



The President and Fellows of Harvard College

Three Perspectives on the Cossack Past: Gogol', Ševčenko, Kuliš

Author(s): GEORGE G. GRABOWICZ

Source: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (June 1981), pp. 171-194

Published by: [Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41035904>

Accessed: 29/09/2014 23:49

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute and The President and Fellows of Harvard College are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Three Perspectives on the Cossack Past: Gogol', Ševčenko, Kuliš

GEORGE G. GRABOWICZ

There is little doubt that the Cossack past animates Ukrainian Romanticism and provides its most productive theme. Indeed, its impact is also strongly felt beyond the bounds of Ukrainian literature, for it becomes one of the strongest and most ramified common themes of Polish and Russian Romanticism.¹ Beginning with the pre-Romantics, various writers—in Polish literature the so-called Ukrainian School, the Cossacophiles, the conservatives of the “St. Petersburg Coterie,” and finally Słowacki, and in Russian literature the Decembrists (above all Ryleev), Puškin, and Gogol' himself—have turned to the events of the Ukrainian Cossack past not only to find a fascinating and colorful subject matter, but also to illustrate the turbulence of history, and, in fact, to better understand their own respective national past. This, of course, is all the more applicable to Ukrainian literature. Here the broad phenomenon of Cossackdom was the subject of purely literary and imaginative concerns, beginning with Metlyns'kyj and Kostomarov, of ethnographic interests (e.g., of Sreznevskij and Maksymovyč), and finally of concerted historical and historiographic work, primarily by Kuliš and Kostomarov. Ultimately, in a complex evolution and synthesis of these various modalities, an understanding and conceptualization of the Cossack past provided the basis for a new Ukrainian national consciousness.

The central role played by Gogol', Ševčenko, and Kuliš in this process, in modern Ukrainian literature, and in Slavic Romanticism as a whole is also unquestionable. All three are preeminent literary artists whose influence, each in its own way, is visible to this day. They all share a common Ukrainian cultural heritage; at the same time, they all leave a profound mark, especially in the case of Gogol', on the broader Russian imperial

¹ An extended treatment of this subject, some of the highlights of which are presented in this article, appears in my forthcoming book, *The Ukraine as Myth: A Study of Polish, Russian and Ukrainian Romantic Literature*.

context. They are, to some extent at least, contemporaries, and, in varying degree, they share a common Romantic poetics. Most obviously, each turns, with an almost obsessive fascination, to the same past. And yet, it is the profound differences in their expression of this central interest and in their formulation of a vision of Cossackdom that are the most instructive for the literary critic—and, I would submit, for the student of modern Ukrainian national consciousness.²

The differences in “perspective” to which our attention is here directed exist on a deep level, i.e., in the very mode of apprehending and expressing the subject. The level of events, of certain characterizations, of various formal devices, etc., may be common to all three writers, but this is a *surface* level which, for our purposes, is of secondary importance. Rather than dwelling, as is done so frequently (and superficially), on the given writer’s evocation of Cossack heroism and patriotism or his literary and historical sources, I will focus on what I take to be more fundamental, that is, the basic nature of his code. For it is only by knowing the code that we can begin to understand the encoded contents.

In terms of such a code, the differences between them are indeed crucial. In the critical tradition, the writings of Gogol’, Ševčenko, and Kuliš have at various times been called historical, and all three authors’ depictions of the Cossack past have been variously considered examples of historical fiction.³ I submit, however, that in Gogol’ and Ševčenko

² The fact that Gogol’ wrote in Russian and is generally considered a Russian writer is not, to my mind, an instance of just such a basic difference. This, as I have argued elsewhere (“Toward a History of Ukrainian Literature,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 1, no. 4 [December 1977]: 520–23 and *passim*), does not in and of itself divorce Gogol’ from Ukrainian literature. In various periods of its history, Ukrainian literature has been bilingual (relying also on Polish and Russian), and in the first half of the nineteenth century, virtually all Ukrainian writers, including Ševčenko and Kuliš, wrote as much, or even more, in Russian as they did in Ukrainian; this does not make these writings, or these writers, any less a part of Ukrainian literature. At the same time, I am not arguing that the very fact of being born Ukrainian makes Gogol’ a Ukrainian writer. The issue is rather that literature—any literature—is a reflection and an emanation of a culture; in Gogol’’s case, his writings, especially his “Ukrainian stories, *Večera na xutore bliz Dikan’ki* and *Mirgorod*, are profoundly rooted in Ukrainian culture and its various traditions (and indeed, as critical practice has tended to show, are rather incomprehensible outside that context) and for that reason he should be considered—at the very least in his early writings—a Russian *and* a Ukrainian writer. On the other hand, the given writer’s *conscious* formulation of his national identity—in Gogol’’s case, his claim of having both a Ukrainian and a Russian soul, his *dvoedušie*—is important, but that is a separate subject.

³ On Gogol’, cf., for example, A. Karpenko, *Narodnye istoki epičeskogo stilja istoričeskix povestej N. V. Gogolja* (Černivci, 1961), or S. Mašinšij, *Istoričeskaja povest’ Gogolja* (Moscow, 1940); on Ševčenko, see M. Marčenko, *Istorične mynule ukrajin’skoho narodu v tvorčosti T. H. Ševčenka* (Kiev, 1957), Ju. Margolis, *Istoričeskije*

what has been called history is fully and quintessentially myth; their structures of conceptualization and narrative composition, and the cognitive values they impart, are mythical, not rational-historical. Kuliš, in contrast, was indeed a writer of historical fiction, and, for that matter, also a historian in the strict or academic sense. But this, too, must be qualified, for the actual, determining feature of his perspective on the Cossack past is not “merely” historical, but *a historicist debunking of myth*, specifically of Ševčenko’s myth. Rather than confining himself to an objectivist stance, or to the correction of errors and “sins” against historical truth, Kuliš constructs nothing short of a program which is not only rationalistic, but militantly anti-mythical. In intrinsic terms, the difference between Gogol’ and Ševčenko, on the one hand, and Kuliš, on the other, is the difference between symbolic and rational thought.

As I use it here, myth is not only a narrative that tells a “sacred,” deep, and abiding—and intrinsically unverifiable—“truth,” but also a complete, closed, symbolic system. A myth is always telling us something essential about the cultural reality; its purpose may be explanatory or normative, i.e., as a prescription for, or a reinforcement of, existing social structures; in either case, it is an attempt to grasp the *totality* of a given set of phenomena by non-rational, symbolic means. In this reliance on the symbolic and the affective also lies the great power of myth. In its basic functioning myth moves, as Lévi-Strauss has argued, from structure to event, that is, a basic relationship or “truth” may generate any number of plot lines, events, or characters.⁴ The structure in question is both psychological (personal) and collective (universal), which is to say that the myth articulated by an individual writer is a *mediation* between personal and collective thought. (Anonymous, i.e., primitive or classical myth, on the other hand, is purged of the personal element in the retelling; it becomes worn down and polished, like a pebble by the waves of the sea, so that only the essence of collective thinking remains.)

* * *

Gogol’, as we know, tried his hand at writing a history of the Ukraine, but

vzgljady T. G. Ševčenko (Leningrad, 1964), or *Istoryčni pohljady T. H. Ševčenko*, ed. I. O. Huržij et al. (Kiev, 1964). In the case of Kuliš the question seems self-evident; cf. B. Nejman, “Kuliš i Val’ter Skott,” *Pantelejmon Kuliš: Ukrajins’ka akademija nauk, Zbirnyk istoryčno-filolohičnoho viddilu*, vol. 53 (Kiev, 1927), pp. 127–56.

⁴ See Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth,” in *Myth: A Symposium*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Bloomington, 1972), pp. 81–106; and idem, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago, 1966).

he quickly abandoned the project, suggesting that the reason lay in his disappointment with the available chronicles.⁵ But it is clear that history—whether written or taught—was quite uncongenial to him. Its very nature required a reasoned exposition of events, causes, dates, etc., whereas Gogol' passionately wanted to convey the *totality* of the past, with all its emotional states and experiences. In fact, he wished to make the past contemporaneous, timeless—and this can be done only in the symbolic system of a myth.

Such a myth, encompassing both the past and the present, is given in Gogol's Ukrainian stories of *Dikan'ka* and *Mirgorod*. No one story gives a full statement of the myth, but when they are superimposed and ordered, a coherent world results, i.e., a world which, despite its comedy and exuberant activity, is in decline and moving toward decrepitude. It is a world, as we see from the story "Zakoldovano mesto," that is suspended in an abnormal state, where almost everything is ultimately "ne tak." Taking the stories cumulatively, it is a world that is "cursed" or, more precisely, in the process of transition.⁶ That world's full meaning—especially with reference to the past and to Cossackdom—can best be seen by looking more closely at the longest story of the two cycles, *Taras Bul'ba*.

In many respects *Taras Bul'ba* is the most revealing exposition of Gogol's myth of the Ukraine; it is also a work that is almost universally misunderstood. In the pre-Revolutionary and Soviet periods, it was read—and indeed still is today—as a sublime statement of patriotism, sacrifice for the fatherland, bravery, friendship, and genuine democratic heroism. At the same time, it is taken as historically true, in fact, as a higher synthesis of history. In short, the story is perceived precisely as a myth—as something that is both ideal and true. What is most striking, however, is that such perceptions have become established not only in the popular, but also in the Soviet scholarly opinion. There, of course, it is called "history," not "myth," as we see in this statement from a representative study:

The power of Gogol's novel lies not in the creation of a concrete historical event or figure, etc., but in the fact that it could include highly important features typical

⁵ See his letter to Sreznevskij of 6 March 1834, in N. V. Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij* (hereafter *PSS*), vol. 10 (Moscow, 1952), pp. 298–99. See also George S. N. Luckyj, *Between Gogol' and Ševčenko* (Munich, 1971), p. 111 and *passim*.

⁶ Abnormality, suspension of the normal laws of existence, or, metaphorically speaking, the quality of being "cursed," are precisely the defining features of what Victor Turner, and Van Gennep before him, call "liminality," i.e., the central phase of an individual's or a group's rite of passage; cf. below.

of the life of the *whole* epoch of the National Liberation struggle of the Ukrainian people against the "Polish Yoke." Nalyvajko and Pavljuk, Taras Trjasylo and Ostrjanycja could recognize themselves in Taras Bul'ba. . . . And in this lies the greatest triumph of the realistic historicism of the artist.⁷

The classical features of myth, its totality and yet factual indefiniteness, are taken as aspects of "realistic historicism." (This tendency to blend the real and the "ought to be," one might add, is characteristic of the pre-secularized nature of official Soviet thought in general, not only of its literary criticism.)

To state it most succinctly, the myth in *Taras Bul'ba* presents the flowering of Cossack strength, the emergence of conflict, and the passing of the Cossack "spirit" into immortality and a new sphere. As in Gogol's other Ukrainian works, the basic structure here is founded on dualism and constitutes a rite of passage in the form of initiation.⁸

The most basic dichotomy for Gogol' is between man and woman, and upon it he builds the further distinction between the settled and the Cossack way of life.⁹ These are presented at the very beginning, as soon as Taras Bul'ba's sons come home from Kiev. The difference between the male and the female world is immediately signalled on a level close to Gogol's heart—in the choice of food. Thus, as they prepare to welcome their children, Taras tells his wife: "Ne nužno pampušek, medovikov, makovnikov i drugix pundikov; tašči nam vsego barana, kozu davaj, medy sorokaletye! Da gorelki pobol'se, ne s vydumkami gorelki, s izjumom i vsjakimi vytreben'kami, a čistoj, pennoj gorelki . . ." (p. 43).¹⁰ (The contrast, one might add, with the gamut of confitures and recherche brandies of the old-world landowners, the Tovstogubs, could not be greater.) The dichotomy extends to other habits, as well: thus while the women (and the peasants) sleep in their houses, Taras and his sons sleep outside under the stars. The issue is fully dramatized when Taras Bul'ba feels the call of the male, Cossack world:

Какого дьявола мне здесь ждать? Чтоб я стал гречкосеем, домоводом, глядеть за овцами да за свиньями да бабиться с женой? Да пропади она: я козак, не хочу! (p. 45)

⁷ Mašinskij, *Istoričeskaja povest' Gogolja*, p. 137.

⁸ This is true of various mythical treatments of the Ukraine, e.g., Rzewuski's *Zaporožec* or, especially, Słowacki's *Sen srebrny Salomei*; cf. *The Ukraine as Myth*.

⁹ Cf. his "Vzgljad na sostavlenie Malorossii," published in the *Arabesques*, with the subtitle "A Fragment from the History of the Ukraine. Volume I, Book I, Chapter I." This is all that ever appeared of Gogol's planned work in "six small or four large volumes."

¹⁰ *PSS*, vol. 2 (1948), pp. 43. All subsequent page references in the text are to this edition.

And this, in turn, becomes a general call to arms in the words of an archetypal *esaul*; significantly, that call asserts the Cossack life and negates the settled world:

Эй вы, пивники, броварники! полно вам пиво варить, да валяться по запечьям, да кормить своим жирным телом мух! Ступайте славы рыцарской и чести добиваться! Вы, плугари, гречкосеи, овцепасы, баболюбы! полно вам за плугом ходить, да пачкать в земле свои желтые чеботы, да подбираться к жинкам и губить силу рыцарскую! Пора доставать козацкой славы! (p. 47)

And we are told that just as Taras breaks up the pots and pans and bottles in his house (and this, we remember, was precisely the universe of Afanasij Ivanovič and Pulxerija Ivanovna Tovstogub), so the Cossacks, too, break the tools of their trade and heed the call.

The Zaporozhian Sich at which they arrive is the epitome of the Cossack world. It is characterized by revelry and violence (e.g., the attack on the Jews), by the liberating ritual of the dance, by self-sufficiency (e.g., the vignette of the Cossack darning his own shirt)—and by the absence of women. Moreover, it is a world unencumbered by possessions. In contrast to Ivan Ivanovič Perepenko, the character in “The Two Ivans” who has everything, all the Cossacks’ belongings are communal; in contrast to the distant relative of the Tovstogubs who goes to market to compare prices and never spends more than a ruble, we are told that the Zaporozhians “*nikogda ne ljubili trgovat’sja, a skol’ko ruka vynula iz karmana deneg, stol’ko i platili*” (p. 66).

The distinction between the Cossack world and that of the settled toilers is only the first of the dichotomies, and, as we see, the principle of opposition extends to the Cossacks themselves. Although dispute and bickering accompanied the election of the *koševoj*, this was but a temporary friction, not a basic division. Such a division occurs when one half of the Cossacks decides to fight the Turks and the other half votes to go against the Poles, and it is given symbolic importance: “*I vse stali perechodit’, kto na pravuju, kto na levuju storonu*” (p. 126). This, however, is but a foreshadowing of a much more ominous division. Later in the story, a number of Cossacks want to make peace with the Poles, but for Taras Bul’ba this is a betrayal of a sacred cause: “*Ej, getman i polkovniki!*” he shouts, tearing his tuft of hair, “*ne sdelajte takogo bab’ego dela! ne verte ljaxam: prodadut psjajuxi!*” (emphasis mine; p. 167). When Taras breaks his sword in anger and frustration, his act symbolizes the division that has entered into the Cossack world.

The arena for the full dramatization of division, however, is the microcosm of the family. Taras’s son Andrij betrays the faith and the fatherland

for the love of a Polish woman. But the love itself is a functional, “manipulative” element: as such it corresponds to various tried plot devices (such as, for example, the Scottian device of lovers separated by a siege).¹¹ On the deeper level, Andrij’s rejection of the Cossack cause is a movement toward the world of women, “family,” and personal values; it is treason on *all levels*, as Andrij himself says:

Кто сказал, что моя отчизна Украина? Кто дал мне ее в отчизны? Отчизна есть то, чего ищет душа наша, что милее для нее всего. Отчизна моя—ты! Вот моя отчизна! И понесу я отчизну сию в сердце моем, понесу ее, пока станет моего веку, и посмотрю, пусть кто-нибудь из козаков вырвет ее оттуда! *И все, что ни есть, продам, отдам, погублю за такую отчизну!* (emphasis mine; p. 106)

The second major plane of the myth in *Taras Bul’ba* is that of initiation, and its success and failure, respectively, in Ostap and Andrij. As in so many works on the Cossack theme, the Sich is the place of initiation here. One’s very departure for it is the first step in the passage from boyhood to manhood, as we see in the eloquent conclusion of chapter 1: “Proščajte i detstvo, i igry, i vsë, i vsë!” (p. 52). It is there that the boys learn the martial arts. The initiation itself, the ordeal, consists of the “tasks” that are presented on the field of battle, and it is here that Andrij’s transition to the world of full manhood is reversed: he returns (with a woman—the Tartar servant girl) through a tunnel (!) to a woman. There he embraces his beloved and a life totally different from that of the Cossacks. His initiation is cut short, and this must inevitably lead to his death. Gogol’ presents this quite clearly in his depiction of the fatal kiss:

Полный не на земле вкушаемых чувств, Андрий поцеловал в сии благовонные уста, прильнувшие к щеке его, и небезотвертны были благовонные уста. Они отозвались тем же, и в сем обоюднослиянном поцелуе ощутилось то, что один только раз в жизни дается чувствовать человеку.

И погиб козак! Пропал для всего козацкого рыцарства! (p. 107)

That Andrij does not become a man is evident in his final moments, when he confronts his father on the field of the battle: “Pokorno, kak rebënok, slez on s konja i ostanovilsja ni živ, ni mertv pered Tarasom”; and the images of his death, with utter consistency, are those of the agricultural, settled mode: “Kak xlebnjy kolos, podrezannyj serpom, kak molodoj barašek, počujavšij pod serdcem smertel’noe zelezo, povis on golovoj i povalilsja na travu, ne skazavši ni odnogo slova” (p. 144).

Ostap, on the other hand, proceeds through his initiation to a different destiny. After becoming an *ataman* (otaman), he is captured and exe-

¹¹ Cf. V. Gippius, *Gogol’* (Leningrad, 1924; reprint, Providence, 1966), p. 73.

cuted in a cruel ordeal. The images of his death intentionally evoke association with Christ's passion on the cross, particularly in his last cry to his father. His ordeal is fully meaningful, however, because he becomes a martyr for the cause; in him, as subsequently in Taras Bul'ba himself, the Cossack cause will see its highest ideals, and the Orthodox faith its true defender. Like the Resurrected Christ, they will live on in memory and tradition.

Through their sacrifice (paradigmatically, that of Ostap and Taras Bul'ba), the Cossacks and the Ukraine they represent pass on to a new, higher, and mature state. This state is more implied than elaborated, but as we see from the conclusion of the second redaction of *Taras Bul'ba* and from the psychological movement of the Ukrainian stories, it generally equals integration into the all-Russian imperial context. The rite of passage in *Taras Bul'ba* can thus be seen as a synecdoche for the entire myth: the Ukraine and the Cossacks in fundamental transition, passing through the "curse," through abnormality and "death," into a different mode of existence.

* * *

Ševčenko's perspective on the Cossack past is also mythical, indeed, more intensely so than Gogol's. His so-called historical poems (as I have argued in detail elsewhere, and can only assert here)¹² are eminently mythical: all the facts of history—chronology, historical figures and events, causes, and processes—are subordinated to a symbolic code. A moment from a *duma* can thus be as important as a fact from a historical source; indeed it is more important because it reveals the "holy truth" with which Ševčenko as myth-carrier and myth-maker is concerned. As in the case of Gogol, Ševčenko's vision of the Ukraine's past and present is couched in fundamental oppositions, and he, too, shows the Ukraine moving through its liminal "cursed" state into a higher reality, subsumed under a millenarian vision of the future. Ševčenko's oppositions differ from Gogol's, however. Rather than being that of Cossack and non-Cossack, male and female, they are the opposition of *communitas* and structure.

The concept of *communitas* and structure (i.e., society as a structured body) were developed by Victor Turner while discussing the rites of

¹² See especially chapter 2 of my forthcoming book, *The Poet as Myth-Maker and Myth-Carrier: A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Ševčenko*. The discussion of Ševčenko which follows is excerpted from this study.

passage that he takes to be a central moment in the study of culture and society. Turner observes

two major “models” for human interrelatedness, juxtaposed and alternating. The first is of society as a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men in terms of “more” or “less.” The second, [communitas] is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated comitatus, community, or even communion of equal individuals. . . .¹³

Thus, two ideal and ideally opposite models of society are posited: on the one hand, the poor, the weak, the disenfranchised, the margins of society; on the other, the rich and the powerful, the world of rank and authority.

The opposition of *communitas* and structure clearly models Ševčenko’s concept of the Ukraine of his day. His metaphoric formulation of the Ukraine in many poems is precisely that of a weeping widow, indeed a blind cripple, abandoned and mistreated by her sons. But because his vision is essentially synchronic, not historical, mythic, not causal, the past is also modeled by this opposition, and the Ukrainian body politic, specifically Cossackdom itself, is split, like the Ukraine of the present, between *communitas* and structure. The task of the poet as myth-carrier is to resolve the opposition, first by divining and expounding the deep meaning of this conflict and then by mediating it.

For Ševčenko, therefore, the Cossacks are both *communitas* and structure; paradoxically, to him they exemplify both the “native” values of freedom, equality, and emotional spontaneity, and the “foreign” features of authority, hierarchy, and power. In one sense, as Soviet critics are quick to point out, this opposition is a function of class stratification—the tension between the poor rank and file, or *sirjaky*, and the propertied Cossack upper classes, or *staršyna* and *karmazyny*—as well as of Ševčenko’s clear identification, as Kuliš was perhaps the first to observe, with the former.¹⁴ Mythical thought, however, is not reducible to rational, socio-

¹³ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Chicago, 1969), p. 96.

¹⁴ In an unsigned autobiographical article (“Žizn’ Kuliša,” *Pravda*, 1868, no. 24) Kuliš describes his first meeting with Ševčenko in this manner:

Kuliš did not quite like Ševčenko for his cynicism; he put up with his eccentricities for the sake of his talent. Ševčenko, on the other hand, did not like Kuliš’s aristocratism. . . . Kuliš loved cleanliness around his tidy person; he loved order in things and time; his ear was like that of a maiden, nobody ever heard him use foul language. It would be possible to say that this was a meeting between the lowland Cossack from the Sich and a rich city Cossack. Indeed they were representatives of both parts of Cossackdom. Ševčenko represented the Right-Bank Cossacks

political distinctions: the very fact that Cossackdom, which for Ševčenko was a single object of emotional apprehension, contained so profound a contradiction demanded that its resolution be posited on an emotional, i.e., symbolic, and not merely intellectual plane.

In their “purest” (i.e., both “holiest” and least ambivalent) form the Cossacks are a nameless, undifferentiated collective. This is projected consistently and in various contexts: in their fusion into a single agent in scenes of battle, e.g., *Hamalija* or *Hajdamaky*; in overt statements of unanimity of purpose and opinion, as in the election of a Hetman (“. . . I odnohlasne, odnostajne/Hromada vybrala hetmana,” “U nedilen’ku u svjatuju”); in the common bond of suffering (e.g., “Son [Komedija]” or “Iržavec”); and, above all, in the ultimate equality, anonymity, and indeed freedom of the common grave. More than any other, the image of the *mohyla*, the burial mound “tightly packed” with the dead, serves as Ševčenko’s key metaphor for the Cossacks and the past in general. Thus in “Poslanije,” the poet counters the self-congratulatory claims of the more vapid enthusiasts of the Ukrainian past by saying that the Cossack glory and freedom that to their mind overshadows the glories of the Roman heroes, the Brutuses and Coccleses, in fact slept on heaps of “free” and looted Cossack corpses:

Кров’ю вона умивалась,
А спала на купак,
На козацьких вольних трупах,
Окрадених трупах!

(lines 145–48)

In “Za bajrakom bajrak” (to which we shall return), the three hundred Cossacks in the common grave are called “pure as glass.” But the most explicit presentation of the Cossack common grave as a holy sepulchre, virtually a temple of the ideal of *communitas*, occurs in “Buvaje v nevoli inodi zhadaju,” where the poet’s persona, in the guise of a child, is instructed by the Cossack who steps out of the *mohyla* and takes him in his arms:

who after the treaty of Andrusovo were left without leadership and, finding themselves under Polish domination, fled to the Sich and from there returned to their landlords’ estates as rebellious *hajdamaky* . . . anxious to smash the landlords completely. Kuliš was a descendant of the Cossacks who sat in council with the tsar’s boyars, formed for Tsar Peter the Little Russian Collegium, helped Tsarina Catherine to write her Code and to introduce schools in place of old seminaries.

Cited in Luckyj, *Between Gogol’ and Ševčenko*, p. 146.

—Дивися, дитино, оце козаки
 (Ніби мені каже), на всій Україні
 Високі могили. Дивися, дитино,
 Усі ті могили, усі отакі.
 Начинені нашим благородним трупом,
 Начинені туго. Оце воля спить!

Лягла вона славно, лягла вона вкупі
 З нами, козаками! Бачиш, як лежить—
 Неначе сповита! . . . Тут пана немає,
 Усі ми однак на волі жили!
 Усі ми однак за волю лягли,
 Усі ми і встанем, та бог його знає,
 Коли-то те буде.

(lines 24–36)

Anonymity, however, is not absolutely essential, and there are numerous instances where Cossacks are named. But these are without exception either legendary heroes, such as Ivan Pidkova, or the entirely fictional Hamalija, or the leaders of Cossack uprisings—Taras Trjasylo, Loboda, Nalyvajko, Ostrjanycja, and Palij—or, finally, leaders of Hajdamak uprisings—Honta, Zaliznjak, Švačka. All of them are rebels against authority, defenders of the poor and oppressed, “holy avengers,” in short, the very incarnation of the ideal of *communitas*.¹⁵ Significantly, those Cossack leaders who are clearly representatives of structure, rather than rebels or avengers, and yet are presented favorably are perceived positively by virtue of being opponents and victims of Russian imperial designs—most clearly, Hetman Polubotok in “Son,” and Dorošenko in “Zastupyla čorna xmara” (where he is called a “Zaporozhian brother”), and implicitly, the colonel Čečel’ in “Velykyj l’ox” and the Zaporozhian otaman Hordienko in “Iržavec.” Finally, the very fact of seeking to continue Cossack institutions, i.e., A. Holovatyj’s formation of the Black Sea Cossack army (cf. “Slipyj”/“Nevol’nyk”), suffices to give a figure a positive cast.¹⁶

But Cossackdom as a structured system, specifically its figures of

¹⁵ Thus, too, the Cossack raids on Turkey (“Hamalija” and “Ivan Pidkova”) are portrayed here, as in the duma, as motivated by the desire to free captive fellow Cossacks rather than to obtain booty.

¹⁶ An oblique reference to Sahajdačnyj in “Hamalija” also focuses only on his legendary military prowess and the (erroneous) belief that at the end of his life he entered a monastery; both moments, again, characterize Sahajdačnyj as one with the elemental Cossack ethos and not as a representative of structure. A passing reference to Sahajdačnyj in *Hajdamaky* (line 1121) refers not to the man, but to his time.

power and authority, presents an entirely different picture. Apart from Polubotok and Dorošenko, who for Ševčenko become victims of stronger external forces and martyrs for the common cause—thus expiating by misfortune their high status and, in a word, suffering status reversal—the Cossack hetmans are invariably depicted in dark colors.¹⁷ By far the most attention is given to Bohdan Xmel'nyč'kyj, who for Ševčenko (as for so many of his contemporaries) symbolizes the Cossack *state*. The poet's attitude toward Xmel'nyč'kyj ranges from invective and derision in such poems as “Jakby ty Bohdane p”janyj” and “Za ščo my ljubymo Bohdana” to bitter reproaches for foolishly accepting Muscovite sovereignty over the Ukraine. In “Rozryta mohyla” Mother Ukraine herself calls him a foolish son and reproaches herself for not killing him when he was still an infant. In “Slipyj” his very memory is reviled in Cossack songs (the real-life equivalent of the pathetic personification of “Rozryta mohyla”), songs that contrast eloquently with the piety with which Honta and Zaliznjak are remembered:

І співали удвох собі
 Про Чалого Саву,
 Про Богдана недомудра,
 Ледачого сина,
 І про Гонту мученика,
 Й славного Максима.

(lines 655–60)

In “Velykyj l'ox” even songs about the hetman carry a curse, for the three minstrels are thrashed by the Russian authorities for singing about the “swindler” Bohdan. Finally, in the sequel to this poem, in “Stojit' v seli Subotovi,” the poet offers Xmel'nyč'kyj partial forgiveness, but at the same time elaborates on what precisely his “sin” was: above all, betraying-deceiving the Ukraine (“Zanapastyv jesy vbohu/Syrotu Ukrajinu”). Here, Xmel'nyč'kyj's role is one with many of Ševčenko's male characters, who seduce and abandon or generally victimize their women; the structure of the relationship precisely recapitulates the pattern of inequality and vic-

¹⁷ A partial exception is Mazepa, toward whom Ševčenko is reticent and somewhat ambivalent (there is only one passing reference to him in the poetry, in “Iržavec”). On the manifest level, Mazepa is depicted neither positively nor negatively, but simply shown as fleeing with the Swedes after the battle of Poltava. Although clearly sympathizing with the Cossacks' cause against Peter I, Ševčenko does not make the hetman an incarnation of that anti-imperial cause (as he does Polubotok and Dorošenko), but implicitly charges him with factionalism and self-interest (cf. “Iržavec,” lines 9–12).

timization found earlier in Ševčenko's depiction of the family. As so many of his *pokrytky*, the Ukraine is not only used and abandoned, but indeed left to suffer for the sins of the false husband-father. The words the poet speaks to the title characters of "Knjažna"—"Ty šče budeš pokutovat'/ Hrixy na sim sviti, / Hrixy bat'kovi . . ."—can equally characterize the fate of the Ukraine after Xmel'nyč'kyj, popularly called "bat'ko Xmel'nyč'kyj." The second aspect of the hetman's sin reflects just as directly the essential nature of structured authority as it appears in Ševčenko's mythic thought: it is destructive of the national ethos (the metaphorical "nen'ka-Ukrajina") because it is basically alien to it. Ultimately structured authority is a form of existential absurdity, or, in Ševčenko's earthier idiom, folly. His address to Xmel'nyč'kyj brings this out most clearly:

Отаке-то, Зіновію,
Олексіїв друже!
Ти все оддав приятелям.
А їм і байдуже
Кажуть, бачиш, що все то те
Таки й було наше,
Що вони тільки наймали
Татарам на пашу—
Та полякам . . .

(lines 29–37)

The wages of friendship with someone so alien as the Muscovite despot is becoming his and history's fool, and the fate of following generations will be to become a laughing stock of nations: "Tak smijutsja z Ukrajiny/ Storonniji ljudy!"

The refrain of Xmel'nyč'kyj's folly runs through Ševčenko's depictions of the hetman,¹⁸ but it must be seen as part of a much broader dialectical set of Wisdom/Folly (or True Wisdom/False Wisdom) that constitutes the metaphysical essence, as it were, of the *communitas*/structure opposition. For it is the nature of structure, of the representatives of hierarchy and authority—be they the Russian tsar and the imperial apologists, or the biblical Saul, or Xmel'nyč'kyj with his plans, or indeed Ševčenko's

¹⁸ Thus, for example, the four-line poem "Za ščo my ljubymo Bohdana" (which, along with "Jakby to ty Bohdane p'janyj," is usually omitted in the popular Soviet editions of Ševčenko):

За що ми любимо Богдана?
За те, що москалі його забули,
У дурні німчики обули
Великомудрого гетьмана.

fellow Ukrainians, the gentlemen-fanciers of German Idealism and other fashionable theories¹⁹—to place their faith in reason and power and the existing order. But in the true, transcendent order of things this is mere folly. In fact, it is the apparent folly of the Holy Fool (the *jurodyvnyj*) and the prophet (indeed the *kobzar*, as well), and the untutored heart of the common man—in a word, the truth of *communitas*—that will ultimately be vindicated. The most fervent expression of this occurs when the poet, echoing Isaiah and Jeremiah, exhorts his noble countrymen to “Stop and become human”:

Схаменіться! будьте люди,
 Бо лихо вам буде.

 Умійтеся! образ божий
 Багном не скверніте.
 Не дуріте дітей ваших,
 Що вони на світі
 На те тільки, щоб панувать . . .
 Бо невчене око
 Загляне їм в саму душу
 Глибоко! глибоко!
 Дознаються небожата,
 Чия на вас шука,
 Та й засядуть, і премудрих
 Немудрі одурять!

(“Poslanije,” lines 63–64 and 79–90)

As with *Xmel'nyč'kyj*, the hierarchy of Cossackdom, over the course of history, is depicted as both foolish and destructive. Hetman *Samojlovyč* is simply called “stupid,” and *Kyrylo Rozumovs'kyj*, with his Council of Elders, are powdered lackeys, dogs licking the slippers of Catherine II; *Ivan Skoropads'kyj* is called a “stupid hetman” merely in passing, in the course of *Ševčenko's* excoriation of one of his “degenerate” descendants.²⁰

¹⁹ Cf. “Poslanije,” lines 91–99:

Якби ви вчилися так, як треба,
 То й мудрость би була своя.
 А то залізете на небо:
 «І ми не ми, і я не я,
 І все те бачив, і все знаю,
 Нема ні пекла, ані раю,
 Немає й бога, тільки я!
 Та куций німець узловатий,
 А більш нікого! . . .»

²⁰ Cf. “*Zastupyla čorna xmara*”: “*Iz-za Dnipra napyraje — / Durnyj Samojlovyč*” (lines 7–8); or in “*Slipyj*”: “*Kyrylo z staršynamy / Pudrom osypalys' / I v caryci, mov*

The judgments on Cossack structure as a collective entity are somewhat more developed, but no less categorical. To be sure, in the first of these, in the opening lines of “Svjato v Čyhyryni” in *Hajdamaky*, the tone is one of lament at the passing of Cossack glory rather than of condemnation of any agent of this decline. In “Poslanije,” however, this condemnation becomes articulated in the sharpest invective that modern Ukrainian literature had yet seen:

. . . ось що
Ваші славні Брути:
Раби, подножки, грязь Москви,
Варшавське сміття—ваші пани,
Ясновельможні гетьмани.

(lines 159–63)

Or, again, in one of the last poems, “Buvaly vojny i vijs’koviji svary,” he enumerates the famous names of the Cossack upper class in the plural, as so much worthless “stuff”:

Бували війни й військові свари:
Галагани, і Киселі, і Кочубеї-Нараї—
Було добра того чимало.
Минуло все, та не пропало,
Остались шашелі

(lines 1–5)

The reason for Ševčenko’s judgment is clear: after the dissolution of Cossackdom, most of its elite, the *staršyna*, became incorporated into the Russian imperial serf-owning nobility, while the rank and file Cossack—their former brothers—became their serfs. Outrage at this obscene dissolution and perversion of the original ideal order, of the “golden age,” which invariably is postulated in mythical thought—with Ševčenko’s thought no exception—is expressed in a great number of his poems, both in conscious, polemical-ideological excoriations of the existing system (cf., for example, “Poslanie” or “P.S.”) and in various symbolic constructions. As stark as it is, however, this inversion of the Cossack ideal, from freedom and equality to total power for some and slavery for others, is for Ševčenko only the narrower case of a universal curse hanging over mankind, which is man’s unbridled drive to control and oppress his fellow man, to establish structure over *communitas*. Thus, “Saul,” the poem that traces the origins of structure and authority (which, *nota bene*, is shown

sobaky, / Patynky lyzaly” (lines 625–28); or in “P.S.”: “Ščyryj pan, / Potomok het’mana durnoho, / I prezavzjatyj patriot” (lines 12–14).

as coming from Satan himself: “Až os’ lyxyj carja nese/Z zakonamy, z mečem, z katamy, Z knjazjamy, temnymy rabamy . . .”), ends with apparent bleak pessimism:

. . . Горе! Горе!
Дрібніють люде на землі,
Ростуть і висяться царі!

(lines 110–12)

The most pointed expression of this conflict in the Cossack world, i.e., in the Ukrainian past as such, is the sin of fratricide, which stands as a direct parallel to the “crimes against nature”—parricide, infanticide, incest—that occur, with much insistence, within the timeframe of the present. The first intimation of this is given in “Son” (Hory moji vysokiji): “Upyvalys’ i čužoji/i svojeji krovi” ([and they, the Cossacks] were drunk with foreign/and their own blood). There is, however, a more extensive elaboration, remarkable for both its power and explicitness. In the prison cycle poem “Za bajrakom bajrak” (1847), Ševčenko presents an old Cossack rising at night from the burial-mound to walk the steppe and sing a sorrowful song, and then, at the cock’s third crow, to sink back into his grave. Its setting, the direct communion with the mohyla, is already an unflinching sign of the utmost seriousness of its message, and the Cossack’s “song,” the heart of the poem, is indeed a central statement:

— Наносили землі,
Та й додому пішли,
І ніхто не згадає.
Нас тут триста, як скло!
Товариства лягло!
І земля не приймає.
Як запродав гетьман
У ярмо християн,
Нас послав поганяти.

По своїй по землі
Свою кров розлили
І зарізали брата.
Крові брата впились
І отут полягли
У могили заклятих.—

(lines 8–22)

In consequence of the sin of spilling their brothers’ blood, the Cossacks are cursed by the very earth’s refusing to accept them and, even more, by the fact that they will not live on in collective memory, that “no one

remembers.” The tension, the contradiction, in the Cossack phenomenon is again evoked in the paradox that despite their sin and the apparent consequent curse, they are still called “pure as glass.” On the one hand, this recapitulates the conflict of *communitas* and structure on the manifest social level, for it is the hetman himself who orders them to this deed; the poem re-evokes the social conflict in the past, the “sinful” flaw in the social order, and as such parallels Ševčenko’s rational and “ideological” imperative, stated in so many earlier poems (particularly of the “Try lita” period), to ponder and discern the true meaning of the nation’s past. But the poem also has a deeper symbolic level, for it is at the same time an elaboration of the Cossacks’ relationship to death, or, more specifically, to their existential status on the borderline of life and death.

Throughout Ševčenko’s poetry the image of the Cossack is almost invariably linked with the image of the grave, the *mohyla*. Most obviously and generally, this signifies that the Cossacks are now dead and in the past, as we see in the oft-cited opening lines of “Ivan Pidkova”:

Було колись—в Україні
Ревіли гармати;
Було колись—запорозці
Вміли панувати.
Панували, добували
І славу, і волю;
Минулося—осталися
Могили на полі.

(lines 1–8)

Moreover, as the examples noted above show, the common grave of the *mohyla* exemplifies *communitas* and hence, for Ševčenko, the sacredness inherent in Cossackdom. But beyond this lies the question of mythical function. As various references in the corpus indicate, and the poems “*Za bajrakom bajrak*” and “*Buvaje v nevoli inodi zhadaju*” make eminently clear, the Cossacks and the Cossack grave (*mohyla*) constitute one mythic-semantic unit, a unit whose primary function is that of ritual revitalization. This is the ritual of the graves that is found in practically all cultures, but which is particularly stressed in moments of deprivation and crisis, as in various millenarian movements; it is a turning to the past to find the collective (or “national”) strength for continued existence, a turning to the dead to insure life, in a word, the vitalization of the future through the past. The Cossacks thus function as a remarkably resonant mediator between the past and the future, between life and death. Like all mythical mediations between opposing categories, they assume a preternatural

existence.²¹ They are the living-dead. The demonic aspect of this mode is amply reflected in various folkloric versions of Cossacks as sorcerers (*xarakternyky*) who traffic with dark forces.²² But in Ševčenko—unlike in Gogol', whose Cossack and non-Cossack Ukrainian worlds are shown in radical opposition, with each seeing the other as demonic—the Cossacks' demonic side is largely muted. In *Hajdamaky*, the demonic features of Honta are on the one hand attributable to surface (Byronic) convention, and on the other clearly counterbalanced by his designation as a holy martyr. The unquestionably demonic Mykyta in "Tytarivna" is given a blurred identity as he becomes a Cossack-*panyč*.²³ And only once, in "Xustyna," is a Cossack actually identified as a *xarakternyk*. In fact, for Ševčenko the Cossacks serve a different function. They are, above all, carriers of a profound truth, which is that of an ideal—i.e., free, equal and harmonious—earlier existence of the Ukraine. Indeed, in a manner characteristic of mythical thought, the carrier *is* the message itself: the Cossacks—as the Cossack *communitas*, of course—are the Ukrainian past, and the Ukrainian past is the Cossacks. The two categories are made equal and co-extensive and no other "historical" Ukrainian past is posited by Ševčenko. (This is also appropriate in another, very concrete sense: the Cossacks are the only ones to have a past, for the peasant world—the other aspect of Ukrainian *communitas*—is timeless, in effect the world of nature, an eternal vegetative cycle. And this is brought out most clearly in the short lyric "Oj čoho ty počornilo . . .") *Het'manščyna*, the Cossack period (not the territory), is consistently depicted not as a state, a political or social order, the rule of any given hetman, but as a form of ideal existence; in "Son" (Hory moji vysokiji) this is made explicit as the old man (a clear projection of the poet himself) speaks of it in one breath as "God's paradise" (*božyj raj*). Unquestionably, Ševčenko sees the Ukraine of the past as an ideal and as an existential, not political, category.

²¹ "'Mediation' (in this sense) is always achieved by introducing a third category which is 'abnormal' or 'anomalous' in terms of 'rational' categories. Thus myths are full of fabulous monsters, incarnate gods, virgin mothers. This middle ground is abnormal, non-natural, holy. It is typically the focus of all taboo and ritual observance." Edmund R. Leach, "Genesis as Myth," in *Myth and Cosmos* (Garden City, 1967), p. 4.

²² Living-dead heroes are the subject of P. Revjakin's "Sbliženija i sledy. Entrückte Helden. Lycari nevmyraky." *Osnova*, January 1862.

²³ Mykyta is the quintessential demon-lover. He departs for a long journey, and the phrase used here ("V daleku dorohu/Pišov sobi") is also an idiomatic reference to death. His behavior when he returns is demonic in the conventional sense: he seduces a girl, kills his bastard child, and puts the blame on the unfortunate mother, who is then killed by the community. At the end—a complete vampire—he is fated to live on forever as a Satan-man and to seduce girls.

Similarly, for him the Cossacks are a mythical, not a historical phenomenon. Not only are they not presented historically, their reason for being is not simply to embody the past and its glory, but to reveal the innermost truths about Ukrainian existence *and* to serve as a touchstone on which to base an ideal future. As we see with great clarity in “Buvaje v nevoli,” they appear from beyond the grave embodying the sacred revelation of what the Ukraine was and what it can be. In the fallen and ignoble present, the full meaning of this message—the secret of the “great vault” (*velykyj l'ox*) that is the Ukraine and the mohyly that are Cossackdom—is known only to the poet. His prophetic task is to pass it on, to inculcate it upon the hearts of his countrymen. In this task lies the function of the myth-carrier.

* * *

In sharp contrast to Gogol' and Ševčenko, Kuliš fundamentally challenges the mythical perspective on the Cossack past. Both Gogol' and Ševčenko show the Cossack past through mythical oppositions: for Gogol', the opposition was between the Cossack and the non-Cossack (male and female) aspects of Ukrainian society, and for Ševčenko, it was between *communitas* and *structure*. The resolutions of their oppositions, while quite different, are also mythical. For Gogol' resolution occurs, on the one hand, in the final decrepitude and collapse of the Cossack Ukraine that we see in such stories as the “Two Ivans” and “The Old-World Landowners” and also in the author-narrator's flight to Petersburg, to Russia; on the other, it happens with the transition of the old Ukraine into a new imperial Russian framework, where the Cossacks—as we see at the end of *Taras Bul'ba*—become a foreshadowing of imperial Russian Orthodox power. For Ševčenko the resolution is contained in a millenarian vision of a new, holy, and just order: “I na onovlenij zemli/Vraha ne bude, supostata/A bude syn i bude maty/I budut' ljudy na zemli.” Kuliš, however, does not allow himself such visions. Instead, he proposes an entirely different, rationalistic, and ultimately positivistic program.

To be sure, in his earliest phase Kuliš, like his contemporaries, is still quite enthralled by ethnographic-folkloristic models and their implicit metaphoric, affective, and, of course, collective thinking. His first work in this mode, *Ukrajina* (published in 1843), is an attempt to reconstruct an epic poem covering Ukrainian history from its beginnings to the time of Xmel'nyc'kyj. Consciously invoking the Homeric epos as an ideal type and model (and perhaps also the model of Ossian), Kuliš uses various *dumy* that he had heard and collected, elaborates on them, and fills in gaps with his own *dumy*. This co-creation, blending the individual and

collective, is quite in keeping with Romantic poetics, but already has one significant departure: his emphasis in the preface on historical completeness. Where Gogol' and Ševčenko work with the structure of oppositions to symbolically convey the deep, concealed essence of the Ukrainian condition, the "holy truth" about its terrible "sin" or "curse," where all of Ševčenko's so-called historical poems are always at most metahistory (i.e., not a statement of *what* happened, but what it all *meant*), Kuliš is here already concerned with recapturing the past in a plenitude of causal sequences of events.

Kuliš's next period of creativity culminated with the publication in 1857 of *Čorna rada*, his major artistic work and the first Ukrainian historical novel. During this time he was guided, on the one hand, by his interest in the historical novel as modeled by Sir Walter Scott, and on the other, even more decisively, by his immersion (largely under the influence of the Polish literary critic and writer Michał Grabowski) in archival and antiquarian research. *Čorna rada* could not stand in sharper contrast to the vision of the Cossack past of either Ševčenko or Gogol', specifically the latter's *Taras Bul'ba*, against which Kuliš consciously measures himself. The novel does indeed try, and quite successfully, to capture the color, the spirit, and the turmoil of the Cossack Ukraine, but it does so not through symbolic and mythical constructs, but through an artistic equivalent of rational, historical analysis. His focus is above all on the delineation of social forces, on the dynamics, values, and aspirations of social groups; in this respect Viktor Petrov is quite correct in calling it the first Ukrainian social novel.²⁴ It is certainly the first Ukrainian work to see the Cossack past as *history*, for it perceives the past not in terms of emotionally charged absolutes, not as "holy truth" (as Ševčenko did), but as a complex and rationally knowable *process*. Although it is very much a product of Romantic poetics, especially as regards the concern for local color, family history, and above all the utilization of the patterns and devices of the Scottian novel, *Čorna rada* already points to a post-Romantic stance. At the core of this new system of values is a belief in the primacy of reason directed at social and cultural analysis. It is most indicative that the novel's epilogue is a calm, balanced, and extremely insightful inquiry into the interrelation of Russian and Ukrainian literature.

In the years following the appearance of *Čorna rada*, Kuliš comes out

²⁴ Viktor Petrov, "Čorna rada, jak roman social'nyj," in *Literatura, Zbirnyk peršyj* (Kiev, 1928), pp. 29–37.

with a number of important historical studies, ranging from the short to the voluminous.²⁵ His guiding principle is to reevaluate all misconceptions (“myths” in the popular sense) that have accreted to his fellow countrymen’s understanding of their past. The central issue is balance and perspective, as he says in an opening passage of his projected but not completed overall history of the Ukraine:

As I begin writing a history of the Ukraine I must [try to] please my fellow countrymen, who love and respect their homeland. But what if they do not find here what they have become accustomed to in their books? We have become used to looking at the history of the Ukraine through our Cossackdom and to turn all our historical writing around the Cossacks. But meanwhile, Cossackdom itself was only a rich flower and sometimes a prickly thistle in the midst of our wild steppe. Apart from the Cossacks, many other things grew on our home ground, and all that which grew, bloomed, died and was born again in another guise, all that constitutes the history of our Ukraine. Thus I have to consider equally each force which battled other forces, and especially care for what was done in the past to affect the present, and what came down to us. We must not look at the past through Cossackdom, but from the distant past to the more recent past, and in that to also study the Cossacks.²⁶

In time these views became sharply polemical. Kuliš came to see the Cossacks (and even more so the *hajdamaky*) as an unequivocally destructive, anarchic force, creators of the “Great Ruin” that the Ukraine became at the end of the seventeenth century. Concurrently, in his poetry, which he resumed writing only after the death of Ševčenko, Kuliš engaged in a twofold program that is both an elaboration and an exorcism of Ševčenko’s legacy. His first concern, dating back to his earlier contacts with Ševčenko, and the help and advice that he offered him, was with continuing and expanding Ševčenko’s essential message, which proclaimed the reborn dignity, power, and creative potential of a nation. His second concern, even while conceived by Kuliš as complementary, came to be seen by many as nothing less than a treacherous and scurrilous attack on Ševčenko. For what Kuliš does, especially in the collections *Xutorna poezija* and *Dzvin*, is to charge Ševčenko with becoming a spokesman and an apologist for destruction and ruin; in Kuliš’s view, the Bard became enthralled to a blind and bloodthirsty muse, as he has Ševčenko himself admit in the poem “Z toho svitu” (*Dzvin*):

²⁵ For example, *Xmel’nyččyna* and *Vyhovščyna* in 1861, and especially *Istorija vossoedinenija Rusi* (1874 and 1877) and *Otpadenie Malorossii ot Pol’ši* (1888–89 and 1890).

²⁶ “Istorija Ukrajiny od najdavnišyx časiv,” in *Tvory Pantelejmona Kuliša*, vol. 6 (Lviv, 1910), p. 7.

Я був собі п'яний, а баба Талалайка
 Безкостим язиком своїм мене дрочила,
 І голову мені, почавши з Наливайка,
 Високославними героями набила.

І довела мене аж до ножів сьвячених,
 До Гонти, що дітей порізав кателіків,
 До православної Руїни діл скажених,
 Що ними пиндимось проміж земних язиків.

(lines 1–8)

Kuliš's personal attitude toward Ševčenko is more sorrowful than angry, but his condemnation of Ševčenko's heroes, his common Cossacks and hajdamaky, and with it his belief in their "holy cause," is implacably severe. As he says in a poem directed to Ševčenko, "the last Cossack minstrel" ("Ostan'n'omu kobzarevi kozac'komu"; also in *Dzvin*):

Не поляже, кажеш, слава . . .
 Ні, кобзарю, брате!
 Прокляла своє козацтво
 Україна мати.

Заробітком розбишацьким
 Гордувати стала,
 І поеми гайдамацькі
 Брехнями назвала.

Все-ж бо в них була омана:
 Воля, честь, лицарство,
 За що сьвітом колотило
 Без путя козацтво.

Воля—нищить землю панську,
 Честь—людей дурити
 А лицарство—християнську
 Кров річками лити.

(lines 29–44)

The only other thing that can draw so much of his scorn are the glorifiers of the "Ruin," the apologists of bloodshed and vengeance whom Kuliš collectively addresses as "hajdamak scribblers." Perhaps their greatest sin, in his eyes, is their total distortion of Ševčenko's legacy:

В ім'я його сьвяте,
 На сором України,
 Ви брехні плетете
 Про благодать Руїни.
 На глум Тарасові,
 Жалкують васі вчені,
 Що не дорізали

Панів ножі сьвячені,—
 Що Гонта й Залізник
 Не стали там князями.
 Де правив Мономах
 З синами-витязями.

(“Pys'makam hajdamakam,” *Dzvin*; lines 45–56)

* * *

We cannot examine here the full range and detail of Kuliš's historical views. It is clear, at any rate, that his views were often highly emotional and bitter. But it is utterly fallacious to claim, as Jefremov once did,²⁷ that they were vacillatory and without a unifying central perspective. On the contrary, it is evident that for most of his mature life, Kuliš came to articulate an understanding of the Cossack past that was in direct opposition to the mythical vision so deeply inscribed on the collective Ukrainian consciousness by Ševčenko. For where Ševčenko apotheizes *communitas*, Kuliš offers the model, prospects, and demands of structured society. It is precisely with these desiderata of enlightenment, of law and order, of normal cultural and social development in mind that he feels obliged to search, almost desperately, for a model in neighboring states—gentry Poland, imperial Russia, Mohammedan Turkey—for the Cossack world itself can offer only a *styxija*, the anti-structure of *communitas*. Thus Peter I and Catherine II, who for Ševčenko are the very incarnation of evil, are seen by Kuliš as carriers of enlightenment, who conquer the “barbarism” of anarchy, who come to rule the Ukraine with “the eternal sceptre of science and culture” (“Dvoje predkiv”).²⁸

Now, one can take strong issue with this interpretation of the past. Kuliš's historico-political reasoning may be shown to be entirely one-sided, but it would be highly unfair to accuse him of condoning despotism. In fact, his opposition to official Russian (or Polish) chauvinism, to oppression of Ukrainian national rights, etc., is manifest, continuous, and vociferous. The crux of the matter, however, is that he sees the only real prospects for the development of the Ukrainian nation in its acceptance not of myth and symbolic thinking, but of the “universal standard” of rational thought and of concrete, constructive action.

Ultimately, Kuliš's debunking of the mythical sense of the Cossack past is not only historicist, but positivist. His own life can be seen as exemplify-

²⁷ “Bez syntezu,” *Zapysky istoryčno-filolohičnoho viddilu*, Akademiia nauk URSR, vol. 4 (Kiev, 1924).

²⁸ Cf., also, “Petro i Kateryna” and “Vin i vona” (*Dzvin*).

ing the “organic” effort of fostering culture and social betterment. It was none other than Kuliš who was the spiritual father of the Prosvita movement; it was he who at the first anniversary of Ševčenko’s death suggested that the best monument to him was not a resplendent mausoleum or sweet praise, but the teaching of trades to village children.²⁹ In this Kuliš signals the end of Romantic ideology and the birth of an entirely new understanding of the Ukrainian situation and the continuum of Ukrainian history. As much as the myth is still with us, his antithesis has also left its indelible mark on our sense of the Ukrainian past.

Harvard University

²⁹ [“Nauka remesla i pracja narodna po selax”], *Tvory Pantelejmona Kuliša*, 6: 560–64.