Nationalities Papers (2019), 47: 5, 894–912
doi:10.1017/nps.2018.59

ARTICLE

Rhyming the National Spirit: A Comparative Inquiry into the Works and Activities of Taras Shevchenko and Ilia Chavchavadze

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Abstract

The article is a comparative inquiry into the roles of Ilia Chavchavadze (1837–1907) and Taras Shevchenko (1818–1861) as national poets and anti-tsarist intellectuals within the context of their respective national traditions (in Georgia and Ukraine). During the period of their activity (19th and the beginning of 20th century), both Ukraine and Georgia were under tsarist imperial rule (albeit the two poets lived in different periods of Russian imperial history). Through their major works, each called for their communities to awaken and revolt against oppression, rejected social apathy caused by tsarist subjugation, and raised awareness about the historical past of their nations. By comparing the works and activities of the two poets and examining their impact on national mobilization in tsarist Ukraine and Georgia, this article argues that (lyric) poetry rather than prose (novel) constituted the agency of common national imagining. It was lyric and not epic poetry or novel, this article shows, that laid the foundation of nationalist mobilization as it framed the revolt of the "I" against colonialism as a revolt of the "I" against an oppressive society under which the cultural grounds for common imagining had been constructed.

Keywords: Georgia; Ukraine; national identity; anti-colonial nationalism; nationalist poetry

The Rationale for the Comparison

Examining the relationship between literature and nationalism is not a novelty to nationalism studies (see Anderson 1991; Corse 1997). A number of interdisciplinary perspectives reflect on the role of poetry in the construction of national ideology, although not in the similar breadth to that of the role and influence of literature (Finnin 2011; Hutchinson 1994). Poems and prose unfold as national discourse is being constructed, yet often the extent to which they influence social mobilization or how literary experience shapes the making of political life is either ignored or not taken seriously (Gould 2014, 23; Hutchinson and Aberbach 1999). This article has a twofold purpose: first, it enriches the comparative literature on nationalism studies by portraying shifting dynamics of relationship between lyrical poetry and national mobilization in tsarist Ukraine and Georgia; second, it illustrates the role of both poets in constructing nationalist narratives. Further, it speculates about the variances between the two case studies.

A reference to national poetry in political discourse may construct a powerful symbolic meaning that could create a continuum between the past and present. Nationalist political elites often refer to "cultural nationalists" (Hutchinson 1994) for reinventing the narratives of glorious past or othering selves from the oppressive ideologies (Tilly 2008), and so forth. An observer who has followed political situation in Georgia and Ukraine in the era of the so-called Colored Revolutions (2003 in Georgia and 2004 in Ukraine) would have noticed recurring references to Ilia Chavchavadze

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https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.59 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(known simply as Ilia to Georgians) and Taras Shevchenko in the statements of leading politicians. The two poets were often mentioned in a similar vein as "founding father(s) of nations." When seeking public legitimacy, leading Ukrainian and Georgian politicians often cited their works, reflected on their key ideas, and (re)interpreted their thoughts. Soon after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, for example, speaking at a Taras Shevchenko memorial opening ceremony, President Victor Yushchenko emphasized the importance of Shevchenko's poetry for the liberation of Ukraine. "… our Kobzar [in reference to Shevchenko] chose the word to be his profession and his weapon in hard times since that was the only way of fighting for Ukraine," asserted Yushchenko, soon to be followed by the reference to the role of Shevchenko in maintaining Ukrainian culture and statehood: "… every state begins with language. When the language is lost, the people lose culture. As a result, territorial integrity is lost; the nation is lost. Therefore, Taras's choice was a wise one." Yushchenko further stressed how well aware the poet was about the future of Ukraine: "Being today close to Taras Shevchenko at Chernecha Hora[1] means knowing what the future of Ukraine will be like" (Yushchenko, *Our Ukraine Press*, 2004).

Similar references could be found in speeches of the Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili. In a "hybrid nationalist" discourse (Metreveli 2016), in which Saakashvili intertwined ethno-religious particularism with elements of civic nationalism, he compared Chavchavadze (himself by that point an Orthodox Saint) to Patriarch Ilia 2nd of the Georgian Orthodox Church who, according to Saakashvili, "… did the same in 1970s what Chavchavadze did in 19th century, when the latter managed to establish a 'new Georgian identity' based on multi-century traditions" (Saakashvili 2010, *Civil.Ge*, December 30, 2010). Often misinterpreting Chavchavadze's writings to suit political context or legitimize partisan agenda, Saakashvili referred to the poet's social thought as an example of how state interests should be understood by citizens: "[Chavchavadze] had permanently tried to prove and show to Georgians that the state interest is higher than private issues of each member of the society" (Saakashvili, *InterpressNews*, November 6, 2009).

Disregarding political rhetoric, Chavchavadze and Shevchenko emerged as important symbols of friendship between the two states after the Colored Revolutions. Upon the invitation of President Saakashvili, President Yushchenko attended the opening ceremony of the Taras Shevchenko square with a monument to the poet in 2007. Perhaps even more symbolically, the Shevchenko monument was erected at the entrance of Ilia Chavchavadze avenue in central Tbilisi.

Shevchenko's and Chavchavadze's names were used in the Soviet state discourse, and after the Soviet collapse, almost every important political figure in Ukraine and Georgia referred to their poetry in some form or the other. For example, Kinzer reported: "Leftists in Georgia embrace Chavchavadze for his hatred of injustice, centrists love him for his nonviolent humanism, and right-wing nationalists have adopted his slogan 'Homeland, Language, Religion'" (*New York Times*, May 7, 1998). The selected works of Shevchenko were taught at Soviet high schools. His poetry was portrayed as a manifestation of solidarity with working class people, while his monuments erected on the territories of the Soviet Union corroborated the image of Shevchenko as a socialist poet. Chavchavadze's work went through a slightly different trajectory. After the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, his works were banned and removed from public school books. However, in the 1930s Chavchavadze's image was restored, monuments erected, and selected works again published upon the orders of the Georgian-Soviet dictator Stalin.

Despite the immense importance of the two poets in cultural and symbolic life of their respective societies, to this day there has been surprisingly little scholarly research comparing works and activities of Chavchavadze and Shevchenko and their impact on national mobilization in tsarist Ukraine and Georgia. Why has this comparison been ignored in the literature? More importantly, what does this comparative inquiry tell the reader about the basic relation between lyric poetry and nationalism? These questions are especially puzzling given that their poems and writings largely addressed similar themes: both of them advocated for solidarity among the social classes and opposed the same enemy—the tsarist Russian state. The general pathos and form of writing cemented their popularity and established their works as national folk art. In addition, besides

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several common themes in their artistic activity, both popularized their native languages: Georgian and Ukrainian, respectively.[2]

Moreover, beyond similarity in contexts, both of them were educated in the Russian Empire. Chavchavadze became a founder of the Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians, while Shevchenko was a founder of the cultural organization Hromada and a member of the short-lived Cyril-Methodius Brotherhood. The social backgrounds of the two poets were quite different, yet their styles of writing resonated with common patterns. Shevchenko, a son of a peasant, was originally a serf himself. His writing style was a recollection of his own experience of a life in the village and interaction with common people (Drahomanov 1879, 78). Shevchenko's works at the later stage of his artistic career were shaped by the ideas of European republicanism of the Decembrist period, Cossack republicanism, and Haydamak era (Plokhy 2012, 79). Chavchavadze, a St. Petersburg–educated lawyer, was a man of nobility, holding the status of *Tavadi*, or baron, yet his writings echoed the struggles of peasants. His writing style bridged the gap between high Georgian (the language which the older generation of Georgian nobility used) and the new Georgian, more accessible for the masses (Manning 2012).

Structurally, this article first defines a few main concepts and scrutinizes the phenomenological relationship between them. It further examines the political context under which the two poets lived. Later follows a discussion of major trajectories that 19th-century nationalist movements underwent. The article continues with an analysis of the works of Shevchenko and Chavchavadze and an examination of how nationalism, poetry, and social mobilization interact in particular historical context and under certain social and political settings, and why poetry rather than prose promoted Georgian and Ukrainian nationalisms.

Poetry Versus Prose: Contrasting Mediums of Nationalism

Prior to elaborating the discussion any further, it is worth clarifying a few key concepts and taking a closer look at the relationship between them. When referring to a nation, I mean "a historical community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory, or homeland, sharing a distinct language and culture" (Kymlicka 1995, 11). I do not understand the "historical community" as a given entity (or in Anthony Smith's words "*ethnie*"), but rather I adopt a modernist approach to the study of nation hypothesizing it as a modern phenomenon (see Gellner 1983). Anthony Smith defines *ethnie* as "a human population with shared myths of ancestry, common historical memories, one or more elements of culture, a link with a territory, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites" (Smith 2003, 359). Unlike nations, *ethnies* mostly had no bordered territory nor "a public mass culture," or identical legal conditions for its members. However, they passed down shared values, memories, and symbols to their "inheritors," the nations. The *ethnies* appear to be the preexisting types of modern nations: "*ethnie* [serves] as a usual preparatory stage for the nation" (Guibernau and Hutchinson 2004, 4; insertion added).

I agree with Smith's definition of nationalism as "an ideological movement to attain and maintain autonomy, unity, and identity on behalf of a population, some of whose members believe it to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'" (Smith 2009, 61). In a sense, nationalism is a project, or "the making of combined claims, on behalf of a population, to identity, to jurisdiction and to territory ..." (Hearn 2006, 11). These claims are legitimated by popular support and are most often communicated (articulated) through mass communication. The collective claim to identity may include "... 'cultural' factors as religious beliefs or language, or notions of shared biological substance, or of inherited historical experiences, but it can also invoke more abstract qualities such as core values (e.g., egalitarianism, liberty, democracy)" (Hearn 2006, 11–12).

Vital for the conceptual framework of this article is a distinction between poetry and prose. Bakhtin (1981, 287) elegantly summarizes the qualitative divergences between the novel and poem when comparing the poet, who, he argues, even while speaking of alien things speaks in his own language, with a novelist, who speaks of his own world in an alien language. The main challenge in

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reading the novel, for Bakhtin, is lack of dialogue between the text and outside world. Yet, for him, poetry and prose differ in their representation and assessment of time.

Within the typology of poetry, one needs to distinguish between epic and lyric poetry. Epic poetry, for example, narrates and assigns exceptional value to the heroic past, producing the sense of having been there before everyone else; thus an epic poem is a carrier of primordial national culture (Manning 2008, 329). It further separates the past from the present in the imagining of fellow contemporaries. If the novel is oriented on the social and the "imagining" of comradeship through its sociocentric model for the national imagining, epic poetry grounds the narrative in an ancient past (van der Veer 2001). Lyric poetry frames the revolt of the "I" against colonialism as a revolt of the "I" against an oppressive society, and is modern in character. "The 'I' whose voice is heard in the lyric," asserts Adorno, "is an 'I' that defines and expresses itself as something opposed to the collective, to objectivity" (Adorno 1991, 41). Yet, he adds, despite being defined by the "I," lyric poetry is also the "we," as it captures the historical moment within its bounds (46). As opposed to epic, lyric poems address the "I" of the nation, thus constructing a modern horizontal imagining under which the communities of strangers bond together against the oppressive machinery of the "other," the colonizer. Unlike the newspaper, which generates the "stranger sociability" through daily experience of reading and reflection of the similar geographical space, the lyric poem is much more private and individual text voicing the "I." The revolt against the oppressive colonizer situates the poem as a means for progressive (modern) as opposed to backward (feudal) imaginary space (Manning 2012, 83).

Anderson refers to the novel as a medium for transmission of nationalism and creation of modern nations. The translations of the holy books and the development of mass printing ("print capitalism" in Anderson's terms) in the vernacular enabled modern communities to read in the same language—to make ultimate and intimate contact with imagined comradeship. If the newspaper was a medium for common imagination based on the sense of contemporaneity, the very structure of the novel made "the collective simultaneity of the private act of reading" (van der Veer 2001, 120) a vital part of common imagining. Common experience of print textuality influenced the creation of nations, or "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991, 16). The 19th century Georgian newspaper *Droeba*, for example, to which Chavchavadze actively contributed, represented "the juxtaposition of heterogeneous correspondence and other genres on a single dated issue of a newspaper," which in turn stipulated the creation of the intersubjective space-time of Georgian readers (Manning 2012, 82). If in the Western scholarly discourse (for example, Anderson's concept of "print culture" or Warner's understanding of public[3]), "the conception of a public, is at least *imagined* as a complete transposability and reciprocity of perspectives between writers and readers and those written about, 'the people' and 'the public' are imagined to be the same" (Manning 2012, 96). Quite different is the social imaginary in the 19th century tsarist territories of Georgia, for example, in which the "people" (illiterate folk) are not yet "the public" (Georgian upper class) (96). The non-existence of "stranger sociability" between the Georgian urban intelligentsia (the public) and illiterate peasants (the people), which manifested itself in the correspondence in the feuilleton section of the newspaper *Droeba*, one might argue, hindered the creation of "imagined communities" in Anderson's classical definition.

What is perhaps missed from Anderson's seminal account are "monumental texts" as expressions of the nationalist imagination in the form of ancient epic poems. Epic poems were more important for nationalism than novels. van der Veer (2001, 130) writes that "written texts have a certain 'consultability,' but they do not fixate a tradition entirely" as opposed to ancient epic poems, ritual performance, and so forth. Epic poems were foundational for both religious and nationalist claim-making and interpretation of history. The epic poems were important imaginaries for Georgian and Ukrainian nationalism, but they led to different imaginings. Lyric poetry expressed the subjectivity of being modern (Manning 2012), while the epic poem dealt with proto-modern *ethnies.* Lyric poetry was the transition between the modern collectivity of the novel and the ancient collectivity of the epic poem. In a poetic form, lyric showed the modern revolt of the "I" against colonial society.

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The editing of epic poems often recovered the national/religious past, stipulated the othering of "invaders," and codified the eternal existence of nation in the historical memory of communities through rhyme (van der Veer 2001, 120–127). In Georgia's case, the 12th-century epic poem *Vepkhistkaosani* (*The Knight in Panther's Skin*) written by Shota Rustaveli constituted a "monumental text," which made the case for antiquity of Georgian churches and religion as well as ethnic identity (Manning 2008, 331). A Ukrainian replication of "monumental text" could be Shevchenko's *Haidamaky* (1845) (Koropeckyj 2011, 455). In fact, Chavchavadze led the movement to create a "monumental" edition of *Vepkhistakoisani* to narrow the divide between the enlightened and literate Georgian "society" (*sazogadoeba*) and the largely illiterate Georgian "people" (Manning and Shatirishvili 2010). However, instead of serving the purpose of building the horizontal comradeship, the limited edition became an elitist project for the cabinets of the aristocracy with which Chavchavadze objected (Soslan in Manning and Shatirishvili 2010).

Social and Political Context in Tsarist Georgia and Ukraine

Shevchenko and Chavchavadze lived during two different periods in tsarist imperial history. Shevchenko operated under serfdom, while Chavchavadze witnessed both serfdom and the period of reform within the empire and its abolition in 1861, which perhaps influenced the predisposition of Georgian society to (political) nationalism as opposed to the Ukrainian context during the period of Shevchenko's activity (Plokhy 2006). As Manning noted, Ilia wrote "… at a time when a Georgian print culture and a class of intelligentsia were emerging from the manuscript culture and court sociability of the nobility," and "… he straddled both spheres as noble and writer of poetic manuscripts and printed prose" (Manning 2012, 32). When Shevchenko started his public activity, Ukrainian separate identity was largely denied by the tsarist government and intellectuals (Grabowicz 1995; Yekelchyk 2007). However, interest in linguistic differences between the Russians and Ukrainians was recognized by the imperial society, which explains why Shevchenko's *Kobzar* was published in St. Petersburg. Georgian identity, language, and culture were not under question from tsarist authorities. Georgians were "othered" by the authorities more than Ukrainians mainly because of significant linguistic and cultural differences. To eliminate those differences, tsarist ideologists targeted key elements of Georgian national identity: the Georgian language and the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC). The usage of Georgian language in liturgy education and publishing was prohibited, and the autocephaly (autonomy) of the church abolished.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the period when Georgia was annexed by the Russian Empire, the country was already politically and culturally divided. The western parts were under the (religious and cultural) domination of the Ottoman Empire, whereas the eastern regions were under the influence of Qajar Iran. Annulment of the GOC as an independent institution (in 1811) coincided with internal rivalries among the local political "elites" and failed anti-imperial conspiracies. These circumstances hindered the creation of a common, collective (national) identity (Jones 1987; Reisner 2009).[4] The tsarist authorities removed aristocratic ranks and privileges from Georgian elites, replacing them with Russian officials on highest positions in the local government. Those who opted for cooperation with the tsarist regime benefited from upward mobility (Ram and Shatirishvili 2004, 24). Unlike in Ukraine, where being Ukrainian was not a stumbling block for the upward mobility for the elites (Grabowicz 1995), being Georgian—speaking or religious service in the Georgian language—was interpreted among the ruling elites as disloyalty to the tsarist state (Gvosdev 2000).

If Georgia was ideologically (and culturally) divided between the influences of Russian and Ottoman empires as well as Qajar Iran, between the late 18th and the early 20th century, Ukrainian territories were influenced by Habsburg and Russian empires. Unlike Georgia, which was far more isolated from egalitarian ideas, Ukraine in the Western parts experienced the spread of modern nationalist ideas. The Eastern parts of Ukraine, however, remained loyal to the Russian monarchy,

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and not just politically; they also assimilated linguistically and culturally (Yekelchyk 2007, ch. 2). As Snyder called it, there existed arguably "two very different Ukraines" (2003, 119). Russian authorities labelled Ukraine as "Little Russia (*Malorossiia*)," "little Russian tribe of the Russian people" (Yekelchyk 2007, 52), and "Southern Rus" (Miller 2003, 25),[5] whereas *Valuev Circular* of 1863 claimed that a Ukrainian language "did not, does not and cannot exist" (Grabowicz 1995, 680). Even during 19th-century Russian imperialism, Ukrainians were not targets of the radical ethno-nationalists since they were not labelled as "non-Russians" (Slocum 1998). Ongoing legal reforms both in Habsburg and in Russian monarchies resulted in new opportunities for spreading of Shevchenko's poetry (Grabowitz 1995). Publications in Ukrainian were largely censored, yet intellectual discourse on matters of *Ukrainofilstvo* (Ukrainian Movement) continued.

The role and function of the poet in the borderlands of tsarist Russia was mainly to echo the "plaintive cry of the people … and implicitly translate it into a political program of action" (Manning 2012, 192). Eastern European intellectuals embraced the ideas originating from German Romanticism, predominantly emphasizing shared language and culture as a pillar of nationalist mobilization (Yekelchyk 2007, ch. 2). Echoing anticolonial social thought (Bhaba 1995; Dei 2000; Dei and Asgharzadeh 2001), Miroslav Hroch described the three-phase trajectory that Eastern European nationalist movements underwent before reaching a massive scale. The first phase was when intellectuals triggered interest not only in their own culture and history, but also in differentiating their sociocultural and linguistic differences from those of the "Other" neighboring groups. These intellectuals emerged as mediating agencies of nationalism for the populations that were excluded both socio-politically and from the hegemonic power structures of the ruling state (Spivak 1999). "Scholarly interest" evolved into second phase of "patriotic agitation," when a newly emerged group of intellectuals started to awaken their compatriots about the potential of forming the common nation or agitated for the forming of an independent statehood (Hroch 2000, ch. 6). In Georgia and Ukraine, the oppressive policies of the empires and lack of national unity among communities appeared as obstacles for the development of patriotic agitation into a third phase of full-blown nationalist mobilization. Therefore, despite being elitist in character, lyric poetry as opposed to epic poetry emerged as a powerful mechanism for construction of common imagining among Georgians.

The Prophets of National Liberation: The Awakening of Nations

The two intellectuals differed in terms of the volume of poetry and the extent of political activity. For example, Shevchenko's "Kobzar" collection was translated into more than 100 languages, and his poetry garnered international scholarship, as opposed to a rather limited scholarly interest in Ilia Chavchavadze's poetry [with the exception of prolific works by Manning (2004, 2012), Ram and Shatirishvili (2004), and Gould (2014)]. In his remarkable account of Shevchenko's life and poetry, Grabowicz (1982) reflected on some of the dominant themes in his works and described his art as "mythopoesis," through which, he asserted, Shevchenko mythologized the Ukraine's historical past, in particular the Cossack Hetmanate.

In his "Friendly Epistle" (1845), Shevchenko attacks the Ukrainian Cossack hetmans for being "Warsaw trash," "slaves, toadies and the filth of Moscow," and loyal to foreign powers:

Raby, podnozhky, hriaz' Moskvy,
Varshavs'ke smittia – vashi pany
Iasnovel'mozhnii het'many.

Slaves, toadies, the filth of Moscow,/
Warsaw trash—these are your most
venerable lords, your hetmans.
(cited in Finnin 2011, 41)

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For these very lines, Shevchenko was criticized by the leading Polish intellectual journal for exalting *haidamak* killings of Poles. "Cossack tradition," according to Sereda, "was discarded as inappropriate for a genuine national idea" (2014, 176). In a poem dedicated to the Ukrainian writer Hryhorii Kvitka-Osnov'ianenko (1778–1843), Shevchenko is pessimistic about the return of freedom:

Ne vernetsia kozachchyna,
Ne vstanut hetmany,
Ne pokryiut Ukrainu
Chernovi zhupany.
Obidrana, syrotoiu
Ponad Driprom plache …

Those awaited [the Cossacks] will not return,
Freedom will not return,
Cossack rule will not return,
The hetmans will not arise,
Ukraine will not be covered in the red mantles.
A ragged orphan,
Weeps beside the Dnipro
("To Osnovianenko," 1839,
Translated by Ferguson and Yurkevich)

As Sereda argued, "Ukrainophiles of his generation favored those poems of Shevchenko that offered a romantic vision of Ukraine's past, and did not fully understand the poet's views on Ukrainian history" (2014, 171).

In line with Shevchenko, Ilia is critical of the past. Georgian historians, as he asserted, created the history about kings, where Georgian people were unseen. His anti-elitism is intertwined with critique of religious asceticism (a popular form of protest among Georgian youth at the time and also a legacy of the past) (Wardrop and Wardrop 1987). Education is a "faithful bridge between darkness and light"; hence the younger generations should have been exposed to this environment for the sake of saving Georgian ethnicity from Russification rather than going into monastic asceticism or melancholy over the past (Chavchavadze in Reisner 2009, 40). In the poem "Gandegili" ("The Hermit," 1883), Chavchavadze illustrated the negative aspects of religious asceticism as a way of social and cultural self-realization. Ilia encouraged the newer generations to be involved in social activism, acquire education, and fight for the freedom of their Mamuli (Fatherland). For him, the Fatherland had religious and metaphysical connotations. He idealized it in a way similar to the way the concept of God was idealized in the earlier days of Georgian poetry and literature (Manning 2012). Fatherland appeared to be the god-like divine idea; as an abstract concept, it was based on belief and love: "If one did not believe in Fatherland, s/he could not fall in love with it, and if one could not fall in love with it, s/he would neither see it nor believe in it" wrote Chavchavadze (Wardrop and Wardrop 1987, 36).

Chavchavadze believed in the moral revival of Georgians, and in this process religion was not rejected, but it was an accompaniment of modernization serving a function of "moral purification" of the nation. Orthodox faith was to him a protector from foreign cultural penetrations of Georgian's traditional sociocultural spheres, or in Partha Chatterjee's (1993) words, defending the "innerness" of Georgian national culture. In one of his seminal poems, "Bednieri Eri" (Happy Nation, 1871), Chavchavadze attacks the Georgian "apathetic mind-set" for not having a sense of solidarity and unity. Arguably he refers to the historically failed rebellions and rampant conformism of the tsarist loyalist ruling elites:

Chvenistana bednieri
Gana aris sadme eri?!

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Mtvertsakrili,
Tavdakhrili,
Kovlad uqmi, udieti;
Uzghudoni,
Gzamrudoni.
Argamtani da tsbieri;
Mtris ar mtsnobi,
Mokvris mgmobi,
Garet mkhdali, shin dzlieri;
Ar ris mqone,
Ar aris mtsodne,
Uzrunveli da mshieri.
Chvenistana bednieri
Kidev aris sadme eri?!

Is there a happier/
Nation than ours anywhere?!
Dusted/
With heads down/
Completely void and discourteous/
With no barriers/
Crooked path/
Persevering and cunning/
Not recognizing the enemy/
Denouncing own relative/
Coward outside, Strong at home/
With no possessions/
Ignorant /
Careless and hungry/
Is there any happier/
Nation than ours anywhere?!
("Bednieri Eri," "Happy
Nation," 1871, author's translation)

"Bednieri Eri" echoes the pathos of Shevchenko's "My Friendly Epistle" (1845), in which Shevchenko explicitly attacks those he calls *nedoliudy* (translated as cruel people) who betray their own brothers and sisters for their personal gains (Drai-Khmara 1930). Shevchenko is sarcastic about intellectual elites:

Nema na sviti Ukraïny,
Nemaie druhoho Dnipra,
A vy pretesia na chuzhynu
Shukaty dobroho dobra,
Dobra sviatoho. Voli! Voli!
Braterstva bratn´oho! Naishly,
Nesly, nesly z chuzhoho polia
I v Ukraïnu prynesly
Velykykh slov velyku sylu
Ta i bil´sh nichoho …

There is no other Ukraine on this earth, /
No other Dnepr, /

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Yet you
Traipse off abroad/
To find the greatest good,/
The sacred good. And freedom!
Freedom!/
And brotherly brotherhood! You found,/
Carried, bore,
and brought from a foreign land into Ukraine/
The great power of big
words/
And nothing more
(Shevchenko cited in Finnin 2011, 40)

Shevchenko problematizes the exploitation of the Ukrainian people by the ruling elites and compares it to blasphemy. In being critical toward elites, he used the language "… not from the large towns, not from the self-acclaimed academies, not from the midst of the luminaries and the powerful … the language of the country and the village alone served his purposes" (Kulish 1861, 61). Rural Ukraine marks the subject of his activism, yet the multifaceted nature of his work craftily forges the "village" folk and the spirit of a nation or a "people" to advocate for "the idea of social solidarity of previously denationalized *pany* (lords) with *narod* (the people)" (Sereda 2014, 178).

In his programmatic *Mgzavris Tserilebi* (*Traveller's Notes* 1861), Chavchavadze problematized the conflict between the generations: those who were exposed to Russian education and returned to the homeland for the sake of its modernization, and the elites who were against the modernization of Georgia. Ilia portrays himself as a medium between the colonizer (tsarist Russia) and the colonized (Georgian people): "Chavchavadze radically revises the geopoetics characteristic of these earlier Romantics, which as often as not sought to align Georgia with Russia against the Caucasus, by creating a novel geopoetics in which the Caucasus, in the form of the Terek River, is identified with Georgia as opposed to Russia" (Manning 2012, 29–30). Ilia develops a civic idea of nationhood in which superiority is given to content over form: "… Georgianness is not a matter of such relatively outward forms (dress, language), but still more inner essence, a matter 'of the heart'" (Manning 2012, 52). In Chavchavadze's view, the idea of the modernization of Georgian society should happen through the establishment of a standardized "high culture." As Manning points out, "… debates concerning the modernization and popularization of a Georgian print language and print culture were conducted in a typically classical and aristocratic form … disseminated 'domestically' by mouth or manuscript among members of the Georgian urban gentry, and only later publicized in print" (Manning 2012, 32). Unlike other writers of his generation who often employed ethnographic prose as a means for constructing nationalist discourse, Chavchavadze advocates "a naturalized fraternal kinship based on shared language within the speech community of Georgians" and borrows the voice of peasant "I" in his *Mgzavris Tserilebi* (Manning 2004, 47).

In Shevchenko's narrative of nationhood, the usage of religion is often situational, depending on different periods of his life and circles of intellectuals with which he affiliated himself (Drahomanov 1879; Finnin 2005). The narrative of God's punishment of the unjust, the latter arguably compared to the tsarist oppressors and conformist elites, is manifested in his seminal poem "The Princess" (1847):

A boh kunaie. Bo tse bulo b dyvo,
Shchob chuty I bachyt I ne pokarat!
Abo vzhe azh nadto dovhoterpelyvyi …

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And God slumbers. For it would be strange /
Were He to hear and see but not punish! /
Or else He is overly patient …
("The Princess," 1847, translated
by Ferguson and Yurkevich)

Shevchenko touched upon religious themes often for symbolic reasons to portray the drama of political suppression and national suffering, while remaining at the same time more critical toward the church as an institution and religious elites (which he deemed as instruments of Russian imperialism) (Finnin 2011). The role of the Russian Orthodox Church was especially destructive in Ukraine, for it openly promoted the official policies of the Russian government and was a powerful assimilatory instrument (Magocsi 1996). The poem "Heretic," for example, illustrated Shevchenko's wrath against the hypocrisy of the religious elites who, according to him, in the name of Christ annihilated the manifestations of truth and justice to further strengthen the absolutist tsarist hegemony over the repressed society. The present "tomb of a church" must be demolished for a newer and freer church to prevail, wrote Shevchenko (Grabowicz 1982, 150):

Tserkva-domovyna
Rozvalytsia … A z pid nei
Vstane Ukraina
I rozviie tumu nevoli,
Svit pravdy zasvityt
I pomoliutsia na voli
Nevolnychi dity.

This tomb of a church
Will fall into ruin.... And from beneath it
Ukraine will arise
And disperse the gloom of slavery,
A world of truth will shine forth,
And the children of slaves
Will worship in freedom
("Untitled," October 21, 1845,
Marinskoe, translated by Ferguson and Yurkevich)

As Shevelov (1962, 76) suggests, this might be interpreted as Shevchenko's vision of independent Ukraine, whereas the contrasted personalities in this poem (the "potbellied leaders of Church") were an allegorical illustration of his contemporary Russian princes, who were corrupted and oppressive in their treatment of the Ukrainian church and peasantry. In similar vein, in his poem "The Neophytes" (1857), he criticizes religious and political elites: "*Vse brekhnia: I tsari I popy!*" (All is a lie: the kings and the priests alike!)" (Drahomanov 1879, 76). Emerging as mediums of nationalism, through their poetry the two poets confronted the hypocrisies of the tsarist loyalists and called for reawakening and revolting of the "I" (nation) against an oppressive tsarist regime and conformity.

Poetry as Nationalism: Subpoena of Political Action

There is no evidence of direct dialogue between the two poets, yet intertextual similarities between poems demonstrate possible influence. For example, Shevchenko's "Velykyi l'okh" ("Great Vault," 1845) may be compared to Chavchavadze's poem "Bazaleti Lake" (1883). Both poets foresee the birth of a messiah—a rebellious new man to confront the status quo of enslavement. Shevchenko

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forecasted the birth of a new Ivan Gonta, a leader of the Haidamaka rebellion, who "would let freedom loose throughout Ukraine"; Chavchavadze refers to Queen Tamar of Georgia, a symbol of a unified Georgian state, hoping that a golden cradle at the bottom of the Bazaleti Lake nourishes a new national hero:

Ikneb, akvanshi is krma tsevs,
Visits ar itkmis sakheli,
Visac dge-da-gham hnatrulobs
Chumis natvrita kartveli?

Perhaps it holds and cradles one
Whose name none dares to speak—
A nation's hope, whom Georgians all
In silent longing seek
("Bazaleti Lake," 1883,
translated by Alexander Mikaberidze)

Ilia published a translation of Shevchenko's poem "Naimychka" ("The Servant Girl") in 1881 (issue 5). This fact shows that Chavchavadze knew Shevchenko's work; however, we cannot speculate about the possible influence of Shevchenko's poetry on Ilia's work. In a conversation with a Georgian poet and a friend of Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli (1840–1915), at the home of the historian Mykola Kostomarov, Shevchenko fascinatingly reiterated a number of common traits that Ukrainian and Georgian people and cultures shared. Shevchenko said about Georgians, "How much in common this nation has with ours!" According to Tsereteli's memoirs, at the end of the meeting Shevchenko and Tsereteli "parted as friends" (Tsereteli 1998, 400–402).

Shevchenko's "Kavkaz" ("Caucasus," 1845) is an example of the poet's solidarity with Caucasian resistance movements against Russian imperialism (Drahomanov 1879, 85; Finnin 2005, 425). "Kavkaz" develops the narrative about the suppressed peoples of the Caucasus and calls for their liberation:

I vam slava, syni hory,
Kryhoiu okuti.
I vam, lytsari velyki,
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!
("Kavkaz," 1845,
translated by Ferguson, Yurkevich)

Shevchenko compared the "injustice" of Russian policy in the Caucasus to that in Ukraine and called his nation to fight for liberty, rebellion against tsarism, and solidarity to Caucasian people. In

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the same poem, he criticized the Ukrainians for passivity, he saluted those who resisted the foreign oppression and fought against the status quo in Caucasus, and warned against the "fatal" consequences of melancholy and national apathy. Yet again, this is an overall theme that Chavchavadze developed a few decades later. There are numerous parallels drawn in the poem between Shevchenko's own Ukraine and the Caucasus, be it relating to the theme of suffering of the common people or prevailing injustice of the oppressive tsarist system that stripped the people's authentic culture of its unique value (Zaitsev 1988). In a prophetic fashion, Shevchenko addresses the revolting Caucasians:

… lytsari velyki, Bohom ne zabuti!
Boritesia—poborete! Vam Bog pomahaie

… mighty knights, by God not forgotten!
Fight on—you will be victorious!
God is with you!

Koly zh odpochyty
Dasy, bozhe, utomlenym
I nam dasy zhyty!
My viruiem Tvoii syli
I dukhu zhyvomu.
Vstane Pravda! Vstane volia!
I Tobi odnomu
Pokloniatsia vsi iazyky
Voviky I viky!

When will you grant the weary leave to rest, / O Lord, /
And grant us leave to live! / We have faith in your power and living spirit. /Truth will arise!
Freedom will arise! / And to you alone /
Will all the tongues bow down / For ever and ever!
("Kavkaz," 1845, translated by Ferguson and Yurkevich)

Echoing Shevchenko's calls for solidarity and comradeship, in "Oriode sitkva tavad revaz shalvas dze eristavis kazlovidan sheshlilis targmanzeda" ("A couple of words on the translation of Kazlov's *The Mad Girl* by Prince Revaz Shalvas dze Eristavi," 1860), Chavchavadze elaborates a program for political and cultural transformation of Georgia, seeing the necessity of a horizontal rather than vertical structure of comradeship in which print language would be accessible to masses and contribute to the formation of modern national consciousness and solidarity. In a similar vein, Shevchenko called for the Ukrainian folk (or *narod* in his own words) to promote Christian love toward "the least of [their] brothers" (Matthew 25:40) notwithstanding the class differences and social status. He envisions brutal revenge of the suppressed over the suppressors and warns of the "final judgement":

Skhamenit´sia! Bud´te liudy,
Bo lykho vam bude.
Rozkuiut´sia nezabarom
Zakovani liude,
Nastane sud, zahovoriat´
I Dnipro, i hory!
I poteche sto rikamy
Krov u synie more

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Ditei vashykh. . . i ne bude
Komu pomahaty.
Odtsuraiet´sia brat brata
I dytyny maty.

Redeem yourselves! Be human,/
Or evil will befall you./
Soon enough the enslaved will free themselves,/
A court will rise in judgment, and the Dnipro and the mountains will speak forth!/
In a hundred rivers the blood of your children will flow into the blue sea ...
And there will be no one to stem the tide./
Brother will renounce brother/
And the mother her children
("My Friendly Epistle," 1845, translated by Ferguson and Yurkevich)

Ilia fully recognized that Georgia was isolated from Western intellectual thought and largely missed the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. He also understood that processes which followed the French Revolution (such as abolition of serfdom, egalitarianism, etc.) were of primary interest to Georgia. An influence of the French Revolution on his social thought is illustrated in one of his poems, "Kartvlis Deda" (Mother of Georgian, 1858). Chavchavadze indirectly refers to the principles *liberté*, *égalité*, *fraternité* and calls on Georgian mothers to raise their children with the ideas of "liberty, unity, fraternity":

Aq aris, dedav, sheni maghali
Danishnuleba da saghmrto vali!
Agzarde shvili, miec dzala suls,
Sazrdod khmarobde Christesa mtsnebas,
Shtaagonebde katsta sikvaruls,
Dzmobas, ertobas, tavisuflebas

Ah here, O mother, is thy task,
Thy sacred duty to thy land:
Endow thy sons with spirits strong,
With strength of heart and honour bright,
Inspire them with fraternal love
("Kartvlis Deda," 1858,
translated by Alexander Mikaberidze)

Chavchavadze's interpretation of territorial nationalism as a Christian duty is by definition Christian. In his effort to portray liberation as a key political agenda of modernity, he intertwines elements of civic and ethnic nationalism. The concept of territoriality (Fatherland) comes across as a new source of loyalty. An adherence to this principle of nationalism is framed as Christian duty.

Several similar themes might be observed in Shevchenko's collection of poems "Kobzar" (1840, 1844, and 1860) that are in line with ideas of European Enlightenment and French Revolution. The ideas of the insulted woman and humiliated Ukrainian mothers are discussed in other parts of "Kobzar," particularly the poems "Kateryna" ("Catherine," 1840) and "Vid'ma" ("The Witch," 1847). He calls his compatriots to "wake up" from century-long "slumber" and revolt against the moral humiliation of the motherland. An illustration of the author's strongly anti-tsarist approach was his sarcastic poem "Son" ("The Dream," 1844), where Moscow-Petersburg elites are portrayed as executioners who crucified Ukraine, attacking Peter I and Catherine II personally with extreme intensity (Drahomanov 1879, 78).

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The theme of awakening from slumber is present in one of the most fascinating displays of Chavchavadze's nationalism in a poem dedicated to the Italian nationalist Giuseppe Garibaldi. He named the poem "Mesmis, Mesmis Sanatreli" ("I Hear, Hear the Voice Desired," 1860), where he wishes the voice of Italian nationalists to be heard in his own Georgia:

Mesmis, mesmis sanatreli
Khalkht borkilis khma mtvrevisa!
Simartle khma kveknada hqukhs
Dasatrgunvelad monobisa,
Agmitatsebs kholme is khma
Da aghmigznebs imeds gulshi …
Gmerto, gmerto! Es khma tkbili
Gamagone chems mamulshi!

I hear, I hear the voice so desired /
The voice of the breaking of shackles of the people!
The voice of justice is thundering around/
To suppress the slavery/
I am excited by this voice/
And it gives me hope in heart/
Oh, god, god! Let this voice/
Be heard in my own homeland!
("Mesmis, Mesmis Sanatreli," 1860,
author's translation)

Despite efforts of tsarist authorities to censor their works, Chavchavadze's and Shevchenko's works of poetry were transmitted by word of mouth and were established as a folk art among the common people. In expressing modern subjectivist position and an individual revolt against society, their lyric poetry served as a transition between the modern collectivity of the novel and pre-modern *ethnies* of the epic poem.

Poets and Their Social Activity

Beyond their poetry and literary contributions, both intellectuals participated in social life, albeit to a different extent and in diverging forms. Ilia, together with a group of Georgian intellectuals, founded the Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians for the official purpose of the "restoration of the oppressed identity" of Georgians [as the founding principles of the organization postulated (Reisner 2009, 44)]. This Society engaged in propagating literacy in Georgian and private school teaching among different social classes. Chavchavadze wrote in one of his publications "Isev ganatlebis sakitkhze" (Again on the Question of Education, 1889) that he saw the "standardized culture" as a "basis for a united Georgian nation" (Reisner 2009, 44). Education would have unified people under the idea of a common past and deepened the interest in studying their history. In line with what Ernest Gellner would elaborate almost a century later on the role of education in the making of nations (Gellner 1983, 48), Chavchavadze did not construe nationality as something inherited or "natural," nor necessarily having connectivity with one's past; neither was it fully accidental in all cases. What mattered for Ilia was the transformation of Georgian society from an agrarian, where progress undermined the importance of the older structures, to a modern one.

Unlike Shevchenko, who more "theorized" about modern national belonging through his lyrical poetry, Chavchavadze proposed the removal of six letters from the Georgian alphabet to make the language easier for massive comprehension. By initiating the reform of old Georgian, on a symbolic level he distanced himself from the past, made the language more accessible to the masses, and sought

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to eradicate the persisting division among Georgians both on vertical (class) and horizontal (regional) levels. "The golden chain shall not overweight freedom," Ilia wrote, referring to the Georgian bourgeois conformism (Chavchavadze 1860). Chavchavadze's critique of elites is somewhat in line with Shevchenko's thoughts about elite conformism: "… cast off chains and cease being the 'scum of Moscow,'" he demanded from the Ukrainian ruling class (Hrinchenko 1892, 121). As Hrinchenko asserted, Shevchenko called on us to realize that "we are the sons of a great, independent nation, to cease bowing down before Moscow and Warsaw and to turn our attention to achieving national independence" (Hrinchenko 1892, 121). In parallel with his creativity as a poet, Shevchenko's social activism cemented his image as the "father of the Ukrainian nation" (Plokhy, 2005, 194). As mentioned in the beginning of the article, he was a member of the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius. The goals of the organization were to promote scientific interest in literature and poetry, and to publish a journal for peasants and elementary books. This Society, which consisted of scholars and teachers among others, was considered a cultural organization with a diverging political agenda of establishing social justice (abolition of serfdom), promoting general education, and supporting federal division of the empire. It consisted of Ukrainian intellectuals, mainly poets, linguists, and historians. However, despite ambitious plans, the organization was rather short-lived and operated for only year and a half (Miiakovski 1962). The annoyance of Shevchenko over the non-assertiveness of some of his fellow Brotherhood members is illustrated in his poem "My Friendly Epistle," in which Shevchenko criticized his fellows:

I Koliara chytaiete
Z usiiei syly,
I Shafaryka, I Hanku,
I v slovianofily
Tak I pretes … I vsi movy
Slavianskoho liudu,
Vsi znaiete, A svoiei
Dast-bih! …

And you read Kollar /
With all your might /
And Safarik and Hanka /
And elbow your way/
Into the ranks of the Slavophiles. … And all the language /
Of the Slavic peoples, /
All of them do you know. As for your own /
— Be it as God grants! ...

("My Friendly Epistle," 1845,
translated by Ferguson and Yurkevich)

For Shevchenko, the Brotherhood was a platform for *muzhik* (peasant) politics in a sense of his passionate advocacy for nationalist social thought and Ukrainianism (Finnin 2011), whereas for Chavchavadze the Society was a modernization project aiming to reinvent the nation as a political unity. One must argue that the actual political possibilities in the two periods of the Russian empire might have influenced this divergence. Shevchenko participated in the activities of underground society (Hromada), which was led by the students of the nobility who wore peasant dress and spoke Ukrainian in their attempt to promote Ukrainian culture and enlightenment of the masses (Hrinchenko 1892). In some ways, Hromada emerged as a social movement with an aim of "national self-education" that focused on organizing schools for the peasantry, staging theatrical performances, and also publishing activities on Ukrainian history, culture, and language (Sereda 2014, 169). Shevchenko's work appeared in an influential but short-lived Ukrainian periodical,

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Osnova (*Foundation*, 1861–1862), edited by Vasyl Bilozerskyi, Panteleimon Kulish, and Mykola Kostomarov (Yekelchuk 2007).

In addition to his efforts to modernize Georgian language, Ilia created several literary salons, initiated the first Georgian translation of the Quran, and contributed to the establishment of a Georgian theater. In 1867 he started to publish the newspaper *Iveria*, arguably one of the most influential newspapers in 19th-century Georgia. Given the international political context of the time, his newspaper portrayed key international affairs thus linking Georgian readers to the international processes happening in Europe. However, perhaps more importantly, Ilia took active part in the activities of the influential Georgian political and cultural newspaper *Droeba*, which established feuilleton as a distinct genre of correspondence between Georgian intellectuals of the time. An elitist in nature, feuilleton emerged as a form of dialogue between members of the intelligentsia. This form of correspondence allowed simultaneous representation of Georgian regions, which in turn was a mechanism for construction of what Manning succinctly called "Georgians, that is, readers of Droeba" (2012, 81).

Conclusion

Ilia Chavchavadze and Taras Shevchenko attempted to create, or reinvent, a common and single "culture" through their lyric poetry and social activism. By using vernacular, the two poets shaped the Georgian and Ukrainian languages, making them more accessible both to intellectuals and peasants. Unlike intellectuals of their era who portrayed Ukrainian and Georgian national identities either as a regional variation of Russianness or as premodern *ethnie*, the two poets challenged existing narratives and depicted Ukrainian and Georgian cultural autonomy and nationhood. Their poetry emerged as foundational text for nationalist imaginary and served a powerful mechanism for reinforcing the otherness of the common enemy. Despite tsarist assimilationist policy and censorship, both poets managed to articulate and (re)frame the narrative of distinctiveness of Georgian and Ukrainian nations. The sheer fact that their ideas were passed along through their works and became established in the folk culture of contemporary Ukraine and Georgia demonstrates the nationalism-generating power of lyrical poetry. As an alternative to prose or epic poetry, the lyric poem emerged as a transition between the modern collectivity of the novel and premodern *ethnies* of the epic poem. Lyric poetry expressed a modern community of the nation from the perspective of the revolting individual "I" against society rather than the "we" of the newspaper. It thus developed as a competing genre characteristic of modernity and as a foundational text to nationalism.

Despite a number of common patterns, it is difficult to measure the influence of the two poets on reinforcement of nationalism. In the conditions where national and ethnic identities of the suppressor (Russian empire) and the suppressed (its peripheries in Ukraine and Georgia) were recognized as different, individual (local) agencies were likely to succeed in social mobilization. In the circumstances where ethnic and national identities of the suppressor and the suppressed were fused, the structural factors hindered the activities of individual agencies in shaping national mobilization. Two interrelated factors—strong fusion between the ethnic (Ukrainian) and supranational identities (Imperial Russian) on the one hand, and lack of common idea of nation (division between Habsburg and tsarist parts of Ukraine) on the other—could explain why Shevchenko's cultural nationalism did not develop (or at least took longer to develop) into a full-blown political movement. In contrast, Chavchavadze's social thought initiated the reinvention of modern Georgian nationalism, especially in the hands of later generation. As reflected in later programmatic statements, his thoughts evolved into demands for cultural and later political autonomy. National slogans eventually developed into the calls for independence and social mobilization, and lyric poetry was vital agency of transmission. Ironically, however, Georgian socialists, fierce rivals of Chavchavadze during his public intellectual life, pursued nationalist demands. As an alternative explanation, we might assert that it took longer for Shevchenko's cultural nationalism to turn

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fully political, as opposed to a more political predisposition of Georgian nationalism under Chavchavadze, who operated after the abolition of serfdom.

Considering Ukraine's greater exposure to the ideas of 19th-century European nationalism as opposed to Georgia's relative isolation from the European political-philosophical terrain, one can speculate about Shevchenko's influence on Chavchavadze's nationalism. Despite a number of similarities, the two men diverged on matters of religion. For Ilia religion was an agency of nation-building. Unlike Shevchenko, who rebuked corrupted religious elites serving an imperial cause, Chavchavadze avoided open confrontation, but through his work fused the concepts of nation and religion in order to further translate this fusion into nationalist claims for independence.

Both poets were revolutionary public intellectuals of their era. They rejected the prevalent social apathy of their respective societies under the tsarist regime. Their non-acceptance of the present and their belief in political self-determination of their nations were among the dominant themes in their works. Their lyric poetry codified nationalism through rhyme, and by doing this it emerged as a transition between the modern community of the novel and the ancient *ethnies* of the epic poem.

Ilia Chavchavadze was assassinated under mysterious circumstances in 1907. Taras Shevchenko was sentenced to ten years of hard labor in Asia for his anti-tsarist activism and writings. He was banned from writing or drawing, and after being pardoned, he was forbidden to live in Ukraine. Although the two poets never met, and one can only speculate about one's influence on the other, the fact that Chavchavadze's avenue in central Tbilisi starts with Shevchenko's monument serves as a symbolic manifestation of their eternal comradeship.

Acknowledgments. I want to thank two anonymous reviewers of this article whose expertise and knowledge helped to significantly improve this work. Special thanks to Paul Manning, Ulrich Schmid, Olena Nikolayenko, Inna Melnykovska, Maria Sidorkina, Dmitry Gorenburg, Elina Kallas, Viktoriya Sereda, and Harvard's Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies for an opportunity to present my work at the Workshop on Post-Communist Politics and Economics. In addition, I am grateful to the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) for generously supporting my fellowship at Harvard. Lastly, I want to thank my wife Ana for her inspiration and shared love of Georgian and Ukrainian poetry, and my friend David Tugwell for his comments on earlier draft. Errors are my own.

Disclosure. Author has nothing to disclose.

Notes

1 Chernecha Hora is the mountain where the remains of Taras Shevchenko were buried in 1861.

2 Although in comparison to Chavchavadze, who wrote overwhelmingly in Georgian, almost half of Shevchenko's writings, namely his prose, were in Russian.

3 "The public is a kind of social totality. Its most common sense is that of the people in general. It might be the people organized as the nation, the commonwealth, the city, the state, or some other community. It might be very general, as in Christendom or humanity. But in each case the public, as a people, is thought to include everyone within the field in question" (Warner 2002, 49).

4 The uprising was dominantly elitist (led by the elites); however, the participation of peasants was also observed (Jones 1987).

5 Suffice to say that pejorative connotations seem to be a later-date rereading.

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Cite this article: Metreveli, T. 2019. Rhyming the National Spirit: A Comparative Inquiry into the Works and Activities of Taras Shevchenko and Ilia Chavchavadze. *Nationalities Papers* 47: 894–912, doi:10.1017/nps.2018.59

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.59 Published online by Cambridge University Press