УДК 1:37

UKRAINIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY TARAS SHEVCHENKO

УКРАЇНСЬКА НАЦІОНАЛЬНА ІДЕНТИЧНІСТЬ ТАРАСА ШЕВЧЕНКО

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How did Taras Shevchenko become the symbol of Ukrainian identity and freedom? This paper analyzes the narrative of his journey, aspiration, contribution and sacrifice. The narrative of this Ukrainian hero is comprised of a system of stories with a common trajectory andreoccurringarchetypes built on previous Ukrainian stories which form a national identity.

Keywords: *Ukraine, Political Science, History, Master Narrative, Russia, Taras Shevchenko.*

Як Тарас Шевченко став символом української ідентичності та свободи? У статті аналізується розповідь про його подорож, прагнення, внесок і жертву. Оповідання цього українського героя складається з системи оповідань із загальною траєкторією та рециркуляцією архетипів, побудованих на попередніх українських історіях, які формують національну ідентичність.

Ключові слова: *Україна, політологія, історія, магістерська розповідь, Росія, Тарас Шевченко.*

(стаття друкується мовою оригіналу)

Introduction. The genesis of Ukraine began in the 9th century with Kyivan Rus. However, the kingdom found itself in between and in the path of powerful empires. First succumbing to the Mongols in 1240, then both Poland and Russia. As a result of foreign rule, Ukraine has struggled to maintain and solidify a common identity. Conversely, once you understand the heroes and events that make up Ukraine's identity, particularly the repeated rebellions throughout history, it then becomes quite evident the existence of a national identity comprised ofa strong character and willingness to fight for freedom and independence.

Taras Shevchenko is the completion of the Cossack master narrative consisting of stories of Ukrainians in pursuit of freedom, who ventured into the lawless Ukrainian frontier. There, the frontiersmen learned to defend themselves from Tatar slave raids, and decades later launched major rebellions against Poland and Russia. The prevalent stories are of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, Ivan Mazepa, and above all Taras Shevchenko, with the latter becoming the symbol for Ukrainian liberation and culture. This paper analyzes the journey of Ukraine's greatest hero. To understand Ukraine, is to understand the story of Taras Shevchenko, his romantic vision, and how he became synonymous with the nations' identity.

My methodology draws on many sources discussed in my previous paper, *Master Narratives of Ukrainian Political Culture*. Some of the sources were Carl Yung and Joseph Campbell who greatly contributed to our understanding of archetypes, story form, and how they affect the audience. Campbell's analysis on the Hero's Journey myth was very helpful in understanding the hero story form and its significance. Moreover, H. Porter Abbott, Gerald Prince, and Edward Forster have excellent works on story and narrative structure. Predominantly I draw from research done by Jeffry Halverson, H. L. Goodall, and Steven Corman, in *Master Narratives of Islamic Extremism* for deconstructing narratives. Various sources are used for historiography of Shevchenko including notable Ukrainian scholars Bohdan Rubchak, George G. Grabowicz, Orest Subtelny, Serhii Plokhy, and Andrew Gregorovich. In addition to showing the Ukrainian perspective, each section shows how the narratives differ in Russian discourse, i.e., the counter narratives, and an analysis of the master narratives comprising the stories that are systematically related, the archetypes, the narrative path from desire to satisfaction, and how the narratives are used ideologically.

Romantic Period

After the Battle of Poltava in 1709, and the end of the Great Northern War in 1721, Sweden could no longer challenge Russian imperialism. Therefore, the Russian Empire became the foremost power in eastern and central Europe. Moreover, the end of the 18th century saw the collapse of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth which was taken over by the Russian Empire.

An effort to Russify and pacify Ukrainians increased throughout the 18th century. Empress Catherine II, known as Catherine the Great, increased the serf system substantially in the Cossack lands and in 1785 she gave Cossack officers known as *starshina* the rights of Russian nobility as a means to Russify them [1]. Adding to Russia's fortune, Catherine the Great defeated the Ottoman Empire during the Russo–Turkish War (1768–1774). As a result, by 1783 Crimea was annexed by the Russian Empire.

By the mid 19th century, following the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, Russia continued to grow as a military and economic power. In 1852 Emperor Napoleon III convinced the Ottoman Sultan to grant him the status «Protector of the Christians of the Ottoman Empire» [2, p. 93]. This role had belonged to the Russian Empire, thus, Tsar Nicholas I was infuriated. He ordered the invasion of Ottoman controlled territories – Moldovia and Wallachia (present–day Romania). The Sultan responded by declaring war against Russia. The Crimean War lasted from 1853 to 1856 with Britain, France and Sardinia backing the Ottoman Empire. By 1856 all sides had suffered heavy losses and were eager to reach a peace agreement. Accordingly, the Treaty of Paris ended the war in 1856 with the European forces withdrawing from Crimea and Russian troops withdrawing from Moldovia and Wallachia. Speaking to the actual causes of the war Kissinger says, «Religious claims were in fact pretexts for political and strategic designs.

Nicholas was pursuing the ancient Russian dream of gaining Constantinople and the Straits. Napoleon III saw an opportunity to end France's isolation and to break up the holy alliance by weakening Russia» [2, p. 93].

Other epochal events during this period were due in part from the shift from Enlightenment of the 18th century to Romanticism of the 19th century. Subtelny explains that Romanticism was an intellectual revolt. Where Enlightenment valued «rationality, uniformity, universality, and order». Romanticism «glorified emotion, spontaneity, diversity, and nature» [3, p. 225]. Enlightenment ideals such as separation of church and state, and individual liberty, lit the fuse for major revolutions such as in America in 1776 and France in 1789. Afterwards, Enlightenment gave way to Romanticism which revived medievalism with a new focus on nature, but was skeptical of rational thinking. Such was the world that Taras Shevchenko was born into. Where Cossack leaders Bohdan Khmelnytsky and Ivan Mazepa accepted the authority of a King or Tsar – as the idea of creating newly independent nations was not yet common thought, Shevchenko was born during the age of Romanticism where existed recent examples of victorious rebellions which had achieved newly independent and democratic nations. Repated by Ukrainian scholars, politicians, and common Ukrainians, the one heroic individual that stands out above the rest is Taras Shevchenko [3, p. 233].

Taras Shevchenko

Taras Shevchenko was born in Moryntsi, a village in central Ukraine, in 1814 to a family of serfs. By the age of twelveboth his parents had died. Thus, the orphaned Shevchenko became part of the family of a wealthy polish estate owner. His master, Paul Engelhardt who owned more than 10,000 serfs, took him to Saint Petersburg as a servant where he so impressed leading local artists that they held an auction to sell a portrait of Vasilii Zhukovsky, one of Russia's foremost poets, to buy Shevchenko's freedom. They were able to raise 2500 rubles, a huge sum at the time. Subsequently, at the age of twenty four Shevchenko became a free man [4; 5, p. 8].

While in Saint Petersburg, Shevchenko entered the Imperial Academy of the Arts where he trained under the guidance of Karl Briullov, who had painted the portrait auctioned for Shevchenko's freedom, and helped Shevchenko hone his skills in painting and poetry. Shevchenko returned to Ukraine on at least three occasions in 1843, 1845, 1846. Seeing his enserfed relatives and fellow countrymen must have had an emotional impact on Shevchenko as his attacks against Russia are especially subversive in his poetry from this time such as A Dream, where he tells the story of an enserfed mother and her hopes for her son, quite clearly pointing to the 'servitude' imposed by the Tsar and the dream for the abolishment of serfdom. Another demonstrative poem he wrote in 1845 is titled My Testament, where he talks of death, alluding to the sacrificial story of Jesus, where Shevchenko gave his last will to be buried in Ukraine and calling for his countrymen to rebel.

While in Ukraine Shevchenko became associated with an organization called the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius. The secret society was comprised of a small group of nationalists who imagined a future Ukraine as a «free republic in a broader Slavic union» [6, p. 158]. The organization's manifesto was written by Mykola Kostomarov called *The Book of Genesis of the Ukrainian People*. Subtelny explains how the book is a clearly demonstration of the Romantic movement in how it called for «the restructuring of society on the principles of justice, equality, freedom, and fraternity. Specifically it proposed the liquidation of serfdom, the abolition of legal destinctions among states, and access to education among the masses» [3, p. 236]. *The Book of Genesis of the Ukrainian People*does in fact read like the bible; especially *The Book of Revelations* in its foretelling of a future Ukraine:

Ukraine will rise from her grave and will call upon her brother Slavs; they will hear her call and all Slavs will arise ... and Ukraine will be a self–governing republic in the Slavic union. Then all the peoples will point to that spot on the map where Ukraine is situated and they will say, 'Behold, the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone [3, p. 236].

Plokhy explains that Kostomarov found much inspiration in a book by Adam Mickieqicz called *Books of the Polish People and the Polish Pilgrimage*. Plokhy further illustrates the connection:

According to Mickiewicz, the Polish nation would rise from the grave and save all enslaved nations. Kostomarov reserved that role for Ukraine, whose Cossack origins had made it democratic and egalitarian: unlike the Russians, the Ukrainians had no tsars, and unlike the Poles, they had no nobility [6, p. 158].

Though the group was united in their common idea for a free and independent Ukraine, they disagreed on the strategy and timeline. Some of the more moderate members argued for a gradual reformation of Ukraine which required time to educate and develop its culture. In contrast Shevchenko called for a revolution [7]. In 1847 a student from Kyiv University named Aleksey Petrov reported the 'secret society' to the government and the leaders were subsequently arrested [3, p. 235; 6, p. 156]. Members such as Kostomomarov were given fairly light sentences consisting of a year or less in Siberia as they were considered more moderate and less dangerous. Panteleimon Kulish who more closely supported Shevchenko's strategy was given a three year sentence. However, Shevchenko was given the harshest sentence of ten years in a labor battalion with the Tsar's army where he was forbidden to paint or write – though he would continue to do so. While in Central Asia Shevchenko helped survey the Aral Sea and while in Kazakhstan at Fort Novopetrovskoe, renamed Fort Shevchenko, he made paintings of the native Kazakh people. He was freed in 1857 but forbidden to return to Ukraine. Instead, he was ordered to reside in Saint Petersburg under «police surveillance» [8]. As a result of the hard labor and psychological suffering, Shevchenko died in 1961, only forty seven years old. His friends had him transported and buried on a hill overlooking the Dnieper River near Kaniv, Ukraine.

Taras Shevchenko in Russian Discourse

As the Soviets knew they couldn't erase Shevchenko from the collective consciousness of Ukraine yet still needed to Russify them, Soviet propagandists opted for the clever tactic of rebranded him. One article on Shevchenko shortly after the revolution was titled 'The Red Christ' [9, p. 24].

Embracing the revolutionary spirit was a pragmatic choice for the Soviets. According to Subtelny, «Lenin himself declared in a speech in Switzerland in 1914 (which is not included in the Soviet editions of his works) that "it [Ukraine] has become for Russia what Ireland was for England: exploited in the extreme and receiving nothing in return» [3, p. 269]. Likewise, during World War 2 the Soviets used the hope of Ukrainian autonomy to motivate the population against the Germans. But, after the war the government moved to reform the Ukrainian image to align with the Soviet ideal [9, p. 33].

The Department of Culture and Propaganda of the Communist Party of Ukraine issued a directive titled The Theses of 1934, with guidelines that called for Shevchenko to be referred to as the 'revolutionary democrat' and the narrative that he «was forever grateful to the Russians for having taught him the art of poetry» [9, p. 30–31]. In 1935 a monument of Shevchenko was built by Russian sculptor Matvey Manizer in Kharkiv in what Myroslava Hatmond describes as a «Stalinist baroque depiction» of the poet [4]. Moreover, it was in 1939 and not post–Soviet Union that Kyiv National University was named in honor of the revolutionary. Obviously, it was easier for the Soviet propagandists to subtly alter Shevchenko's image to one of a Soviet revolutionary hero rather than attempting to erase his memory from Ukraine's collective consciousness.

Analysis of Taras Shevchenko Master Narrative

Shevchenko was born in a world of serfdom. Years of Russification had taken its toll on Ukrainian society and identity. The prevailing sentiment was that the Ukrainian language was not advanced enough to be used for poetry or respectable literature. In contrast, Shevchenko demonstrated that the Ukrainian language was worthy of creating high literature. He spoke out against contemporaries such as Gogol who wrote in Russian. Instead, he worked toward a national liberation, not accepting Ukraine's status as little Russia.

Shevchenko saw Ukraine as a descendent of the Cossacks having stated that «Ukraine's freedom perished with the Cossacks» [10, p. 116]. He attacked Khmelnytsky for what regarded as capitulating to Moscow for signing the Pereiaslav Agreement in 1654. Though, he writes fondly of their willingness to rebel – the problem being that they didn't succeed. As a result, he both blamed and gloried the Cossack's [10, p. 120].

Grabowicz explains how Shevchenko used myth in his poetry as myth operates on an emotional level allowing it to be more easily understood by the general public. He argues that Shevchenko's myth of Ukraine is one of a country divided against itself without any hope of mediation [11, p. 490–491]. His poems convey the following,

In the present, all that remains of Ukraine is a suspended, helpless feminine world – the world of serfs tied to the land but with no memory of their glorious past, with no sense of identity, of descendants of Cossacks now willing slaves to tsarist despotism. It is a world of fallen women and illegitimate children; its cursed victimized state of being is stressed by the recurring motifs of incest and rape [11, p. 491–492].

Grabowicz expoundson Shevchenko not only blaming the Cossacks for bringing death to their people – «the brother peasants». But what's worse is that the people do not remember. They've forgotten theinjustices made against Ukrainian peasants, and at a deeper level Shevchenko is alluding to Ukrainians not remembering their own identity. Thus, the resolution is for the poet to retell the past, and open the eyes of his countrymen «to the great ruin that Ukraine has become». Symbolically, Shevchenko will become the martyr upon his death [1, p. 493–494].

Ukraine's national anthem is a prime example of the significance of the Cossack archetype and Ukrainian national identity. The anthem specifically proclaims Ukraine as descendants of the Cossacks which also symbolizes free men, the protector of the frontier and the rebel. Also, declaring that the nations' foes will be defeated.

Always present in Shevchenko's works is the use ofrecurring archetypes and biblical allegories. For instance, his poem Iurodyvyi (The Half Wit), contains a scene where the rebel slaps the face of a «high Russian official in a church» [2, p. 419]. Thus, evoking the story of Christ and his expelling of the money–changers from the temple located in Matthew 21:12–17. Moreover, the Christ archetype is inducedand masked as the rebel.

His poem The Caucasus,is about Russia's colonization of the fiercely resistant territory. It was especially personal for Shevchenko being that he lost

Щене вмерла України і слава, і воля, Ще нам, браття молодії, усміхнеться доля. Згинуть наші воріженьки, як роса на сонці. Запанує і ми, браття, у своїй сторонці. Душу й тіло ми положим за нашу свободу, І покажем, що ми, браття, козацького роду.	Ščе ne vmerla Ukrajiny, i slava, i volja, Ščе nam, brattja molodiji, usmichnetjsja dolja. Zhynutj naši voriženjky, jak rosa na sonci, Zapanujem i my, brattja, u svojij storonci. Dušu j tilo my položym za našu svobodu, I pokažem, ščo my, brattja, kozacjkoho rodu.	Nay, thou art not dead, Ukraine, see, thy glory's born again, And the skies, O brethren, upon us smile once more! As in Springtime melts the snow, so shall melt away the foe, And we shall be masters in our own home. Soul and body, yea, our all, offer we at freedom's call We, whose forebears, and ourselves, proud Cossacks are!

a close friend named Count Yakov de Balmen who was serving in the Russian Imperial Army [3, p. 165]. The poem openswith a quote from the bible where Jeremiah laments his people for their current state, hoping for them to change, and foretelling the future consequences. It begins with the story of Prometheus, the god that rebelled against Zeus to protect and fight for humanity.In the Greek myth, Prometheus had created man in the image of the gods. The tyrannical Zeus had become jealous of Prometheus' creation as he was dissatisfied with man's sacrificial offerings. Zeus then decided to punish Prometheus by taking away the use of fire from man. Prometheus in looking down at earth could see the humans dying and felt great compassion. Thus, he secretly went down to earth to return fire to the humans knowing that he would be killed by Zeus if caught. He successfully made the journey to earth and gave back fire to the overjoyed humans who were then able to cook their food and keep warm. Upon learning that Prometheus had disobeyed him, Zeus banished the Titan to a peak called Mount Caucasus. While bound to a rock, an eagle came and ate Prometheus's liver. It would grow back and the eagle would return daily – an eternal suffering. Yet, in in the Greek myth Prometheus never wavered from his ideals and remained unrepentant for his actions. The titan is the rebel, willing risk his life for the good of man against Zeus, the supreme authority. The message is the same for the rebel and even after being sentenced for his words against the Tsar, Shevchenko remained unrepentant.

Oh that my head were tears, and mine eyes a fountain of waters, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my People! –Jeremiah, 9, I

On Prometheus an eagle
Feasts throughout the ages.
Every day it's tearing, rending
Both his heart and body,
Rending but it ne'er drains fully
All his living blood,
For again he is revived
And again he's smiling. […] [3, p. 166].

The poem then shifts with a sense of the writer speaking directly to the reader. The following excerpt reminds the reader of the presence of the Christian God as Shevchenko makes a proclamation.

And our human spirit dies not
And our freedom dies not;
And the greedy man ploughs never
Fields beneath the ocean,
Does not bind the human spirit
And the living word,
Does not carry off the glory
Of Almighty God.

His poem, *My Testament*, written in 1845, has been translated in over sixty languages and is second in national status only to Ukraine's national anthem [4]. In the poem we see that it is also metaphorical of the biblical stories, predominantly of the sacrificial martyr and uses the recurring theme from his works of flowing blood, either from the sacrifice of the lamb, the blood shed by Ukrainians or below with the blood of the tyrant.

MY TESTAMENT
When I am dead, then bury me
In my beloved Ukraine,
My tomb upon a grave mound high Amid the spreading plain,
So that the fields, the boundless steppes,
The Dnieper's plunging shore
My eyes could see, my ears could hear
The mighty river roar.
When from Ukraine the Dnieper bears
Into the deep blue sea
The blood of foes ... then will I leave
These hills and fertile fields –
I'll leave them all and fly away

To the abode of God,
And then I'll pray .... But till that day
I nothing know of God.
Oh bury me, then rise ye up
And break your heavy chains
And water with the tyrants' blood
The freedom you have gained.
And in the great new family,
The family of the free,
With softly spoken, kindly word
Remember also me [5, p. 138–141].

In 1858, after serving his sentence and living in exile, Shevchenko wrote one of his most moving poems about a mother and her dream for her son to be free and to be able to raise a family in freedom. The following excerpts highlight the political message and visceral memory a boy has with his mother.

A DREAM
In Servitude she harvested the wheat,
And wearied; but not for herself to rest, […]
She dreamt about her boy Ivan
Grown–up and handsome, well–to–do,
And married, a fair maid he'd wooed –
A maidan free, she saw – and he himself
No more a serf remained, but free, […] [5, p. 196].

The story ends with the mother waking up from the dream and realizing nothing has changed, that she is still in fact a serf along with her son. She lovingly wraps a blanket around him and hurries back to the field hoping her overseer hasn't noticed her absence. In the poem we see the symbol of the mother a visceral and relatable archetype to all Ukrainians as she symbolizes the nation – a nation needing to be saved.

All stories combined construct a master narrative with the objective to cause a desire for rebelling against Russia in order to establish a free and independent nation. The stories of the Cossack's and the numerous uprisings, primarily those lead by Bohdan Khmelnytsky and Ivan Mazepa, demonstrate and serve as examples for Ukrainian hero's during the Cossack Hetmanate. The two figures tell the story of a hero's journey. At first reluctant, both men decided to revolt knowing the dire consequences should they fail. They also establish the existing conflict of repression by the Russian Empire to produce the desire to revolt. Shevchenko's works retell the past, building on the existing stories of rebellion, to enlighten the Ukrainian people and attempt to give them an identity in the most

visceral and emotional way. He repeatedly uses myth, symbolism and metaphors drawing on the stories of repression, sacrifice, martyrdom and rebellion. He uses the biblical language ingrained in the nation since its Christianization by Vladimir the Great in the 9th century and even pre Christian stories such as Prometheus – a reinforcement of the theme of sacrifice.

Today, Shevchenko remains a symbol for Ukrainian national identity and is the archetypal hero for Ukraine. Most notably, Hartmondstates that during the 2013 Euromaidan Revolution protestors emblazoned Shevchenko's image on their shields and helmets. And, soldiers fighting the pro–Russian insurgency in eastern Ukraine are issued camouflaged copy of 'Kobzar', a collection of Shevchenko's poems [6, p. 23]. As Washington and Lincoln are symbols for America, the same can be said for Shevchenko.

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