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For and Against a Ukrainian National Literature: Kostomarov's *Sava Chalyi* and Its Reviewers

MARKO PAVLYSHYN

IN the 1860s and 1870s Mykola, or Nikolai, Kostomarov (1817–85) was an eminent and popular historian of Russia with a large corpus of historical writing to his name, all of it in Russian. In his youth in the late 1830s and early 1840s, however, he was one of the men of letters who began to reshape the Ukrainian social elite within the Russian Empire as a national elite. Kostomarov's life and works, his enduring quest for a historiography that would focus upon the popular masses rather than political and social elites, and the connections between this populist conviction and his views on the dignity and destiny of linguistically and culturally distinctive groups — 'peoples' (*narody*) — in the Russian Empire have commanded a moderate degree of scholarly interest.¹

In his memoirs Kostomarov emphasized his sense of allegiance to both Ukraine and Russia.² He was born in Voronezh province at the very

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¹ Two book-length biographies of Kostomarov are Iurii Pinchuk, *Mykola Ivanovych Kostomarov*, Kyiv, 1992, and Thomas M. Prymak, *Mykola Kostomarov: A Biography*, Toronto, 1996. See also, V. A. Smolii, Iu. A. Pinchuk and O. V. Ias', *Mykola Kostomarov: Vikhy zhyttia i tvorchosti. Entsyklopedychnyi dovidnyk*, Kyiv, 2005. S. A. Venglovskii, *Nikolai Kostomarov*, St Petersburg, 2013, was published after the completion of the manuscript of this article.

² Late in life Kostomarov dictated two substantial memoirs, one in 1869–70 to his amanuensis Natalia Bilozers'ka ('Avtobiografia Nikolaia Ivanovicha Kostomarova', *Russkaia mysl'*, 6, 1885, 5, pp. 190–223 [hereafter, 'Avtobiografiia 1885'], and 6, 1885, pp. 20–43), the other to his wife Alina in 1875 (Nikolai Kostomarov, *Istoricheskie proizvedeniia*.

boundary of Ukrainian and Russian settlement. The Kostomarovs, he claimed, were an ancient Russian boyar family. One of its members fled Ivan the Terrible and settled in an ethnically Ukrainian part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. A descendant of that refugee joined the Khmel'nytskyi rebellion in the mid seventeenth century and later settled on the territory of Muscovy with numerous others who had embraced the Cossack cause. Kostomarov's father was a Russian provincial aristocrat; his mother was a Ukrainian serf who had been sent to school in Moscow by her future husband. How much Ukrainian Kostomarov heard from her is unclear; he claimed that he knew the language very poorly when, in 1833, he began his studies in Kharkiv.³ Mykhailo Maksymovych's collections of folksongs (1827 and 1834), Izmail Sreznevskii's *Zaporozhskaia starina* (Zaporozhian Antiquities, 1833–38)⁴ and Gogol's early stories,⁵ he said, were the catalysts that transformed him into an enthusiast of things Ukrainian.

As a university student and a young scholar Kostomarov became a committed member of what later came to be called the Kharkiv Romantic School. He collected Ukrainian folklore, wrote Ukrainian poetry and drama, and researched Cossack history. Upon graduating and moving to western parts of the Ukrainian lands, and then, in 1846, to Kyiv, he developed his world-view along Christian and Pan-Slav lines, carrying these convictions into the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius, a secret society that he co-founded and whose programmatic documents he wrote. His *Knyhy buttia ukrains'koho narodu* (Books of Genesis of the Ukrainian People), influenced by Adam Mickiewicz's *Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego* (Books of the Polish People and the Polish Pilgrimage, 1832), reflected the combination of pan-Slav republican federalism and Christian providentialism that characterized his world-view at the time. In the utopian vision articulated in Kostomarov's *Books of Genesis*, Ukraine was to carry its tradition of egalitarian and freedom-loving Cossackdom into a future as an 'independent Republic within a Slavic union'.⁶

In 1847, like the other Cyrillo-Methodians, including the poet Taras Shevchenko, Kostomarov was arrested, interrogated, incarcerated without

Avtobiografia, 2nd edn, Kyiv, 1990, pp. 425–719 [hereafter, *Avtobiografia*].

³ *Avtobiografia*, p. 201.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 447.

⁵ 'Avtobiografia 1885', p. 202.

⁶ 'Spysok "Knyhy buttia ukrains'koho narodu" M. I. Kostomarova, shcho buy vyluchenyi u M. I. Hulaka pid chas obshuku v Oleksiivs'komu ravelini 2 kvitnia 1847 r.', *Kyrylo-Mefodiivs'ke Tovarystvo*, 3 vols, Kyiv, 1990, 1, pp. 152–69 (p. 169).

trial and banished to the provinces. In 1856 he was allowed to resume publishing and soon afterwards to settle in St Petersburg. Ukraine remained a focus of interest for him for the remainder of his life, but he abandoned his advocacy for the full development of Ukrainian literature and culture, proposing instead a limited role for Ukrainian-language publications as tools for the elementary education of the Ukrainian peasantry. In place of his 1840s political vision of Ukraine as an independent member of a free Slavic federation, by 1861 in his essay, 'Dve russkie narodnosti' (Two Rus' Nationalities), Kostomarov would promote the idea of an organic complementarity of Ukrainians and Russians as peoples different in character and culture, yet united by destiny. The question of whether these shifts represented a fundamental abandonment of earlier convictions, or merely a tactical adjustment of them in the light of an inauspicious political environment, remains moot.⁷

Over a period of a few weeks in 1838,⁸ Kostomarov, then a graduate student of history at Kharkiv University, wrote the drama *Sava Chalyi*, which appeared in print with the University's publishing house shortly afterwards.⁹ The play introduced an extended period during which Kostomarov did all of his imaginative writing in Ukrainian, his first published literary work in Russian appearing only in 1852. Like almost all of Kostomarov's literary works, the play has attracted relatively little detailed scholarly attention, and judgements of its aesthetic qualities have been, on the whole, negative.¹⁰ The play does, however, merit close attention

⁷ David Saunders in 'Mykola Kostomarov (1817–85) and the Creation of a Ukrainian Ethnic Identity', *Slavonica*, 7, 2001, 1, pp. 7–24 defends the view that, in essence, Kostomarov remained faithful to the one set of attitudes to the Ukrainian question throughout his life.

⁸ The time of writing of *Sava Chalyi* appears in Kostomarov's memoirs as both autumn 1838 ('*Avtobiografiia* 1885', p. 203) and a three-week period in February 1838 (*Avtobiografiia*, p. 449).

⁹ Ieremii Galka, *Sava Chalyi: Dramaticheskiia stseny na iuzhnorusskom iazyke*, Kharkiv, 1838. As was the case in practically all publications of Ukrainian-language works in the 1830s, the title and all bibliographical information, and in the case of dramas all of the text except for the dialogue, appeared in Russian. Transliterations of pre-Revolutionary titles follow the old orthography only in bibliographical citations.

¹⁰ In literary histories *Sava Chalyi* typically rates little more than a plot résumé, a remark on what the authors regard as the drama's ideological content, perhaps a reference to its folkloric source and the influence of Shakespeare and Schiller, and an evaluative observation on its averred weakness, whether dramatic or ideological. See, for example, Serhii Iefremov, *Istoriia ukrains'koho pys'menstva* [1919], Kyiv, 1995, p. 351; Dmytro Čyževs'kyj, *A History of Ukrainian Literature* [1956], 2nd edn, trans. Dolly Ferguson, Doreen Gorsline and Ulana Petyk, New York, 1997, p. 475, and *Istoriia ukrains'koï literatury*, 8 vols, Kyiv, 1967–71, 2, p. 412. Mykhailo Iatsenko breaks this pattern by pointing to the play's construction of a 'national character' of Ukrainians and its reflections on the nature (and the dangers) of a mass consciousness. 'Mykola Kostomarov', in Mykola

as a testimony to the evolution of Kostomarov's views on the desirable nature of a future Ukrainian group (or, potentially, national) identity, and on the political consequences of the existence of such an identity. In the following I inquire into these dimensions of the play and read it as seeking to modify the self-understanding and the values of its projected audience. The arguments implicit in *Sava Chalyi* may be understood as endeavours to propel the play's audience toward a new national, democratic and religious self-consciousness. First, by its very form and its departure from the burlesque tradition of vernacular literature, the play demonstrated that Ukrainian culture had the right to modern development and that the Ukrainian language could sustain the same range of genres, styles, content and tone as any language that supported a mature literature. Second, it proposed that the ordinary people of Ukraine — in their Golden Age they had been farmers who in the hour of need could become Cossacks — embodied virtues incumbent upon all who possessed a Ukrainian identity: a yearning for liberty and a commitment to the Christian faith in its Orthodox form. Third, it argued that social abuses, especially those caused by the dominance of some ethno-cultural and social groups over others, must be extinguished and social equality must prevail. In an imperial environment such arguments could not but be controversial; I therefore also explore the critical responses that the play engendered, analysing in particular a review in *Syn otechestva* that emphatically opposed Kostomarov's identity-building project from a position committed to a single imperial high culture.

Sava Chalyi was published under the pseudonym that Kostomarov adopted for his Ukrainian-language writing: Ieremiia Halka. His friend of later years, the writer Dmytro Mordovtsev, wondered what had guided this choice:

Why did Kostomarov choose the pseudonym 'Halka' [jackdaw], the commonest of birds, though agreeable and beloved by Ukrainians — the 'little black jackdaw', and why did he combine it with the name Ieremiia, which I always associated with recollections of the deeply poetic 'Lamentation' of the prophet Jeremiah?¹¹

Zhulyns'kyi, Mykola Bondar and Mykhailo Iatsenko (eds), *Istoriia ukrains'koï literatury XIX stolittia*, 2 vols, Kyiv, 2005, 1, pp. 340–44 (p. 340).

¹¹ D. L. Mordovtsev, 'N. I. Kostomarov po moim lichnym vospominaniiam', *Nov'*, 22, 1887–88, 15–16, pp. 109–21 and 212–17, and *Nov'*, 23, 1888, 17, pp. 34–45 (p. 109).

We are not party to Kostomarov's reflections on his pseudonym, but it is plausible to regard it as an indication of the kind of relationship he wished to establish with his audience. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, confident of divine guidance in the face of adverse public opinion ('They will fight against you, But they shall not prevail against you', Jeremiah 1: 19), admonished the people of Israel for their sins, in particular for serving strange gods and forsaking their own (5: 19). We know from Kostomarov's autobiographies and letters that at the time he, likewise, saw himself, in the face of mockery and derision, as the defender of a righteous cause: the elevation of the language of the Ukrainian people to high cultural dignity. 'The dawn of [a Ukrainian] literary renaissance had long been my cherished dream. [...] Love for the Little Russian word possessed me more and more; I was aggrieved that such a beautiful language should remain without literary cultivation and, what is more, be subject to wholly undeserved contempt', he would recollect in 1875.¹² As for the jackdaw, in his 1843 Master's thesis on the significance of folk poetry for the discipline of history Kostomarov speculated on the symbolic meaning of this bird in Ukrainian folklore. Like the crow, the merlin and the rook, Kostomarov observed, the jackdaw was a bringer of news. Unlike them, however, its appearance did not presage disaster.¹³ Ieremiia Halka, then, was about to be a harbinger for the Ukrainian reading public; a modern Jeremiah, he would warn that public against seduction by foreign blandishments and enjoin it to cleave to its own values.¹⁴

That Kostomarov intended to enter into such a relationship with his audience was borne out by *Sava Chalyi*. The Ukrainian school theatre of the Baroque having long passed into oblivion, Kostomarov's play confronted an

¹² *Avtobiografiia*, pp. 449–50. See also Kostomarov's letter to Izmail Sreznevskii of 8 August 1839, in Ahapii Shamrai (ed.), *Kharkivs'ka shkola romantykiv*, 3 vols, Kharkiv, 1930, 3, pp. 330–31 (p. 331), and Panteleimon Kulish, 'Vospominaniia o Nikolae Ivanoviche Kostomarov', *Nov'*, 4, 1885, 14, pp. 61–75 (p. 63).

¹³ 'Ob istoricheskom znachenii russkoi narodnoi poezii', in M. I. Kostomarov, *Slovians'ka mifolohiia: Vybrani pratsi z fol'klorystyky i literaturoznavstva*, Kyiv, 1994, pp. 44–200 (p. 101).

¹⁴ I am indebted to one of the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript of this article for the observation that the persona of Jeremiah the lamenter (as distinct from Jeremiah the admonisher) is relevant to the content and mood of several of Kostomarov's lyrical poems and of his translations of Byron's *Hebrew Melodies*. The jackdaw, too, is connected to the mode of the lament: in one of the folksongs in Maksymovych's collection (where the song about Sava Chalyi also appeared) the jackdaw conducts a dialogue with the Zaporozhian Cossacks, learning from them that their instruments of war, the sources of their valour, are in disuse and they themselves have lost their freedom. 'Halka', *Ukrainskiiia narodnyia pesni, izdannyyia Mikhailom Maksimovichem*, Moscow, 1834, pp. 128–29.

existing and popular, but relatively recent tradition of vernacular theatre.¹⁵ Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi's play, *Natalka Poltavka* (Natalka from Poltava, 1819), a sentimental comedy in the spirit of the Enlightenment, had made the point that the natural wisdom of ordinary people, expressed in their own clear and coherent language, was superior to confused thought expressed in the jargon of affected learning. Three of Hryhorii Kvitka-Osnovianenko's Russian-language satirical plays, written between 1829 and 1840, boasted a Ukrainian-speaking character, Shel'menko, a scoundrel introduced mainly for comic and satirical effect. In the case of Kotliarevs'kyi, the naturalness of the vernacular underscored the universality of the play's humanist message. In Kvitka-Osnovianenko's Shel'menko plays, by contrast, the vernacular signified the pragmatic superiority of corrupt and immoral lower-class native cunning over corrupt and immoral upper-class stupidity, even if the latter was articulated in the prestigious language of the Empire. The satirist as guardian of moral norms stood outside and above the social world shown on stage; all the social actors represented fell short of universal ethical norms, and virtue was not the preserve of any particular cultural or social group.¹⁶

Kostomarov's historical drama *Sava Chalyi* was quite different. Its guiding value was not humanist universalism, but a particular group identity — that of the Cossacks, whose sense of who they were in religious and ethnic terms was presented by the logic of the play as significant for the contemporary addressee.

Sava Chalyi was the first historical play written in vernacular Ukrainian. In the preceding decade Russian-language dramatists — Nestor Kukul'nik, Platon Obodovskii, Rafail Zotov, Nikolai Polevoi and others — had produced a Russian-language tradition of patriotic historical plays expressing loyalty to the monarchy and the Russian state.¹⁷ Kostomarov, by contrast, had no existing Ukrainian statist ideology to bolster. Nor, it appears, did he wish to: his play offered its audience the mythical image of the Cossacks as an object of self-identification, and a key feature of that image was resistance to external authority. The play presented for the audience's approbation, if not an explicitly democratic ethos (which would

¹⁵ See V. M. Ivashkiv, *Ukrains'ka romantychna drama 30–80-kh rokiv XIX st.*, Kyiv, 1990, pp. 14–19.

¹⁶ This was acknowledged by Soviet criticism, notwithstanding the fact that it placed emphasis on the gentry as the chief target of Kvitka's satire. See, for example, Iu. D. Luts'kyi, *Dramaturhiia H. F. Kvitky-Osnovianenka*, Kyiv, 1978, especially pp. 40–50.

¹⁷ Mark G. Pomar, 'Historical Drama', in Victor Terras (ed.), *Handbook of Russian Literature*, New Haven, CT, 1985, pp. 194–95.

have been in keeping with Kostomarov's developing views on history: it was at this time that he formulated his views on the mass of the people as the true subject of history),¹⁸ then certainly an attachment to liberty almost to the point of anarchism. It was not by accident that Kostomarov took his theme from the Cossack period: his audience was descended, in the main, from the Cossack elite, and its members owed their social pre-eminence to the roles that their forefathers had played in the Cossack rebellions under Khmel'nyts'kyi and then as eminent men in the Cossack state. Descent from the Cossack officer class was a significant element of the group identity shared by members of the Ukrainian gentry, regardless of the fact that by the early nineteenth century they had become, on the whole, well-adjusted members of the Russian aristocracy.¹⁹

Kostomarov took the plot of his 'dramatic scenes' from a historical folksong about a Cossack notable, Sava Chalyi, who chose to serve the Poles and for this act of betrayal was slain by the Cossacks. The song had first been published in Mykhailo Maksymovych's collection of Ukrainian songs of 1827. In this version the Poles were mentioned only briefly, and Sava's fault was seen to lie in his corrupt use of his office to misappropriate luxury goods — 'sukny, iedamashky' (velvets and silks) — at the expense of the common Cossacks.²⁰ A longer version appeared in Izmail Sreznevskii's *Zaporozhskaia starina*. Here the motif of Sava's collaboration with the Poles was strongly developed, and Sava was represented as having converted from Orthodoxy to Catholicism. In Sreznevskii's version Sava persuaded the Cossacks who came to kill him not to do so, promising to return to fighting the Poles.²¹ Finally, Maksymovych's second collection of 1834 in the main followed Sreznevskii's text, but finished the song with Sava's arrest by the Cossacks and the flight of Sava's wife and young child.²² Kostomarov selected elements from all three versions to make a narrative more dramatic than any of the sources. In his autobiographies, written much later, he regretted that, misled by Sreznevskii's misdating of the song, he had been guilty of anachronism. He thought the song had originated in the first half of the seventeenth century and set his play in

¹⁸ Pinchuk, pp. 34–39; Prymak, pp. 8–9.

¹⁹ David Saunders, *The Ukrainian Impact on Russian Culture 1750–1850*, Edmonton, AB, 1985, pp. 18–29.

²⁰ 'Duma o kozake Save', *Malorossiiskia pesni, izdannia M. Maksimovichem*, Moscow, 1827, pp. 33–37 (p. 36).

²¹ 'Podvigi Savy Chalago', *Zaporozhskaia starina, chast' I*, Kharkiv, 1833, pp. 60–73.

²² 'Pesnia o Savve Chalom', *Ukrainskiiia narodnyia pesni, izdannia Mikhailom Maksimovichem*, Moscow, 1834, pp. 90–94.

that period, whereas the historical Chalyi had been active in the first half of the eighteenth century and the song about him was necessarily more recent.²³ In fact, the time in which the events were set had little significance for the dramatic and ideological qualities of the play. It appears that in his autobiographies Kostomarov was seizing a belated opportunity to criticize Sreznevskii, whom in his later years he came actively to resent. We cannot know the cause of his rancour. In Kharkiv, contact with Sreznevskii had played an important role in Kostomarov's becoming an enthusiast of things Ukrainian.²⁴ Perhaps, as many of the allegedly folkloric texts in *Zaporozhian Antiquity* proved to be complete or partial fakes,²⁵ Kostomarov, who had been deeply moved by them in his youth, could not avoid feeling that he had been betrayed by these forgeries and his former mentor. Perhaps the offence was magnified in Kostomarov's mind by the fact that, though he himself watered down his Ukrainophile positions greatly after his arrest of 1847, he remained a friend of the Ukrainian cause, whereas Sreznevskii cooled toward it once he began to achieve eminence as a Slavic linguist. Indeed, Sreznevskii may have come to represent for Kostomarov the kind of change of identity that he had so thoroughly condemned in *Sava Chalyi*.

The play is about the way in which the life of an ambitious, but not unprincipled, young man works out against the background of irreconcilable oppositions — between Pole and Cossack, Catholic and Orthodox, and a gentry nation and an anarchic warrior caste. There is no middle ground between these positions. As the Iago-like villain Ihnat Holyi puts it, 'koly ne sokol, tak riabets'; koly ne kozak, tak poliak' ('if not a falcon, then a harrier; if not a Cossack, then a Pole').²⁶ Nonetheless, in contrast to the enmity between Cossack and Turk, which Kostomarov presents as essential and timeless, because grounded in an irreducible incompatibility of religious faiths, the antagonism between Pole and Cossack is shown as contingent upon less fundamental differences that have arisen within living memory. In the first scene of the play, illustrating

²³ *Avtobiografiia*, p. 449.

²⁴ Kostomarov's letters to Sreznevskii between 1838 and 1843 reveal the extent to which he regarded the latter as a mentor and adviser on Ukrainian matters. *Kharkivs'ka shkola romantykiv*, 3, pp. 325–36.

²⁵ For an analysis of the cultural meanings of Sreznevskii's invented antiquities, see Taras Koznarsky, 'Izmail Sreznevsky's *Zaporozhskaia starina* as a Memory Project', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35, 2001, 1, pp. 92–100.

²⁶ Kostomarov, 'Sava Chalyi', M. I. Kostomarov, *Tvory*, 2 vols, Kyiv, 1990, 1, pp. 167–216 (p. 177). Volume and page numbers in parentheses refer to the text of this edition. All translations from the Ukrainian are the author's.

the essential antagonism of the Cossacks toward Islam, a gathering of senior Cossacks nostalgically reflects on a recent Golden Age when, led by their hetman Petro Konashevych-Sahaidachnyi, they acted according to their nature as Cossacks, crossing the Black Sea in open boats, burning and pillaging the Turkish port of Sinope, slaughtering its inhabitants and releasing captive Christians. By contrast, Sava looks back upon the sixteenth-century kingship of Stefan Batory as a time when Pole and Cossack lived in harmony:

What, are we infidels? We are of the same faith! You pray to God the Saviour, as do we! You venerate and honour the holy saints — as we do! We have one God and one Christian faith — why is there such violence between us? Why do you hold us unfortunates in such contempt? In truth, there is nothing that you do not inflict upon us! If you treated us like human beings there would be no strife or rebellion, and we would live alongside one another like blood brothers! Listen to what the old folk say: 'Under the late King Stefan...' How loyally we served him, and in his time nothing untoward happened! But now... (1, 205)

Jan Kollár, articulating the principles of pan-Slavism in 1837, insisted that relationships among Slav peoples be grounded in brotherly love and that traditional animosities among them be eliminated.²⁷ In this spirit Kostomarov, who shared the Kharkiv Romantics' solidarity with the pan-Slav movement,²⁸ represented the animus between Pole and Cossack not as a natural and necessary state of affairs but as the outcome of particular provocations whose elimination might restore normal neighbourly relations. These provocations, however, were presented in the play as so severe that they opened between the two parties what the play's characters see as an unbridgeable gulf.

The chief such bone of contention is *uniia*: the Church Union. In 1596, meeting in Brest, several bishops of the Orthodox Church in the Ukrainian and Belarusian lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth proclaimed their Church to be doctrinally in union with the Roman Catholic Church while retaining its Eastern liturgy and customs. The Union was immediately rejected by a part of the clergy, nobility and burghers. In the religious, cultural and political strife that followed, the

²⁷ Jan Kollár, *Rozprawy o slovanské vzájemnosti*, ed. Miloš Weingart, Prague, 1929, pp. 33 and 69–75.

²⁸ On Kostomarov's pan-Slav interests and sympathies at this time, see Prymak, pp. 9–12 and Pinchuk, pp. 42 and 60.

Cossacks became the most powerful secular patrons and protectors of the Orthodox Church, especially under Sahaidachnyi, the hetman whom the Cossacks in *Sava Chalyi* see as an exemplary figure. The Polish nobility, the main political force in the Commonwealth, remained predominantly Roman Catholic, notwithstanding the inroads of Protestantism. Of the two Eastern Churches, the Polish nobles favoured the Uniate over the Orthodox.²⁹ Kostomarov was deeply interested in the Union: it became the topic of the Masters dissertation that he began in the year following the publication of the play. Of the ideas elaborated in the dissertation, the ones most in evidence in *Sava Chalyi* are those of the Eastern Slavs' 'ancient antipathy toward Poland' and the 'inevitable collision' between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism.³⁰ The religious rift in the play, thus, overlaps with the divide between Pole and Cossack. Indeed, the play suggests that for ordinary Cossacks the religious and ethnic difference are one and the same. This ideological and civilizational antagonism inspires the other, day-to-day provocations that exacerbate Cossack resentment toward the Poles. The list of Cossack grievances (and those of the Orthodox and the Ukrainians more generally) against the Polish rulers of the Commonwealth was a recurrent feature of the source texts on which the historical treatises of the time and the historical consciousness of the Ukrainian gentry were based: the Cossack chronicles and the *Istoriia Rusov* (The History of the Rus').³¹ *Sava Chalyi* contains two iterations of this topos. The first identifies Sava as a man who shares the Cossack *communis opinio* on this matter prior to his entry into the Polish service:

Who can fail to be morose in this evil hour, when the cursed heretic oppresses and tortures the Orthodox without mercy? [...] Who shall

²⁹ For a detailed account of developments in the religious sphere in the East Slavic lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the seventeenth century and the role of the Cossacks in them, see Serhii Plokhy, *The Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine*, Oxford, 2001.

³⁰ Kostomarov, 'O prichinakh i kharaktere Unii v Zapadnoi Rossii', *Naukovo-publitsychni i polemichni pysannia Kostomarova*, ed. Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, Kyiv, 1928, pp. 1–40 (pp. 5 and 10). Despite its pro-Orthodox and anti-Catholic zeal, the dissertation was banned on the order of Sergei Uvarov, the minister of education. For an account of the prohibition and a discussion of its motivations, see James T. Flynn, 'The Affair of Kostomarov's Dissertation: A Case Study of Official Nationalism in Practice', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 52, 1974, 127, pp. 188–96.

³¹ In 1843 Kostomarov would study manuscript copies of *The History of the Rus'*, the *Litopys samovydtisia* (Eyewitness Chronicle) and the chronicle of Hrabianka (*Avtobiografia*, 460). In his dissertation, however, his accounts of the Cossack grievances were based on published histories. Kostomarov, 'O prichinakh...', pp. 39–40.

make merry when people have their last beast taken from them, children are seized from their mothers, entry to Orthodox churches is barred, confession and communion are forbidden... (1, 173)

The other invocation of the topos, almost identical, occurs in a speech by the Cossack officer Andrii Hordii, who at the end of the play is one of the party that murders both Sava and his wife Kateryna:

Two years have passed since the Poles executed our honoured lord Stepan Ostrianytsia, tortured our brave officers and generals to death in Warsaw and sowed misery and violence in our ill-fated Ukraine. Two years: much water has flowed under the bridge in two years! All this time the Catholics persecute our faith, plunder our churches, deliver what is sacred to us to the Jews to desecrate, torment the Orthodox, defile our women and girls, and grow rich on our fathers' and grandfathers' property. (1, 179)

In *Sava Chalyi*, then, Cossacks' resentment against the Poles was represented as intense. Though depicted as a historically conditioned, not a defining or permanent feature of their identity, it nonetheless was presented as profoundly important for their self-identification in the period during which the play was set. In this respect, *Sava Chalyi* showed the Cossacks of the past as being, coincidentally, in harmony with official imperial attitudes of the 1830s. Kostomarov's depiction of a Ukrainian seventeenth-century identity that conferred upon the Poles the role of a religious, ethnic and even social Other was not in conflict with, and indeed could be read as supporting, contemporary mainstream distrust of the Polish gentry in the Russian Empire following the failed rebellion of 1830–31. Furthermore, it would have been difficult to interpret Kostomarov's negative representation of the Church Union in *Sava Chalyi* otherwise than as approving the abolition of the Union in the Russian Empire, a process that was completed in 1839, the year after the play was published. If readers of *Sava Chalyi* chose to empathize with the antagonistic dimensions of Cossack identity that the play presented, they could do so without fear of dissenting from tsarist policy.

In defining the collective Cossack self, then, the play makes considerable use of negation and distancing. The Cossacks are demarcated from various inimical Others: Poles, Jews, Turks and Tatars. At the same time it emphasizes, especially in its first half, where ideological speeches are concentrated, that the Cossacks share an object of positive identification: Ukraine. Unusually for the period, Kostomarov uses the word 'Ukraina'

to designate not merely the territory on which the Cossacks were active, but a composite abstract idea incorporating territory, people and historical heritage that lends itself to personification as mother or victim and is able to command love and loyalty. 'There is nothing that I wish for more than I wish to serve my own mother Ukraine [svoïi nentsi ridnii Ukraïni]', declares Sava's father Petro Chalyi prior to his election as hetman of the Cossacks. Andrii Hordyi bewails 'the misery and violence' afflicting 'our poor Ukraine' (1, 179); 'Ukraine grieves like a disconsolate widow', he tells an assembly of Cossacks and commoners (1, 179). Even Sava, when deciding whether to serve in the Polish army, believes he can do so without breaching his loyalty to Ukraine: 'Even if the Poles pronounce me hetman, I shall be no traitor; I shall once more be able to serve my native Ukraine' (1, 179).

Within the rhetorical composition of *Sava Chalyi* that is designed to persuade the reader and viewer to adopt the Cossackophile sentiments and the forms of self-identification described above, dramatic structure plays an important role. Ahapii Shamrai, who in 1930 offered what remains to this day the most penetrating interpretation and contextualization of the play, pointed to its indebtedness to the Romantic enthusiasm for Shakespeare.³² Kostomarov may well have been directly influenced by Shakespeare's dramas (he especially admired *Richard III*),³³ but that influence may also have reached him through the mediation of the early dramas of Goethe and Schiller — those of the two poets' 'storm and stress' period. The diligent Kostomarov read the complete works of Goethe and Schiller as soon as he had learnt German.³⁴ If the blank verse of Kostomarov's later drama, *Pereiaslavs'ka nich* (The Pereiaslav Night, 1840), may be seen to pay homage to Shakespeare's prosody, the earlier *Sava Chalyi* with its prose and its forceful language that sometimes borders upon the barbaric is reminiscent rather of Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773) and Schiller's *Die Räuber* (The Robbers, 1781). However that may be, the Shakespearean theme of tragic ambition and the sensationalism, no less Shakespearean, of a stage littered with corpses before the final curtain are both in evidence in *Sava Chalyi*.

The play presents Sava as a man whom excessive self-esteem and desire for advancement divert from an otherwise righteous path. Courageous in

³² Shamrai, 'Pershi sprobny romantychnoi dramy ("Pereiaslavs'ka nich" i "Sava Chalyi" M. Kostomarova)', *Kharkivs'ka shkola romantykyv*, 3, pp. 5–29 (p. 7).

³³ Kostomarov, letter to Sreznevskii, 8 August 1839, *Kharkivs'ka shkola romantykyv*, 3, p. 331.

³⁴ *Avtobiografiia*, p. 449.

battle, honourable in love and steadfast in his profession of the Orthodox faith, he at first both embodies and articulates the values of the Cossack community. But he craves the hetmanship, which the Cossacks bestow instead upon his father Petro. Under the urgings of a fellow officer, the duplicitous Ihnat Holyi, Sava accepts a high military command from the Poles. Upon learning that his brief includes enforcement of the Church Union, he refuses to carry it out. This costs him the protection of Polish arms just as renegade Cossacks, incited by Holyi, set forth to kill him and his wife, Kateryna. Kateryna had been betrothed to Holyi against her will, though she had loved Sava; it was her marriage to Sava that motivated Holyi to intrigue against his former friend. Sava and Kateryna are killed, though their infant son is saved;³⁵ Holyi, too, is killed once Cossacks loyal to Sava's father arrive on the scene.

If Sava's tragic flaw is ambition, his misdeed lies in his deviation from the convictions and sentiments that should bind him to the Cossack community. The play paints him as blind to the magnitude of this transgression. Mentally he inhabits a pre-national (anachronistic, the play suggests) world in which a professional soldier may contract his services to a sovereign without dishonour and without negating his essential, religiously and ethnically defined, self: 'I have come to serve my legitimate king, not to betray the faith of our fathers and grandfathers', he proclaims (1, 204). But the Cossacks know better, as does Sava's father, who begs them not to elect his son to the hetmanship: 'the truth must be told: he got his education from the Poles' (1, 180), which is to say that he is infected by an alien civilizational bacillus that has changed his nature and deprived him of membership of the Cossack identity group. True Cossacks know that the only honourable condition for one of their number is a state of perpetual war with the adversary, in this case the Pole; even strategic planning as practised by Petro Chalyi is dangerously close to treason because it involves a deferral of hostilities: 'A plague upon this hetman! It's his eighth month in office, and what have we done? We haven't even shown our faces any further abroad than Trakhtemyriv' (1, 194).³⁶ Neither the Cossacks'

³⁵ Evidently, Sreznevskii dissuaded Kostomarov from having the child killed on stage as well. Kostomarov was grateful for this advice, conceding that the infanticide would have deviated from the letter of the original song and would have appeared to be the outcome of an 'ugly and violent desire to produce an effect'. Kostomarov, letters to Sreznevskii, undated [1838] and dated 12 October 1838, *Kharkivs'ka shkola romantykiv*, 3, pp. 325 and 326.

³⁶ Trakhtemyriv with its castle served as a Cossack administrative centre in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In *Sava Chalyi* it is the setting of Act I, Scene III, which depicts the election of the hetman.

intuition of their collective identity, nor the righteousness of the warlike duties that it imposes upon them, are invalidated within the argumentative system of the play by the vices of individual Cossacks (Ihnat's treachery, Andrii's lack of steadfastness, Nychypir's greed and opportunism) or their collective follies (they are easily swayed by villains and charlatans, they give credence to unfounded accusations and exercise violence instead of justice). These faults are as inextricably part of their identity as their love of anarchic liberty and of strong drink. The play begins with a crowd scene in which Cossacks of all ranks enjoy Petro Chalyi's hospitality in the form of 'spirits, beer and mead' (1, 167), and it is a sign of Sava's status as an outsider that he does not imbibe. Sava is depicted as surpassing his Cossack colleagues in matters of military valour and personal morality, but he sins against the one thing that they hold sacred (and that, according to the logic of the play, *is* sacred): their identification with their ethnos and their Orthodox faith.

This Cossack world-view with its corresponding value system, unchallenged by the play, was offered to the audience as a representation of the mentality of its Cossack forebears two centuries earlier. But this was no picture of a remote past: the play created no distance between the attitudes and actions represented, and the contemporary audience that was called upon to judge them. *Sava Chalyi* appeared to recommend to its readers a continuity of memory and identity between themselves and their seventeenth-century ancestors. The world of Kostomarov's drama was not the tolerant, enlightened world of universal human values proposed by Kotliarevskiy's *Natalka Poltavka*, but one antagonistically divided, in the present as well as in the past, into a collective Self and a collective Other, and at the same time passionately attached to an ideal entity called 'Ukraine'. Kostomarov appeared to be holding up a mirror to a historical community contiguous with his contemporary Ukrainian audience. The exclusive identity of Cossackdom, his play seemed to argue, was ingrained, for better or for worse, into that audience's inherited experience.

In the tragedies of Shakespeare it was the interplay of characters, the modulation of belief and affect in the central figures as reflected in their speeches and actions, and the expressiveness of language that commanded the audience's attention. Christian ethics and the principle of monarchical legitimacy were upheld in Shakespeare's tragedies, but it would be unusual to suggest that this was their primary concern. The work of Shakespeare's plays upon their audiences is much more likely to be described as an arousal of empathy with, or condemnation or approval of, the characters

in their confrontations with themselves or each other.³⁷ Kostomarov's *Sava Chalyi*, by contrast, is a play not strong in the development of character or management of plot. Judged by the criteria of the dramas of Schiller and Shakespeare, whose influence is palpable in the play, the action depicted lacks adequate psychological motivation. It is difficult to disagree with one of the earliest judgements of the drama, that of the poet Ivan Roskovshenko, a member of the first cohort of Kharkiv Romantics:

As for the characters of Ieremiia Halka's dramas: his dramas have no characters, the *dramatis personae* are all pallid... Kateryna is the best drawn of them — there is some emotion there, and after reading the drama a coherent image of her stays in your mind. But even she is feebly and inconsistently drawn; as regards Sava and Ihnat, I couldn't glean any idea of their character. Holyi is a weak copy of a copy of Iago, or of a cousin of Wurm's [a character in Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe* (Love and Intrigue, 1784)], and as for Sava — what can one say of him? Where is the force and severity of character that the author wanted to depict through him? What motivates his actions? Is there any psychology there?³⁸

The main thing that *Sava Chalyi* presented to the audience was not the play of character, but an ideology that could be read from the drama's set-piece speeches and from the individual and collective conflicts that shape its plot. The content of that ideology, as demonstrated above, was affirmation of an ethnic and religious collective self in solidarity with the Orthodox Cossacks, dedicated to an ideal Ukraine, and in opposition to the Catholic Poles. How did this education of the public relate to the mainstream world-view imperatives of the day? The play's invitation to its audience was, in the main, in keeping with the doctrine of Official Nationality as advocated by Sergei Uvarov and adopted in Nicholas I's Russian Empire.³⁹ Of the three pillars of that doctrine — Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality (*narodnost'*) — *Sava Chalyi* was most obviously in harmony with the principle of Orthodoxy. On the issue of *narodnost'*, the play took an equivocal position: it painted the Cossacks as a community

³⁷ This is also the way in which critics read translations of Shakespeare into Russian in the 1830s. See Irena R. Makaryk, "'The Tsar of Poets'? The Changing Fortunes of Shakespeare in Russia', *Toronto Slavic Quarterly*, 23, 2008, 1 <<http://www.utoronto.ca/tsq/23/Makaryk.shtml>> [accessed 26 February 2013] (para. 11–18 of 54).

³⁸ Ivan Roskovshenko, letter to Sreznevskii, 3 February 1839. Quoted in Shamrai, 'Pershi sprobly romantychnoi dramy', *Kharkisv'ka shkola romantykiv*, 3, pp. 12–13.

³⁹ For an exposition of Official Nationality, see Nicholas V. Riazanovsky, *A Parting of Ways: Government and the Educated Public in Russia 1801–1855*, Oxford, 1976, pp. 107–08.

whose group identity flowed in part from a shared history and culture, and in part from its difference, cultural and especially religious, from Poles; but whether this community, explicitly labelled as Ukrainian, was *sui generis* and the kernel of a separate nation, or part of an overarching Russian ethnos, was not made clear. Where the play did diverge from official prescription, however, was in its failure to affirm Uvarov's principle of autocracy. The Cossacks were represented in *Sava Chalyi* as defiant of all authority. Within the value system of the play this feature figured as negative in some respects: it inclined the Cossacks toward anarchy and, therefore, indiscipline and ineffectiveness. But on balance the play called for a positive evaluation of the Cossacks' rejection of rules, presenting this as essential to their identity, their lifestyle and their refusal of tyranny. In Kostomarov's second historical drama, *The Pereiaslav Night*, a work that is no less deserving of close analysis than *Sava Chalyi*, the Cossack resistance to authority would be framed even more favourably as a positive dedication to the ideal of liberty. Not openly oppositional, the rhetoric of *Sava Chalyi* nonetheless called upon the play's potential audience to cherish a local, historically grounded, ethnically discrete and anti-tyrannical sense of self — an identity that, had it also included a sense of trans-class solidarity, might have been called national.

Almost as important as this ideological argumentation — and similar in political tendency — was the argument embodied in the play's language. In *Sava Chalyi* the language spoken by all *dramatis personae*, including the Poles, was Ukrainian. The function of Ukrainian was not, therefore, to be an aspect of the naturalistic representation of social reality (as it was, for example, in Kvitka-Osnov'ianenko's satires, in some of which vernacular Ukrainian and regional dialects of Russian appeared alongside standard Russian), but to be the aesthetic medium of the drama, used in full seriousness and as a transparent vehicle for its content. It was as appropriate in *Sava Chalyi* for the Pole Konets'pol's'kyi to speak Ukrainian as it was for Schiller's Joan of Arc to speak German. This is not to say that the play aspired to a stylistically neutral Ukrainian free of social association. The speech of the Cossacks possesses a high concentration of tropes, concrete nouns and fixed folkloric locutions that identify it as the language of a social and historical group.⁴⁰ Yet the difference separating

⁴⁰ Such folklorically coloured colloquialism is especially in evidence in the lively exchange between Sava and Ihnat Holyi in Act I, Scene II (1, 176–79). On Kostomarov's activities as a folklorist in the late 1830s, see Pinchuk, pp. 36–37. For an exposition of Kostomarov's views on folklore and their origin in German Romantic myth studies, see M. T. Iatsenko, 'M. I. Kostomarov — fol'kloryst i literaturoznavets', in *Slovians'ka*

Kostomarov's use of such 'colourful' language and the burlesque language use of Kotliarevs'kyi's imitators, or even of Kvitka, was fundamental. Unlike his predecessors, Kostomarov was not holding up the Ukrainian language *itself* to be observed by its audience; he was showing them the action, character and ideas of his play *through* the Ukrainian language, arguing thereby that it was a normal, legitimate literary language, a vehicle for the high-culture business of tragedy. This argument, in turn, was a constituent part of an even larger implied argument: that a Ukrainian-language high culture had a natural right to exist alongside other high cultures, including that of the Russian Empire at large.

Was Kostomarov's argumentation, both ideological and linguistic, understood in this way by its intended recipients? There is not much evidence on which to base an answer to this question. In contrast to the perennially popular comedies of Kotliarevs'kyi, neither of Kostomarov's plays was ever performed. A small number of reviews of the published text of the play did, however, appear. A long and favourable response in the St Petersburg journal *Otechestvennye zapiski* by an anonymous author (who did not identify himself as a Ukrainian or a Ukrainophile)⁴¹ understood the play's invitation to readers of Ukrainian background to cultivate a Ukrainian identity and to support a serious literature expressing that identity clearly enough. The review, twenty-two pages long, contained a detailed account of the plot and generous quotations in the original Ukrainian. Apart from a few mildly-worded remarks about weak characterization and motivation, the reviewer said little about the aesthetic qualities of the play, but in a long introduction essentially endorsed its ideological position. The review sketched the distinctive geography and climate of Ukraine and gave an account, full of approbation, of Cossack history and the Cossacks' way of life. It praised the excellence of Ukrainian folk poetry and congratulated the literature composed in vernacular

mifolohiia, pp. 5–41 (pp. 5–20).

⁴¹ Kostomarov believed the reviewer to be Vissarion Belinskii, an implausible view, given the contrast between the scorn that Belinskii would soon pour over the idea of a Ukrainian literature and the favourable attitude of the reviewer of *Sava Chalyi*. George S. N. Luckyj considers the reviewer to have been Vasilii Mezhevich, then still in charge of the literary criticism section of *Otechestvennye zapiski* (Luckyj, *Between Gogol' and Ševčenko: Polarity in the Literary Ukraine, 1798–1847*, Munich, 1971, p. 70). However that may be, it appears that the reviewer was not a native speaker of Ukrainian, despite his professing to correct Kostomarov's language, otherwise he would have been unlikely to gloss the word *kazna*, part of the phrase *kazna-shcho*, perhaps translatable as 'the devil knows what', as 'Ka-zna (t.e. Katia znaet)' (*Ka-zna*, i.e., Katia knows). 'Sava Chalyi, dramatičeskii stseny na iuzhnorusskom iazyke. Sočinenie Ieremii Galki. Khar'kov', *Otechestvennyia zapiski*, 3, 1839, 6, pp. 43–65 (p. 65).

Ukrainian for being comprehensible to ordinary people. It saw the present as a watershed for Ukrainian literature: perhaps, having developed as far as the emulation of folk speech could take it, it would stagnate and decline. But the reviewer preferred the view that, 'full of fresh and glorious power, it is entering into that period of conscious creativity that, marked by enduring works, promises a long and mighty life, a luxuriant blossoming and a rich harvest'.⁴² Noting the differences between the peoples that he called the North and the South Russians, the reviewer concluded the general part of his reflections with a passionate plea for a separate Ukrainian literature:

Tell me, how could a people fail to love this way of life, how could it fail to remember its past, if this past is so inextricably mingled with its own interests? If everywhere in the foreground of this living drama the people itself appears as an indivisible entity, an autonomously acting personality? How could a people possessed of such a rich store of glorious memories fail to have its own poetry or its own literature?⁴³

At least one representative of the general imperial public, then, understood the argument in *Sava Chalyi* and had no qualms about assenting to it. At the end of the 1830s, evidently, it fell within the limits of the politically legitimate for Kostomarov to advocate the construction of a Ukrainian identity as an identity based on historical memory, a sense of ethnic and linguistic separateness, and a project for a Ukrainian high culture. The proposal lacked only the component of solidarity transcending social class to be recognizable as a modern national identity.

Other responses were not so positive. In 1841 the journal *Moskvitianin* published Aleksandr Afanas'iev-Chuzhbyns'kyi's review of the Ukrainian almanac *Lastivka* (The Swallow, 1841). The review was highly appreciative of the almanac, supportive of the idea of a Ukrainian literature and irate at those who opposed it. It also contained half a paragraph of bilious commentary on *Sava Chalyi*, judged by the reviewer as a 'work bereft of talent, a pitiful attempt at opera or drama', possessing 'not a drop of vital poetic feeling'.⁴⁴ His judgement of the play notwithstanding, the reviewer (who did not set out the reasons for his opinion) showed in his discussion of *The Swallow* that he shared Kostomarov's position concerning the need for a literature addressing all social classes.

⁴² Ibid., p. 45.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 49.

⁴⁴ Aleksandr Chuzhbinskii, 'Lastovka, sobranie sochinenii na Malorossiiskom iazyke. Spb. 1841, v 8-ku, 382 s.', *Moskvitianin*, 5, 1841, 8-10, pp. 444-55 (p. 446).

More extended and sophisticated, and in fundamental disagreement with Kostomarov, was an earlier intervention in the St Petersburg journal, *Syn otechestva*. This was a review of *Sava Chalyi* and Amvrosii Metlyn's 'kyi's verse collection, *Dumky i pisni ta shche deshcho* (Thoughts and Songs and Other Things, 1839), which the author had published under the pseudonym Amvrosii Mohyla. The review devoted little space to the two books, but attacked the idea of using vernacular Ukrainian for literary purposes, discerning in such a practice — presciently, as it turned out — a challenge to the project of a Russian national literature for a Russian nation encompassing all inhabitants of the Russian Empire, regardless of ethnos. The review, similar in content and tone to the campaign against Ukrainian literature that Vissarion Belinskii would soon launch from the left of the political spectrum,⁴⁵ merits extensive quotation and analysis:

Let us confess: we do not at all understand the publication of books in the *Little Russian* dialect [na *Malorossiiskom* narechii]. That people born in Little Russia find precious the lore of the land where they were born; that they collect it; and that sometimes it comes into their heads to imitate a Little Russian song or legend — all that is fine and understandable. But if we see people writing and printing books in the Little Russian dialect, translating whole epics into it and wanting to create an entire Little Russian literature, we have to ask, what for? What does this lead to? Kotliarev's 'kyi wrote Little Russian songs, composed a very charming Little Russian vaudeville and parodied the *Aeneid* — that was a joke, an eccentricity; what is more, Kotliarev's 'kyi's works can be explained by his life and circumstances. But what are the young people born in Little Russia, people who are pure — Russians [molodye urozhdentsy Malorossii, liudi chisto — Russkie], trying to prove? Why does the talented Hryts'ko Osnovianenko stubbornly write in Little Russian? We do not understand, and it seems all the stranger to us that, among those writing in Little Russian, even in addition to Mr Osnovianenko, there are truly gifted people, as proof of which we can point to Mr Mohyla and Mr Halka (both names are probably pseudonyms). The idea that a separate *Little Russian*

⁴⁵ The opponents of a Ukrainian literature included the vocal and influential Vissarion Belinskii, whose 1841 response to *The Swallow* was the first in the long series of his attacks on literary works in Ukrainian. See Victor Swoboda, 'Shevchenko and Belinsky', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 40, 1961, 4, pp. 168–83; Victor Swoboda and Richard Martin, 'Shevchenko and Belinsky Revisited', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 56, 1978, 4, pp. 546–62; Andrea Rutherford, 'Vissarion Belinskii and the Ukrainian National Question', *Russian Review*, 54, 1995, 4, pp. 500–15; and Hryhorii Hrabovych (George G. Grabowicz), 'Teoriia ta istoriia: "Horyzont spodivan"' i rannia retseptsiia novoï ukrains'koï literatury', in Hrabovych, *Do istorii ukrains'koï literatury*, Kyiv, 1997, pp. 46–136 (pp. 115–24).

Literature might come into being is strange; and even if it did so, are not the Little Russians, in the first instance, *Russians*? [razve Malorossiane, prezhde vsego, ne *Russkie*?] Should they not dedicate their gifts to the *Russian* [*Russkomu*] language, our rich national language that is common to us all? Would not, by this logic, a separate literature be demanded by the Zyrianian, the Olonchanian, the Belarussian, the Votiak — by all the tribes and dialects that have merged into one mighty community, Russia? In a word, we view everything that is published in our times in the Little Russian language as some kind of strange whim on the part of intelligent people, and even, we dare say, as a literary prank... [...]

If you ask us about the merit of the actual compositions of Mr Mohyla and Mr Halka, we can say that, putting aside the Little Russian dialect, *Sava Chalyi* and *Dumky* demonstrate the undoubted talent of their authors, *Dumky* especially so. Many of them breathe an inimitable beauty. It is to be regretted that they are written in Little Russian, are of no use to our Literature, and cannot even be fully understood by us.⁴⁶ (Emphases and capitalization follow the original — M.P.)

Displaying considerable oratorical virtuosity, the reviewer delineated a field of consensus whose force it would have been difficult for a reader to resist. He — one assumes, given the historical environment, that the anonymous author was a man — worked with a chain of oppositions (comprehension vs incomprehension; pure Russian vs not quite pure Russian; serious vs unserious; and youthful vs mature) to argue that any intention to produce literature in Ukrainian was irrational and potentially unpatriotic, while the path back into the prestigious fold of Russian literature was both broad and beckoning.

The review attributes all of its observations and judgements to a first-person plural ‘we’, which begins as the synonym, conventional in scholarly and other expository prose, for ‘I’. Appeals to an assumed agreement about what is understood and what is incomprehensible expands the meaning of ‘we’ to encompass a virtual community comprising the reviewer, his readers, and others who think in the same (reasonable) way. This enlarged ‘we’ is then figured as having a special, indeed proprietary and custodial, relationship to ‘our rich national language’, Russian, and ‘our [Russian] Literature’. This relationship, in turn, confers upon ‘us’ the right and the authority to determine the linguistic obligations of writers who are deemed

⁴⁶ ‘*Sava Chalyi. Dramaticheskii stseny na iuzhno-russkom iazyke*. Soch. Ieremii Galki, Khar’kov, v Univ. tip., 1838 g. v 8, 114 str. *Dumki i pesni, ta shche de shcho*, Amvrosiia Mogily. Khar’kov, v Univ. tip., 1839 g. v 12, vii i 210 str. s notami’, *Syn otechestva*, 8, 1839, 4, pp. 149–51.

(by 'us') to be Russian, regardless of the language in which they write. Authority over writers who *should* be writing in Russian, even if they do not, extends to 'our' being able to judge their works, even if they are in a language that 'we' openly state that we do not understand well.

The incremental accumulation of authority commences with an ironic declaration of inadequacy in relation to the subject matter ('we do not understand the publication of books in the *Little Russian* dialect'). This modesty topos is immediately transparent as an assertion that it is not 'we' but the subject matter that fails the test of adequacy. 'Failure to understand' is figured as a failing, not of the reviewer whose business it is to understand, but of the phenomenon under inspection: it chooses to fall outside the boundaries of 'our' reason. The onus lies not upon 'us' to extend the boundaries of our rationality (put less charitably, to suspend our prejudices) in order to comprehend the facts before us, but upon the facts to change themselves, so that 'our' framework of understanding remains intact.

'We' give two examples of the kinds of thing that we do understand and over which, accordingly, 'we' are willing to spread the mantle of legitimacy. First, the native of Little Russia may have an understandable desire to collect local folklore, and even to imitate it a little, though doing so would be eccentric enough to justify using the verb, 'vzdumat'sia' (to take it into one's head), to describe the thought process preceding such an activity. The 'native of Little Russia', it should be noted, is referred to neither here, nor elsewhere in the review, as a Little Russian ('Malorossianin'), perhaps because this would suggest membership of something as substantive as an ethnos, whereas for the reviewer's argument it is more convenient for attachment to things Ukrainian to be presented as flowing from birthplace, a thing altogether more accidental.

Second, the literary activity of Kotliarevs'kyi, the pioneer of literature in Ukrainian, is also understandable, and for two reasons. First, his travesty of Virgil's *Aeneid* was a joke, an exercise in originality or eccentricity. Thus, as a phenomenon at the margins of Russian literature, it did not disturb its overall system; as a one-off event it did not threaten to begin a literary movement in competition with Russian literature. Second, Kotliarevs'kyi's writing in Ukrainian is explained by his 'life and circumstances'. The reviewer does not specify what these circumstances might have been, but implies that Kotliarevs'kyi was burdened by disadvantages — perhaps a faulty education — that prevented him from writing in Russian. In fact, of course, Kotliarevs'kyi was as well-versed in Russian as the next person,

as his non-fictional prose and his correspondence attest.⁴⁷ Moreover, what the reviewer overlooks is the fact that Kotliarevs'kyi's *Aeneid*, in fusing the elite historical myth of Cossackdom with the image of a culturally replete plebeian populace, mounted no less a challenge to imperial authority than did the publications of Kostomarov or Mohyla.⁴⁸ In any case, Kotliarevs'kyi is figured as a writer with a small output, concerning whom the best that can be said is that he wrote a vaudeville (the reviewer no doubt has in mind one of Kotliarevs'kyi's two comedies, *Natalka Poltavka* or *Moskal' charivnyk* [The Soldier Sorcerer], 1819) that was 'very charming'.

Incomprehensible, on the other hand, is the desire to create 'a whole Little Russian Literature'. 'What for? What does this lead to?', the reviewer asks. The intended responses to these rhetorical questions are, respectively, that there are no good reasons to create a Ukrainian literature, and that attempting to do so will lead either nowhere or to consequences that, extrapolated, would be patently absurd (at least, according to the common sense invoked by the review): a separate Belarusian literature and literatures for other submerged or indigenous peoples. But the answer to these questions that Kostomarov's and Metlyns'kyi's books embody — that one writes in Ukrainian to reinforce a particular identity and to demonstrate the aesthetic utility of the Ukrainian language — are relegated to the realm of the incomprehensible; the review locates them beyond reason and therefore saves itself the trouble of saying what they are and seriously polemicizing against them. Kostomarov did formulate his answer to the question 'what for', not only as the subtext of the whole of his Ukrainian-language *oeuvre*, but also explicitly, if retrospectively, in his autobiography: his purpose was to restore a measure of dignity to the cultural community of the Ukrainian people:

Everywhere I heard coarse jests and ridicule at the expense of *khokhly* [derogatory term for Ukrainians]; these came not only from Great Russians [*velikorussov*], but even from Little Russians [*malorussov*] of the higher classes who considered it permissible to sneer at the peasant and his way of speaking. Such an attitude toward the people [*narodu*] and its speech seemed to me a debasement of human dignity, and the more I encountered such mockery, the more attached I became to the Little Russian nationality [*malorusskoi narodnosti*].⁴⁹

⁴⁷ See I. P. Kotliarevs'kyi, *Tvory*, Kyiv, 1957, pp. 332–54.

⁴⁸ See my article, 'The Rhetoric and Politics of Kotliarevsky's *Eneida*', *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 10, 1985, 1, pp. 9–24.

⁴⁹ *Avtobiografiia*, p. 450.

Reference to Kotliarevs'kyi served the reviewer as a launch-pad for the second of his value-laden oppositions. The phenomenon of Kotliarevs'kyi could be given circumstantial explanation, but not the Ukrainian writings of 'young people born in Little Russia — people who are pure — Russians'. It transpires that young people born in Ukraine are 'pure Russians' in ways that Kotliarevs'kyi was not. What definition of Russianness does this distinction imply? The reviewer, whose purview extends only to the gentry, suggests that *young* Ukrainian-born gentryfolk have grown up and been educated as pure Russians, in contrast to the culturally challenged Kotliarevs'kyi whose Russianness was less than pure. The dash in the phrase 'liudi chisto — Russkie', however, makes it clear that the matter is not quite self-evident even to the reviewer. There is a momentary hesitation before identifying educated Ukrainians as Russians, a hesitation that could be translated as meaning, 'who else could they be but...'. The pause signified by the dash inadvertently brings to mind that other group definitions might be possible, and that ethno-cultural self-identification might be less subject to metropolitan consensus than to individual choice.

The definition of 'pure Russianness' as an acquired attribute makes 'Russianness' a trans-ethnic concept based on possession of a high culture marked as Russian. Non-Russianness, or 'impure Russianness' like that of Kotliarevs'kyi, accordingly, is a condition of cultural underdevelopment. 'Pure Russianness' confers privileges: participation in the cultural commonwealth circumscribed by 'the *Russian* language, our rich national language that is common to us all', but also in 'one mighty community, Russia', into which many otherwise insignificant 'tribes and dialects' have merged, or, more precisely, 'flowed' ('slivshiiasia'). The metaphor of tributaries flowing into a major river would have a long life: in the twentieth century it helped articulate the theory of the 'merging of nationalities' ('sliianie narodov') into a 'new historical entity, the Soviet man'.⁵⁰ On the other hand, these privileges also imposed responsibilities: young Ukrainian writers as 'pure Russians' should 'dedicate their gifts to the *Russian* language'. The wording is scarcely accidental: these literati would be working, not for the further development of the Russian language, but for its exaltation. Though modern literary Russian, according to the consensual view, had only taken its canonical shape under the influence of Pushkin, who had not been dead for two years when *Sava Chalyi* was published, the reviewer saw it already as an object of veneration, 'rich',

⁵⁰ For an account of this and other topoi of transnational unity as used in Soviet discourse, see Lowell Tillet, *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities*, Chapel Hill, NC, 1969.

'national' and unifying ('common to us all'). Young writers were under obligation to 'dedicate' ('posviashchat') their gifts to it. The metaphoric use of the religiously coloured verb 'posviashchat' (in its literal meaning 'to bless' or to 'consecrate') implied that the young Ukrainian-born writer had a sacred duty toward Russian culture; failure to fulfil it would smack of impiety. (The reviewer assumed the authors of the works under review to be Ukrainian-born. In the case of Metlyns'kyi, who was born in Poltava province, this was true. But Kostomarov, born in Voronezh province near to what was then the Russian-Ukrainian ethno-linguistic boundary, had a father who identified himself as Russian and was brought up in a culturally Russian household, his Ukrainian mother notwithstanding. How the reviewer might have responded to the idea that in the person of Ieremiia Halka a Russian-born 'pure Russian' was assiduously constructing Ukrainian high culture remains to be imagined.)

The classification of Mr Mohyla and Mr Halka as 'young' made possible the introduction of the topos of the (forgivable) folly of youth and, thus, the hope that maturity would bring an end to their incomprehensible behaviours that border on the sacrilegious. Writing in Ukrainian received negative labels of increasing intensity. Kotliarevs'kyi's writing was a mere eccentricity; that of the younger generation is at first incomprehensible, then strange, then a whim ('prikhot'), and finally it is labelled a 'prank' ('shalost'; the noun is a direct relative of the verb 'shalet', to go mad). However labelled, writing literature in Ukrainian is irrational.⁵¹

The problem with putting all of this irrationality down to the folly of youth was the fact that the best known and most respected prose writer in Ukrainian at the time, Hryhorii Kvitka-Osnovianenko, was in his fifty-first year when the review appeared. Kvitka's writings in

⁵¹ On the basis of this use of the term 'shalost' to deprecate the project of developing a Ukrainian high literature, two of the anonymous peer reviewers of the manuscript of this article conjectured that the author of the review may have been Nikolai Polevoi, who during 1838–40 was editor of the journal *Syn otechestva* in which the review first appeared in 1837. Polevoi's review of Kyrylo Topolia's play, *Chary* (Magic), referred to Kotliarevs'kyi's *Eneida* as 'umnaia shalost' (an intelligent prank). (Quoted here from a later collection of Polevoi's publications, Nikolai Polevoi, 'Chari, ili neskol'ko stsen iz narodnykh bylei i razskazov Ukrainskikh. Sochinenie Kirilla Topoli. Moskva, 1837 g', *Ocherki russkoi litteratury: Sochinenie Nikolaia Polevago*, 2 vols, St Petersburg, 1839, 2, pp. 483–510 [p. 489]). The review, while praising *Chary* for its naive unpretentiousness, dismissed the view of 'some intelligent and educated denizens of Ukraine' that there 'may yet exist a national [*narodnaia*] Little Russian literature'; it found 'amusing' 'the idea of the artificial creation of a distinctive Little Russian poetry, or the notion that Little Russia can be the subject of a distinctive drama, epic, lyric and novel such as would constitute a separate literature' (pp. 488–89).

Russian, in Ukrainian and in Russian translation from the Ukrainian appeared in several Moscow and St Petersburg journals in the late 1830s and early 1840s and enjoyed popularity and critical success.⁵² They could not be easily overlooked. For all his professed failure to understand Ukrainian literature, the reviewer was sufficiently well informed about it to know, pseudonyms notwithstanding, that Mr Mohyla and Mr Halka could plausibly be labelled as young, while Mr Osnovianenko could not. Accordingly, while fully acknowledging Osnovianenko's talent, the reviewer accused him, not of youthful folly, but of stubbornness. This form of the *captatio benevolentiae* — praising the man while deploring his activity — was extended to Kostomarov and Metlyn's'kyi. It assured the two authors that the review was critical not of them, but of the idea of a Ukrainian literature. On the contrary, the reviewer deemed them to be 'intelligent people' and their work to be of 'inimitable beauty', testifying to their 'undoubted talent'. These virtues, unfortunately, could not be broadly acknowledged because of these young writers' insistence upon writing in Ukrainian. By implication, then, the reviewer offered them, as a reward for returning to Russian literature, the promise of recognition, as well as the opportunity to perform their patriotic cultural duty.

The review constitutes an almost perfectly constructed argument: almost, but not quite. The very last sentence contains a *faux pas* that puts under question all the previous skilful work: it lets slip that 'we' — the strong 'we', nourished throughout the course of the review, that stands for the Russian public and, indeed, Russian culture itself — do not fully understand (in this case, linguistically comprehend) the works under review. If that is the case, the alert reader would be obliged to ask, what is the value of the generalized praise heaped upon Osnovianenko, Halka and Mohyla? And if that praise is of doubtful value, what guarantee is there of their triumphant entry into Russian literature? And finally, if Russian and Ukrainian are sufficiently different for a Russian critic to be unable fully to understand a Ukrainian text, perhaps they are also sufficiently different to support different literatures and even different literary institutions, including different institutions of literary criticism.

Kostomarov did not read the review when it first came out,⁵³ and it is unclear whether he did so subsequently. There is some irony in the fact that

⁵² Belinskii, for example, wrote in 1839 of Kvitka's story, 'Marusia', having excited 'the general enthusiasm of the public and the unanimous praise of all the journals'. V. G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 13 vols, Moscow, 1953–59, 3, p. 52.

⁵³ Kostomarov, letter to Sreznevskii, 8 August 1839, *Kharkivs'ka shkola romantykyv*, 3, p. 331.

later in life he developed a scepticism concerning the need for and possibility of a Ukrainian high literature that, while far from the condescending tone of the review in *Syn otechestva*, echoed its content.⁵⁴ In the late 1830s and early 1840s, however, he was more than ever an enthusiast and builder of a Ukrainian national literature, which in his 'Obzor sochinenii, pisannykh na malorossiiskom iazyke' (Survey of Compositions Written in the Little Russian Language, 1843) he presented as 'a desideratum of the times, for it flows from the source that invigorates a genuine society'.⁵⁵ In *Sava Chalyi* Kostomarov's design for the ideal national identity that this literature should foster was still incomplete. In particular, he was uneasy about incorporating into this identity unreserved approval for Cossackdom, given the role in the Cossack ethos of violence and cultural animus. Kostomarov's next play, *Pereiaslavs'ka nich*, published in 1840 in the almanac, *Snip* (The Sheaf), would offer a radical correction, in a spirit of Christian forbearance, pan-Slav reconciliation and trans-class ethno-cultural solidarity, to his project for an ideal audience.

As for the reception of *Sava Chalyi* by its few reviewers, it reflected, in the first instance, the marginal quality of Ukrainian literature in the Russian Empire in the 1830s. There being no journals directed at a discrete Ukrainian market or interest group, the reviews appeared in periodicals that addressed the educated readership of the Russian Empire at large. Even if their authors identified themselves in other contexts as Ukrainian (as Afanas'iev-Chuzhbyn's'kyi did), in their reviews for St Petersburg or Moscow journals they adopted the role of representatives of a single, primarily Russian-reading, audience. From that standpoint they addressed their tasks of informing this audience and, through their judgements, shaping its cultural choices and opinions. Whether the judgement was favourable or unfavourable, it was in the first instance about the anomalous place within the imperial literary sphere of works composed in a language that was not Russian, but not uncontroversially foreign, either. The

⁵⁴ In several essays from the 1860s onward Kostomarov argued that the Ukrainian language should be used for the early education of the Ukrainian peasantry, but that 'raising the Little Russian language to the level of an educated language, a literary language in the higher sense of the word, utilizable in all branches of knowledge and for communication in highly developed human societies was a tempting idea, but its impracticality was obvious at first glance'. Kostomarov, 'Malorusskaia literatura' [1871], in *Slovians'ka mifolohiia*, pp. 314–25 (p. 322). See also, for example, his 'Mysli iuzhnorusa: 1. O prepodavanii na iuzhnorusskom iazyke' [1862], *ibid.*, pp. 309–13, and 'Zadachi ukrainofil'stva' [1882], N. I. Kostomarov, *Russkie inorodtsy*, Moscow, 1996, pp. 554–68.

⁵⁵ M. I. Kostomarov, 'Obzor sochinenii, pisannykh na malorossiiskom iazyke', in Kostomarov, *Tvory*, Kyiv, 2 vols, 1967, pp. 375–93 (p. 378).

discussion concerned not so much the merit of the works as the broader question of whether it was appropriate for them to appear in Ukrainian. Where the verdict was positive, as in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, this was because of the perceived beauties — natural, unrefined, pre-civilizational — of the folklore from which all Ukrainian-language cultural production was seen to spring, and because of the intrinsic interest that the Ukrainian theme, especially in its historical aspect, was believed to possess. The value of Ukrainian-language works of literature lay in their being different from those of 'our northern-Russian literature',⁵⁶ and yet part of it; the metaphor of Ukraine as 'the Russian Italy'⁵⁷ suggested a pleasant interplay of the remote and the familiar that affirmed the imperial cultural space as an instance of comfortable unity in variety.

Where, on the other hand, the reviewer's judgement came down against the nascent Ukrainian literature, it did so on the basis of quite a different vision. The reviewer for *Syn otechestva* already imagined the future of the imperial expanse, or at least the East Slavic part of it, as tightened up in line with a modern national model, possessing a unified high culture carried in a single language, Russian, and requiring of the carriers of that high culture a single mode of national self-identification. Deviations from this model were to be combated with a combination of threats and promises, of scorn and flattery, for the alternative was to tolerate the evolution within an insufficiently disciplined imperial cultural space of national literatures other than Russian subtending national identities other than the Russian. The reviewer went as far as to acknowledge that, unchecked, such tendencies might divert energies from the project of consolidating imperial culture as a unitary grand national culture. What remained unspoken was the possibility that these tendencies were already, implicitly, national challenges to empire.

⁵⁶ *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1839, p. 45.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 46.