Cossacks
in Jamaica,
Ukraine
at the Antipodes

Essays
in Honor
of MARKO
PAVLYSHYN

Contact Zone vs. Postcolonial Condition: On the Relevance of a Concept from Latin American Studies for Research on Ukraine

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The concept of the postcolonial condition has been vastly applied to the study of contemporary Ukrainian culture since Marko Pavlyshyn published his seminal paper "Post-colonial Features in Contemporary Ukrainian Culture" in 1992.¹ Pavlyshyn constructed a Hegelian pyramid with the notions "colonial," "anticolonial," and "postcolonial." The colonial refers to the self-marginalization of Ukrainian culture, as it is famously present in both the tsarist and Soviet cultural history. The anticolonial encompasses the revolt and protest against the perceived colonial situation in Ukraine. Finally, the postcolonial addresses a constellation in which the presence of both the colonial and the anticolonial is acknowledged and playfully transposed into an ambivalent text. Pavlyshyn's conception aptly describes an important aspect of Ukrainian culture since the demise of the Soviet Union. One special feature is the postcolonial (and postmodern) use of sexual motifs in contemporary Ukrainian literature. Erotic rhetoric demystifies both imperial and national values.² Madina Tlostanova points to the postcolonial situation of literary production in the post-Soviet space. According to her,

¹ Marko Pavlyshyn, "Post-Colonial Features in Contemporary Ukrainian Culture," *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* 6, no. 2 (1992): 41–55.

² Marko Pavlyshyn, "Ukrainian Literature and the Erotics of Postcolonialism. Some Modest Propositions," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 17, nos. 1–2 (1993): 110–26, 125.

recycled imperial and nationalist myths intertwine with new forms of liberating discourses.³ However, the notion of Ukrainian postcolonialism often remains centered around an understanding of "coloniality" that stems from a paradigm with disparate features.⁴ The most important thinkers derive their concept of "coloniality" from the case of the British Empire. The most fruitful comparison can be drawn between Ukraine and Ireland. Since 1921, Irish culture has been assuming a postcolonial status. Irish writers challenged the British hegemonic culture by introducing new styles of writing. As in the Irish case, Ukrainian culture developed in close proximity to the imperial center. However, it occasionally even dominated Russian culture. Finally, current relations between Russia and Ukraine do not only resemble a relationship between a former empire and a young nation. Russia faces "postcolonial" problems too, but in a very different way—incidentally, it blames the "West" for assuming the role of cultural hegemon.⁵

At this point, the notion of "internal colonization" in Russia comes into play. Alexander Etkind pointed toward the long history of this analytical concept that was first used by the German traveler August von Haxthausen in 1843. Subsequently, the eminent nineteenth-century historians Sergei Solov'ev and Vasilii Kliuchevskii described Russia as an empire that does not acquire colonies abroad, but colonizes itself. The state, in other words, acts like an occupational power, and colonizes its own territories. It expands governing institutions, and spreads the central civilization to remote areas.⁶ In Russia, colonialism is not a relation between

³ Madina Tlostanova, "Postsocialist ≠ Postcolonial? On Post-Soviet Imaginary and Global Coloniality," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48, no. 2 (2012): 130–42.

⁴ Vitaly Chernetsky, "Postcolonialism, Russia and Ukraine," *Ukrainian Review* 7 (2003): 32–62, 37ff.

⁵ Ilya Gerasimov, Marina Mogilner, "Deconstructing Integration: Ukraine's Postcolonial Subjectivity," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 4 (2015): 715–22, 722.

⁶ Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization. Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge–Malden: Polity, 2011), 61ff.

imperial rule and several subaltern cultures, but an internal condition of the empire itself.

Another conceptual problem is the relation between the postmodern and the postcolonial.⁷ For Pavlyshyn, postcolonial writing in Ukraine is essentially postmodern. Such postmodernism debunks authoritative truths in cultural self-descriptions. Neither Marxian class struggles, Darwinian evolutions, nor Freudian drives are exclusive or even trustworthy explanatory models for the human condition. The "post-" in postmodernism thus refers to a diversification of a monolithic truth, which eventually becomes a choice of options on an equal footing. What then does the "post-" in postcolonialism mean? Kwame Anthony Appiah aptly addressed this problem in his influential essay from 1991: "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?" Postcolonialism, in Appiah's understanding, does not abolish or even fight the colonial condition which persists even after the global process of decolonization in the twentieth century. Political independence does not necessarily come with economic or cultural autonomy. Postcolonialism is rather a "space-clearing gesture" that allows for new modes of cultural expression. However, postcolonialism clearly differs from postmodernism. Appiah describes the postcolonial situation as a post-optimistic one: "Postcoloniality is a condition of pessimism."⁸ It is precisely this feature that may explain why postcolonialism became a popular interpretive pattern for both Ukrainian writers and critics. A telling example is Oksana Zabuzhko's novel *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* (2009). In her novel, she attacks all former occupiers of Ukraine: the Poles, the Germans, and the Russians. The postcolonial narrative of self-victimization, of course, is a very attractive one, because it offers a clear-cut identity. At the same time, this narrative is very limiting –

⁷ Ato Quayson, *Postcolonialism. Theory, Practice, or Process?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), 132ff. For an overview see: Vitaly Chernetsky, *Mapping Postcommunist Cultures. Russia and Ukraine in the Context of Globalization* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 3–58.

⁸ Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 2 (1991): 336–57, 348, 353.

it disenfranchises the subject and reduces actors to the role of a late victim of bygone historical events.

It is quite remarkable that such an understanding of postcolonialism becomes interchangeable with the notion of colonialism itself. In a conceptual answer to Mark von Hagen's provocative question "Does Ukraine have a history?"⁹ George Grabowicz points to the fact that colonialism was a decisive factor in the formation of what "Ukrainian" came to mean. According to Grabowicz, colonialism was present in many spheres: the political, the economic, the cultural, and the psychological.¹⁰ Grabowicz understands the prefix "post-" as a temporal marker that refers to the year of independence in 1991. Within this framework, the paradigm of postcolonialism continues the colonial restrictions under the precarious conditions of a nationalizing state. This is of course true, but it does not represent the whole picture.

I propose to complement the postcolonial discourse about contemporary Ukraine with an analytical concept from Latin American Studies. Mary Louise Pratt introduced the notion of cultural "contact zones" in 1991 to describe the encounter between indigenous people in Peru and the Spanish conquerors in early modern times. Neither states nor nations lie at the heart of Pratt's concept. Instead, she draws attention to phenomena like auto-ethnography, transculturation, collaboration, hybridity, bilingualism, mediation, parody, imaginary dialogue, and vernacular expression. The simple enumeration of these analytical models illustrates how fruitful her concept is, not only in a colonial or postcolonial context but also in a heterogeneous space such as Ukrainian culture in the past and present.

Pratt explicitly takes issue with Benedict Anderson's seminal concept of the "imagined community." Anderson interprets the nation as a discursive construction that is based on a unifying

⁹ Mark von Hagen, "Does Ukraine Have a History?," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 3 (1995): 658–73.

¹⁰ George G. Grabowicz, "Ukrainian Studies: Framing the Contexts," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 3 (1995): 674–90, 676.

literary culture and social institutions. Pratt criticizes this approach as being too teleological. She is rather interested in cultural processes of exchange, negotiation and dominance. With her own analytical term "contact zone," she refers "to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power [. . .]."¹¹ If we take this approach seriously, the Russian-Ukrainian encounter is not about the clash of two national projects but about an intense negotiation of cultural issues.

1. Auto-ethnography

Auto-ethnography is a device that emerges at a specific point of literary history when texts move away from the traditional religious and political purposes of the medieval tradition. Social reality, in terms of ethnic culture, must become "interesting" in the historical sense of the word. The romantic category of "interesting" directs attention to topics that were hitherto neglected by literary tradition.¹²

Nineteenth-century Ukrainian culture started in the tonality of hetero-ethnography. Most Russian travelogues cast Ukraine as a domestic arcadia, but, of course, always with the main interpretive key of "provinciality." In his work, Hryhorii Osnov'ianenko (1778–1843) clearly departs from this model. Only a fifth of his literary writings are in Ukrainian. However, the Ukrainian topic dominates most of his Russian prose. Notably, he introduced the figure of the Ukrainian trickster Shel'menko in three of his Russian-language plays. Kvitka addressed different audiences in his novelistic and dramatic works. The implied author wavered between ethnography

¹¹ Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* 91 (1991): 33–40, 34.

¹² Karlheinz Stierle, "Zwischen Romanus und Romantik – Wandlungen eines europäischen Schlüsselbegriffs," in *Die Romantik: ein Gründungsmythos der Europäischen Moderne*, ed. Anja Ernst and Paul Geyer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2010), 55–84, 69.

(posing as a Russian voice) and auto-ethnography (posing as a Ukrainian voice).¹³

In terms of auto-ethnography, there is a clear evolution in Kvitka's œuvre. First, he adopted imposed stereotypes, and even used Russian for the literary self-description of provincial Ukraine. The title of one of his early comedies clearly epitomizes this mode: "The Guest from the Capital or Turmoil in the Provincial Town" (1827). In "Saldat'skyi patret" (1833), he gave an account from the periphery in Ukrainian. Kvitka was sophisticated enough to reflect upon the reception of his text in the Russian context. In a fictional letter to the editor, he even parodies the language of the dominant culture by using a phonetic Ukrainian orthography:

Не второпают по-нашому, та й ворчать на наши книжки:
"Это нэшто па-чухонські. Зацім печатать, кагда нхто не
розуміє."¹⁴

Kvitka made an important choice when he switched from the ironic adoption of Russian clichés about Ukraine to an autonomous account of Ukraine in the Ukrainian language. He did not even try to assume a position in the contested field of Russian literature. Kvitka published his pieces in provincial Kharkiv and addressed an audience that was local and proficient in Ukrainian.

2. Transculturation

The Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1881–1969) coined the analytical concept of "transculturation." He used this notion to describe the various processes that characterize the history of Cuba: the encounter between the native people and the Spanish conquerors, the arrival of slaves from Africa, and the mixing of

¹³ Marko Pavlyshyn, "Experiments with Audiences. The Ukrainian and Russian Prose of Kvitka-Osnov'ianenko," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 58, no. 2 (2014): 197–216.

¹⁴ H. Kvitka-Osnov'ianenko, *Tvory u vos'my tomakh*, vol. 8 (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1969–70), 44.

European and Asian businessmen. Ultimately, Ortiz proposed to subsume all ongoing processes of "disculturation," "exculturation," "acculturation," and "inculturation" under the umbrella concept of "transculturation." The product of such "transculturation" is what Ortiz calls "cubanidad,"—that is, "Cubanity."¹⁵

For the first time, Ortiz applied his concept of "transculturation" in his famous book *Cuban Counterpoint. Tobacco and Sugar* (1940). He explained that "the result of every union of cultures is similar to that of the reproductive process between individuals: the offspring always has something of both parents but is always different from each of them."¹⁶ In his book, Ortiz demonstrates the process of how tobacco and sugar, the two top natural resources of Cuba, generate specific social, economic, and cultural practices.

The notion of transculturation as a dynamic, complex, sometimes even contradictory process of cultural exchange may well be applied to the Russian-Ukrainian contact zone in the nineteenth century, more precisely to the figure of Marko Vovchok (i.e. Mariia Vilins'ka [1833–1907]). Vovchok was not only a traveller between cultures, but also between genders. Born as a Russian aristocrat's daughter, she chose the persona of a Ukrainian Cossack for her literary production. Panteleimon Kulish supported Marko Vovchok when she published her Ukrainian *Folk Tales* in 1857. The tone of Marko Vovchok's eleven short stories is exclusively tragic. The author denounces the ruthless behavior of landlords towards their peasants and focuses especially on the suffering of peasant women. By raising such a wide array of sociopolitical topics, Marko Vovchok created a specific Ukrainian intellectual sphere that was not confined to folkloric traditions.¹⁷

¹⁵ Fernando Ortiz, "El fenómeno social de la transculturación y su importancia en Cuba," *Revista Bimestre Cubana* 46 (1940): 273–78.

¹⁶ Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint. Tobacco and Sugar* (New York: Knopf, 1947), 103.

¹⁷ Marko Pavlyshyn, "Normalising a Ukrainian Intellectual Identity in the Nineteenth Century: The Role of Marko Vovchok (1833–1907)," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of European Studies* 5, no. 2 (2013): 61–70.

For Kulish, Vovchok was an essential addition—as he saw it—to the hitherto imperfect system of Ukrainian literature. Vovchok herself wavered between the Russian and the Ukrainian field. After the Ems Ukaz, she definitely chose Russian literature as her main domain. In her later years, she seemed to return to Ukrainian literature. She worked on a historical novel with the title "Haidamaky." A Russian draft and a final Ukrainian chapter of this novel are preserved in her archive.¹⁸ By picking up this topic, so prominently poeticized by Shevchenko, Vovchok sought to fill in a gap that she identified in the genre system of Ukrainian literature: the epic.

3. Collaboration

Collaboration in the Latin American context was a more complex phenomenon than just the despicable surrender to, and subsequent administrative backing of a foreign occupying force. Collaboration may also refer to practices of cultural appropriation and learning. Sociologists described the adaptation to other cultural models in terms of "upward assimilation." From the perspective of upward mobility, cultural contact becomes the framework for innovative practices of self-empowerment.

The most famous representative of such a practice in the Ukrainian-Russian context is, of course, Teofan Prokopovych (1681–1736). The beginning of his career was deeply rooted in the Western, more precisely, the Latin canon. He received a Roman Catholic education, but may have had a falling out with the papal institutions. Back in Ukraine, he accepted the Church Union, and taught at the Mohyla Academy in Kyiv. He invoked Mazepa as a national hero in the preface to his drama *Vladimir* (1705). Mazepa, in turn, was present at the premiere. However, after the Russian victory at Poltava (1709), Prokopovych became a staunch propagandist of Russian imperialism in general, and Peter the Great's rule in particular.

¹⁸ Liliia Hureieva, "Marko Vovchok," *Spadshchyna. Literaturne dzhereloznavstvo. Tekstolohiia*, vol. 3 (Kyiv: Foliant, 2007), 339–55.

In 1717, Prokopovych issued a *Catalogue* that followed Peter's ancestry up to the legendary Rurik.¹⁹ Ultimately, Prokopovych was the first high official to fuse Orthodox Christianity and Autocracy into a single national ideology of tsarist power.

However, it would be wrong to consider Prokopovych as a mere career opportunist. When he moved to the Russian capital in 1716 on Peter's orders, he was very ambivalent about his new position. Moreover, alien and contradictory influences such as Jesuit, and even protestant traditions informed his theological works and sermons during his "imperial" period. Prokopovych was thus a "collaborator" who did not betray his former intellectual interests, but molded them into a political ideology that purported to be Russian Orthodox but still retained traces of the contact zone.

4. Hybridity

In Latin American Studies, it was the Argentinian anthropologist Néstor García Canclini who applied the biological term "hybridity" to social and political phenomena. In his book *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (1989) García Canclini looks at the difficult position of Latin American cultures that straddle tradition and modernity, popular and high culture. He also analyzes the symbolic behavior of writers like Jorge Luis Borges or Octavio Paz who both became famous because of their intense ties with the Western cultural industry.²⁰

Nikolai Gogol' / Mykola Hohol' represents a similar hybrid model. Just to place him at the core of the Russian canon does not grasp the complexity of his situation. Apart from one short letter, he did not write anything in Ukrainian. His fame is based on a literary innovation that could be described as the conscious

¹⁹ Elena N. Boeck, "Claiming and Acclaiming Peter I: Ukrainian Contributions to the Visual Commemoration of Petrine Victories," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 31, nos. 1–4 (2009–10): 271–308, 286.

²⁰ Néstor García Canclini, *Culturas híbridadas. Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad* (Mexico: Grijalbo, 1990), 106.

exploitation of the Russian reader's horizon of expectation about all things Ukrainian. The astute way in which Gogol' explored, and eventually catered to preferred tastes of the Russian readership may be observed in his literary debut. In 1829—following the great success of the most fashionable Russian author of the time, Alexander Pushkin—he wrote a long poem with the title "Gants Kiukhel'garten." This epigonic text was a complete failure. After reading the devastating criticism, he hastened to buy all remaining copies from the bookstores in St. Petersburg. This catastrophe had an enlightening effect on him. He looked for a new manner of writing and found it in the de-canonizing style of the Ukrainian cultural space.

Already in 1831, Gogol' published in *Literaturnaia gazeta* two pieces in prose that signaled their Ukrainian topics in the title: *From the Little Russian novel "Strashnyi kaban"* and *Hetman*. These two texts are still a mixture between established literary models and stylistic innovation. Gogol' deploys narrative devices from the love story à la Jean-Jacques Rousseau, or from the historic novel à la Walter Scott. But at the same time, he stylizes his protagonist's speech with Ukrainian elements. Gogol's trick here is not to use "real" Ukrainian, but Russian with Ukrainian syntax and Ukrainian lexical splinters.

Gogol' brought this model to perfection in his two collections of Ukrainian tales *Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki* (1832) and *Mirgorod* (1835). At the beginnings of the chapters, he used mottos from Ukrainian authors, and at the end of the book he inserted a glossary of Ukrainian words to highlight the "otherness" of his writing. He readily fulfilled Russian expectations about the domestic "Arcadia" with romantic clichés and stereotypes. On the Russian side, Pushkin complemented and corroborated this view by famously praising Ukrainians as a "dancing and singing people."

5. Bilingualism

In the Eastern European contact zones, the very concept of "national culture" belongs to the sphere of researched objects and not to the researcher's analytical toolbox. Even in the perspective of imperial

subjects, the "national culture" was a goal that still needed to be achieved. Ultimately, the quest for (or perhaps the construction of) a "national culture" followed Western European models, with institutions like the national poet, national literary journals and Bible translations. However, the nation and national literature were not always congruent. Just as Mickiewicz famously hailed "Lithuania" as his home in the opening line of the Polish national epos, the Ukrainian national poet Shevchenko wrote his prose in Russian and the bulk of his poetry in Ukrainian.

George Grabowicz defines the duality of an "adjusted" and a "non-adjusted" self as the main feature of Shevchenko's artistic existence. The "adjusted" self articulates itself in the Russian prose, in the diary and the letters. Here, Shevchenko acts as a rational subject of the Russian Empire and adopts a well-established discourse of social progress and literary aesthetics. An irrational force drives the "non-adjusted" poet to produce lyrical texts with a claim for absolute truth. With his Ukrainian voice, the poet fights the demonic evil, which he identifies with the tsarist system. Both aspects belong to Shevchenko's literary existence. They do not complement each other. Instead, they form a sharp contradiction. In a sense, the contact zone is a battlefield of values, languages, and modes of expression in the poet's own subjectivity.²¹

To complicate things even more, it is sometimes impossible to separate Shevchenko's two selves. In his letters, he switches from Ukrainian to Russian and back. In most cases, these linguistic shifts seem to be unmotivated. Sometimes, however, an official tone can be reached by using Russian (or a variety of Ukrainian that is very close to Russian).²²

It is quite interesting to analyze a prominent text that contradicts the division of Shevchenko's oeuvre between powerful Ukrainian poetry and epigonic Russian prose. In 1843, Shevchenko

²¹ George Grabowicz, *The Poet as Mythmaker. A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Taras Ševčenko* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 9.

²² Michael Moser, *Taras Ševčenko und die moderne ukrainische Schriftsprache—Versuch einer Würdigung* (München: Ukrainische Freie Universität, 2008), 397.

wrote the Russian language poem *Trizna*. This artful piece is heavily influenced by Russian romanticism, notably by Pushkin and Lermontov.²³ There are several aspects as to the poetological function of this text. First, it is a poetic self-empowerment. Shevchenko proves to himself, and to his audience, that he is able to produce in the romantic or even sentimental discourse of his epoch. Second, the poem establishes a framework for Shevchenko's later Ukrainian poetry, which adds a prominent dimension of political subversion to the melancholic tonality of *Trizna*. Third, the poem articulates the difficult marginal position that Shevchenko occupies in the space of imperial culture and society: He is neither peasant nor nobleman, he aims to be the voice of the Ukrainian "narod," and, at the same time, he seeks the recognition of the highest strata of the Russian imperial society.²⁴

6. Mediation

Contact zones are spaces in which cultural agents may move according to their needs, negotiate their attitudes, and mediate between different positions. At times, institutional constraints apply. However, there is a simple rule for the effects of political repression. The dominated culture assumes a weaker position only for a short time. Repression ultimately endows the marginalized culture with a new self-consciousness and sense of agency. The modern Ukrainian nationalism that emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century was only made possible by the restrictions imposed upon the use of the Ukrainian language in 1863 and 1876. Not even the revocation of these bans in 1905 could revert the process of Ukrainian nationalization that culminated in separatism, and the proclamation of an independent Ukrainian state.

²³ Hryhorii Hrabovych, *Shevchenko, iakoho ne znaiemo* (Z problematyky symvolichnoi avtobiografii ta suchasnoi retseptsii poeta) (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2000), 23.

²⁴ Grabowicz, *The Poet as Mythmaker*, 145.

Before these dramatic events, mediation between the different positions in the contact zone was a widely spread pattern. Mykola/Nikolai Kostomarov (1817–85) was educated in Russia, and became a Ukrainian writer and historian by choice. Kostomarov was politically engaged in a utopian vision of a Pan Slavic Federation that was supposed to rise up against German rationalism, French atheism, and English mercantilism. This idea was to become one of the leitmotifs in his œuvre: He turned to his fellow Slavs to explain why Ukraine, Russia, and Poland are not enemies but brothers more than once. Kostomarov even wanted to implement his all-Slavic conception in his personal life. He considered himself to be a cultural representative of a united Great and Little Russia, and planned to marry a Polish girl. Their children would embody Slavic unity between Russia, Ukraine, and Poland.

In 1861, Kostomarov published his important essay "Two Russian Nationalities" in the influential, if short-lived journal *Osnova*, which was designed to be a platform for Ukrainian culture in the capital of the Russian Empire. Kostomarov argued the Great and Little Russians complete each other mentally, and are only able to form a stable state together. However, Kostomarov's mediatory stance was criticized from all sides; conservative Russians accused him of sedition, while radical Ukrainians dismissed his conception as a foul compromise.

7. Parody

In cultural contact zones, discourses fuse, meet, or clash. Moreover, these discourses notice or influence each other, and sometimes even use mimicry to imitate or subvert a dominant position. Parody is probably one of the most powerful devices when it comes to attacking or debunking the cultural hegemon. Such a development may be observed quite early in the nineteenth century. Petro Hulak-Artemovs'kyi (1790–1865) artfully plays with the cultural incompetence of the average Russian reader in the capital about all things Ukrainian. Actually, Hulak inverts the asymmetry of information. In his texts, the Ukrainophone

narrator even fails to know the correct name of the capital. He talks about "Piantenburg" or "Piantemburkh" and thus discloses his encyclopedic ignorance about the hegemonial culture.²⁵ Of course, Hulak-Artemovs'kyi does not criticize the low level of education in the Ukrainian province, but, ironically, mirrors the self-centeredness of Russian culture in the capital.

Even advocacy for a Ukrainian literary language comes in the guise of a highly ironic text. In 1819, Hulak wrote the short prosaic piece *Deshcho pro toho Haras'ka*. The name Haras'ko refers, of course, to the Roman poet Horace. The Ukrainian distortion is programmatic: Hulak's unreliable narrator explains that Horace wrote in "Lithuanian" (*po-lytvyns'ky*). Further on, the text plays with homonyms that bear different meanings in Russian and Ukrainian. Finally, the text closes with a challenge to the dominance of Russian in the Ukrainian lands. The narrator explains: "We all know that all of the Christian people use their own language: The Turks speak Turkish, the Germans speak German."²⁶ The first Christian people that seem to corroborate Hulak's case are the Turks! However, this is more than a joke. Basically, Hulak uses this ignorant point to demonstrate the possibility of making a correct point (the acceptance of the Ukrainian language in the imperial context) in a situation of complete cultural ignorance (the assumption that the Turks are Christians or that the Ukrainians are Russians, for that matter).

8. Imaginary dialogue

In cultural contact zones, every utterance incorporates the "other" one way or another. Writers cannot define their own position without considering how the "other" views them from the outside. This is a classic case of the construction of an "image": How does the other perceive me; what must I do to influence this perception, and how can I engineer my own image? To complicate the situation even

²⁵ Petro Hulak-Artemovs'kyi, *Tvory* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1978), 36, 55.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

further, an additional, a kind of "meta-image" may be constructed: How do I perceive the other's perception of me?

An interesting literary embodiment of this multifaceted negotiation of self-presentation, image, and meta-image can be found in the poetic *Dialogue of Great Russia with Little Russia*. Semen Divovych, a scribe in the Cossack Chancery in Hlukhiv, wrote this piece in 1762. The long poem consists of over 1200 lines, most of which belong to Little Russia. Great Russia basically asks insulting and provocative questions such as: Who are you? Do you have a history? What is your aristocratic lineage? Why do you want to act on your own? Little Russia answers with pride and high self-assurance. Little Russia proudly retells the heroic Cossack past.

Since the whole text is written from a Ukrainian perspective, it should not be read as a genuine dialogue. Within the fictional framework of the text, the Russian arrogance and condescension, of course, may be interpreted as a Ukrainian projection. One can reduce the imaginary dialogue between the two interlocutors to an exchange between Little Russia's self-presentation and Little Russia's meta-image.

It is noteworthy that Little Russia strives to be on an equal footing with the Great Russian culture. A case in point is the description of Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi's heroic death that follows the literary model of Ovid's seventh elegy from his collection *Tristia*. Such stylization elevates the dignity of Ukraine. At the same time, Little Russia assumes a position that Michel Foucault famously defined as parrhesia: "In *parrhesia*, the speaker uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood and silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest or moral apathy."²⁷ By implication, parrhesia is only possible from a weaker position. However, parrhesia often lays bare a tacit asymmetry in power positions. In Divovych's *Dialogue*, the effect of Little Russia's parrhesia is as overwhelming as it is utopian. In the end,

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 1981), 19–20.

Great Russia acknowledges Little Russia's "truth" and vows to live on in friendship, and on equal terms in a political union.

9. Vernacular expression

"Vernacular expression," according to Mary Louise Pratt, challenges the literary, often highly formalized style of the dominant culture. According to Marko Pavlyshyn, the texts of the baroque tradition may well be considered to be part of a "Ukrainian literature." A "Ukrainian national literature," however, begins only in 1798 with Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi's famous *Eneida*—a mock poem about the Ukrainian Cossacks.²⁸ Kotliarevs'kyi took Virgil's epic and filled it with coarse descriptions of Cossack drinking, eating, and partying. The true hero of Kotliarevs'kyi's epic is not the Ukrainian Cossack Aeneas, but the Ukrainian language. Kotliarevs'kyi uses in his verse synonyms, elaborate expressions, and epigrammatic couplets at length. The goal of this rhetoric firework is to demonstrate the linguistic and artistic capacities of the vernacular.

Interestingly, the first edition of Kotliarevs'kyi's *Eneida* appeared with the Russian language title "Malorossiiskaia Eneida v trekh chastiakh" in 1798 in St. Petersburg, accompanied by a Ukrainian-Russian dictionary. As with many other Ukrainian cultural endeavors, the debut of the "Ukrainian national literature" also happened to take place in the Russian capital. Other significant events for Ukrainian culture in St. Petersburg include the artistic socialization of the young painter Shevchenko, the professorship of Kostomarov, and the publication of the journal *Osnova*.

However, the reaction of the Russian audience remained tame. Among fellow Ukrainian writers, Kotliarevs'kyi had an immense success and even became the role model for a specific "Ukrainian" writing. The success of *Eneida* was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it established a recognizable identity for a culture that

²⁸ Marko Pavlyshyn, "Modern Literature and the Construction of National Identity as European: The Case of Ukraine," in *Domains and Divisions of European History*, ed. Johann P. Arnason and Natalie J. Doyle (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 181–97, 187f.

was considered provincial at best thus far. On the other hand, the so-called "kotliarevshchyna" was so dominant that it took forty years before Shevchenko established an entirely new, tragic and pathetic tone. Notably, Shevchenko's praise for Kotliarevs'kyi was highly ambivalent. He wrote about his mock epic in 1847: "*Eneida* is good, but nevertheless a joke in a Muscovite manner."²⁹ This quote shows quite clearly that the comic style of "kotliarevshchyna" was already past its expiration date.

Fifteen years earlier, it still had been possible to exploit this literary model. Gogol', who first tried to write romantic poems in a Pushkinian manner, took up the "kotliarevshchyna" and introduced this particular style into the Russian literary system. This move yielded great success and made him an acclaimed writer.

Shevchenko did not accept the parodistic tone of "kotliarevshchyna," but eventually embraced the vernacular as his very own mode of literary expression. The rhetoric means for his very successful Ukrainian poems, however, were borrowed from Russian romanticism, especially from Pushkin. "Vernacular expression" represents thus not just an opposition to the dominant language of the empire, but may be described in terms of cultural imports to and exports from the imperial literary system.

10. Conclusion

Ukraine's cultural situation was characterized as postcolonial in a Hegelian (Pavlyshyn) or in a temporal (Grabowicz) sense. There is certainly a great deal of truth to this.³⁰ However, this approach may trap Ukrainian culture in the cage of victimization. As a possible remedy I suggest complementing the postcolonial analytical toolbox with the concept of contact zones. Four points stand out:

²⁹ Taras Shevchenko, *Povne zibrannia tvoriv*, vol. 1 (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1989), 427.

³⁰ Marko Pavlyshyn, "Postcoloniality as Method and Mind-Set," in *Ukraine Twenty Years after Independence: Assessments, Perspectives, Challenges*, ed. Giovanna Brogi, Marta Dyczok, Oxana Pachlovska, and Giovanna Siedina (Roma: Aracne Editrice, 2015), 259–72.

1. The contrasting notions of the cultural hegemon and the subaltern colony are complemented with the idea of spaces with ambivalent symbolic practices.
2. The focus lies on cultural production rather than cultural repression. In the Ukrainian-Russian case, "self-fashioning" and "othering" are often intertwined. This constellation initiated processes that drew not only on the neighboring culture, but also on European models, both directly and indirectly.
3. One feature of the Latin American situation is the dwindling power of the cultural hegemon. Almost all South American countries gained independence by 1825. Similarly, the imperial project of Russia in the nineteenth century may be characterized as a difficult process of conquests and defeats. Recently Ilya Gerasimov, Maria Mogilner, and Sergei Glebov suggested an innovative approach to describe this situation. They came up with the concept of a "New Imperial History of Northern Eurasia" and talked about the "balancing of the imperial situation" that had to come to terms with several national projects.
4. The Latin American situation always had to deal with the immense social heterogeneity in the cultural contact zone that was determined not only by colonial, but also by domestic social repression. Such aspects need to be considered in the Ukrainian situation—the most prominent example being perhaps the life trajectory of the national poet Shevchenko who moved between peripheral and central spaces, between social estates, and between modes of literary expression.