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Introduction: The Apotheosis of Taras Shevchenko

A DOUBLE-HEADED, serpentine eagle clutches in one claw an axe, in the other a gallows. Below the creature cower helpless human figures, hands raised in fearful acquiescence. A path paved in skulls stretches toward the horizon, where the shadow of the Kremlin looms, and a signpost in the foreground directs us bitterly to the 'Tretii Rym' ('Third Rome'). Such imagery adorns the cover of *Mental'nist' Ordy* (The Mentality of the Horde), a 1996 collection of articles 'pro koreni rosiis'koï ekspansionists'koï polityky' ('about the roots of Russian expansionist politics') by Ievhen Hutsalo, a prominent Ukrainian intellectual who emerged on the literary scene as a member of the *shestydesiatnyky*.[1] This visualization of a menacing hegemon sets the stage for his polemical project, which traverses historical time and geographical space in an effort to demonstrate that a lust for power and domination has characterized Russian history and culture for centuries. Hutsalo argues that this legacy has survived the dissolution of the Soviet Union and persists to the present day, particularly in Chechnya.

Among the many metaphors Hutsalo employs in his discussion of violence in the Caucasus, a few of the most grisly are lifted from Taras Shevchenko's poem 'Kavkaz' (The Caucasus, 1845). The Russians 'drink' the 'hot' blood of the Chechens, for example, as Boris El'tsin, following in the footsteps of the imperial *katy* ('executioners') of Shevchenko's work, deals in 'bomby, rakety, smert' ditei i materiv' ('bombs, rockets, and the death of children and mothers').[2] Toward the

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[1] Ievhen Hutsalo, *Mental'nist' Ordy*, Kiev, 1996, p. 2. Hovering above this imagery is the emblem of the publisher Prosvita, which features the Ukrainian *tryzub* ('trident') beset by stalks of wheat — incidentally encouraging us to equate *prosvita* ('enlightenment') with a realization of Russia's malevolence.

[2] Ibid., pp. 171–72.

end of *Mental'nist' Ordy*, Hutsalo excerpts five lines from 'Kavkaz' to underscore the seemingly perpetual nature of Russia's aggression in the Caucasus, which he likens to a *pokhmillia* ('hangover') that never subsides. Citing Shevchenko's poem is akin to a sacred invocation for Hutsalo. He summons 'bezsmertnoho Tarasa, ioho bezsmertne slovo' ('immortal Taras, his immortal word') as if a divine spirit, at once familiar ('Tarasa') and otherworldly.[3] The gesture not only valorizes 'Kavkaz' and its author, according them a high degree of sacrality and rigidity, but also reflexively confers upon *Mental'nist' Ordy* no small measure of authority. Hutsalo appropriates and apotheosizes Shevchenko and his *slovo* in order to legitimate and sanction his own anti-colonial politics, and this appropriation and apotheosis in turn close off any proliferation of meaning *vis-à-vis* Shevchenko and 'Kavkaz' beyond the anti-colonial.

Generally speaking, intertextual relationships are by their very nature processes of appropriation, and these processes of appropriation or revision or even 'misprision', to use Harold Bloom's term,[4] tend to serve a progressive function in literature. For generations, however, traditional *shevchenkoznavstvo* ('Shevchenko studies') seemed to discourage any acknowledgement of the fact that Shevchenko's poetic texts exist between and among other works. The poet was to be regarded as a singularity, a phenomenon bestowed with a divine talent who emerged from the ether to awaken the conscience of his people. For the custodians of his legacy, Shevchenko's *narodnist'* ('nation-ness') was so original and so visceral that it necessitated an understatement, even a disavowal, of external influences. He was distinctively and indelibly Ukrainian, to whom alone 'the power and beauty of [the Ukrainian] language was revealed', as Panteleimon Kulish remarked upon his death in 1861.[5] His nation preceded him, and he became the repository of Ukrainian-ness, his verse cathected with the politics of nationalism.[6]

This posthumous elevation to near mythical status has placed Shevchenko in the role of monolith, a ubiquitous authority figure who stands astride Ukrainian literature, setting its standards and marking

[3] Ibid.

[4] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, Oxford, 1973, p. 14.

[5] Panteleimon Kulish, 'Graveside Oration', in George S. Luckyj (ed.), *Shevchenko and the Critics 1861–1980*, Toronto, 1980 (hereafter, *Shevchenko and the Critics 1861–1980*), pp. 55–56 (p. 55). Kulish's subsequent attempts to reign in the emerging cult of Shevchenko would ultimately prove ineffective. See George Grabowicz, *The Poet as Mythmaker: A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Taras Shevchenko*, Cambridge, MA (hereafter, *The Poet as Mythmaker*), p. 2.

[6] The term 'nationalism' has countless definitions. For the purposes of this discussion, we will define it as a mobilizing force that unites a people behind a common history and language in opposition to or resistance against another, 'foreign' group.

its boundaries.[7] Even for those who seek to bring him back down to earth, he remains a poet trapped in his own œuvre. George Grabowicz, for example, in his 1982 monograph, *The Poet as Mythmaker: A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Taras Shevchenko*, avoids discussion of intertexts for the most part, bracketing off such 'external relations' in order to withdraw into the deep symbolic structures of Shevchenko's poetic world. He does so precisely to avoid the 'inconsistencies' attendant to discussions of Shevchenko's politics, ' "inconsistencies" which are then made to serve as grist for ideological mills'.[8] Indeed, Grabowicz is highly critical of the propagandists and ideologues who have populated the cult of Shevchenko, and his provocative and incisive analysis has influenced a number of valuable revisionary studies that have appeared in recent years, perhaps Oksana Zabuzhko's *Shevchenkiv Mif Ukraïny: sproba filosofs'koho analizu* (Shevchenko's Myth of Ukraine: Towards a Philosophical Verification, Kiev, 1997) most of all. But in its aversion to 'inconsistencies' and its search for 'total [. . .] systematic meaning',[9] *The Poet as Mythmaker* risks divorcing Shevchenko from various contexts and from the prevailing cultural milieu of his day, implicitly investing him with too much control of his own discourse.

This control is predicated upon a condition of stability that Shevchenko himself never enjoyed over the course of his lifetime. His biography reads like a tragedy, every other chapter bringing news of a new illness, each page sustaining a subtle note of loneliness and estrangement. Indeed, the poet was an intellectual (and, from 1847 to 1857, a political) exile, and his profound and multivalent displacement, instead of being considered a central algorithm in his poetic code, has been often simply relegated to the realm of footnotes. An orphaned serf-turned-*cause célèbre*, poet-cum-painter, Ukrainian visionary and Russian-language diarist — *inter alios* — he is a figure replete with inconsistencies and antinomies, and scholars like Grabowicz have attempted to account for the fissures in his identity by way of a duality between an 'adjusted vs. non-adjusted self', for example.[10] In the pages that follow, we will not compensate for or attempt to rectify these disjunctions so much as work under the presumption, *à la* Edward Said, that they represent a creative opportunity, signifying a condition that

[7] Shevchenko's apotheosis certainly contributed to the overwhelming predominance of the traditional-populist model in Ukrainian *belles-lettres* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the *fin-de-siècle* period, many proponents of populism dismissed the stirrings of modernism in the works of Ol'ha Kobylianks'ka, for example, as somehow un-Ukrainian. See Solomea Pavlychko, 'Modernism vs. Populism in Fin-de-Siècle Ukrainian Literature', in Pamela Chester and Sibelan Forrester (eds), *Engendering Slavic Literatures*, Bloomington, IN, 1996, pp. 83–103.

[8] *The Poet as Mythmaker*, p. viii.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., p. 9.

avails the poet of a transcendent perspective. 'Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home', writes Said, 'exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions.'[11] We will keep this decentredness at the forefront of our attention, reading 'Kavkaz' in an effort to reveal a plurality and highlight a syncretism heretofore underestimated, to free the text from monologic misreadings and, hopefully, to allow for more play. Our analysis will take the form of, first, a diachronic reading, in which we will progressively unpack the text and navigate its polyphony and, second, a synchronic one, in which we will attempt to demonstrate how the text as a whole works along the lines of a dialectic to articulate an ambivalence rather than promote a politics.

A Work of Mourning: The Origins of 'Kavkaz'

Not the forbidding peak of Mount Kazbek or the furious current of the Terek River — rather, it is a drinking club called *tovarystvo mochemordiv* ('the Society of the Wet Mugs') that affords our discussion of 'Kavkaz' a convenient point of departure.[12] It was in the company of an oft-inebriated circle of nobles from Left Bank Ukraine that Taras Shevchenko made the acquaintance of Iakiv de Bal'men (1813–45), the count of Scottish descent to whom 'Kavkaz' is dedicated.[13] The year was 1843, and the twenty-nine-year-old Shevchenko had just recently returned to Ukraine for the first time in fourteen years. His homecoming was occasion for many among the Ukrainian landowning nobility in the Chernihiv and Poltava regions to fête the former serf and, at the invitation of the widow Tetiana Vil'khivs'ka, he attended on 29 June a lavish ball at the estate of Moisivka, known as the 'Ukrainian Versailles'.[14] There he spent the evening reading poetry with young debutantes and, later, revelling in the witty anecdotes and lively discussions of the *mochemordy*, whose motto was, predictably, *in vino veritas*. Shevchenko left Moisivka and this Ukrainian symposium with an invitation to join Count de Bal'men as a guest at his farmstead in Lynovytsi.[15]

Not much can be found by way of letters or journal entries that can speak directly to the intensity of Shevchenko's friendship with de

[11] Edward W. Said, 'The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile', *Harpers*, September 1994, p. 55; quoted in Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin (eds), *The Edward Said Reader*, New York, 2000, pp. xiv–xv.

[12] Pavlo Zaitsev, *Zhyttia Tarasa Shevchenka*, Kiev, 1994 (hereafter, Zaitsev), pp. 99–100. The *mochemordy* were led by Viktor Zakrevsky, a former Hussar officer rather appropriately dubbed *vsep'ianiishestvo* ('the totally tipsy one').

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., pp. 98–99.

[15] Ibid., p. 100. See also Mykola Zhulyns'kyi, 'Komentari', in *Taras Shevchenko: Povne zibrannia tvoriv u dvanadtsiaty tomakh*, ed. M. Zhulyns'kyi et al., 12 vols, Kiev, 2001– , 1 (hereafter, Zhulyns'kyi), p. 735.

Bal'men. We do know that the Count, along with his brother-in-law Mikhail Bashylov, illustrated the manuscript of *Wirszy T. Szewczenka* (The Verse of Taras Shevchenko), a collection of the poet's verse transliterated into Latin script, and presented it as a gift to Shevchenko in 1844.[16] An amateur artist and writer, de Bal'men adorned nearly half of the poems from *Wirszy* (and notably two of Shevchenko's most important early works, 'Haidamaky' and 'Hamaliia') with scenes drawn from contemporary Ukrainian life.[17] Indeed, the two men shared a love of the arts, but it was love rivalled by a penchant for playfulness. We learn from Pavlo Zaitsev, whose *Zhyttia Tarasa Shevchenka* (The Life of Taras Shevchenko, 1955) is considered an authoritative account of the poet's life, that de Bal'men was a signatory on an 1843 mock *universal*, or Cossack hetman's proclamation, drafted by Shevchenko and addressed to the Ukrainian historian Mykola Markevych in the mischievous *mochemordy* style. Not surprisingly, Shevchenko assumed the title of *het'man* for the prank, while de Bal'men signed off as the *viis'kovyi iesaul* ('army captain') 'Iakiv Dybailo'.[18]

This merry period of 1843–44 is counterpoised by the tragic events of July 1845 in the Caucasus. Only months before, de Bal'men and his brother-in-law Bashylov had been called into active service in the Russian Imperial Army and assigned to the Fifth Infantry Corps as aides-de-camp to General O. M. Liders.[19] The regiment was stationed at a base in modern-day Chechnya that served as a launching point for much of the military's activity in the northern Caucasus. In May 1845, Nicholas I ordered approximately eighteen thousand troops, including those of the Fifth Infantry Corps, to march on Dargo (or Darghiya), the headquarters of Shamil, the Avar Imam who had been leading the Caucasian resistance against Russian imperial expansion for decades.[20] Over the course of the campaign, the Russians were brutalized by the treacherous terrain and exposed to fierce attacks from the Caucasian mountaineers. They lost thousands of troops before reaching Dargo, which they found evacuated and destroyed. Shamil had been aware of the Russian advance and left his headquarters barren to deprive the Russians of sustenance and supplies.[21] With hundreds dying of starvation, the Russians began a miserable retreat back to base. For the Fifth Infantry Corps, which had fallen behind and lost contact with the

[16] Ibid., p. 736.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Zaitsev, p. 123.
[19] Zhulyns'kyi, p. 736.
[20] Ibid. The Battle of Dargo has been called 'perhaps one of the worst defeats of any colonial power ever suffered in a war with a native population'. See Yo'av Karny, *Highlanders*, New York, 2000, p. 223.
[21] Shauket Mufti, *Heroes and Emperors in Circassian History*, Beirut, 1972, p. 178.

vanguard during the withdrawal, the situation was particularly desperate, and General Liders sent de Bal'men and Bashylov ahead to reconnoitre and re-establish communication.[22] Their mission went unfulfilled, however, as both were killed in the heights of the mountains on 26 July 1845.

The news of de Bal'men's death reached Shevchenko in early September 1845, and it seems that he began to work on 'Kavkaz' immediately.[23] Its composition must have been a cathartic experience for the poet, a constructive outlet for his sorrow. In fact, we learn from Varfolomei Shevchenko, the poet's cousin, that an early incarnation of the poem may have been too emotionally-charged: 'Raz khodyly my z Tarasom po sadu; vin stav deklamuvaty "Za horamy hory, khmaroiu povyti . . ." [. . .] Ia stav radyty iomu, shchob ne duzhe zakhodyv vin u khmary' ('Once we strolled about the garden with Taras; he began to recite "Mountains upon mountains, covered in cloud . . ." [. . .] I advised him not to venture very far into the clouds').[24] Perhaps in deference to this advice, Shevchenko spent much of October researching the history and ethnography of the Caucasus with the help of friend and fellow poet Oleksandr Afanas'iev-Chuzhbyns'kyi, who had recently been to the area.[25] As the latter remarked in his memoirs about the experience, 'Dolgo my besedovali o gortsakh [. . .] On rassprashival o maleishikh podrobnostiakh tamoshnego byta' ('We chatted about the mountaineers for a long time [. . .] He [Shevchenko] asked about the slightest details of the customs of life').[26] Here we find Shevchenko, arguably for the first time, extending himself beyond the horizon of his personal experiences and recollections, beyond the confines of his environs, in an effort to enrich his poetic vocabulary.

This breakthrough was accompanied by a difficult struggle with typhus, and in the late fall of 1845 the poet was encouraged to seek medical attention in Pereiaslav.[27] There, on 18 November, with his condition worsening, he completed 'Kavkaz', dedicating it 'iskrennemu moemu Iakovu de Bal'menu' ('to my sincere Iakiv de Bal'men'). Toward the end of this study, we will return to the critical importance of this dedication and, indeed, of the figure of Iakiv de Bal'men himself.

[22] Zhulyns'kyi, p. 736.
[23] Ibid., p. 734.
[24] V. H. Shevchenko, 'Spohady pro Tarasa Hryhorovycha Shevchenka', *Pravda* (L'viv), 1876, 2, p. 25; quoted in Zhulyns'kyi, p. 734. Varfolomei's comment may have arisen from his concern for Shevchenko's safety. Zaitsev describes Varfolomei, a former serf himself, as 'praktychnyi po-svoiemu' ('practically-minded'). He feared, quite practically and quite rightly, that the poet might be punished for his emotional, that is 'political', verse. See Zaitsev, pp. 154–55.
[25] A. Chuzhbynskii, 'Vospominaniia o T. G. Shevchenke', *Russkoe Slovo*, 1861, 5, p. 14; quoted in Zhulyns'kyi, p. 734.
[26] Ibid., p. 734.
[27] Zaitsev, p. 143.

For the time being, however, it is worth noting that the Count is one of only two individuals (the other being Mykola Hohol', aka Nikolai Gogol') explicitly honoured by a poem from *Try lita* (Three Years), the collection of verse written over the course of Shevchenko's travels in Ukraine from 1843–46 in which 'Kavkaz' was featured. Despite the fact that *Try lita* was only circulated in manuscript copies and never published, 'Kavkaz' did succeed in achieving renown, mainly by virtue of its incorporation in the first publication of Shevchenko's poems outside the Russian Empire, *Novye stikhotvoreniia Pushkina i Shavchenki* [*sic*] (The New Verse of Pushkin and Shevchenko), which appeared in Leipzig in 1859.[28]

Parsing a 'Poetic Anti-narrative': Reading 'Kavkaz'

Moving from an overview of the historical circumstances relevant to 'Kavkaz' to a closer look at the text itself, we find that the aforementioned dedication to de Bal'men, written in Russian, is followed by an excerpt from Jeremiah 9:1:

> Kto dast glave moei vodu
> I ochesem moim istochnik slez,
> I plachusia i den', i noshch'
> O pobiennykh . . .

> Oh that my head were water, and my eye a fountain of tears, that I might bewail day and night the slain . . .[29]

The epigraph serves a practical purpose, of course: suggesting the poem's theme, it sets a tone of lament and introduces the leitmotifs of weeping and death that will figure in the poem. At the same time, it loosely associates 'Kavkaz' with biblical literature and, more specifically, with the works of the Hebrew prophets. The mingling of the biblical with the secular occurs often in the *Try lita* collection; for example, 'Ieretyk' (The Heretic, 1845) contains a passage from Psalms 117:22, while 'Son' (A Dream, 1844) commences with an epigraph from John 14:17, and '[. . .] Moie druzhnieie poslaniie' ([. . .] My Friendly Epistle, 1845) with one from the First Letter of John 4:20. These citations from Scripture, as well as the renditions of the Psalms of David that appear at the end of the *Try lita* cycle, are not manifestations of an excessive religiosity or, as some scholars have suggested, some sort of prophet complex on the part of Shevchenko. As

[28] M. Antokhii et al., 'Taras Shevchenko', *Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, 2001 <www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?AddButton=pages\S\H\Shevchenko Taras.htm> [accessed 9 November 2004] (para. 21 of 41).

[29] Notably, Shevchenko crops the final three words of Jeremiah 9:1 from his epigraph, '[. . .] dshcheri naroda moego' ('[. . .] of the daughter of my people'), an excision that calls attention to itself and merits mention toward the end of this study.

Northrop Frye reminds us, it was common practice among Romantic poets to de-compartmentalize biblical and secular literature, which they did to such an extent that many early twentieth-century critics, looking back, could argue that they 'confused' literature and religion.[30] Considering as well the great question of Shevchenko's religious beliefs — was he a proponent of Orthodoxy, an atheist, or a precursor of the Ukrainian evangelical movement? — we can never be entirely certain of whether or to what extent he held the Bible to be the repository of religious truth.[31] Instead, we must look upon Shevchenko as an artist, one who reads Jeremiah, and the Bible more generally, as text.

Beyond fulfilling these suggestive and associative functions, the epigraph also represents a footnote of sorts, an acknowledgment of the poem's indebtedness to Jeremiah as a model for imitation. While it is hardly the sole model, the biblical text does help inspire one of the most distinctive compositional features of 'Kavkaz': the ambiguous first-person speaker. Indeed, to read Jeremiah is to negotiate a text where 'I' may signify Jeremiah himself, God, the people of Israel, or some combination of the three.[32] Let us elaborate by returning to Jeremiah 9:1 for a moment: 'Oh that my head were water, and my eye a fountain of tears, that I might bewail day and night the slain . . .' Without delving too deeply into the context of the passage, we may assume with some confidence that the speaker here is the 'weeping prophet' himself, Jeremiah. Continuing with Jeremiah 9:2, however, we read: 'Oh that I had in the wilderness a wayfarer's lodgings that I might leave my people, get away from them, for all of them are adulterers, a company of crooks!' From the most profound sorrow to bitter name-calling — the prophet's mood swings wildly between Jeremiah 9:1 and Jeremiah 9:2. In fact, it swings so wildly that the biblical scholar William L. Holladay argues for a different reading of the passage, one that places God as speaker of Jeremiah 9:2 instead of the prophet.[33] He justifies this interpretation by explaining that it not only resolves the incongruity but also offers a more acute understanding of the 'tension between [Jeremiah] and [God] in their respective attitudes toward the people'.[34] Holladay's is only one of a multitude of re-readings of Jeremiah's ambiguous 'I', and scholarly opinion remains divided on the issue.

[30] Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, New York, 1982, p. xix.
[31] For a more detailed discussion of Shevchenko's religious beliefs, see Dmytro Chyzhevsky, 'Shevchenko and Religion', in *Shevchenko and the Critics 1861–1980*, pp. 250–65.
[32] Timothy Polk, *The Prophetic Persona: Jeremiah and the Language of the Self*, Sheffield, 1984, p. 58.
[33] Ibid., p. 112.
[34] Ibid.

Why the lack of consensus? If Holladay's approach is any indication, it seems that there is more focus on the utterance than the underlying system that governs it. Such a strategy flirts with the affective fallacy, provoking little more than subjective value-judgements: that is, we may choose to agree that the severe change in mood in Jeremiah 9:2 cues us to another speaker, or we may disagree, convinced that the prophet's emotions are strikingly fickle. To read 'Kavkaz', however, to resolve its own ambiguities as regards the first-person perspective, requires the discipline of a more objective approach. For, much like the region itself, 'Kavkaz' is a battlefield, the site of a rhetorical struggle between competing poetic personae. It might well be thought of as a poetic anti-narrative, to borrow Clare Kinney's term used to describe T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, where a prevailing narrative authority is relinquished and overtaken by veiled voices.[35] Until the poem's elegiac conclusion which, as we shall see, is more of a superfluous appendage than a functional part of an organic whole, there is no mediator to accommodate a particular vision, no firmly established and clearly identified lyrical 'I'. Gone is the conspicuous heterodiegetic narrator who introduces the three ravens in 'Velykyi l'okh (Misteriia)' (The Great Mound [A Mystery], 1845), an equally multi-vocal poem from the *Try lita* cycle. Instead, a push and pull of shifting discourses confounds our search for clear semantic continuity.

As Bohdan Rubchak reminds us, Shevchenko is a lyrical chameleon whose 'I' is often opaque and off-centre, shrouded in masks.[36] In this respect, he is an *eiron*, that is, a 'dissembler', a practitioner of irony who never allows us to zero in on his location. His shiftiness is not a destructive tendency that seeks to shatter unity or cultivate discrepancies; rather, it is a constructive one that uses contradictions and dialectics to achieve synthesis. In other words, Shevchenko disseminates his 'self' via a play of masks, through a controlled self-distancing, not in order to conceal his 'self' but to reveal it on a more authentic level.[37] Embodying the paradox of *kerygma* and *enigma*, irony makes the truth (that is, the poet's 'authentic self') known by way of riddles (that is, his 'masks'). We arrive at a realization of this 'authentic existence' only through an eager and vigilant interpretation of the text.

But where do we begin? Not only do we lack a stable speaking subject to help us order 'Kavkaz', but Shevchenko also abandons the stanza as a functional unit of organization in the text. With this in mind, we will begin to parse the poem by way of perhaps the most critical element of its formal structure, its metre. Identifying metres and

[35] Clare Regan Kinney, *Strategies of Poetic Narrative*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 165.
[36] Bohdan Rubchak, 'Shevchenko's Profiles and Masks', in *Shevchenko and the Critics 1861–1980*, pp. 395–429.
[37] Ibid., p. 396.

attempting to formulate metrical patterns in a polymetrical composition like 'Kavkaz' is an instructive exercise, for 'any attempt to define "what the poem means" must necessarily consider how the poet chooses to express this meaning', as Michael Wachtel reminds us.[38] Even though metre too, like Shevchenko's masks, shifts frequently and without warning, these variations are not randomly determined — they are deliberate, meaningful and critical to the poem's content as well as its form. In 'Kavkaz', metre is a non-semantic feature of the poem that nonetheless bears heavily on its meaning: it shifts in step with Shevchenko's masks, acting as a 'language' through which they express themselves and, therefore, serving as an important interpretive tool.[39] Rubchak uses the term 'mask' to trace the dialectical movement of the poet's 'self' throughout his œuvre, and its convenience for him resides in the connection it establishes between the ambiguous 'I' or 'I's of a particular text (the 'mask' or 'masks') and Shevchenko the empirical individual (the 'masker'). For the purposes of this discussion which, at this point, is interested in the play of 'Kavkaz', we will use 'poetic persona' in place of 'mask', if only to attempt to diminish the notion of dependency that is bound up in the contemporary connotation of the latter term.[40] If we are to allow the text to play, it is best for us to bracket off referents and consider each 'persona' an autonomous character with its own traits, agenda and manner of speaking.

Further, ours will not be an in-depth analysis of versification. The value of metre for us in this study lies in its function as a key to the text's semantic organization, not necessarily in the way it organizes 'Kavkaz' phonically or syntactically. Shevchenko's verse is captive to rich and protean rhythms and, as Roman Jakobson points out, is indebted to the native oral tradition,[41] demonstrating deft metrical manoeuvrability

[38] Michael Wachtel, *The Development of Russian Verse*, Cambridge, 1998 (hereafter, Wachtel), p. 2.

[39] Wachtel's mentor, Mikhail Gasparov, also makes the point of citing a relationship between metre and meaning, arguing that changes in metre are often deliberate gestures employed to inform us of the entrance of a particular character or voice: 'Smena razmerov v proizvedenii motiviruetsia smenoi nastroenii liricheskogo geroia *ili vystupleniem novogo personazha s novym nastroeniem*' ('Change in the metre of a work is justified by a change in the mood of the lyrical hero *or by the entrance of a new persona with a new mood*'; emphasis mine — RF). See Gasparov, *Ocherk istorii evropeiskogo stikha*, Moscow, 1984, p. 130. In her study of Ukrainian prosody, Halyna Sydorenko makes a similar observation within the context of a discussion of Shevchenko's poetic œuvre: 'Rytmy [Shevchenka] sminiuiut'sia razom z inshymy zasobamy [. . .] obraziv' ('Shevchenko's rhythms change together with other collections of [. . .] images'). See, H. Sydorenko, *Virshuvannia v ukraïns'kii literaturi*, Kiev, 1962 (hereafter, Sydorenko), p. 65.

[40] The two terms are entirely interchangeable: 'persona', in fact, is the Latin word for the mask used by actors in classical theatre — hence, 'dramatis personae'. 'Person', of course, is derived from 'persona', and the natural association between the two gives the latter a quality of independence and agency.

[41] Roman Jakobson, 'The Kernel of Comparative Slavic Literature', in id., *Selected Writings*, ed. S. Rudy, 8 vols, The Hague, 1962–1988, vol. 4, part 1, p. 32.

and a distinctive improvisational quality.[42] Limiting ourselves to what Wachtel terms 'metrical semantics',[43] we will first explore the ways in which metre helps structure 'Kavkaz' and then, in the next section, consider what metre means, that is, how associations and expectations evoked by particular metrical forms interact with each other and influence our reading of the text.

Lines 1–37: A Poem of Lament

In 'Kavkaz' and throughout the *Try lita* cycle more generally, Shevchenko tends to alternate between three metres: iambic tetrameter, arguably the most popular metre of his time, employed famously by Pushkin in *Evgenii Onegin*; amphibrachic tetrameter, a relative latecomer to the East Slavic verse tradition, used to express solemnity and melancholy;[44] and, finally, a syllabic *narodnopisennyi rytm* ('national-musical rhythm') derived from the Hutsul kolomyika folk song.[45] In the first stages of its development, the kolomyika metre was organized into strophes of two rhymed 14-syllable lines, with each line typically divided by two caesurae (e.g. [4+4+6] x 2). A tendency toward internal rhyme, however, eventually led to the translation of the kolomyika strophe into a four-lined construction (e.g. [(4+4)+(3+3)] x 2), and it is in this manner, according to alternating eight-syllable and six-syllable lines, that the kolomyika metre is rendered in 'Kavkaz'.[46] Due to its flexibility and ability to correspond to manifold poetic moods, the kolomyika metre prevails most often in the *Try lita* cycle, appearing in every poem with the exception of the brief, eight-line 'Choho meni tiazhko' (Why is it difficult for me, 1844), where the absence of its musicality emphasizes a sentiment of despair.[47] Iambic tetrameter and amphibrachic tetrameter, on the other hand, tend to serve more as supplementary metres, playing off of the kolomyika rhythm to generate energetic, textured compositions.

In 'Kavkaz', however, no single metre is dominant. Shevchenko strikes a near perfect balance between iambic tetrameter and the kolomyika metre over the course of the 178-line poem, with the former appearing in eighty-three lines and the latter in eighty. The metrical

[42] It is important to keep in mind that Shevchenko is not renowned for an unwavering adherence to metrical forms; his rhythm can be highly irregular and may only exhibit a *tendency* toward, say, an iambic construction. Nonetheless, if iambs prevail in an 8- or 9-syllable line, acting as that which Mikhail Gasparov likens to a *fon* ('background'), I will classify the metre, accordingly, as iambic tetrameter.

[43] Wachtel, p. 18.

[44] In Russian poetry, for instance, amphibrachs were rarely used prior to 1810. See ibid., p. 23.

[45] Sydorenko, p. 63.

[46] Ibid., p. 18.

[47] 'Choho meni tiazhko' is written entirely in amphibrachic tetrameter — an appropriate choice considering the poem's lack of levity.

'third wheel', amphibrachic tetrameter, is featured only three times in a total of fifteen lines, including the two that open the poem:

> Za horamy hory, khmaroiu povyti,
> Zasiiani horem, kroviiu polyti.

> Mountains upon mountains, covered in cloud,/ sown with woe, soaked in blood.[48]

The couplet is orderly and efficient, for no real action is recounted, no human characters introduced, yet much is achieved. These two descriptive lines, which Shevchenko end-stops with a perfect rhyme between 'povyti' and 'polyti', capture the way in which 'Kavkaz' is at once whole and at war with itself. As a unit, they effectively sound a note of grief and despair, but this efficacy is a function of the way in which the lines in fact conflict with one another. The first opens innocently, evoking the imagery of the distant, exotic Caucasus, only to be followed by the ominous and gory 'zasiiani horem, kroviiu polyti'. Our expectations are betrayed, even assaulted, as one line attracts while the other repels. This divergence is offset by the paronomasia between 'hory' ('mountains') in the first line and 'horem' ('woe') in the second, which unites the couplet by binding one term up in the other and implying, through an intimate phonetic association, that the exotic mountains are, by their very nature, a place of torment.

Amphibrachic tetrameter represents what I will call a 'liminal metre' for Shevchenko: it is used to effect critical transitions and announce a crossing of thresholds in the text. Here, for example, it sets 'Kavkaz' in motion and ushers us into an embattled world of soaring peaks and gruesome suffering. Elsewhere, as we shall see, the liminal metre conjoins what precedes it with a passage that could very well operate independently of the larger text. In fact, 'Kavkaz' may be best thought of in terms of a tripartite structure, as the sum of three semi-autonomous parts: a poem of lament (lines 1–37), a poem of irony (lines 38–155) and a poem of elegy (lines 156–78).[49] At once the glue that bonds them and the marker that makes known their difference, amphibrachic tetrameter can be found precisely at the point at which the lament turns to irony, and irony turns to elegy.

[48] The plain prose translation of 'Kavkaz' that follows is my own and is meant more as a key to the vocabulary than a rendering of the poem itself. For context, I have referred to John Weir's translation (in Taras Shevchenko, *Vybrani Poezii*, Kiev, 1977, pp. 187–95), as well as C. H. Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnell's, in eid. (eds, trans.), *The Poetical Works of Taras Shevchenko*, Toronto, 1964, pp. 243–48 (hereafter, *The Poetical Works of Taras Shevchenko*). I take the text of the poem itself from Zhulyns'kyi, pp. 343–47.

[49] Shevchenko makes the division between these three 'poems' quite clear in his hand-written 1847 manuscript of *Try lita*, drawing line breaks after line 37 and line 155. Contemporary anthologies of Shevchenko's poetry do not accord these breaks much value, however, arranging 'Kavkaz' as a seamless work instead.

We have called metre a 'language' and, as Saussure famously remarked, language is a system of differences. It follows, then, that the units of the metrical system we are using to explore 'Kavkaz' only have significance by virtue of their relation to and difference from one another. In order to assign a persona to amphibrachic tetrameter, then, we must resume our reading of the text at line 3, where Shevchenko begins to employ the kolomyika rhythm:

Spokonviku Prometeia
Tam orel karaie,
5 Shcho den' bozhyi dobri rebra
I sertse rozbyvaie.
Rozbyvaie, ta ne vyp'ie
Zhyvushchoï krovi —
Vono znovu ozhyvaie
10 I smiiet'sia znovu.
Ne vmyraie dusha nasha,
Ne vmyraie volia.
I nesytyi ne vyore
Na dni moria pole.
15 Ne skuie dushi zhyvoï
I slova zhyvoho.
He ponese slavy boha,
Velykoho boha.

From time immemorial an eagle torments Prometheus there,/ every day it rips his good, divine ribs and heart to pieces./ It rips them to pieces, but does not drain/ the lifeblood,/ which revives and rejoices once more./ Our spirit will not perish,/ our freedom will not perish,/ and the insatiable one will not plough a field at the bottom of the sea./ He will not fetter the living spirit and the living word in chains./ He will not enslave the glory of the god,/ of this great god.

'Tam' in line 4 cues us to infer that the mountains 'covered in blood' in line 2 are those of Greek mythology. We recall that Prometheus was the prescient and wise Titan who served as a protector and advocate of humankind. According to Hesiod, Lucian, Apollodorus and others, he even participated in its creation, forming figures out of clay and water for Athena, who in turn breathed life into them.[50] As is well known, Prometheus' concern for and commitment to humankind would be accompanied by great anguish. Having stolen fire from Mount Olympus and offered it as a gift to the mortals, he was nailed naked to

[50] Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Mt Kisco, NY, 1988, p. 34.

'Mount Caucasus', as Apollodorus tells us, by a vindictive Zeus and tortured there day after day by an eagle.[51]

The distinct cruelty of Prometheus' fate is captured in the anadiplosis in lines 6–7: 'I sertse *rozbyvaie./ Rozbyvaie*, ta ne vyp'ie.' The eagle rips apart Prometheus' breast, but it does not kill him. He revives *diem ex die* to experience the pain anew. His punishment, therefore, is not death, but eternal suffering, and it is in this suffering that we paradoxically find heroic triumph and inspiration: 'Ne vmyraie dusha nasha / Ne vmyraie volia.' This rather hopeful sentiment, emphasized by anaphora, echoes that of Byron, whose 1816 poem 'Prometheus' helped promote the god as a symbol of rebellion and progress for the Romantic movement:

> Still in thy patient energy,
> In the endurance, and repulse
> Of thine impenetrable Spirit,
> Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse,
> A mighty lesson we inherit . . .[52]

Like Byron's narrator above, the speaker of lines 3–18 is a messenger of sorts, a storyteller of divine afflatus who conjures a mythical tale in order to convey 'a mighty lesson' about the resilience of the spirit and of freedom in the face of adversity. The message seems meant for 'the people', and the kolomyika metre, sprung from the cadence of the folk song, is the appropriate means by which he can deliver it. As we shall see, this speaker discharges his responsibility to the people faithfully and fearlessly, even going so far as to confront God on their behalf. Given these traits, and with the epigraph from Jeremiah still fresh in our minds, we shall refer to this figure as the *prophet*.

Contrary to the views of some scholars, the prophet does not refer to God of the Judaeo-Christian tradition in lines 17–18. The 'velykyi boh' remains Prometheus; indeed, straying from this reading detracts from the prophet's 'mighty lesson', not to mention the symmetry of the passage at hand, and indicates an underestimation of the significance of Prometheus's association with the Caucasus and of the influence of Prometheus on Shevchenko the Romantic poet. Nevertheless, C. H. Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnell translate the lines as 'The glory of our God may not be rent,/ The glory of the Lord Omnipotent', and even the impressive new anthology of Shevchenko's poetry edited by Mykola Zhulyns'kyi makes the point of capitalizing 'boha', regardless of the fact that Shevchenko did not do so in the 1847 manuscript of *Try*

[51] Apollodorus, *The Library*, ed. Sir James George Frazer, 2 vols, Cambridge, 1961–63, 1, p. 53. In Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, the most popular account of the myth, a vulture torments Prometheus. Shevchenko's choice of an eagle is a deliberate allusion to the Russian Empire and will merit brief mention in the next section.

[52] *The Poetical Works of Byron*, ed. Paul E. More, Cambridge, MA, 1933, p. 191.

lita.[53] Here Andrusyshen and Kirkconnell and Zhulyns'kyi seem to underestimate the role metre plays in organizing 'Kavkaz', justifying their interpretation instead from the context of lines 19–25:

Ne nam na priu z toboiu staty!
20 Ne nam dila tvoï sudyt'!
Nam til'ko plakat', plakat', plakat'
I khlib nasushchnyi zamisyt'
Krovavym potom i sl'ozamy.
Katy zhnushchaiut'sia nad namy,
25 A pravda nasha p'iana spyt'.

It is not for us to get involved in a struggle with you!/ It is not for us to judge your deeds!/ It is only for us to cry, cry, cry/ and later knead the bread that sustains us/ with our blood and with our tears./ The executioners laugh at us,/ while our drunk justice sleeps.

Iambic tetrameter suddenly overtakes the poem, alerting us to the entrance of a new speaker or, rather, speakers, who call attention to their perceived inferiority and powerlessness at the first opportunity in lines 19–20. We shall call them the *subaltern.* Here the abstract, mythological world of the prophet has fallen away, along with the eternal forces of 'dusha nasha' ('our spirit', line 11) and 'volia' ('freedom', line 12), which are rendered meaningless when 'pravda nasha p'iana spyt'". Underscoring the subaltern's resentful lament is the epizeuxis of 'plakat', plakat', plakat'", which is directed at an ambiguous 'ty'. Given the fact that the 'katy' in line 24 are referred to in the third-person, we may infer from the passage that 'ty' is God, whose 'dila' are ultimately responsible for their miserable lot. These deictics, as well as the metrical difference between lines 3–18 and lines 19–25, challenge the reading of Andrusyshen and Kirkconnell and Zhulyns'kyi, who carry 'God' over from the latter passage to the former and blur the identities of the prophet and the subaltern instead of highlighting the critical distinction between the two.

Overhearing the subaltern's plaintive cry to God, the prophet (again, conspicuous in his use of the kolomyika 'language') returns to the fray:

Koly vona prokynet'sia?
Koly odpochyty
Liazhesh, bozhe, utomlenyi?
I nam dasy zhyty!
30 My viruiem tvoïi syli
I dukhu zhyvomu.
Vstane pravda! Vstane volia!

[53] Andrusyshen and Kirkconnell rationalize their translation of lines 3–18 thus: 'Truth and justice will never die, because they are essential parts of God.' See *The Poetical Works of Taras Shevchenko*, p. 244.

I tobi odnomu
Pomoliat'sia vsi iazyky
35 Voviky i viky.
A poky shcho techut' riky,
Krovaviï riky!

When will she [justice] awaken?/ When, God, will you lie down to rest, exhausted?/ And let us live!/ We believe in your strength/ and your living spirit./ Rise justice! Rise freedom!/ And then all people will pray to you alone/ forever and ever./ Until then, the rivers will flow,/ rivers of blood!

Like the subaltern before him, the prophet seems to contend that God's works are obstacles to a life of happiness and freedom. God is a meddler, an overbearing controller, not a 'Lord Omnipotent'. In addressing Him directly, even condescendingly, the prophet seems to imply that His deeds actually bring about human misery, a claim bordering on blasphemy. Indeed, the moans of the subaltern have clearly spurred on the prophet — his outlook is darker, and the 'volia' that would not die in line 12 now needs to be revived by an invocation of his talismanic powers: 'Vstane pravda! Vstane volia!' Until they do rise again, he portends that the rivers will run red with blood, and it is with this image of a bloody landscape, which complements the 'hory [. . .] kroviiu polyti' of lines 1–2, that Shevchenko concludes the first portion of 'Kavkaz', the poem of lament.

Lines 38–155: A Poem of Irony

Lines 38–44, which open what we have called the poem of irony, induce a feeling of *déjà vu*. The amphibrachic couplet appears once more, heralding the transition from lament to irony, and again the deictic 'there' ('otam-to') situates the subsequent action in the heights of the mountains. It is as if 'Kavkaz' is repeating itself:

Za horamy hory, khmaroiu povyti,
Zasiiani horem, kroviiu polyti.

40 Otam-to mylostyviï my
Nenahodovanu i holu
Zastukaly serdeshnu voliu
Ta i ts'kuiemo.

Mountains upon mountains, covered in cloud,/ sown with woe, soaked in blood./ There we, the gracious ones,/ overtook miserable freedom, naked and malnourished,/ and we set our dogs on it.

Instead of the inspirational, if not didactic, tone of the prophet, or even the desperate lament of the subaltern, we encounter a new, more sinister perspective. It is that of 'my', the collective first-person speaker known by the epithet 'mylostyviï', and distinguished by its use of iambic

tetrameter. In a deft use of enjambment, Shevchenko once again plays with our expectations here, for only after 'ts'kuiemo' do we appreciate the bitter irony of epithet: the 'gracious ones' do not care for the vulnerable, emaciated 'volia' — they hunt it down. And, giving no reason for their actions, they apparently do so for their own enjoyment. Hunting jargon can be found in line 54 as well, after the elite, as we shall refer to them, proudly quantify the mass misery brought about by their sport:

Liahlo kost'my
Liudei mushtrovanykh chymalo.
45 A sl'oz, a krovi? Napoït'
Vsikh imperatoriv by stalo
Z dit'my i vnukamy, vtopyt'
V sl'ozakh udov'ïkh. A divochykh,
Prolytykh taino sered nochi!
50 A maternykh hariachykh sl'oz!
A bat'kovykh starykh, krovavykh,
Ne riky — more rozlylos',
Ohnenne more! Slava! Slava!
Khortam, i honchym, i psariam,
55 I nashym batiushkam-tsariam
Slava.

The bones of many a soldier lie there./ And what of tears and blood? They slake the thirst of all of the emperors, so much so that they could drown themselves with their children and grandchildren in the tears of the widows. And of the girls/ who shed them in secret in the middle of the night!/ And what of the hot tears of mothers!/ Of fathers, old and bloody./ Not rivers – a sea overflows,/ an impetuous sea! Glory! Glory!/ To our hounds and their keepers, and to our paternal tsars,/ glory!

These are certainly the amused 'katy' ('executioners') of line 24 at whose hands the subaltern languish. Bloodthirsty and prone to adynaton (lines 45–48), the elite are grotesque in their enthusiastic recitation of the suffering of the families of the executed, and their perversity is punctuated by the abundant praise they heap upon the participants of the hunt, including the tsar. Yes, the tsar — line 55, 'i nashym batiushkam-tsariam', encourages us to equate the elite with the Russian elite and, given the 'anti-Russian' ire frequently attributed to Shevchenko, it may seem appropriate to do so. Such a gesture, however, immediately politicizes a poem that revels in ambiguity. To remain open to alternative meanings — after all, the title 'tsar' was once used to refer to Byzantine emperors as well as the khans of the Golden Horde — we shall assume an admittedly naive posture and bracket 'Russian' off from 'elite' for the time being, at least until 'Kavkaz' unravels further.

Eavesdropping on the elite as they talk among themselves, the prophet counters their onslaught of adulation with his own exclamatory 'slava' in the kolomyika metre:

I vam slava, syni hory,
Kryhoiu okuti.
I vam, lytsari velyki,
60 Bohom ne zabuti.
Boritesia — poborete,
Vam boh pomahaie!
Za vas pravda, za vas slava
I volia sviataia!

And glory to you, blue mountains,/ encased in ice./ And to you, great warriors,/ who are not forgotten by god./ Struggle — overcome,/ God will help you!/ Justice is with you, glory is with you,/ and sacred freedom as well!

Contrary to our expectations, he does not confront the elite, belittle them, or dispute the outrageous epithet they have assigned to themselves. Instead, using only a few lines, the prophet salutes the 'lytsari' who fight them. It seems that these warriors are a constituency among the subaltern who, while under the thumb of the elite, do not bemoan their passivity or wait for justice to awaken from its hangover like their brethren in lines 19–25. Cut more from the cloth of the prophet, they work to resurrect justice and freedom. Their quest is sanctioned by God, the prophet proclaims, but this confident assurance comes not without an impending sense of doom for, in lines 26–29, was not the intercession of God an impediment to freedom?

The question will be left unanswered, for what follows the prophet's brief interjection is an uninterrupted 51-line monologue of iambic tetrameter addressed by the elite to the subaltern. Positioned almost exactly at the middle of the text, the passage is the poem's centrepiece, a redundant, convoluted appeal for assimilation that smacks of hypocrisy, and whose patronizing tone is evident from the start:

65 *Churek* i *saklia* — vse tvoie,
Vono ne proshene, ne dane,
Nikhto i ne voz'me za svoie,
Ne povede tebe v kaidanakh.
A v nas! . . . Na te pys'menni my,
70 Chytaiem bozhiï hlaholy!
I od hlybokoï tiurmy
Ta do vysokoho prestola —
Usi my v zoloti i holi.
Do nas v nauku! My navchym,
75 Pochomu khlib i sil' pochim!

My khrystyiane; khramy, shkoly
Use dobro, sam boh u nas!

A *churek* and *saklia* — all of this is yours./ Not begged for, not given,/ no one will take them from you,/ or drive you in shackles./ So join us! . . . We are writers;/ we read the words of God!/ From the deep prison/ to the high throne —/ we all are amid gold and nakedness./ We've been given knowledge!/ We will teach you why we hoard bread and salt./ We're Christian; we have temples, schools, all that is good, even God himself!

Up to this point, specific references to geography, culture, religion and language have been relatively few and far between and, with the possible exception of the putative 'Russian' elite, the text's personae have resisted classification along the lines of ethnicity or nationality. The introduction of 'churek' and 'saklia' — respectively, the unleavened bread and mountain dwelling indigenous to the peoples of the Caucasus[54] — marks a change of direction in the text. The elite address directly a subaltern 'native' ('tebe', not 'vas') of the Caucasus, whose possessions, they remark not without an air of superiority, amount to little more than some crumbs and a hovel. Having diminished his lot, they proceed to seduce the subaltern with images of their world, a Shangri-La adorned with gold and abundant in its places of learning. Yet they let word slip of a sinister feature of this world, the prison. As we shall see, allusions to slavery, punishment and incarceration pepper the entire monologue and then are decried so vehemently as to arouse our suspicion. Indeed, the imperative 'v nas!' proves to be more a command driven by greed than an altruistic invitation, and the elite's true motives are disclosed as 'Kavkaz' continues:

Nam til'ko saklia ochi kole:
Choho vona stoït' u vas,
80 Ne namy dana; chom my vam
Churek zhe vash ta vam ne kynem,
Iak tii sobatsi! Chom vy nam
Platyt' za sontse ne povynni!
Ta i til'ko zh to! My ne pohane,
85 My nastoiashchi khrystyiane,
My malym syti! . . . A zate!
Iakby vy z namy podruzhyly,
Bahato b dechomu navchylys'!
U nas zhe i svita, iak na te —
90 Odna Sybir neiskhodyma,
A tiurm! A liudu! . . . Shcho i lichyt'!
Od moldovanyna do fina
Ha vsikh iazykakh vse movchyt',
Bo blahodenstvuie! U nas

[54] Zhulyns'kyi, p. 736.

95 Sviatuiu Bibliiu chytaie
Sviatyi chernets′ i nauchaie,
Shcho tsar iakyis′-to svyni pas
Ta druzhniu zhinku vziav do sebe,
A druha vbyv. Teper na nebi.
100 Ot bachyte, iaki u nas
Sydiat′ na nebi! Vy shche temni,
Sviatym khrestom ne prosvishchenni,
U nas navchit′sia!

The 'saklia' bothers us, though:/ how does it stand among you?/ We didn't give it to you. How is it that we don't throw you your 'churek', as we would to the dogs!? How is it that you do not have to pay us for the sun!/ It's only that! We're not bad,/ we're true Christians,/ satisfied with little! . . . But on the other hand,/ if you befriend us,/ you'll learn a lot!/ We have the world,/ like inescapable Siberia,/ and all the prisons! And the people! . . . Beyond all estimation!/ From the Moldavian to the Finn,/ all are silent in their languages,/ because they're blessed! Among us,/ a holy monk reads the sacred bible and learns/ that some king, a pig-herder,/ took a friend's wife for himself,/ and then killed the friend. Now he's in heaven./ See what kind of people go to heaven among us! You are still dark,/ not yet enlightened by the light of Christ,/ so learn from us!

The overly earnest argument for assimilation in the previous passage was a ruse designed to conceal a lust for territorial expansion and cultural domination. As far as the elite are concerned, the subaltern lives at their pleasure, entitled to nothing but scraps — not a place at the table, not even the 'saklia' called 'tvoie' just moments before. They rationalize this lust for power by professing a Christianity ('my nastoiashchi khrystyiane') that resembles more a demented social Darwinism, and cite the story of David, Bathsheba and Uriah from 2 Samuel 11 as an example of behaviour acceptable in the eyes of God.[55] For the elite, then, sharing the light of Christ is to blind the subaltern, to reconcile him to the realization that their dominion is divinely ordained and that his place is at their feet.

Lines 90–94, 'Odna Sybir neiskhodyma,/ A tiurm! A liudu! . . . Shcho i lichyt′!/ Od moldovanyna do fina/ Ha vsikh iazykakh vse movchyt′,/ Bo blahodenstvuie!', dispel any ambiguity that may have remained as to the national identity of the elite. They are Russian, and from east to west to north, from Siberia to Moldavia to Finland, they plot the coordinates of their vast empire. Notable is the absence of a southern point in the lines above, and we understand that the Caucasus is meant to fill that void, to allow the 'organic' growth of the empire to

[55] The elite tell only half the story, of course: God did punish David for his misdeed, taking the life of the child conceived in 2 Samuel 11:5. Such sophistry is an indication of the lengths to which the elite will go to convince the subaltern of their superiority.

continue unabated. Hints dropped casually throughout the passage intimate that the 'saklia' will be razed to erect prisons and establish a 'second Siberia', and that local culture, like the voices of the Moldavian and the Finn, will wither under the intense weight of assimilation.[56]

With the repetition of 'u nas', the references to prisons and the constant exclamations, the monologue builds to a denouement in which the elite's greatest hypocrisy is exposed:

V nas dery,
Dery ta dai,
105 I prosto v Rai,
Khoch i ridniu vsiu zabery!
U nas! Choho to my ne vmiiem?
I zori lichym, hrechku siiem,
Frantsuziv laiem. Prodaiem
110 Abo u karty prohraiem
Liudei . . . ne nehriv . . . a takykh,
Taky khreshchenykh . . . *no prostykh.*
My ne hishpany; kryi nas, bozhe,
Shchob kradene perekupat',
115 Iak ti zhydy. My po zakonu!

Among us, it's squeeze,/ squeeze and give/ and then it's simply off to paradise./ But bring your whole family!/ Join us! What aren't we capable of?/ We count the stars, sow buckwheat,/ and curse the French. We sell people, or lose them in cards . . . not negroes, though . . ./ just those peasants, *the simpletons.*/ We are not Spaniards; God save us from trading in stolen goods,/ like those Jews. We live according to the law!

The elite have prided themselves on their religious, intellectual and cultural superiority; in a previous passage, for example, they boasted of their holy monks, who alone tend to the Word of God, and of their manifold achievements in learning. Here they lay claim to a moral superiority over the Spanish and the Jews while admitting, at the same time, that they barter in human beings. Serfdom, which all but disappeared in Western Europe by the sixteenth century, persisted until 1861 in the Russian Empire, and we cannot help but find the irony of 'my po zakonu!' in line 115 almost humorous. The elite's hypocrisy here, particularly in lines 111–12, is brought into even greater relief if we consider the historical context: in December 1841, Russia, along with Austria, Great Britain, Prussia and France, signed a treaty declaring its opposition to *torhivlia nehramy* — the slave trade — nearly

[56] Throughout the monologue, the diction of the elite has been quite a cocktail. In this passage, for example, 'nashtoiashchi' in line 85 is an obvious Russianism; 'neiskhodyma' in line 90, an archaism; and 'blahodenstvuie' in line 94 a Church Slavonicism. The language of Church Slavonic was considered of the highest register, and its inclusion here suits our characterization of the elite.

twenty years before its abolition of serfdom and emancipation of the 'prosti liudy'.[57]

It is at this point, after hearing the elite at their most hypocritical, that the prophet returns from a lengthy absence. He assails their sanctimony head-on:

Po zakonu apostola
Vy liubyte brata!
Suieslovy, lytsemiry,
Hospodom prokliati.
120 Vy liubyte na bratovi
Shkuru, a ne dushu!
Ta i lupyte po zakonu:
Dochtsi na kozhushok,
Baistriukovi na prydane,
125 Zhintsi na patynky.
Sobi zh na te, shcho ne znaiut'
Ni dity, ni zhinka!

By the law of the apostles,/ you love your brother!?/ Idle prattle, hypocrites,/ damned by God./ You love your brother's/ skin, not his soul!/ You peel it off by this law:/ a sheepskin coat for your daughter,/ a dowry for your bastard,/ slippers for your wife,/ and things for yourself that the children and your wife know nothing about!

After 51 lines of iambic tetrameter, the relative swiftness of the kolomyika metre above, with its alternating eight- and six-syllable lines, accentuates the fierce sentiment of the prophet's indictment. His fury is not reserved solely for the elite, however:

Za koho zh ty rozip'iavsia,
Khryste, syne bozhyi?
130 Za nas, dobrykh, chy za slovo
Istyny . . . chy, mozhe,
Shchob my z tebe nasmiialys'?
Vono zh tak i stalos'.

For whom were you crucified,/ Christ, Son of God?/ For us good folk, or for the sacred word . . . Or, maybe,/ so that we can make fun of you?/ It appears so.

After implying that God's actions may hinder the march of justice and freedom in lines 26–29, the prophet nearly blasphemes against the Son of God by questioning whether the significance of the crucifixion extends beyond the realm of the trivial. Close calls with blasphemy are not uncommon in Shevchenko's poetry; in fact, lines 57–58 of the

[57] Zhulyns'kyi, p. 736. Shevchenko's use of irony throughout the elite's monologue is reminiscent of Byron's, in that he targets false virtue and hypocrisy.

poem 'Iakby vy znaly, panychi' ('If You Only Knew, Gentlemen', 1850) echo line 132 above: 'A mozhe i sam na nebesy/ Smiieshsia, batechku, nad namy' ('And maybe You in heaven/ are laughing at us, Father'). But rarely is Christ the object of irreverence, for as George Grabowicz explains, 'in Shevchenko's poetic world [. . .] God the Father is mostly distant and unresponsive, and even accused of being deceptive. True godhood and solace is found in Christ, the crucified God of the poor and the humble'.[58] As far as 'Kavkaz' is concerned, Grabowicz is correct on the first count — we have seen how the prophet distrusts God the Father and, moreover, how the elite manipulate Him for their own ends. The fact that the very nature of Christ, 'the crucified God of the poor and the humble', is also doubted here, however, attests to the unusual intensity of the prophet's anger and despair.

Up to this point we have tracked the movement of the prophet, the subaltern, and the elite throughout the text, describing the poetic space that they take turns occupying as a 'battlefield'. As we have seen, they have held their positions in this battle firmly. The prophet has entrenched himself in the rhythm of the Ukrainian folk song, and the elite in what we might call 'the metre of the majority', iambic tetrameter. The consistent patterning of metre throughout the text, therefore, leaves us quite unprepared for the following lines, which constitute nothing less than an ambush:

Khramy, kaplytsi, i ikony,
135 I stavnyky, i myrry dym,
I pered obrazom tvoïm
Neutomlennyie poklony.
Za krazhu, za voinu, za krov,
Shchob bratniu krov prolyty, prosiat'
140 I potim v dar tobi prynosiat'
Z pozharu vkradenyi pokrov!!

Temples, chapels, and icons,/ and candlesticks and myrrh/ — in front of your images,/ they worship tirelessly./ For theft, for war, for blood,/ they ask to spill the blood of brothers,/ and later bring you stolen goods from the inferno!!

Suddenly, unexpectedly, the prophet usurps the iambic tetrameter of the elite to complete his address to Christ, and appears to do so with some relish, given the pervasive alliteration of 'r' above (for example, 'khramy', 'myrry', 'pered obrazom', 'dar tobi prynosiat' / z pozharu vkradenyi pokrov').[59] Effectively turning the language of the elite inside-out, he proceeds to turn their piety and their temples inside-out

[58] *The Poet as Mythmaker*, p. 93.
[59] Sydorenko, p. 70.

as well, exposing the ornate fixtures for what they really are — war booty. The elite respond in kind, overtaking the prophet's kolomyika metre to make one last appeal to the subaltern:

Prosvitylys'! ta shche i khochem
Druhykh prosvityty,
Sontse pravdy pokazaty
145 Slipym, bachysh, ditiam! . . .
Vse pokazhem! Til'ko daite
Sebe v ruky vziaty.
Iak i tiurmy murovaty,
Kaidany kuvaty,
150 Iak i nosyt'! . . . I iak plesty
Knuty uzlovati —
Vs'omu navchym; til'ko daite
Svoï syni hory
Ostatniï . . . bo vzhe vzialy
155 I pole i more.

We are enlightened! And we also want/ to enlighten our friends,/ to show the light of truth/ to our blind children, you see! . . ./ We'll show you everything!/ Just give/ yourself in hands tied./ (We'll show you) how to build prisons,/ how to forge shackles,/ and even how to wear them! . . . And how to plait the intricate knout./ We'll teach you everything; just give us every last one of your blue mountains . . . because we've already taken/ the fields and the sea.

The elite continue to regurgitate a mantra that is a mixture of sadism, greed and noblesse oblige. In exchange for their lessons of 'good will', in which the subaltern will learn of the 'benefits' of his acquiescence to the empire — namely, imprisonment ('tiurmy') and torture ('knuty') — the people of the Caucasus must surrender the 'syni hory'. The motives of the elite, once obfuscated by the feigned benevolence of lines 65–77, for example, are now more or less transparent, although no less menacing. They have corrupted the kolomyika language of the prophet, and the authority that accompanies it, and it is on this note of foreboding that the poem of irony concludes.

Lines 156–78: A Poem of Elegy

For an unpredictable poem like 'Kavkaz', the only thing that is certain is that nothing is certain. As we have just seen, the prophet and the elite consistently maintain signature metres throughout the text, only to swap them at the very end of the poem of irony. Here, at the onset of the poem of elegy, we anticipate the repetition of the amphibrachic couplet, 'Za horamy hory . . .', which has been used to open the previous segments of the text, but discover instead:

I tebe zahnaly, mii druzhe iedynyi,
Mii Iakive dobryi! Ne za Ukraïnu,
A za ïï kata dovelos' prolyt'
Krov dobru, ne chornu. Dovelos' zapyt'
160 Z moskovs'koï chashi moskovs'ku otrutu!
O druzhe mii dobryi! Druzhe nezabutyi!
Zhyvoiu dusheiu v Ukraini vytai,
Litai z kozakamy ponad berehamy,
Rozryti mohyly v stepu nazyrai.
165 Zaplach z kozakamy dribnymy sl'ozamy
I mene z nevoli v stepu vyhliadai.

They drove you out there, my unique friend,/ my good Iakiv! Not for Ukraine,/ but for her executioner, you were forced to shed/ good blood, not black. You were forced to drink/ the Muscovite poison from the Muscovite goblet!/ Oh my good friend! My unforgettable friend!/ Hover over Ukraine with your living spirit,/ fly with the Cossacks over the riverbanks,/ look after the burial mounds, exposed on the steppe./ Weep small tears with the Cossacks/ and look out for me in slavery on the steppe.

A new array of personal, spatial and temporal deictics brings us out of the distant world of the poems of lament and irony and places us in the more immediate world of November 1845. No longer do we find ourselves amid the airy peaks of the Caucasus; in their place the wild expanse of the Ukrainian steppe fills the poetic landscape. Iakiv de Bal'men, once a name that stood outside the boundaries of the text, is now a character within it, the addressee of a speaker who seems to be the poet himself. Wary of the impersonality of poetic discourse, however, we do not posit the speaker to be Shevchenko the empirical individual; rather, this 'I' is also a poetic persona, which we will call *Shevchenko qua meditative persona*. More a witness than a narrator, it is as if he has stood above the 'battlefield', eavesdropping on the voices of the prophet, the subaltern, and the elite below. He uses the amphibrachic tetrameter to frame this experience (hence its function as a liminal metre throughout the text) and to meditate upon the loss of de Bal'men.[60]

The passage presents de Bal'men's death as a murder. He is poisoned by the Muscovite elite, the same *katy* of line 24, but the murder is essentially not a betrayal. There is no deception, no foul play; the Count drinks '[z] moskovs'koï chashi moskovs'ku otrutu' ('the Muscovite poison from the Muscovite goblet'). Even though de Bal'men dies 'ne za Ukraïnu', Shevchenko qua meditative persona directs his spirit to join the Cossacks, the past defenders of Ukraine and now, the

[60] Sydorenko makes clear that the passage above, despite a number of irregularities, manifests a definite 'amfibrakhichna tendentsia' (amphibrachic tendency). See, ibid., p. 71.

defenders of Ukraine's past. For Shevchenko, the 'rozryti mohyly' are solemn symbols of Ukraine's freedom, and de Bal'men, along with the Cossacks, is entrusted with the sacred duty to protect these burial mounds.[61] The speaker then switches to the kolomyika metre to bid a poignant farewell to his friend, thus bringing 'Kavkaz' to an end:

A poky shcho moï dumy,
Moie liute hore
Siiatymu — nekhai rostut'
170 Ta z vitrom hovoriat'.
Viter tykhyi z Ukraïny
Ponese z rosoiu
Moï dumy azh do tebe! . . .
Bratn'oiu sl'ozoiu
175 Ty ïkh, druzhe, pryvitaiesh,
Tykho prochytaiesh . . .
O mohyly, stepy, more,
I mene zhadaiesh.

Until then I will sow my thoughts, my savage despair. Let them grow/ and speak with the wind./ The quiet wind from Ukraine/ will carry my thoughts to you with the dew./ With a brotherly tear/ you will greet them, my friend,/ you will read them quietly/ . . . and you will remember the mounds, the steppe, the sea, and me.

Negotiating a Dialectic of Metrical Planes: Understanding 'Kavkaz'

So far we have revealed 'couplings', to borrow Samuel Levin's term, in which parallelism in metre 'passes over into parallelism of meaning'.[62] In 'Kavkaz', lines united by the rising rhythm of iambic tetrameter, for example, are bound up in a set of semantic elements that cohere to form an identity or 'ethos' of a poetic persona that we have called the elite. The kolomyika metre groups an opposing set to give us the prophet, and amphibrachic tetrameter helps us assemble Shevchenko qua meditative persona. These speakers are, of course, fictional constructs that we produce in order to negotiate the text's ambiguities and discontinuities. We might instead put forth a single narrator who in effect limits the polyphony, but I would argue that 'Kavkaz' problematizes such an approach. Myroslav Shkandrij comments that '[a]t three different points the narrative [of "Kavkaz"] shifts into a mocking mimicry of the autocrat's voice. Each time the narrator's angry protestant voice punctures his august tone, challenging the apotheosis of violence, vastness, and power'.[63] Here 'the narrator' is a

[61] See, Shevchenko's 'Rozryta Mohyla' (The Plundered Burial Mound, 1843), chronologically the first poem of the *Try lita* collection.
[62] Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, Ithaca, NY, 1975, p. 185.
[63] Myroslav Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine*, Montreal and Kingston, 2001 (hereafter, Shkandrij), p. 135.

conflation of the prophet, the subaltern and Shevchenko qua meditative persona, whose use of mimicry produces the elite. While this certainly seems to make sense of the poem, how do we reconcile 'a narrator' who dramatically summons the ethereal world of Greek mythology and testifies to the power and perpetuity of justice and freedom, only to weep over their ineptitude in the next line? Coming to grips with such a mood swing is reminiscent of William F. Holladay's troubles with Jeremiah. How do we reconcile 'a narrator' who twice conjures an image of mountains covered in blood, only to describe them as 'blue' and 'encased in ice' later? And perhaps most significantly, how do we reconcile 'a narrator' who praises the Caucasian *lytsari* responsible for the death of his 'sincere' friend, to whom 'Kavkaz' is dedicated so poignantly? Following variations in metre to assert multiple personae — while hardly an infallible tool, as we have seen — accounts for the poem's internal conflicts and plasticity and makes sense of the text without imposing too much order where order is deliberately relinquished.

Recognizing these multiple personae, or 'masks', as we have also called them, allows us to conceive of the poem's three-dimensionality, of multiple discourses taking place in the text along a vertical axis, as it were. As the structural lynchpin of 'Kavkaz', metre organizes these discourses which work together as a dialectic. The initial discourse — a discourse of colonialism, which takes place along the metrical plane of iambic tetrameter, the binary metre 'so closely linked to Pushkin [and] his entire epoch', as Michael Wachtel reminds us[64] — provokes a reaction — a discourse of anti-colonialism, which takes place along the metrical plane of the kolomyika metre, the 'narodnopisennyi rytm' ('national-musical rhythm') — which in turn gives rise to a transcendence above the two — a discourse of post-colonialism, which takes place along the metrical plane of amphibrachic tetrameter, the ternary form commonly associated with themes of 'love, betrayal and brutal murder'.[65] Before we elaborate upon each in turn, beginning with the discourse of colonialism, a word on these 'metrical planes' and the loaded terms of post-colonial theory.

By charting discourses of colonialism, anti-colonialism and post-colonialism along a kind of metrical topography, I do not mean to suggest that iambic tetrameter, for example, is somehow inextricably

[64] Wachtel, p. 248.

[65] Ibid., p. 38. This dialectic, while reminiscent of the synchronic movement of myth that Grabowicz traces in Shevchenko's poetry, is quite distinctive. 'Myth proceeds through a series of binary oppositions and mediations; an opposition on a lower level of structure is resolved by a mediation on a higher one', Grabowicz explains. 'The mediation [will be] developed only in the context of later poetry, [. . .] on a higher and universal level, in the future' (see *The Poet as Mythmaker*, p. 45). We are arguing here, however, that this third stage, or synthesis, is not deferred until 'later poetry', but rather occurs within 'Kavkaz' itself.

fraught with the politics of colonial subjugation, or the kolomyika with the politics of national liberation. To be sure, the three metres in question have allowed Ukrainian and Russian poets alike to express a boundless range of sentiments. Generally speaking, however, each does evoke its own constellation of associations and expectations, some of which we have mentioned previously: for example, kolomyika and the traditions of the folk, amphibrachic tetrameter and an experience of that which is intense, grave, jarring. The horizon of iambic tetrameter's 'semanticheskii oreol' ('semantic aura'), however, is more difficult to delimit due to the frequency of the metre's use in Shevchenko's day, but we will nonetheless make an attempt to do so in the following pages by way of a comparative analysis of a few key Russian texts from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[66]

Further, Stephen Slemon has argued that there is a 'scramble for post-colonialism' in a number of professional fields and critical enterprises, a free-for-all that has put the term 'post-colonial' itself in danger of becoming diffuse and unfocused.[67] Its use here, in a study of a 'national bard' who wrote over a century and a half ago, may seem, to say the least, misplaced. Just as dangerous, however, is the limitation of the definition of 'post-colonialism' to mean 'after-colonialism', that is, post-independence. Marko Pavlyshyn constrains himself in this regard: 'If [. . .] one were to select a historical moment representative of the arrival of the post-colonial in Ukraine, an obvious choice might be 24 August 1991, the day of the parliamentary proclamation [. . .] of Ukrainian independence.'[68] Yet, as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin remind us, 'post-colonialism [. . .] begins from the very first moment of colonial contact. It is the discourse of oppositionality which colonialism brings into being. In this sense, post-colonial writing has a very long history'.[69] Shevchenko and post-colonial theory are,

[66] I take the term 'semanticheskii oreol' from Mikhail Gasparov, as quoted in Wachtel, p. 14.

[67] Stephen Slemon, 'The Scramble for Post-colonialism', in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds), *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, London, 1995 (hereafter, *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*), pp. 45–52 (p. 45).

[68] Marko Pavlyshyn, 'Post-colonial Features in Contemporary Ukrainian Culture', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, 6, 1992, 2, pp. 41–55 (hereafter, Pavlyshyn) (p. 41). Reading the post-colonial in Shevchenko is also to read out, as it were, the 'post-' that implies a terminal end-point of the forces of colonial subjugation.

[69] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, 'Postmodernism and Post-colonialism', in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, p. 117. The reception of post-colonial studies *vis-à-vis* the former Soviet Union, which once represented the largest contiguous empire in history, has been rather lopsided. This may be due partly to the fact that post-colonial studies have generally taken as their subject a colonial archive in which English (or 'english') predominates as the language of communication. Post-colonialism has been either accepted wholesale, as in the case of some Ukrainian intellectuals, or approached with great reticence. In either case, as Grabowicz rightly points out, it has not been the object of rigorous examination. See, 'Ukrainian Studies: Framing the Contexts', *Slavic Review*, 52, Autumn 1995, 3, pp. 674–90 (p. 676).

therefore, not necessarily mutually exclusive, as Oksana Zabuzhko has demonstrated.[70] What matters more is the viability of the concept of 'colonial contact' *vis-à-vis* Ukraine, a contentious issue that we will not address per se in this study, as to do so would require, among other things, an immersion into the politics and economy of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russian Empire and of the entire Soviet period.[71] What we will endeavour to highlight, however, is that a discourse of colonialism is indeed articulated in 'Kavkaz', and that the process of its articulation arouses more in the poet than just a straightforwardly oppositional — that is, nationalist — posture.

Colonial Discourse in 'Kavkaz'

Pavlyshyn defines colonialism as an ideology that 'coerces or seduces people and institutions to observe, accept and, through their behaviour, reinforce a particular structure of [cross-cultural] dominance'.[72] It is promulgated in literature and other modes of knowledge production and driven by 'the ideological machinery of the manichean allegory', as Abdul R. JanMohamed explains, by way of a static binarism between 'self-Other', 'civilized-native', or — as we have classified the relationship — 'elite-subaltern'.[73] In 'Kavkaz', both the elite and the subaltern use iambic tetrameter, and the fact that they are the only two personae of the four to employ predominantly the same metrical language is testament to their interdependence in the discourse. On an abstract level, theirs is the prototypical colonial encounter.[74] From the start, the elite communicate that they 'know' the subaltern; their first words to the 'native' Caucasian in line 65, 'churek' and 'saklia', assign him an irremediable alterity. With an overbearing repetition of 'v nas/ u nas', they force him to recognize the elite as, first, purveyors of knowledge ('Do nas v nauku', line 74) and, second, purveyors of religious truth ('sam boh u nas', line 77). The possibility of this recognition inflates the elite's sense of self, and their narcissistic

[70] See, *Shevchenkiv Mif Ukraïny: sproba filosofs'koho analizu*, Kiev, 1997.

[71] Irrespective of such a discussion, we can say with certainty that Ukraine, at the very least, was subject to 'internal colonialism', in which 'dependencies of the "colonialist" type appear, not between a "mother country" and a geographically remote colony, but between dominant "centres" and dependent "peripheries" *within* nation states or regionally integrated land empires'. See Jurgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, Princeton, NJ, 1997, pp. 16–17.

[72] Pavlyshyn, p. 43.

[73] Abdul R. JanMohamed, 'The Economy of the Manichean Allegory', in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, p. 20.

[74] That is, the representation of the encounter is 'prototypical' for, in reality, colonial relationships are rarely simplistically oppositional. As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin explain, imperial 'power does not [. . .] operate in a simple vertical way from the institutions in which it appears to be constituted: it operates dynamically, laterally and intermittently' or, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, rhizomatically. See, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, London and New York, 2000, p. 207.

perception of occupying the position of superiority ('Choho to my ne vmiiem?', line 107) becomes quickly evident to us. The subaltern, on the other hand, serving as the means by which the elite build up the colonialist self, are negated by the interaction; after their cries of distress in lines 19–25 ('Nam til'ko plakat', plakat', plakat"), which are issued, notably, before the emergence of the elite in line 40, they fall deafly silent. Throughout the remainder of 'Kavkaz', the subaltern are only present in their absence.

Textual cues, such as 'churek' and 'saklia' or the reference to Siberia in line 90, prompt us to read 'elite' as 'Russian' and 'subaltern' as 'Caucasian'. As a matter of history, the Caucasus became an object of interest to Moscow following the dissolution of the Golden Horde in the sixteenth century. The region meant access to warm-water seas and the Iranian market, but proved resistant to the imperial advance for nearly two centuries. In 1801, after years of seeing military victories offset by abysmal failures, the Russian Empire scored a diplomatic victory with the annexation of the (Christian) kingdom of Georgia, securing that heretofore elusive position from which to stage excursions south of the Caucasian mountains. The encroachment rallied the Muslim peoples of the Caucasus in a *ghazawat*, or struggle, against the tsar's forces, and it is at this stage of the conflict, from approximately 1825 to 1855, that we may place 'Kavkaz'.[75]

Of course, the poem, and the discourse of colonialism it presents via iambic tetrameter, does not seek to recreate these historical circumstances so much as address the repository of ideas and rhetoric that inspire and legitimate the colonial enterprise in the first place. Attuned to intertextuality provoked by the colonial encounter, Shkandrij notes that the elite's tone and language in 'Kavkaz' echo those of official proclamations of the tsar (for example, the royal 'my' of line 40), as well as sycophantic panegyrics to autocracy and empire (cf. 'blahodenstvuie' of line 94 to Zhukovsky's 'Oda, *blagodenstvie* Rossii' [Ode, Blessedness of Russia, 1797]).[76] Shevchenko also 'writes back' to no less than three of Pushkin's works, most notably 'Kavkazskii Plennik' (The Prisoner of the Caucasus, 1822) which, as Katya Hokanson argues, represents the progenitor of Russian literary imperialism *vis-à-vis* the Caucasus. She

[75] Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers*, Richmond, 2001 (hereafter, Cornell), p. 27.

[76] Shkandrij, p. 136. Compare the elite's appeal for assimilation with this 1816 directive from Marquis Philippe Paulucci, a commander in the Imperial Army, to his troops: 'Upon arriving in the Caucasus, be sure to follow these guidelines in dealing with the natives: 1. Refrain from anything that could weaken *their perception of our power* [. . .] 2. Establish commercial relations so as to generate among them *needs that they still do not feel* [. . .] 4. *Introduce among them the light of Christianity*' (emphasis mine — RF). See Cornell, p. 31.

contends that 'the Caucasus, as Russians know it, did not really exist until Pushkin created it in ["Kavkazskii Plennik"]'.[77]

The dedication that opens Pushkin's work cues us to the intertextual relationship between 'Kavkazskii Plennik' and 'Kavkaz'. He invokes the Caucasus in this way:

Kavkaz,
Gde pasmurnyi Beshtu, pustynnik velichavyi,
Aulov i polei vlastitel' piatiglavyi,
Byl novyi dlia menia Parnas.[78]

The Caucasus,/ where gloomy Bestu, the majestic hermit,/ the five-headed ruler of the auls and the fields,/ was for me a new Parnassus.

Like Shevchenko with Prometheus, Pushkin begins with an allusion to the world of classical antiquity ('novyi Parnas'), and he does so, as Hokanson points out, 'to establish the Caucasus as an appropriate place for Russian poetry'.[79] Shevchenko has a similar objective with 'Kavkaz'. By bringing forth a landscape of suffering, where justice and freedom are crippled yet not entirely overcome, he draws a parallel between the Caucasus and his Ukraine, between the mountains and the steppe.[80] Especially toward the poem's conclusion, he implies a shared experience between the peoples of Ukraine and the peoples of the Caucasus, fostering a solidarity with the subaltern, as it were.[81] This avowal of similarity with the Caucasus is more than impassioned

[77] Katya Hokanson, 'Literary Imperialism, Narodnost', and Pushkin's Invention of the Caucasus', *Russian Review*, 53, 1994, 3, pp. 336–52 (hereafter, Hokanson) (p. 336).

[78] Excerpts from Pushkin's poetry have been taken from Aleksandr Pushkin, *Sochineniia*, Moscow, 1949, pp. 156–244.

[79] Hokanson, p. 343.

[80] There are many compelling geographical and historical parallels between Ukraine and the Caucasus. The Caucasus is often referred to as a 'borderland', a region over which various empires have competed and in which civilizations and religions have met. And more often than not, as we might say in regard to the inhabitants of Ukraine, the Caucasian peoples have 'lost rather than gained from their important geographical position'. See Cornell, p. 18.

[81] 'Kavkaz' is not the only occasion when Shevchenko effects a kind of lateral bonding between Ukraine and the 'East'. For example, in 'Dumy moï, dumy moï' (My Thoughts, My Thoughts, 1848), most likely composed over the course of his expedition to the Aral Sea in exile, he writes: 'Prylitaite . . ./ Iz-za Dnipra shyrokoho/ u step pohuliaty/ z kyrhyzamy ubohymy' ('Fly [that is, my thoughts] . . . from the wide Dnieper to the steppe to wander with the poor Kirghiz'). In *The Poet as Mythmaker*, Grabowicz argues that the world depicted in Shevchenko's poetry is for the most part not determined by place, but I would argue that, as far as the poet's solidarity with the subaltern is concerned, spatial-geographic considerations often do take precedence over what Grabowicz calls the 'mythic model'. See *The Poet as Mythmaker*, p. 56. Linking arm-in-arm with the peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia, rather than with fellow Slavs for instance, is a geographically-conscious strategy that allows Shevchenko in 'Kavkaz' and 'Dumy moï' to stake a claim to a Ukrainian identity safely ensconced in the 'margins' rather than vulnerable to absorption and oblivion near the imperial 'centre'.

advocacy of an international brotherhood of the oppressed;[82] it is an assertion of cultural difference from Russia. While Ukraine (or 'Little Russia') was attributed a degree of alterity in Shevchenko's time, it was widely looked upon as a 'tributary' of the Great Russian 'river', lacking an individual essence of its own. Belinskii, to cite one prominent example, called 'Little Russians' a 'plemia' (tribe), incapable of producing much more than folk songs, and argued that the Treaty of Pereiaslav in 1654 constituted an end to Ukrainian history.[83] Cultural difference was not in dispute as far as the Caucasus was concerned, however, and as we have seen from our reading of 'Kavkaz', the Russian elite acknowledge the Caucasian subaltern's 'foreignness' from the beginning of their monologue. Shevchenko's solidarity with the subaltern is thus a claim to 'Otherness', which is conversely a claim to an identity, to a Ukrainian 'self'.

'Every inch of the Caucasus is full of memories of war and romance', remarked a British traveller to the region in 1884, and 'Kavkazskii Plennik' is Pushkin's contribution to the cultivation of this image of a land of emotional extremes, where humanity is stripped of the sober trappings of 'civilization'.[84] After the dedication, the poem proceeds, notably, in iambic tetrameter to relate the tale of a wounded Russian soldier taken captive by a circle of mountaineers in the northern Caucasus. While in their company, he observes their habits and customs, marvelling at their 'zhizni prostotu' ('life of simplicity'), and wins the love of a Caucasian girl. The *plennik*, however, is a Byronic figure apparently incapable of love and does not return her affection. She nonetheless helps deliver him from his captors, only to take her own life in a river whose far bank offers freedom to her beloved.[85]

As we can see, the narrative unfolds like a dramatization of the colonial interaction described earlier. The imperial self, represented by

[82] As Iu. O. Ivankin remarked, 'It seems that in no poetic work of world literature of the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century [other than "Kavkaz"] had the idea of the international brotherhood of nations in battle against oppressors been raised with such fire'. Iu. O. Ivankin, *Komentar do 'Kobzaria' Shevchenka*, Kiev, 1964, p. 284; quoted in *The Poet as Mythmaker*, p. 98, n. 37.

[83] Shkandrij, p. 122.

[84] The traveller was Charles Marvin, whose *Region of the Eternal Fire* was meant to warn the British Empire of the development of Russia's power in the oil-rich areas of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. We note his colourful title which, of course, alludes to the newly-discovered petroleum deposits in the region as well as to the legend of Prometheus. See Charles Marvin, *Region of the Eternal Fire*, Westport, CT, 1976, p. 81.

[85] As the girl takes her own life, the *plennik* does not join her or attempt a rescue. Pushkin's letter of February 6, 1823 to Petr Viazemskii reveals that the poet considered his hero 'an intelligent fellow, sensible, not in love with the [Caucasian] girl. He is right in not drowning himself'. See *The Letters of Alexander Pushkin*, ed., trans. J. Thomas Shaw, 3 vols, Bloomington, IN, 1963, 1, pp. 109–10. For Pushkin, the *plennik* is a true romantic individual, always moving forward. Never compromising his 'organic mobility', he marches toward the next conquest.

the *plennik*, encounters the Other, represented by the Caucasian girl, who 'recognizes' him by learning his language and ultimately falls in love with him. The process of this recognition strengthens the *plennik*, who escapes successfully, but eviscerates the girl, who is spurned by an unrequited love and swept away by an unsympathetic current.

The impossibility of a rapprochement between the self and Other may classify 'Kavkazskii Plennik' as a colonial text, but the tone and language of the poem proper do not approximate the elite's arrogant and bloodthirsty monologue in 'Kavkaz'. Rather, it is the poem's epilogue, a resounding, even perplexing call-to-arms written two months after the narrative itself, that the elite seem to ape in Shevchenko's text. The epilogue is in such contrast with the lines that precede it, so over-the-top in its imperial rhetoric, that we may even surmise that Pushkin himself is parodying other hymns of praise to empire. Regardless, in 'Kavkazskii Plennik', we encounter a speaker who creates an equivalence between glory and loss of life, musing upon a 'slavnyi chas' ('glorious time') in which there will be a 'boi krovavyi' ('bloody battle'). He implies that the people of the Caucasus fall short of being human in the prosopopoetic exclamation 'Vostok pod'emlet voi!' ('The Orient howls!'), in the same way that the elite ponder treating the subaltern like a dog in lines 80–82 of 'Kavkaz'. And just as Shevchenko's elite issue instructions that presuppose some sort of deficiency on the part of the subaltern, the speaker of Pushkin's epilogue delivers demeaning imperatives prefiguring territorial and cultural subjugation: 'Ponikni snezhnoiu glavoi,/ Smiris', Kavkaz: idet Ermolov!' ('Hang your snow-covered head,/ Submit, Caucasus: here comes Ermolov!').[86]

This prosopopoeia, in which the mountains buckle in anticipation of the advance of 'civilized' men, positions the imperial project as a conflict between nature and culture. Here Pushkin follows in the footsteps of many of his predecessors, particularly Gavril Derzhavin, who in a poem of 1797 celebrates the return of a young count from an expedition to the Caucasus not by regaling the reader with details of dramatic military victories, but by underscoring the constancy of his hero's humanity in the face of 'uzhasy, krasy prirody' ('the horrors, the beauties of nature').[87] 'Vozvrashchenie Grafa Zubova iz Persii' (The Return of Count Zubov from Persia), composed in iambic tetrameter, is an ekphrastic work in which nature is construed as an object of the imperial gaze, a spectacle of treacherous precipices, 'terny' ('thorns'),

[86] General A. P. Ermolov, the hero of the Napoleonic Wars appointed to the post of Governor-General of Georgia and Caucasia by Alexander I in 1816, was renowned for his brutal tactics in the Caucasus.

[87] Excerpts from Derzhavin's 'Vozvrashchenie Grafa Zubova iz Persii' were taken from Gavril Derzhavin, *Stikhotvoreniia*, ed. D. D. Blagoi, Leningrad, 1957, pp. 255–59.

'strashnykh gor' ('terrible mountains'), and 'gromy' ('thunder'). For Derzhavin, Valerian Zubov's triumph is his emergence as ineluctably human from an intense confrontation with the sublime, whose capacity to provoke fear and awe could have shaken him beyond repair: 'Vnizu, vverkhu, ty videl vse [. . .] Ostalsia ty! [. . .] I byl v vel'mozhe chelovek' ('Above and below, you saw it all [. . .] You remained! [. . .] And were a man in grandeur'). Nature represents culture's crucible in 'Vozvrashchenie Grafa Zubova iz Persii', the ultimate Other threatening a dissolution of the self, and overcoming it becomes a rhetorical *raison d'être* of the imperial march. At the heart of empire is neither national pride nor a will to power, implies Derzhavin, but an assertion of that which is integrally human. His conceptualization of imperialism as a clash between nature and culture, rather than a clash of cultures, thus can be seen to constitute a kind of diversion in which a heroic possession or retention of the self obscures what is undoubtedly a violent dispossession of the subaltern.

We know that Shevchenko was no stranger to Pushkin's verse; in fact, he is said to have read Pushkin relentlessly after the latter's death in 1837 and to have modelled historical romantic poems like 'Haidamaky' after 'Poltava' (1829).[88] Given Pushkin's singular preeminence, not to mention the relatively widespread circulation of his texts, we may state with certainty that the Russian played a significant role in the development of the Ukrainian's poetic voice. While a comparable assertion with regard to Derzhavin cannot be supported by biographical or critical sources, I would argue that intertextual parallels between 'Kavkaz' and 'Vozvrashchenie Grafa Zubova iz Persii' urge us to infer an important influence. Not only are both poems inspired by a valiant count sent to fight in the Caucasus, but Shevchenko's work, like 'Vozvrashchenie Grafa Zubova iz Persii', also abounds in images of terrible beauty. This sublimity is perhaps most evident in the prominent couplet, 'Za horamy hory, khmaroiu povyti,/ Zasiiani horem, kroviiu polyti' ('Mountains upon mountains, covered in cloud,/ sown with woe, soaked in blood'), whose first line is strikingly reminiscent, even syntactically, of line 72 of Derzhavin's work, 'S gromami gromy v oblakakh' ('Thunder upon thunder in the clouds'). Yet whereas both Derzhavin and Pushkin, in their employment of prosopopoeia, endow the Caucasus with voice — 'Revut [. . .] serdity reki' ('Angry rivers [. . .] roar'), 'Vozvrashchenie Grafa Zubova iz Persii'; 'Vostok pod'emlet voi!' ('The Orient howls!'); 'Kavkazskii Plennik' — Shevchenko, in 'Kavkaz', reduces it to silence.

To speak of the silence of the subaltern is to disclose the monological nature of colonial discourse, and in lines 92 and 93 of 'Kavkaz',

[88] Zaitsev, pp. 47 and 66.

Shevchenko does so by way of an allusion to Pushkin's 'Exegi monumentum' (I Erected a Monument, 1836), a poem written in homage to Horace. Written a year before Pushkin's death, 'Exegi monumentum' is a reflection on the endurance of poetry, a 'pamiatnik [. . .] nerukotvornyi' ('a monument [. . .] not made by hand'), and manifests a powerful hope in its deliverance of an immortality that will triumph over the fleeting world. It is not necessarily the poet's own words, however, that stand to guarantee a life after death, but rather the words of those who read him:

> Slukh obo mne proidet po vsei Rusi velikoi,
> I nazovet menia vsiak sushchii v nei iazyk,
> I gordyi vnuk slavian, i finn, i nyne dikii
> Tungus, i drug stepei kalmyk.

> Rumour of me will pass through all of great Rus'/ And her every single tongue will call my name,/ the proud descendent of the Slavs, and the Finn, and today's savage/ Tungus, as well as the Kalmyk, friend of the steppe.

Echoing Pushkin's stanza, while not quite its sentiment, the elite in 'Kavkaz' proclaim: 'Od moldovanyna do fina/ *Ha vsikh iazykakh vse movchyt*" ('From the Moldavian to the Finn,/ *all are silent in their languages*'; my emphasis — RF). For Pushkin's narrator, imperial expansion spells increased readership: as borders extend ever outward from the centre, gathering lands and gathering tongues, his monument of words ascends skyward, reaching for the heavens like a Babelian Tower. Meanwhile, Shevchenko, not unlike the biblical Yahwist, reminds us that such a construction only leads to the suspension of language, to its eventual disintegration and obsolescence. For him, the whims of empire are vanity and hubris, constitutive of a monument of lies and deception.

Anti-colonial Discourse in 'Kavkaz'

The unidirectional movement of colonial discourse, in which the elite silence the subaltern in absolute terms, is countered by that of an anti-colonial discourse made manifest in the eighty lines of the kolomyika metre. Its agent is the prophet who, as we noted earlier in our discussion, is distinguished by a high degree of reactivity. He is the one persona in 'Kavkaz' who consistently replies to what he hears, from the cries of the subaltern to the chauvinist monologue of the elite. By the same token, the subaltern and the elite are deaf to even his most fervent philippic. That the three do not converse is a function of their ideological aversion to dialogue — it is in their nature to talk past each other, rather than to each other.

With this in mind, we note that anti-colonialism is a reactive inversion of the colonial ideology. While ostensibly oppositional in its stance, it seeks merely to turn the tables on the elite-subaltern binarism.

The same monologic structure of dominance survives, perpetuating 'the master narrative of imperialism'.[89] Anti-colonial literature, then, perpetrates its own kind of epistemic violence; it is a call-to-arms modelled after the colonial discourse, albeit with a different aim. The ideology of this 'literature of combat', as Frantz Fanon puts it, is fuelled to a significant extent by a desire to return to origins, to those 'essences' that have presumably been corrupted by the colonial encounter.[90]

In 'Kavkaz', the one who works to bring about this return is the prophet. From the outset, he speaks of an eternal spirit, an absolute freedom: 'Ne vmyraie dusha nasha,/ Ne vmyraie volia' ('Our spirit will not perish,/ our freedom will not perish', lines 11–12). As we know, the subaltern cast doubt on the power of these concepts, memorably bemoaning the slumber of 'pravda nasha p'iana' ('our drunk justice', line 25). The prophet subsequently attempts to revive them — 'Vstane pravda! Vstane volia!' ('Rise justice! Rise freedom!', line 32) — only to imply later that their resurrection is an eventuality, a matter of God's will — 'A poky shcho' ('Until then', line 36). Justice and freedom are therefore vulnerable, more imminent than present, but this realization does not keep the prophet from exploiting them to encourage the Caucasian *lytsari* of lines 57–64 to keep fighting in a conflict, which, as he knows all too well, has caused endless bloodshed: 'Boritesia — poborete,/ Vam boh pomahaie!/ Za vas pravda, za vas slava/ I volia sviataia!' ('Struggle — overcome,/ God will help you!/ Justice is with you, glory is with you,/ and sacred freedom as well!', lines 61–64). Like the elite, and the narrator of Pushkin's epilogue before them, the prophet finds glory in conflict rather than in peace and reconciliation. Immeasurable human suffering is not anathema to him, as long as it occurs for the 'right' law, on behalf of his officialdom.

Equally reliant on the 'us-them' binarism, colonialism and anti-colonialism are thus two sides of the same coin. (With this in mind, we might consider the elite and the prophet's surprising swap of metres toward the end of the poem of irony a function of this relationship.) Shevchenko maps both discourses and parodies their rhetoric, lambasting the egregious hypocrisy of the elite and uncovering the subtle hypocrisy of the prophet. Indeed, we get the feeling, were it not for the intervention of Shevchenko qua meditative persona in line 156, that the elite's colonialist harangue and the prophet's anti-colonialist verbal sorties would continue indefinitely. The amphibrachic tetrameter of 'I tebe zahnaly, mii druzhe iedynyi', however, leads us to a new poetic space, where the conflict has subsided to allow for reflection.

[89] David Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment*, Dublin, 1993, p. 54.
[90] Frantz Fanon, 'National Culture', in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, p. 155.

Post-colonial Discourse in 'Kavkaz'

Earlier we likened the perspective of Shevchenko qua meditative persona to that of a spectator surveying a battlefield, a spectator roused by the struggle between the prophet, the subaltern, and the elite to contemplate the death of a dear friend. It is a perspective shared, at least spatially, by that of the narrator of Pushkin's own 'Kavkaz' (1829), whose initial words are 'Kavkaz podo mnoiu' ('The Caucasus is under me') and produce a strong caesura in the first line. As from a great height, both speak in amphibrachic tetrameter while overlooking vast, Caucasian vistas. Yet whereas Shevchenko qua meditative persona mourns an intensely personal loss in an identifiable present (that is, 1845), Pushkin's narrator stands emotionally detached in a timeless 'now'. With an air of superiority (as his first words make clear), he describes a space overcome by sublimity, where harsh rivers and streams rush below ominous 'tuchi' ('storm clouds') *à la* Derzhavin's 'Vozvrashchenie Grafa Zubova iz Persii', exercising voice (for example, the Terek river 'voet' ['howls']) as in the epilogue to 'Kavkazskii Plennik'. Soaring high above this scene is an eagle unwavering in its flight, a proud symbol of the Russian Empire ostensibly come to tame the Caucasus and bestow upon it a 'civilized' culture. As close readers of Shevchenko's 'Kavkaz', however, we cannot help but suspect the eagle of more nefarious activities: is this not the same creature that, as in lines 3–6, beleaguers Prometheus, the patron of humankind, atop the Caucasus?

We may be reminded of the prophet's allusion to Greek mythology here, because it seems as though his strident counter-colonial resistance persists in the poem's amphibrachic coda: 'Ne za Ukraïnu, a za ïï kata dovelos' prolyt'/ Krov dobru' ('Not for Ukraine, but for her executioner, you were forced to shed/ good blood'). There is a focus on national 'essences' in which Ukraine and her Cossacks represent the unfortunate victim, and the tsar their ruthless executioner. To die for Ukraine is to die in defence of a 'righteous' purpose, 'po zakonu'; to die for the Russian Empire, a meaningless loss.

These few lines of amphibrachic tetrameter, then, hardly seem to signal an abrupt about-face from the anti-colonialism manifested in the kolomyika metre. One of the characteristic ploys of post-colonial discourse, however, is a creative revisionism, an adept manipulation or 'tweaking' of the dominant discourses — not a wholesale eradication of them. According to Pavlyshyn, 'the post-colonial [. . .] acquires a transcendence over both the colonial and the anti-colonial by [a] more sophisticated perceptual standpoint'.[91] Or, as Helen Tiffin explains, '[the post-colonial] does not seek to subvert the dominant with a view

[91] Pavlyshyn, p. 45.

to taking its place, but, in Wilson Harris's formulation, to evolve textual strategies which continually "consume" their "own biases" at the same time as they expose and erode those of the dominant discourse'.[92] Shevchenko qua meditative persona assumes, and thereby exposes, the antagonistic and divisive stance of the anti-colonialist, only to undercut himself by lamenting the loss of Iakiv de Bal'men. What prompts his putative 'programmatic' rhetoric, and inspires 'Kavkaz' in the first place, is not the violation of a Caucasian (and thus, by extension, Ukrainian) *pokrytka* or the death of a Ukrainian peasant from, say, Kerelivka consigned to fight in the Russian Imperial Army.[93] Rather, it is the death of a member of the non-Ukrainian nobility, who is killed in the service of the 'bloodthirsty' *orel* and whose family, furthermore, gained prestige in the Russian Empire by helping lead the march on the Caucasus.[94]

Given his relatively brief appearance in 'Kavkaz', most critics have tended to place de Bal'men more or less on the margins of their interpretations of the poem. Noting that the Count was Shevchenko's close friend and the illustrator of *Wirszy T. Szewczenka*, Shkandrij goes on to ascribe the genesis of 'Kavkaz' to 'the crystallizing anti-imperialism among Ukrainian patriots with whom [Shevchenko] associated at the time and who would soon form the Cyrillo-Methodian brotherhood'.[95] Yet as we recall, 'Kavkaz' is one of only two poems in the *Try lita* collection to include a dedication, and the individual to whom it is dedicated is curiously inserted as a character himself. C. H. Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnell address the figure of de Bal'men with a brief footnote: 'Of French origin, but Ukrainianized, Y. Balmen (or Balmain) was a great friend of Shevchenko's.'[96] Besides wondering what 'Ukrainianized' means here, we note that the aside itself is not entirely accurate. As the directory *Dvorianstvo rossiiskoi imperii* (Nobility of the Russian Empire) states:

> BAL'MENY — grafskii rod, vetv' shotlandskoi familii Ramzai, izvestnoi s 12 v. Odin iz predstavitelei roda v nachale 18 v. postupil na frantsuzskuiu, zatem na turetskuiu sluzhbu, a pri imp. Anne Ioannovne stal sluzhit' v Rossii maiorom pod familiei grafa de Bal'men. Ego syn Anton Bogdanovich

[92] Helen Tiffin, 'Post-colonial Literatures and Counter-discourse', in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, p. 96. Tiffin cites Wilson Harris's article, 'Adversarial Contexts and Creativity', *New Left Review*, 154, November–December 1985, pp. 124–28 (p. 127).

[93] Located in the Cherkasy region, Kerelivka was Shevchenko's native village.

[94] In *The Poet as Mythmaker*, Grabowicz acknowledges that de Bal'men is a member of the 'upper class' who nonetheless represents a 'martyr for the holy cause' in Shevchenko's mythic universe. See *The Poet as Mythmaker*, p. 101. He does not seem to be aware, however, of the role played by the de Bal'men clan in over a century of imperialist exploits and, as we shall see, this role does much to raise the interpretive stakes, as it were, of the Count's peculiar 'martyrdom'.

[95] Shkandrij, p. 138.

[96] *The Poetical Works of Taras Shevchenko*, p. 243.

(1740–90) byl direktorom 1-go sukhoputnogo kadetskogo korpusa, zatem gen.-gubernatorom Orlovskogo i Kurskogo namestnichestva. Ego syn Aleksandr Antonovich v chine gen.-maiora byl rossiiskim komissarom na ostrove sv. Eleny s 1816 po 1821 gg., kogda tam v izgnanii nakhodilsia Napoleon.[97]

BAL'MENS — family of counts, branch of the Scottish Ramsays, known since the twelfth century. One of the representatives of the family entered into the service of the French at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and then into the service of the Turks, and in the reign of Empress Anna became a major in the Russian army under the surname Count de Bal'men. His son Anton Bogdanovich (1740–90) was director of the First Land Cadet Corps, and later governor-general of Orel and Kursk. His son Aleksandr Antonovich held the rank of general-major and was the Russian commissar on the island of St Helena from 1816 to approximately 1821, when Napoleon was incarcerated there.

The de Bal'mens were a family of mercenaries. After the Time of Troubles (1598–1613), the Russian state began to engage officers from the West to reform the military and to organize and lead regiments.[98] Warfare by this time had become largely professionalized, and the de Bal'mens made their name (and their fortune) by moving from west to east, from conflict to conflict, and eventually found a home in the Russian Empire.

Other sources of comprehensive genealogical data on the de Bal'men family are few and far between, but a recent work of history, *Kavkaz: Zemlia i krov'* (The Caucasus: Land and Blood) briefly makes mention of the career of one of Iakiv de Bal'men's ancestors, a somewhat anonymous 'Count de Bal'men' (possibly Anton Bogdanovich de Bal'men, referenced in *Dvorianstvo rossiiskoi imperii*, above) who not only put down a number of uprisings in Crimea as a major-general in the Imperial Army, but also participated in the destruction of the Zaporiz'ka Sich (Zaporozhian Host) in 1775 and attained the position of commander of the forces in the Caucasus in the late 1780s, during a

[97] K. A. Aver'ianov, *Dvorianstvo rossiiskoi imperii: spravochnik*, 4 vols, Moscow, 1994– , 1, p. 52.
[98] Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, London, 1995, p. 116.

critical juncture in the history of the imperial advance.[99] The end of the eighteenth century was witness to a series of events that would spark a conflagration among the peoples of the Caucasus, compelling them to put aside internal differences and, decades later, unite behind the figure of Shamil. Indeed, through a twist of fate, a de Bal'men may have helped produce the Imam who, as the target of the infamous Dargo campaign, brought about the death of Iakiv de Bal'men in 1845.

The Shamil connection is entirely conjecture, of course, but de Bal'men's family background could not have been lost on Shevchenko. The poet spent time with him at his home in Lynovytsi and studied the region and its history with Oleksandr Afanas'iev-Chuzhbyns'kyi. It was de Bal'men's duty and calling — indeed, his family legacy — to serve the empire in its exploits in and around the periphery. Whether or not Shevchenko knew of the de Bal'men family's complicity in the destruction of the Zaporiz'ka Sich, an event he bemoans as Ukraine's fatal blow in 'Son' (The Dream, 1844), is also arguable. If he did, proceeding nonetheless to honour a direct descendent of the *katy* responsible for the Cossack *mohyly* ('burial mounds') that haunt his poetic landscape, then such a gesture would certainly seem to complicate the readings that value Shevchenko largely for the vigour of his 'national' sentiment. An armed military encampment situated on the banks of the Dnieper and occupied by thousands of Cossacks for generations, the Sich represented a bastion of freedom and autonomy, of strength and identity, and its demise in 1775 upon the order of Catherine the Great constitutes nothing less than one of the most traumatic moments in Ukrainian history. As the nineteenth-century Ukrainian intellectual Mykola Kostomarov would write with a mixture of pain and vindictiveness, 'the German Tsarina Catherine, a universal whore, atheist, and husband slayer, ended the Cossack Host and freedom . . . And Ukraine was destroyed'.[100]

What we can say with certainty is that Shevchenko had to have been aware that de Bal'men was more than a soldier compelled to fight

[99] Iakiv Gordin, *Kavkaz: Zemlia i krov': Rossiia v kavkazskoi voine XIX veka*, St Petersburg, 2000, p. 328. Aware of de Bal'men's ties to 'Kavkaz', Gordin actually points to the paradox we have begun to seize upon here: 'Iakov Petrovich de Bal'men proiskhodil iz sem'i s tverdoi voennoi traditsiei' ('Iakov Petrovich de Bal'men comes from a family with a firm military tradition'). He concludes by stating that the Count 'does not fit the role Shevchenko has put him in', intimating some sort of mistake or misunderstanding on the part of the poet. Gordin seems uninformed, however, of the history of Shevchenko's relationship with de Bal'men, of the poet's sojourn at Lynovytsi and of their collaborative artistic endeavours and alcohol-induced pranks — a history of friendship and camaraderie that would preclude any such misunderstanding. As we argue, Shevchenko was conscious of de Bal'men's family history. In fact, it is precisely the Count's inability to 'fit' that makes him such a fitting dissembler of the monologic discourses of colonialism and anti-colonialism.

[100] Mykola Kostomarov, 'The Books of the Genesis of the Ukrainian People', in Ralph Lindheim and George S. N. Luckyj (eds), *Towards an Intellectual History of Ukraine*, Toronto, 1996, p. 99.

against his will. Nevertheless, Shkandrij writes that '[i]n the final section [of "Kavkaz"], which is a meditation on de Bal'men's death in the service of a foreign army, the focus becomes the tragedy of nations and individuals who must serve military causes that they find repulsive'.[101] Implying that de Bal'men considered the Imperial Army 'foreign' or its military cause 'repulsive', however, seems more symptomatic of a teleological interpretation — that is, one cast with an eye toward Shevchenko's 'politics' — than one open to a proliferation of meaning. For indeed, if the poet's objective were to focus on the tragedy of an individual coerced into serving a tyrannical regime, he does not serve it well by mourning de Bal'men.

Instead, Shevchenko uses his friend to dismantle the Manichaean opposition between 'self-Other', 'insider-outsider', 'elite-subaltern', 'Russian-Ukrainian'. He counters the monologic nature of the colonial discourse of iambic tetrameter and the anti-colonial discourse of the kolomyika metre by elegizing a man who is at once a lover of Ukrainian culture and an instrument of the imperial power that seeks to muzzle it; a member of the upper echelon who is posted as a sentinel over the *mohyly* that contain the history and hope of a *prosti liudy*; and a 'sincere' friend who nonetheless partakes in the bloodshed in the Caucasus on the side of the aggressor. Honouring Count Iakiv de Bal'men — a cultural hybrid who traverses geographical boundaries and cultural allegiances — flies in the face of both anti-colonialism, which perceives hybridity as a contamination of an 'original' essence, and colonialism, which considers a mingling with the colonized a reversion to the primal and the provincial. It is thus by way of de Bal'men that Shevchenko stages a collision of discourses, one that propels us into a poetic universe without a true centre.[102]

This collision is no accident. As we noted earlier, the amphibrachic couplet that inaugurates the poem — 'Za horamy hory, khmaroiu povyti,/ Zasiiani horem, kroviiu polyti' — is simultaneously whole and at war with itself, at once attractive and repulsive, and this unsettling ambivalence, a hallmark of the post-colonial, is sustained throughout the entire metrical plane of amphibrachic tetrameter. Take, for example, the stirring imperatives issued by Shevchenko qua meditative persona in lines 162–66 — 'vytai', 'litai', 'nazyrai', 'zaplach', 'vyhliadai' — which, upon close examination, are sadly nothing more than

[101] Shkandrij, p. 138.

[102] It is worth pointing out here that de Bal'men's brother-in-law, Mikhail Bashylov, makes no appearance at all in 'Kavkaz', inside or outside the text. Bashylov, as we recall, was also a comrade of Shevchenko, a generous contributor to *Wirszy T. Szewczenka*, who perished in the same Dargo campaign, on the same day and in the same capacity as de Bal'men. Bashylov appears to have had firmer roots in Ukraine, however, and we may postulate that Shevchenko excludes him from 'Kavkaz' so as to maintain the text's course toward a perplexing, yet liberating, syncretism that only de Bal'men can deliver.

the vain orders of a slave. Indeed, in the final line of the poem's amphibrachic coda, the elegizer reveals that he himself languishes 'z nevoli' ('in slavery'), and this revelation cannot help but sap the force from his foregoing commands, undercutting any possible efficacy. In other words, the collision that de Bal'men facilitates at the end of 'Kavkaz' cannot be easily explained away as a sudden, emotionally-charged gesture made in response to a personal tragedy. Whereas the metrical planes of iambic tetrameter and the kolomyika metre organize ideologically-coherent discourses, the metrical plane of amphibrachic tetrameter consistently shifts its coordinates and mobilizes ambivalences, including the figure of de Bal'men, to 'undermin[e] from within the very framework in which the previous [discourses] had been [constructed]',[103] making ideology impossible.

What this post-colonial discourse makes possible, meanwhile, is less clear. We recall that amphibrachic tetrameter is a 'liminal' metre for Shevchenko, one that effects critical transitions in the text, and at the conclusion of 'Kavkaz' it seems to offer us lines of flight to a space distinguished by a 'semantic openendedness', to borrow from Bakhtin, 'a living contact with an unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality'.[104] Bakhtin notes that many Romantic poems are infected with the novel's 'spirit of process and inconclusiveness',[105] and the polyphonic, multilayered, indeterminate 'Kavkaz' certainly stands as one of them. In fact, coming full circle, we note that Shevchenko makes a point of excising the tail-end of Jeremiah 9:1, 'dshcheri naroda moego' (literally, 'of the daughter of my people'), from his epigraph. 'Oh that my head were water, and my eye a fountain of tears, that I might bewail day and night the slain *of my people*.' The passage in its entirety laments the death of *a* people, and an uncompromising nationalist might well cite it. Shevchenko clearly resists such a move. 'Kavkaz' bears a 'surplus of humanness',[106] and the poet weeps day and night for all of the slain — Russian, Caucasian, Ukrainian alike.

Conclusion: Toward a Re-evaluation of Shevchenko's 'Socio-political Legacy'

In *The Poet as Mythmaker*, George Grabowicz makes use of two concepts from Victor Turner's work in anthropology to elucidate a tension in Shevchenko's poetics between communitas — a just and harmonious

[103] Fredric Jameson, 'Foreword', in Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, MN, 2002, p. xix. Jameson refers here to Lyotard's concept of paralogism, a practice 'in which the point is not reach agreement' or consensus but to seize upon instabilities and upend our traditional understandings in search of the new.

[104] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Epic and the Novel', in M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, Austin, TX, 1981, pp. 6–7.

[105] Ibid., p. 7.

[106] Ibid., p. 37.

world bound by a common morality — and structure — the laws, rules, and hierarchies that breed pathologies of power.[107] What the poet seeks is an elevation of communitas and a negation of structure,[108] and in 'Kavkaz' we see how he questions an ordered, 'structured' world through a poetic anti-narrative that effaces borders and deconstructs the 'self-Other' and 'elite-subaltern' binarisms. That many constrain 'Kavkaz' to an anti-colonial reading and fail to notice this paradigmatic subversion is testament to the subtle way in which Shevchenko achieves it. Through a dialectic of metrical planes, he perforates his poetic discourse to allow for pluralism and play, ultimately posing 'questions of solidarity and community from the interstitial perspective'.[109]

According to Grabowicz, however, this elevation of communitas and this negation of structure have made for 'a questionable socio-political legacy' and may have come at a price for the people of Ukraine. 'Even more questionable, indeed potentially fatal', he continues, 'was the legacy of mythical thinking that Shevchenko had inculcated upon the psyche of succeeding generations of his countrymen. For in direct proportion to the apotheosis of communitas and the negation of structure came hypertrophy of the emotional and a blockage of the rational faculties.'[110] Grabowicz's use of 'inculcate' here is unfortunate, as its denotation of a forceful 'stamping' ('inculcare') on the part of Shevchenko is one that the scholar most likely did not intend. At the least, however, it does imply something of a monologic relationship between Shevchenko and the 'succeeding generations of his countrymen', a relationship that warrants a brief concluding word.

To cordon off the aesthetic from the political can be as harmful as conflating the two, so we will not argue, for instance, that Shevchenko should be spared the burden of a 'socio-political legacy'. He did not rise to prominence by way of some kind of 'autotheosis'; as at Moisivka and Lynovytsi an audience was there to receive him. And as Roman Ingarden explains, this reception is more a 'communion' in which the audience, like the artist, engages in creative behaviour. This behaviour is 'not only stimulated and guided by what has already been apprehended in a work of art, but also demands [the audience's] *creative initiative*' (my emphasis — RF).[111] We might argue that, to some degree, the creative initiative exercised by the generations succeeding

[107] *The Poet as Mythmaker*, p. 97. Turner first articulated the difference between communitas and structure in *The Ritual Process*, Chicago, 1969.
[108] *The Poet as Mythmaker*, p. 149.
[109] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London, 1994, p. 3.
[110] *The Poet as Mythmaker*, p. 162.
[111] Roman Ingarden, 'Phenomenological Aesthetics: An Attempt at Defining Its Range', in Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle (eds), *Critical Theory Since 1965*, Tallahassee, FL, 1992, p. 189.

Shevchenko involved glossing over the intertexts, ambivalences and instabilities of his verse in order to forge a more rigid national identity that could withstand the ebbing and flowing oppression of the Ukrainian language and culture at the hands of the authorities of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. It was more this (understandably) defensive posture, and less Shevchenko's own work, that led to the nostalgic romanticism responsible for the 'hypertrophy of the emotional' identified by Grabowicz.

To explore these intertexts, ambivalences and instabilities is a worthwhile charge for contemporary *shevchenkoznavstvo*. Sophisticated and unpredictable, pregnant with meaning and possibility, Shevchenko's verse is as timely, instructive and alive today as ever. Especially after a tumultuous electoral year in which a residue of colonial politics threatened Ukraine's sovereignty, when simplistic binarisms were deployed rhetorically to advance political antagonisms within Ukraine, the poet has much to teach us about the negotiation of national and cultural and even regional differences, about the delicate and permeable borders between 'self' and 'Other'.