time to publish *Dead Souls*, which appeared in 1842.

Maguire writes that Gogol’s move from Russia was an attempt to find an entirely new place for himself, a place where he could creatively transform himself.<sup>140</sup> And Rome (and Western Europe more broadly) was indeed that place. “If only you knew how marvelous the winters are here,” he wrote to Maria Petrovna Balabina in March of 1838,<sup>141</sup> extorting her to come visit him. Rome fueled his creative efforts. It was in Rome that *Dead Souls* took shape.

For Shevchenko, some of the *Try Lita* period involved reckoning with the works produced during his first phase of productivity. Those works are, as I have argued, characterized by their continuous retreading of the historical past. They focus on moments of incompleteness, the gap between history and mythology. It is in this liminal space that works such as *Haidamaky*

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<sup>140</sup> Robert A. Maguire, *Exploring Gogol* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 92.

<sup>141</sup> *PSS*, vol. 11, 129. My translation is based on the Russian translation in the *PSS*, rather than the Italian original.

find their footing. In his second period of poetry, works such as “Cold Ravine” (“*Kholodnyi Iar*,” 1845) reimagined that past, rethinking its place in Shevchenko’s poetic cosmos, and indeed, the role of the past in Ukraine’s present.

The eponymous Cold Ravine is a large forest in the modern Cherkas'ka Oblast. Located in the center of Ukraine between the towns of Lubentsi, Mel'nyky, Hrushkivka, and Zhabotyn (at approximately the compass points), the Ravine is actually a series of ravines, valleys, and hills. Its historical significance stems from the battles, settlements, and legends set against the backdrop of its rolling landscape. For Shevchenko, the Cold Ravine was especially important as the site where the *Koliivshchyna* uprising began.<sup>142</sup>

The *Koliivshchyna*, as discussed at length in Chapter Two, was a major Haidamak rebellion during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Importantly, its events, particularly the Massacre of Uman, are depicted in *Haidamaky*. In “Cold Ravine,” Shevchenko revisits those events, rethinking their significance through the lens of their beginning. “Cold Ravine” bridges Shevchenko’s early period, with its dreamtime, in which the historical past is identity forming and transformational, and, in particular, destabilizing in its trauma, and the second period of Shevchenko’s work, which I will examine in this chapter.

This second period is, for Shevchenko, best typified by his 1844 poem “Dream (A Comedy)” (“*Son (Komedia)*,” 1844). It was written before “Cold Ravine,” but more clearly exemplifies the second period. It is also comparable to Gogol’s *Dead Souls*, which also deals with a journey taken by the protagonist, and shares a comic tone. These two works, “Dream” and *Dead Souls*, share multiple characteristics, including their political significance.

When the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius was arrested in March of 1847, a

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<sup>142</sup> V. A. Smolii, “Koliivshchyna,” *Entsyklopediia istorii Ukrainy*. Vol. 4. (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2007).

copy of “Dream” was among the papers seized by the secret police. While Shevchenko’s membership in the group was not proven by the police, he was arrested and, eventually, sentenced to exile and military servitude based on “Dream’s” political content. In an article published in 1924, but written before World War I, Ivan Franko writes that in “Dream,” and its contemporaries, Shevchenko was “tearing pitilessly aside the veil of political and social despotism.”<sup>143</sup> For Franko and other critics, “Dream” is a work that exemplifies a political turn in Shevchenko’s poetic course, a turn towards social and humanitarian concerns, rather than national ones.

*Dead Souls*, too, is noted for its political resonance and importance. Indeed, *Dead Soul*’s political stance is the subject of substantial criticism. As James Woodward laid out in his 1978 book, while the basic topic of *Dead Souls* has never really been subject to debate – it is, as the title states, about dead souls or serfs – the meaning behind that topic, and indeed its treatment, has been thoroughly questioned. One group of critics has focused on the work’s satirical elements, its critique of the status quo. Another camp has, at times with equal fervor, insisted that it is not social satire, and that it is rather a more fantastic rendering of Russia and its inhabitants.<sup>144</sup> Whatever the particular view of the critic, however, the political impact of *Dead Souls* cannot be denied. Exchanges such as the polemic between Vissarion Belinsky and Konstantin Aksakov, although nominally on the subject of the novel, were in substantial part extensions of the Westernizer/Slavophile conflict that was central to the Russian political and cultural context of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Ivan Franko, “Taras Shevchenko,” *The Slavonic Review* 3, no. 7 (Jun., 1924): 115.

<sup>144</sup> James B. Woodward, *Gogol’s Dead Souls* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), ix-x.

<sup>145</sup> See Aksakov’s “Neskol’ko slov o poeme Gogolia: Pokhozhdeniia Chichikova, ili Mertyve dushi” and “Ob”iasnenie po povodu retsenzii V. G. Belinskogo na ‘Neskol’ko slov o poeme Gogolia’” and Belinsky’s “Neskol’ko slov o poeme Gogolia: Pokhozhdeniia Chichikova ili mertvyie dushi” and “Ob”iasnenie na ob”iasnenie

Both “Dream” and *Dead Souls*, thus, had substantial political significance at the time they were written. Moreover, both works occupy similar positions in their writers’ corpuses. While “Dream” is not the *magnum opus* that *Dead Souls* is, its writing fundamentally altered the trajectory of Shevchenko’s life, as *Dead Souls* did for Gogol. These two works are also representative of the second period of both writers’ creative trajectories. In this chapter, I argue that these two second periods are not differentiated from the first solely by the political motivations evident in *Dead Souls* and “Dream,” nor by the fantastic or the folkloric, nor indeed by the settings of the works they include. Rather, Gogol’s and Shevchenko’s second periods are marked by fluctuations in the identities of their protagonists, the style and tone of their writing, and most importantly, their temporal frames. Just as works from the first periods were notable for the traumatic destabilization of their liminal moments, works from the second period are marked by flux.

In the second period of their writings, Gogol and Shevchenko play with the temporal elements of liminality. As one moves from the pre-liminal world of the everyday into the in-between space of the liminal moment, one moves from the simple drumbeat of quantitative time to a period in which quantitative time, clock time, no longer adequately represents one’s experience of time. Time becomes instantial. One can relate this shift from quantitative to qualitative time to the (ancient) Greek concepts of *chronos* and *kairos*.

*Chronos* is time as measured by the clock, or, more broadly, time as measurable by any means. John E. Smith writes that “*chronos* time is a grid upon which events can be plotted.”<sup>146</sup>

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po povodu poemii Gogolia ‘Mertvyie dushi’” in Vissarion Belinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v 9-ti tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1979).

<sup>146</sup> John E. Smith, “Time, Times, and the ‘Right Time’: ‘Chronos’ and ‘Kairos,’” *The Monist* 53, no. 1 (Jan., 1969): 5.

The chronicle, with its orderly list of events and its march from year to year, is a type of narrative that solely depicts *chronos*. In contrast, *kairos* is qualitative time, the moment at which something *ought* to occur. It is the “right time” for something to happen, the appointed moment. As one moves from the everyday world into the liminal moment, one moves from experiencing chronologic to kairotic time. Ritual processes, those moments which induce liminal states, also create bubbles of *kairos*, separated from the clockwork passage of the hours. Notable in both Gogol and Shevchenko’s second periods is how these bubbles are themselves portrayed. In their kairotic moments, time is not simply *right* for something to occur, it is also itself in flux. Both authors create a poetics of flux, of temporal instability, that dominates their narratives.

“The poetics of flow” writes Victoria Bazin, are “reflections of experience that fall outside... the ‘moulds of our understanding.’”<sup>147</sup> In this case, that understanding is the linearity of time. Time, as we perceive it, is linear. It progresses from past to present in an unbroken march. Time’s arrow seems fixed in a single direction. Physics suggests this is not the case, that time’s arrow can point in any direction, that its progression can be from present to past, or perhaps even in some direction that is not simply an 180° reversal of human norm. Physics also defines flux as an effect that seems to travel or pass through a surface.

In the liminal moments of *Dead Souls*, *Cold Ravine*, and *Dream*, events, people, and even moods penetrate through the fabric of time. They cross from one part of history to another, without any care for the bounds of historical reality. In *Dream*’s fantasyland, contemporary public figures, such as Nicholas I, are directly juxtaposed with the grumbling of Hell. The protagonist moves seamlessly from flying spirt to servant spying on the emperor as he greets his

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<sup>147</sup> Victoria Bazin, “Lorine Niedecker, Henri Bergson, and the Poetics of Temporal Flow,” *Journal of American Studies* 46, no. 4 (2012): 978.

bureaucrats. Moreover, in these works time itself is in flux, penetrating through the narrative at angles more varied than those standard to traditional linear narrative.

Mark Currie writes that much of fiction “involves an interplay between narrated time and the time of the narrative, where the time of the narrative functions as the site of self-conscious reflection both on past events and on the nature of writing about them.” More broadly, time is lived both backwards and forwards. Currie writes, “the idea that moving forwards in time involves a backwards narration is more than just a novelistic structure, and might be thought of, with Proust, as the shape of time itself. It is possible to view ageing [sic] itself as a process of acquisition of memories, or the acquisition of a history, after the synchronicity and presence, or the here-ness and now-ness, of childhood.”<sup>148</sup>

Simultaneous backwards and forwards motion is most often the flow of time in the novel or narrative poem. Time moves forward and backward for both the narrator and the narrated. This is the case even if the two overlap as in the autobiography or are as separate as they are in a third person, limited narration. Yet time can also loop in on itself, become stretched and warped, even become quantified.

Flux, as a physical concept, is defined by the rate of flow per unit area.<sup>149</sup> That is to say, flux is the passage of someone over or through something else. In the three works I discuss in this chapter, ideas and events pass through the fabric of time itself, just as time warps and bends, passing through the area of the narrative. In its passage through the narrative, particularly in *Dead Souls*, time becomes encapsulated. It forms little bubbles that are separate from each other,

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<sup>148</sup> Mark Currie, *About Time: Narrative, Fiction, and the Philosophy of Time* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 88.

<sup>149</sup> Flux, then, has the dimensions [quantity][time]<sup>-1</sup>[area]<sup>-1</sup>. This is the transport definition of flux, not the electromagnetic definition. In the transport definition, flux is a vector quantity, not scalar, and thus has both magnitude and direction.

yet all linked by the narrator, as though they are pearls on a string.

Physics, at least in its quantum mechanical form, hypothesizes that all physical properties can be quantized. In other words, all physical properties can be described as consisting of discrete packets of information or energy, which all together make up the property or physical entity. Thus, while light appears to be a ray, or a wave of energy, it can also be described as a stream of photons. Those photons are individual bubbles of electromagnetic energy, the quanta of light.<sup>150</sup>

Just as the light ray appears continuous to the eye, time appears continuous to those living inside it. Yet time, as depicted in *Dead Souls*, can be quantized.<sup>151</sup> It can be packaged into discrete parcels, each of which link together to form the continuous thread of the whole. Quantized time allows for gaps between temporal bubbles in the work. These gaps are not simple moments that the narrator has failed to describe, but rather the in-between, timeless spaces.

These are gaps in narrative, gasps that allow movement between wildly disparate temporal spaces. As Allison Grimaldi-Donahue writes about linguistic gaps, “gaps imply movement, like faults in the earth.”<sup>152</sup> So too with temporal gaps in narrative, particularly the narratives present in *Dead Souls*, “Cold Ravine,” and “Dream.” These gaps and bubbles of time, as well as their penetration through the fabric of the narrative (flux) characterize the liminal

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<sup>150</sup> The Higgs boson, which has received popular attention due to the Large Hadron Collider’s confirmation of its existence in 2013, is a way of quantizing the Higgs field (a field which allows potential energy to be expressed as mass for some particles, such as quarks). Thus, the Higgs boson is the quanta of the Higgs field.

<sup>151</sup> Time may also be quantized in physics. Both Planck time, which describes the minimal possible temporal separation between two events, and the theoretical chronon, which is a proposed quantum of time used in theories that time takes both wave and particle forms are ways of doing so.

<sup>152</sup> Allison Grimaldi-Donahue, “Poetry’s Intrinsic Ontology of Change: Plasticity, Translation, and the Work of Catherine Malabou,” *Catherine Malabou* (blog), May 16, 2018, <https://catherinemalabou.wordpress.com/2018/05/27/poetrys-intrinsic-ontology-of-change-plasticity-translation-and-the-work-of-catherine-malabou/>

moments in Gogol and Shevchenko's second periods. This can also be described as an interest in the "no-time" of liminality, in the gaps that liminality introduces in lived existence. Not only do these works focus on ways in which time twists and turns on itself, they also focus on those spaces between the quantized lumps of time that make them up.

These works are, importantly, not simply reiterations of the episodic novel or narrative poem. While *Dead Souls* has been consistently characterized as a picaresque or partially picaresque novel,<sup>153</sup> and thus its episodic nature has been noted, this does not entirely account for the gaps in time in the work, nor does it serve as an appropriate description for "Dream," which, as I will establish, displays similar "no-time" moments to *Dead Souls*. Furthermore, these moments are specifically linked to transitions out of normal space into ritual space, or from *chronos* to *kairos*. It is not their episodic nature that marks them as being in flux, but rather the space between their episodes.

Levin writes that being is as much in the energies of movement or change as in the settled states preceding or following after that movement or change.<sup>154</sup> This is particularly notable in both Gogol and Shevchenko's second periods. In these, the movements, whether literal, as they are in both *Dead Souls* and "Dream" or more metaphorical, as in "Cold Ravine," are the focus of play with time and space. The gaps, as Grimaldi-Donahue notes, create movement, and it is in these gaps that the essence of these stories lies.

Setting is one of *Dead Souls*' critics' major concerns. The novel's very location is ambiguous. It is located in both *Rus'* and Russia, as both words are used to describe the setting

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<sup>153</sup> For example, in Jurij Striedter's *Der Schelmenroman in Russland: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des russischen Romans vor Gogol'* (Berlin: Osteuropa-Institut an den Freien Universitäten, 1961).

<sup>154</sup> Jonathan Levin, 11.



and inhabitants of the novel. Yulia Ilchuk writes that this dual setting allows Gogol to “integrate archaic and modern concepts of Russia.”<sup>155</sup> William Todd takes a slightly different track, arguing that the novel takes place in a sort of no-time, or “historical vacuum.”<sup>156</sup>

There are markers of history in the work, however. In Chapter X’s “Tale of Captain Kopeikin,” the eponymous captain is a veteran of Napoleon’s 1812 invasion of Russia. This sets the entire novel *per se* after the invasion, and given the time that elapses in the narrative, quite some time later. Yet placing the work more precisely in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is not as simple. Moreover, the exact temporal setting is less important than the broader contours of time and space, at least for questions about flux and liminality.

In *Gogol’s Work: Meaning and Form*, Yuri Mann uses Bakhtin’s chronotope to understand time’s flow in the novel. He establishes a correlation between landscape and time, between past-present boundaries and the physical contours of *Dead Souls*.<sup>157</sup> In the novel, the protagonist Chichikov moves from one landowner’s home to the next in a small area, on a quest to buy dead serfs who he intends to use to pass himself off as a wealthy and prominent man. The novel details his initially successful efforts at buying serfs, and the slow realization by the landowners and regional officials that a con is being carried out. In the course of his adventures, he passes from a windblown, lilac-dotted homestead that reminds one forcibly of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century British romantics, particularly Byron, to a rain-drenched house cluttered with knick-knacks and the detritus of a solitary life, in which he seeks refuge from a terrible storm. Mann

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<sup>155</sup> Yulia Ilchuk, *Nikolai Gogol: Performing Hybrid Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 147.

<sup>156</sup> William Mills Todd III, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 249.

<sup>157</sup> See Iiuri Mann, *Tvorchestvo Gogolia: smysl i forma* (Saint Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 2007).

sees this as evidence of the link between landscape and time. Yet each of these episodes, set apart by their physical surroundings as well as by the landowners who dominate them, are also bubbles in time, quantized episodes that are differentiated by the “no-time” in-between them.

Take, for example, the transition to Chichikov’s encounter with Madame Korobochka,<sup>158</sup> and then to his subsequent departure from her estate. After Chichikov leaves Manilov’s estate at the end of Chapter II, he transitions out of the preset rituals of the Manilov household, back into the everyday world of travel through the Russian countryside. This transition is particularly marked when Chichikov draws attention to his own failures in this area, apologizing to the Manilov children for bringing them no presents (as courtesy might require). Immediately at the beginning of Chapter III, the narrative quickly turns to the everyday, with Selifan the coachman berating the middle horse in the carriage team for laziness.

This short, one-and-a-half-page encounter with the everyday realities of coach driving is broken by a clap of thunder. This thunder introduces a transitional state, in which Chichikov moves from a straightforward, planned procession through the countryside to a nightmarish ride through rain, mud, and plowed fields. Chichikov loses track of time, and, once he finally takes stock, finds that “by his reckoning, he should have arrived long ago” to his destination.<sup>159</sup>

Time has slipped away from both Selifan and Chichikov, and it is already night when they realize they have gone astray. Their byronic, romantic ride over the rain-lashed fields finally leads them to a house. As they arrive at the house, time begins to be quantifiable again. The woman who greets Chichikov tells him, “Wait a moment,” (“*Pogodite*”) and then returns in what

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<sup>158</sup> Korobochka’s name means, literally, “little box.” It is also the term used in cheating at cards, particularly in reference to the behavior of a new or inexperienced player. (See “*Korob*,” Vladimir Dal, *Tolkovyi slovar’ zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka*, 6th ed. (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo inostranykh i natsional’nykh slovarei, 1955.))

<sup>159</sup> PSS, vol. 6, 42.

the narrator specifies is “two minutes.”<sup>160</sup> Unlike the journey from Manilov’s, which includes no specific mentions of time, the moment Chichkov arrives at Korobochka’s manor, time begins to be counted once again.

At the outset of the journey, that period closes to Manilov’s romantic world, Chichikov muses, caught, like many a romantic hero, in his own thoughts. A clap of thunder resounds, and the coachman whips his horses into a frenzy. As Chichikov draws closer to Korobochka’s house, however, the journey moves to the absurd. Rather than the deeply introspective protagonist of the romantic novel, Chichikov is dumped from his britchka onto the muddy ground when Selifan overturns the carriage, “floundering” about as he tries to free himself from the carriage. Thus, the journey becomes comedic, an introduction to the tone of the subsequent encounter with Korobochka.

The transition between journey and destination is one between *kairos* and *chronos*. The moments of *kairos*, during the journey, are those of mystical time, time appropriate for such a journey. Manilov’s house, which resembles nothing so much as a manor drawn directly from the British romantic fiction of the early 1800s, introduces a journey that transitions *Dead Souls*’ protagonist from romantic to satiric worlds, from the terribly Western Manilov’s abode to the incredibly Russian Korobochka’s home. Unlike Manilov, who uses as refined a diction as any character in *Dead Souls*, Korobochka’s speech is rife with colloquialisms and provinciality. She calls Chichikov “father,” shrinks at the name of the devil, and, just like Selifan, uses the verb “*zakusit*” “to have a bite,” a very informal way of saying “to eat.” In this transition between Western and Russian Provincial, between romantic to satiric work, the journey is not one of hours and minutes, but rather one that finds its place in the catalogue of mythical transitions of

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<sup>160</sup> PSS, vol. 6. 44.

state, resembling the *katabasis* in works such as book 10 of the *Metamorphoses*, in which Ovid tells the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. Its dark and troubled course resembles that of similar journeys, as does the troubles that befall the travelers, which resemble, albeit comedically, the challenges Dante faces early on in the *Inferno*.

Elements of this journey play on the conventions of such a transition. It consists of a typical romantic ride through the wet night, which becomes a comedy of errors, with an overturned carriage and drunk coachman. It is the *appropriate* journey to link Chichikov's meetings with Manilov and Korobochka. This transitional process is both a literal transition through space, and also a transition between two ritualized environments, through the wild space between. Caught between these two ritualized spaces, there is a bubble of kairotic spacetime. .

This transitional moment is encapsulated, sealed away from the chronological time of the households Chichikov visits. It separates two periods of highly ritualized interaction, with Chichikov playing the role of the guest and Manilov and Korobochka as the hosts. The period *after* Chichikov and Korobochka's meeting, however, is not a bubble of kairotic time. It is also not a transition between two meetings with landowners, the highly formalized interactions between (former) government official and serf owner, between buyer and seller of souls. Rather, it is an exit from this ritualized world into the boring, mundane world of the everyday traveler, instead of the karotic space of the prior journey.

Chichikov leaves Korobochka's home after finally convincing her to part with some of her dead serfs. Unlike his departure from Manilov's house, which is marked by both Chichikov and Selifan musing to themselves, when Chichikov leaves Korobochka's, he is accompanied by the everyday chatter of a serf girl, Pelagea. The final pages of chapter III consist of a continuation of the *chronos* time of Chichikov's visit with Korobochka. As he attempts to free

himself from his final conversation with the landowner, she mentions two specific dates – Christmas and St. Philip’s Day. These calendar dates emphasize the mundane nature of Chichikov and Korobochka’s interactions, and underline how no transition out of *chronos* is about to occur.

When Chichikov, Selifan, and Pelagea drive away from Korobochka’s house, they are not headed to another landowner’s house, with its own rituals and performances. Rather, Pelagea accompanies Chichikov and Selifan in order to direct them to the main road, and consequently, an inn. They do not enter story-book time, *kairos*, the “right time,” full of its conventional elements, as they do on the way to Korobochka’s house. The only conversation on the journey concerns whether or not the carriage should turn right at a certain road. Pelagea, it becomes clear, does not know right from left. This mundane conversation is far from the windswept night and thundering hooves of Chichikov’s journey to Korobochka’s house. It has none of that trip’s magical nature and is instead of the most everyday variety.

These rapid shifts between mundane time and fairy-tale time, between *chronos* and *kairos*, continue through the work. They create a fluctuating time-scape, in which shifts between ritual interactions and the everyday world are marked by parallel shifts between *chronos* and *kairos*. Omeljan Pritsak writes, “Gogol... had no concept of linear time.”<sup>161</sup> His narrative vacillates between chronological and non-linear time, and renders the linearity of time almost inconsequential.

Time’s flux is not only present in the rapid shifts between clock-time and kairotic time, however. The central conceit of the novel is one that rests on deformed temporal space, a space

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<sup>161</sup> Omeljan Pritsak, “Prolegomena to the National Awakening of the Ukrainians during the Nineteenth Century” in *Culture and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe*, ed. by Roland Sussex and J. C. Eade. (Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, inc., 1985), 106.

in which people still remain on the tax lists after they die, and thus are legally alive while physically dead. Chichikov takes advantage of the differences in physical existence and bureaucratic existence to run his scam, and thus the narrative rests on physical existence being in flux.

During the Napoleonic wars, Russia was unable to conduct a census. While the first complete census of the Empire was conducted in 1897, many years after *Dead Souls* was written, prior to that, censuses were conducted in individual provinces (*gubernii*) in Russia and Ukraine, as well as by administrative region in some of Belarus, Livonia, Courland, and Kovno (among others).<sup>162</sup> During the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, conducting a census this way became impossible, as imperial priorities were directed towards repelling Napoleon, rather than taking stock of its citizenry. At the same time, people were rapidly redistributed throughout Western Russia at the close of the war, with various armies stationed at newly designated posts, peasants returning after their terms of service, nobles taking newly created positions due to the administrative reforms of the time, and newly appointed governors general attempting to consolidate their territories.<sup>163</sup>

There was an enormous shift in the Russian countryside during this period, and one of the many things in flux was the number of serfs held by any one landowner. For the readers of Gogol's day, this was a reality that many of them had experienced. Moreover, administrative changes meant that landowners really did have to pay taxes on serfs who were no longer theirs,

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<sup>162</sup> See M. E. Falkus, *The Industrialisation of Russia 1700-1914* (London: MacMillan, 1984) and B. R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics: Europe 1750-1988*, 3rd ed. (NY: Stockton Press, 1992) for more information on the census.

<sup>163</sup> See John P. LeDonne, "Unitary State or Empire 1796-1855," *Forging a Unitary State: Russia's Management of the Eurasian Space 1650-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 296-346. for more on the post-Napoleonic political developments in the Ukrainian and Southern Russian space.

as these serfs had not yet been removed from the lists.

The lived reality of Gogol's readers penetrates *Dead Souls*' fictional fabric. Likewise, Chichikov's scheme penetrates though the story, to the outside world, as it is a plausible scheme. Moreover, the confusion of the Napoleonic wars continues to penetrate through the narrative, even though the work is set after the war (as I established earlier). The confusions of the war era, which reach through the temporal space of the narrative to affect its inhabitants even long after the war ends is yet another example of flux. It is essential to the premise of the work.

Yuri Lotman argues that a novel begins with plot elements – it sets up the contours of its specific story – and ends with mythological elements, becoming generalizable and relatable to the world at large.<sup>164</sup> *Dead Souls* reverses this pattern. In the opening of the novel, the generalizable nature of Chichikov's experiences is emphasized. "Thus are common rooms – and every traveler knows it well," the narrator says, while introducing the parlor in Chichikov's inn.<sup>165</sup> Just a little later, during the same introductory scenes at the inn, the narrator comments that "Both in enlightened Europe and in enlightened Russia there are now many respectable people who cannot eat in a inn without talking with the servants."<sup>166</sup> In both of these moments, the narrator emphasizes the commonality of the experiences taking place, rather than their importance to *Dead Souls*' particular plot.

In contrast, the final chapter of *Dead Souls Part I* is a detailed accounting of Chichikov's personal affairs and life story. In it, the narrator summarizes Chichikov's initially successful career, the corruption scandal that ended it, and his choice to turn to scams to rebuild his position

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<sup>164</sup> Iurii Lotman, *Struktura khudozhestvennogo teksta* (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1971), 265.

<sup>165</sup> "Kakie byvaiut eti obshchie zaly - vsiakoi proezhaiushchii znaet ochen' khorosho." PSS, vol. 6, 9.

<sup>166</sup> "Kak v prosveshchennoi Evrope, tak i v prosveshchennoi Rossi est' teper' ves'ma mnogo pochtennykh liudei, kotorye bez togo ne mogut pokushat' v traktire, chtob ne pogovorit' s slugoiu." PSS, vol. 6, 10.

in the world. Instead of the broad, universalizing descriptions of first chapter, and the broad strokes that the narrator uses to paint Chichikov, the final chapter is full of specifics. Instead of the landowners who depict various archetypes, as Manilov, Sobakevich and the rest do, the final chapter includes a highly individual portrait of Chichikov's former schoolmaster.

In this way, *Dead Souls* moves from universal to specific, from general to plot-centric. Gogol reverses Lotman's formula, creating a story whose universal themes give way to more specific concerns as the novel progresses. This, along with its rapid shifts between types of temporal flow, creates a multilayered, shifting timescape. As the narrator of *Dead Souls* comments, "everything in life changes quickly."<sup>167</sup>

Just as the narrator of *Dead Souls* affirms that all in (Chichikov's) life changes quickly, the narrator in "Dream" demonstrates that all in its protagonist's dreams shifts rapidly as well. In fact, "Dream" moves from clock-time to mythic, kairotic time with just the same sort of dizzying shifts as *Dead Souls*. Take, for example, a passage early on in the poem, where Shevchenko writes, "Farewell, world, farewell, earth,/unkind land,/my torment, my rage/I'll hide in a cloud./And you, my Ukraine,/ill-fated widow,/I'll fly to you,/to speak from the clouds,/speak quiet and sad,/take council with you."<sup>168</sup>

This passage is both highly metaphorical, and temporally unclear. It follows directly after a section in which the protagonist of the poem falls asleep. That passage is located clearly within the routine of the subject's everyday life. They stumble back home after a night of drinking, and, falling into an empty bed in an empty house, begin to dream. While no particular date is

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<sup>167</sup> "V zhizne vse meniaetsia bystro." PSS, vol. 6, 224.

<sup>168</sup> "Proshchai, svite, proshchai, zemle,/Nepriyaznyi kraiu,/Moi muky, moi liuti,/V khmari zakhovaiu,/A ty, moia Ukraino,/Beztalanna vdovo./Ia do tebe litatymu,/Z khmary na rozmovu,/Na rozmovu tykho-cymny,/Na radu z toboiu." ZT, vol. 1, 267.



specified, it is clear that this is no magical event, no strange intervention of the fates. Rather, this is an everyday sort of occurrence, in which a man falls to bed “already drunk.”<sup>169</sup>

Yet after this mundane and everyday moment, the language of the poem switches. No longer is the subject stumbling to their empty home, but instead, they have transcended the earth, and are among the clouds. Moreover, they have even been freed from the constraints of the present tense. Instead, the passage beginning “farewell, farewell,” is written with future tense verbs that allow the action to take place in the hypothetical mists of the future, rather than in the present.

Just as quickly, the poem moves from mundane drunkenness to heartfelt future musings, and a little later it cycles from *kairos*, the time of mystical rightness, back into the ticking of the chronological world. The narrator asks “And where then are your thoughts, rosy flowers,/well-groomed, brave, those well-cared-for children,/To whom, my friend, to whom did you give them?/Or, perhaps, have you buried them in your heart forever,/Oh don’t hide them, brother! Throw them, scatter them,/They will rise, and grow, and go out into the world!”<sup>170</sup>

This passage’s very lines are extended, each of them almost doubles the length of the lines that precede and follow it. Their length breaks the flow of the poem, taking the reader outside of the rhythm of the stanza, and into a new rhetorical space. The longer lines, weightier than those that precede and follow them, briefly introduce a heavy solemnity to the poem. Moreover, these lines take place outside of the narrative space of the poem. They are spoken by the narrator, rather than as the subject’s dialogue. Indeed, they address the world outside the

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<sup>169</sup> “*Vzhe pidpylyi*,” *ZT*, vol. 1, 266.

<sup>170</sup> “*A de zh toi dumy, rozhevii kvity,/Dohliadani, smili, vykokhani dity,/Komu ty ich, druzhe, komu peredav?/Chy, mozhe, navnyky v sertsy pokhovav?/O ne khovai, brate! Rozsyp ikh, pozkydai,/Ziidut', i rostymut', i u liudy vyidut'!*” *ZT*, vol. 1, 271.

poem, as though reaching out of the poem's setting to take root in the reader's own existence.

The "where are your thoughts" passage is in sharp contrast to a closely following passage, in which the dreamer arrives in a great city "in a swamp."<sup>171</sup> The lines return to their shorter length, and the dreamer regains prominence as the narrator's voice recedes. As this occurs, a specific temporal marker appears in the text. It is the day of a parade. Which parade is not specified, but it is a very particular marker of life. It is an event that is scheduled, planned, and announced, occupying a point on the calendar for the inhabitants of St. Petersburg. Indeed, those around the dreamer are astonished that he is unaware of the parade, suggesting that it has been widely announced.

These are only two examples of the rapid shifts between ritual time, and the logical, clockwork progression of everyday events. Interspersed between these and other, similar shifts, are gaps in the time-space of the poem. For example, after the Tsar parades about, and the onlookers laugh at his (supposedly) good mood, the dreamer says, "I, too, laughed! What else?/And I was pressed/By the crowd. Before dawn/Everyone has gone to sleep,/.../...I went out/To see the city./There night, is like day."<sup>172</sup> Here, there is a temporal gap, and then doubling. The dreamer is pressed by the crowd, but then, in an instant, everyone has gone to sleep. The enjambment in the line that bridges these two events, "By the crowd. Before dawn," makes this gap noticeable. The crowd's instantaneous dispersal and sleep is purposefully juxtaposed with its close press. There is no new stanza, or even a new line that introduces this new state of being. It is directly contiguous with the old, two separate bubbles of time connected without any space

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<sup>171</sup> Clearly St. Petersburg, which occupies the islands of Neva River estuary.

<sup>172</sup> "Zarehotavsia ia, ta i hodi;/A i mene davnuly/Taky dobre. Pered svitom/Use te zasnulo,/.../...Ot pishov ia/horod ozyraty./Tam nich, iak den'." *ZT*, vol. 1, 273-274.

between them, either graphical or narrative.

Not only is there a temporal gap in these lines, but there is also a moment of doubling. The crowd disperses so that they can sleep “*before the dawn*,” but there is still enough time that the dreamer is able to explore the city by night, a night that is like day. During the summer, when St. Petersburg nights are often bathed in twilight, dawn comes relatively early. Near the summer solstice, nights can be shorter than six hours long, giving the city an air of perpetual daylight. However, by writing that the crowd goes to bed “before dawn,” Shevchenko implies that they do not go to bed at the beginning of St. Petersburg’s summer pseudo-night, but rather close to the dawn itself. What is remarkable is how late they are awake, and that they return home just in time to catch some of the twilight hours.

The dreamer, instead of returning to his bed (which he has, of course, left far behind in Ukraine), sets out to explore the city. Despite it being close to dawn, there is still enough time in St. Petersburg’s incredibly short night to explore. This produces a doubling effect, where time stretches out, or folds back on itself, allowing the dreamer enough night to walk along St. Petersburg’s canals and remark at their construction.

For the dreamer, time is a malleable thing that can be warped, chopped, and reconnected at the dream’s convenience. Moreover, the narrator’s digressions into a no-time, musing state, one that alternates with decisive forays into chronological time, create a fluctuating timescale. Just as *Dead Souls*’ temporal framework is marked by flux, by reversals and irregularities, so too is “Dream.” “Cold Ravine” likewise involves time in flux. However, “Cold Ravine’s” temporal flux particularly highlights the movement of time and history and depicts the way in which the past penetrates through the fabric of the narrative.

“Cold Ravine” begins with a lament that there is no longer a path through the Cold

Ravine itself, no longer a clear trail leading through the undergrowth. The physical space is no longer stamped with its history, at least not physically. It is “as though no one, no foot/had stood there.”<sup>173</sup> Thus, the poem begins by underlining how the events it goes on to recount have left little visible evidence behind, despite their emotional resonance. It is that emotional resonance that the poem then goes on to establish, and moreover, the presence of past events long after those events occurred. Indeed, in the first lines of the poem, just before the narrator describes the Cold Ravine as no longer having trails leading through it, they declare “Each person has their own trouble/and in me there is no quiet/Albeit it’s not mine, borrowed,/but all the same, a trouble.”<sup>174</sup>

This is the first introduction to an idea that comes to dominate the poem – that, while the past has in fact, passed, it is still with the poet, and indeed with the entire community. After speaking of how the ravine is no longer cut through with trails, the poet goes on to write of how the Haidamaks had met at Motryn monastery, had prepared their attacks against the Poles during the Koliivshchyna uprising. This historical meeting at the monastery, which is not featured in Shevchenko’s earlier poem *Haidamaky*, is one of the several major events which took place in the Cold Ravine, and which are, in the present day, commemorated through monuments and historical markers.<sup>175</sup>

In the poem, however, there are no monuments to the Haidamaks. The poet says that no longer can people go to seek council deep in the ravine. He asks, “Where have you gone, in the

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<sup>173</sup> “*Shcho nikhto i nohoiu/ne stupyv tam.*” *ZT*, vol. 1, 355.

<sup>174</sup> “*U vsiakoho svoe lykho,/I v mene ne tykho,/Khoch ne svoe, pozychene,/A vse-taky lykho.*” *ZT*, vol. 1, 355.

<sup>175</sup> Among these are “Haidamak or Monastery Pond,” where the Haidamak forces are commemorated, Maksim Zalizniak’s oak, the oldest tree in Ukraine, which supposedly marks where Zalizniak spoke to his fellow Haidamaks, and a monument to the partisans of the Cold Ravine, who fought against the Nazis in World War II.

deep Ravine/you well-trodden path?/Has the dark wood overgrown/Or have you been planted over,/prisoned by a new hangman?”<sup>176</sup> The question is quickly answered by the poet. He writes that while the physical evidence of history has passed away, that history itself still exerts a palpable presence in the area.

“Above the Ravine/Zalizniak hovers/And looks to Uman,/Searching for Gonta,” the poet says.<sup>177</sup> While Zalizniak is not visible there – the verb used to describe him, *vytaty*, means to hover as well as to be tangibly, but invisibly present – he is very much still a part of the ravine. Despite dying in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Zalizniak is still a real, tangible force in the overgrown ravine and in the whole world of the poem. His influence has penetrated the years between the beginning of the *Koliivshchyna*, when he called on Cossacks to rebel at the monastery, and the present moment, when Ukraine has fallen further and further under Russia’s sway. Indeed, it is not just Zalizniak himself who still holds sway, whose influence is unbounded by the restrictions of time’s normal flow. His hopes for freedom still capture the heart of the poet. It is the loss of his and the Haidamaks’ dream that the poet calls “his trouble” at the outset of the poem. They have reached through the fabric of time and caught the heart of the poet.

The poet, in turn, chides Russian historian A. O. Skalkovskii.<sup>178</sup> He criticizes him for believing that the Haidamaks were robbers and thieves, for believing a narrative that says that the Tsars are bringers of glory. This, as the poet sees it, is a revision of history, a warping of the historical story that lacks logic and truth. Even as Zalizniak and the other Haidamaks make their way through time to the ears and heart of the poet, so too does the intervening time become

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<sup>176</sup> “*De zh ty divsia, v Iar glybokyi/Protoptanyi shliakhy?/Chy sam zaris temnym lisom,/Chy to zasadyly/Novi katy?*” *ZT*, vol. 1, 355.

<sup>177</sup> “*Nad Iarom/Zalizniak vytae/I na Uman' pozyrae,/Hontu vyhliadae.*” *ZT*, vol. 1, 356.

<sup>178</sup> *ZT*, vol. 1, 742.

warped and distorted by forgetfulness and by deliberate lies. Time and its contents are malleable, and the poet hopes to draw attention to the arrow of truth leading from the *Koliivshchyna* to his own time.

The poet's own identity is somewhat in flux in "Cold Ravine." In a literal sense, the writer of "Cold Ravine" is the same person who wrote *Haidamaky*. Shevchenko penned both works, their writing separated by only four years. Yet the poet who speaks in "Cold Ravine" is not the narrator of *Haidamaky*'s digressions, nor the bandurist who sings passages throughout it. Rather, they are a poet reacting to the reception of an earlier poem.

This is not an explicit reaction. Nowhere in "Cold Ravine" does the poet speak of *Haidamaky* as his own work, or, in fact, speak of the work at all. Instead, he speaks of reactions to the stories about the Haidamaks, writing that his fellow imperial citizens "lie" and that they can "fool your children/And your blind brothers/Fool yourself, other people,/But you cannot fool God."<sup>179</sup>

This characterization is both a criticism for, as the poet sees it, warping history, but also a way of linking the poet to the poet of *Haidamaky*. He has not told what he sees as lies, nor has he obscured the past. Yet he does not speak of himself explicitly, but rather puts the voice of the past in the mouth of the ravine itself. He writes that "a new fire will blow/from out the Cold Ravine,"<sup>180</sup> that the truth will appear once more, and that the Haidamaks and their ravaged land will have revenge. He does not tell the reader that he himself will herald this new understanding, and indeed, puts it far in the future.

Yet Shevchenko himself had written about what the "Cold Ravine" poet sees as truth in

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<sup>179</sup> "Durit' ditei/I brata slipoho/Durit' sebe, chuzhykh liudei,/Ta ne durit' Boha." *ZT*, vol. 1, 357.

<sup>180</sup> "I povie ohon' novyi/Z Kholodnoho Iaru." *ZT*, vol. 1, 357.

*Haidamaky*. Mark Currie writes that “There is always an element of self-distance in first-person narration in the sense that it creates a schism between the narrator and the narrated, though they are the same person, and in this schism, there is often a cooperation between temporal and moral self-distance which allows for the self-judgement of retrospect.”<sup>181</sup> For the poet who speaks in “Cold Ravine,” this self-distance is clear. It allows him not to mention that he is the same poet who authored *Haidamaky*, an apologia for the same men that “Cold Ravine,” depicts.

The dichotomy between speaker and writer, between poet in poem and poet in life, creates a space where the narrator has not quite joined the narrative. Yet it allows for the imagination and elaboration of the narrator, for responses to imagined critics of the Haidamaks, as well as the specific specific critics of *Haidamaky*. And critics there were. As mentioned in Chapter I, the ever-influential Belinsky turned his biting tongue towards *Haidamaky*, as did others in Russian circles. For Shevchenko, the division between author and poet-speaker in “Cold Ravine” allowed for a more indirect address of these criticism. It also introduced into the poem another source of flux. The poet, who is and yet is not Shevchenko himself, has an identity that is itself indeterminate, vacillating between that of the writer of “Cold Ravine,” and that of someone who is engaged with *Haidamaky*. This vacillation in the narrator is yet another aspect of flux in the work.

*Dead Souls*’ narrator, too, is a persona in flux. Much as the particular temporal setting of *Dead Souls* is unclear, and the subject of some debate, so too is that of the narrator. For example, in his 2007 work on Gogol, Yuri Mann investigates whether or not the narrator is a contemporary of Chichikov. The language used in *Dead Souls*’ narratorial digressions is of a time with that used by the novel’s protagonist. Neither Chichikov nor the narrator sound as

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<sup>181</sup> Mark Currie, 100.

though they are speakers from the past, nor does the narrator sound deliberately modern. Yet the narrator, in his digressions, does not confirm that his life has run along the same course, or at the same time, as those of his subjects. Rather, his comments on his own life are encapsulated, timeless.

Take, for example, his comments to the reader at the beginning of Chapter II. The narrator comments that he is “ashamed to keep his reader occupied so long with people of a lower class, knowing from experience how reluctant they are to get to know those of lower estates.”<sup>182</sup> While this passage begins in third person, unlike many of the digressions in *Dead Souls*, which are written in first person, it specifically references the narrator-author’s personal experience.

Yet this experience does not correspond with the personal experience of the *actual* author of *Dead Souls*. Gogol made his reputation with *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*. The two-part story cycle is narrated by the fictional Rudy Panko (*Rudyi Pan'ko*), a Ukrainian beekeeper. While some of the cycle’s subjects, such as Danilo and Katerina of “A Terrible Vengeance” (“*Strashnaia mest'*,” 1832) belong to the nobility, and thus are not implied to be of lower status than the reader, others, such as Vakula of “Christmas Eve” (“*Noch' pered Rozhdestvom*,” 1832) are working class and likely illiterate (and even if literate, highly unlikely to be buying Gogol’s works).<sup>183</sup> Panko and his fellow *Dikanka Tales* characters were wildly popular, despite, and in

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<sup>182</sup> “No avtor ves'ma sovestitsia zanimat' tak dol'go chitatelei liud'mi nizkogo klassa, znaia po opytu, kak neokhotno oni znakomiatsia s nizkimi sosloviiami.” PSS, vol. 6, 20.

<sup>183</sup> The literacy rates in Russia are uncertain and the matter of quite some debate. At the end of the 18th century, thirty years before the *Dikanka Tales* were published, literacy rates among the *meshchanstvo*, or town artisans such as Vakula, may have stood somewhere over 12%, although most likely not above 25%. (This is assuming Vakula is not a serf. By 1880 literacy rates among male peasants reached 15% or more, but during Vakula’s time, numbers were in the 1-12% for serfs.) See Boris N. Mironov, “The Development of Literacy in Russia and the USSR from the Tenth to the Twentieth Centuries,” *History of Education Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (Summer, 1991): 229-252.



fact, because of their social statuses and Ukrainian origin.<sup>184</sup>

Gogol-the-author's audience wants to hear about the Selifans and Panochkas of the world. Yet the narrator of *Dead Souls* avers that his readers do not. The narrator has not had, or at least portrays himself as not having had, the same publication experiences as Gogol himself. Returning to Currie's concept of self-distance in first person narration, Gogol increases this self-distance by deliberately giving his narrator experiences that differ from his own.

None of this is to say that the narrator has no personality, or one that is entirely divorced from Gogol's own. Indeed, the narrator of *Dead Souls* has a personality just as distinctive as those of the novel's characters. Chichikov, the protagonist, in fact, has one of the least exaggerated personalities of *Dead Souls*. This is underlined in Chapter I. The narrator does not use his name until the end of page 10 of the collected works, and only refers to him by his name once in the next two pages, instead using the third person masculine pronoun throughout the description of Chichikov's movements that first day. The narrator continues to emphasize Chichikov's lack of distinction through his descriptions of the protagonist as neither fat nor thin, and through Chichikov's own efforts to maintain an air of generic affability. He speaks little of himself and attempts to blend into any social situation.

The narrator, on the other hand, is a man of strong opinions, with no hesitancy in sharing them. This is particularly noticeable at two points where time seems to slow or disappear in the narrative. These moments occur at the beginning and end of the narrative. The beginning, in which the narrator introduces his story and his hero, involves lengthy digressions on the state of rural inns, the narrator's opinions of scarves, and finally, his beliefs about the various

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<sup>184</sup> See Roman Koropecj and Robert Romanchuk, "Ukraine in Blackface," for an exploration of class and ethnic representation in the *Dikanka Tales*.

personalities and life courses of fat and thin men, as well as not-fat-nor-thin men. These insights take place over the course of the first fifteen pages of the novel (as printed in the *PSS*). In these first fifteen pages, the narrative proceeds at an almost glacial pace. It takes two and a half pages for Chichikov to eat dinner<sup>185</sup> and look about the town, although this takes place over the course of a single afternoon and involves little-to-no conversation or major interactions. Time is slow here, far slower than it will be when Chichikov travels around the countryside in the following chapters. This temporal space gives the narrator the chance to expound on his own opinions, to develop his own voice before Chichikov's exploits take center stage.

The narrator has this opportunity to express himself once again at the end of the novel. Chichikov has been chased from the town, is fleeing in search of his next potential con, and time stretches like the road in front of him. As the action of the work pauses, the narrator's voice comes through more strongly than ever before. In fact, in this moment the narrator turns to the audience and addresses them directly, asking if they see anything of themselves in Chichikov, if they could, themselves, be a Chichikov.<sup>186</sup>

In this direct address to the audience, the narrator reaches outside the pages of the novel, connecting himself to the world of the reader, rather than that of the novel's characters. While in much of the novel, the narrator writes as though he is observing the action as it takes place, here he steps outside of the action and crosses the boundaries to another world. Yet the narrator has not united with Gogol here, and there is no indication that when stepping outside of the narrative, the narrator has become Gogol.

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<sup>185</sup> "*Obed*," dinner here in the same sense it was traditionally used in the United States (and is still used in the South), as a main meal in the afternoon, followed in the evening by a much lighter supper.

<sup>186</sup> *PSS*, vol. 6, 245.

Just as in “Cold Ravine,” the distance between author and narrator, and the accompanying discordance it introduces for the reader, creates a flux state. The author penetrates through to the fabric of the narrative, and his presences is noticeable precisely because of the ways in which he differs from the narrator. The first-person narration in *Dead Souls* highlights this difference between the two, as it does in Shevchenko’s narrative poem, “Dream.”

Like the digressions in *Dead Souls*, “Dream” is narrated using the first person. However, unlike *Dead Souls*, the protagonist and narrator are one in “Dream.” And, unlike “Cold Ravine,” “Dream” has a narrative arc, and is not a study of a single place and an episode of history. Thus, the narrator is not simply an observer, or a storyteller, but is also an active participant in the narrative.

After an introductory stanza, which consists of the narrator commenting on the human condition, particularly that of peasant laborers, “Dream’s” narrator turns to recounting a dream he had one drunken night. In that dream, he embarked on a magical journey, flying high above Ukraine and then St. Petersburg. At first, he marvels at the beauty of the countryside – a paradise on earth – but, as he looks closer, he finds that the land is dotted with people starving and suffering. The horrors below him make the narrator turn away and bury those things he has seen in hopes of searching far and wide for an unspoiled paradise.<sup>187</sup> That unsuccessful journey takes him to St. Petersburg, in much the same way that Shevchenko’s own life brought him to the Imperial capital.

Like his protagonist, Shevchenko, too, was a stranger in the strange land of the capital. Yet his own arrival in St. Petersburg eventually led to being freed from serfdom, his work in Karl Briullov’s studio, his membership in the Academy of Arts, and his career as a painter. For

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<sup>187</sup> “*A bez tebe ia de-nebud'/Certse zakhovaiu/Ta tym chasom poshukaiu/Na krai svita raiu.*” ZT, vol. 1, 269.

the narrator, however, his arrival in St. Petersburg takes him far beyond those places that Shevchenko himself frequented and brings him into close contact with the emperor himself.

In this way, the narrator penetrates the layers of class and privilege that usually separate out a man from Ukraine, without any title or land, and the Tsar of all the Russias. He, who has spent so much of the poem up until this point speaking of himself as an average man, one without great claim to fame, who feels as though he must hide suffering away in his heart rather than speak about it or change it, suddenly is face-to-face with the locus of power in the Empire. And in that discordant moment, the greater problems faced by Ukraine and the downtrodden of the Empire penetrate the narrative to confront the emperor in the person of the narrator. While the narrator does not directly address Nicholas, his narration of Nicholas's actions is an address all in itself.

The narrator creates an inflection point through his highly emotive narration – his descriptions of the Emperor and Empress pull no punches as they insult the appearance and character of both. And at this inflection point, a moment of great ritual pomp, as the emperor inspects his troops, the discordance offered by the narrator is a type of flux, where sarcasm and satire penetrate the fabric of the narrative to strike at its underlying reality.

Dream is subtitled “A Comedy” and includes an epigraph from John, chapter 14, verse 17: “Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.”<sup>188</sup> The contrast between the subtitle, and immediately following epigraph brings one in mind of the burlesque, a common mode for Ukrainian literature in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in which “low” topics are written about using “high” language and forms.<sup>189</sup> Here, a comedy

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<sup>188</sup> *KJV*, John 14:17. “*Dukh*” *istiny, ego zhe mir*” *ne mozheth*” *priяти, iako ne vidin*” *ego, nizhe znaet*” *ego*” *ZT*, vol. 1, 265.

<sup>189</sup> See Marko Pavlyshyn, “Ukrainian Prose from the 1800s to the 1860s: In Quest of a European Modernity,”

receives an epigraph from the Bible, and a story about a drunken dream has the narrator contemplating paradise.

Burlesque is often a form of satire, which, as I have mentioned, is one way of interpreting “Dream.” Yet it is not the only way. Dream also closely resembles the magical journeys present in works such as Goethe’s *Faust II* and Gogol’s “Christmas Eve.” Indeed, except for the presence of the devil in both of these works (and in their descendants, e.g., Bulgakov’s *Master and Margarita*), “Dream” proceeds in much the same manner as these works. In *Faust II*, published twelve years before Shevchenko wrote “Dream,” the protagonist begins by falling asleep, an Emperor is featured in a mocking manner, and a magical journey flying over Europe brings the protagonist to strange and new locales. In “Christmas Eve,” the protagonist, Vakula, blackmails a devil into taking him on a flight across the sky between Ukraine and St. Petersburg, so that Vakula can beg Catherine the Great’s slippers from her, as his beloved has requested them. Thus he, like “Dream’s” protagonist, flies through the sky, meets an Empress, and marvels at the sights of the capital.

“Dream” closely resembles the Gogolian or Faustian magical journey. Yet it differs in one key respect. In those works, as in others that draw on their structure, the journey undertaken by the protagonist is enabled by a demon. While in works such as “Christmas Eve,” the protagonist is, in fact, in control of the devil, the journey is still the work of evil forces. (In *Faust II*, the devil and Faust are manipulating one another.) Yet, at the same time, these evil forces have been bent to the will of the protagonist, and thus have outcomes which are advantageous to that protagonist. In contrast, the protagonist of “Dream” has no such demonic guide, nor is he in

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*Ukraine and Europe: Cultural Encounters and Negotiations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017): 211-226 for more on Ukrainian literature in the first half of the 19th century.

control of his journey in the same way that someone such as Vakula is (although, like Faust, he seems to have some control by way of his desires).

In contrast to “Christmas Eve,” “Dream” does not produce a positive result for its protagonist. Unlike Vakula, whose encounter with the Empress leads to marriage to the one he loves, “Dream’s” protagonist’s encounter with Nicholas I is a traumatic one, which ends when Nicholas I notices the protagonist, and he wakes abruptly from his dream. “Dream” thus plays with the reader’s expectations. The protagonist’s journey is not demonic, but rather enlightening, and the emperor is not a figure of salvation, but rather of damnation. “Dream” is a story turned inside out, a story that reverses the normal course and system of events, sending them into flux. There is a fundamental disconnect between what the reader expects and what they read.

“Dream’s” very structure underlines the importance of flux and disconnections in the work.

*Dead Souls’* structure, too, emphasizes the importance of flux. As when discussing “Dream,” one must begin a conversation about *Dead Souls’* genre and structure with satire. Indeed, some English translations, such as that by D. J. Hogarth, include “A Satirical Novel” after the title of the work. Yet Nabokov, among others, argues that Gogol is rather a literary stylist and a false comedian than a satirist, his narratives irrational and elaborate, and his characters more important than his plots.<sup>190</sup> Satire inherently is aimed *at* someone or something; it is intended to call attention to some problem in the author’s own world. If satire is a punch at some aspect of society, at whom does *Dead Souls* aim? Perhaps it is a critique of Russian culture generally, or perhaps at the worst aspects of that culture. Perhaps it is, as Nabokov claims, a

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<sup>190</sup> See Vladimir Nabokov, *Nikolai Gogol* (New York: New Directions, 1944) for more on Nabokov’s interpretation of Gogol’s aesthetics. See Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 41 for more on the definition of *poshlost’*.

depiction of *poshlost'* – the banality of life coupled with the trivial, vulgar, and the tasteless.<sup>191</sup>

And, indeed, perhaps it is more.

Like “Dream,” *Dead Souls* also includes a descriptive subtitle. It is a “poem” (“*poema*”). In his unpublished “Literature Textbook for Russian Children,” Gogol describes what he calls the “minor type of epic.” These works, which Gogol says are exclusive to the modern period, an everyman has encounters of importance that are conducive to “the observation of the human soul.”<sup>192</sup> *Dead Souls* is this sort of work, one which lies between the epic and the novel, with the poem’s freedom and the novel’s prose. As translators Pevear and Volokonsky write, the theme of Russia, in particular, “does not derive from situation or character, but is added lyrically by the author, forming part of the poetical ambience of the book, as do the many epic or mock epic similes, the asides, the lyrical flights and apostrophes.”<sup>193</sup>

*Dead Souls* sits in-between the poem and the novel, between the satire and the serious, between the comedy and the epic. It occupies the strange space of generic confusion, when all possibilities expand, and the author is able to stitch together lyric digressions and the most mundane of lunchtime menus. *Dead Souls* vacillates between genres, ever in flux, each new passage bringing with it a new place that fits into the literary canon. Like “Dream,” it is in flux, defying readers’ expectations at the same time fulfilling them. Both *Dead Souls* and “Cold Ravine” should also be seen as experiments in history making. “Cold Ravine,” with its explicit critique of the dominate imperial narrative about the Haidamaks, is rather explicitly such an experiment. As I discussed in Chapter II, Shevchenko’s role as a historical poet, as both a creator

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<sup>191</sup> Nabokov, 70.

<sup>192</sup> *PSS*, vol. 8, 479.

<sup>193</sup> Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*, trans. by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Classics, 1997), 11.

and rewriter of history, is an important one. In “Cold Ravine,” he not only interprets the historical memory of his country and culture, as he does in *Haidamaky*, but moreover, he reinterprets reactions to that historical memory.

In his analysis of 19<sup>th</sup> century historiography, Hayden White writes that a historical work is “a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of explaining what they were by representing them.”<sup>194</sup> While “Cold Ravine” is not a prose piece, and does not claim to be a piece of historical scholarship, it is indeed a literary work that aims to model “past structures” in order to explain them. For “Cold Ravine” these structures are sometimes literal – the running motif of the overgrown path that the author recalls to the reader is a physical sign of times gone by, conjured up for the present through the poet’s pen.

“Cold Ravine’s” explanations are of the didactic sort, and employ metonymy in order to convey the whole of Ukraine’s oppression through the explanation of a single part. The poem is a project in narrative creation and correction. Through this didactic explanation, “Cold Ravine” reveals the flux inherent in history writing. This is a two-fold sort of flux. The first is a flux of the colloquial sort. In “Cold Ravine’s” corrective to the dominant narrative, the instability in how one understands history becomes obvious. He critiques Russian historians’ misunderstanding of who the Haidamaks were and attempts to show that they are committing a logical fallacy: “For holy truth and freedom/A robber does not rise/Nor unfasten the chained/People shackled/shadowed...”<sup>195</sup> Shevchenko sees these readers as having been convinced by the

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<sup>194</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), 3.

<sup>195</sup> “*Za sviatuiu pravdu-voliu/Rozboinyk ne stane,/Ne rozkue zakovanyi,/U vashi kaidany/Narod temnyi...*” ZT, vol. 1, 356. Here Shevchenko is quoting from Skalkovskii.



dominant narrative that portrays the Haidamaks as robbers, and sees it as his own duty to correct that belief. His readers' understanding of history is in flux, malleable, and "Cold Ravine" is a direct intervention into this flux.

"Cold Ravine" also suggests that the events of the past penetrate through the fabric of time and speak to the present. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, "Cold Ravine" is a reckoning with time's transformative power, and with the ways in which historical events' passage through time changes them. Moreover, it is an examination of how their passage through the filters of the imagination allows a single historical story to be seen in many different ways, viewed from many different angles. While the poet clearly wants to present what he views as the truth, in doing so, he highlights how malleable that "truth" really is.

*Dead Souls*, too, highlights how perspective determines the individual character of the historical narrative. Chichikov's own personal history, that series of events that define his particular psychological makeup and determine the course of his life, is not revealed to the reader until the end of the novel. Thus, he exists as something of a *tabula rasa*, on whom the narrator, the characters, and reader can project all sorts of characteristics. His lack of history opens possibilities that even the multiple interpretations of history do not allow.

Yet even during those moments in which personal histories are given, their tenuous nature is emphasized. The landowners provide Chichikov with lists of the dead serfs they have sold, documenting those serfs' names. Some of the landowners provide details about each serf – profession, personality, nickname – and others, like Pliushkin, provide only the serf's initials. Thus, some of these dead men are given histories, stories that follow them, and some are not. Olga Volkova writes that "the lists communicate misgivings about history-making. The connective narrative of proverbs and calligraphy refuses to hold together the serfs' names and the

stories they engender.”<sup>196</sup>

These serf personal histories are unstable, mediated through the care of the landowner who writes them down and through Chichikov’s own observations. The stories are related by those who knew them, to an observer who now “owns” their stories and is in ultimate control of whether or not those stories are shared. These stories are then translated to the reader through the narrator’s observations, and thus at yet a greater remove from their point of origin in the author’s imagination. Yet even though there are several interlocutors between the souls themselves and the reader, there is an intimacy to how these stories are conveyed. Gogol lays bare the ways in which each landowner determines how much of their serfs’ lives are shared with Chichikov, and in doing so, reveals the very personal nature of history-making.

Volkova notes that in *Dead Souls*, “Gogol further rethinks the Enlightenment notion of distance as the basis for historical analysis.”<sup>197</sup> As Shevchenko does in “Cold Ravine,” Gogol investigates the very personal nature of the stories he tells and attempts to reveal to the reader their instability. Just as the personal histories of the novel are unstable and ever-changing, so too is the very structure of the novel. There is a “patchy and puzzling combination of the past and the present that shapes time in the novel into something subjective, protean and incongruous. Such shaping helps account for *Dead Souls*’ familiar chronic forgetfulness and misunderstanding of temporal processes, features that have long bewildered its readers.”<sup>198</sup> Moreover, this instability allows history itself to be written and rewritten in the narrative.

In Chapter X’s “Tale of Captain Kopeikin,” a personal history-cum-folk-legend recounts

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<sup>196</sup> Olga Volkova, “On Scott’s Russian Shadow: Historicity in ‘The Bride of Lammermoor’ and ‘Dead Souls,’” *Studies in Romanticism* 53 no. 2 (2014): 150.

<sup>197</sup> Volkova, 155.

<sup>198</sup> Volkova, 156.

both the troubled years directly after the Napoleonic war and the challenges facing the contemporary everyman who hopes to benefit from government assistance. Gogol brings the familiar story of a disabled 1812 veteran into focus for the reader by connecting it to Chichkov, who the Postmaster believes could be Kopeikin, and by highlighting the thoroughly relatable aspects of Kopeikin's story. "Captain Kopeikin" is both folktale and personal history, chronicle-like in its aesthetic, yet historic in its scope. It straddles generic boundaries, just as *Dead Souls* as a whole does. Moreover, "Captain Kopeikin" underlines the very personal nature of historical recollection – after the Postmaster tells the story, he and his listeners realize there is no possible way Chichkov could be Captain Kopeikin, and the connection the Postmaster had hoped to make between the two is impossible. The Postmaster is mistaken, and the recollection of the Tale is one based on his personal interest in the story, an interest that overrides his ability to judge its relevance.

Like much of *Dead Souls*, the "Tale of Captain Kopeikin" is a story in flux, a personal history that reaches beyond itself to encompass much wider themes, yet is filtered through the lens of its interlocutor. Both Gogol and Shevchenko use these middle-period works to emphasize the instability of historical narrative, and to underline how it is subject to the whims of the historian. History, in *Dead Souls* and "Cold Ravine," is not so much *in flux* as it is fundamentally a flux state.

*Dead Souls*, "Dream," and "Cold Ravine" all feature time and narrative in flux. In *Dead Souls*, rapid shifts between *chronos* and *kairos* create a fluctuating time-scape, one in which transitions between past and present, between real and fairy-tale, are a prominent feature. In "Dream," time doubles back on itself, and the narrative stretches each moment to the limit. Further, the narrator has control of a timeless space which he uses for his digressions, moments

that take him away from the action of the narrative, despite the poem being written in the first person. “Cold Ravine” emphasizes how time is no bar to the influence of the poem’s subjects. In “Cold Ravine,” time is malleable, inherently flexible.

So too is the identity of “Cold Ravine’s” narrator. He vacillates between seeming to be Shevchenko himself, and, plausibly, a creation of Shevchenko’s poetic world. This allows Shevchenko to address *Haidamaky*’s critics indirectly, while still speaking primarily to his fellow countrymen. It sets “Cold Ravine” in a liminal space, a fluctuating world where it is not quite companion to *Haidamaky* and not quite response to it.

“Dream,” with its concrete narrative arc and direct social critique, presents a different sort of narratorial flux. In “Dream,” the narrator penetrates the layers of propriety and class that blanket Russian Imperial society and arrives at its core. He is able to witness the emperor himself, and through the inherent distance of culture and social status, is able to see the emperor more clearly than the nobles around him. This penetration is itself a form of flux.

*Dead Souls*’ digressions are similarly narrated in the first person, although their narrator is not identical to its protagonist. However, like “Cold Ravine,” a major source of flux in the narrative comes from the discord between Gogol himself and his narrator. He creates distance between himself and his narrator, while at the same time allowing his narrator to connect with readers in moments that break the fourth wall of the narrative. The push and pull of narratorial identity suggest constant transition, states of being that shift from one passage to the next.

Finally, all three works play with genre and generic conventions to create a sense of continual transition. “Dream” and *Dead Souls* engage with satire and the boundary between novel and poem. “Cold Ravine” and *Dead Souls* interrogate the process of writing history, and both emphasize how history is a story written from a particular perspective, rather than an

immutable list of facts and figures. All three works occupy places at the borders of generic convention, and in doing so, bring the reader on a journey from one genre to the next.

In these middle-period works, Gogol and Shevchenko focus on destabilizing conventions, expectations, and narratives. These works sit in the mystical margins of convention, works which exist in that place between fixed states which allows for the expansion of possibilities. And in this space, both authors emphasize flux states, and highlight how vacillation between various perspectives is key to the liminal moment.

## Chapter IV

### Searching Anew: *Selected Passages*, “The Artist,” and the Poetry of Disenchantment

In 1844, just a year into his middle period, Shevchenko wrote a poem to Gogol. An admirer of the older writer, Shevchenko compares the two of them in “To Gogol.”<sup>199</sup> The poem is rather dark – in it he writes that while Gogol laughs, he himself cries, and out of those tears comes only hemlock, only poison. He goes on to describe how his tears and Gogol’s comedy have not roused the Ukrainian people, but yet are still worthwhile. The greatest gift to Russia would be to keep silent, and thus he and Gogol should continue to write.

Shevchenko sees Gogol as being in a similar position to himself. In “To Gogol” (“*Hoholiu*,” 1844), he draws explicit parallels between their works, particularly between *Haidamaky* and *Taras Bulba*. In the poem, he also alludes to Gogol’s magnum opus, *Dead Souls*. In *Dead Souls*, Gogol describes his own writing as his attempt to look at the whole of life with laughter visible to the world and invisible, unknowable tears.<sup>200</sup> In “To Gogol,” Shevchenko depicts the two of them as at a moment of pause, in which their work seems to produce no visible effect, yet is being read, and is worthwhile.

Just three years later, Gogol published *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*. A semi-nonfictional collection of essays and letters, in *Selected Passages* Gogol writes on everything from Russian literature to his own burial. Donald Fanger calls *Selected Passages* Gogol’s “declaration of independence.”<sup>201</sup> Gogol’s laughter had not produced the effect he

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<sup>199</sup> See his letter to V. M. Repnina on 7 March 1850. *ZT*, vol. 6, 53-54.

<sup>200</sup> *PSS*, vol. 6, 134.

<sup>201</sup> Donald Fanger, *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979), 216.

anticipated, and *Selected Passages* was a corrective. Gogol's final major published work, it signaled his unwillingness to be made into something he himself did not create and his desire to stand apart from, and above, the social and political debates of his time. That is not to say that *Selected Passages*, or Gogol himself, was apolitical – far from it. Yet in this work, Gogol strove to be wholly his own.

Moreover, as Fanger argues, *Selected Passages* was an attempt at participating in a new Russian literature, one that had moved beyond Pushkin and Gogol himself. It came as an answer to Gogol's abiding sense that things were not as they should be, that something in Russia was somehow off, awry, askew.<sup>202</sup> For Gogol, *Selected Passages* was both a corrective and a turn in a new direction, towards something he did not yet understand, but was compelled to explore.

Likewise, Shevchenko's 1856 novella "The Artist" was an experiment in something new. From 1851 through the end of 1856, Shevchenko, the poet, produced no new poetry. Instead, he turned to a new form and language to express himself, writing several novellas in Russian. "The Artist," while not a corrective in the same sense that *Selected Passages* is, represents an attempt at participating in a new form. It is, as *Selected Passages* is, an answer to a period of creativity that was fundamentally different than those that came before it.

In its subject matter, "The Artist" is story of the perils that can befall a young artist, a tale of the artist's problems. In this, too, it is similar to *Selected Passages*, which is in part a meditation on the problems and failings of the artist-writer. "The Artist" (along with Shevchenko's other Russian-language novellas), shares its lack of success with *Selected Passages*. When Gogol's strange final work was published, it was met with confusion, incredulity, and ultimately, derision. Critics did not know what to make of it, or, like Vissarion

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<sup>202</sup> Fanger, 218; 214.

Belinsky, thought it an utter failure.

“The Artist” on the other hand, was not published during Shevchenko’s lifetime. In fact, its first publication was in 1887, twenty-six years after Shevchenko’s death.<sup>203</sup> Yet Shevchenko intended his novellas to be published. For example, he wrote to Andrei Aleksandrovich Kraevskii, the publisher of *Notes of the Fatherland* (*Otechestvennye zapiski*), at the end of 1854 in an attempt to get his novella “The Princess” (“*Kniaginia*,” 1853) published.<sup>204</sup> These novellas were not solely for Shevchenko’s friends, but rather intended for public consumption. Yet they were not picked up by a journal or publisher, and over the course of 1856 it becomes clear from Shevchenko’s letters that he was becoming increasingly disillusioned with “The Convict” (“*Varnak*,” 1853) and (perhaps) “The Princess.”

“The Artist” was written between January and October of 1856, at the same time Shevchenko was finding fault with “The Convict.”<sup>205</sup> While in April Shevchenko sent “The Convict” to his close friend Bronisław Zaleski,<sup>206</sup> in June he wrote to Zaleski to ask that Zaleski send back the manuscript for a full rewrite, and by November he told Zaleski that another friend of theirs should get rid of his copy of “The Convict” entirely. Shevchenko was aware of his prose’s poor reception yet continued to write both “The Artist” and “A Stroll with Pleasure and Not Without a Moral” (“*Progulka s udovol'stviiem i ne bez morali*,” 1855-1858) and to ask friends for help placing his prose in various journals.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> *ZT*, vol. 4, 518.

<sup>204</sup> *ZT*, vol. 6, 86.

<sup>205</sup> *ZT*, vol. 4, 517.

<sup>206</sup> Zaleski, a Polish-Belarusian activist, was in exile in Orenburg and Kazakhstan at the same time as Shevchenko. He was one of Shevchenko’s most frequent correspondents during and immediately after Shevchenko’s exile.

<sup>207</sup> See, for example, his letter to Mykhailo Matviiiovych Lazarevs'kyi and Semen Stepanovych Hulak-Artemovs'kyi in November of 1856, *ZT*, vol. 6, 112-113.



Shevchenko's own mixed attitude towards his prose is mirrored in the critical reactions to it. Relatively soon after its publication, Ivan Franko saw "The Artist" as a source for biographical detail, rather than a work of artistic merit.<sup>208</sup> Grabowicz included Shevchenko's novellas when describing his authorial mode apart from the poetic one, one which is defined by "a sense of intellectual distance..., a sense of perspective on the role of Ukraine vis-à-vis the Russian Empire, and on the role and efficacy of the artist."<sup>209</sup> More recently, Oleksandr Boron' has looked closely at several of the novellas with an eye to poetics and intertexts.<sup>210</sup>

None of these critical works, however, have fit Shevchenko's Russian language novellas into an overarching understanding of his poetics, just as few critics have done so with *Selected Passages* (Fanger, Robert A. Maguire and a few others excepted). This is the intervention I intend to make in this chapter. I argue that Shevchenko's Russian language novels and Gogol's *Selected Passages* are not radical departures from previous works, but rather new ventures into a different area of the poetics of transition: that of disenchantment.

Robert Huddleston writes that "poetry is always associated, to a certain extent, with enchantment – not necessarily magic, but a heightened state of being that moves above (or below) prosaic reality."<sup>211</sup> This might suggest that there can be no poetry of disenchantment, that disenchantment is inherently antithetical to the poetic (and creative) process. Yet Jeffrey Green argues that "in the philosophical usage, disenchantment is above all an activity. It is a self-

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<sup>208</sup> See, for example, his use of "The Artist" in his "Foreword to 'Perebendia'"

<sup>209</sup> George Grabowicz, "Consideration of the Deep Structures in Shevchenko's Works," in Luckyj, *Shevchenko and the Critics*, 487.

<sup>210</sup> See, for example, Oleksandr Boron', "Poetyka povisti Tarasa Shevchenka 'Muzykant,'" *Slovo i chas* 3 (2019): 30-39, or "Povist' Tarasa Shevchenka 'Varnak' i roman Val'tera Skotta 'Rob Roi': spil'ne i vidminne," *Shevchenkoznnavchi studii* 16 (2013): 167-170.

<sup>211</sup> Robert Huddleston, "The Poetics of Disenchantment: Buchanan and Meier" Center for Literary Publishing, Colorado State University. <https://coloradoreview.colostate.edu/reviews/the-poetics-of-disenchantment/>

reflective meditation. It asserts that something of value is missing and then, almost paradoxically finds some form of compensatory value in the very fact of this absence.”<sup>212</sup> In this way, disenchantment can indeed be a characteristic of poetry. A poetics of disenchantment is a poetics that addresses the loss of something valuable, and indeed, centers itself in that loss.

One can understand this loss as a transposition of enthusiasm, a decay or dissolution of philosophical or grand impulse into a narrower, more focused sphere. E. P. Thompson, whose essay on disenchantment among the British Romantics of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries forms the theoretical backbone of this chapter, writes that political disenchantment occurs when “the impulse is transmuted in some way – from abstract political right into something more local, but also more humanly engaged.” The poetry of disenchantment springs from “a tension between boundless aspiration – for liberty, reason, *égalité*, perfectibility – and a peculiarly harsh and unregenerate reality.”<sup>213</sup>

Thompson places disenchantment, which has, as he sees it, “nothing in [it] inimical to art,” in opposition to apostasy. Apostasy is an acceptance of the world’s harsh reality without all those virtues that Thompson ascribes to aspiration, but which one might otherwise call hope. Thompson writes that “apostasy is a moral failure, and an imaginative failure. In men of letters it often goes with a peculiar disposition towards self-bowdlerization,” and “it is an imaginative failure because it involves forgetting – or manipulating improperly – the authenticity of experience: a mutilation of the writer’s own previous existential being.”<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Jeffrey E. Green, “Two Meanings of Disenchantment: Sociological Conditions vs. Philosophical Act - Reassessing Max Weber’s Thesis of the Disenchantment of the World,” *Philosophy and Theology* 17 no. 1/2, (2005), 53

<sup>213</sup> E. P. Thompson, “Disenchantment or Default? A Lay Sermon,” in *Power and Consciousness*, ed. by Conor Cruise O’Brien and William Dean Vanech (New York: New York University Press, 1969), 152.

<sup>214</sup> Thompson, 152-3

Some prior criticism has placed *Selected Passages* squarely in the category of apostasy. This is particularly notable in the line of criticism initiated by Vissarion Belinsky's 1847 public letter to Gogol, in which Belinsky charges Gogol with having looked on Russian only from afar, and doing so, having betrayed earlier revolutionary or liberal ideals for the comfort and calm of the church and of paternalistic society.<sup>215</sup> Even some of those critics who do not condemn *Selected Passages* see it as evidence of a fundamental shift in Gogol's work and personhood, in which *Selected Passages* is evidence of the author finding a "point of rest," where traditional values are returned to, and cultural norms are enshrined – in other words, a point of apostasy.

In contrast, Robert Maguire finds in *Selected Passages* a search for what he calls a "language of self." He sees in it an attempt to convey a spiritual meaning, and an almost platonic (or rather, Neo-platonic) search for one's proper place appointed by God – in Gogol's case, the proper place of the writer.<sup>216</sup> Thus, *Selected Passages* represents both a struggle with place, which Maguire argues is a key concept for Gogol, and with word, another central aspect of Gogol's writing. For Maguire, *Selected Passages* is not a break with earlier themes, but rather a new mode for understanding those themes, a contemplative and more introspective one.

I agree with Maguire that *Selected Passages* does not represent a discontinuity in Gogol's earlier writings, or at least not a total break. *Selected Passages* shares the themes Maguire identifies as key to Gogol's fiction and, moreover, it is an extension of the all-important poetics of liminality that is found throughout Gogol's writing. It is not a *total* break because it shares this poetics of transition in its use of disenchantment. That is to say, this text is an example of the

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<sup>215</sup> A. K. Kotova and M. Ia. Poliakova, eds., *N. V. Gogol' v russkoi kritike* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1958), 243-252.

<sup>216</sup> Robert A. Maguire, *Exploring Gogol*, 85, 295

conflict between aspiration and reality. Simply put, that aspiration is to a conservative or traditionalist world, and the reality that is so jarring is that of a world which cannot hold those values as important in the way that Gogol himself does. Thus, I extend Maguire's argument that *Selected Passages* demonstrates Gogol's search for a way to express his political and social views, and in particular, a way to express those views while the idealistic and imaginative nature of those views was directly challenged by the reality of his own limitations as a writer, and the limitations of his readership.

I further argue that the period of disenchantment, which occupied the last decade of Gogol's life, and is marked by his non-fiction writings in *Selected Passages*, *Meditations on the Divine Liturgy* (*Razmyshleniia o Bozhestvennoi Liturgii*, 1845-1852), and *An Author's Confession* (*Avtorskaia ispoved'*, 1847), shares a fundamental similarity with the period in which Shevchenko produced "The Artist." I argue that in "The Artist," Shevchenko, too, ventured into new genres and new forms of literature as a result of finding himself in the "closing of that moment of perceived possibility, the point at which hope falters and reassessments must be made."<sup>217</sup>

I begin with a description of the two works, as neither is frequently read by the casual (or even the academic) reader of either author. I then move towards a quick review of enchantment in both authors' earlier works, in order to illuminate the difference between enchantment and disenchantment for both Gogol and Shevchenko. I then write of both authors' disenchantments with their readership, a form of disenchantment that underlies both works and these periods as a whole. I write next of disenchantment in genre, then plot and narratorial voice, and finally as a

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<sup>217</sup> James Epstein, "Among the Romantics: E. P. Thompson and the Poetics of Disenchantment," *Journal of British Studies* 56, no. 2 (2017): 328

function of formal aspects of both works. I conclude this chapter by showing how taken in totality, this disenchantment is the most complete form of the poetics of transition found in both Gogol's and Shevchenko's writings.

"The Artist" depicts a fictionalized beginning of Shevchenko's career as an artist, and his freedom from serfdom. Its first part is narrated by Ivan Soshenko, a Ukrainian artist and student of Karl Briullov.<sup>218</sup> Soshenko comes upon a young man in the Summer Garden. The young man, named N. N. in the novel, is in this first part a version of Shevchenko himself, and his meeting with Soshenko is drawn from Shevchenko's own meeting and acquaintance with him.

Soshenko quickly becomes close friends with N. N. and discovers that he is a serf, unable to study art. Soshenko introduces the issue to Aleksei Venetsianov, a painter with an inclination towards philanthropy, who begins to look into N. N.'s circumstances. N. N. is apprenticed to Shiraev, a painter-decorator. When Soshenko goes to meet Shiraev, he finds that the decorator is uninterested in letting N. N. study art. The meeting prompts a moment in which Soshenko contemplates how some people who have worked their way up from poverty seem determined to keep others down.

People who are well off yet uneducated, who have lived their meagre youth in filth and trial, and somehow crawled out into the light of God, do not believe in any theory. For them there exists no other path to well-being than that one they themselves traveled. And often these crude beliefs are mixed with an even cruder feeling: I, they say, was not patted on the head, why should I comfort others?<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Karl Pavlovich Briullov (Charles Bruleau, 1799-1852), a prominent figure in the novel, was one of the most famous Russian painters of the first half of the 19th century. His work, *The Last Day of Pompeii*, established him as the first Russian artist to gain international acclaim. It caused a sensation abroad and in Russia, and its success also meant Briullov was appointed a professor at the Imperial Academy of Arts. While at the academy, Briullov used his classical training and romantic inclinations to produce successful portraits of prominent members of Russian society and was one of the key artists during the transition from Neoclassicism to Romanticism.

<sup>219</sup> "Liudi material'nye i nerazvitnye, prozhivshie svoiu skudnuiu iunost' v griazi i ispytaniakh i koe-kak vpolzshie

After this interlude Soshenko convinces the reticent Shiraev to allow N. N. a little freedom. Soshenko begins teaching N. N. and introduces him to Bruillov. Bruillov and Venetsianov then start trying to convince N. N.'s master to free him. They are told it will take 2,500 rubles, as N. N. is a skilled craftsman.

Over the next months, Soshenko and N. N. continue to hone N. N.'s skills, and Bruillov begins to paint a portrait of Vasily Zhukovsky.<sup>220</sup> As the portrait nears completion, N. N. becomes deathly ill, and Soshenko sends him to the hospital. As N. N. begins to recover but is still hospitalized, Bruillov invites Soshenko over to his house, and gives him a leave of manumission signed by Graf Vielgorsky,<sup>221</sup> and Zhukovsky, who have obtained the money to free N. N. through the sale of Bruillov's Zhukovsky portrait. (This is, indeed, the way in which Shevchenko's freedom was bought.) In the novella, it marks the end of the first part, as Soshenko hands N. N. over to Bruillov as a pupil and himself leaves St. Petersburg for a new teaching position.

From this point on, the novella is primarily composed of N. N.'s letters to Soshenko, with occasional interjections from the narrator, and a few letters from another artist, Mikhailov.<sup>222</sup> It chronicles N. N.'s introduction to the artistic elite of St. Petersburg, particularly his friendship

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*na svet Bozhii, ne veruiut ni v kakuiu teoriiu. Dlia nikh ne sushchestvuet drugikh putei k blagosostoianiu, krome tekhn, kotorye oni sami proshli. A chaste k etim grubym ubezhdeniiam primeshivaetsia eshche grubeishee chuvstvo: menia, deskat' ne gladili po golovke, za chto ia budu gladit'”* ZT, vol. 4, 128.

<sup>220</sup> Vasilii Andreevich Zhukovskii (1783-1852) was the preeminent Russian poet of the 1810s, and one of the most influential Russian poets to write before Pushkin. He was one of the principal writers who introduced Romanticism to Russian and is also remembered for his mentorship and defense of younger poets.

<sup>221</sup> Mikhail Iur'evich Viel'gorskii/Michał Wielhorski (1788-1856), Graf (Count) of Polish origin. A patron of the arts, particularly music, and a friend of Beethoven. Host of a very popular salon which was frequented by writers such as Gogol and Lermontov, musicians like Liszt and Berlioz, and artists such as Bruillov.

<sup>222</sup> Grigorii Karpovich Mikhailov (1814-1867) was a Russian historical painter. More successful than his namesake in the novel, Mikhailov became an artist 1<sup>st</sup> class after winning a major gold medal in the Academy competitions.

with another artist, Vasil' Ivanovych Shternberg (Sternberg).<sup>223</sup> N. N. and Sternberg go to parties, to the theatre, and N. N. becomes more used to freedom. They share an apartment until Sternberg is invited to travel to Orenberg and paint there.

After Sternberg leaves, N. N. shares his apartment with Mikhailov, and sometimes with Mikhailov's unruly friend Aleksandr (Sasha) Oblonsky,<sup>224</sup> a midshipman in the Russian navy. At the same time, N. N. meets his neighbor's niece, Pasha. Pasha plays an increasingly prominent role in N. N.'s life – he teaches her to read, and she supports him through his first academy examinations, in which he wins a minor gold medal.<sup>225</sup> As N. N. becomes more interested in Pasha, he begins a study of her, and decides to paint her as the Vestal Virgin. This marks where the novella begins to substantially diverge from Shevchenko's own life.

There is a short interlude where Soshenko worries over Pasha's influence, and promises to visit N. N. in St. Petersburg, so that N. N. will remove Mikhailov and Oblonsky from his apartment, as Soshenko thinks they are a bad influence on N. N. When Soshenko does not arrive, N. N. chides him in a subsequent letter and tell him that he is having trouble painting his piece for the competition for the major gold medal. He has become preoccupied with his painting of the Vestal Virgin.

Soshenko interjects with a long portion of narration here, which is principally made up of his concern for N. N. and his dislike of the way society raises beautiful women.

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<sup>223</sup> Sternberg (Russian: Vasilii Ivanovich Shternberg) (1818-1845) was a Ukrainian artist and close friend of Shevchenko's. He was known principally for his landscapes of Ukraine.

<sup>224</sup> While no Aleksandr Oblonsky was among Shevchenko's acquaintances in truth, the editors of the collected works speculate that he was likely based on Petr Aleksandrovich Oblonskii (Petro Oleksandrovych Oblons'kyi), (?-1844) a midshipman who served as part of the Baltic Fleet until promoted to lieutenant and transferred to the Kabardian Jaeger Regiment. *ZT*, vol. 4, 542.

<sup>225</sup> Shevchenko himself won only silver medals, which meant he did not receive a rank high enough to become part of the bureaucratic nobility.

“A beauty is made by God soles to sweeten our lives which are filled with tears and trepidations” – That is true. It is her God-given purpose. But it is she, or better we, who have contrived to change her high divine purpose and we have made out of her a soulless, lifeless idol... How has this evil begun? This is how: it begins with upbringing. If God blesses affectionate parents with a beautiful young daughter, they themselves begin to spoil her, preferring her to their other children. And they think this about their beloved’s education and even say: “Why should we destroy a child over an empty book? Without learning and without a dowry, she will still have a sparkling career.” And the beauty, doubtless, has a brilliant career. The parents’ prediction comes true, so what else is there? This is the beginning of the evil.<sup>226</sup>

This diatribe reminds one of some of the later section in Gogol’s *Selected Passages*, which discuss a woman’s place in society. In “The Artist’s” context, it precedes a section in which Soshenko finds out from the newspapers that N. N.’s Vestal Virgin has been a sensation, but receives no letter from him, until one in which N. N. suggests that he failed the examination program and bemoans his poor fate.

Soshenko becomes concerned and writes Mikhailov. From Mikhailov, he learns that N. N. has gotten married to Pasha and that Pasha is pregnant with Sasha Oblonsky’s child. Soshenko mourns the loss of N. N.’s opportunities, as he will not be able to receive a stipend to travel abroad and may not be allowed to compete in the next academy program. Soshenko continues to write to the grudging Mikhailov, who sends back a snide letter in which he informs Soshenko that N. N. has started drinking and painting cheap portraits. Mikhailov then refuses to write any further. Soshenko desperately plans to return to Petersburg at the end of the semester.

Once Soshenko arrives, he finds Mikhailov and learns that N. N. was not allowed to

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<sup>226</sup> *Krasavitsa Bogom sozdannaia dlia togo tol'ko, chtob uslazhdat' nashu ispolnennuiu slez i trevolnenii zhizn'. - Pravda. Naznachenie ee ot Boga tokom. Da ona-to, ili, luchshe skazat', my ukhitrilisia izmenit' ee vysokoe bozhesvennoe naznachenie. I sdelali iz nee bezdushnogo, bezzhiznennogo idola... Gde zhe nachalo etogo zla? A vot gde: nachalo v vospitanii. Esli nezhykh roditelei Bog blagoslovit krasavitsei dochechkoi, oni sami nachinaiut ee portit', predpochitaia ee drugim detiam. A o obrazovanii svoei liubimitsy oni vot [chto] dumaiut i dazhe govoriat: "Zachem naprasno ubivat' ditia nad pustkoiu knigoiu? Ona i bez knigi i dazhe bez pridanogo sdelat sebe blestiaschuii kar'eru." I krasavitsa, deistvitel'no, delaet blestiaschuii kar'eru. Predskazanie roditelei sbylos', chego zhe bol'she? Eto nachalo zla*” ZT, vol. 4, 199-201.



participate in this year's competition, has lost his mind as a result, and has been institutionalized. Soshenko visits N. N. in the asylum, where he finds that N. N. does not even recognize him. Over the ensuing days, N. N. seems to be recovering, but the day after he says Soshenko's name during his visit, he dies. Soshenko goes to visit Pasha, and buy's N. N.'s unfinished masterpiece, a Madonna and Child, from her for 10 rubles.<sup>227</sup>

This final section, following from the point at which N. N. stops writing letters, is notable for its focus on Soshenko's internal musings. He outlines his feelings on the life of the artist, romantic relationships, and other issues close to his heart. Soshenko is not Shevchenko himself, nor does he represent Shevchenko in "The Artist's" semi-autobiographical framework. Yet as narrator his opinion carries weight, and the choice of topics on which to ponder is important. These musings also remind the reader of Gogol's similar topics in *Selected Passages*.

Gogol's *Selected Passages* consists of thirty-two individual pieces, presented as excerpts from letters Gogol has written to friends. Maguire describes them as dealing with "large moral, social, political, and literary questions apart from any particular topography."<sup>228</sup> This is an apt description, although the questions that Gogol explores are loosely tied together through theme. I

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<sup>227</sup> Approximating the value of 10 rubles between 1838, when Shevchenko was granted manumission, and 1856, when "The Artist" was written, is an almost impossible task. During the period, there were several competing currency systems in the Empire. The silver ruble, arguably the standard for the first half of the century, was worth about 28.25 *assignati*, or paper rubles in '38, while by '43 the *assignat* had been replaced by the credit ruble, which was (at that time) worth 97.3 silver rubles. These rates differed throughout the century, and because Shevchenko does not specify the type of ruble, it is unclear whether or not he means *assignat*, credit ruble, or silver ruble. As other writers, such as Tolstoy, do specify when they are using *assignati*, one might assume that Shevchenko mean silver ruble. In that case, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ruble was approximately 18 grams of silver, which is worth about \$15.00 in 2021. However, this does not well approximate the purchasing power of the ruble at the time, as the replacement of the silver/gold standard with fiat currency makes such conversions tenuous. For more on the challenges of 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian currency conversion and valuation, see Thomas C. Owen, "A Standard Ruble of Account for Russian Business History, 1769-1914: A Note," *The Journal of Economic History* 49 no. 3 (Sep., 1989): 699-706. For more on Russian currency before the revolution, see Ivan Spasskii, *Russkaia monetnaia Sistema* (Leningrad: Istoriko-numanizmaticheskii ocherk, 1970), and, for a broader perspective, Jerome Blum, *The End of the Old Order in Rural Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).

<sup>228</sup> Maguire, 120.

will explore how disenchantment serves as a structural principle in *Selected Passages* later in this chapter, but for now, I will outline the structure itself.

*Selected Passages* is not arranged into thematic sections, but rather develops several arguments simultaneously. Nor is it arranged chronologically; “letters” from ’46, such as “Fears and Horrors in Russia” (XXVI) appear before ones from ’44, such as “To a Short-Sighted Friend” (XXVII). Thematic development seems to determine the order of the works, as much as any guiding principle does.

Ten of the pieces discuss literature or painting, and they make up almost half of the text in the book, making literature one of the most prominent themes. Jesse Zeldin writes that much of *Selected Passages* is, therefore, a discussion of Gogol’s theory of Russian literature, a theory that had profound influence on subsequent writers.<sup>229</sup> Zeldin describes this theory as progressing from one that argues that the “purpose of Russian literature is to express ‘the beautiful and the sublime’ to the theory that it is the business of Russian literature to ‘evoke our Russia for us – our Russian Russia.’”<sup>230</sup>

This project necessitates several discussions of Pushkin, and Pushkin’s place in Russian literature. In letter X of *Selected Passages*, Gogol represents Pushkin in a positive light much like that of his early writing on the poet. Yet, as Maguire notes, by the penultimate section of the work, the long essay “What, at Last, is the Essence of Russian Poetry, and What are its Features?” (XXXI), he has moved on to seeing Pushkin not as the highest pinnacle of Russian literary achievement, but rather as a necessary step towards a greater reality.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Jesse Zeldin, “A Revaluation of Gogol’s ‘Selected Passages,’” *Russian Review* 27, no. 4 (1968): 422.

<sup>230</sup> Zeldin, “A Reevaluation,” 426.

<sup>231</sup> See Maguire, 319-321.

This perspective reminds one of Pushkin's portrayal in "The Artist:"

Over tea, Karl Pavlovich recited "Angelo" by Pushkin, and told us how the late Aleksandr Sergeevich asked him to paint a portrait of his wife, and how he unceremoniously refused him, because his wife was cross-eyed. He suggested that he paint Pushkin himself, but Pushkin refused him. And soon after that the poet died and left us without a portrait. Kiprenskii represented him as some kind of a dandy, not a poet.<sup>232</sup>

By recalling Kiprenskii's comments on Pushkin, "The Artist's" narrator is able to subtly suggest what makes a true poet. A true poet is *not* a dandy. The two ideas are set in opposition to one another. They cannot coexist in the same space. Like Gogol in the end of *Selected Passages*, "The Artist's" narrator is suspicious of Pushkin's almost godlike status in Russian literature and uses this anecdote to make that suspicion clear. While Gogol is by no means as condemnatory as "The Artist's" narrator, his changing attitude is clear in *Selected Passages*, and forms a major sub-theme in the work.

Gogol's perspective on Pushkin is intimately linked to another major theme in *Selected Passages*, that of religion. Unlike literature, which is the specific subject of several entries, religion runs through even those essays that do not directly concern it. This overpowering importance is underlined by the fact that *Selected Passages* both begins and ends in an expressively religious fashion. In the preface, Gogol describes how he felt compelled to write *Selected Passages* after a period of illness. He ends the section by writing:

In conclusion, I ask everyone in Russian to pray for me, starting with the saints, whose whole life is one prayer. I ask for the prayers of those who meekly do not believe in the power of their own prayers, and of those who do not believe in prayers at all and do not even think them necessary: no matter

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<sup>232</sup> "Vskore oni poshli domoi i menia prigasili k sebe. Za chaem Karl Pavlovich prochital 'Andzhelo' Pushkina i rasskazal, kak pokoinyi Aleksandr Sergeevich prosil ego napisat' s ego zheny portret i kak on bestseremonno otkazal emu, potomu chto zhena ego kocaia. On predlagal Pushkinu s samogo ego napisat' portret, no Pushkin otplatil emu tem zhe. Vskore posle etogo poet umer i ostavil nas bez portreta. Kiprenskii izobrazil ego kakim-to dendi, a ne poetom." ZT, vol. 4, 159.

how weak and callous their prayers, I ask them to pray their weak and callous prayers for me.<sup>233</sup>

Gogol has apologized for any fault that the readers find in the book and has begged for their prayers. Throughout the work, he develops his idea of prayer, and of the imperfect Christian, who strives to better reflect Christ in his own life.<sup>234</sup> Maguire connects this theme to Gogol's reading of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, and to his wider theological readings that inspired in the work a focus on Christ-centered culture and society.<sup>235</sup> Beyond this Christological impulse, which began at least in the 1830s, Gogol also pays particular attention to Russia's place in a Christian world. The final entry in *Selected Passages*, "Easter Sunday,"<sup>236</sup> is nominally a description of the day's celebrations but is principally an exploration of Russia's place in a Christian world.

Finally, another major theme explored in *Selected Passages* is closely linked to resurrection. In both the preface and letter I, "Testament," Gogol reveals his preoccupation with his own death. This continues throughout the work, with essays such as "The Meaning of Sickness" (III), which focus on ill-health. This theme, especially in the more focused form of preoccupation with death, is closely tied to that of Christianity, and is a major locus for disenchantment in the work.

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<sup>233</sup> "V zakliuchenie proshu vsekhn v Rossii pomolit'sia obo mne, nachinaia ot sviatitelei, kotorykh uzhe vsia zhizn' est' odna molitva. Proshu molitvy kak u tekh, kotorye smirenno ne veruiut v silu molitv sloiku, tak u tekh, kotorye ne veruiut vovse v molitvu i dazhe ne schitaiut ee nuzhnoi: no kak by ni byla bessil'na i cherstva ikh molitva, ia proshu pomolit'sia obo mne samoi bessil'noi i cherstvoi ikh molitvoi." PSS, vol. 8, 217-218.

<sup>234</sup> See, for example, "Christians Moving Forward" (XII)

<sup>235</sup> Maguire, 83.

<sup>236</sup> Easter here is referred to as "Bright Sunday" the first day of "Bright Week" not to be confused with the Western Christian name "Bright Sunday" or "Holy Humor Sunday," which refers to the Sunday after Easter, otherwise known as Thomas Sunday or *Antipaskha*.

When I write that *Selected Passages* and *The Artist* share a poetics of disenchantment, I do not intend to claim that these are not beautiful works. Both have moments of true beauty, bright descriptive language, and gripping narrative. But there is a distinction between *enchancing* and *enchantment*, and so too between *disenchancing* and *disenchantment*. By this I mean that one describes an effect on the reader, and one describes the stance or character of a work. A work which is *disenchancing* is one which robs the reader of beauty and magic, which removes the myth from its mythscape. It is reminiscent of religious disenchantment of the sort described by Max Weber in *The Sociology of Religion*, in which he argues that modern Western society increasingly values scientific understandings of the world over those founded in a non-scientific belief-system.<sup>237</sup>

This Western religious disenchantment is decidedly not what is occurring in either *Selected Passages* or “The Artist.” In these works, enchantment of that sort is rife. Take, for example, the passage from “The Artist,” in which Soshenko ponders what he is going to do with his new-found protégé. “I was delighted at heart by my discovery. But it did not occur to me to ask myself what I was going to do about this diamond in the rough, given my more than limited means. True, the thought flitted by me, but it was immediately replaced with this saying: ‘God is not without mercy, and a Cossack not without a fate.’”<sup>238</sup> Here, Shevchenko builds a complex world to background his story, one which is deeply connected to both religion and culture, through references to common proverbs, and through allusions to everyday problems such as inadequate salaries.

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<sup>237</sup> Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 270.

<sup>238</sup> “*Ia v dushe radovalsia svoei nakhodka. Mne i v golovu togda ne prishlo sprosit' sebia, chto ia budu delat' s moimi bol'she nezhe li ogranichennymi sredstvami s etim almazom v kozhure? Pravda, u menia i togda mel'knula eta mysl', da tut zhe i okunulas' v poslovitse: “Bog ne bez milosti, kozak ne bez doli.”* ZT, vol. 4, 124.

Similarly, in *Selected Passages*, it is precisely the enchantment of the everyday, the rich world of what Gogol calls “youth” that shines through. At the end of a letter he writes, “In a word, the *Odyssey* acts on those who suffer and are ill because of their European polish. It will remind them of their beautiful youth, which (alas!) is lost, but to which humanity must return itself, as its rightful inheritance.”<sup>239</sup> In this case, Gogol actively pushes against the “disenchantment” of the world that sociology describes, the disenchanting action of modernity.

Disenchantment, in E. P. Thompson’s writing, and as I speak of it, is a personal thing, a confrontation between the idealized views of the past and the reality as it is now being realized. Thus, for a work to exhibit this sort of disenchantment, it is not necessary for it to be dull, or grey, or stripped of its wonder. Rather, that wonder is confronted by the harsh reality of the world, and the work turns on dealing with that confrontation.

The aforementioned confrontation is demonstrated through the narratorial voice in both *Selected Passages* and “The Artist.” Both works exhibit complex interrelationships between fact and fiction, writer and narrator(s), word and text. For Gogol, *Selected Passages* is something of a search for a narratorial position or, more precisely, for how to convey himself as narrator.<sup>240</sup> He has been forced to confront the confusion of Gogol-the-person and the narrator of his works and to acknowledge that his readers may neither understand nor appreciate that distinction.

“All the places where I vaguely mentioned a writer were attributed to me; I blushed even at those explanations in my favor,” Gogol writes about reviews of *Dead Souls*.<sup>241</sup> He seems to

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<sup>239</sup> “Slovom, na strazhdushchikh i boleiushchikh ot svoego evropeiskogo sovershenstva Odisseia podeistvuet. Mnogo napomnit ona im mladencheski-prekrasnogo, kotoroe (uvy!) utracheno, no kotoroe dolzhno vozvratit' sebe chelovechestvo, kak svoe zakonnoe nasledstvo.” PSS, vol. 8, 244.

<sup>240</sup> Maguire, 318.

<sup>241</sup> “Vse mesta gde ni zaiknulsia ia neopredelenno o pisatele, byli otneseny na moi schet; ia krasnel dazhe ot iz'iasnenii ikh v moiu pol'zu.” PSS, vol. 8, 288.

have tried to separate himself from his narrators and to have wanted to keep some distance from his own works.<sup>242</sup> Ilya Vinitsky writes that in *Dead Souls*, Gogol uses shifting tone, silence, and unreliable information in order to create a secretive narrator, one whose nature is concealed from the reader by deliberate design. Yet, as Vinitsky notes, this is a dangerous endeavor; “by leading the reader into a rhetorical trap, the author himself risks becoming a victim of his own device.”<sup>243</sup>

By the time of writing *Selected Passages*, Gogol has reconciled himself to the impossibility of this endeavor.<sup>244</sup> In *Selected Passages*, he reckons with how a fiction writer, writing about the imagined world of Russia, can also deal with the realities of Russia as it is. He explicitly notes that while his works do not contain realistic psychological portraits of others, they are reflections of himself, reflections of his own image.<sup>245</sup> And yet his readers do not understand this. The narratorial voice of *Dead Souls* and his prior works has not allowed this separation to be visible.<sup>246</sup>

Gogol’s attempts at rectifying this situation, at adapting his own narratorial voice to the harsh realities of the world as he has begun to realize them, were one of the major reasons that *Selected Passages* was so poorly received. Maguire notes that the narrator in *Selected Passages* is much the same as the narrator in “Rome” (“*Rim*,” 1842), in Gogol’s historical articles, and in those same places in *Dead Souls* which mention a writer, and whose interpretation so upset

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<sup>242</sup> Yulia Ilchuk’s *Gogol’s Hybrid Performance* highlights how this separation is particularly important and notable during Gogol’s first period.

<sup>243</sup> Ilya Vinitsky, “‘Exegi Testamentum’ Gogol’s Posthumous Ode,” *Urbandus Review* 6 (2002): 87.

<sup>244</sup> See Maguire, 311.

<sup>245</sup> *PSS*, vol. 8, 292.

<sup>246</sup> Gogol credits Pushkin as having been the only person to understand him as a writer (*PSS*, vol 8, 292-293), but given his general use of Pushkin in order to affect his readership and manipulate his social standing, this should probably be taken with a grain of salt.

Gogol.<sup>247</sup>

Gogol's attempts to create a different voice, one that demonstrated his own disenchantment with his earlier poses, with those works of literature that he felt had been so misunderstood, were unsuccessful. Maguire writes:

[Selected Passages'] narrator sounded no different from the one with which they had long been acquainted. Since that narrator was obviously a persona, were they now to assume that "another" Gogol speaking in the same language was more "real," more "genuine"? We can imagine them saying: if this is the "real" Gogol, then he has nothing new to say; if it is not the "real" Gogol, then he offends by pretending to be what he is not.<sup>248</sup>

The complex, interwoven sentences, adjective-filled lines, and multiple subordinate clauses that make up the writing in *Selected Passages* are those of the same author whose strange similes of transformation are so prominent in *Taras Bulba*. Yet their content disavows that earlier writer, arguing that he is somehow different from the Gogol of *Selected Passages*, a mask which has now been discarded.

Gogol justifies this attempt to discard his former persona as part of an effort to help his readers understand the "real" Gogol. This, in turn, he views as an indispensable endeavor, as it would, he believed, allow him to properly perform his task as a writer. "Artistic creation, in turn, was for him a form of social utility, which determined his moral worth and justified his secular existence on this earth," Bojanowska writes.<sup>249</sup> This is closely linked to Gogol's view of literature, which he develops in detail in letter XXXI of *Selected Passages*, "What, at Last, is the Essence of Russian Poetry, and What are its Features?" He begins to lay out his belief in the

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<sup>247</sup> Maguire, 120.

<sup>248</sup> Maguire, 317.

<sup>249</sup> Edyta Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 319.



prophet-poet (a theme which dominates criticism of Shevchenko).

The narrator of the latter part of *Selected Passages* has been caught by the reality that a poet who only creates beauty, as Gogol casts Pushkin as having done, is part of a fantasy world, in which the poet has no duty or obligation to the material realm. For Gogol, political motivation and social reform (in a conservative direction) are the product not of enchantment, but of disenchantment – they represent a period when the harsh, cold reality of Russia's imperfections creeps into Gogol's literary endeavors.

Just as *Selected Passages* is an argument, in part, for the necessity of the prophet-poet, it is also the argument of a self-proclaimed prophet-poet. It demonstrates Gogol's attempt to become a narrator of both the fantasy and the reality of Russia, of both the good and the bad, the controversies and the great achievements. His self-professed humility, his insistence that he does not write because he “has a high opinion of himself and relies on his skill to be helpful, but because he has never before felt such a strong wish to be helpful,”<sup>250</sup> is no bar to this. It appears only in those self-conscious moments in which Gogol attempts to justify his own writing. It is sharply contrasted with the tone he takes in those parts where he plays his prophetic role, such as in letter XXVI, where he predicts, in no uncertain terms, troubles soon to come in Europe.

Indeed, *Selected Passages* is an exercise in balancing the tension between a self-conscious, uncertain Gogol and a new Gogol, one who is concerned with his own opinions about the world, and with conveying those opinions to his readers. It is a work that illustrates the interplay between aspiration, the aspiration of the author looking for a voice, and the same author whose voice is already set in stone, who has only to apply that voice to the world around him.

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<sup>250</sup> “Ne potomu, chtoby imel vysokoe o sebe poniatie i nadeialsia na umen'e soe byt' poleznym, no potomu, chto nikogda eshche dosele ne pital takogo sil'nogo zhelan'ia byt' poleznym.” PSS, vol. 8, 216.

That tension, in Thompsonian terms, is the tension of disenchantment. Gogol is, fundamentally, disenchanted with his past work, with his past personae, and with his own narratorial voice. Yet he cannot quite escape himself in his writing, even when he tries his hardest to do so.

Shevchenko, too, seems to search for a new narratorial voice in “The Artist.” There is, of course, the obvious shift in his work of this period from poetic to prose narration and from Ukrainian to Russian language. These shifts are evidence of a search for a new sort of language to express himself in writing. His diary and his letters before this point are indeed written in Russian, but they were not intended to be published. “The Artist” was. Yet Shevchenko’s search for a new voice does not stop simply at the adoption of a new literary language. In “The Artist,” he places the narrator’s voice in another person’s mouth, a real person, one who is not simply a figment of his imagination.

Unlike in a work such as *Haidamaky*, where the narrator and the bandura player are decidedly not Shevchenko himself, in “The Artist,” some aspects of the narration come from Shevchenko, as they are born out of his own recollections of the past. Yet he does not cast himself as the narrator. Instead, he chooses Soshenko to tell his own story. Soshenko is, as a narrator, given to lengthy digressions on politics, women, and artistry. “The Artist” opens with him musing on the almost inevitable misfortune of the great artist. “The question is,” Soshenko thinks to himself, “why do these incarnate angels, these living representatives of goodness on earth, almost always fall to such sad, such bitter lots. Likely because they are angels in the flesh.”<sup>251</sup> In this moment, Shevchenko muses on his own fate – exiled, alone, isolated in one of Kazakhstan’s harshest regions – and yet puts the words in the mouth of a friend remembered

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<sup>251</sup> “*Za chto zhe, vopros, etim olitsetvorennym angelam, etim predstavitelei zhivoi dobrodeteli na zemli, vypadaet pochti vseгда takaia pechal'naia, takaia gor'kaia dolia? Veroiatno, za to, chto oni angely vo ploti.*” *ZT*, vol. 4, 120.

from youth, a friend whose life has something of the quality of a fantasy about it, a dream of a different path Shevchenko might have walked.

After all, Soshenko, both as a character in “The Artist” and as a person, led a life far less eventful than Shevchenko’s own. His beginnings as a free man differ dramatically from Shevchenko’s, and from that of his fictional double. N. N. is, of course, a serf. Soshenko expresses his unhappiness with the institution of serfdom throughout the early parts of the work, recoiling when N. N. tries to kiss his hand and sadly informing Bruillov that N. N. is indeed a serf. Here, Shevchenko manages to express his own distaste for the reality of serfdom, while also presenting a fantasy in which the narrator himself has never experienced serfdom. Not true, of course, in that Shevchenko had been a serf. In this moment Shevchenko creates a narrator who is for him an impossibility, blessed with freedom throughout his life, yet who clearly understands the horrors of serfdom in all its morbid detail.

The dichotomy between narrator and author that Shevchenko introduces here is decidedly different from the union of narrator and author Gogol attempts in *Dead Souls*. Yet, they are born out of similar impulses. In both works, the authors attempt to reconcile their disappointments with the past with their new, clearer understandings of the present.

For Shevchenko, his imprisonment at Novopetrovskoe/Fort Aleksandrovskaia (now Fort Shevchenko) was in many ways a disillusionment, that even non-militant speech was a ticket to the deep and unending despair that he experienced in exile. While his poetry of the *Try Lita* period was decidedly critical of the Emperor (and his wife) and of the Empire as a whole, it was, as George Grabowicz makes clear, not revolutionary in that militant sense, but rather transformative in a personal and ethical sense.<sup>252</sup> Moreover, exile was a disillusionment in that

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<sup>252</sup> George Grabowicz, “Taras Shevchenko: The Making of the National Poet,” 438.

even when acting under the orders of his commander and documenting the expedition to the Aral Sea during the first period of his exile in Orenburg, his art brought him even harsher punishment in the arid Mangyshlak peninsula.

Thompson writes about the English romantics that “these disappointed men were being driven back upon themselves – the contemplation of themselves.” Just so with Shevchenko, who steps outside himself, into Soshenko, in order to look back at himself in “The Artist.” Beyond this “if the attempt to live out the ideals appears to produce their opposite... then aspirations can only become a transposed interior faith.”<sup>253</sup> For Shevchenko this interior faith is demonstrated throughout “The Artist,” as the narrator continues to believe, in the face of all evidence, that there is some greater artistic purpose in the world, that one is not simply fated to die as N. N.’s friend and French tutor Leonard Demski does, alone, kind and caring but unloved by almost all the world. One is not fated to turn to drink and disaffection, as Mikhailov does. Even as the events of the novel, and of Shevchenko’s own life, challenge these beliefs, challenge is tempered with hope. Soshenko recovers N. N.’s abandoned Madonna and Child, it is not destroyed by the harsh realities of its painter’s life, but rather rescued by the narrator. The narrator, thus, is a sign of disenchantment, of the retreat into personal belief and passion of the chastened man, but also the aspiration to better and brighter futures that flies in the face of the cold light of day. For Gogol, too, his narrator professes to self-consciousness and inadequacy, yet speaks with the clarity of the zealot. He sees the public’s reaction to his works, the reality of his readers’ needs, and tries to appease them through self-effacement. Yet he tempers this reality with the passion of his beliefs, the ambition of letters like XXVI, “Fears and Horrors in Russia” in which he writes as the prophet-poet, the herald of a better world. Both Shevchenko and Gogol demonstrate their

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<sup>253</sup> Thompson, 174

deep personal disenchantment through this narratorial tension. Yet Gogol, in his disappointment at the reception of *Dead Souls*, and Shevchenko, in his dissatisfaction with the actions (or rather, inaction) of his fellow Ukrainians, still write for those readers *with whom* they are disenchanted.

Initially, in Gogol's case, his writing begged for an imperial Russian audience. It called upon inhabitants of the Empire proper to read it, to see themselves in it, and to be amused or perhaps horrified by the other they saw there. Thus, his writing was for those operating in the Russian-speaking sphere, and thus written in Russian. Gogol adopted Russian mannerisms and dress in a mimic of the imperial norms yet resisted full assimilation. Moreover, during his early writing, he "escaped identification in terms of 'either'/'or' and creatively played out this ambiguity in his self-fashioning."<sup>254</sup>

By the time that he published *Selected Passages*, his desire or attempts at ambiguity had changed. Reactions to *Dead Souls* had shown him that his readers did not understand his writing, politics, or positions, nor did they believe him to be a Russian patriot, the insightful, and knowledgeable critic of Russian society that he wanted them to see. As Bojanowska writes, "the critics' accusations that Gogol lacked the requisite knowledge to write about Russia finally sank in,"<sup>255</sup> and he was convinced that neither he, nor his audience was adequate to the work he wished to complete.

In *Selected Passages*, Gogol has become disenchanted with readers who seem unable to see what he is trying to convey. In letter XVIII, he bemoans *Dead Souls*' readers' inability or unwillingness to teach him, for, as he says, "a writer has only one teacher: his own readers."<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Yulia Ilchuk, "Nikolai Gogol's Self-Fashioning," 205.

<sup>255</sup> Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol*, 317.

<sup>256</sup> "U pisatel'ia tol'ko i est' odin uchitel': sami chitateli." PSS, vol. 8, 288.

Yet in the preface he begs his readers' pardon and asks them to alert him to whatever they find distasteful in the work; he expects the readers of *Selected Passages* to do what he thought those of *Dead Souls* and his earlier works did not or could not.

In *Selected Passages*, Gogol reaches out to an ideal reader, a created reader. In his later unpublished *Confession*, he states that *Selected Passages*' reader should have either "a very simple and good soul, or be an extremely many-sided person, who has a mind capable of embracing every side, and who embodies a high poetic talent and soul, capable of loving with a deep and full love."<sup>257</sup> Beyond this, the ideal reader, Maguire writes, would be one who was an ideal Christian, although Gogol seems to acknowledge, in the *Confession*, at least, that the likelihood of this reader actually appearing is very small.<sup>258</sup>

This new reader would not be the sort to quibble about realism, for they would understand the deeper meaning of Gogol's writings. This was an essential aspect of Gogol's new reader, for he had grown deeply disenchanted with the needs and expectations of the old. He was unhappy that readers of *Dead Souls* had complained about the work's portrayal of Russia. During his attempt to write Part II of the work, he collected information about the country from all and sundry, writing to his friends and correspondents, requesting every detail of their lives.<sup>259</sup> Some of this search appears in letter XXI of *Selected Passages*, where Gogol exhorts his friend Aleksandra Osipovna Smirnova to tell him every detail of her life in her new home.<sup>260</sup> While this

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<sup>257</sup> "Nuzhno imet' ili ocher prostu<iu> i dobriiu dushu, ili byt' slishkom mnogostoronnim chelovekom, <kotoryi> pri ume, obnimaiushchem so vsekh storon, zakluchal by vysokii poeticheskii talant i dushu, umeiushchuiu liubit' polnoiu i glubokoiu libov'iu. PSS, vol. 8, 467.

<sup>258</sup> Maguire, 313-314.

<sup>259</sup> See Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol*, 317-320 for a deeper exploration of this process.

<sup>260</sup> PSS, vol. 8, 310-213.

is nominally to aid Gogol in giving her better advice, taken with the totality of evidence, it is part of a pattern of requesting details on the everyday existence of the Russian populace.

Even as he gathered this “evidence” to use in his second volume of *Dead Souls*, Gogol pushed against readers who read his works as though they portrayed reality. He wanted instead those readers who understood the greater purpose of the works, who appreciated their importance as an address to the soul, rather than a depiction of the literary milieu or the physical realities of the Russian condition.<sup>261</sup> Beyond this, he wrote *Selected Passages* for the reader who would not misinterpret his political meanings, or beliefs.

Many of the readers of *Dead Souls* saw it as fundamentally anti-Russian, revealing the tragedy of Russian culture. For Gogol, this was an unbearable misreading, one which flew in the face of what he hoped to accomplish. In *Selected Passages* he effusively defends Russia, writing pieces like “One Must Love Russia” (XIX), “Rural Justice and Punishment” (XXV), and “Fears and Horrors in Russia” (XXVI), in which he states over and over Russia’s exceptionality and great inherent goodness.

Thompson writes about disenchantment involving a “withdrawal from the vortex of an unbearable political conflict.”<sup>262</sup> For Gogol, it was a withdrawal from the conflict that his fiction created, from the confusion he saw in his readers, and a turn towards writing the sort of book he thought might be read “rightly.” He had become so disenchanted with those who engaged with his works, that he had to look for a new reader, one who would understand the ideas he so fervently wanted to convey in *Selected Passages*.

Shevchenko’s readership was more complex than Gogol’s in the lead up to “The Artist.”

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<sup>261</sup> PSS, vol. 8, 298-299.

<sup>262</sup> Thompson, 169.

As an artist and a member of the Academy of Arts, he completed paintings and etchings that depicted Ukrainian culture, yet he also painted and etched the portraits of many notable members of the Imperial aristocracy. He mixed and mingled among them not as an equal, but as a respected artist. His audience, then, consisted of the same educated members of society that read Gogol's fiction.

Shevchenko's poetry, on the other hand, was written for a different public. It often included direct addresses to *his* people, to the Ukrainian people he called his own.<sup>263</sup> Yet the stories of his own life were told in Russian and were written for different readers. While those who read his poetry could, almost invariably, read his prose, as Russian was taught in schools and was the language of official discourse in the Empire, the converse was not the case. In his prose, Shevchenko reached out to readers he had previously been unable to access. In his review of *Haidamaky*, Belinsky accused Shevchenko of writing only to please himself, saying that there was no other public for poetry in Ukrainian.<sup>264</sup> This assessment was heavily colored by Belinsky's intense Ukrainophobia, but it underlines the perception of the everyday Russian that Ukrainian poetry was *not* for them, that they were not the intended readers (which, of course, they were not).

Unlike Gogol, Shevchenko was not disenchanted with his Ukrainian readers – not permanently. He wrote for them again after his exile ended, producing poetry such as “Neophytes” (“*Neofity*”). During his exile, particularly during the Novopetrovskoe period, however, he was isolated from these readers. Exile took Shevchenko away from the company of his friends, away from his fellow Ukrainian writers and his colleagues at the Academy of the

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<sup>263</sup> See, for example, “To the dead, to the living...” (“*I mertvym, I zhyvym...*” 1845).

<sup>264</sup> Vissarion Grigor'evich Belinskii, 275.



Arts. “The Artist” in fact, was written entirely from memory – he could not walk St. Petersburg’s familiar streets or meander through the Summer Garden to help himself recall days gone by, nor could he visit Mikhailov (the only of his friends who are mentioned in “The Artist” who was still alive in ’56) and reminisce about old times. This sort of isolation is conducive to disenchantment.

Isolation is a breeding ground for a search for new readers and new ventures. After all, the old ones are no longer accessible. Moreover, the magical air of the community which a group of people with a common cause creates was taken from Shevchenko, and what was left were his recollections of that community, and of times past. These recollections were not the sort of prophetic, transformative work that is evident in “Cold Ravine” and “Dream.”

Rather, they demanded an audience that was not aspirational, the audience of cold hard reality, of the everyday. Thus, these works demanded the Russian-reading audience. For Shevchenko, speaking to the Ukrainian reader was speech of aspiration. Grabowicz demonstrates a fundamental opposition in Shevchenko’s work, in which social structure (“the world of the father”) is set against *communitas* (“the world of the mother”).<sup>265</sup> The world of the mother was less accessible to Shevchenko in his exile, and his own recollections, his personal world was more accessible. He shares that world in “The Artist,” and he shares it not with the people of his dreams, but rather with denizens of the harsh realities of Empire, in the language of that mundane world.

Shevchenko conveys this disenchantment to the reader throughout the plot of “The Artist.” The novella is, on the whole, a portrait of transformation. Soshenko chronicles N. N.’s journey from a young serf to successful student, and finally to drunken insanity and death. In

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<sup>265</sup> See George Grabowicz, *The Poet as Mythmaker* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1982), for more on this and other structural oppositions.

turn, Soshenko slowly becomes disenchanted with the image of the consummate artist he presents early on in the work and with the aspirations he held for N. N.

In the beginning of the novella, Soshenko has boundless aspiration, believes wholeheartedly in the idea that a serf from no particular background can become a respected painter. This seems, at first, to be the case. He praises N. N.'s innocent tears when Bruillov admires his paintings: "What kind of concern, what joy might be greater than these happy, these heavenly, God-given tears?" Soshenko thinks.<sup>266</sup> For Soshenko, N. N.'s pure delight in art and in the presence of artists is the ultimate ideal, the perfect sort of perspective for an artist to begin with, and indeed, to continue on with throughout their career. By the end of the novel, however, he has become entirely disenchanted with the situation. At first, he wonders, "is it possible that a single reason, this unhappy marriage, could so suddenly, so quickly destroy a young genius! There was no other reason. A deplorable marriage!"<sup>267</sup> He has not become disappointed in N. N. per se, and in fact he never does. But he has lost his firm belief in the "fatedness" of great artists and has begun to look for reasons why his prior optimism was unfounded.

Disillusionment reaches its peak in the final scene of the novella, when Soshenko and Mikhailov visit N. N.'s widow. Soshenko asks to see N. N.'s Madonna and finds that it is being used to patch an old screen. There is an air of poignance to the scene, a melancholy that a great artist's last work is warming a room not through its sale and splendor, but only for its value as canvas.<sup>268</sup> Soshenko's idealistic outlook is truly dashed in this moment. Despite arranging for N.

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<sup>266</sup> "Da i kakoe uchastie, kakaia utekha mozhet byt' vyshe etikh schastlivykh, etikh raiskikh bozhestvennykh slez?" ZT, vol. 4, 132.

<sup>267</sup> "Bozhe moi! Neuzheli odna-edinstvennaia prichina, eta neschastnaia zhenit'ba, mogla tak vnezapno, tak bystro unichtozhit' genial'nogo iunoshu! Drugoi prichiny ne bylo. Pechal'naia zhenit'ba!" ZT, vol. 4, 206.

<sup>268</sup> ZT, vol. 4, 207.

N. to escape serfdom, supporting his studies as an artist, and acting as his guide and closest confidant, nothing has come of it. N. N.'s wife lives in poverty, her child will grow up, not a serf, but poor, destined for an uneducated life and to scabble for a living. Ten rubles is the princely sum paid to the widow for the painting – a considerable amount for a very poor woman, almost nothing compared to what Bruillov's portrait of Zhukovsky sold for, or even compared to the price of successful painting by a less prominent, yet accomplished artist.<sup>269</sup>

It is as though it was all for naught. As though the man who ate with Soshenko at Madame Jurgens' and did not look out of place in an establishment catering to artists and businessmen had vanished,<sup>270</sup> and all that he left behind was a shadow and a poor wife. It was the ultimate disappointment of aspirations and intrusion of harsh reality. Yet at the same time, hope remained. The Madonna was not lost, nor did it spend its life in an attic, or as insulation for a hovel. Rather, it was bought by Soshenko, brought to light to be admired and remembered. "How far is it possible for men to hold on to aspirations long after there appears to be no hope of inserting them into 'the real world which is the world of all of us?'" Thompson writes.<sup>271</sup> "This far," Shevchenko answers in "The Artist." The novella is not a cycle of despair, because out of all the hardship and disappointment, beauty springs forth. Caught in the space between hope and reality, both in his own life and in the novel, Shevchenko writes an escape, a work of art that lives on long after the artist has died. He investigates what aspiration can really be, and how far it can be carried until it is diverted to portrait painting and a pregnant vestal virgin, or to exile and the freezing, dry air of the Mangyshlak peninsula. The answer he gives – farther than this. There

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<sup>269</sup> Bruillov's portrait of Zhukovsky sold for something in the neighborhood of 75,000 dollars. (See note 212 for more on conversion rates.)

<sup>270</sup> *ZT*, vol. 4, 139.

<sup>271</sup> Thompson, 174.

is still hope, still a portrait, still a work that has come from all this suffering. N. N.'s Madonna is that work, just as "The Artist" itself is. For Gogol, this late period in his writing yields work that is not so clearly that of disenchantment and remaining hope. Indeed, in works such as "Four Letters to Various Persons on the Subject of *Dead Souls*" (XVIII) there is finally, for Gogol, a whiff of apostasy. Thompson writes of the "complex psychology" of apostasy: "There is that peculiar and vengeful kind of bitterness which a certain kind of man finds for an idealized mistress who has disappointed him."<sup>272</sup> And despite never having intended to leave the bosom of paternalistic culture, Gogol felt as though he had been forced out. He had been set a particular course by his readers, and he had to publicly disavow that terribly disappointing course – a task of great bitterness.

Yet even so, "Four Letters" is not precisely full apostasy, as the "received patterns of feeling" which Gogol should have been predisposed toward as relapse are not the religious ardor and deep chauvinism of *Selected Passages*, nor is there any precise "prior" idealism of his own against which Gogol is responding. Rather, Gogol's is an apostasy of seeming, of exterior projection, external perceptions to which the narrator says "no, not I." And instead, this is disenchantment in its deepest form, disenchantment with the aspirations of the world around one, with the idea that there is something that needs fundamental alteration about culture and indeed, reality.

This perspective much in line with the review of *Selected Passages* written at the time of its publication by Apollon Grigor'ev.<sup>273</sup> Grigor'ev argued that neither Westernizers nor

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<sup>272</sup> Thompson, 173.

<sup>273</sup> Apollon Aleksandrovich Grigor'ev, "Gogol' i ego posledniaia kniga," *Moskovskii gorodskoi listok* 56 (March 10, 1847); 62 (March 17, 1847); 64 (March 19, 1847): 225-226; 249-250; 254-256.

Slavophiles had understood Gogol, and that their assumptions about his previous works, and their belief that Gogol had fundamentally broken with them was wrong. Yet that does not tell the whole story. *Selected Passages* is indeed a reaction against a projected idealism, and itself a reaffirmation of Gogol's views. Jesse Zeldin writes that the work is imbued with a "constant optimism,"<sup>274</sup> and Bojanowska writes that it "beams total hopefulness."<sup>275</sup> If so, it is a sort of forced optimism, from a man who has hardly traveled through Russia, yet considered such travel a necessity, who has never successfully served in the bureaucracy, yet writes of such service as one of the highest callings. An optimism for the world, but not for oneself.

*Selected Passages* is not the work of a naïve and hopeful writer who is certain of his audience's reactions and sure of his position in the world.<sup>276</sup> It is neither pure aspiration, nor pure apostasy. This is clear in the interplay between works such as "Easter Sunday," "Testament," and "On the Theatre;" and "Four Letters." The very contents of the work, these essays' juxtapositions and their appearance in the same volume emphasizes how the work is that of disenchantment, of the loss of *solid* conviction in one's moral and spiritual superiority that is accompanied by a flicker of genuine hope that that conviction is not entirely gone.

Both texts are born of self-conscious writing. For Shevchenko, the parallels between his own life and his novella are obvious – it is semi-autobiographical. Beyond this, the emotional course of the plot parallels the emotional course of Shevchenko's exile, mirroring the optimism

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<sup>274</sup> Jesse Zeldin, "Introduction," in *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* trans. and ed. by Jesse Zeldin (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), xviii.

<sup>275</sup> Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol*, 334.

<sup>276</sup> If Gogol was ever such a writer, it is unclear. Yet he retains a hopefulness about his readers throughout his work. It is this hopefulness that made the criticism of *The Inspector General*, which made him flee Russia, so biting, and this criticism which made him so shrink from publication after *Selected Passages* was ridiculed.

of the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius days, the stress of “In the Casement” and the almost-despair of the Novopetrovskoe years. *Selected Passages* is a personal manifesto, a conscious outline of Gogol’s beliefs and values in response to those values being publicly debated after the publication of *Dead Souls*. Both works are, thus, types of confessional writing.

These two texts are also both epistolary works. There was some discussion of epistolary works in the previous chapter, but in that chapter I focus on diary novels, not those that primarily consist of letters proper. In contrast, both *Selected Passages* and “The Artist” are in part made of letters rather than diary entries. Both works nominally include letters *from* the author. In “The Artist,” Shevchenko writes as though he were Soshenko, receiving N. N.’s letters. N. N., while not being Shevchenko *per se*, is in most ways a reflection of the author, and his letters a reflection of those Shevchenko himself might have sent at the time. While the letters remaining from Shevchenko’s life as a student do not resemble those in the novella,<sup>277</sup> this is not surprising, as the novella had to be written completely from memory, with no notes or assistance from the people Shevchenko was close to during his twenties.

No matter how closely these fictional letters and “The Artist’s” narrative resembles the life of Shevchenko himself, they *are* presented as an accurate retelling of N. N.’s, just as most epistolary novels present themselves as true to life in some way. Yet epistolary novels also create a layered sense of reality, where the reader perceives a double narrative, the narrative that the characters lived, and the narrative as those characters relate it in their letters. In “The Artist,” this layered quality particularly noticeable when N. N. writes to Soshenko after he has failed his program. While Soshenko suspects this has happened, and while we, as readers, soon learn that

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<sup>277</sup> See *ZT*, vol. 6 for the letters from 1839-1845. Most discuss his writing, and few touch on the personal matters and everyday life that are so prominent in the letters depicted in “The Artist.”

N. N. has gotten married as well at the same time, N. N. says nothing of the sort. Thus, there is a double narrative – the one that N. N. wants to portray, and the one of which Shevchenko, as author, makes the reader aware.

This doubling is compounded by what Bernard Duyfhuizen calls the palimpsestic nature of the epistolary novel – the tendency of epistolary novels to refer to other, similar novels. He writes that “references to earlier epistolary novels establish an analogous textualization (lettering) of the events, and similar occurrences at the level of event are in some degree overdetermined by the anterior text; moreover, the reader’s response is in some degree overdetermined.”<sup>278</sup> This is decidedly the case in “The Artist,” where Shevchenko carefully conditions the audience’s reactions through his choices of other works of literature to reference. These come in four flavors, two of which are closely connected to the genre of “The Artist,” and two of which are consistent elements of Shevchenko’s oeuvre. These are: 1) fictional memoirs, 2) fictional travel journals, 3) historical novels, and 4) non-fictional works of history.

I have discussed Shevchenko’s use of history and historical fiction extensively in Chapter II. Here, Shevchenko primarily refers to Walter Scott’s Waverly novels as he draws on historical fiction. References to the Waverly novels, with their focus on the lives of everyday people and their interactions with famous or historically significant members of society, suggest to the reader that one is intended to view “The Artist” similarly. Yet the frequent appearance of such people makes one wonder if, despite Soshenko’s insistence that N. N. was an unlucky genius, he was rather an ordinary man whose life intersected with those of extraordinary people.

Shevchenko does not suggest that he himself was somehow not extraordinarily

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<sup>278</sup> Bernard Duyfhuizen, “Epistolary Narratives of Transmission and Transgression,” *Comparative Literature* 37, no. 1 (1985): 4.

significant in his work up until this point. Rather, earlier poems such as “The Opened Tomb” (“*Rozryta mohyla*,” 1843) and “Whether misery and bondage” (“*Chy to nedolia ta nevolia*,” 1850) emphasized Shevchenko’s understanding of his own importance, and his determination to speak truth to power because he could be heard. Moreover, later works such as “Holy Fool” (“*Iurodyvyi*,” 1857) reaffirm that Shevchenko was not given to false modesty or minimizing his own importance. Yet, the references to the Waverly novels suggests that in “The Artist,” Shevchenko wanted to portray himself, or rather, N. N. as one of Scott’s ordinary heroes. It is a retort to Soshenko’s insistence that N. N. is a monumental genius, and an answer to the idea that only marriage spoiled his potential. It is a dose of reality in the face of the extraordinary, and in the face of Bruillov’s overwhelmingly large personality.

Yet in the palimpsestic, layered fashion of an epistolary novel, this portrayal is countered by a specific reference to one of Scott’s novels. The majority of the references to specific Scott titles are like that on page 157: “After *Nicholas Nickleby* in the same way we read through *Kenilworth* and *The Fair Maid of Perth* and several other novels by Walter Scott.”<sup>279</sup> Each specific title is only one reference among many. This is not the case, however, for Scott’s *Woodstock*, on which N. N. devotes comments in a letter to Soshenko.

*Woodstock* is not only a historical novel, but is specifically presented as a fictional memoir, the author of which lived in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. It prominently features Charles II of England (posing as a page, Louis Kerneguy), who is partially the subject of N. N.’s letter. N. N. points out a section of *Woodstock* in which Charles suggests to Julia Lee, the daughter of the Baronet sheltering him from Oliver Cromwell’s forces, that she become his mistress

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<sup>279</sup> “Posle “*Niklasy Nikl'bi*” takim zhe poriadkom prochitali my “*Zamok Kenil'vort*”, potom “*Pertsuiiu krasavitsu*” i eshche neskol'ko romanov Val'tera Skotta.” *ZT*, vol. 4, 157.



(*nalozhnitsia*). Julia, the principal hero of the novel, rejects the offer, and N. N. comments with some irony that Charles's offer is "true kingly generosity for hospitality."<sup>280</sup> Julia here speaks truth to power, just as Shevchenko has and will in the future. Moreover, by highlighting N. N.'s distaste for this episode, Shevchenko foreshadows N. N.'s contempt for Oblonsky and his actions towards Pasha.<sup>281</sup> He also underlines how Julia Lee herself is remarkable, quite unlike the everyday heroes of *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Fair Maid of Perth*, and even *Kenilworth*. While including characters such as Sir Walter Raleigh and Elizabeth I, *Kenilworth* follows Edmund Tressilian and Amy Dudley, Countess Leicester, whose own romantic drama involves Elizabeth I primarily because Amy's husband wants to marry the Queen, despite loving his wife. Julia is an exceptional person, and dominates the scenes around her, despite her relatively low status (in comparison to Charles II).

By singling out *Woodstock*, with its dashing young heroes and close focus on a revolutionary period, Shevchenko suggests to the reader that perhaps "The Artist" is also such a novel. The reference shapes the readers' expectations of what sort of a fictional memoir "The Artist" purports to be and tells the reader that it is one of historical significance.

Another fictional memoir features prominently in "The Artist," *The Vicar of Wakefield* by Oliver Goldsmith. *The Vicar of Wakefield* was one of the most popular sentimental novels in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is particularly notable for the contrast between the vicar's idealistic values and the real world, which does not accommodate his worldview. His deeply Christian perspective does not lead him to success, but rather leads him to require the assistance of Sir William Thornhill, a worldly, and wealthy man.

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<sup>280</sup> "Nastoiashchaia korolevskaia blagodarnost' za gostepriimstvo." *ZT*, vol. 4, 155.

<sup>281</sup> Oleksandr Boron', *Povisti Tarasa Shevchenka i zakhidnoievropeis'ki literatury*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2015), 41-42.

Evoking *The Vicar of Wakefield* suggests early on to the reader that “The Artist” is a similar work. The ideals of the narrator are not applicable to life in the real world, and indeed, those who are blessed with exceptional talent are not fortunate in the real, everyday activities of the world. As *The Vicar of Wakefield* is the work that, in part, introduces N. N. to Pasha, and thus to his doom, it also foreshadows that doom, suggesting that a good or otherworldly man can never survive solely on his own. N. N. has no Thornhill to help him, no wealthy benefactor – in fact, Soshenko bemoans that Russia does not have a great patron of the arts, and even if one were to be found, they would only employ an artist for their own ends, not for the love of the art itself. “The Artist,” is a sort of reverse *Vicar*, a novella that is not sentimental, and is in fact emphatic in its denial of the sentimental mode, but which includes characters who desperately wish the world of the sentimental novel truly existed.

The books referenced in “The Artist” also track the progression of the novel itself. This is particularly notable when one looks at the fictional travelogues mentioned in “The Artist.” The first of these is *The Travels of Anacharsis the Younger*, referenced approximately 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the way through the novel. *Anacharsis*, written by Jean-Jacques Barthélemy and published in 1788, was a popular early historical novel, one which encouraged interest in historical subjects, and particularly in the Hellenic period.

In “The Artist,” *Anacharsis* is a mark of N. N.’s exit from the lower classes and entrance into a different sort of society. The book’s many references to historical events and its clear orientation towards the educated reader emphasize that N. N. is now among that group. After all, *Anacharsis* is no penny dreadful, nor cheap, “second-rate” work, but rather a popular work from Western Europe, at one time fashionable and desirable.

Moreover, Anacharsis himself was a Scythian, a member of that mythologized ancient

people who were all the rage during the 17<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Indeed, Scythians were claimed as the ancestors of Celts, Northern Europeans, Russians, Poles Hungarian and most importantly for this work, Ukrainians. In legend, Anacharsis was the first foreigner to receive Athenian citizenship. His Scythian nature coupled with his entry into Athenian society parallel N. N.'s own experience at the beginning of "The Artist." This suggests to the reader that N. N. is himself destined for greatness, for history's memory. Moreover, *Anacharsis* provides a sharp contrast to the fictional travelogue mentioned later in the work.

Three-quarters of the way through "The Artist," N. N. bemoans that Pasha has no interest in the most recent book he has provided her – *Robinson Crusoe*. In contrast to *The Travels of Anacharsis*, *Robinson Crusoe*, written and published by Daniel Defoe in 1719, reinscribes master-slave relationships, with Crusoe himself becoming the "master" even in his castaway state, and finding a servant, Friday, whom he alienates from other non-English speakers, converts to Christianity, and then takes away from his family, as Friday leaves the island with Crusoe after they defeat the cannibals and escape. In contrast to *Anacharsis*, in which the foreigner becomes an equal to the civilized Greeks and indeed recounts his time traveling through Greece, in *Crusoe*, the displaced "civilized" man conquers the foreigners, murders the locals, and returns to his homeland only a slightly better person than before.

Pasha herself does not want to read *Crusoe*, as she is bemoaning the midshipman's departure (or, more likely, her pregnancy by the departing midshipman, who has certainly not left her in a stable position). Even so, the novel's radically different tone and decidedly traditionalist nature foreshadows the coming tragedies in N. N. (and Pasha's) lives. Indeed, as Oleksandr Boron writes, "the novel acts as an indicator of the girl's (Pasha's) condition."<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> "Roman vystupaie svoho rodu indykatorom stanu divchyny." Oleksandr Boron', *Zakhidnoievropeis'ki literatury*, 88.

Thus, Shevchenko yet again uses works mentioned in “The Artist” to provide a guide to reading the work itself. These works also highlight how “The Artist’s” narrative exists in a space between idealism and reality, between hope and pessimism.

Literary references also help create the illusion that “The Artist” is an accurate reflection of Shevchenko’s experience during his time at the Academy, and moreover, that the letters contained therein are real letters, passed back and forth between Soshenko and N. N. They are also markers of genre; such references are frequent in epistolary novels, particularly when they take the form of a reading list, as they do several times in “The Artist.” Epistolary novels are also characterized by certain reading stances among the characters in the novel, particularly that of the confidant.

In “The Artist” there is only one recipient of letters, Soshenko, the narrator. He is only the recipient of confidential, private works during the first half of the second part of the novel, before N. N. fails his program. After that, he receives one letter that is not even included in the work, and is more dramatic, or expository, than confidential, as in it, N. N. does not include either his failure in the program or his marriage to Pasha. The letters that arrive after this point are entirely dramatic, consisting of those written by Mikhailov to Soshenko after the latter can no longer reach N. N.

In *Selected Passages* the difference between confidant and recipient is very important, and is, in fact, a central element in analyzing the works’ epistolary nature. As Edyta Bojanowska and Ruth Sobel note, the great majority of *Selected Passages* does not appear to be drawn even approximately from Gogol’s actual letters, and no passages directly reproduce his correspondence.<sup>283</sup> Thus, the choice to publish these works as letters was a stylistic one, one that

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<sup>283</sup> Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol*, 332.

makes specific use of the genre conventions and implications of the epistolary work.

Despite the fact that *Selected Passages*'s essays are not drawn directly from private correspondence, they are not precisely public letters. After all, they are not addressed to an editor, nor to a reading public, nor even to the passerby who has chanced upon some pamphlet provided for their edification. While the letters are intended to be read by the broad public, some of them deal with problems personal to their supposed recipient and are of an intimate tone and character. Moreover, these are not the sort of self-effacing or self-obviating public letters that tries to conceal the author's personal character – they are specifically intended to convey aspects of Gogol's personality that he was particularly keen to clarify to the public.<sup>284</sup>

The twenty-five essays that have some sort of addressee (to L-; to Count A. P. Tolstoy; "To One who Occupies an Important Position," etc.) are all examples of what Katrina Quinn calls epistolary journalism. Epistolary journalism combines the personal nature of the private letter and the public intentions of the public one. Particularly important to Quinn's epistolary journalism is the multivocal nature of the authorial voice in such works, and the oscillation from confidential to formal, from that conversational tone so characteristic of the private letter<sup>285</sup> to one which can be didactic or informational.<sup>286</sup>

For Gogol, the oscillation between public and private voices occurs in individual "letters" as well as between various works. For example, "What a Governor's Wife is" (XXI) is rich with personal references, with little moments of Gogol's friendship with Smirnova which sneak

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<sup>284</sup> Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol*, 334.

<sup>285</sup> See Bruce Redford, *The Converse of the Pen: Acts of Intimacy in the Eighteenth Century Familiar Letter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), for more about this conversational voice.

<sup>286</sup> Katrina Quinn, "Reconsidering the Public Letter in Epistolary Theory," *CEA Critic* 77, no 1. (2017): 106-108.

through the advice and rhetoric with which the letter is rife.<sup>287</sup> Yet the essay “The Historical Painter Ivanov” (XXIII), only two letters later, is a formal work, much like a modern op-ed. It bears little of the personal character of the preceding two essays (“A Russian Landowner” (XXII), while didactic, has a personal tone that makes it an intermediary between “Governor’s Wife” and “Ivanov”).

Quinn writes that “a significant feature of these alternating voices is the potential to convey textually encoded inflection that can be decoded by the reader. These elements of sonance reveal moments of sarcasm or irreverence when the words alone can suggest something else.”<sup>288</sup> For Gogol, these oscillations reveal the swings between realistic and idealistic, between the pressures of the world which are calling on him to write *Selected Passages*, and the ideals which he feels driving both the drafting of *Dead Souls* part two and *Selected Passages* itself.

The moments of profound “optimism” which Zeldin and Bojanowska find in *Selected Passages* are produced by works such as “Parting Words” (XXX) and are common to those works that are addressed solely to the implied reader. These very public letters allow Gogol to express the sort of idealistic beliefs that he wanted to convey in his earlier fictional works. Moreover, the letters are born of Gogol’s own analyses of the Russian situation and include less of his reactions to other writers and friends, and thus less of the “reality” of his more personal letters.

Gogol’s more personal letters, and the more personal moments in the didactic letters of *Selected Passages*, are those that react to his personal friends, or at least purport to do so. As Bojanowska writes, *Selected Passages* was a hastily produced work, a response that took the

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<sup>287</sup> For example, when he tells Smirnova, “My friend, you are tired.” (“*Drug moi, vy ustali*”). PSS, vol. 8, 309.

<sup>288</sup> Quinn, 108.

place of the second part of *Dead Souls*, whose writing was proving an interminable process. “His haste may have been caused by the enormous pressure from his friends, who called upon Gogol to clarify his position and ‘close the mouth’ of his enemies by producing the novel’s second volume as soon as possible. In their view, Gogol was at war and needed to parry the blows of his opponents. Pletnev, Shevyrev, Aksakov, and even Smirnova all rushed Gogol in his work and tried to impress a battlefield mentality on him,” Bojanowska writes. This conjecture is demonstrated by the fact that these letters are far more deeply infused with the harsh realities of the world than essay pieces such as “The Essence of Russian Poetry,” which are far more aspirational. For example, in “Advice” (XVI), Gogol is particularly prone to the sort of “self-bowdlerization” that Thompson notes as characteristic of apostasy – he attempts to expunge all past efforts at capturing human emotion, as he views them as inaccurate and inappropriate. His claim that he has only become recently able to see the “close relationship between human souls”<sup>289</sup> is almost laughable given the perceptive nature of the relationships depicted in his earlier works, particularly *Dead Souls* and *The Inspector General*. Realism, in this sense, is the narrowing of the aspirational boundaries of the writer – for Gogol, particularly notable is the intense need to react to others’ claims in his letters to his friends, to affirm aspects of his former self that could not be true, and to reduce his work to nothing more than a sort of utilitarian attempt to influence his readers.

That is not to say Gogol did not intend other letters to be realistic. Rather, the oscillation between these voice registers mirrors the oscillation between the poles of aspiration and realism that is characteristic of a work written in a moment of disenchantment. For Gogol, the epistolary genre, and particularly the non-fictional epistolary work meant for public consumption, allows

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<sup>289</sup> “blizkoe rodstvo chelovecheskikh dush mezhdub soboiu.” PSS, vol. 8, 281.

him these swings in tone and mood, and moreover, swings from hope to frustration, and back once again.

In these moments of disenchantment – with their readers, with their status as authors, and in their works, Gogol and Shevchenko seem to mirror, and indeed turn towards one another. Of the real people who are mentioned in *The Artist*, but who do not appear as characters, Gogol comes up most frequently. He is a returning topic of conversation or contemplation, as a feature of Sternberg's Rome or a subject of Soshenko's musings. While Gogol does not mention Shevchenko directly, nor would it make sense for him to do so, given his focus on Russian, rather than Ukrainian, or even Little Russian literature and culture in *Selected Passages*, his description of the purpose of literature in essay XXXI seems tailor-made for Shevchenko's career. Gogol does not mention Shevchenko by name, but rather gestures towards the concept of Shevchenko and what he came to embody for Ukrainian literature.<sup>290</sup> The political prophet-poet, the spiritual prophet-poet – this is the product of Gogol's disenchantment with pure art. These descriptions could be pulled from one of the critical works about Shevchenko produced in the one hundred and sixty years since his death.

Shevchenko wrote effusively about Gogol after the publication of *Selected Passages* – its public reception did not mar his opinion of Gogol in the slightest, and he was a believer in the “true Christian purpose”<sup>291</sup> of *Dead Souls* – whether or not he agreed with Gogol about what that purpose was remains, a question. It is important to note that Shevchenko had received a copy of *Selected Passages* from Repina before writing his letter to her on the subject.<sup>292</sup> Also important

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<sup>290</sup> I do not intend to suggest here that Gogol consciously thought of Shevchenko when writing “The Essence of Russian Poetry.” There seems to be reason to think that. However, it is remarkable how closely his description of the necessary poet fits Shevchenko.

<sup>291</sup> Letter to Varvara Repina, 7th of March, 1850, “*Istinno khristianskuiu tsel'.*” *ZT*, vol. 6, 54.

<sup>292</sup> He thanks her for it by way of a letter to Andrii Ivanovych Lyzohub on the 9th of May, 1848. *ZT*, vol. 6, 46.



to note, is that before his exile he had attempted to write to Gogol in order that Gogol might intervene and plead for Shevchenko to be allowed to draw during his banishment.<sup>293</sup>

It appears that Shevchenko, too, did not read *Selected Passages* as solely a work of apostasy, or as a rejection of previously held beliefs. He was as confident of Gogol's willingness to hear from him based solely on their common Ukrainian birth years after receiving *Selected Passages* as he was excited to obtain the book in the first place. That is not to say that Shevchenko endorsed those ideals – it is clear from his poetry, and indeed from “The Artist” that a work such as “The Russian Landowner” (XXII) was diametrically opposed to many of Shevchenko's views. But Shevchenko saw the continuity of Gogol's beliefs, and felt, at least, willing to express some appreciation for his work.

This affinity is particularly notable because Shevchenko's letters about Gogol were written in his exile, in the period directly preceding the moment when he stopped writing poetry and turned to prose for the better part of a decade. For Shevchenko, this period of prose is marked by disenchantment, and by works such as “The Artist.” For Gogol, *Selected Passages*, which Shevchenko had only just received, was marked by disenchantment as well.

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<sup>293</sup> See his letter to V. M. Repina, 1st of January, 1850, sent from Orenburg. It is unclear if Repina sent Gogol's address back to Shevchenko as requested - Shevchenko's next letter to Repina does not mention the subject specifically but is rather the ecstatic one in which Shevchenko praises Gogol's writing.

## Chapter V

### **Boundaries and Borders: *Dead Souls, Part II*, “Should we not then cease, my friend,” and the Poetry of Liminality**

Throughout my dissertation, I have discussed various forms of liminality in Gogol and Shevchenko’s works. In their first period, both authors engage with the poetry of destabilizing trauma. I discussed Gogol’s *Taras Bulba* and Shevchenko’s *Haidamaky*, examining both to find their common denominators. Both works depict worlds spinning on their axes, societies that have been wrenched from their normal structures by the forces of history. These traumatic destabilizations create liminal spaces that embody Ukraine’s contentious past and fractured present.

In Chapter III, I examined Gogol and Shevchenko’s poetry of flux. In this chapter, I focused on temporal instability, as well as the ways in which expectations of genre and structure penetrate narrative. I explored Gogol’s *Dead Souls* and Shevchenko’s “Dream” and “Cold Ravine,” works in which authors rethink historical narratives, emphasizing the importance of the historian themselves. Identity also plays a central role in this period, and continuous transitions of identity dominate the works of both authors’ second stages of writing.

In Chapter IV, I looked at Gogol and Shevchenko’s poetry of disenchantment. I looked at Gogol’s final published work and Shevchenko’s prose novella, “The Artist,” written in his exile. In this period, both authors look at their personal histories, and contend with their interactions with readers. These works reach for new audiences and new authorial perspectives. They stretch beyond the borders of the authors’ previous pieces in a search to escape the boundaries that have been built in those works.

By setting Shevchenko and Gogol's writings against one each other, I examined how each author evokes psychological and bodily liminality in their work, and how their techniques can differ across various works. In this chapter, I look broadly at their uses of liminality throughout their careers, and then conclude with an examination of both author's final works, "Should we not then cease, my friend?" and *Dead Souls, Part II*

Throughout their works, both authors return to several tropes. One of these is the tomb. Thirty-four of Shevchenko's poems feature a *mohyla*, or burial mound. They rise like shadowy sentinels from the landscape of his poetics, each one reinforcing the reader's sense that for Shevchenko, the *mohyla* is more than simply a feature of the familiar world around him. It is one of his most notable topoi. The poet seems almost preoccupied with this physical feature of the Ukrainian landscape, with the "Scythian" burials that dot the steppe.<sup>294</sup> Although extraordinarily prominent in his early poetry, over the course of his literary life, Shevchenko uses the *mohyla* less and less. Yet it appears in poems as late as the 1860s, including Shevchenko's last work, "Should we not then cease, my friend?" For Gogol, the grave haunts his writing, from the earliest Dikanka tales, where it features in "A Bewitched Place" ("*Zakoldovannoe mesto*," 1832) and (in absentia) in "May Night," through his longer works, including *Dead Souls* and *Selected Passages*.

As Grabowicz notes, the *mohyla* plays a major role in Shevchenko's mythscape, linking Ukraine's present to its mytho-historical past.<sup>295</sup> It even features as the title, "The Excavated Tomb" ("*Rozryta mohyla*"), of one of Shevchenko's laments about Ukraine's current state, and his prediction of a heroic resurrection and future. "The Excavated Tomb" invokes not only

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<sup>294</sup> While later archaeological work has suggested these mounds are burials from significantly later in Ukraine's history, during Shevchenko's time, they were considered to date from the Scythian past.

<sup>295</sup> George Grabowicz, *The Poet as Mythmaker*, 28.

Ukraine's mythic future, but also its historical past, one that Shevchenko sees – at the time of writing – as having put the country in its figurative tomb, its state of subjugation and its desperate struggle for cultural and political independence.<sup>296</sup>

Yet the *mohyla* remains one of the most understudied topoi of Shevchenko's poetics. No single monograph exists on the subject, and explorations remain cursory in most essays on his poetry as a whole. This presents the reader with a conundrum. How should one understand this frequently reoccurring theme? One might be tempted to see it as a constant in Shevchenko's work, an ever-present signpost in a corpus of poetry that is otherwise continually evolving. This, however, would do a disservice not only to Shevchenko's great progression as a poet over the course of his life, but also to the theme generally. Shevchenko's verse does not remain static, nor does his attitude to Ukraine, as it is conveyed through his writing. The *mohyla*, then, is not a continually reoccurring symbol that has a single defined meaning, but rather features as an indicator of state. It is static, only in as far as it always represents a liminal state, a time of change and transition, yet because Shevchenko's attitude towards that state is ever-changing, the *mohyla*'s true meaning changes as well.

Grabowicz argues that the *mohyla* represents “*revealing of the concealed*.”<sup>297</sup> It seems clear as well that throughout the poet's work, the *mohyla* often stands as a representative of Ukraine itself. It is a Ukraine that will be reborn, but also one that is a victim of its own past, and a culpable victim at that. This is particularly notable in Shevchenko's first period, where traumatic destabilization is the dominant form of liminality depicted in his poetry. The *mohyla*

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<sup>296</sup> George Luckyj has commented on “The Excavated Tomb's” direct invective against the historical Hetman Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi in his essay “Shevchenko Studies One Century After the Poet's Death.”

<sup>297</sup> Grabowicz, *Poet as Mythmaker*, 41.

represents that which is dead and will be reborn again. Yet it serves as more than simply a line between the dead and the living, or even, as Grabowicz puts it, *communitas*.<sup>298</sup> It is a symbol of Ukraine's liminal state, and as such, it brings to the poetry all those things which liminality implies to a person, as well as to society as a whole. It colors every poem it appears in with the in-between, the transitory, and the undefined. It is the shadowy present that, by its very liminality, throws light on the bright colors and shapes of past and present. While the *mohyla* is a symbol of ritual liminality, it is also symbolic of a liminality that extends beyond the ritual into the political and the psychological. Fundamentally, the *mohyla* blends the personal psychology of the poet, the ritual nature of the act of poetic creation, and the geopolitical status of the state, and carries the varying notions of liminality inherent in all three.

The burial mound is, of course, by its very existence linked to death, a symbol and also a physical locus for the catabolic processes that transmute the body from the living form to its dead component pieces. Even when the *mohyla* is metaphoric, as it is in Shevchenko's early poem "Kateryna," it serves as a symbol of death, and one that marks the transition from one type of status to another.<sup>299</sup> Yet, though the *mohyla* is an obvious symbol of death, and thus is similar to other markers of liminal states, correlation or similarity does not ensure that something is *in fact* the same. That can only be done by seeing whether the *mohyla* marks a state of transition, where something is neither one defined thing nor another, where possibilities expand exponentially and boundaries fall away to reveal the space outside of rules and regulations.

The *mohyla* plays just this role in the poem which most directly references the *mohyla*'s

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<sup>298</sup> Grabowicz, *Poet as Mythmaker*, 117. *Communitas* is, in anthropologist Victor Turner's view, that mode of society that appears in a liminal period which is fundamentally unstructured.

<sup>299</sup> Taras Shevchenko, "Kateryna," *ZT*, vol. 1, 92-109. In the poem, the word *mohyla* is used once, to refer to the metaphorical tomb which remains along with Kateryna's reputation after she kills herself.

own status in Shevchenko's poetics, "The Excavated Tomb." In it, the poet addresses Ukraine directly, asking "Oh mother, what do you die for?" The country then responds by detailing the circumstances that have led up to her present state of decay. Obliquely blaming the union with Russia, she finally returns to her own current state of transition, hinting that death can lead eventually to new possibilities beyond imagining.

*Nachetvero rozkopana,  
Rozryta mohyla.  
Choho voni tam shukaly?  
Shcho tam skhoronyly  
Stari bat'ky? Ekh iakby-to,  
Iakby-to naishly te, shcho tam  
skhoronyly,  
Ne plakaly b dity, maty ne zhurylas'.*

In quarters dug up  
The excavated tomb  
What did they look for there?  
What was hidden there  
By the elders? Oh, if only  
If only they'd found that which was  
hidden there,  
Then children wouldn't cry, and  
mothers wouldn't grieve.<sup>300</sup>

Through the voice of his country, Shevchenko asks the reader to consider whether or not the present state of decay and destruction – the broken open tomb – could possibly lead to some treasure or new path. The *mohyla* here is not simply a burial mound, but also a symbol of how Ukraine has suffered and died. And yet, even the indignities inflicted on its corpse are part of a transition state that may lead to new wonders. Ukraine has died, but, in the poet's view, has not become forever entombed. It is, somehow, at once both dead and alive, and neither dead nor alive. It is, in "The Excavated Tomb," in the very essence of the state of liminality.

This use of the *mohyla* to symbolize the liminal present continues in other poems. In *Haidamaky*, Shevchenko uses the *mohyla* to symbolize the present that remains, even after the horrors of the past and the struggles that face Ukraine on every side. The *mohyla*, singing to the wind, and standing tall and black on the steppe, is the only marker of the world-which-is-gone, the dead space that still echoes in the consciousness of the country and will not leave the state to

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<sup>300</sup> ZT, vol. 1, 253.

its torpid slumber and dissolution.

In both these poems, the *mohyla* is a marker of the present, of the dead-and-yet-still-living state of the country. It is a reminder that Ukraine is in a transition period, one that cannot be reduced to either state or colony, nation or nationless people. It is a symbol of Shevchenko's attempt to "act as intermediary between a vanished world – not a historical period but an ideal, utopian state of being – and the then-current circumstances of being Ukrainian," as George Hawrysch puts it.<sup>301</sup>

Hawrysch, while not identifying the *mohyla* directly as a symbol of the liminal, agrees that liminality is characteristic of the state of the particular Ukraine depicted in Shevchenko's poetry. He notes that many of the poems feature a dramatic shift from the past to the present liminal state, particularly highlighting "The Monk" ("*Chernets*"), "To Osnovianenko" ("*Do Osnov'ianenka*"), "Taras's Night" ("*Tarasova nich*," 1838), and "To N. Markevych" ("*N. Markevychu*").<sup>302</sup> Yet Hawrysch, despite his focus on the personal-shamanic nature of Shevchenko's poetry, only connects the burial mound with the heroic past, or with the shamanic status of the poet.<sup>303</sup> He sees the mounds as markers of shamanism, and not as symbols of liminality in their own right, symbols of a marked opening up of possibility in both the personal as well as the sociocultural.<sup>304</sup>

The *mohyla* can be seen acting as a marker of endless personal possibility and frightening dislocation in both Shevchenko's early, middle, and late poetry. It reminds the reader that

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<sup>301</sup> George Hawrysch, *Shevchenko's Literary Shamanism* (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 1997), 80.

<sup>302</sup> Hawrysch, 160-161.

<sup>303</sup> Hawrysch, 179

<sup>304</sup> Hawrysch, 111.

Ukraine exists between two empires, two modes of communication, and two cultures, and yet maintains an identity all of its own. Yet it is not a static symbol, one that signifies a unified liminal space that is unchanged over the course of Shevchenko's life, and over the creative life of his poetry. Rather, the reader can use the *mohyla* as a signpost, guiding him or her to a clearer understanding of Shevchenko's mythos, and his conception of Ukraine's past and present. A liminal state does not exist in isolation. In the same way, Shevchenko's *mohyla* does not exist without a trigger that induces the liminal state, a way of understanding the events that led up to personal and societal in-betweenness. By tracing the *mohyla* through Shevchenko's writing, one can trace these triggers, and find the cataclysms and deaths on which Shevchenko's myth-scape turns.

One of the earliest examples of the *mohyla* in Shevchenko's writing is in "Taras's Night." Hawrysch identifies lines 15-16 as markers of the liminal state, writing that there is a tension between what has been lost and the promised world to come, which figures in the poem as the moment of tension between preliminal and liminal phases.<sup>305</sup> Yet the *mohyla*, a marker of liminality, occurs significantly after this in the poem, when the poet asks "And has the blue sea flooded your hills, your high burial mounds?..."<sup>306</sup>

Here the poet asks about the physical surroundings of the world in the same breath as asking about the *mohyla*. He wants to know what has overcome them, has flooded them, has drowned them. He sees the world past as something that has not simply gone to its grave, but has been washed away by a flood, much as the world is wiped clean by the flood in Genesis. He extends this sense of desolation in the second-to-last stanza of the poem, when he writes:

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<sup>305</sup> Hawrysch, 160-161.

<sup>306</sup> "A chy zatopylo/syne more tvoi hory/vysoki mohyly?..." ZT, vol. 1, 86.



*Nad richkoiu, v chystim poli,  
Mohyla chornie,  
De krov tekla kozats'kaia,  
Trava zelenie.  
Sidit' voron na mohyli  
Ta z holodu kriache...*

Over the river, in an empty field,  
The tomb darkens  
Where Cossack blood flowed  
The grass is green  
A crow sits on the tomb  
And cries from hunger...<sup>307</sup>

Here Shevchenko places the *mohyla* at the center of a tableau of destruction, one which hints at the trigger for this new transition stage. That trigger is clearly violence, the defeat of the Ukrainian free lands, and the societal violence that has overcome them. It is not simply past mistakes or defeats, but a bloody battle, one that has painted the ancient tombs with new scarlet and called the harbingers of death, carrion crows, down to roost.

Written in the same year as “Taras’s Night,” “To the Eternal Memory of Kotliarevs'kyi” uses the *mohyla* almost identically. Set during the Trojan war, at the end of the poem, Troy has been destroyed and lies in ruins. In this moment of desolation, at the end of an empire, when the world is a blank slate and any new order will be a fundamental shift, the *mohyla* looms over the open steppe, a sign of isolation and destruction. While in “Kotliarevs'kyi,” blood does not literally paint the *mohyla*, as it does in “Taras’s Night,” it is clear that violence has triggered the desolation that surrounds the poet at the end of the poem. In the end, the liminal space in “Kotliarevs'kyi” is the same as that of “Taras’s Night,” marked by the political and the societal, one that is not solely personal, but rather indicates communal shifts. Thus, the liminality here resembles that liminality which Stoicescu and Pyrah see in Ukraine’s geopolitical situation, rather than the liminality of the individual ritual, or the liminal space that is found on the personal journey of the reconciliation of the psyche. This liminality is a political and historical space of transition, not a psychological one.

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<sup>307</sup> ZT, vol. 1, 88.

Political and historical liminality is characteristic of Shevchenko's early poems. In "Kateryna" (1838-1839) the *mohyla* is a site of death and destruction, the last remaining structure, over which orphans cry.<sup>308</sup> While it is not painted by blood here, it is wet with the tears of those who have violently lost their parents, and thus is the implied transition point, the remains after a violent path. The *mohyla* is soaked with the water of tears, not the blood, yet it is still a reminder of that violence.

In "The Poplar" ("Topolia," 1939) the orphan is linked even more strongly to the *mohyla*, especially the orphan who has been violently or horrifically separated from his or her parent.

*Bez myloho bat'ko, maty –  
Iak chuzhii liudy,  
Bez myloho sontse svityt' –  
Iak voroh smiet'sia,  
Bez miloho skriz' mohyla...  
A serden'ko b'et'sia.*

Without her lover, her father, mother-  
Are as strangers  
Without her lover, the sun shines  
Like a laughing enemy,  
Without her lover, all's a tomb  
But her heart still beats.<sup>309</sup>

Here the *mohyla* is connected to desolation, to the natural world as it struggles against the human, and to the orphans. "The Poplar" emphasizes the transitional nature of physical and emotional space surrounding the *mohyla*, setting a lone shepherd to play his pipes like an orphan on the *mohyla*, waiting and watching, unable to move because he is caught in a transitory space where all possibilities appear, yet none are fully realized.

The *mohyla* is a sign of the transitory destruction after a battle in Shevchenko's early poetry, a marker of Ukraine's liminal geopolitical space, and by Shevchenko's late work it has shifted to a more personal liminal marker, one that denotes the poet's or speaker's own transitory nature and psychological development. 1858's "Muse" ("Muza") opens with the *mohyla*, yet here

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<sup>308</sup> Part IV. *ZT*, vol. 1, 105-108.

<sup>309</sup> *ZT*, vol. 1, 115.

it is not a site of destruction or the one remaining landmark after a battle. Rather, it is a place where an individual new life begins. The poet cries out that on the burial mound he was swaddled and rocked.<sup>310</sup> The *mohyla* is here a symbol of the personal and the psychological. It represents the transition between childhood, when the psyche is open and unformed, to adulthood, when the poet is called to proclaim the truth, and the prophet is forced to do his duty. The *mohyla* marks the point of transition and transformation, when a mere man is recreated as a servant of the muse.

Miller writes of liminal space as that place where the psyche is reformed, boundaries are transgressed, and the limits one puts on oneself disappear into the fog of the normal, left behind and forgotten until they are reestablished in the post-liminal moment. While “The Slave” (“*Nevol'nyk*,” 1859) does not directly reference the poet-speaker’s journey with the first-person singular pronoun in the same way “The Muse” does, it does reinforce the *mohyla* as a symbol of personal rather than societal transition. The *mohyla* occurs twice in the poem.

The first of these two instances sets the *mohyla* up as a symbol of desolation, just as it is in Shevchenko’s early poems.

*Toi blukae za moriamy,  
Svit perekhozhay,  
Doli-dolen'ky shukae –  
Nemae, nemae...  
Mov umerla; a toi rvet'sia  
Z usiei syly  
Za doleiu... ot-ot dohnav –  
I bebekh v mohylu!*

He wanders the seas,  
Passes the whole world,  
Seeking his fate –  
Nothing, nothing...  
Perhaps it has died; and he chases  
With all his might  
After fate... has almost grabbed it  
And thuds into the grave!<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> “*I na mohyli sered polia, i jak tuiu voliu na rozdolli, / tumanom syvym spovyla. / I kolykhala, i spivala, / I chary diiala... I ia... / O charivnychen'ko moia! / Meni ty vsiudy pomahala. / Mene ty vsiudy dohliadala.*” ZT, vol. 2, 262.

<sup>311</sup> ZT, vol. 2, 287.

Here, Shevchenko shows a drifting figure, finding their way through a haunted and shattered landscape, one in which they desperately search for destiny. Most notably, in this poem, the *mohyla* establishes its correspondence with the essential dead-alive quality of a liminal psychological state. Nothingness here leads to the line “perhaps died,” a direct statement of uncertain animation, and then to the grave that houses the dead and the speaker. As Miller points out, the fundamental character of the liminal state makes it a place where one is both dead and alive, and at the same time cannot be either living or dead.

The paradoxical nature of the *mohyla*, and of all liminal psychological states is underlined in the second usage of the *mohyla* in “The Slave.” Here, the tomb mound rears up in the words of a fortune teller. There is something liminal about fortune and fate, about moments when fates seem predicted, and yet life also expands in endless possibilities, in the endless modes of interpreting a prophet’s words. Here the *mohyla* helps establish this liminal quality by recalling fictional family history and, indeed, Cossack history, marking it as gone, and underlining the seedy and distasteful nature of that history.<sup>312</sup> This reminds one of the ways in which history is used in other Shevchenko’s poems, this mode combines elements of both his early and middle periods. It underlines the personal nature of failed worlds, rather than the societal nature, as his early poems do. In these failed worlds, however, comes a personal sense of destiny that is not present in the early poems where they emphasize the fate of Ukraine as a whole. “The Slave” reminds the reader that liminal spaces appear in the personal, in the transition phase between the moment fate is determined and the instant that fate is realized.

Gogol’s “Testament,” letter I of *Selected Passages*, also exists in that same liminal space,

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<sup>312</sup> “*I vorozhka vorozhyla/prystrit zamovliala,/...Kozak otoi zliarat' dida,/Zliarav na i skhovavsia/Za mohylu, lichyt' hroshi*” *ZT*, vol. 2, 296.

and makes direct use of the tomb. He begins by denying his imminent demise. In the first part he announces, “I will that my body not be buried until it shows clear signs of decay.”<sup>313</sup> He does not want his living body confused with his dead one, nor indeed, his dead body confused with his personhood. By writing a testament and publishing it while still alive, Gogol invokes the liminal space of the tomb *in situ*, attempting to transform his body of literary work *ex post facto*.<sup>314</sup> He is concerned about the perception of his earlier works as secular calls to action. In invoking the transitional space just after death, Gogol tries to capture the infinite possibilities of the liminal, and to reform public opinions of him and his work wholesale. He also looks to the future, to how he will be viewed after his death. So much of *Selected Passages* constitutes an attempt to influence Gogol’s readers, and this effort is particularly concentrated in “Testament.”

“Shame on anyone who pays any mind to a rotting finger, which is no longer mine,” he says, chiding anyone who thinks to treat him as a saint, with relics to be collected.<sup>315</sup> In announcing that he will not be considered dead until his body rots, he also announces his relationship with God, just as Shevchenko does throughout his poetics. Yet there is a certain irony here. Gogol orders his body not to be buried until he has decayed, and in doing so, implies there is at least some possibility that he *will not* decay. In the next breath, he chastises even the very idea that he could be considered saintly. In this point and counterpoint, the instability of the liminal plays out through the instability of Gogol’s self-portrayal and perception.

Yet unlike Shevchenko, who often sees his journey towards God as simply an inevitable

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<sup>313</sup> “Zaveshchaiu tela moego ne pogrebat’ do tekh por, poka ne pokazhutsia iavnye priznaki razlozheniia” PSS, vol. 8, 219.

<sup>314</sup> Ilya Vinitsky, “Exegi Testamentum,” 88.

<sup>315</sup> “Stydno tomu, kto privlekaetsia kakim-nibud’ vnimaniem k gniiushchei persty, kotoraiia uzhe ne moia.” PSS, vol. 8, 219.

part of death, Gogol goes out of his way to emphasize his failing and stained soul. A saint's body was known not to decay after death, and to remain uncorrupted. By saying that his body will rot away and turn to dust, Gogol emphasizes his place as a sinner in a fallen world. This further points to the transition period of death – while a saint remains able to intercede on the part of the living, and does not descend into Hell, Gogol makes no such claim about himself. He shows that the moment after death is one of possibilities that both delight and frighten him, and focuses on the darkness of his soul at the time of death and the new life that he believes he will experience.

Gogol clearly marks how burial and being placed in the tomb are acts that exist outside of the normal flow of societal life. He has to leave explicit instructions for how he wishes his burial to go, because he is afraid of a posthumous glorification and burial that he does not deserve. He is concerned that he will have a burial that would somehow change people's understanding of his role, and paint him as a saint without recognizing the darkness of his soul that he himself believed was so essential to his character.<sup>316</sup> Moreover, he cannot quite avoid implying that there is some possibility he will not enter death like every other person, but may, possibly, be worshiped after death. He knows that the action of placing him in the tomb opens up potential new possibilities and fundamentally takes him as a person out of the profane space of life and entrusts him to the sacred realm. Yet at the same time, Gogol cannot abandon his self-appointed task to show to the truth of all the Russias, and in doing so, cannot set aside his self-portrayal as prophet. "Testament" sits at the center of these counter-currents of identity, and thus, sits in the space where identity is fully in flux, the liminal moment.

Gogol's "Testament" has been described as "shocking" by Ilya Vinitsky, and "miswritten" by Alexander Zholkovsky. Shevchenko's "Should we not then cease, my friend" could not be

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<sup>316</sup> See, for example, his comment in letter XVIII that in all his dark characters there is something of himself, that he is in fact all the strangeness that is seen in his work.

more dissimilar. Two end-of-life works could not produce more diverse reactions among critics. In his poem, Shevchenko, already on the verge of death in his St. Petersburg flat, calls out to the muse and to classical mythology, mapping his journey in death onto those experienced by the heroes of old. Gogol, on the other hand, is already preoccupied by his own death in “Testament,” despite the fact that he published it years before that death occurred.

Shevchenko’s last poem, “Should we not then cease, my friend?” speaks directly to this final moment, the instant before fate and death are found, the last breath before the poet leaves and the song is sung. Shevchenko addresses the personal transition between life and death, asking the reader whether it is time to leave behind the project of prophecy, the great ordeal that life brings the poet. The entire poem exists in a liminal space, and directly addresses the endless possibilities of that space. “Let’s go to sleep/Let’s go into the house to sleep...” the poet writes, metaphorically introducing death, and the path towards it. He then continues “Oh let’s not go, not go,/It’s early, my friend, early-” pausing the journey towards death and halting the psychological journey away from the bounds of the normal.<sup>317</sup> The poem’s narrative exists in this pause, where the speaker has not yet died, but has begun the journey towards death.

The rest of the poem is a mediation on this state, an exploration of the liminal theme which Shevchenko has developed throughout his poetry. It is no surprise that the *mohyla* finally appears in the last two lines of the poem. It is a signpost of the impossible possibility that the poet imagines – a house in the heavens that somehow captures the feeling of home, the feeling of life along the Dnipro. In this impossible possible, the *mohyla* rears up, a marker of the fact that

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<sup>317</sup> “*Khodimo spat’/Khodimo v khatu spochyvat’...*” and “*Oi ne idimo, ne khodimo,/Rano, druzhe, rano-*” ZT, vol. 2, 372. The translation fails to capture the difference between “*idimo*” and “*khodimo*.” “*Idy*” is a concrete verb, “*khodyty*” is an abstract one. Thus, by using both, Shevchenko emphasizes that both the unidirectional completed action (“*idy*”) and the indirect, iterative action (“*khodyty*”) should not be taken.

all is possible in the liminal space of the poem. It has been triggered by the personal journey of the poet and is fundamentally a reflection of the psychological space created in the poem, a space that allows for the exploration of the psyche, and the acceptance of new possibilities, new fates, and new duties.

“Should we not then cease, my friend?” is the final expression of Shevchenko’s preoccupation with liminality. Shevchenko uses the *mohyla* as a marker of the impossible possible, the liminal space where all psychological boundaries can be crossed, and all traditions can be abandoned. It is the ultimate expression of the personal liminal space, and clearly opposes Shevchenko’s early poems, which deal with political and social liminality.

These early works speak far less to the personal reality of the poet. Rather than dealing with the poet’s desires, fates, and personal struggles, they address Ukraine as a whole and as such, the liminal state they depict is not triggered by personal events, but rather by historical detail. This historical detail is romanticized, idealized, and mythologized – it is typically a time of blood and destruction. In his early poetry, Shevchenko is concerned with using the *mohyla* to indicate to the reader that the battle has been waged, and now the land is desolate, abandoned, and ripe for new life – it has been disturbed by trauma. In his later works, this grand vision has been personalized.

Tracking Shevchenko’s use of the *mohyla* shows how he investigates personal and societal liminality in his poetry. It connects both the personal and the societal, underlining how the prophet-poet and his country are intrinsically linked. Most importantly, it demonstrates a turn in Shevchenko’s work. In his early poetry, his idealized and romanticized depiction of Ukraine predominates, and is one of the main themes of his writing. His early poetry also depicts a desolate present, one of waiting potential, where whole societies stand at attention, hoping and



praying for a new day. In his later works about liminal spaces, psychological themes predominate. Shevchenko's poetry becomes more personal, and liminality becomes a site for exploration and quasi-magical expansion of fate. The *mohyla* guides the reader through his works, revealing subtleties that are invisible without its silent directions.

Shevchenko here agrees with Gogol that the place ultimately desired after the tomb will be one without glory, and, for Shevchenko, one where he can build a house by the Styx as though by the Dnieper, and can recall, in solitude, the beauty of his beloved homeland. Here he references his own poem "Testament" ("*Zapovit*," 1845).<sup>318</sup> In this poem he begs for his tomb to be on the banks of the Dnieper, high up on a bluff, so that he can see across the land of Ukraine. He also recalls his tomb, and indicates his own desire to remain in that place of possibility, in that land where he can continue to spin poems and create worlds untold through his own writing. Indeed, the rest of the poem is a meditation on this state, an exploration of the liminal theme which Shevchenko has developed throughout his poetry. In this impossible possible, the tomb rears up, a marker of the fact that all is possible in the liminal space of the poem. While Shevchenko knows he will likely be glorified and raised to a hero after transitioning from being just a man during his burial, and indeed accepts that fate, he indicates his desire to stay in the place of uncertain animation, in the place where he is in his own tomb, buried but still able to create, as he was in life.

Gogol, terrified of reader-reactions counter to his intentions, shrinks from the idea of the impossible possible, from the expanding possibilities of the tomb's liminal space, and instead hopes for the vanishing of all chances and choices that occurs in liminal space, during the ritual of death. "My entire dying being groans, sensing the monstrous growths and fruits whose seeds

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<sup>318</sup> Also, and more properly, known as "When I am dead, bury me," ("*Iak umru, to pokhovaite*,") after the first line.

we sowed in life, unable to see or hear the horrors which will rise from their planting.”<sup>319</sup> In death, and particularly in the moment of eulogy, as a body is placed into the tomb, all things are possible, yet nothing is certain. The liminal nature of the moment means that anything can happen, and yet the moment is caught out of normal time, and thus nothing actually happens. No possibilities are actualized until that moment passes. And in writing his *Testament*, Gogol hopes to prevent those possibilities he fears from becoming reality, from being actualized outside of the ritual space of the tomb. Unlike Shevchenko, who accepts how the moment of burial will open up new possibilities, Gogol seeks to thwart those possibilities, and to defeat the liminality of the tomb by writing instructions for its ritual long before he actually dies.

Gogol’s seeming inability to stomach uncertainty, and his own Catch-22 – his fundamentally liminal identity and his desire to be properly seen by his readers – comes to a head in his final work, *Dead Souls, Part II*. While *Selected Passages* was his final published piece, *Dead Souls, Part II* occupied the creative energy of the better part of the last decade of his life. Gogol read parts of the work aloud and shared it with friends during this period, yet the work was never completed. Instead, over the night of February 24<sup>th</sup> (O.S. Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>), 1852 he burned most of the manuscript, along with some of his other papers. He died just nine days later.

Approximately five chapters of *Dead Souls, Part II* still exist, and can be found in various translations, as well as in Gogol’s collected works and in a variety of Russian language editions. Other fragments remain in the memoirs of Gogol’s contemporaries, who also record their reactions to Gogol’s readings. These five chapters have been cobbled together over the past 180 years, since their first publication in 1855. Four of the chapters seem to be the beginning of

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<sup>319</sup> “*Stonet ves’ umiraiushchii sostav moi, chuia ispolinskie vozrastan’ia i plody, kotorykh semena my seiali v zhizni, ne prozrevaia i ne slysha, kakie strashilishcha ot nikh podymutsia.*” PSS, vol. 8, 221.

the work and the fifth to be the conclusion. These chapters are widely considered a failure as a literary work – Gogol himself obviously agreed at the moment he destroyed the manuscript. Yet this is also his final written work, and as such, serves as a conclusion to his literary journey.

*Dead Souls, Part II* is also the conclusion to the development of Gogol's theme of liminality. The manuscript's destruction is, indeed, the culmination of that liminality. It removed the work from reality and rendered it forever part of the impossible possible.

The five remaining chapters of *Dead Souls, Part II* bracket a central, mysterious portion, one to which we have no access as a full text. While critics attempt to draw conclusions about the general shape of the narrative, as well as account for its failures, there is no way to be *certain* if it resembled the remaining chapters, was of the same tone and shape, or even if it was truly the failure Gogol thought it was.<sup>320</sup> Anne Lounsbery writes about *Part I* that “a distinguishing characteristic of the book Gogol wrote (though not perhaps of the book he later wished to have written) is its deliberate insistence on its own mysteriousness.”<sup>321</sup> No matter his intentions about *Part II*, this also became true about *Dead Souls'* second volume after its destruction.

As Lounsbery writes, “in the first part of *Dead Souls*, the reader is constantly invited to hypothesize, but in the second part of the novel – which was intended to be, in one critic's apt formulation, the sermon preached on the parable of the first – Gogol planned to relieve the reader of this burden by providing answers that would eliminate the need for interpretation.”<sup>322</sup> Yet by eliminating *Part II* from existence, Gogol instead unintentionally invites these questions,

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<sup>320</sup> For an example of the type of speculation on Part II's failures that occurs, see Simon Franklin, “Novels without End: Notes on ‘Eugene Onegin’ and ‘Dead Souls,’” *The Modern Language Review* 79, no. 2 (Apr., 1984): 377.

<sup>321</sup> Anne Lounsbery, ““Russia! What Do You Want of Me?": The Russian Reading Public in *Dead Souls*,” *Slavic Review* 60, no. 2 (Summer, 2001): 385.

<sup>322</sup> Lounsbery, “The Russian Reading Public,” 383.

and accidentally encourages interpretation of his intentions without even the guide of his document.

The first chapter begins with the narrator, yet again, wondering at the reason for his writing. His answer, rather oddly, is simply that it is his personal inclination. This is in contrast to the claims of *Part I*, or letter XVIII of *Selected Passages*, where Gogol claims a specific purpose for the second part, namely, to guide readers along their own path of betterment, to show them the path Chichikov walks so they can walk it themselves. Yet in answer to himself, the narrator says, “what can one do, if one is such a writer, having fallen ill from his own shortcomings, cannot write about anything but poverty, and poverty, and the imperfections of life, digging up people out of the wilderness and remote corners of the country.”<sup>323</sup>

With this answer, the narrator introduces an extended metaphor about the wilderness that he continues for the next several (long) paragraphs. This metaphor, the introduction to the work, is also an introduction to a liminal state. The narrator invites the reader to climb a great mountain and to look out across its wide vistas. As often happens in Gogol’s writing, the metaphor shifts slowly into a literal description of a landscape, one owned by the landowner Andrei Ivanovich Tentetnikov.

Tentetnikov is something of a stargazer, a man whose fellows do not like him very much and with whom his servants are often annoyed.<sup>324</sup> He is quite unlike his beautiful vistas. Yet at the same time, he is an inhabitant of those wild and strange corners of the world that Gogol introduces at the beginning of the chapter. Tentetnikov is an immediate set of potentialities, the

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<sup>323</sup> “*Chto zh delat', esli uzhe takogo svoistva sochinitel' i, zabolev sobstvennym nesovershenstvom, uzhe i ne mozhet izobrazhat' on nichego drugogo, kak tol'ko bednost', da bednost', da nesovershenstvo nashei zhizni, vykapyvaia liudei iz glushi, iz otdalennykh zakoulkov gosudarstva.*” PSS, vol. 7, 7.

<sup>324</sup> See PSS, vol. 7, 9, for his description.

owner of a metaphor given reality, but also the most mundane of men. In his introduction, he is caught between his land and the narrator's description of his own personality. Thus, *Part II* opens with an affirmation of liminality, of "betweenness," where a character is placed between their own introduction and their stated personality.

A similar moment occurs at the end of the "Concluding Chapter." This one, however, is far more clearly an indication of a liminal state of personality. Writing about Chichikov, the narrator says:

This was not the old Chichikov. It was some kind of ruin of the former Chichikov. One could compare his inner state with a building pulled to pieces, which has been dismantled in order that out of it be built something new; but the new one has not yet been begun, because the plans have not come from the architect, and the builders are perplexed.<sup>325</sup>

Here, Gogol makes explicit Chichikov's liminal state. He is not his old self, yet neither is he someone new. His old self remains as fragments, the building blocks of what he may yet become, but those blocks are disordered. Moreover, the rebuilding has not yet begun because it has not been fully planned or realized within his or his maker's mind. Much as Jeffery Miller describes when writing about psychological liminality, Chichikov seems to be in a state between conflict and the deconstruction of his old personality, and the new self-image that has become possible over the (likely) course of the manuscript. During *Part II*, Chichikov seems to have transgressed his own boundaries, broken through the walls of his former constraints, but has yet to come out on the other side. These transgressions can seem relatively minor, as when he purchases a property in truth in Chapter IV, yet their sum leads to this final description of

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<sup>325</sup> "On byl ne prezhnii Chichikov. Eto byla kakaia-to razvalina prezhnego Chichikova. Mozhno bylo sravnit' ego vnutrennee sostoianie dushi s razobrannym stroen'em, kotoroe razobrano s tem, chtoby stroit' iz nego zhe novoe; a novoe eshche ne nachinalos', potomu chto ne prishel ot arkhitekтора opredelitel'nyi plan, i rabotniki ostalis' v nedoumen'i." PSS, vol. 7, 124.

Chichikov, one which is one of the most explicitly liminal of all Gogol's character descriptions.

Thus, in their final works both Gogol and Shevchenko turn towards the explicitly liminal. In Gogol's final published piece, he, like Shevchenko, uses the tomb as his marker of liminality. Both authors draw on tomb imagery in order to evoke the passage between life and death, that passage that is one of infinite possibility through its very unknowable nature. In Shevchenko's last poem, he also focuses on the personal journey, on the psychological processes of the poet, and on his own life's path. This character focus is mirrored in *Dead Souls, Part II*. The manuscript is introduced with a character in a liminal moment, and then concludes with its protagonist in a state of complete liminality. These final remnants of Gogol's writing are the culmination of his liminal theme, just as Shevchenko's final poem is the culmination of his.

These themes began in the earliest stages, with both authors experimenting with how to realize trauma and its aftermath in their works. While Gogol's *Taras Bulba* is substantially less heavy in tone than Shevchenko's *Haidamaky*, both works deal with the way in which trauma destabilizes the narrative around it. In their second periods, both authors examine the ways in which flux is a form of liminality. They experiment with time and its course, with the ways in which genre and narrative can turn back on themselves. In their third periods, both Gogol and Shevchenko confront disenchantment, and through it, new possibilities appear for both authors. In this period, both authors also search for new readers. In this search they produce works that sit in between new and old audiences, in a liminal space. Then, in their final works, both Gogol and Shevchenko turn towards the purest expression of liminality, that of psychological liminality. They trace this theme through their entire careers, and finally find clarity (as much as the liminal lends itself to clarity) in their final works. In these last works, questions of character and identity once again appear, questions that dogged both authors throughout their careers and have

followed them in their literary afterlives. Liminality is both a theme in their writing and in their critical interpretation, shared, tying them together as more than just countrymen and contemporaries.

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