

AT HOME AND AWAY: COMMUNITY BELONGING IN POLISH, RUSSIAN, AND  
UKRAINIAN ADVENTURE FICTION, 1918-1960

BY

DARIA SEMENOVA

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Valeria Sobol, Chair  
Professor Harriet Murav  
Associate Professor George Gasyna  
Professor Marina Balina, Illinois Wesleyan University

## ABSTRACT

Adventure novels, traditionally considered merely as an entertaining genre and relegated to young and popular readers, in fact, play a key ideological role in fostering a sense of community in their readers. This dissertation argues that Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian authors adapted the adventure genre to teach readers about the community and values perceived as essential for it. With the images of exemplary protagonists, they educated the reader what it means to be a community member, as they wanted young readers to become active builders of their social and political worlds. This study aims to answer the question how the same genre structure was used in different political situations: a nation fighting for independence, a young nation-state, a socialist republic, and an émigré community.

Exotic adventure novels as a genre developed its classical form in the late nineteenth century. Scholars have argued that in Western literatures, adventure genre was complicit in the imperialist ideologies of the epoch often called ‘the age of empires’, inculcating their young readers with Eurocentric values and preparing them to bear the “white man’s burden” vis-à-vis colonial subjects. The formulaic structure of adventure fiction requires a clear distinction between protagonists and antagonists and the protagonists’ victory in the end. These formal requirements make the genre an effective means of educating the reader about “our” and “their” place in the world and the rightness of “our” way of life and values.

The ‘age of empires,’ however, was just one page in the history of the genre. Adventure fiction started to appear in Slavic literatures in the early twentieth century. At the time, Poles and Ukrainians had no independent states, let alone colonial politics to bolster, so the genre could hardly inherit without changes the function of an “energizing myth of the empire.” Russian literature also experienced an abrupt change after the 1917 revolution, as the Bolshevik ideology

disavowed the imperialist attitudes to the Soviet periphery and to the colonial policies elsewhere. Thus, shifting the focus from the Western narratives, my study enriches the understanding of the ideological potential of popular literature.

This study explores several major and minor adventure novels written in Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian in 1920s-1950s. Making use of structural and post-structural approaches, it examines how the dichotomies, such as “Us” and “Them,” “Home” and “Away,” “Own” and “Alien” are constructed but also problematized. The methodologies of literary imagology and axiology lend devices to analyze the construction of images of national groups and systems of values. Reader-response criticism helps examine how the narratives attempt to entangle the implied reader, which enhances the impact of these “innocuous” narratives.

The case studies from three national literatures are organized in six chapters, grouped conceptually into two parts: Venturing out and Coming home. Part 1, “Venturing out”, analyzes how, adopting existing genre models from Western literatures, Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian authors subverted or reasserted the original hierarchies depending on what puts the in-group in a more favorable light. The Slavic retellings of recognizable plots – about castaways, lost kingdoms, frontier of the civilization, and voyages around the world – disavow European colonialist practices but eagerly use the social capital of the Slavs’ whiteness. Part 2, “Coming Home,” analyzes new structural types created in these national literatures. Adventure fiction thematizes Ukrainian and Polish struggle for independence, rewriting into inspiring narratives the traumatic episodes of collective memory, an unusual ingredient in this entertaining genre. In Soviet literature in Ukrainian and Russian, the new plots in adventure fiction appear incorporating the ideologemes of class struggle and defense against the enemies from beyond.

This study offers a fresh interpretation of the ideological functions of the adventure

narratives: rather than associating the adventure genre specifically with imperialist ideologies, as it has been done before, I claim that this narrative structure is equally effective in promoting competing ideologies, including anti-imperialist, nationalist, and Marxist thought. Stepping aside from the Western European literary canon and focusing on Slavic literatures with their varied historical and political contexts allows demonstrating significantly new aspects of how adventure fiction is used to indoctrinate readers and promote the feeling of belonging.

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## INTRODUCTION

“Don’t lose your heart and don’t forget that you are Polish.”<sup>1</sup> These words were supposed to guide a protagonist of the adventure novel *Across Siberia* (1928) by Tadeusz Dybczyński through the hardships that awaited her. A protagonist of M. Bradovych’s *Through Foreign Lands* (1947) was suggested to have “made, in a brave and dignified manner, as a Ukrainian and a human, all necessary conclusions.”<sup>2</sup> And the school-age protagonists of Oles’ Donchenko’s *A School by the Sea* (1937) were urged to contemplate on their behavior with the following rhetoric question: “What kind of Soviet citizens will you grow into?”<sup>3</sup> All these examples from adventure fiction created across languages, cultures, and ideologies offer a glimpse into how texts in this genre, although formulaic by nature, are entangled with the specific ideas around community belonging and self-identification with national groups that the implied reader was supposed to be part of.

These examples also illustrate the variety of interconnected but distinct ways in which self-identification with a national community can be intertwined with the symbolic journey of an adventure hero. In the first case, the feeling of belonging to the Polish community was supposed to provide the protagonist with consolation and guidance through the challenges in her path by adding meaning to her experience, implied by her being a part of something larger and greater than an single person, but also by reminding her of examples of how prominent community members overcame hardships. In the second example, the author seems to imply that belonging

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<sup>1</sup> Tadeusz Dybczyński, *Wpoprzek Sybiru: powieść podróżnicza* (Warszawa, Kraków: Wydawnictwo J. Morkowicza, Nakład t-wa wydawniczego w Warszawie, 1928), 1:20.

<sup>2</sup> M. Bradovych, *Chuzhynoiu* (Buenos Aires: Promin’, 1947), 27.

<sup>3</sup> Oles’ Donchenko, “Shkola nad morem,” in *Tvory v shesty tomakh*, by Oles’ Donchenko, vol. 2 (Kyiv: Molod’, 1956), 491.

to the Ukrainian national community endows a person with a particular set of values distinct from universal “human” values, which become the measure of evaluating one’s own and other’s actions; a criterion for what is “brave” and what is “dignified.” Finally, in the Soviet novel, the idea of belonging to the Soviet nation offers a trajectory along which the transformation of the adventure protagonist is supposed to happen.

Adventure novels have traditionally been considered merely an entertaining genre and relegated to young and popular readers. By way of contrast, my study is based on the assumption that they play a key ideological role in fostering a sense of community in their readers. The formulaic structure of adventure fiction, which requires a clear distinction between protagonists and antagonists and the protagonists’ victory in the end, makes this genre an effective means of educating the reader about “our” and “their” place in the world and the rightness of “our” way of life and values.

My dissertation argues that Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian authors adapted the adventure genre to teach readers about their respective community and values perceived as essential for it. With the images of exemplary protagonists, they educated the reader about what it means to be a community member, as they wanted young readers to become active builders of their social and political worlds. To achieve this, authors writing in these three languages eagerly adopted and adapted existing formulas from the tradition of adventure fiction, mostly originating from Western European and American literatures, as well as clichés and stock character types. As I will explain in greater detail below, scholars have argued that in Western literatures, the genre of adventure fiction was complicit in the imperialist ideologies of the epoch often called “the age of empires,” inculcating their young readers with Eurocentric values and preparing them to bear the “white man’s burden” vis-à-vis colonial subjects. The conventional evaluation and treatment of

certain elements of adventure narratives in line with these ideologies became a part of the genre formula. This dissertation explores the interplay between the inherited elements and the original messages about the community, to which implied readers were supposed to belong, and its place vis-à-vis other groups in the world amidst the changing social and political circumstances. A focus on texts from Slavic literatures, originating from the societies whose participation in, and ideological discourses around, the processes of colonization were very different from those of the Western European empires, allows analyzing how the genre formulas of adventure fiction function outside of the context in which they received the most scholarly attention.

My study offers a fresh interpretation of the ideological functions of adventure narratives: rather than associating the adventure genre specifically with imperialist ideologies, as it has been done before, I claim that this narrative structure is equally effective in promoting competing ideologies, including anti-imperialist, nationalist, and Marxist thought. Stepping aside from the Western European literary canon and focusing on Slavic literatures, with their varied historical and political contexts, allows me to demonstrate significantly new aspects of how adventure fiction is used to indoctrinate readers and promote the feeling of belonging.

## ADVENTURE FICTION

Martin Green offers a definition of *adventure* as

a series of events, partly but not wholly accidental, in settings remote from the domestic and probably from the civilized (at least in the psychological sense of remote), which constitute a challenge to the central character [during which] he/she performs a series of exploits which make him/her a hero, eminent in virtues such as courage, fortitude, cunning, strength, leadership, and persistence.<sup>4</sup>

The “remoteness” from home can be associated with the “alien” natural conditions that

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Burgess Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 23.

the protagonist has to struggle with but also with the alterity of the culture in which the adventure is set.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, in what Green calls “modernist adventure” – a stage in the development of the genre whose beginning he dates to Daniel Defoe’s novels, as opposed to prior stages such as chivalric romances – the hero of the adventure “defeats the challenges [...] by means of the tools and techniques of the modern world system.”<sup>6</sup> The modernist adventure implies advances in science and technology, such as “guns and compasses” (and, as my analysis below will show, increasingly impressive means of transportation) but also rational thought practices. Being an adventurer as implied by these classical adventure novels became intertwined with the notion of being a representative of modernity, and such narratives were, then, utilized to assert the status of one’s community as a “modern” one, as I will analyze below, especially in Chapters 2 and 3.

Green’s definition of adventure implies that the story and the adventurer’s journey is organized along a pre-defined trajectory, both physically between “domestic” and “remote” spaces and symbolically, through a number of challenges out of which the protagonist will emerge as a hero. This suggests the formulaic nature of the adventure fiction genre. John Cawelti in his *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* offers a more nuanced understanding of the literary *formula* as applicable to popular fiction, including adventure. His definition combines the usage of the term “formula” referring to “larger plot types,” “general plot patterns,” or “archetypes” with the usage denoting “a conventional way of treating some specific thing or person.”<sup>7</sup> The former are thought to have been “popular in many different cultures at many different times,”

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<sup>5</sup> Green, 102.

<sup>6</sup> Green, 23. On the interrelation with the previous historic stages of the genre development, see Green, 24; Martin Burgess Green, *Seven Types of Adventure Tale: An Etiology of a Major Genre* (Philadelphia: Penn State Press, 1991), 56.

<sup>7</sup> John G Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 5–6.

while the latter are quite specific to a particular culture and period. At the intersection of the two arises the understanding of “formula” as Cawelti uses in his scholarship, and which will be used in this study: the general plot structure of adventure combined with specific elements characteristic for a certain “sub-genre” tradition, such a western, a Robinsonade, or a lost-world adventure, all of which will be analyzed below. Each such “sub-genre” of adventure fiction includes aspects such as a typical setting, features of the protagonist(s) and dynamics between several protagonists, challenges on the protagonist’s journey, and value-related structural oppositions that organize the fictional world and outcomes of the encounters between protagonists and antagonists in a pre-defined way. This understanding of separate formulas within the genre of adventure fiction is akin to what Green refers to as “story types” in his *Seven Types of Adventure Tale*. He makes the emphasis on the connections between individual formulas and ideological imperatives important for a particular society.

While able to exist for a long time, such “formulas” nevertheless evolve and give way to other varieties, adapting “to the different needs and interests of changing generations,”<sup>8</sup> since they are “collective fantasies shared by large groups of people.”<sup>9</sup> And although for the sake of an engaging story, both readers and authors often agree on “more extreme expressions of political and moral values” than they espouse in daily life, it is still necessary for “author and audience to share certain basic feelings about the world,” lest the readers will not be able to produce an appropriate emotional response and will not enjoy the story.<sup>10</sup> This feature of the formulas is what makes it possible to put to adventure fiction questions that I am addressing in this study.

Traditionally, literary studies have approached popular fiction, including adventure, as

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<sup>8</sup> Cawelti, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Cawelti, 7.

<sup>10</sup> Cawelti, 32.

“imitations” of, or “substitutions” for, “great novels” or “fine arts,” while in the last few decades scholars have started to study popular genres through the understanding that it has “aims and values of their own,” different from those inherent in “serious fiction.”<sup>11</sup> Green invokes several important differences between what he refers to as “literature” (meaning “serious” literature) and “adventure,” which lie in the domain of readers’ expectations. First, literature is expected to convey and aesthetically shape experience, while the purpose of adventure is to immerse the reader in the experience. Second, unlike literature, the language of adventure is expected to be the “language of action [...] remote from critical thinking or verbal play.”<sup>12</sup> Third, literature explores and condemns the rules and regulations of society, while adventure seeks weaknesses in society’s guarantees. Fourth, literature describes the real or possible, and adventure explores “forbidden violence and above all the experience of inflicting it.”<sup>13</sup> The latter two oppositions can be summed up by the observation that while “serious” literary works “tend toward some kind of encounter with our sense of the limitations of reality, [...] formulas embody moral fantasies of a world more exciting, more fulfilling, and more benevolent than the one we inhabit.”<sup>14</sup> As Salman Rushdie put it in his essay *On Adventure*, “adventurers [...] perform marvels on our behalf; [e]scaping from the prison of everyday reality, they enable us to experience [...] something of the exhilaration of the successful jailbreaker.”<sup>15</sup> Cawelti summarizes the differences between “serious fiction” and “formula genres” in such a way that “formulas are more highly conventional and more clearly oriented toward some form of escapism, the creation of an imaginary world in which fictional characters who command the reader’s interests and

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<sup>11</sup> Green, *Seven Types of Adventure Tale: An Etiology of a Major Genre*, 26.

<sup>12</sup> Green, 35.

<sup>13</sup> Green, 35.

<sup>14</sup> Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 38.

<sup>15</sup> Salman Rushdie, “On Adventure,” in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991*, 1999, 224.

concerns transcend the boundaries and frustrations that the reader ordinarily experiences.”<sup>16</sup> The two aspects are, in fact, interrelated. Considering that a genre, and even more so a “formulaic genre” like adventure, is “not just an aesthetic form but also [...] part of a group’s social contract,”<sup>17</sup> these genre conventions are binding but also liberating. Margaret Bruzelius argues that the fascination of adventure is not only that this genre is formally “light” reading but thanks to its conventionality, the reader perceives the adventure plot as a priori artificial, which “allows us certain kinds of freedom” in what we can imagine.<sup>18</sup> “Adventure provides pleasure because of its certainties,” concludes Bruzelius.<sup>19</sup> As a result, higher conventionality of the formula genres, including adventure, is not the drawback of popular fiction that makes it secondary to “serious” literature but a characteristic that creates a different type of readers’ experience that makes it a fascinating genre to read.

The summary of the distinctions offered by scholars of the formula genres outlined above may suggest that the boundary between two categories is a clearly defined one when it is, in fact, quite blurry. Many texts can be defined in terms of both “serious literature” and “adventure,” and there are texts that have made it into canons of national literatures and are thoroughly studied for their artistic qualities despite following a genre formula. One of the “justifications” for following the formula of adventure and not compromising one’s status as a “serious” author is writing for a young audience. I will focus on the ambiguous status of adventure fiction between “canonized” and “non-canonized” literary subsystems, as far as the texts addressed to children are concerned, in the next section of this introduction. On the other hand, many adventure novels, even texts that

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<sup>16</sup> Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 38.

<sup>17</sup> Katherine Arens, “When Comparative Literature Becomes Cultural Studies: Teaching Cultures through Genre,” *The Comparatist* 29 (May 2005): 128.

<sup>18</sup> Margaret Bruzelius, *Romancing the Novel: Adventure from Scott to Sebald* (Cranbury: Bucknell University Press, 2007), 212.

<sup>19</sup> Bruzelius, 213.

were not originally intended for a younger audience, have long been relegated to the sphere of adolescent reading. By the twentieth century, texts like *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe or Jules Verne's novels were considered to be constructive reading in adolescence, which was never intended by their authors. Their relegation to adolescent reading may however endow the texts in this genre with greater social, if not literary, significance. Green explains this importance as follows:

This [reclassification of adventure novels from the past as appropriate for adolescent reading] is a sure mark of relegation to the periphery of literature, though that very shift may be a move to something like the center of culture; for the books that shape ourselves as a nation or as a class are surely the books we read as children. What we read as adults, at least what we read seriously, cannot have that effect, just because serious critical attention disinfects the reading process.<sup>20</sup>

Most of the scholarship that has been conducted through this prism of adventure fiction's "group identity shaping" potential has focused on Western European literatures and on the texts written between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, during the so-called "age of empires." This was the period when "realistic adventure stories" developed their classical form, that is, those whose events are assumed to take place in spaces found on real-world maps.<sup>21</sup> These adventure stories are believed to be a genre that developed to discursively support imperialist politics and the expansion of European empires; as Green puts it, to be "the energizing myth of empire."<sup>22</sup> The ideological functions that recent scholarship identifies include the justification of European empires' overseas colonial politics and a Eurocentric discourse directed at non-Europeans who inhabit the "exotic" adventure spaces. At the same time, adventure stories might feature representatives of different

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<sup>20</sup> Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*, 110.

<sup>21</sup> "Realistic adventure stories" is what Richard Phillips calls them. See Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men & Empire: A Geography of Adventure* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), 15. Green refers to a comparable set of texts as "modernist adventure," which should not be confused with originating from the literary epoch of modernism. Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*, 23.

<sup>22</sup> Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*, xi.

European nations and make claims about the superiority of one nation over another, supporting the discursive right of the “superior” nation to rule over colonies.<sup>23</sup>

Another aspect of “shaping” social identities by adventure fiction to which scholars have drawn attention are that its formulaic conventions include reproduction of quite rigid gender roles. As Bruzelius puts it, “[m]en win in adventure.”<sup>24</sup> Adventure has been long imagined as a masculine realm, where the active role of the adventurer was given to a male hero, while female characters were given auxiliary roles at best.<sup>25</sup>

The “age of empires,” however, was just one page in the history of the genre. Adventure fiction started to appear in Slavic literatures in the early twentieth century, by which time the readers were already familiar with the genre and its conventions through translations and adaptations from the Western literatures. At the time, Poles and Ukrainians had no independent states, let alone colonial politics to bolster, so the new original works within the adventure genre could hardly inherit west European tropes without changes to functioning as an “energizing myth of empire.” Russian literature also experienced an abrupt change after the 1917 revolution, as socialist ideology disavowed imperialist attitudes to the Soviet periphery and criticized colonial policies elsewhere. This usage of the genre in a different cultural and political context begs the central question of my study: If, for instance, British adventure novels “inspired merchants,

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<sup>23</sup> For example, Jules Verne criticized British governance over the colonies while ignoring that his native “freedom-loving” France possessed an equally big colonial empire. In H. Rider Haggard’s novels, “British superiority over other peoples is proclaimed, namely the Portuguese.” Maria Theresia Pinto Coelho, “The Image of the Portuguese in the British Novel of Empire: King Solomon’s Mines and Prester John,” in *Colonizer and Colonized*, ed. Theo D’haen and Patricia Krues (Amsterdam – Atlanta, GA: Rodopi B.V., 2000), 367.

<sup>24</sup> Bruzelius, *Romancing the Novel*, 212.

<sup>25</sup> Adventure stories were classically fashioned as boys’ reading. However, there is statistical research on the dynamics of readership that suggests that, nevertheless, they were usually read just as eagerly by girls, unlike adolescent reading fashioned for girls, which had not been typically read by boys. See Phillips, *Mapping Men & Empire: A Geography of Adventure*, 11, 46–48.

investors, travelers, settlers, and others to go out and physically become ‘empire builders,’”<sup>26</sup> then what was the goal toward which Ukrainian, Polish, and Soviet Russian authors aimed to “inspire” their intended readers with adventure fiction created in these national literatures? My study addresses the question how the same genre structure was used in different political and social circumstances: a nation fighting for independence, a young nation-state, a socialist republic, and an émigré community. Shifting the focus from the Western narratives to Slavic literatures, my study enriches the understanding of the ideological potential of popular literature.

## CHILDREN’S LITERATURE

Some of the texts analyzed in my dissertation are explicitly addressed to children and young adults as their intended readers. In this subsection, I will discuss what the prism of children’s literature adds to my analysis. There exists a bidirectional connection between the categories of adventure fiction and literature for children and adolescents. On the one hand, one of the features of adventure stories became that they were typically “marketed as boys’ stories,” which did not prevent them being attractive for audiences of both genders and “all ages and classes.”<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, as I will show in more detail in Chapter 2, adventure fiction that is not specifically addressed to children is still usually fascinating reading for juvenile audiences.

Categories useful for understanding this intersection are provided by the approach of literary polysystems, which was applied to the case of children’s literature by Zohar Shavit. She suggests that the literary polysystem includes subsystems of adult and children’s literature, both of which are subdivided into canonized and non-canonized subsystems. Adult non-canonized literature (that is, popular fiction) and children's literature are similar in their status in culture,

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<sup>26</sup> Phillips, 18.

<sup>27</sup> Phillips, 11.

which is peripheral, as well as in some characteristics, such as “tendency to secondary models [and] to self-perpetuation.”<sup>28</sup>

The convergence of audiences mentioned above is possible because texts adhering to the conventions of formula genres, regardless of whether they are explicitly addressed to young readers, share features with children’s literature. Among five characteristic features of children’s literature identified by Judith Hillman, three resonate most with the features of formula genres, including adventure, discussed in the previous section of this introduction. First, both children’s literature and popular fiction for adults tend to have simple action-focused plots.<sup>29</sup> Second, inherent to both is a kind of optimism that is vouchsafed by an inherent happy ending. Finally, both in children’s literature and in formula stories there is a tendency to combine reality and fantasy: even in the case of those adventure novels that have a realistic setting, this is a fantasy about a “more exciting” and a “more benevolent” world discussed above.<sup>30</sup>

There remain two features of children’s literature in Hillman’s list that are, at first glance, primarily applicable only to those adventure novels that are explicitly addressed to children: that these books are focused around characters that are children or childlike and that they talk about typical childhood experiences and are written from a child’s perspective.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, including a child as the central character and focalizing the story through a child’s perception is usually what plays the most important role in creating a connection with the intended young reader and what limits the adult readers’ interest in such literature. The two notable exceptions are when adults

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<sup>28</sup> Zohar Shavit, *Poetics of Children’s Literature* (University of Georgia Press, 1986), 33.

<sup>29</sup> Nodelman also observes the convergence in this aspect: “The two literatures [children’s and popular] do tend to share characteristics, including a focus on narrative action based on a lack of details about characters and settings.” Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children’s Literature*, First Edition (Baltimore, Md: JHUP, 2008), 216.

<sup>30</sup> These features as characterizing children’s literature are discussed in Judith Hillman, *Discovering Children’s Literature*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J: Merrill, 2003), 2–3., quoted from Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult*, 189.

<sup>31</sup> Hillman, *Discovering Children’s Literature*, 2.

are reading books to children and when the focalization through a child's experience is a literary device, something of a disguise for conveying more complex ideas to be deciphered by an adult reader.<sup>32</sup> Otherwise, there exists a strong expectation that a text focalized through a child character is likely to be intended for a child reader, and that children as readers prefer to read about children as characters. In adventure fiction, even if it does not explicitly include a child as the central character, its characters can often be characterized as *childlike*, because of the usage of stock character types whose motivations are devoid of the psychological complexity to which "serious" literature for adults strives. As Nodelman puts it, "[t]exts for adults don't usually presume to tell less of the truth that their writers know, as texts for children characteristically do,"<sup>33</sup> but in this distinction, the notion of "texts for adults" refers to "serious" literature or what Shavit calls "canonized literature for adults." Formula stories, even when not addressed to young readers, are such a domain where the contract between the author and the reader includes the decision to temporarily abandon the knowledge about the complexity of the world for the sake of the pleasure of certainty and a happy ending.

The texts chosen for analysis in this dissertation were selected based on their belonging to the genre of adventure fiction, not on their being addressed to young readers. Inclusion both of texts that are explicitly addressed to children and young adults and those that do not have this specific addressee in my analysis in the chapters to follow, as well as in the scholarship on adventure fiction discussed above, shows that these two types of adventure fiction are very similar in aspects central to this study (the potential to convey messages about the place and values of the community). There exists an expectation that texts that are directly addressed to

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<sup>32</sup> On certain texts within children's literature as paradigmatic ambivalent texts, which are simultaneously addressed to adults and children but pretend that they are for children, envisioning two different concurrent readings by these two groups of readers, see Shavit, *Poetics of Children's Literature*, 66–67.

<sup>33</sup> Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult*, 142.

children and adolescents are more overt in their didactic and indoctrinating functions, because of the cultural conception about young readers as needing more explicit explanations to absorb the intended take-away messages. While this is true with regard to some instances of literature addressed to children, adventure fiction in particular is a great example of the tension between two functions of the children's literature, which Perry Nodelman refers to as "pleasing" and "teaching."<sup>34</sup> The didactic function, which an adult author might want to perform with a text addressed to children, is only possible if communication with the text has taken place, which then has as a prerequisite that the text is enjoyable enough for the reader not to abandon before the author brings the reader to the intended conclusions. There is, then, a need for "disguising the didactic in the mask of allowing the pleasurable."<sup>35</sup> The adventure genre is a great illustration of this tension, as it is chosen by readers for their exciting fast-paced events, and by authors (writing for children and adolescents), as a "colorful wrap" for didactic messages. As Deborah Stevenson puts it, children's literature "operat[es] on the theory that children, left to their own devices, will tend to consume junk, but that tactful adult assistance will lead them to partake of equally enjoyable and much more healthful fodder."<sup>36</sup> Lest the young readers consume "junk" (that is, in the terms offered by Shavit, texts from "non-canonized children's literature"), the authors are hijacking the appealing form from the non-canonized subsystem to combine it with the messages that are deemed appropriate. This makes possible the inclusion of the resulting texts into the "canonized" subsystem, since it is now considered desirable that children read such adventure novels, as they will learn "correct" messages from them. This tension in perception of

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<sup>34</sup> Nodelman, 179–80.

<sup>35</sup> Nodelman, 36.

<sup>36</sup> Deborah Stevenson, "Classics and Canons," in *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, ed. M. O. Grenby and Andrea Immel, Illustrated ed. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 109.

adventure fiction on the scale between “junk” that only caters to empty imagination and a proper means of moral education will reappear throughout my discussion of the adventure novels, their critical reception, and, occasionally, institutional appropriation/approval.

When children, adolescents, or otherwise immature characters are in the focus of an adventure story, one can often trace connections to the genre of Bildungsroman. The challenges on the adventurer’s journey then become milestones that help the protagonists advance along the trajectory of “spiritual and intellectual maturation,” as is characteristic for Bildungsroman.<sup>37</sup> Dangerous encounters propel the protagonist to review the priorities in his or her life, define what is important and what transient, and reinstate the values that are worth taking risks for. Moreover, it is the import of Bildungsroman in the adventure genre that allows discussing the aspect of growing-up to become a worthwhile member of a specific national community and leading the reader by the example, which is central to my analysis of the adventure novels.<sup>38</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

My study explores several major and minor adventure novels written in Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian between 1918 and 1960. Making use of structural and post-structural approaches, I examine how dichotomies such as “Us” and “Them,” “Home” and “Away,” and “Own” and “Alien” are constructed but also problematized. The methodologies of literary imagology and axiology lend devices to analyze the construction of images of national groups and systems of values. Reader-response criticism helps examine how the narratives attempt to entangle the implied reader, which enhances the impact of these “innocuous” narratives.

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<sup>37</sup> Tobias Boes, *Formative Fictions: Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Bildungsroman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 1.

<sup>38</sup> See Boes, 5.

Nationalism and empire studies, as well as post-colonial criticism, inform the analysis with an awareness of power dynamics between the dominant and the subversive discourses at play.

One of the key assumptions behind my analysis is that print culture participates in the formation of what Benedict Anderson has called *imagined communities*. Anderson interprets nations as “imagined political communities—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, Anderson claims that modern discursive forms, such as newspapers and novels on contemporary topics were conducive to the creation of this imagined shared belonging with people whom one had never met. In my analysis of the communities in adventure narratives, I will trace the symbolic and geographical boundaries on which members of the group are separated from non-members. Throughout the analysis of narrative representations of these differences in adventure fiction, I often refer to *mental maps* offered by specific texts or sets of texts. This term originates from the interdisciplinary field of imaginative geography (or imagined geography), which dwells on the ideas of Edward Said in *Orientalism*, drawing attention to the discursive means of constructing the image of the Orient by the West, which informed the politics of imperialism and colonialism.<sup>40</sup> Since then, studies have appeared that addressed the questions how other *imagined* entities appeared on Western European mental maps, such as the Balkans or Eastern Europe.<sup>41</sup> The discipline of *imagology* studies literary representations of various communities of “others” and lends some useful tools for my analysis.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition (London New York: Verso, 2016), 6.

<sup>40</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York: Vintage, 1979). See also: Derek Gregory, “Imaginative Geographies,” *Progress in Human Geography* 19, no. 4 (December 1, 1995): 447–85, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030913259501900402>.

<sup>41</sup> Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Updated ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

<sup>42</sup> Manfred Beller and Joseph Theodoor Leerssen, *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters: A Critical Survey*, *Studia Imagologica* 13 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007).

Following the theoretical premises outlined above, I aim to show how the adventure fiction genre was used in the three Slavic literatures both to offer the readers a representation of one's "own" "imagined community" and to situate this community on the "mental map" of other communities. In doing this, I am going beyond the binary distinction into the "in-group" and "out-groups." Instead, I show that the formulaic structure of adventure (with its inevitable opposition between the protagonists and the antagonists) is used to offer the reader a more nuanced picture: not a binary but a ternary structure based on the degree of alterity. The German sociologist Georg Simmel in his essay *The Stranger* (1908) has offered a distinction between two understandings of the category of the "stranger" (*der Fremde*). One is a positive meaning: "the stranger as a member of the group itself," and the other that "no longer has any positive meaning," with whom the very idea of existence of any commonality is precluded, up to denying that group general human characteristics.<sup>43</sup> Bernhard Waldenfels also discusses the differences between two categories that are opposed to the sphere of "own" or "self," noting that languages like English or French do not conceptualize this difference, using the single concept of "Other" or "l'autre," which is deplorable and leads to confusion. In the translations of Waldenfels's works into English the two categories are rendered as "Alien" (*der Fremde*) and "Other" (*der Andere*).<sup>44</sup> The basic differentiation may be introduced as follows. When distinguishing *one* from the *other*, we can imagine an overarching order, where "a is not b" and "b is not a." With *alien*, such an operation is impossible, since nobody can stand on both sides of the "threshold" or

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<sup>43</sup> Georg Simmel, "Exkurs über den Fremden," in *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1908), 685–91. English translation quoted from Georg Simmel, "The Stranger," in *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, ed. Donald N. Levine, The Heritage of Sociology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 148.

<sup>44</sup> Bernhard Waldenfels, *Phenomenology of the Alien: Basic Concepts*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 72; Bernhard Waldenfels, *The Question of the Other*, Tang Chun-I Lecture Series (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 6.

occupy a position of a third-person spectator. “There is no “third man” necessary to differentiate the male from the female, since male beings distinguish themselves from female beings, and similarly female beings from male beings. Nor is there a cultural arbitrator to divide European and Far Eastern cultures from outside, since Europeans must have distinguished themselves from Asians before such a division can be made,” as Waldenfels suggests for the sake of an example.<sup>45</sup>

When it comes to applying these concepts from phenomenology to literary representations and “mental maps” of the world, it is important to abstain from unnecessarily essentializing certain characteristics along which “othering,” or, rather, “alienation” is happening. Following Waldenfels’s example of European and Far Eastern cultures as seeing one another as “alien,” one can suggest that, in the globalizing world, a descendant of mixed origin who has experience with both cultures but for whom neither of the two is an all-encompassing prism for understanding the world, might be such a “cultural arbitrator,” who will then, understand the two cultures as simply mutually “other.” Alternatively, a belief that something else – such as gender or class belonging – defines a person’s experience of the world more than their belonging to a national culture might also lead to presentation of various cultural origins as a basis for “otherness” rather than “alienness.” As a result, I am borrowing Waldenfels’s conceptual suggestion, but I do not follow his suggestion that specific categories are mutually “other” and mutually “alien.” Instead, in my analysis I aim to explore how each of the authors, or their cultural milieu, conceptualized these differences and the relative importance of overlapping categories.

Taking into account the “imagined” nature of “imagined communities” and the “mental maps” on which other communities are situated and marked as “others” or “aliens,” one of the

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<sup>45</sup> Waldenfels, *The Question of the Other*, 7.

central questions that I am addressing in my study is how the lines delimiting these groups are drawn and how impermeable and definitive they are considered. Depicting an out-group with the main focus on the common humanity shared by the representatives of that group with one's own "imagined community," highlighting the similarity of their experiences to those of one's own in certain aspects despite evident differences in others, places such a group in the position of the "other" on the mental map. To the contrary, focusing on the differences that overshadow any commonality of human experiences, on ideological confrontations that are imagined as unsurmountable divides, ascribing to that out-group everything that characterizes the in-group but with an opposite sign – all this places such an out-group in the position of an "alien" on the mental map offered by a literary representation.

The formulaic structure of adventure fiction provides material for studying these imaginary geographies in the communities for which these texts were created. The expectation of confrontation between the protagonists and antagonists, which engenders the challenges for the hero to overcome, allows mapping onto the structure of the fictional narrative ideas about where the boundaries of one's "own" "imagined community" lies and who are the (friendly) "others" or (hostile) "aliens" or "adversaries," who are least like "us." Slavic languages, like German, have separate words for these concepts: *svii – chuzhyi – inshyi*; *swój – obcy – inny*, *svoi – chuzhoi – drugoi* (own – alien – other). Hence, the texts include this differentiation even based on the way in which the language organizes the representation of the reality it talks about, and more than once my analysis will stumble upon the unexpected use of these and related words that outline the world. Categories like race and class, historic grievances and ideological affiliation, all impact the relative positions of various national and cultural communities on the "mental map."

Throughout my study, I am analyzing how the authors used the formulaic structure of the

adventure fiction to convey certain messages to the reader, including the messages about the boundaries of one's "own" "imagined community," its values, and its place on the "mental map." At the same time, I only occasionally refer to the actual reception of the adventure fiction in question. What interests me more than actual historic readers on the receiving end of the communication is the way the books in question construct the possibility of this communication by creating an *implied reader*. This term was developed by literary scholars within the school of reader-response criticism. According to Wolfgang Iser, an "implied reader is [...] a textual structure anticipating the presence of a recipient without necessarily defining him."<sup>46</sup> For instance, this category of implied reader may postulate itself in the text "as much in the text's silences as in its overt appeals," through "all that the author says or does not say in making the work accessible, particularly in making its factual base intelligible."<sup>47</sup> In my study, I think of the implied reader constructed in the text not only as the (ideal, virtual) addressee of the messages about one's "own" "imagined community" but also as the structure *through* which these messages are postulated. That is, the expectations about what needs to be explained to the implied reader and what they already know, the importance of which values should be reiterated to them and which ones are already obvious – all this not only makes communication with the reader possible, but provides the content of what the "imagined community" is.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

The following analysis of adventure fiction in Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian literatures written between 1918 and 1960 is not supposed to be a history of the genre in these three

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<sup>46</sup> Wolfgang Iser, *Der Akt des Lesens: Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung*, 4. unv. Nachdr. edition, Uni-Taschenbücher (München: UTB, Stuttgart, 1994), 61.

<sup>47</sup> Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 422–23.

languages. The texts selected for analysis are not chosen because they were most prominent or impactful; rather, along with the texts that were widely read and had multiple print runs, I am analyzing more obscure and forgotten ones. These are case studies that allow illustrating the variety of contexts and ways in which the potential of the adventure fiction to shape the readers' understanding of the world was put to use.

The dissertation includes six chapters, which are organized on a combination of thematic and chronological factors. Each chapter focuses on two or more adventure narratives that originate from the same national culture and period and addresses related issues of importance for that cultural milieu, intertwining questions of national identity with the aspects of ethnicity, race, religion, class, and gender.

The chapters are grouped into two parts: "Venturing out" and "Coming home." These titles reflect the key topics addressed in the chapter in more than one way.

First, venturing out into the space of adventure and then coming home in a new capacity, as a hero whose virtues have been checked by his or her behavior in challenging circumstances, are key elements of the adventure formula. Venturing out and coming home are central for discussing every adventure narrative analyzed below. Yet, the focus shifts significantly to problematizing and redefining the idea of home in the second part of the dissertation.

Secondly, and more importantly, the two parts organize the adventure stories based on how closely one of the pre-existing formulas within the adventure genre is reproduced. The case studies in part 1, "Venturing out," include Slavic retellings of recognizable plots – about castaways, lost kingdoms, frontiers of the civilization, and voyages around the world – which preserve many of the elements of the existing genre models from Western literatures. In these adventure stories, Ukrainians, Poles, and Russians "venture out" into a setting established by an

adventure formula. In these retellings, authors subvert or reassert the original hierarchies depending on what puts the in-group in a more favorable light. It is a common denominator that they express some level of criticism toward European colonialist practices, since their “own” communities postulated in these narratives are defined by not participating and not being responsible for the atrocities of colonial exploitation. Hence, disavowing other white people’s practices, these authors enhance the self-image of their “own” community as possessing a higher level of morality, occasionally also benefitting from the positive implication of being “white” in the established colonial hierarchies.

Chapter 1 is the only chapter in which the two analyzed adventure novels do not originate from the same decade but from two rather different cultural and historical moments for the Ukrainian nation. *A Son of Ukraine* (1919/1946) by Valentyn Zlotopolets’ and Ihor Fediv and *A Venture into the Unknown* (1955) by Iuri Tys have a historic setting associated with the “glorious past” of Ukrainian Cossackdom and inscribe Ukrainian heroes into the stories associated with the European conquest of the Americas. The traditions of the Robinsonade and the Lost World adventure include the discourse associating participation in the colonial conquest with the status of “proper,” fully-fledged European nations. Dwelling on the symbolic capital of these sub-genre formulas, these narratives counterfactually inscribe Ukrainians into these historical situations to raise the self-image of the Ukrainian nation and to put it on par with those European nations that had colonial empires. The two novels illustrate a dialogue between two generations of Ukrainian authors on questions including the preservation of national identity and openness toward “others,” in the context of fighting for national independence and in emigration.

Chapter 2 analyzes the novels *Salt River Canyon* by Tadeusz Kosteki and *Carnelian Signet Ring* by Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski (both 1938) as a snapshot of the Polish culture of

the late 1930s, with its catastrophic premonitions, discussions about modernity, and self-fashioning as a strong European nation-state that finally has an opportunity to develop and modernize itself after many years of foreign domination, while preserving the values associated with national tradition. The genre formulas of western and “wanderer adventure” à la Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* are used to include Polish protagonists into the recognizable stories set on the frontiers of civilization. The Polish nation’s lack of historical experience as an empire with overseas colonies (due to its lack of statehood between 1795 and 1918) is reinterpreted to enhance the self-image of the Polish nation as freedom-loving and adhering to non-violent ethos. The values of non-violence are also something that the implied reader is prompted to follow in light of an impending international conflict.

Chapter 3 focuses on two Soviet adventure narratives that were published in Russian: *Around the World in Fifty Days* (1928) by Iakov Kalnitskii and Vladimir Iurezanskii and *Under the Tropics’ Sun* (1926) by Viktor Goncharov. Both make use of the genre formula of extraordinary journeys developed in the adventure novels of Jules Verne. Depictions of encounters in European and colonial settings are repurposed in these adventure stories to present the reader with proof of the superiority of Marxist-Leninist doctrine, a promise that everywhere in the world is divided into capitalists and exploited toiling masses, the latter waiting for and welcoming help from the Soviet Union in anticipation of world revolution. In reassessing the social capital of their whiteness in encountering non-white colonized peoples, these Soviet authors go furthest in comparison to the Polish and Ukrainian examples from the Chapters 1 and 2. While the idea that “we are just as good as those other white people but even better than them” was used to enhance the Ukrainian and Polish national image, the self-image of the class-based Soviet community is enhanced based on the reconsideration of the hierarchy and removal of the

“as good as” part, claiming, instead, that “we are even more red than white.”

Part 2, “Coming Home,” analyzes adventure narratives that depart further from the pre-existing genre models inherited from West European and American literatures. In Chapters 4 to 6, I discuss the new formulas within the adventure genre that appear in Slavic literatures because certain cultural themes become so important that they reoccur in many narratives. These adventure novels do not exist in a vacuum, of course, and still connect to the pre-existing formulas, yet the level of departure from the genre models is much higher here than in the texts analyzed in part 1. For instance, I show in Chapter 5 how the Ukrainian author Ivan Bahrianyi reappropriates the formulas of western and wanderer adventure, but his usage of the models goes well beyond recreating the typical setting of adventure stories belonging to this story type and simply including in it a character of different origin, as was mostly done in the texts analyzed in part 1.

Chapters 4 and 5 address the question of how adventure fiction thematizes the Ukrainian and Polish struggles for independence, rewriting into inspiring narratives the traumatic episodes of collective memory, an unusual ingredient in this entertaining genre. In Chapter 4, I analyze the novels *Across Siberia* (1928) by Tadeusz Dybczyński and *Through Snows and Ravages of War* (1922) by Wacław Niezabitowski, both of which focus on the protagonists’ long way home to Poland that is finally independent from Russian imperial rule. These novels teach young readers in the 1920s about recent historical events and reframe the trauma of collective helplessness and loss into narratives mobilizing young Poles to action for the sake of preserving national identity and performing Poland’s historical mission. They construct the opposition of the in-group and various out-groups to enhance the self-image of Poles as representatives of European Christian civilization vis-à-vis a lesser civilized and morally depraved adversary. Both novels also reflect

the anxieties of the educated elites about the need to propagate the national culture and its values to all social strata of the population in independent Poland.

Chapter 5 considers three adventure narratives published by Ukrainian authors in post-World War II emigration: *Through Foreign Lands* (1947) by M. Bradovych, *The Tiger Hunters* (1944) by Ivan Bahrianyi, and *Toward the Sun* (1955) by Halya Lahodynska. These stories upend the structural opposition between the dangerous “away” and the safe “home” typical of adventure fiction. Instead, all three texts focus on the need to escape from the “home” space (Ukraine) that is dangerous because it is governed by evil regimes (Soviet Union in Bradovych’s and Bahrianyi’s texts, Poland in Lahodynska’s novella). The structural element of reaching a safe space by the end of the adventure narrative is now associated with a perspective to create a temporary national home for Ukrainians in emigration. Published in the diaspora and for the diasporic reader, these stories are to some extent the foundational myth for the Ukrainian émigré community as they justify the need for a temporary retreat into foreign lands to preserve the Ukrainian nation, its culture and values, which are imagined as something opposed to the vices of modernity.

In Chapter 6, I analyze adventure novels, novellas, and short stories by three Soviet Ukrainian authors, Oles’ Donchenko, Mykola Trublaini, and Ivan Bahmut. I show how the ideology of the Stalinist period is combined with the adventure genre to engender new story types. The first of these new formulas is about invariably unidentified intruders from abroad, aided by renegades within Soviet society, whom the Soviet youth should learn to identify. The second formula is an adaptation of the Marxist master narrative about class struggle that replays itself in stories set in various ethnic groups in the Soviet Union. These adventure narratives, written in Ukrainian, aim to downplay any national peculiarity of their Ukrainian protagonists

and implied readers and promote the feeling of belonging to the Soviet Union-wide imagined community.

## PART 1. VENTURING OUT

### CHAPTER 1. SEEKING RECOGNITION IN THE PAST: UKRAINIAN ÉMIGRÉ

#### ADVENTURE NOVELS WITH HISTORICAL SETTINGS

##### 1.1. A *ROBINSON* FOR AN AWAKENING NATION: *A SON OF UKRAINE* (1919, 1946)

###### 1.1.1. A wandering narrative

The story of Robinson is among the stories which are retold the most often in modern Western tradition. “To say ‘Robinson Crusoe’ is to name one particular (highly particular) book, but it is also to name a type of book, a subgenre,”<sup>48</sup> as Martin Green puts it, introducing this subtype of adventure. Green summarizes the common features of multiple versions of this plot as follows:

“It is the story of a man cast away on an island (by a number of possible mechanisms; a man with a number of possible histories) who at first is in danger of dying but gradually learns to survive, and later how to accumulate goods and crops and comforts, until he is a monarch of all he surveys. [...] In the second half of the story, he meets other people, some of his own color and some of darker skins, and they present different problems.”<sup>49</sup>

Since its publication in 1719, Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* has become popular not only in England but also in other European countries. It was translated into other languages and also retold “to naturalize the story abroad.”<sup>50</sup> This section will deal with a retelling of the generic Robinson story, which is also a retelling of an earlier such adaptation, a German novel *Robinson der Jüngere* (*Robinson the Younger*, 1779) by Joachim Campe. Early in the twentieth century, a Kyiv publishing house, *Vernyhora*, commissioned its translation into Ukrainian. In the course of

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<sup>48</sup> Green, *Seven Types of Adventure Tale: An Etiology of a Major Genre*, 47.

<sup>49</sup> Green, 48.

<sup>50</sup> Green, 49–50.

its preparation for publication conducted by Valentyn Zlotopolets' and Ihor Fediv, as I will explain in greater detail below, the novel was adapted for Ukrainian readers and published under the title *Syn Ukrainy (A Son of Ukraine, 1919)*.

The relations between the German and Ukrainian texts are complicated ones, which does not fit easily into the common understanding of relations either between an original text and its translation or between two original texts, one of which was merely an inspiration for the other. In the first case, one might consider the later text as much too free of a translation and disregard it as ad-libbing; in the second, one might decide that the target text is far too unoriginal and disregard it as plagiarism. However, this uncertain nature of the Ukrainian text as partly translation, partly adaptation, and partly original creation makes it even more illustrative of the processes I aim to elucidate in this study. Namely, even to a greater extent than with texts that conform to the common understanding of originality, *A Son of Ukraine* foregrounds the usage of existing genre models for didactic purposes, as adapted to function in the new cultural context and the new epoch, specifically the context of the Ukrainian revolution of 1917–1919 and the imagined readership it created.

What was the *function* of Campe's source text in its context? This iteration of Robinsonade was proposed to a very young audience and meant to help cultivate certain cultural values in children. The book first appeared in German in 1779 and took the form of a narrative inside a narrative. The story of Robinson was told within the frame of a conversation between a father and his children, chosen to serve the author's objectives better. These objectives, according to Campe's preface, include: (1) entertainment for young readers; (2) education about "initial ideas of things occurring [sic!] in domestic life, in nature, and in the extensive circle of ordinary human activity" and about (3) natural history; and, finally and most importantly, (4)

moral inculcation.<sup>51</sup> Zohar Shavit brings Campe's *Robinson der Jüngere* as an example of how a text originally written for adults (meaning Defoe's *Robinson*) can be "translated" or adapted into children's literature, at the same time being subject to ideological or evaluative adaptation. According to Shavit, Campe needed to re-write Defoe's text as a means of "adapting it to Rousseau's pedagogical system, which served as the pedagogical system of his school in Dessau."<sup>52</sup> Shavit summarizes the ideological background that necessitated the changes through the following comparison:

"In [Defoe's] original text, *Robinson Crusoe* arrives at the island with all the symbols of Western culture (weapons, food, the Bible) and manages to cultivate nature. In Campe's translation, however, he reaches the island naked and possessionless [...] Robinson has to learn to live within nature without building a quasi-European culture. Rather, he builds an anti-European culture and suggests it as an alternative to the European."<sup>53</sup>

Shavit goes on to describe the enormous popularity of the novel, which was further translated into many other languages. Analyzing its nineteenth-century translations into Hebrew, she shows that translators, again, introduced further ideological adaptations that suited those political and philosophical views, according to which they, in turn, saw it appropriate to educate their young: "paradoxically, the new version resulting from this revision included elements of both Defoe and Campe."<sup>54</sup> Similarly to the Hebrew translations analyzed by Shavit, the Ukrainian translation introduced further changes of the ideological and axiological plane that took place when the translation/adaptation of Campe's novel was presented to its Ukrainian reader.

The editions of *Robinson the Younger* lose the narrative frame of a conversation between a father and his children sometime in the late nineteenth century. This, too, reflects a change in

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<sup>51</sup> Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Robinson the Younger* (Hamburg: Printed for C.E. Bohn, 1781), v.

<sup>52</sup> Shavit, *Poetics of Children's Literature*, 127.

<sup>53</sup> Shavit, 127.

<sup>54</sup> Shavit, 128.

the image of the implied reader. It is important to note that this difference between Campe's late-eighteenth-century version and its Ukrainian translation is not the choice of the Ukrainian adaptors but the German publishers. For my analysis, I will quote a 1908 edition of Campe's novel, assuming that a version similar to this one was the source text for the Ukrainian translation in 1918.

### 1.1.2. Context and audience for a "Ukrainian Robinson"

Apart from Joachim Campe, two more people, without whom *A Son of Ukraine* would not have been created, are Ihor Fediv and Valentyn Otamanovs'kyi, who is in connection with this novel known under his pseudonym Valentyn Zlotopolets'. Competing narratives exist around the roles played by these two men in the novel's coming into being. In his afterword to the 1946 edition, Fediv downplays Zlotopolets's role; on the other hand, biographers of Zlotopolets' claim that Fediv's role was negligible and technical. However, it is clearly marked in the table of contents of both the 1919 and 1946 editions which chapters of the book were Fediv's translations from Campe and which chapters were added by either Zlotopolets' or Fediv and in the latter case who of the two men authored the additions. Hence, it can be concluded that both their contributions were essential to the final result. Both men evidently had different views on how to use the pre-existing genre model of the adventure novel for conveying messages that related to readers' national identity. Since these differences are related directly to my research question, on the next several pages, before proceeding to an analysis of the textual material, I consider the ways in which their background and political and historical circumstances influenced their goals in *A Son of Ukraine*.

Valentyn Otamanovs'kyi (1893-1964), or Valentyn Zlotopolets', was a member of the clandestine political party "Bratstvo samostiinykiv" ("Brotherhood of Independentists") and, as a

representative of this party, was briefly a member of the Central Rada, the parliament created in Kyiv in March 1917 after the February revolution in the Russian empire.<sup>55</sup> According to the Roman Bzhes'kyi's history of the Ukrainian revolutionary struggle (pseudonymously published in the emigration under the name R. Mlynovets'kyi), Otamanovs'kyi's term as a deputy to the Central Rada was short because the party decided there were more important issues he should be occupied with.<sup>56</sup> This more important activity included organizing party membership and working in the publishing house "Vernyhora," which was founded by the "Brotherhood" in 1916 but became especially active with the new opportunities opened up by the revolution the following year.<sup>57</sup> Its programmatic goal was orienting Ukrainian literature towards European literature,<sup>58</sup> and part of this activity was offering popular Western titles in Ukrainian. A translation of Campe's *Robinson* was commissioned along with other translations of entertaining adventure novels, as can be seen from the list of other translated editions advertised in the book.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ihor Robak and Zoriana Savchuk, *Valentyn Otamanovs'kyi — revoliutsioner, vchenyi, orhanizator nauky* (Kharkiv: Kolegium, 2013), 16, 19–20.

<sup>56</sup> R. Mlynovets'kyi, *Narysy z istorii ukrains'kykh vyzvol'nykh zmahan' 1917–1918 rr.*, Druhe vydannia, perehlianute i znachno dopovnene, vol. 1 (Toronto: Drukomy Vyd. "Homin Ukrainy," 1970), 174. Bzhes'kyi was himself a member of the Brotherhood of Independentists, so his evaluations of the party's activity are more of a witness's testimony than a historian's reconstruction. See Nadiia Bzhes'ka, *Roman Bzhes'kyi: bibliohrafiia drukovanykh prats'* (Toronto, 1988).

<sup>57</sup> Stephen Velychenko comments on the publishing situation in Ukraine in the period as follows: "The explosion of texts and pictorial images in the public sphere after 1917 amounted to a democratization of, and revolution in, mass communication. That explosion accompanied the social and national revolutions that broke out that year. The centralized simultaneous mass distribution of single messages in different places within a definite territory to create a sense of national belonging among people who had never seen one another was, of course, central to state and nation building." Stephen Velychenko, *Propaganda in Revolutionary Ukraine* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 7. Velychenko focuses on leaflets, postcards and pamphlets but the initiative to publish popular fiction such as the book in question is part of the same phenomenon and include the same ideas as some of these graphic materials about the community, its space and its values, which "the mobilized elites thought they should disseminate to populations in order to win their loyalty and influence them to understand events according to those ideas." Velychenko, 7. Moreover, these are not simply parts of the same trend; they were also performed by the same actors. The publishing house "Vernyhora" was also publishing propaganda leaflets and posters. Velychenko, 50.

<sup>58</sup> Andrii Bezsmertnyi-Anzimirov, "Valentyn Otamanovs'kyi," *Ukraïna Incognita*, February 27, 2015, <http://incognita.day.kyiv.ua/valentin-otamanovskij.html>.

<sup>59</sup> Including James Fenimore Cooper's *Deerslayer* in a translation from English and Franz Treller's *Der Enkel der*

Ihor Fediv (1895–1962) originated from Kolomyia in Western Ukraine and was a volunteer in the Ukrainian regiment “Sichovi striltsi,” which fought on the Austrian side during the First World War. In July 1917, was taken captive by the Russian troops but fled from the convict transport to Siberia and ended up in Kyiv.<sup>60</sup> Fluent in German, he was the person supposed to translate Campe’s novel. As Fediv recalls in the afterword to the second (1946) edition of *A Son of Ukraine*, at first, he was fascinated with the adventurous material but later on, it started to seem “pale, dull and dry” when compared to the uproarious events unfurling in real life.<sup>61</sup> “Robinson, the favorite hero of millions of youngsters, amidst the reality of the Ukrainian outburst and squall, seemed ever more alien, ever less interesting,”<sup>62</sup> Fediv recalled. But little by little, “a new, *Ukrainian* Robinson was conceived in the imagination. A Robinson that would fascinate the youngsters of the awakened Ukrainian nation” [emphasis in the original].<sup>63</sup> Although this 1946 afterword does not mention it directly, Fediv was joined in this process of creating a *Ukrainian* Robinson on the basis of Campe’s version by Zlotopolets’.

Both Fediv and Zlotopolets’ were in their early- to mid-twenties, both active participants in the struggle for Ukrainian independence on the political and/or actual battlefields.<sup>64</sup> Not surprisingly, Campe’s moralist book for small children seemed outdated in its style and relevance as compared to their own experiences in those eventful years. Their personal experiences are not of central importance, however; they also imagined their audience as

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*Könige* (*The Grandson of the Kings*) in a translation from German. See Valentyn Zlotopolets’, ed., *Syn Ukrainy* (Kyiv-Kam’yanets’-Viden’: Vydannia T-va “Vernyhora,” 1919), opp. 223.

<sup>60</sup> “Zhyttiepys d-ra Ihora Fediva, redaktora perevydannia knyhy istorii USS-iv 1955 r.,” Ukraïns’ki Sichovi Stril’tsi, accessed October 21, 2020, <http://halychyna.ca/USSTOC/CVFediwUTF-8.htm>.

<sup>61</sup> Ihor Fediv, “Pisliaslovo,” in *Syn Ukrainy*, ed. Ihor Fediv and Valentyn Zlotopolets’ (Augsburg-Niurnberg: “Ukrainska Knyha” – Vydavnytstvo “Chas,” 1946), 177.

<sup>62</sup> Fediv, 177.

<sup>63</sup> Fediv, 177.

<sup>64</sup> Fediv, “Pisliaslovo”; Valentyn Zlotopolets’, “Zhyttiepys-Spomyn,” in *Syn Ukrainy* (Kyiv-Kam’yanets’-Viden’: Vydannia T-va “Vernyhora,” 1919).

significantly different from what one could conceive of just several years earlier. And that expectation of a totally new identity was not only their imagination about what was happening at that time: in 1917, an unprecedented number of Russian imperial subjects changed their national identity from “Little Russians” to “Ukrainians,” as Serhii Plokhy puts it.<sup>65</sup> Hence, Fediv and Zlotopolets’ used the themes and imagery that were seen as relevant for their imagined readership – those related to Ukrainian struggle for independence – to make Campe’s plot more up-to-date, more attractive to Ukrainian youths. At the same time, they used a fascinating adventure plot to further their political goals, which included promoting values of national independence.

How this supposed demand for Ukrainian books correlates with the actual preference of the readership is mostly beyond the purview of my study, especially given that the book was not published in time to meet any readership’s demand. There is, however, historical evidence that there was a surge in demand for “Ukrainian books” at the time, not only intellectual elites’ expectations that such books will be needed now.<sup>66</sup>

To “domesticate” Robinson, they set the story in the seventeenth century, making the main character, Mykola Nalyvaiko, a participant in the military campaigns under Bohdan

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<sup>65</sup> Serhii Plokhy, *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mykhailo Hrushevsky and the Writing of Ukrainian History*, 1st edition (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 80.

<sup>66</sup> Velychenko quotes archival evidence suggesting that an agitator on behalf of Central Rada reported from the Kharkiv province in November 1917 that “[t]he demand for Ukrainian books is phenomenal.” TsDAVO [Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchykh orhaniv vlady] f. 1115, op. 1 sprava 44, no. 59 v., cited in Velychenko, *Propaganda in Revolutionary Ukraine*, 48. A report from Odessa in May 1918 states that “[book] sellers in Odessa, exploiting the huge demand and small supply of Ukrainian books, had doubled prices.” TsDAVO f. 2537 op sprava 53 no.4, cited in Velychenko, 51.

Velychenko qualifies these pieces of evidence against other observations suggesting that the outreach was very uneven, local officials often refused to assist the volunteer agitators, some villagers met them with “suspicion and hostility [...] as well as indifference to politics” (Velychenko, 47.) and in many cases “[w]hose representatives arrived first, how many of them there were, and how competent they were [...] had a decisive impact on opinions” Velychenko, 48.

Khmel'nyts'kyi, which were interpreted as a struggle for national independence.<sup>67</sup> Before experiencing solitude on a desolate island in the Carribean, the protagonist participates in the Cossack campaigns, including campaigns against the Turks and the Crimean Tatars. During one of these campaigns he is taken captive: the translators reintroduce Defoe's motif of Robinson's being a slave in a North-African country before arriving on an uninhabited island in the Western hemisphere. After the return from the island, the protagonist participates in the newly established Ukrainian state's wars of independence.

Renaming the protagonist Mykola Nalyvaiko was not simply changing the name "Robinson" to something sounding more Ukrainian. Severyn Nalyvaiko was a mythologized Cossack leader from the late sixteenth century, famous as a defender of, and martyr for, Orthodoxy, whose relative the protagonist is claimed to be. Mykola is the name of Zlotopolets's comrade, Mykola Lyzohub. The 1919 edition of *A Son of Ukraine* is dedicated to Lyzohub, and in the preface Zlotopolets' mentions that the fallen friend stands in his mind's eye as he thinks of the novel's protagonist. Lyzohub was Zlatopolets's fellow member of the "Brotherhood of

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<sup>67</sup> Interpreting the events of the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a struggle for national independence contiguous with the ideas of the Ukrainian national movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the independence drive of 1917-1920 might be ahistorical, antedating of the modern concept of nation. In his research of historical mythology in Eastern Europe, predominantly occupying with Ukrainian historical plots, Plokhy claims that it is only in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century that Khmel'nyts'kyi's movement was endowed this mythological meaning: "The 1720s saw the transformation of Bohdan Khmelnytsky from a popular historical personage into a cult figure who was regarded as the founder and, more importantly, the protector of the whole nation." (Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus*, 1st edition (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 349.) He connects the development of the Cossack myth with the anonymous early-nineteenth-century *History of the Rus'*, which governed the imaginations of Ukrainian Romantics and, later, of the national movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1917-1919, Cossack mythology was used across the political spectrum, including national democratic forces, national monarchists, and even by the Bolsheviks. See Serhii Plokhy, *The Cossack Myth: History and Nationhood in the Age of Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 365. In the interwar period, too, Cossackdom was one of the primary historic topics to turn to in order to look for strong protagonists (among whom Khmel'nyts'kyi was most often depicted) in the literary contributions to the ideological discussion on Ukrainian national development in Western Ukraine and in émigré circles. See Myroslav Shkandrij, "The Cult of Strength: Khmelnytsky in the Literature of Ukrainian Nationalists During the 1930s and 1940s," in *Stories of Khmelnytsky: Competing Literary Legacies of the 1648 Ukrainian Cossack Uprising*, ed. Amelia M. Glaser (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 154–67.

independentists” and his less lucky comrade-in-arms during the Battle of Kruty in January 1918, the “chosen defeat”<sup>68</sup> of the Ukrainian national narrative; that is, in a way, also a martyr for Ukrainian independence.

The moment for which the book was being prepared was over soon. However grand were the identity transformations experienced by a portion of the Ukrainian readership, it should be kept in mind that the expectations of totality of these transformations in terms of the entire population, expressed in the dedications and Fediv’s afterword, are exaggerated. The initial support for Central Rada in 1917 was significant within wide masses of population. Yet, in several months, a disconnect became more profound between whom Plokhy calls “[w]riters, scholars, and students, who found themselves at the helm of the new parliament [and] were busy living the romantic dream of national revolution,” and the masses of population who wanted “peace and land.”<sup>69</sup> The Ukrainian People’s Republic (UNR) proclaimed independent by the Central Rada, with whose ideology the authors aligned themselves, was suffering military defeats from various sides, including the Bolsheviks and the conservative forces (German-backed Hetmanate). Even though UNR was reestablished in late 1918 and for almost a year more controlled varying amounts of territory, the economic circumstances and constant military actions seriously affected the possibility to continue cultural activities. *A Son of Ukraine* was created during the period of those “romantic dreams of national revolution” of 1917 but by the time the book was published in 1919, Ukraine was torn by the inter-group and inter-ethnic

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<sup>68</sup> I am using this term in the way stipulated by memory studies. Such a defeat “represent[s] a moment when history, according to the normative values of the national ideology, took a wrong turn, yielding disastrous results that would endure for centuries afterward and that the nation exists to reverse.” Steven Mock, *Symbols of Defeat in the Construction of National Identity* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2. For a profound classification of such historical defeats in terms of how they are remembered and shape the culture, see also J. Macleod, ed., *Defeat and Memory: Cultural Histories of Military Defeat in the Modern Era*, 2008 edition (Basingstoke England ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>69</sup> Serhii Plokhy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine*, 1st edition (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 207.

violence.

The publishing house “Vernyhora,” in whose activity Zlotopolets’ took a very active part since 1917, “not leaving a single book without his personal attention,”<sup>70</sup> moved to Vienna in 1919, partly because of the lack of paper in Kyiv for publishing but also because Kyiv has changed hands repeatedly.<sup>71</sup> Zlotopolets’ relocated to Vienna to continue publishing activity and resume his higher education. It was in Vienna that the 1919 edition of *A Son of Ukraine* was published, although the frontmatter lists three cities: Kyiv, Kam’ianets’,<sup>72</sup> and Vienna. In Vienna, “Vernyhora” mostly published school textbooks, which were greatly lacking in Ukraine, particularly in Ukrainian. However, “due to the political circumstances in Ukraine, a great part of the books published abroad was never brought to Ukraine.”<sup>73</sup> This was, most likely, also the fate of the 5,000 copies of *A Son of Ukraine* (“1,000 of them on glossy paper”<sup>74</sup>).

Fediv also left Kyiv for good in 1919, as he joined the UNR’s delegation to the Paris Peace Conference as a stenographer. After the delegation had not been allowed to take part in the conference, Fediv remained in Vienna, where he also started his university education. He spent most of the interwar years in Czechoslovakia, only briefly returning to his native region of Western Ukraine that was under Polish rule at the time.<sup>75</sup>

Even though the book did not reach its intended audience immediately, it is said to have

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<sup>70</sup> Robak and Savchuk, *Valentyn Otamanovs'kyi — revoliutsioner, vchenyi, orhanizator nauky*, 21.

<sup>71</sup> Robak and Savchuk, 24.

<sup>72</sup> Kam’ianets’-Podils’kyi was the core of the territory controlled by UNR during 1919, so much of the cultural and administrative activity moved there, too.

<sup>73</sup> R. Mlynovets’kyi, *Narysy z istorii ukrains’kykh vyzvol’nykh zmahan’ 1917–1918 rr.*, Druhe vydannia, perehlianute i znachno dopovnene, vol. 2 (Toronto: Drukomy Vyd. “Homin Ukrainy,” 1973), 457.

<sup>74</sup> I am highlighting this to emphasize the drastic inappropriateness of the medium—Vienna-published expensive edition with color illustrations and glossy paper—that was supposed to connect an otherwise very appropriately matching message—the necessity to fight for one’s country to the last drop of blood—and the addressee, the war-torn nation.

<sup>75</sup> “ZHyttiepys d-ra Ihora Fediva, redaktora perevydannia knyhy istorii USS-iv 1955 r.”

had “a great impact in creation of nationalist worldview” in interwar Western Ukraine,<sup>76</sup> which means it still performed the job the authors intended for it. I will comment on its further fate and the clash of ideologies around its re-publication towards the end of this section, as my further analysis focuses on this first, 1919 edition. I analyze, first, how this text, which is a peculiar combination of translated, adapted, and original parts, works on a micro-level. Then, I consider how the narrative structure inherent to the genre of adventure, particularly, the sub-genre of a Robinsnade, is combined in *A Son of Ukraine* with other forms in order to create a message that seemed to the authors urgent to convey to young Ukrainians during the revolutionary struggle for independence in early twentieth century.

### 1.1.3. Translators’ strategies

In this section, I will focus on the micro-level strategies utilized by Fediv and Zlotopolets’ to incorporate the translation from Campe into their original creation. When I use the word “translators” in plural in the following analysis, I am referring to both Fediv and Zlotopolets’, even though their contribution was not the same. It is assumed that Fediv did the actual translation from German into Ukrainian. Some of the phenomena I observe in this section may have been introduced into the text during the stylistic editing of the resulting whole, rather than during translation as such. Overall stylistic editing was conducted by Zlotopolets’, as Robak and Savchuk claim based on a comparison of the dialectic features of the Ukrainian language in *A Son of Ukraine* and in both men’s separately authored texts.<sup>77</sup>

Changes on the level of the translated text per se may be lumped into several types. The following list will name these strategies in the order of increasing distance from the source text.

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<sup>76</sup> Mlynovets’kyi, *Narysy*, 1970, 1:32.

<sup>77</sup> See Robak and Savchuk, *Valentyn Otamanovs'kyi — revoliutsioner, vchenyi, orhanizator nauky*, 28.

First, there are changes in style: a neutral style of the German original is translated into a more ornate style with spoken idioms and diminutives. These changes create not only a perception of a more vivid narration than the dry speculative description of the original, but also ground the resulting text in the Ukrainian literary tradition of renderings of the Cossack period, which developed to imitate spoken and ornate style.<sup>78</sup>

Hätte er ein Hackeisen, einen Steinmeißel und andere Werkzeuge gehabt, so wäre nichts leichter gewesen, als diese Höhlung, die zum Teil felsig war, weiter auszuarbeiten und sie zu einer Wohnung geschickt zu machen. Aber von allen diesen Dingen besaß er ja nichts. Es war also die Frage, wie er den Mangel derselben ersetzen sollte. Nachdem er sich lange darüber den Kopf zerbrochen hatte, dachte er so: die Bäume, die ich hier sehe, scheinen eine Art Weidenbäume zu sein, die sich leicht verpflanzen lassen. Ich will eine Menge derselben mit meinen Händen ausgraben und hier vor diesem Loche einen Platz so dicht bepflanzen, daß es eine Wand werden soll. Wenn sie dann wieder ausschlagen und wachsen, so werde ich in diesem Raume so sicher wie in einem Hause schlafen können; denn von hinten schützt mich die steile Felsenwand, und von vorn und von den Seiten werden es die dicht gepflanzten Bäume thun.<sup>79</sup>

[If he had had a knife, a stone chisel, and other working tools, nothing would have been easier than to develop this cavity, which is part rock, further and to make it an apartment skillfully. But of all these things he obviously had nothing. So the question arose how he could compensate for this lack. After he had scratched his head over this issue for a long time, he thought so: the trees which I see here seem to be willows, which can be easily transplanted. I will dig out a number of them with my hands, and I will plant them around an area here, in front of this hole, so thickly that it will be a wall. When they take root and start to grow further, I will be able to sleep in this space as safe as in a house, since from the back the wall of rock will protect me, and from the front and from sides the thickly planted trees will do that.]

«Як би мати лопату, або кайло, - міркував він далі, - то таку б видовбав печеру, хоч куди. Або хоч би шабляка тобі! - Та, крім рук, нічогосінько немає, а руками не будеш довбати скелі; треба щось вимудрувати».

Узяв спочатку гостру камінюку, що лежала під ногами, почав довбати нею, та нічого з цього не вийшло. Аж наприкінці таки придумав.

«Ось ці дерева зарадять моєму лихові: викопаю їх із корінням та й посажу перед щілиною. А як розростуться, то наче стіною захистять мене. І спати вже можна буде спокійно, і сховатись од хуртовини. А згодом може що краще винайду».<sup>80</sup>

[“If only I had a shovel or a chisel,” he pondered further, “I would dig out a superb cave! Even if I had at least a saber! But I don’t have anything besides my hands, and you won’t gouge rock with hands; I need to come up with something.”]

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<sup>78</sup> Such as Oleksa Storozhenko’s *Marko Proklyatiy (Marko the Cursed)*, 1859).

<sup>79</sup> Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Robinson. Ein Lesebuch für Kinder* (Stuttgart: F. Carl Loowes Verlag, 1908), 12.

<sup>80</sup> Zlotopolets’, *Syn Ukrainy*, 63.

At first, he took a sharp rock that was lying under his feet, tried to gouge with it, but it didn't come off. Finally he stroke out: "These trees here will help my trouble: I will dig them out with roots and plant in front of this cavity. When they grow large, they'll protect me like a wall. I'll be able to sleep safely and to protect myself from a snowstorm. Later, maybe, I'll come up with something better."]

The passages above retell the same exact episode, including the same steps of decision making. A significant stylistic difference is present. In Campe's version, it is neutral; theoretical speculations are described with complex, grammatically correct sentences. In *A Son of Ukraine*, the style is rather that of spoken language; many spoken words, diminutives, and idioms are used (as opposed to only one rather effaced figurative expression in the source text: "den Kopf zerbrechen" = lit. "to break the head," to ponder on a complicated question). A significant element is introduced in the translation to relate to what the reader knows about Mykola, namely, his wish to use a saber, which he had used as a Cossack. On the other hand, Campe's wish to use the literary text as a vehicle for encyclopedic knowledge is abandoned in the translation: the translators omit the information that the trees are willows, which might have been Campe's readers' takeaway from the scene.

Second, there are changes on the level of imagery, aimed at domesticating the text. Elements of an exotic landscape are described through imagery familiar to Ukrainian readers either from first-hand experience or through literary texts. As a result, even a plot in an exotic setting helps reinforce the imagination of the "own" community and its symbolic space – an objective supported by changes on other levels as well.

Dadurch entstand nun eine so feste Wand, daß schon eine große Gewalt erforderlich war, um sie zu durchbrechen.<sup>81</sup>

[In this way was created such a strong wall that it would be necessary to use a lot of force to break through it].

«От тобі й вал. І кулі бусурменської не побоявся б за ним!» - говорив до себе наш

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<sup>81</sup> Campe, *Robinson*, 14.

козарлюга.<sup>82</sup>

[“Here you have a bulwark. Even a Muslim’s bullet wouldn’t scare me behind it!” our mighty Cossack said to himself.]

And one paragraph later:

Der Felsen über seiner Wohnung war ungefähr zwei Stockwerke hoch.<sup>83</sup>

[The cliff above his apartment was about two-story high.]

Над печерою вносилася стрімка скеля, така заввишки, як кручі над Дніпром під Києвом.<sup>84</sup>

[Above the cave, towered a steep cliff, as high as the cliffs above Dnipro near Kyiv]

In both these examples, Campe’s neutral descriptive language is replaced with domestic imagery familiar to the reader either from first-hand experience (the height of the cliffs on the Dnipro banks near Kyiv) or from cultural tradition. This imagery is used to relate to the reader’s experience, but also to show the exotic landscape through the eyes of a Ukrainian from that epoch. Not only can the reader imagine the height comparing to what he or she knows about the landscape near Kyiv, but based on what we know about the protagonist, it seems likely that he would in his mind compare a cliff to the familiar Dnipro hills and the protective qualities of the bulwark with those bulwarks he would have seen during campaigns against the Muslim enemies of the Cossacks. These changes both enhance the communication with the reader and ground the protagonist as a culturally determined subject.

By contrast, Campe’s protagonist is a seventeen-year-old *tabula rasa*. Roughly speaking, it is not the Lorelei cliffs on the Rhine that are substituted with Dnipro cliffs but a culturally effaced idea of a two-story building.<sup>85</sup> This reminds us of the fact that Campe’s late-eighteenth-

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<sup>82</sup> Zlotopolets’, *Syn Ukrainy*, 65.

<sup>83</sup> Campe, *Robinson*, 14.

<sup>84</sup> Zlotopolets’, *Syn Ukrainy*, 65.

<sup>85</sup> Replacing it with Dnipro cliffs is also obviously an exaggeration typical of Romanticist aesthetics. Taking into account the description of how the castaway used the cliff (he tied a rope ladder to a tree that grew on top of the cliff and climbed it every time to exit or enter the “apartment”), the height of a two-story building is much more

century work propagating the development of universal Enlightenment values in young children was translated into a completely different epoch, that of nationalism, where even the description of an exotic landscape is used to reinforce the imagination of the symbolic space of the “own” order of national community.

Third, there are straightforward additions or changes of passages in the canvas of an otherwise quite closely rendered translation. These additions are by and large a cultural commentary. Zohar Shavit was quoted above observing the novelty of Campe’s version of the Robinsonade in creating an alternative to existing European civilization from scratch. This alternative, however, does not revise the Eurocentric paradigm governing the contact with “savages” that denies them the existence of any trace of culture and affirms Europeans’ moral power to judge and govern over them. The encounter with the indigenous people of Campe’s Robinson is very similar to the original in Defoe’s version: the European castaway saves a “savage” and names him Friday. In the Ukrainian version, this ideology is undermined by the national discourse and experience of being subject to foreign oppression.

Translation of Campe’s *Robinson* is not only a translation from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> and not simply from one national culture to another. It is also a translation from a cultural tradition which is used to representing European “universalist” values in encounters with non-European indigenous peoples – to a cultural tradition of a nation with a different self-image based on its historical fate.

Adventure stories are believed to be the “energizing myth” of the empire, supporting the discourse that ignites the young generations to become settlers, discoverers, and soldiers on the frontiers of civilization on behalf of European empires.<sup>86</sup> Although Germans participated in

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appropriate as a vehicle of comparison than that of Dnipro hills.

<sup>86</sup> Green, *Seven Types of Adventure Tale: An Etiology of a Major Genre*, e.g. 21-23. See also Phillips, *Mapping Men*

imperialist encounters with indigenous peoples on individual level rather than as representatives of their state / nation, their perception of their cultural role did not differ significantly from that of imperialistic nations. Historically, Ukrainians have tended to encounter foreigners desiring to govern over their lands rather than people they themselves have come to civilize. Moreover, at the moment of the creation of *A Son of Ukraine* they were still fighting for independence from such foreign rule; at least, this aspect of the self-image of the national group was a very salient one for Fediv and Zlotopolets'. As a result, the authors identifying themselves with the colonized nation have had a different stance on many ideas regarding the (implied) European mission to civilize "barbarian" peoples, traditional for the genre.

Ever since the theme of "savage" locals appears in the text, dissenting comments (italicized in the example below) are added to the text, which is otherwise quite a close translation.

Einige der Unmenschen schlugen nämlich den einen Gefangenen zu Boden, und ein paar andere fielen über ihn her, vermutlich um ihn abzuschlachten und zu ihrer abscheulichen Mahlzeit zuzubereiten. Unterdes stand der andere Gefangene als Zuschauer bei diesem entsetzlichen Schauspiel, bis die Reihe auch an ihn kommen würde. Aber plötzlich, als dieser arme Mensch merkte, daß alle mit seinem geschlachteten Unglücksgefährten beschäftigt waren und eben nicht so sehr auf ihn achteten, ergriff er, in der Hoffnung, sein Leben zu retten [...]<sup>87</sup>

[Some of the un-humans threw one of the captives on the ground, a couple of others attacked him, perhaps to slaughter him and to prepare him for their loathsome meal. In the meanwhile, the second captive stood as an on-looker by this atrocious spectacle, while his turn has not come yet. But suddenly, as this poor man noticed that everybody was occupied with his slaughtered comrade in misfortune and did not pay that much attention to him, he decided, in a hope to save his life ...]

[...] кілька дикунів кинулося на одного з бранців, ударили ним об землю й з гарчанням мов вовки почали шматувати свою здобич. *Спочатку кров ударила Миколі до голови. Стиснувши в руці списа, готувався вже він зопалу, будь-що будь, кинутися на ворогів.*

*Та потроху розум переміг. Миколина лють минула. Почав митикувати. - «Адже ж це дикуни, - міркував він, - які, не знаючи нічого про єдиного Бога, живучи звірячим життям. А хіба ж можна лютувати на звіра, коли він кидається на іншу тварину й поїда її?»*  
*І загадався козак... Зненацька гірка усмішка скривила йому уста. - «Ні, ні! – скрикнув він, мов од лютого болю. – сто тисяч разів людяніші ці дикуни від гнобителів-чужинців! - Дикуни їдять своїх бранців мертвими, а зайди-чужинці жеруть нас живцем!»*

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& *Empire: A Geography of Adventure.*

<sup>87</sup> Campe, *Robinson*, 52.

*І ці болючі гадки зовсім одібрали в козака охоту втручатися в чужу справу й ставати суддею між дикунами.*

А тим часом другий бідолаха-бранець стояв непорушно, ждучи своєї черги. Та зненацька, коли побачив, що дикуни не звертають на нього жадної уваги, кинувся навтіки.<sup>88</sup>

[...several savages attacked one of the captives, threw him on the ground and, growling as wolves, started to tear their prey apart. *Blood rushed to Mykola's head: he grasped a javelin and was going to attack the enemies, whatever it takes.*

*But little by little the reason overcame. Mykola's rage was over. He started pondering. "But these are savages," he thought, "who don't know a thing about the One God, live beasts' lives. Can one get angry with a beast when it attacks another animal and eats it?"*

*The Cossack plunged into thoughts... His mouth went awry with a sad smile. "No, no!" he screamed, as if with a scorching pain. "One hundred thousand times are these savages more humane than foreign oppressors! The savages eat their captives dead, and the foreigners devour us alive!"*

So these painful reminiscences took the rest of the will to interfere in not his affair and become a judge for the savages.

In the meanwhile, the second poor captive stood without a move, waiting for his turn. But suddenly he noticed that the savages didn't pay any attention to him and shoot off.]

Without intending to change the entire plot, the authors nevertheless consider it necessary to add passages that show the protagonist's doubts concerning the traditional opposition between "civilized" European behaviors and the "barbaric" ways of locals. Moreover, for Mykola this experience prompts an unexpected reevaluation of the traditional hierarchy: he suggest a possibility that a "savage" person, who does outrageous things unknowingly, might be morally superior to the "civilized" "foreign oppressors"?<sup>89</sup> At least, the protagonist acknowledges that the issue is more complex than it is usually presented in the canon of the adventure genre, in which both the moral superiority and the sympathies of the protagonist are on the side of the colonizer.

Despite this hesitation that nearly prompts Mykola to abstain from judgement and action, he saves the poor captive along the same lines as Campe's Robinson does. However, for Mykola

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<sup>88</sup> Zlotopolets', *Syn Ukrainy*, 117.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Michel de Montaigne's similar development of thought in comparison of "barbaric" customs of the indigenous people of the New World to the "civilized" European customs: "I am not sorry that we should here take notice of the barbarous horror of so cruel an action, but that, seeing so clearly into their faults, we should be so blind to our own. I conceive there is more barbarity in eating a man alive, than when he is dead." Michel de Montaigne, "Of Cannibals," in *The Essays of Montaigne, Complete*, trans. Charles Cotton, 1877, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3600/3600-h/3600-h.htm>.

this act of protecting the aggrieved is presented as a realization specifically of his Cossack ethos, as opposed to other cultural and religious identities that define the same behavior of Robinson. Later on, another major difference reflecting the translators' stance on Eurocentric stereotypes occurs (I italicize the substituted fragment in the original and in the translation):

Robinson und sein Gefährte legten daher ihre Waffen nieder, und ersterer holte etwas von seinem Vorräte zum Abendessen herbei.

*Weil dieser merkwürdige Tag, der in der Geschichte unseres Robinsons sich ganz besonders auszeichnete, gerade ein Freitag war, so beschloß er, seinem geretteten Wilden den Namen desselben zu geben, und nannte ihn also Freitag.*

Robinson hatte erst jetzt Zeit, ihn genauer zu betrachten.<sup>90</sup>

[Robinson and his companion put down their weapons and the former took out something from his reserves for dinner.

*Since this noteworthy day, which in the story of our Robinson distinguished as entirely unusual, was Friday, so he decided to give the saved savage the same name and called him Friday.*

Only now Robinson had time to examine him closer.]

[...] поклавши зброю, зготував для себе й для дикуна вечерю. Підчас роботи Микола розглянув ближче свого нового товариша. [...]

*З розмови Микола дізнався, що звать Індіянину - Чінкадавін, а це індіанською мовою значило – «бистрозорий». Так прозвали його за те, що в леті міг устрелити птаха.<sup>91</sup>*

[... having put down his weapons, he prepared a dinner for himself and for the savage. During this work, Mykola examined more closely his new companion. [...]

*From the conversation, Mykola found out that the Indian's name was Chinkadavin, which meant in the Indian language Quicksighted. He was called so because he was able to shoot a flying bird.]*

The italicized fragment is not only swapped for a totally different one in the translation; it is also placed one paragraph later, after a (quite closely translated) description of the savage's appearance. This is also meaningful: in Campe's novel, the act of naming not only disregards the savage's own story, but it is conducted without envisaging a possibility that he even has such a story, as the naming takes places even before the one who names looks at the named one closer. In *A Son of Ukraine*, Mykola does not give a name to the rescued man but "finds it out" "from a conversation" (although they have no language in common yet): that is, from the very beginning

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<sup>90</sup> Campe, *Robinson*, 54.

<sup>91</sup> Zlotopolets', *Syn Ukrainy*, 120.

he recognizes that the “Indian” has a pre-existing identity. In the following chapters, too, there are additions that show much more respect for indigenous tradition, language, and knowledge than in Campe’s version.

Fourth, large portions of the text, while following the scheme of Campe’s plot, are rewritten to work better together with the surrounding original parts of the novel. One may say about these sections (the beginning of the first chapter on the island and the final three chapters of the translation) that the translation is a “faithful” rendering of the original but on an unusual level: not on the level of words, sentence or paragraph structures, but on that of the plot elements. This approach resembles intersemiotic translation, reminding us of an adaptation of a novel for screen or theater, when the “translator” can work only on a level of structures larger than those of the actual linguistic material.

For example, the first of the translated chapters that sees the castaway on the island in both cases includes the following nodes: the protagonist finds himself on the shore and lies there; he is thirsty and looks for a spring; he spends the first night on a tree and falls down; he quells his hunger with oysters; he climbs a mountain to look around and discovers that this piece of land is an island; he finds a narrow cave to serve him as home and plants trees in front of it; he wants to eat more oysters but discovers that the tide is high; he spends another night on a tree but ties himself to a branch this time; on the way to the beach he finds a coconut and enjoys it; he finds a shell which can be used as a shovel—and so on.

At the beginning of this chapter, the narrative depends significantly on the protagonist’s personal story and personality, which is very different in the cases of Robinson and Mykola. For the young Robinson, the shipwreck is a punishment for his sins and disobeying his parents’ wishes. For Mykola, it frees him from slavery, which brings the two castaways to very different

evaluations of their situations. The two protagonists differ enormously in life experience, which results in an exaggerated emotional reaction to everything in Robinson's case and a more philosophical stance in Mykola's case. Both are religious, but their devoutness is very different: Robinson believes in punishment and prays to better his fate; Mykola trusts that god will take care of him. All in all, here the similarities are limited to aligning the narrative around the mentioned thematic nodes, but it is rather difficult to find exact correspondences between the source text and the translation on the level of words or even sentences. However, as the chapter goes on and the narrative focuses on the technical details of the protagonist's coping with his new situation, the differences between the German and the Ukrainian Robinsonades become less profound. This may have been a conscious decision as well as somebody's ceasing to vigorously edit the translation to make the narrative more coherent with the preceding original section.

#### 1.1.4. The logic of the genre

This brings us to the interrelation between the portion translated from Campe and the original beginning and ending. The resulting novel combines different narrative logics in the framing of and in the translated adventure story itself. The narrative arc of the frame follows the conception of history espoused by the translators: the depicted period was a heroic but tragic moment in Ukrainian history. The narrative arc of the central part embodies the promise for a victorious outcome, a happy end, typical for the adventure genre. By and large, one can see that these two models contradict one another, and efforts to reconcile them stylistically shown above were only partially effective. In this subsection, I will analyze some aspects in which these differences manifest themselves, yet not to merely pinpoint "incoherencies" in the novel but rather to evaluate the import of both narrative logics.

For instance, the frame and central part propose different types of national identity. The

period of the Khmel'nyts'kyi uprising, chosen as the novel's background, lets authors make a parallel with the moment of the creation of their adaptation. For the intellectual elites of 1917 Ukrainian revolution, the 17<sup>th</sup>-century uprising against Polish domination was clearly a previous attempt to regain independence for the Ukrainian nation defined in ethnic terms. Hence, they are evoking the idea of endangered national identity, conceived in narrow ethno-national terms. Moreover, this identity is understood as so insecure that a person cannot hope to bring up their own children as bearers of the same identity, because of the oppressors' influences, as it is reflected in the words addressed to the protagonist by his father:

“If I knew that you will take for a wife a foreign woman and she will bear for you a Pole, a Muscovite or a Turk, I would kill you with this saber! The blood of your grandfathers and brothers, the blood of our family would fall onto your head and revenge on your children and grandchildren!”<sup>92</sup>

It is noteworthy that while the politics of the 1917 Central Rada was inclusive of national minorities, such as Jews, Poles, and Russians, the Brotherhood of Independentists, the party whose delegate to the Central Rada Zlotopolets' had been, had an ethnically exclusive concept of Ukrainian identity, similar to that in the quote above. These prohibitions in the novel reflect almost literally one of the rules of the Brotherhood, imposed on its members.<sup>93</sup> This similarity supports the idea that contemporary concerns were inscribed into the historical period chosen as the backdrop for the Robinsonade's adaptation. Over the time while *A Son of Ukraine* was in preparation for the publication, due to a growing frustration at economic and political degradation, a more hostile treatment of ethnic others prevailed. As Velychenko puts it, even Jews and Russians loyal to the Ukrainian government, who were perceived as allies in 1917,

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<sup>92</sup> “І як би я знав, що за жінку візьмеш чужинку й приведе вона тобі на світ Ляха, Москвина чи Турчина, вбив би тебе оцею шаблюкою! Кров твоїх дідів і братів, кров нашого роду спала б на голову твою й помстилася б на твоїх дітях і внуках!” Zlotopolets', 14.

<sup>93</sup> See Mlynovets'kyi, *Narysy*, 1970, 1:32.

began to arouse burning hatred by 1919.<sup>94</sup> Notoriously, this ended in a particularly harsh wave of anti-Jewish violence in 1919.<sup>95</sup> Noteworthy, however, that while Jews were a group of “Others”, very significantly present in Ukrainian cultural imagination of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, who had been equally a victim of inter-ethnic violence in the historic context of the Khmel’nyts’kyi uprising, the novel does not mention Jews at all. Instead, the ethnic “Others” that are repeatedly mentioned are those whom the authors lump under the category of “foreign oppressors” (*hnobyтели-чужынтси*), that is, representatives of neighboring states that at different points attempted to control over lands with Ukrainian population: Poles, Russians, and Turks, occasionally Hungarians. It is also anachronistic to include Russians or “Muscovites” into the category of “foreign oppressors” in the thinking of the protagonist before the Treaty of Pereiaslav of 1654 that was the starting point of the gradual spread of Muscovite and then imperial Russian control over Ukrainian lands. However, since by 1917 Russian empire controlled a significant majority of ethnic Ukrainian lands, this group was the most salient representative of the category of “foreign oppressors” for the milieu that started to practice independentist thinking in 1917.

From the point of view of style, the frame makes use of the Ukrainian Romanticist tradition, imitating folk *dumas*. The model of endangered national identity is also inherent to this tradition. Any “Other” here is an enemy; any contact with them is treason because its outcomes

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<sup>94</sup> At first glance, this narrow ethno-national interpretation of identity is at odds with the national policies of Central Rada, with which one of the authors was affiliated. However, the messages changed drastically between the 1917 when the inclusive policies were formulated and the war-torn 1919, as Velychenko comments based on the material of state-sponsored or at least state-tolerated leaflets: “The sample indicates that one key difference between materials issued in 1917 and those issued between 1919 and 1922 was that as the scale and intensity of violence increased during those years, messages became more aggressively nationalist. Non-governmental and anonymous texts dropped an earlier distinction between Jews and Russians who were loyal to the Ukrainian cause and those who were not. They instead began to classify all Jews and Russians as enemies.” Velychenko, *Propaganda in Revolutionary Ukraine*, 86. The government propaganda, however, continued to make clear distinction between “foreign non-Ukrainians” and “settled non-Ukrainian minorities in Ukraine.” Velychenko, 93.

<sup>95</sup> Plokyh, *The Gates of Europe*, 222.

cannot be good:

“Because are not few those who had once sworn to revenge upon the foreigners, as they returned from the big cities, started to fraternize with them, forgetting their oath... They take foreign women for wives, and those bring to world betrayers; they shy away from their own language which their mothers had taught them to pray in; they express conceit to it and spit on their fatherland – Ukraine.”<sup>96</sup>

Correspondingly, in-group members are required to strictly comply with a given model of national identity. This choice of an identity model can only partially be explained by the choice of the historic plot; to the contrary, one may suggest that the historic plot is chosen as befitting a certain ideological need. Thinking and writing about the epoch of Khmel’nyts’kyi’s wars as a struggle for ethno-national liberation was in no way Zlotopolets’s and Fediv’s invention—according to Plokhyy’s *The Cossack Myth*, this association was made in the early nineteenth century. However, some aspects of these theme developments were particularly contemporary. One of them is the theme of the unity (*sobornist’*) of the Ukrainian nation separated by political borders, which was only possible after the Romantic reconceptualization of national identity on a folkloric basis. It became especially urgent in the wake of World War I when short-lived attempts to establish independent political entities in both Russian- and Austro-Hungarian-ruled parts of Ukraine took place, as well as a proclamation of their reunification on January 22, 1919, which had mostly symbolic meaning. These contemporary concerns are reflected in the epilogue of the novel, which is set in a house of a Ukrainian family on Hungarian lands.

During the dinner, Mykola was asked who he was and where he was from. Luxuriating in the sweet sounds of the mother tongue, Mykola was in a happily gleeful mood. He gladly told the villagers that he is a Cossack from Ukraine, from nearby Uman’.

“So, you are a foreigner!” responded the host. “From your speech, we had assumed that you are our, Hungarian man.” Something squashed Mykola’s heart. The gleeful mood disappeared at once.

“And you... who are you then?” he asked sullenly.

“We?” the host asked in surprise. “We are Hungarian people, *Rusnaks*.” [...]

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<sup>96</sup> “Бо чи ж мало з тих, що колись присягалися помститися на чужинцях, вернувши з великих міст, починали брататися з ними, забуваючи свою присягу... Беруть собі за жінок чужинок, а ті приводять їм на світ відступників; цураються своєї мови, якою вчила їх мати молитися; гордують нею й опльовують свою вітчизну - Вкраїну.” Zlotopolets’, *Syn Ukrainy*, 11–12.

“But who? Who told you that people from Ukraine are foreigners to you? Hungarians?” Mykola uttered with deep pain. [...]

“But how?” Mykola pondered sadly. “How to return to them their lost Ukrainian soul? How to make them recover their sight?... Damned be the Hungarian oppressors!” “There is only one way – self-sacrifice!” he told himself in a while. “We should sprinkle our hot blood in their eyes – and they will open...”<sup>97</sup>

Several aspects are important in this illustrative scene. First, just like other passages analyzed above, it suggests that ethno-national identity should be the most important of all group identities a person might have. This suggestion is quite ahistorical, as in the early modern period (into which this scene is inscribed), self-identification via a combination of several layers, such as affiliation with a religion, an ethnicity, and a political nation (or loyalty to a monarch) was a widespread phenomenon, as reflected by the characterization “gente Rutheni, natione Poloni.”<sup>98</sup>

Second, this passage also reflects an understanding of this ethno-nationally conceived self-identification as the only possible true one, in alignment with the primordial understanding of identity. Mykola suggests that whatever the people he encountered say and believe about

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<sup>97</sup> “За вечерею запитали Миколу, хто він і звідки. Милуючи солодкими звуками рідної мови, Микола перебував у щасливо-радісним настрою. Охоче оповів селянам, що він козак з України, зпід Уманя. - «Е, то ви чужинець!» одказав господар, – «а ми з вашої мови та з лица думали, що наш - мадярський чоловік».

Щось стиснуло Миколі серце. Радісний настрій зник одразу.

- «А ви ж... хто ж ви такі?» спитав він глухо.

- «Ми? - здивовано повторив господар. - Ми мадярські люде – Руснаки». [...]

- «Але ж хто? Хто сказав вам, що люде з України вам чужинці? - Мадяри? - з глибоким болем вимовив нарешті Микола. [...]

- «Але що?.. що робити?- думав Микола смутно. - Як вернути їм утрачену вкраїнську душу? Як полуду зняти з незрячих очей?.. О прокляті гнобителі-Мадяри!»

«Тільки один є спосіб - самопожертва! - сказав він сам собі згодом. - Кров'ю нашою гарячою бризнути їм у вічі - і вони отворяться...» Zlotopolets', 196–98.

<sup>98</sup> This Latin phrase can be roughly translated as “of Ruthenian origin, of Polish nation,” although historians draw attention to the fact that one should be wary of bringing the post-Romantic ethno-national understanding of “nation” into this phrase. It was used to describe people of Ukrainian or Belarusian origin who affiliated themselves politically with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The “Ruthenian origin” was sometimes identified by confessional difference: adherence to Orthodox rather than Catholic rite, although many families continued to maintain some kind of “Ruthenian” identity based on their ancestors’ origin despite adhering to the Catholicism for many generations. For a detailed discussion of different aspects of identity hybridity associated with the term, see Adam Świątek, *Gente Rutheni, Natione Poloni: The Ruthenians of Polish Nationality in Habsburg Galicia* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2021).

themselves, he has access to the truth about their “real” identity, which is given through the concept of a “Ukrainian soul.” The scene goes on to introduce a very old man, the only one in this family who still remembers something vague from the past and recognizes the truth in Mykola’s suggestion that they, “Rusnaks,” belong to the same group as Ukrainians from behind the Carpathians. The old man is shooed away, however: explicitly because everyone considers him senile but supposedly because it is dangerous to make this truth apparent.

This leads to the third important aspect of this encounter: it is suggested that while ethno-national identity is the only “true” identity one might have, any alternative ideas are lies deliberately disseminated by enemies. In this case, Hungarians are blamed for the deception, assumedly to serve their own vile interests. It is suggested here that Ukrainians living under Hungarian rule were manipulated into believing they are “Rusnaks,” a group different from the Ukrainians living behind the Carpathians. This suggestion in the novel is structurally very similar to the idea in the discourse of the Russian empire that Ukrainians are “in fact” an inalienable part of the Russian people who were deceived and manipulated into believing that they are something separate – and the entity considered by Russian propaganda to be responsible for this manipulation was the Austrian government. A more recent understanding of social identities stipulates that the fact that they have been “invented” does not at all preclude the possibility that they are experienced as “true” by people who self-identify with them. A notable attitude toward ethno-national identities in *A Son of Ukraine* is not simply that their nature is primordial rather than constructed, but that a difference in truth status exists: what “I” believe about “myself” and about “you” is primordial; what “you” believe about “yourself” is constructed and false. Taken together, such reflections about the “Ukrainian soul,” the concepts of “national” and “ethnic,” and the role of imperialistic propaganda are more characteristic of the authors’ contemporary

struggle for independence, including the issue of national unity of Ukrainian lands under different rules.

As I have just shown, in the original parts of the novel added by Zlotopolets' and Fediv, Ukrainian national identity is presented as an endangered one. Both external enemies and assumed in-group members who are, allegedly, deceived by the adversary, are threats to the very existence of Ukrainian identity. Based on this assumed fact, the authors present their message about the need for mobilization and armed resistance to oppressors for the preservation of the Ukrainian nation. In the historical timeframe, they show, this struggle was not successful, but the absence of the happy outcome in that time makes this message only more relevant during a new attempt to create an independent Ukrainian state.

In the central Robinsonade, on the contrary, Ukrainian identity is conceived as quite strong. The encounter with the “Others” is here mostly with the representatives of various European nations and the “good savages.” Such encounters had also taken place in Campe’s source text, but the “map” of interrelations of the in-group with these “Others” is significantly re-created by the authors of the adaptation.

Various “Others” praise the protagonist based on his belonging to a group they have respect for. Even representatives of the Muslim world, although repeatedly described as the adversary—one of the groups presented as menacing intruders in Ukrainian lands—are expressing praise to Ukrainians as the group, which is extended to Mykola as a representative of this group.

“Brave and knightly people you are, Ukrainians!” he said as he was leaving. “Many times I have heard about your valor. The Master of the faithful himself (may Allah prolong his years!) is sad to have neighbors with such ardor, and the whole of Europe trembles before him, Cossack.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> "Сміливий і лицарський народ ви, українці! - сказав він на відході. - Не раз чував я про вашу відвагу. Самого Володаря вірних (хай Аллах продовжить йому віку!) гризе журба, що має таких завзятих сусідів, а

Contacts with Europeans are based on repeated acts of “normalization” and “recognition” of the in-group. In the beginning of the novel, the main reason for admiration from Europeans was Ukrainians’ courageous struggle against “Muslims.” The following quote is illustrative in this regard:

It is impossible to describe the care and the good attitude expressed by the whole ship’s crew to the runaways, as they learned who they were.

But they were especially disposed toward Mykola. And no surprise, since at that time all civilized nations of Europe were leading an incessant fight against the Muslims. [...]

Thus, the glory of the Zaporizhian Sich was heard of all over the world. In the eyes of the civilized European nations, a Zaporizhian Cossack was a knight who was leading an incessant, fierce war with Islam.<sup>100</sup>

With this, several points should be noted as they demonstrate ideological message conveyed to the readers. First, these “Europeans” are depicted in a generalized way, as a kind of positive force, while in the middle of the seventeenth century the unified concept of “European” could hardly be used. The Habsburg Empire was indeed in constant military confrontation with the Ottoman Empire, while to the contrary, France had entered into a military alliance with the Ottomans against the Habsburg Empire a century earlier. During the Khmel’nyts’kyi campaigns, the Cossacks themselves had allied with the Crimean Tatars against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which also undermines the idea in the novel that religious denomination was at the time an overarching identification defining military alliances. Second, from these Europeans, the authors clearly exclude Hungarians and Poles, who are shown as forces hostile to the Cossacks. Third, the authors show the reader how “Europeans” admire the courage of the

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перед ним, козаچه, тремтить уся Європа." *Zlotopolets'*, *Syn Ukrainy*, 46.

<sup>100</sup> Неможливо описати тих піклувань і тої прихильности, яку виявила кораблева залага до втікачів, дізнавшись, хто вони.

Але особливо привітно ставилися всі до Миколи. І не диво: страшну, безупинну боротьбу провадили тоді всі цивілізовані народи Європи проти мусульман. [...]

І тому слава Запорожської Січі голосно лунала по всьому світові. В очах цивілізованих європейських народів Запорожець - це був лицар, що вів безупинну, жорстоку війну з мусульманством. Тепер, коли серед кораблевої залози був Запорожець, імя «Україна» не сходило нікому з уст. *Zlotopolets'*, 53.

Ukrainian people, as someone standing in the way of the Turks and preventing them from seizing “Europe,” although historically the Ukrainians were hardly an obstacle to the Ottomans on their way to Europe: the main attack on Europe (actually on Austrian Empire) was conducted through the Balkans. Although their role as *Antemurale Christianitatis*, that is, a “bulwark” protecting Christianity and Europe from Muslims, was an important image in Poles’ and Ukrainians’ self-perceptions, they were hardly seen as such by other Europeans. A repeated epithet in the admiration of Cossack valor and their role in protecting Europe and Christianity is “knightly.” In this, the authors follow the trope of nineteenth-century Russian and Ukrainian historiography and historic novels that “the Sich was a Ukrainian equivalent of Western knightly orders.”<sup>101</sup>

Especially ample instances of such praise and expressions of respect are towards the end of the novel, as the time of Mykola’s presence on the island coincides with the historical events of Khmel’nyts’kyi’s struggle for independence from Poland. This political development allegedly puts Ukraine on the maps of European imagination, as European newspapers closely followed the events.

The whole world was enthralled by the gigantic battles in which Khmel’nyts’kyi created the Ukrainian State. There remained no intelligent European who would not know Ukraine and would not follow its titanic struggle for liberation with bated breath.<sup>102</sup>

This quote reflects a system of values ascribing importance to ethno-national self-determination and generally recognizing ethno-national groups as entities. The authors refer to the Cossack Hetmanate, a Cossack state that was created in 1648 and established vassal relations with the Tsardom of Muscovy in the Treaty of Pereiaslav of 1654.

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<sup>101</sup> Valeria Sobol, *Haunted Empire: Gothic and the Russian Imperial Uncanny*, NIU Series in Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (Ithaca: Northern Illinois University Press, an imprint of Cornell University Press, 2020), 117. See p.117-118 for a more detailed discussion of the tradition.

<sup>102</sup> “Увесь світ захоплений був велетенськими боями, в яких Хмельницький створив Українську Державу. Не було тепер ані одного інтелігентного Європейця, щоб не знав України й затаївши віддишу не стежив за нечуваним розвитком її титанічних сил.” Zlotopolets’, *Syn Ukrainy*, 185.

But an even more important reason was that a Ukrainian was not anymore a son of a hapless oppressed nation. No (and Mykola felt that from the foreigners' attitude), he was now a citizen of a large, mighty and widely-recognized European country!<sup>103</sup>

In the latter quote, too, it is suggested that the respect paid to Mykola is given based on his status as a citizen rather than a subject. Both these instances are not only a stretch, propagating into the seventeenth century an understanding from a later period, but also a significant change from the praise at the beginning of the novel, analyzed above. The recognition based on individual qualities (bravery) and on belonging to a social estate ("Cossack knight") is replaced by recognition based on file-and-rank belonging to a national entity, that is, citizenship.

When addressing the protagonist, the novel's Europeans use the rhetoric of the French Revolution, claiming the ideals of "freedom, equality, and fraternity":

[...] the captain, who was a very educated person for that epoch, addressed Mykola solemnly: "Sir! Your glorious, arduous people has revived the knightly traditions which were about to die out! You were the first in Europe to proclaim freedom, equality, fraternity, the first after the ancient Greeks and Romans to create a democratic republic! [...] So let me, on behalf of the queen of the seas, the freedom-loving England, greet you on the land you discovered, which from now on belongs to Ukraine, as its first governor!"<sup>104</sup>

The latter quote fully reveals the fantastic nature of passages of this type, as it exaggerates beyond any verisimilitude, assuming that a person identifying himself with "freedom-loving England," and acting on behalf of his nation's democratic aspirations, would name another group as the first in bolstering the ideals of freedom. The idea of recognition by established and powerful European nations and the promise of their support for Ukrainian endeavors is a transposition of political aspirations of the authors' contemporaneity into the

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<sup>103</sup> "Проте ще більше спричинилося те, що Українець не був уже сином нещасної, поневоленої нації. Ні (і Микола це добре відчував у відносинах чужинців), він був тепер громадянином великої, могутньої, всіма званої європейської держави!" Zlotopolets', 184.

<sup>104</sup> ...капітан, що був дуже освіченою людиною того часу, урочисто звернувся до Миколи: „Сер! Ваш славний, завзятий народ відживив завмерлі вже всюди лицарські традиції! Він перший проголосив у Європі вільність, рівність, братерство, перший після Гелінів та Римлян утворив демократичну республіку! [...] Дозвольте ж мені від імені цариці морів і також свободолюбної Англії щиро привітати Вас на відкритій Вами й однині українській землі як першого її губернатора!" Zlotopolets', 186.

historical material. According to Velychenko, “the claim that it [UNR] was supported by the European powers”<sup>105</sup> was one of the main lies in the propaganda issued by this short-lived state – which only emphasizes how the intellectuals of the time wished this support was real.

It seems Fediv and Zlotopolets’ themselves felt how against the grain these passages about recognition by Europeans might be perceived, so in the “Editorial notes” they cite a 1912 brochure *Ukrainets’ za kordonom i mandrivka v mynule* (*A Ukrainian Abroad and a Journey into the Past*, 1912), pseudonymously authored by S. Podolianyn.<sup>106</sup> In the brochure, Podolianyn expresses his surprise on finding the name “Ukraine” on British maps (at the time when this very name was suppressed domestically by the Russian imperial regime) and delves into the London newspaper archives to find extensive reports on the uprisings led by Khmel’nyts’kyi. Fediv and Zlotopolets’ quote Podolianyn’s findings in the “Editorial notes” and base on them passages in the text of the novel like the ones quoted above. Podolianyn himself, in his preface to the brochure, reveals that his main goal for compiling it is “throwing at least a sliver into the young fire of our national faith in ourselves.”<sup>107</sup> Since the ideological stakes are high and even acknowledged, one cannot say without further research whether this is a “found manuscript” device or a veritable analysis of old British newspapers. In any case, it is telling that Fediv and Zlotopolets’, just like Podolianyn, considered it crucial to support their passages about the international recognition of the Ukrainian cause with a “documental citation,” while using them with the same idea of supporting “our national faith in ourselves” in their readership.

The inclusion of a Ukrainian protagonist in a colonial encounter with “good savages”

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<sup>105</sup> Velychenko, *Propaganda in Revolutionary Ukraine*, 190.

<sup>106</sup> S. Podolianyn, *Ukrainets’ za kordonom i mandrivka v mynule* (Kyiv: Dzvin, 1912), Reprint: <https://yatran.com.ua/mt-content/uploads/2020/03/tsnna-broshura.pdf>.

The person behind the pseudonym is Volodymyr Stepankivskyi, journalist and political activist.

<sup>107</sup> Podolianyn, 2.

within a typical plot of a Robinsonade becomes the basis for a historical fantasy: Ukraine as a strong and fair-minded colonizing power. The experience of struggle for one's own independence is here presented as the reason for reconsidering instinctive "European" reactions to the otherness of the colonized (amply supplied by Campe's pretext). I have already shown in the previous section how Fediv and Zlotopolets' achieved this effect on the textual level, analyzing several instances of additions and substitutions in a faithfully rendered translation. Here, the "Friday" is recognized as possessing a pre-existing identity and a name: Chinkadavin. While "savage" customs are deplored, their strict opposition to everything "European" and "civilized" is revisited. As Chinkadavin questions Mykola at some point whether white people eat human flesh, the Cossack is at first enraged at this thought but then reevaluates this difference in customs:

"White people do not eat human flesh but some of them do something much worse. Ukraine, for example, is governed by foreign invaders. They have put our people into slavery and torture it with inhuman sufferings. They are not eating our flesh, that's true, but my friends, they are crucifying our soul!"<sup>108</sup>

It is suggested that based on a specific national character, as well as on the historical experience of being a subjugated nation, Ukrainians could have been much fairer as colonizers than those European nations who historically governed over overseas colonies. For instance, Mykola contemplates towards the end of his presence on the island that his experience of teaching Chinkadavin and his father civilization and agriculture was successful, and that it would make sense to invite people from their tribe to his colony and bring more of these "gentle and intelligent savages" to civilization.<sup>109</sup> With that, the protagonist imagines himself as a

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<sup>108</sup> "Білошкірі не їдять людського мяса, але де-які з них роблять іще гірше. От Україну, наприклад, опанували зайди-чужинці. Вони поневолили наш народ і катують нелюдськими муками. Вони не їдять нашого тіла, це правда, але, друже, душу нам розпинають!" Zlotopolets', *Syn Ukrainy*, 137.

<sup>109</sup> Zlotopolets', 180–81.

representative both of the Ukrainian State, as he proclaims the island to be the colony of this newly established state, and of European culture, on whose behalf he is bringing civilization to the savages.

The passage describing Mykola's decision to widen the colonizing effort ends in the following way: "Having decided that, the Cossack was extremely proud for his nation, as he knew well how other European nations tormented and were still tormenting the poor savages in their colonies."<sup>110</sup> This whole passage performs two things with regard to the image of Ukrainian identity, as offered to the reader. First, it aims to normalize against the background of European nations who had statehood and throughout the period of colonial expansion performed overseas acquisitions and brought civilization to the "savages." At the same time, however, a second operation is performed within the same comparison, suggesting that the Ukrainian nation is even better than those European ones because Ukrainians would not "torment the poor savages." One can easily claim anything in this regard, as history did not create an opportunity to check whether it would be so or different. However, a further step is taken: this purely mental operation becomes a source of pride for the Ukrainian nation, which the reader is supposed to feel together with the protagonist. Interestingly, this claim remains pure conjecture even in the context of the novel, as the protagonist was the only Ukrainian on the island performing the civilizing mission; he has no basis whatsoever upon which to ground how Ukrainians as a collective would behave.

It is important to make one more remark about the stance this novel takes on colonialism. *A Son of Ukraine* criticizes specific colonial practices and describes real historic encounters of Europeans with indigenous peoples around the world as "tormenting." Yet, it takes an anti-

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<sup>110</sup> "І отак нарешті постановивши, Запорожець був незвичайно гордий за свою націю, бо добре знав, як знущалися й знущаються над нещасними дикунами в своїх кольоніях інші європейські народи." Zlotopolets', 181.

colonial position only when the Ukrainian experience of being subjugated and colonized is discussed, not regarding the idea of subjugation and colonization in general. Although the claim that Ukrainians would have been much gentler colonizers is grounded exactly on the notion that they themselves as a nation had experienced subjugation by foreign oppressors, these terms are not used interchangeably. “Subjugators” [*zaharbnyky*] are the powers aiming to rule over Ukraine and no bad word is spared to describe them. Aiming to rule over other people, especially those whose skin is not white, is “colonization”, and is generally a positive notion, a token of a fully-fledged and strong European nation that Ukrainians also want to be. In this regard, the stance Fediv and Zlotopolets’ express in this novel reveals more similarity (than explicit self-identification with a subjugated nation would suggest) to that of Joseph Conrad who would criticize Belgians but praise the British or that of Jules Verne who would criticize the British but praise the French exactly on the same grounds: the former “torment,” the latter bring order and civilization.

It is in this fantasy about Ukraine’s unrealized historical mission – to become a benevolent and fair colonizer, who would, rather than exploit and torment, bring civilization and let the “gentle savages” partake in European culture – where the difference of two models of national identity between the frame and the central part of the novel becomes most evident. In the frame, as I have shown above, Ukrainian identity is presented as so threatened that ethnic Ukrainians cannot even be sure that they will be able to pass on cultural values and the feeling of belonging to their immediate offspring. That is, even the understanding of Ukrainian national identity as an ethnic identity is threatened by historical developments. In the Robinsonade, it appears that the protagonist can educate Chinkadavin, who is described as acting with “truly

Ukrainian ardor,”<sup>111</sup> to become a bearer of truly Ukrainian values and traits. Chinkadavin understands the importance of the fact that he can pass these values over to his children; parting with Mykola, he says:

I will teach my children to pray for you! And the first words that they'll learn to say will be the sweet names: yours and that of our common Fatherland!<sup>112</sup>

The constitution of the new colony, which the protagonist leaves to the colonists (Spaniards and indigenous people from Chinkadavin's tribe) as he ventures on the return journey from the island to Ukraine, also conceives Ukrainian identity in quite a different, civic manner, envisioning the possibility for a person of any ethnic origin to join this group by sharing common values. That is, authors switch between an ethnic concept of national identity and a civic one.

Obviously, turning to a historical plot, the authors could not have reimagined history and suggested that the what they describe as an attempt of gaining national independence in the seventeenth century was successful and that Ukraine was defended as an independent political entity for the centuries to come. They could, however, imagine a different, “New Ukraine,” which could have been successfully defended, according to the victorious logic of the genre in which this story is told, and this is what they present Mykola to have accomplished: “Here I am, a real *otaman* of the colony. The whole island is in my hands, and I will be able to defend my colony, not allowing foreign enemies onto Ukrainian land, as I did today.”<sup>113</sup>

Adventure is known to be a victorious genre, and the contract between the reader and the author includes the anticipation that despite all the dangers, the protagonist will overcome and survive. This is also hard to reconcile with the logic of a novel about a tragic episode in the

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<sup>111</sup> Zlotopolets', 172.

<sup>112</sup> “Я навчу діти свої молитися за тебе! І перші слова, яких вони вмітуть, - це будуть солодкі імена: твоє та нашої спільної тепер Вітчи[з]ни!“. Zlotopolets', 190.

<sup>113</sup>“От тобі справжній із мене отаман колонії. Увесь острів у моїх руках, та й оборонити зможу свою кольонію, не допускаючи на українську землю чужинців-ворогів, як і зробив оце сьогодні.” Zlotopolets', 176.

national history, whose message to the implied reader (who is assumed to continue the struggle for independence) is the more effective the more tragic are the events in which the protagonist's fate culminates. To reconcile the two logics, authors use several strategies.

Throughout the novel, an axiological model is built according to which dying for one's fatherland on the battlefield is the best thing that could happen to a hero (in this case, to a Cossack warrior). Mykola's father bemoans that he had grown old and unfit for battle and that he would now be destined to die like a peasant, not a knight. Paradoxically, he is able to avoid this disgraceful peaceful death by becoming a wandering bard, who is then tortured to death by enemies for (what can be described, using much more modern language, as) propaganda activity. This example is governing Mykola's choices as well.

The protagonist understands that his destiny is to sacrifice his life for his homeland, he proclaims this as his goal. Thus, reaching his goal, he would look like a winner in the eyes of the readers. Hence, the dangers Mykola faces throughout his adventure are evaluated against this background: "God somehow saves the Cossack!" thought the poor guy, as he became able to breathe with more ease. "Maybe he won't let a Christian person die in a foreign land!"<sup>114</sup> Now he (as well as the reader for him) fears not that he will perish, but rather that he will die prematurely: during a tempest at sea, in claws of predators or cannibals. And the promise of a happy outcome provided by the logic of the adventure genre is realized not in ensuring that he survives, but that he survives these inappropriate dangers.

As a result, Mykola's death during the battle of Konotop becomes his personal victory – in the same way as dying a peaceful death in his bed would be a personal defeat, as discussed in the story of the protagonist's father. The authors cannot ignore historical events and do consider

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<sup>114</sup> „Якось рятує Бог козака! – подумав бідолаха відітхнувши вільніше. – Може, таки не дасть Він загинути хрещеній людині в чужій землі.” *Zlotoplets*, 85–86.

them a national defeat, which only their generation tried to undo, over 250 years later. But the protagonist's death during the battle of Konotop – the last battle during Khmel'nyts'kyi's campaign that was relatively successful for the Cossacks – is the substitution for a happy ending the adventure convention calls for: “And Mykola lay before them with a sign of otherworldly beauty, and a happy smile froze on his lips.”<sup>115</sup> These are the last words in the novel, and the wording of this phrase unambiguously suggests a victory: he is happy to die exactly in these circumstances.

#### 1.1.5. Changing the story for a yet new addressee

In the reworked edition of 1946, prepared only by Fediv, the novel's epilogue, which features Mykola's return from his journey to Ukraine and his death on battlefield, is omitted altogether. The second version of the novel ends when the protagonist is ready to depart the island, which he leaves behind as a prosperous colony of the Ukrainian state at the moment when everybody admires Ukrainians as a freedom-loving nation. Behind this decision are not only the issues related to reconciliation of the two genre logics, on which I commented above. The circumstances in which each of the editions, both the original publication in 1919 and the renewal in 1946, were prepared, also account for the change. For Zlotopolets' personally, the image of Mykola Nalyvaiko was connected to the image of Mykola Lyzohub, a friend of Zlotopolets' who died in the battle of Kruty. The need to add an epilogue featuring and justifying Mykola's death may have been his personal way to reconcile with the loss of a friend. Moreover, although the first edition was only published abroad, it was prepared with Ukraine still fighting for its independence in mind.

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<sup>115</sup> “А Микола лежав перед ними з печаттю несьогосвітньої краси й щаслива усмішка застигла йому на устах...” Zlotopolets', 212.

Unlike Zlotopolets', Fediv never returned to Soviet Ukraine, and he was preparing the second edition in 1946 in Augsburg, Germany, where a significant Ukrainian diaspora has been formed in the wake of the WWII around the displaced persons camps. In these new circumstances, and for the new addressee supplied by the new wave of emigration, the homecoming was not supposed to happen anytime soon, just as the reader never sees Mykola come home in the second edition. In his afterword, Fediv explicitly makes this connection between the protagonist and the new addressee: "thousands of our young men have been thrown into new, unknown lands of the wide world—just like our hero Mykola."<sup>116</sup> The young readers are also urged to follow Mykola's example in developing personal features that will help "not only physically save oneself but also bring use and glory to one's nation."<sup>117</sup> Dying on a battlefield for Ukrainian independence was not part of the program anymore, as the addressees were those who fortunately avoided dying at the battlefields of the WWII or joining millions of civilian victims of its massacres. So Fediv removed this ending, which returned the protagonist from the victorious logic of the adventure genre back to the harsh reality of military and political defeats in seventeenth-century Ukrainian history.

Fediv also removed some of the harsher descriptions of Ukrainians' suffering in the beginning of the novel, explaining all these omissions by a wish to end on a more positive note. The Ukrainian émigré youth, his new intended reader in 1946, "already happened to live through so many calamities, so many Dantean sufferings, that it would be excessive to additionally pull their already torn nerves any further by imaginary tragedies on the pages of novels, – if not a national shortcoming, at least, a wrong method in the up-bringing of the current generation."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Fediv, "Pisliaslovo," 178.

<sup>117</sup> Fediv, 178.

<sup>118</sup> Fediv, 178.

Dying for the glory of one's nation, which is the ultimate virtue in the 1919 edition, is presented here in opposition to surviving and living to its glory.

The reception of Fediv's new vision by the émigré Ukrainians could not be further from ubiquitous acceptance. In fact, Fediv's edition was dubbed "anti-national" and "falsified," particularly for proclaiming ideas drastically different from the original.<sup>119</sup> As the quotes earlier in this chapter from Fediv's afterword show, he downplayed Zlotopolets's role in the conception of *A Son of Ukraine*. This might be the evidence for the original dissent between the endeavor's two participants. In 1919, Zlotopolets' as the representative of the publishing house that commissioned the translation had a deciding say in the resulting work. Now that Fediv was in charge of the second version, the changes he made might have indicated his initial dissent with Zlotopolets's conception as well as the changes in worldview he experienced over the almost thirty years that had passed. Zlotopolets', who returned to Ukraine back in 1920, survived political repressions in the fabricated case of the "Association of the Liberation of Ukraine" in 1929–1936. In 1946, he was teaching in different parts of the Soviet Union and was not around to protect his original conception of *A Son of Ukraine*. But the Ukrainian émigré community included many who still believed in the original message, which foregrounded the need to fight for the independence of Ukraine and even die for it. To preserve the original idea, a photocopy re-print of the 1919 version was published in the USA soon after the 1946 Augsburg edition.<sup>120</sup>

However, as the following section will show, Fediv was not the only one in the émigré community to take up the idea of using the adventure genre and topic of Ukrainian history to create more constructive models of one's relationship with the community and other groups.

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<sup>119</sup> Mlynovets'kyi, *Narysy*, 1970, 1:33.

<sup>120</sup> Mlynovets'kyi, 1:33.

## 1.2. “YOU ARE NOT THE FIRST ONES TO COME TO SOUTH AMERICA FROM THE UKRAINIAN LANDS”: *A JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN* (1955) BY IURII TYS

As I have argued above, certain differences between the 1919 and 1946 versions of *A Son of Ukraine* may be explained partly by the need to adapt the text to another, yet new imagined readership—that of émigré Ukrainian youth. The analysis of the next novel, *Reid u nevidome* (*A Journey into the Unknown*, 1955) by Iurii Tys, will show even greater revision of the message addressed to young émigré readers.

Iurii Krokhmaliuk (1904–1994), who published under the pseudonym Tys, was born in Krakow and spend his early years in Western Ukraine, which was at the time first part of Austria-Hungary and then Poland. He obtained a degree in engineering in Vienna and, while practicing the profession in Western Ukraine, in the 1930s and during the World War II was affiliated with various organizations espousing the cause of Ukrainian independence. After the war, Krokhmaliuk spent several years in Austria and Germany before moving to Argentina in 1947. He left Argentina and moved to the USA in 1961, but the novel *A Journey into the Unknown* was published in 1955 during his Argentinian period, when he was living in Buenos Aires.<sup>121</sup>

Unlike in the case of an explicitly declared reworking of the pre-existing text, like that discussed above, one cannot claim that Tys’s novel is an adaptation of *A Son of Ukraine*. However, it seems likely that Tys had the work by Zlotopolets’ and Fediv in mind as he was creating his own historical novel, as he could hardly be unfamiliar with the precursor. I will demonstrate similarities of the two novels’ plots below. The first edition of *A Son of Ukraine* in

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<sup>121</sup> See Iryna Boiko, “Iurii Krokhmaliuk ta ioho istorychni tvory,” in *Humanitarni ta so͡sial'ni nauky: materialy I Mizhnarodnoi konferentsii molodykh vchenykh HSS-2009 (14-16 travnia, 2009 Ukraïna, L'viv)* (L'viv, 2009), 67–68.

1919 was published in Vienna, just several years before Tys, quite in the age of “youngsters of the awakened Ukrainian nation,”<sup>122</sup> attended college there. The second edition was published in 1946 in Germany at the time when Tys also was there, already a seasoned activist for the national cause with experience running a publishing house specializing in youth literature.

The adventure novel *A Journey into the Unknown* also has a historical setting: its action spans over the years 1520–1533. It focuses on the adventures of another Ukrainian Cossack named Mykola, this time Mykola Pretvych of noble origin, who is first introduced to the reader as a fifteen-year-old boy. Together with his armor-bearer Stan’ko, Mykola joins the Cossacks at Sich; during one of the battles with the Turks they are captured and sold into slavery in Istanbul. Later on, they escape by sea, are saved by a Spanish ship, participate in a battle with pirates, are shipwrecked – not on an uninhabited island, though, but in Spain – and join Spanish conquistadors as they gather to conquer the Incan empire under the leadership of Francisco Pizarro.

As this short summary shows, the novel by Tys uses the same motif of war between Ukrainian Cossacks and Turks and captivity, just like *A Son of Ukraine*, to introduce a Ukrainian character into a plot borrowed from Western literature and/or history. Whether or not Tys intended his novel to be a response to *A Son of Ukraine*, it obviously became a part of the dialogue in the émigré community. In what follows, I will analyze the key aspects of Tys’s proposal, related to the modes of encounter with the “Other” and the model of ethno-national community.

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<sup>122</sup> Fediv, “Pisliaslovo,” 177.

### 1.2.1. Encountering the Others: we all are very similar and have similar values

Encounters with all different groups of “Others,” including Crimean Tatars, Turks, Spaniards, and Native Americans of the Incan empire, seem to be introduced in order to support the idea that people all over the world are profoundly similar to one another. For example, after discussing some aspects of appearance and customs of Crimean Tatars, which might strike an inexperienced observer as exotic and different, the narrator claims: “In other aspects, they were not different from the Cossacks.”<sup>123</sup> On another occasion, the arrival to the South America with the conquistadors is commented as follows: “So, this is that land unknown until now? Where people, **just like us**, live, and nobody knew about it until now?”<sup>124</sup> (emphasis added).

There are additional fleeting comparisons that ascertain similarities between the in-group, Ukrainians, and other groups, for example, Spaniards (e.g., p.143–44) or Native Americans (p.13, 137). The rationale behind showing these similarities is not likening the in-group only to those powerful and victorious, as inhabitants of Spain and the Incan empire are very different points of comparison if judged by this criterion. Rather, the idea is that there always can be found inherent similarities between different people, however distinct they may seem at first glance. All over the world, the novel claims, people are similar in that they strive for happiness and peaceful life.

The first protagonist’s encounter with the Tatars happens on a battlefield, a setting quite conducive to drawing strict boundaries and dehumanizing the “Other.” Yet, even here, the motivation of the Tatars is explained not through an assumption that they are inherently evil intruders (cf. “foreign intruders” in *A Son of Ukraine*). Instead, it is suggested that ordinary

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<sup>123</sup> “Позатим не різнилися від козаків” Іґорі Тус, *Reid u nevidome: dyvni pryhody znatnoho molodtsia pana Mykoly Pretvucha* (Buenos Aires: Vydavnytstvo Іґ. Serediaka, 1955), 44.

<sup>124</sup> “Оце і є невідома досі земля? Де живуть **такі люди, як і ми**, і ніхто про це досі не знав?” Тус, 145.

people are pressed to go on raids into Ukrainian steppes because greedy nobles are demanding captives and loot. Instead of a dehumanized enemy, even the rivals on the battlefield are imagined as people with natural human longing for what is also a value for the in-group: peaceful life. It is expected that “we” and “they” might be realizing this shared value in a shared space: some of Tatars, if captured by the Cossacks, prefer to “stay to live among our folks.”<sup>125</sup> In a way, this almost Marxist explanation of the dynamics within the Tatar society is a justification of emigration: if the situation in one’s own society prevents you from the realization of basic human values, it is acceptable to strive to realize those values “among other people.” An important condition to make this an acceptable option, however, is that such Tatars who choose to live among Ukrainians can live in small communities and nobody demands of them to convert to Christianity or otherwise change their customs. This fleeting observation in an early portion of the novel is in line with conclusions from many other encounters of the protagonists: as I will show in greater detail below, a possibility to build one’s life according to the symbolic order of one’s own culture is a very highly prioritized value in the hierarchy offered by Tys. On yet another instance, it is suggested that living in a society governed by “one’s own government rather than a foreign, even if it were the best one,” is another universal value shared by every human community.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> - Що буде з ними? - спитав Микола сотенного. - Розпитаємо їх трохи, а опісля поведемо в паланку. Згодом, може, виміняємо їх за своїх. Але деякі не хочуть вертатися. Лишаються жити між нашими. Ти не бачив татарських осель? Tys, 44.

[“What will happen to them?” Mykola asked the *sotnyk* [lieutenant]. “We’ll interrogate them a little bit and then will take them to *palanka* [village]. Later, we could exchange them for ours. But some of them do not want to return. They stay to live among us. Haven’t you seen Tatar dwellings?”]

<sup>126</sup> “Як би не було, населення цієї країни, як і кожний народ, воліє свою владу, чим чужу, хоч би й найкращу” Tys, 219.

[However it is, the inhabitants of this country, just like any other people, wish to have their own government rather than a foreign one, even the best]

### 1.2.2. Encountering the Other: we are so different, so we can learn from one another

It is repeatedly argued in the novel that all people, however different they are, are essentially similar in their human qualities and values, as I have shown above. Yet, this does not mean that differences between people are not noticed and acknowledged. When asked, the protagonist declares that people in the world are not equal. But the reason for that is not any pre-existing hierarchy, prioritizing any one group over any other, only that “[w]hile there exist stupid and smart ones, people will not be equal!”<sup>127</sup> This claim is not developed further, so many interpretations may be implied. The most straightforward idea is that people differ in their intellectual capacities. Another interpretation is that some smart people use other people’s guilelessness to perpetuate inequality in their own favor, like with the one-step-from-Marxism observation about class exploitation in Tatar society quoted above. Finally, it might be understood as a suggestion that stupid people perpetuate inequalities while it takes some level of intellect to see the common humanity behind the differences. In any case, since people of different nations met by the protagonists on their journey are mostly smart ones, most of the intercultural encounters become an apology for the idea of the possibility of mutual understanding.

Consequently, differences between people, including cultural differences, are not neglected behind the idea of humankind’s similarity, but noticed and celebrated. “How different people’s customs are!” wonders the protagonist, learning about customs of a different culture. “Every Janissary has a spoon, this is a sign of Janissaries” – “They are carrying their spoons on their head, and we, the Cossacks, in the boots.”<sup>128</sup> The readiness to switch into a mode of

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<sup>127</sup> “Доки є дурні і розумні, люди рівними не будуть!” Тус, 230.

<sup>128</sup> “«Кожний яничар має ложку, – це ознака яничар». – «А, це вони стояли проти нас у степу [...] Які різні звичаї в людей. Вони носять ложки на голові, а ми, козаки, за халявою.» Тус, 80–81.

admiring the diversity of human traditions is especially notable since the protagonist has previous experience encountering the group in question, the Janissaries, as an enemy on a battlefield. Even in such cases, instead of demonizing the Other, the novel describes an interest in cultural peculiarities and a readiness to understand the underlying motifs of their actions:

“Don’t kill, sir, the Tatar is poor, must pay a levy to the sultan, and how do I pay? Misery at home, and the sultan demands gold or captives. Don’t kill the poor Tatar...”

Only now Mykola learned that Tatars live in villages, herd their horses, and only send out their squads to pay the levy to the Turkish nobles with captives. And he felt pity for the Tatar.<sup>129</sup>

Mykola’s reaction to learning the reasons behind the enemy’s actions is readiness to understand and, hence, to “pity.” This is something the young reader is prompted to learn on Mykola’s example. However, the situation is presented in a more multi-faceted way, as the above reaction of Mykola, who is still very young, is juxtaposed to the reaction of a more experienced Cossack: “Nothing to feel pity for [...] Everyone has their own troubles, and our troubles are closer to us than theirs.”<sup>130</sup>

This depiction of several possible points of view on the situation is also related to the author’s appreciation for differences between people. Now it comes to differences not between cultures but between people within the in-group that are diverse in other characteristics: age, experience, social standing, or occupation. The scene above is far from being the only one that juxtaposes two possible points of view without marking a correct one. Most often two possible outlooks are represented by Mykola, the Cossack knight of princely origin, and Stan’ko, his childhood peasant friend, who begins the journey as Mykola’s armor-bearer and later becomes a

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<sup>129</sup> “– Не вбивай, пан, татарин бідний, мусить платити гарач султанові, а чим платити? Вдома біда, а султан вимагає золота, або людей. Не вбивай бідного татарина...”

Тут доперва Микола довідався, що татари живуть у селах, пасуть табуни, а свої загони висилають на те, щоб невільниками платити окуп турецьким вельможам. І йому стало шкода татарина.” Tys, 44.

<sup>130</sup> “Немає чого жаліти, – сказав козак, що їхав біля нього. – Кожний має свою біду, а наша ближча нам, як їхня” Tys, 44.

real comrade-in-arms. Mykola is brave and highly educated; Stan'ko is hard-headed and cautious. These points of view are opposed not in order to prove one of them right and the other wrong. If any position is at all proposed to the reader as ultimately correct, it is the idea that only combined can these different approaches guarantee an effective result. This applies on a variety of different levels, starting from a practical situation of freeing themselves from captivity: "We will make use of both. Without your brain, I would be sitting inside a galley. And without money, we'll never manage to escape."<sup>131</sup> The same idea applies to a much wider level of thinking about how all of society functions: "It is an important task to defend faith and homeland. It is a knightly honorable struggle! But it is as important to sow and to forge iron and to build houses. Some people are doing one task, and the others – the second one."<sup>132</sup> Only together we, who are so different, make a functioning group, argues the author. This comes as a drastic contrast to the position on the same topic expressed in *A Son of Ukraine*, where a strict hierarchy favoring those who "defend faith and homeland" over those who sow buckwheat is proposed. Usage of almost the same key words suggests that this might be a point of direct polemics by Tys with the message of the earlier novel.

This idea that the most effectively functioning society is the one that combines different practices and various approaches is developed by suggesting the usefulness of enhancing this diversity by learning from other cultures. To a great extent, the story of Tys's protagonist is about learning from other cultures and other people, including in the least likely circumstances, in order to enhance skills that will be useful when he returns home. It is especially interesting how this is handled in the part of the novel dedicated to the time the protagonists spend as

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<sup>131</sup> "Нам придасться одне й друге. Без вашої голови я, певне, сидів би в нутрі галери. А без грошей ми ніколи не втечемо" Tys, 84.

<sup>132</sup> "важною справою є оборона віри і батьківщини. Це лицарська чесна боротьба! Але так само важною роботою є сіяти й кувати залізо та будувати дома. Одні роблять одне діло, інші – друге" Tys, 31.

captives in Istanbul. Even in such a situation, which is naturally conducive to an inimical attitude to the “Other,” the author repeatedly mitigates the harshness of the situation, turns it into an opportunity to get acquainted with a different and interesting culture to enrich one’s knowledge and experience. It is acknowledged, of course, that such an interpretation of the time spent in captivity is an uncommon one. The expectation is that one is more likely to care about one’s physical survival than about intellectual enrichment. The tension between this expectation and the situation in which Mykola and Stan’ko find themselves is mitigated by repeatedly pointing out the exceptional nature of what is happening to them. Their experience is consistently described as “we/you are lucky.”<sup>133</sup> Indeed, for each of the following lucky events in the protagonists’ story, one can easily imagine a more likely unhappy outcome. The protagonists are captured during a battle victorious for the Cossacks; they manage to help the Otaman flee; thanks to the rumor about Mykola’s noble origin and education, they are bought on the slave market by a “kind person” (“ne zloho cholovika”<sup>134</sup>); in his palace they are given easy jobs and relative freedom, and later on, Mykola is even given a teacher to study the knowledge of the Muslim world. Everybody around is understanding toward the hardship of being a slave, even if it is only a moral hardship in Mykola’s case because of his special position.<sup>135</sup> Everybody – including the narrator, protagonists and all other characters – is aware that in a situation of captivity much worse things tend to happen: hence, the repetition of the words “you are lucky.” For the protagonists, the time they spend as captives in Istanbul is rather an opportunity to widen

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<sup>133</sup> “маємо/маєте щастя.” Tys, 70, 78, 79, 107.

<sup>134</sup> Tys, 70.

<sup>135</sup> “Микола хоч у неволі, не сумував” Tys, 63.

[Mykola, though in captivity, was not sad]

Микола вдихнув свіже, запашне повітря. [...] – „Шкода думати про втечу, пане Миколо!” Tys, 76.

[Mykola inhaled fresh, balmy air. [...] – “It’s a pity to be thinking about an escape, sir Mykola!”]

horizons, to get acquainted with the “marvelous land of sultans,”<sup>136</sup> its science, philosophy, poetry, and traditions, than suffering. In fact, their status as captives mostly means that they are not free to return to their homeland and that they are outsiders, because gaining freedom within Turkish society would depend on adopting local customs and religion, that is, becoming less of an outsider. “Of course, it is not easy for you to get accustomed to us, who are foreign to you in language and faith,”<sup>137</sup> it is said to Mykola, while he is learning about the culture, science, and philosophy of the Turkish world with great eagerness. What is the unnoticeable boundary between the desirable widening of one’s knowledge by learning from another culture and the unacceptable rapprochement to it that is called here “getting accustomed to those foreign in language and faith”? The whole setup with captivity and the resulting potential of certain developments being forced on Mykola (only potential, because of his exceptional situation) allows demarcating the limits of openness to the “Other” culture.

### 1.2.3. Limits of openness to the Other

While in captivity in Istanbul, Mykola is treated with respect because of his noble origin and level of education. He enjoys relative freedom and is spared from hard work – definitely not rowing on a galley, which is the most common image of a Cossack enslaved by Turks in Ukrainian literature. Yet, he could be given much more, including freedom, good status in the society, and marriage with a girl he is in love with – if he agreed “to change his faith and fatherland.”<sup>138</sup> To Mykola, this option is unacceptable, as loyalty to his cultural authenticity, which is imagined through a combination of religious denomination, customs and practices of

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<sup>136</sup> “казковий край султанів” Тус, *Reïd u nevidome*, 71.

<sup>137</sup> “Неволя для лицаря, – це життя, що гірше смерті, – сказав, – це я знаю. І, певне, що вам не легко звикати до нас, що чужі вам і мовою, і вірою” Тус, 81.

<sup>138</sup> “змінити віру і батьківщину” Тус, 96.

everyday life, language, and nominal self-identification with a land has the highest position in his system of values.

The choice Mykola refuses to make is exemplified by an occasional character, Ivan-Akhmed. We do not know much about the back story of this character, who is described as Mykola's compatriot ("*kraianyn*"), so one can assume that he was also a Cossack captured by Turks. In order to regain freedom, he agreed "to accept Turkish faith and customs."<sup>139</sup> Instead of the expected help in organizing an escape, he suggests that Mykola and Stan'ko follow his example, advice which disgusts both protagonists. Preferring to avoid open confrontation, however, Stan'ko responds in a joking manner:

"Eh, we are not that bad in captivity either," responded Stan'ko, taking a sip of black coffee, "and, you see, dear countryman, we cannot do this. You see, I am trying to sit in the Turkish manner for a little while, and then my knees hurt."<sup>140</sup>

This repartee metaphorically explains his refusal by evoking the bodily reaction to an attempt to adopt a custom from a different culture. Notably, the same phrase implicitly suggests that there is a continuum and, up to a certain point, new, foreign things can be accepted: apparently, Stan'ko's body does not react in an equally strong manner to equally *Turkish* black coffee, which he is drinking as he is saying this. This encounter imagines national identity as something engraved in one's bodily constitution. Attempts to better one's position in society by adopting the local ways and customs are despicable because identity is considered inherent to one's physical essence, according to Tys's novel. At which point in life does this happen, however? The following example will shed additional light on this topic.

Another character Mykola and Stan'ko meet in Istanbul is Abdul, a Janissary – that is, a

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<sup>139</sup> Tys, 89.

<sup>140</sup> „Е, нам не зле і в неволі, – відповів Станько, попиваючи чорну каву, – і бачите, краєне, цього ми зробити не можемо. Посиджу, бачите, трохи по-турецьки, опісля ноги болять у колінах.” Tys, 89.

person who was captured as a small child and brought up to serve in the Turkish military. He does not remember his homeland but is aware that he is a foreigner, on whom Islam and Turkish customs were forced, even if he does not remember the fact. Already this vague understanding of one's position as an outsider makes him more amenable to Mykola and Stan'ko: he realizes that his own interests do not necessarily align with those of the Turks, and thus he makes the protagonists' escape possible by not taking action expected of him by his seniors (in whose interests it would be to stop them from escaping).

Mykola and Stan'ko manage to revive in Abdul's memory the images of his mother, his home village, and his native language – which happens to be Ukrainian. This starts a fast re-identification of this character through markers of a culture he is very little familiar with. Abdul is now renamed Andrii and is identified as a Ukrainian and a Christian. For the religious denomination, it is suggested that this is not a case of conversion because Andrii is *already* a Christian from the childhood he does not remember. It is acknowledged that some clarification of the issue with a priest is necessary, but this concerns learning the doctrine, not a formal conversion.

The author depicts two characters changing their cultural and religious self-identification as adults: Ivan-Ahmed and Abdul-Andrii. Both learn the language, customs, and religious dogmas from scratch. Yet, the evaluation of their identity change in the novel could not be more different: the protagonists are disgusted with the first one, but the second one becomes their friend, and they help him learn the language and acquire cultural competencies associated with his new/regained self-identification as a Ukrainian. The only difference explaining the contrasting evaluation is the vague recollection from Andrii's childhood. That is, this episode shows that all conscious life lived in a specific culture, according to its symbolic practices does

not matter as much for one's identity as being born into a specific culture, even if removed from that community as a small child without having had enough time to learn its symbolic practices or even remember the language.

The examples described above show that the author offers the reader a more complex view on relations with foreign cultures than is proposed in the novel by Zlotopolets' and Fediv. On the one hand, the text calls for perceiving every "Other" primarily as a person, rather than as a stereotypical representative of another nation. This person can have his own motifs and interests, and if both counterparts are smart, they can always negotiate, and sometimes even learn something new from each other. On the other hand, when borrowing new knowledge, one should be careful not to lose elements of one's national identity. Although this identity is "something in-born," a person may forget about his belonging to the Ukrainian people if he is exposed to a long-term influence of another culture. Such an integrated approach can be seen in a new light when taking into consideration that it was addressed to an émigré readership.

#### 1.2.4. Own and exotic: the case of an émigré addressee

This model of encountering the Other is better understood if one takes into consideration that the intended readers of Tys's novel are émigré Ukrainian youths living across the numerous small communities dispersed throughout the Americas and Europe. Such readers would encounter "Others" on a daily basis, and Tys seems to be offering a model for an effective intercultural interaction, which proclaims possible openness to the Other's experience and knowledge and makes it clear that enriching one's experience through contact with Others is in no way a betrayal of one's national identity or a threat to preserving in-group traditions.

Given the primary intended readership for Tys's novel, some other aspects of the book can also be understood in a new light. One needs to distinguish a wider readership from diaspora

communities living in different countries and a more narrowly defined addressee, Ukrainian youths in Argentina and other Spanish-speaking countries. At the time, different Ukrainian émigré communities exchanged their print production, and the novel was available to Ukrainian young readers in different countries. Tys clearly saw himself as writing for Ukrainians across the borders of their host countries, judging from the fact that his books were at the same time published in different locations.<sup>141</sup> At the same time, it can be assumed that the primary addressee of the novel was Ukrainian youths of Argentina, since Tys lived there during the creation of the novel and the novel was published in Buenos Aires, including an additional title page in Spanish. While in Argentina, Tys not only took an active part in the life of the Ukrainian community of the country,<sup>142</sup> but also represented this community in contacts with broader Spanish-speaking society. He was the Head of *El Instituto Informativo-Editorial Ucraino*, an organization that undertook publication of a quarterly, *Ucrania Libre (Free Ukraine)*, in Spanish, informing the Spanish-speaking public about issues pertaining to Ukraine. Tys also authored a separate brochure published by this institution, also in Spanish, *Guerra y libertad (War and Liberty)*, dedicated to the history of the division “Halychyna.”<sup>143</sup> All this evidence suggests that the Ukrainian community in Argentina and the dialogue between Ukrainians and the Spanish-speaking world around them were clearly of importance to him. Consequently, Ukrainian youths in Argentina would have been the first intended readers of *A Journey into the Unknown*. The message related to outlining a more productive mode of interaction with Others, which is clearly

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<sup>141</sup> E.g. IUrii Tys, *Konotop: opovidannia* (Toronto: Homin Ukrainy, 1959).

<sup>142</sup> Myjailo Vasylyk mentions that Tys was a member of the Association of Ukrainian Engineers and the Association of Ukrainian Scientists, Artists and Writers, and as such he was teaching courses in Ukrainian studies for the preparation of teachers for Ukrainian secondary schools. Myjailo Vasylyk, *Inmigración ucrania en la República Argentina: una comunidad por dentro* (Buenos Aires: Lumen, 2000), 150,156,189.

<sup>143</sup> Jorge Tys-Krojmaluk, *Guerra y libertad; historia de la División “Halychyna” (D. U. I) del Ejército Nacional Ucraino (1943–1945)* (Buenos Aires, 1961).

distinguished from what can be considered a betrayal of one's Ukrainian self-identification, discussed in the previous subsection, was relevant to his readers in different countries. In this subsection, I will discuss additional takeaways that could be specifically relevant for Tys's readership in Spanish-speaking surroundings.

One can imagine that the contexts related to the Spanish-speaking world and the Spanish conquest of the South America were much less exotic for this readership than it would be for a reader in mainland Ukraine. For the sake of a comparison, one can use the novella *From La Plata to the Andes* (*Vid Lia Pliaty do Andy*) by Antin Lotots'kyi, published in L'viv in 1938,<sup>144</sup> which describes a journey of a Ukrainian boy from an émigré family living in South America. The geographical setting of Lotots'kyi's novella partly coincides with the lands described in *A Journey into the Unknown*. The primary intention in *From La Plata to the Andes* is to acquaint young Ukrainian readers with the exotic lands; its informative and encyclopedic worth probably exceeds its artistic or entertainment value. But at the same time these lands are shown as completely foreign to the reader, who does not have any recognition or sense of belonging to them. In contrast, the novel by Tys, in addition to a simple description of exotic lands for readers of other Ukrainian diasporas of the world, carries an additional message for those Ukrainians whose self-identification is associated with the territory of Argentina and other Spanish-speaking countries of South America.

These young readers were growing up in a community that had to define itself vis-à-vis the Spanish-speaking majority on a daily basis. Ukrainians first came to settle in Argentina around 1897, while a majority, around 50,000 people, came during the interwar period from Western Ukraine. A third wave of Ukrainian immigration to Argentina of about 6,000 persons

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<sup>144</sup> Antin Lotots'kyi, *Vid Lia Pliaty do Andy: zemlepysne opovidanniâ*, Ditocha biblioteka, kn. 220 (L'viv: Nakladom vydavnytstva "Svit dytyny," 1938).

took place after the Second World War, among whom was Tys himself. These people were characterized by a higher average level of education and also of a higher level of political awareness of the Ukrainian cause, as they mostly emigrated for political reasons, as opposed to the vast majority of the previous waves of emigration who came for economic reasons.<sup>145</sup>

Statistically, a teenage intended reader of Tys's book published in 1955 in Buenos Aires would more likely be a second- or third-generation Ukrainian in that country rather than a recent émigré themselves. For this readership, turning to a plot about the Spanish conquest of the continent might have had an additional function than simply information about an exotic land.

This function may be summarized as discursive appropriation of the continent where Ukrainians live as a minority, normalization of one's place in South American society through describing Ukrainians' participation in its conquest and through an assumption that Ukrainians have a long history of settling in South America. The novel suggests that the three Ukrainian protagonists<sup>146</sup> are in no way the only or exceptional visitors who share this identity, as the following phrase addressed to the protagonists by Spaniards who came into South America earlier: "You are not the first ones to come from the Rus'ian-Ukrainian land. [...] Many people from different nations arrive with captains. Everyone has a reason to wander around the worlds!"<sup>147</sup> One can easily imagine that a twentieth-century Ukrainian, who also had their reasons to wander around the world and end up in South America, could relate to these words.

On another occasion, they encounter a Native American widow and daughter of their

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<sup>145</sup> Vasylyk, *Inmigración ucrania en la República Argentina*. Moreover, Serge Cipko characterized these 6,000 post-WWII refugees as "their influence on the existing community [...] was out of proportion to their numbers." Serge Cipko, *Ukrainians in Argentina, 1897-1950: The Making of a Community* (Edmonton, Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2011), xviii.

<sup>146</sup> That is, Mykola, Stan'ko, and Andrii – the pause in Andrii's Ukrainian self-identification in the latter part of the novel is only recalled when the troubles in learning simultaneously Ukrainian and Spanish are mentioned.

<sup>147</sup> "Не перші ви з русько-української землі [...] Багато тут людей від різних народів прибуває з капітанами. Кожний має якусь причину волочитися світами!" Tys, *Reïd u nevidome*, 149.

fellow countryman, boyard Polozovych. The widow still remembers and recognizes several Ukrainian words, the daughter understands none but it does not impede the protagonists from recognizing her as “our girl,” who has potential to be accepted as an in-group member and become the beloved of one of the Ukrainians: ““Our girl through and through,’ marveled Stan’ko.”<sup>148</sup> The described case gives the reader the impression that Ukrainians have lived here for a long time and do not forget their culture. Moreover, they pass on part of their cultural heritage to local residents, with whom they have close, sometimes even familial ties. The desirability of such openness to intercultural relations is the additional message that, in my opinion, is addressed to young Argentinian citizens of Ukrainian origin.

#### 1.2.5. Tys’s novel vis-à-vis existing models of adventure

As I have shown above, the part of the novel set in South America can be seen as having different functions: educating and entertaining by telling the exotic story of the European conquest of the continent, but also providing a relatable story about Ukrainian presence on that continent. This two-fold perspective can be also seen in the author’s usage of preexisting adventure tropes. From the point of view of the genre model, this part of the novel resembles the tradition established by Henry Rider Haggard’s novels, which is often called “the Lost World” adventure type.<sup>149</sup> I will show below the similarities between the genre model and *A Venture into the Unknown*, but also point to the aspects in which the author revisits the ideology of the genre model, specifically because he depicts the conquest of the continent through the participation of outsiders.

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<sup>148</sup> “Цілком наша дівчина”, - захоплювався Станько. Tys, 161.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Benjamin Ivry, “Inspired by *King Solomon’s Mines*,” in *King Solomon’s Mines*, by H. Rider Haggard, 2004, 227.

Quite like in the Allan Quartermain series by Haggard, this novel features Europeans who come, small in numbers but with a significant advantage in weapons, “into lands unknown to white people,”<sup>150</sup> where an ancient and sophisticated civilization exists. There European conquerors declare that they have a right to this land they have just discovered: “the land that was to belong to Spain, the land whose master was their captain, don Francisco Pizarro,”<sup>151</sup> as the country of Peru is referred to upon the conquistadors’ first arrival into it. In *A Venture into the Unknown*, this a priori right to the yet-to-be-seen lands is associated with the discursive power in the names of the Spanish emperor and of the Catholic Church. “I am a representative of two greatest Lords of the world – the Pope and the Emperor. They sent me to announce to you new truths, which your soul and body needs. So you have nothing left to do but to accept me as a guest and a master,” claims the conquistador.<sup>152</sup> And on another occasion: “Remember: wherever we tread is the land of our emperor! You must recognize him as the greatest lord on earth. And our God in heaven.”<sup>153</sup>

Like in some of the Haggard’s novels, in that country they are about to conquer, the Europeans use a civil war to their own advantage: “Most of the population are against Atahualpa. Everyone is praying to the gods that they have mercy on the people who suffer from unheard-of

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<sup>150</sup> Cf: “Один з інків побудував цей шлях перед сотнями років, перекопав гори, вирівняв скелі й провів вигідну дорогу від берегів моря через Кахамарку до Куска, а, може, ще й далі, в незнані білим людям землі.” Tys, *Reid u nevidome*, 229.

[One of the Incas built this road hundreds years ago, dug through mountains, evened out the rocks and made a convenient road from the shores of the sea, through Cajamarca to Cusco, and, it may be, even further, into lands unknown to white people.]

<sup>151</sup> “Увійшли в край, який мав належати Еспанії, край, якого паном є їхній капітан, дон Франціско Пізарро.” Tys, 153.

<sup>152</sup> “Я є представник двох найбільших Сеньйорів світу, - Папи й Імператора. Вони вислали мене, щоб сповістити вам нові правди, потрібні вашій душі й тілові. Ото ж, вам не залишається нічого іншого, як прийняти мене, як гостя і пана” Tys, 187.

<sup>153</sup> “Ми маємо іншу силу, якої ти не можеш бачити. Але ми не прийшли до вас з війною. Пам'ятай: де наша нога стане, там є земля нашого імператора! Ви мусите його визнати, як найбільшого володаря на землі. І нашого Бога на небі” Tys, 211.

atrocities from the new ruler.”<sup>154</sup> However, this circumstance does not become a justification of the Spaniards’ intervention into the affairs of the Incan empire: the fact that the Pope and the Emperor have proclaimed these lands theirs is a sufficient justification for the conquest, no further justifications (such as that they are bringing an end to the atrocities of an unlawful ruler) are necessary. More generally, similarly to Haggard’s but unlike some other types of adventure novels that imply that Europeans come to rule for the sake of the civilizing mission—to better the “savages” situation—*A Journey into the Unknown* does not include this type of justification. Instead, two other reasons for setting out on such a journey are proclaimed: adventure-seeking and enrichment. Tys describes how Spanish conquistadors include people governed by these two reasons and how hard it is for Pizarro to reconcile these two very different personality types together: “out of all these people to make a sturdy company, to combine the dreamers with the thugs, and all these energies acting in different directions to steer into one riverbed of concrete reality.”<sup>155</sup>

Just like in Haggard’s African series, where more and less developed societies are existing in eternal timelessness and waiting for the European conquerors who will discover them and give meaning to their existence, in Tys’s novel the representatives of the conquered Incan empire themselves describe their own culture languishing in expectation of foreigners who will come and bring meaning, movement, and development:

After all, a renaissance will come. You will wake up the dead country held captive by the sun. You

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<sup>154</sup> “- Перед нами, - говорив далі Пізарро, - є розправа з королем, який війною здобув владу. Більшість населення є проти Атауальпи. Усі молять богів, щоб змилосердилися над народом, який терпить нечувані насильства від нового володаря” Tys, 147.

<sup>155</sup> “з усіх цих людей зробити міцне товариство, з’єднати мрійників з лиходіями, і всі ці розбіжно діючі сили спрямувати в одне річище твердої дійсности” Tys, 144.

Also: “Були тут справжні авантюристи, що вибралися здобути майно, але були й лицарі, які чекали від виправи містичних і цікавих переживань.” Tys, 135.

[There were real fortune-seekers here, who ventured out to acquire possessions, but there were also knights who expected the journey to give them mystical and interesting experiences]

will break the gods with painted eyes and lips, and you will sometime in the future put the clay soldiers with pearl blue eyes on a well visible place, for the descendants to observe. But with that, you will also give us hope and meaning of life. Your vigor and your God.<sup>156</sup>

Above I have shown many similarities between *A Journey into the Unknown* and the “Lost World adventure” model, which imply that Tys used an existing genre model and tropes to explain the actions of his characters. There is, however, an important difference in the usage of the very recognizable tropes. While Haggard’s protagonists are themselves the bearers of the discourse about the necessity and Europeans’ moral right to conduct the conquest on these premises, Tys’s novel rather reproduces these tropes to outline *somebody else’s* motivation and beliefs about the conquest. This is how the Spanish conquistadors conduct war and deal with the Other, while Ukrainian protagonists are not sure that these acquisitions are necessary. For instance, when a Spaniard reproduces the conquistadors’ approach to unknown lands in the following way: “No, a conquistador does not keep close to the shore, he goes to the land’s interior! He conquers, not languishes!” The protagonists respond to this maxim by questioning it through a comparison with a different approach to protecting the interests and the borders of one’s country: “Why then [...] do our Cossacks defend Ukraine in the steppes, instead of venturing to conquer the sultans’ realm?”<sup>157</sup> However, this opposition to the dominant discourse prompted by the protagonists’ experience is not developed any further. They do not question the colonization project in any fully-fledged manner. Apparently, the goal of inscribing Ukrainians in the history of the Spanish conquest of the South America was more important to Tys;

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<sup>156</sup> “Все ж таки, прийде відродження. Ви збудите мертву країну, яку поневолило сонце. Ви розіб’єте богів з малюваними очима й устами, а глиняних воїнів з жемчужними голубими очима поставите колись на видному місці, щоб оглядали їх нащадки. Але з тим ви дасте нам надію і змісл життя. Свою снагу і свого Бога.” Tys, *Reid u nevidome*, 238–39.

<sup>157</sup> “- Ні, конкістадор не тримається берегів, а йде у глиб краю! Здобуває, а не животіє! [...]

- А чому ж, - глянув на них Андрій, - наші козаки боронять Україну в степах, а не йдуть здобувати царство султанів?” Tys, 169–70.

seriously questioning this discourse and putting the Ukrainian protagonists in opposition to the Spaniards could undermine this message. What the author does, however, is marking the Ukrainian protagonists as outsiders: even as they participate in the action on behalf of Spain, they do not participate in the discursive justifications of these actions.

Without partaking in the dominant discourse about the moral power to come and take, the protagonists feel lost in time and space and are mostly justifying their participation in the conquest by the idea that the experience they have gained will be useful in further fights in defense of Ukraine, as can be illustrated by the following words addressed to Mykola by one of the conquistador commanders:

«Скільки років ти вже у мандрах? Десять? Це нічого, коли ти їх не змарнував у безділлі або у благих справах. Живи славно й відважно! І хай далі твоє життя йде шляхом лицарів, шукай чести для своєї батьківщини і слави для твого роду! Коли вернешся до своїх, знай, що ці роки дали тобі небувалий досвід, який можеш зужити для оборони твоєї країни.»<sup>158</sup>

[“How many years have you been wandering? Ten? That’s fine if you didn’t waste them in idleness or folly. Live gloriously and bravely! And let your life continue to be a knightly one; look for honor for your homeland and glory to your family! When you return to your countrymen, know that these years gave you incredible experience, which you will be able to use to defend your country.]

In this way, participation in Peru’s acquisition on behalf of Spain is not an end in itself for Mykola, but just a means to his maturation as a fully-fledged adult knight. In his adolescence, he might have dreamed about travels in the New World, which seemed to him a “paradise on earth.” At that point he doubts his teacher’s rebuttal that “paradise is at home.”<sup>159</sup> The

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<sup>158</sup> Tys, 201.

<sup>159</sup> Одного дня Микола дістав книжку, яка його цілком полонила. Це був опис нової країни, що її відкрив Колон [...].

-Туди я хочу йти, дорогий Михайле Васильовичу! Туди, де птахи, де квіти, де рай на землі.

- Не там рай, сину, - похитав головою списатель. - рай дома!

- Як то? А татари, а Литва?

- Слід боронити рідний край, бо це лицарське діло. Не думай собі, що й країну індіан не боронять червоні люди перед білими здобичниками. Та про це Америго не пише. Tys, 13.

[One day Mykola got a book that totally enthralled him. It was a description of the new land discovered by Columbus [...].

protagonist must make this journey of maturation – which is much more about acquaintance with all the diversity of the world and its cultures than actual challenges – in order to recognize that his homeland and returning to it are of ultimate value.

Returning home was hardly a feasible option for the post-war émigré reader but still, the novel might have offered a new idea about the balance between valuing one's culture as a minority émigré community and partaking in the majority culture of the host country, learning its language and working in its institutions, which could now be interpreted as gaining experience ultimately useful for one's own culture and country.

## CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 1

Both novels analyzed in this section develop a historical plot; both novels' protagonists are Cossacks by the name Mykola who end up travelling to the New World as a result of a series of events that in both cases start from their capture by Turks on the battlefield. The similarity of the plot in the part about Turkish captivity leads to the assumption that *A Journey into the Unknown* by Tys might have been a response to *A Son of Ukraine* by Fediv and Zlotopolets'. I argue that the aim of this response is to offer a different stance on the topic of national identity and encounter with the Other, which are significantly different in the two novels. *A Son of Ukraine* adheres to the model of threatened ethno-national identity, which for the sake of its preservation must limit any contacts with any out-group members, who are a priori enemies. *A Journey into the Unknown* by Tys proposes openness towards other cultures, their knowledge

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“I want to go there, dear Mykhailo Vasyliovych! There, where there are birds, flowers, where is the paradise on earth.”

“Paradise is not there, my son”, responded the scripter. “Paradise is at home.”

“How can that be? But we have Tatars, and Lithuania...”

“One should defend one's own land, because it is a knightly deed. Do not think that the Indians' country is not defended by the red people against the white intruders. But that Amerigo would not mention.”]

and customs, and enrichment of one's experience through encounters with the out-groups, which are promoted. At the same time, this mutually enriching mode of intercultural communication is strictly demarcated from what is considered a betrayal of own identity and culture. Tys's novel promotes the need to always look for what is universal and common to all humankind, even in situations of overt conflicts of interest. Consequently, the novels also differ in how they imagine the in-group itself. *A Son of Ukraine* proposes a strict hierarchy within the in-group, which implies that it is more honorable to be a warrior than a farmer (who is contemptuously referred to in the novel as "buckwheat-sower"), whereas in *A Journey into the Unknown*, it is repeatedly emphasized that different roles in society, approaches, and ideas are equally important and only together do they constitute the entirety of the in-group.

The first part of both novels is related to the Ukrainian tradition of folkloric and literary dumas about the Cossacks' struggle against Tatars and Turks, though in *A Son of Ukraine* the motif of a Cossack's captivity by Turks from this tradition is combined with the motif of captivity from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and *A Journey into the Unknown* most likely recreates its predecessor in this regard. Later on, each of the novels follows an existing model of adventure novels: the Robinsonade adventure model in *A Son of Ukraine*, quite closely replicating *Robinson the Younger* by Campe, and, more loosely, the "Lost World adventure" model in *A Journey into the Unknown*. In this way, both novels inscribe Ukrainian protagonists into the "big world history" of European conquest and colonization of the New World, in which Ukrainians historically could only participate as separate representatives, not as a political nation and state.

By using such models of adventure novels, which were developed in West European literatures (of the nations who did conduct this conquest and colonization and discursively justified these practices in such novels), the authors are overtly distancing their Ukrainian

protagonists from the typical binaries of the colonizer-subaltern. To emphasize this, they suggest either different goals for participation in the conquest or an intention to become in this fantasized order a “better”, “fairer” colonizer than historical European colonizers.

Difference in the messages with regard to the model of national identity and the encounter with the Other in these novels that are similar in many regards may be attributed to the differences in circumstances in which the authors created these texts and which defined how they imagined their readers. *A Son of Ukraine*, created amid the revolutionary effort to establish an independent Ukrainian state, presents the model of mobilized national identity, as its aim is to “awaken” the Ukrainian youth, who are imagined as possible contributors to the cause of establishing an independent state. *A Journey into the Unknown* is created for the émigré readership, in a moment when a more relevant goal than mobilizing for an armed struggle is finding its place in the host country and balancing the importance of belonging to one’s culture and community and partaking in a wider society of the host country, including learning from it for personal benefit and the benefit of the community.

## CHAPTER 2. SEEKING RECOGNITION IN THE PRESENT: POLISH SELF-REFASHIONING AS A MODERN EUROPEAN NATION-STATE IN THE 1930S

### 2.1. REDEEMING THE NON-VIOLENCE: *SALT RIVER CANYON* (1938) BY TADEUSZ KOSTECKI

The novel *Kanion słonej rzeki* (*Salt River Canyon*, 1938) by Tadeusz KostECKI (1905–1966) was one of the first books published by the author, who only made his debut that year. He would later become better known to the Polish audience with his detective stories published in the late 1940s and 1950s. Alongside his real name, he published under a variety of pseudonyms, including “Krystyn T. Wand,” “Tadeusz Kryswan,” and “W.T. Christine.” The latter pseudonym was the one that figured on his pre-war texts, including *Salt River Canyon*. Just like the other three novels he published before the Second World War, *Salt River Canyon* is a western whose action is set in the typical scenery of the American “Wild West” and features character types and plot elements characteristic of this sub-genre of adventure novels like cowboys and outlaws. The usage of an English-sounding pseudonym (as opposed to the Polonized version Krystyn T. Wand) also suggests the intention to offer these westerns to the Polish reader as if they originated from an authentic foreign source, not from a domestic author. *Salt River Canyon*, however, does not pretend to be a translation of an American novel unrelated to the Polish context: it brings a Polish protagonist into the plot in a western setting.

The novel is centered around a twenty-something young Pole by the name Jacek Bandera, a cavalry veteran and a law school graduate from Warsaw, who comes to an unspecified location in the American “Wild West.” His aim is to retrieve his inheritance from his uncle and bring to justice the killer of the same uncle and his family, following a letter from some twenty years prior. Jacek is falsely accused of a different murder he witnesses and harshly persecuted by a

local sheriff, Carsley, later discovered to be the uncle's murderer. Carsley is interested in hanging Jacek under this convenient false pretense, lest his own misdeeds from the past are made known. Bandera escapes from the prison, befriends some outlaws, works as a cowboy on a cattle farm, and falls in love with a farmer's daughter, Ann. Yet, only after clearing his name from false accusations and restoring justice can he marry her and take her back with him to Poland.

In this section, I will analyze how the fact that the protagonist of western adventure is an outsider from Poland rebalances the ideological set-up of the genre. Moreover, I will address the question of what the usage of this genre formula brings into the message for the reader in the cultural moment when the novel is set and written.

#### 2.1.1. Elements of the western formula in Kostecki's novel

By the time the novel was written in the late 1930s, the genre model of the western, or what Green calls the Frontiersman adventure story type, had been developing in American literature for over a hundred years, ever since *The Pioneers* by James Fenimore Cooper in 1823. Not only did the frontier itself move substantially from the times of Natty Bumppo, when the wilderness started in upstate New York, but the literary formula had evolved and developed new elements over this time. Yet, as Cynthia S. Hamilton puts it, throughout the existence of the genre it had been a ground for "testing and confirmation of key American values,"<sup>160</sup> and the genre evolved naturally, as the relevant questions and answers changed. In the following paragraphs, I will analyze what elements Kostecki borrowed from the various stages of development of the western formula, and then show what was new that he added to the ready model, making this novel a relevant narrative to the cultural situation in Poland and his

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<sup>160</sup> Cynthia S. Hamilton, *Western and Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction in America: From High Noon to Midnight* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1987), 1.

communication with Polish readers.

Green claims that the Frontiersman adventure story type is a predominantly American formula, in the same way as he associates the Robinson story type with British literature, and the Three Musketeers story type with French literature. Within this type of adventure narrative, however, Green also counts texts written by Europeans about other frontiers their cultures pushed against (such as the Caucasus in Russian literature or North Africa in French), as well as westerns written about the American frontier by non-Americans (such as by the German author Karl May). The term “western” has been associated more specifically with the American setting and the push of the frontier of the American settled territory westward since the independence war.

The most widely known texts associated with the western formula are the Leatherstocking series by James Fenimore Cooper. Some of the elements that reemerge in Kostecki’s story can be traced from Cooper’s novels. For instance, the plot element related to the disinheritance of a lawful heir and the need to restore justice and the family’s good name with regard to the inheritance that is central to *Salt River Canyon* resembles that in *The Pioneers*. While this is a rather specific motif, it is connected to a wider notion that the frontier is a setting where the ideas of natural law and justice are put to the test. Hamilton, who considers both western and hard-boiled detective fiction to be sub-genres or sub-formulas of what she calls the “American adventure formula,” claims that the distinctive features of this master formula’s setting are lawlessness and individualism, along with the maximum opportunity for individual enrichment.<sup>161</sup> Kostecki’s novel, too, replicates these aspects of the western setting, although, as I will show below, in the Polish novel the “western” setting with these characteristics is opposed

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<sup>161</sup> Hamilton, 10.

to something different than in American westerns, and as a result it offers an escapist relief for anxieties of a different kind.

Later stages in the development of the genre also added to the form in which it was inherited, as a ready formula, by Kostecki in the 1930s. The Dime Novels series published by the publisher Beadle became iconic of the developments in the genre in 1860s–90s. In the 1910s–20s a new incarnation of the western formula appeared, which John Cawelti connects to the books by Zane Grey and the movies of W. S. Hart, as the formula began to make its way from literature into cinema.<sup>162</sup> On these stages, many steady elements have developed that can be found in Kostecki’s westerns and that I will discuss below. I am not generally considering here the cinematic “classic western” stage of the formula development that only started to appear in the late 1930s and mostly developed in the 1940s and 1950s. The new elements in the genre were not yet consolidated as a ready set of tropes by the time the novel was written. Some similarities can be discerned, however, like treatment of the western setting as something forgone, belonging to the past, suggesting that the kernel from which these elements developed was already present in the formula when Kostecki borrowed it.<sup>163</sup>

Green claims that central to the western formula since Cooper is a relationship between an old guide, or “hunter,” who represents a way of life in line with nature, and a “genteel” young man, who usually comes from outside the frontier setting and represents the civilization. The apprenticeship of the young protagonist to the old one is his process of learning what it means to be a true American.<sup>164</sup> While Green traces the realizations of this same dynamics in twentieth-

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<sup>162</sup> Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, A Harvard Paperback, HP 21 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), 90–122; Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 209–41.

<sup>163</sup> Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 242–51; Kim Newman, *Wild West Movies: Or How the West Was Found, Won, Lost, Lied about, Filmed and Forgotten* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991).

<sup>164</sup> Green, *Seven Types of Adventure Tale: An Etiology of a Major Genre*, 99–101.

century novels, offering new answers to the same profound questions about American culture, Henry Nash Smith observes that already in the second half of the nineteenth century the figure of the old hunter or traditional trapper gradually goes “off the stage.”<sup>165</sup> In *Salt River Canyon*, the motif of apprenticeship of a young outsider hero to an old one, a local of the frontier setting, is only a minor one and does not play an equally structurally important role as suggested by Green. By quite an improbable turn of the events, the protagonist’s experience gained in totally different circumstances (in an urban setting in Poland) already makes him prepared for the challenges of the American “Wild West.” The motif of apprenticeship as a way to represent the dialectics between a “civilized aristocrat” and a simple frontiersman gave way by the later nineteenth century to the motif of disguise when both roles are performed by the same character.<sup>166</sup> In Kostecki’s novel, the disguise of the protagonist (not an aristocrat but through his education and military service a member of the elite) as a tramp (*włoczęga*) and a simple cowboy dwells on this tradition.

Smith argues that a cowboy gains dominance as the stock character of the western in the early twentieth century, after his first appearance in the 1880s.<sup>167</sup> As the scholar observes, paradoxically, quite often in the Dime Novels, the image of the cowboy “has nothing to do with cattle,” as “[t]he professional duty of Beadle cowboys is to fight Indians, Mexicans, and outlaws.”<sup>168</sup> The disconnection of the image of a cowboy from the real-life scope of that profession is not as startling in *Salt River Canyon* as in the Dime Novels. Here, the protagonist’s role as a cowboy is introduced very specifically in relation to the work on a cattle farm, and in

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<sup>165</sup> Smith, *Virgin Land*, 96.

<sup>166</sup> Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 211.

<sup>167</sup> Smith, *Virgin Land*, 109.

<sup>168</sup> Smith, 111.

connection to the necessity to earn a living by unskilled wage labor. Still, the protagonist's work on a cattle farm in this novel comes together with the paraphernalia of the glorious image of a cowboy, including the prowess in riding and performing horseback tricks and protecting innocent maidens from outlaws and wild beasts.

Another role of the western hero that started to develop in the Dime Novel tradition is that of a detective.<sup>169</sup> Hamilton finds many common features between the genres of the western and the hard-boiled detective, including their shared emphasis on individualism and lawlessness, that is, absence or malfunctioning of the institutions that are supposed to procure justice in society.<sup>170</sup> Unsurprisingly, some westerns include the motif of brave individuals taking their fates into their own hands and fighting for justice – and they do so not only by fending off the outlaws and bandits but also by solving crimes and clearing the reputations of the falsely accused when the institutions of law and order fail to perform these functions. It is also telling that Tadeusz Kostecki himself, after authoring several westerns in the beginning of his writing career, switched to detective stories. In *Salt River Canyon*, this aspect is present more nominally than substantially. Jacek Bandera takes upon himself the task of “solving the crime” he is accused of. However, this does not make the novel a detective story, as the reader knows the identity of the criminal from the very beginning, together with the protagonist. Thus, Jacek's task is rather to substantiate his version of the events with legally valid proofs before the judge. The real mystery the reader observes him solve is the reason why sheriff Carsley is so inclined against him and ignores the evidence proving that Bandera acted in self-defense. That “mystery,” however, is solved not through elements usually found in a detective, such as finding clues and checking

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<sup>169</sup> Smith, 101.

<sup>170</sup> Hamilton, *Western and Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction in America*, 10.

hypotheses, but by simply locating the person who knows the truth (Matteo, the old servant of the late Jan/John Bandera), who is known to possess the necessary information all along. The search for the traces of Matteo, who had been in hiding twenty years, could have made a detective story, but this search is omitted from the novel altogether; it is just stated that it took several months and was difficult.

As these observations suggest, the protagonist of *Salt River Canyon* combines in himself several ready types of the western hero: he is both a “genteel” outsider from the East, a cowboy, and a detective. Recognizing these stock personas taken from literary and cinematic western traditions will allow me to distinguish later in this analysis what characteristics of this protagonist make him a specifically Polish hero and what values ascribed to him distinguish him from these pre-existing western heroes.

The setting of *Salt River Canyon* also comes entirely from the tradition of the western formula.<sup>171</sup> Both the typical elements and meaning of the frontier setting have evolved throughout the development of this genre. On the one hand, real historical changes are behind the fact that the “pathless forest” and endless prairie gave way to a “frontier town”<sup>172</sup> as the setting for the frontier narratives over the nineteenth century. On the other hand, Cawelti observes that early twentieth-century literary and cinematic westerns, for instance, all “develop and elaborate the same quasi-allegorical landscape of town, desert, and mountains and the same social and historical background of large cattle and sheep ranching” while ignoring other types of landscapes and economic activity present in reality in the same region in the same time frame,

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<sup>171</sup> The author’s daughter confirmed in an interview that her father had no first-hand knowledge of the American West when he authored his westerns in the 1930s. See M. Jarocka, “Zapomniany Sherlock Holmes,” *Argumenty*, no. 2 (1987): 6–7.

<sup>172</sup> Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 215.

such as “mining development, [...] wheat-raising[,], or the family subsistence farm.”<sup>173</sup> These iconic elements of the landscape are also the ones reproduced in Kostecki’s novel: a town, a mountainous desert, and cattle ranches.

According to Cawelti, in the late-nineteenth century westerns a new meaning of the West emerges (this change historically is related to the closing of the frontier). It no longer symbolized an encounter between civilization and nature, as in Cooper’s times, but “an open society where the intricacies of complex social institutions are unknown, where people are surrounded by loyal friends, where hearty individualists can give vent to their spontaneous urges, and where justice is done directly and without ambiguity.”<sup>174</sup> This all was conducive to the attractiveness of the western setting as an escapist fantasy about the possibility of prioritizing different values than what modern society offers. And Kostecki, too, uses the borrowed western setting in this role. With all the borrowed elements from the tradition of western literature and movies created in the US discussed above, this aspect is what makes *Salt River Canyon* more than a simple reproduction of all *American* novels written about a similar setting. The ready formula with its set elements is used to present the reader with *Polish* values, as well as an escapist fantasy and relief for very specific anxieties that were relevant to Polish society on the eve of World War II.

### 2.1.2. A clash of value systems

In *Salt River Canyon*, one can discern three different systems of values that come in conflict with one another. One is associated with the frontier town of Neavill, corrupted by the bandit-turned-sheriff Carsley. Another, with the “noble-hearted” outlaws from Jolly Joe’s band. These two by themselves would constitute the classic western set-up. However, standing apart

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<sup>173</sup> Cawelti, 234–35.

<sup>174</sup> Cawelti, 214.

from, while sharing some aspects with both, there is also the Polish protagonist's system of values.

It cannot be said that Carsley, the antagonist, himself represents a system of values. His actions against Jacek Bandera in the novel's present time are motivated not by any type of conviction, belief, or ethos, but simply by the desire to hide the information revealing Carsley's past crimes. His actions in the past are also hardly motivated by anything more than his boisterous temper. Once a friend and a business partner of Jan Bandera (the uncle), Carsley simply goes berserk at some point because of their rivalry for the love of one woman, which is presented as a realization of his evil and irrational nature more than anything else.

His role in the town of Neavill, however, shows that this frontier town society represents a kind of system of values. Carsley is successful in his line of behavior and in achieving his goals because those around him lack the responsibility and devotion to the common good. "[H]e will be able to lead the jury wherever he wants anyway. He knew the court of Neavill well enough."<sup>175</sup> Carsley is sure he can manipulate the opinion of the jury because nobody really cares. Doctor Meadow, the justice of the peace, had been neglecting his duties for years, simply signing all the documents given to him by the sheriff.<sup>176</sup> In other words, this town represents the vices a society develops when people stop being responsible citizens who personally care about justice and the common good. Relying on impersonal systems and relegating performance of essential functions to somebody else opens the way to abuses. It is suggested that even those who had built the jail building in Neavill did not take their task responsibly but rather stole part of the

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<sup>175</sup> "... i tak potrafi zaprowadzić sąd przysięgłych, dokąd będzie chciał. Znał dostatecznie dobrze sąd d Neavill" Tadeusz Kostecki, *Kanion Słonej Rzeki* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo LTW, 2006), 23.

<sup>176</sup> „Doktor podpisywał bez najmniejszego sprzeciwu dokumenty podsunięte przez szeryfa, ale jeszcze wczytywać się w ich treść? Uważałby to niewątpliwie za przesadę.” Kostecki, 108.

funds.<sup>177</sup>

The townspeople's attitude is opposed by the protagonist himself, who considers it his personal responsibility to attend to justice. I will analyze this in greater detail below. This attitude is also opposed to that of another sheriff named Winsney, who works in the vicinity of Dean's farm where Jacek finds work after his escape. Winsney had received a wanted notice for Jacek Bandera and identified the protagonist as the person described in the notice. Yet, he sets Jacek free based on his individual judgement and personal evaluation of the virtues of the young man. These virtues include the fact that, conveniently by the moment of his arrival, Jacek captures two criminals the sheriff had long been searching for to arrest:

“Before I saw “The Golden Hand” and “The Tiger” [nicknames of the criminals caught by Jacek] I would have sworn that you remind me of someone... someone whose photograph I saw quite recently... But at the sight of my two old friends, bound like sheep by you, I lost all memory. You are Mr. Clement [the name under which Jacek is known] and will remain him as long as you remain in my district ...”<sup>178</sup>

There is an element of calculation here: Winsney seems to let Jacek go unrecognized because of the service he had performed capturing two criminals who had troubled the sheriff for a long time. However, a greater part of this evaluation is recognition of Jacek's moral virtues based on this action: he cannot be a criminal himself if he saves Ann from other criminals. This is an example of that escapist fantasy about a world of easier and clearer moral judgements for which the western setting has been known. Interestingly, this situation is clearly an exercise of law-defying arbitrariness on Winsney's behalf, just like Carsley's conduct with regard to Jacek is arbitrary and unlawful. The difference is only that Carsley persecutes Bandera without proper

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<sup>177</sup> „Ktoś musiał grubo zarobić na budowie” Kostecki, 25.

<sup>178</sup> „Zanim jeszcze zobaczyłem „Złotą Rączkę” i „Tygrysa” przysięgłbym, że mi pan kogoś przypomina... kogoś, czyją fotografią oglądałem całkiem niedawno... Ale na widok mych dwóch starych przyjaciół, związanych przez pana jak owce, straciłem wszelką pamięć. Pan jest Clementem i pozostanie nim, dopóki będzie przebywał w moim okręgu...” Kostecki, 98–99.

legal justification because of his *personal* interest; Winsney sets Bandera free, contrary to the legal order, because this corresponds to his understanding of the *common* good. This means that arbitrariness itself is not something that is presented as a negative thing in the novel. To the contrary, relying on a personal judgement, rather than on impersonal authority, is mostly a positive thing (as the system of impersonal authority might also promote someone's biased or self-serving judgement, as in this case); what matters is the system of values that governs this personal judgement.

The second system of values is associated with the “noble-hearted” outlaws of Jolly Joe's band. This resembles the “code” of the Wild West idealized by many late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century American westerns. Jacek Bandera meets one from the band, Harrington, in prison, and they organize the escape together. Harrington leads the way through the rocky wilderness, thus saving Jacek, but dies from the wounds he suffered during the escape. Taking care of Harrington at his death bed and burying their comrade is what vouchsafes Jacek the help of the rest of the band when he later meets them. They are criminals, no doubt, but they share with the protagonist some key values, such as the love of freedom, a sense of honor, reciprocating past good deeds, and the reliability of one's honest word. Harrington, for instance, is described as having “a delicate sense of justice,” even though the scope of its application is limited to those whom he considers his comrades.<sup>179</sup>

As the genre of the western developed, the role of the chief enemy was transferred from Indians to outlaws and bandits.<sup>180</sup> What was persevered throughout the change, however, is the dynamic that envisions distinguishing between “noble” and “vicious” savages. Cawelti brings the

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<sup>179</sup> „Bandyta miał delikatne poczucie sprawiedliwości... w stosunku do swych towarzyszy.” Kostecki, 40.

<sup>180</sup> Smith, *Virgin Land*, 92.

example of this opposition in Cooper's *The Last of Mohicans*: the noble savages "are motivated by a code of personal honor," while the "diabolical" ones are "obsessed with a mad desire for power and vengeance."<sup>181</sup> The same difference can be seen in *Salt River Canyon* on the outlaws. The bandits whose quarrel Bandera witnesses in the novel's opening, "devoid of any scruples,"<sup>182</sup> and even more so Carsley in his outlaw past are the "mad savage" type, representing elemental violence beyond reasoning. The band of Jolly Joe are the "noble savage" type, who even suffer because of their adherence to principles and a code of honor.

It is traditional for the western genre to include opposition to corrupt civilization as an element of the more violent but more pristinely moral world of the Wild West. Quite often, the former is associated with the longer-settled areas in the American East, while the latter with the scarcely populated West. In Kostecki's novel, the opposition of these two modes is transferred onto the opposition between the town of Neavill, on the one hand, and the world of "noble savage" outlaws, sheriff Winsney, and the cowboys on Dean's cattle farm, on the other hand. Geographically, these two worlds are packed together much closer than usual for traditional western narratives (the mountainous desert, where the outlaws feel at home and where the authorities from the town do not dare to follow the escapees, begins immediately at the outskirts of the town) but they seem to belong to different epochs. The status of an outsider who had travelled a long way is reserved for a representative of a third, yet different world.

Even though Kostecki obviously favors the "noble-hearted" outlaws, rewarding them towards the end of the novel with Jacek's gift out of his redeemed inheritance and letting them go free from the police, this is still not the ethos that is presented to the readers as the worthiest

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<sup>181</sup> John G. Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1971), 54.

<sup>182</sup> "Pozbawieni byli jakichkolwiek skrupułów" Kostecki, *Kanion Słonej Rzeki*, 7.

one. The system of values associated with the protagonist, Jacek Bandera, stands apart both from the unengaged townsfolk condoning corruption and the noble-hearted bandits.

Most remarkably, the protagonist's beliefs are outstandingly pacifist for a hero of a western, the genre that has been long observed to be presenting increasing amounts of violence and bloodshed, for the subsequent texts in the genre to be able to impress the readers against the background of the earlier ones.<sup>183</sup> When they escape from the prison, Bandera makes Harrington promise that they are not going to kill anyone standing in their way but simply knock them out. (In this fantasized reality, beating someone so hard that they lose consciousness is a totally innocuous act.) Later, as he meets Jolly Joe's band, he refuses to accept financial help from them, which would enable him to return to Poland, because this money was stolen from someone.<sup>184</sup> Another element that symbolizes the protagonist's rejection of western-style violence is that he makes it explicit that he comes not to avenge his uncle's and cousin's murder but to bring the perpetrator to justice. In that, he also displays the belief in systems and institutions – the value shared with the townspeople I analyzed above. His own quandary is eventually solved by resorting to institutional authority as well: a forensic expertise of the firearms used by him and by the bandits of murdering whom he was accused.

The values of personal responsibility and truthfulness also characterize the protagonist.

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<sup>183</sup> As Henry Nash Smith puts it, rival publishers competed for the readers' attention to their series by "killing a few more Indians": "exaggerating violence and bloodshed for their own sakes, to the point of an overt sadism." (Smith, *Virgin Land*, 92.)

<sup>184</sup> „Bandera zaczerwienił się ... Przyjęcie pieniędzy zrabowanych przez kogo innego byłoby przecież jeszcze gorsze od rabowania ich samemu. [...]

- Tak – powiedział cicho wpatrując się z uwagą w jakiś wierzchołek – masz rację. Jeżeli ma się takie czy inne przekonania, trzeba konsekwentnie się ich trzymać, jak drogo by to miało kosztować. Żywność w każdym razie możesz chyba od nas przyjąć?” Kostecki, *Kanion Słonej Rzeki*, 67.

[“Bandera blushed... Accepting money stolen by someone else would be even worse than robbing it yourself. [...]

"Yes," he [Jolly Joe] said quietly, staring intently at some point, "you are right. If you have certain beliefs, you have to stick to them consistently, however dear it would cost. Can you, at least, accept food from us?"]

These values are so important for him that he follows these priorities even when this creates problems for him. As I already briefly mentioned above, Jacek Bandera's "bad luck" that nearly results in his hanging starts from his reluctance to ignore the injustice he has witnessed (a quarrel between two outlaws resulting in a murder): "You are asking why I care? I must care about the robbery murder committed before my eyes. Since I was the witness of the murder, I am obliged to pull you to the sheriff... such is my bad luck..."<sup>185</sup> Even though he is a total outsider, and he knows that he deals with dangerous bandits who do not stop short of killing, he cannot but follow the moral imperative to bring the murderer to justice.

Patriotism is another of the protagonist's virtues. Kostecki is offering his reader not simply a virtuous role model, but specifically a model member of the Polish community. It is, for example, a condition that goes without questioning that only after the protagonist "performed his duties before the state," i.e. served in the military, the time came to go to the United States to mend family affairs.<sup>186</sup> Being the representative of Poland in this foreign setting, he always cares about how his actions influence his homeland's reputation. Accused of murder, he is reluctant to mention that he is from Poland, so that the image of his country would not be associated with criminals.<sup>187</sup> As it befits a true Pole, Jacek Bandera is also religious. His religious conviction helps him console Harrington on his deathbed, as the outlaw wonders about existence of God.

As this analysis shows, although Jacek Bandera has much paraphernalia of a typical western adventure hero, the core values ascribed to him drastically contradict the key characteristic of "lawlessness-and-individualism" identified in the genre. This character, whose

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<sup>185</sup> „Musi mnie obchodzić morderstwo rabunkowe popełnione na moich oczach. Skoro byłem świadkiem mordu, jestem zmuszony zatańczyć cię do szeryfa... taki już mój pech...” Kostecki, 11.

<sup>186</sup> „Czekałem, aż dorośniesz, aż spełnisz obowiązek wobec kraju... a teraz, jeżeli chcesz...” Kostecki, 34.

<sup>187</sup> „Nie miał zamiaru w więziennej celi przyznawać się do swej narodowości. To nie przyniosłoby zbytniego zaszczytu dalekiej ojczyźnie” Kostecki, 24.

ethos is remarkably pacifist, is introduced into a genre formula that, as the scholars of this genre observe, has traditionally valued the ability to exert violence and cold-heartedly kill enemies. The author can clearly point out for the reader whether specific traits of character, lines of behavior, or values that are “good” or “bad” by rewarding or punishing the characters’ behavior. Jacek Bandera is not punished for appearing in the violent and masculine western setting with his toothless and pacifist values. Even the ultimate western “stock characters,” the outlaws, who are living by the law of the jungle, do not deem his values naïve or mawkish; they respect him and, most improbably, do not even take offense at Jacek’s reluctance to use their offered help because it originated from banditry. Jacek emerges victorious from the challenges he faces, even with his “naïve” and non-virile values, which redeems these values for the reader.

It is important to note that sometimes Jacek’s values are overtly stated, while at other points in the plot he behaves rather as a typical western hero and not according to the declared values. For instance, his value of truthfulness does not stop him from assuming a false identity and living on Dean’s farm under the name Clement. His relying on societal institutions and on skills he obtained at law school rather than on the law of the jungle still combines with his intruding and stealing clues from the sheriff’s house. His reluctance to benefit from violence performed by other people and preference for institutionalized justice over personal vengeance do not lead to any qualms when in the end Carsley is violently slaughtered by Matteo, in the act of vengeance that the old servant had to postpone by twenty years. In fact, the chapter featuring this latter event is called “When there is more than enough justice” (“sprawedliwości stało się zadość”), eliminating all previously introduced differentiation between avenging and restoring justice.<sup>188</sup> These incongruencies, however, only emphasize that it was the author’s deliberate

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<sup>188</sup> „Stryj nic nie żądał, co by się sprzeciwiało nakazom sumienia. Zemstę miało według jego woli wziąć w swoje ręce prawo” Kostecki, 34.

attempt to create a character espousing a specific set of values and to recuperate them against the traditionally violent values of the genre.

### 2.1.3. Polonizing the western

Until now, I have not addressed the Polishness of this western, other than stating that the ethos ascribed to the protagonist, which is in stark contrast to the violent ethos associated with the frontier setting, is proposed specifically as the ethos of a Polish patriot. However numerous are the elements that are taken without significant changes from the existing tradition of western writing, as I have shown above, there are aspects that make this a specifically Polish adventure, which I will address in this section. They can be grouped as follows: Polonizing the space of the Wild West; connections to the Polish adventure writing tradition; and, most importantly, addressing very specific anxieties that were relevant in the moment when this conversation between Kostecki and his reader was happening in the late 1930s.

Most obviously and superficially, this is the exotic space of the “Wild West” as seen, named, and interpreted by Poles. For instance, Jan Bandera named his farm “Varsovie,” that is, “Warsaw.” Jacek names his horses with typical Polish names, Bartek and Wojtek, and the strangeness of the combination with an American mustang is admitted in the novel: “[t]his foreign-sounding name was weirdly unfitting the borderland (*kresowy*) mustang, but the horse

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[His uncle demanded nothing that was against the dictates of conscience. It was his will that the law will take revenge into its own hands]

„- A więc wreszcie przybył na tę ziemię potomek Banderów, aby pomścić śmierć swych krewnych...

- Nie – zaprzeczył żywo – myli się pan. Nie mam zamiaru ujmować zemsty w swoje ręce. Przybyłem, by pomóc wymiarowi sprawiedliwości... w ukaraniu zabójcy” Kostecki, 129.

[“So, finally, a descendant of Banderas came to this land to avenge the death of his relatives ...”

“No,” he said vigorously, “you're wrong. I'm not going to take my revenge into my own hands. I've come to help the judiciary ... punish the killer”]

got used to it very quickly.”<sup>189</sup> One more interesting instance of seeing the setting of the western through the prism of Polish culture is using the word “*kresy*,” the term for Poland’s eastern borderlands, for what is usually referred to as the “Wild West.” In this way, a connection is created between the tradition depicting the “Wild West” as a space of adventure and the Polish tradition of depicting its “Wild East” in a similar way – for instance, in Henryk Sienkiewicz’s historic novel *Ogniem i mieczem* (*With Fire and Sword*, 1884) that has many characteristics of the adventure genre.

One recurrent motif in Polish adventure novels both before and after Kosteczki is explaining the Polish protagonists’ presence in exotic setting through tensions with Russian imperial police, or even via escaping from post-uprising Siberian exile. In *W pustyni i puszczy* (*In Desert and in Wilderness*, 1910) by Henryk Sienkiewicz, a Polish family is living in British-ruled Egypt because the father, a participant in the 1863 uprising, escaped from his exile in Siberia and could not legally be present in Poland. In several texts by Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski written in the 1920s and 1930s (although not in his novel analyzed below in this chapter), the same explanation of evading the imperial regime’s retaliation after the uprising is used to substantiate the presence of Poles in exotic adventure settings. The role of this information can be minor: the fact may be only mentioned once and very briefly and never recalled again, as it is done in *Mali zwycięzcy: Przygody dzieci w pustyni Szamo* (*Little Winners: Children’s Adventures in the Gobi Desert*, 1930).<sup>190</sup> In Ossendowski’s *Skarb wysp andamańskich* (*The Treasure of the Andaman Islands*, 1935), the presence of a Polish family on the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal again results from an instance of state violence by the

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<sup>189</sup> „Dziwnie nie pasowała ta obco brzmiąca nazwa do kresowego mustanga, ale koń przyzwyczał do niej bardzo szybko.” Kosteczki, *Kanion Słonej Rzeki*, 13.

<sup>190</sup> Antoni Ferdynand Ossendowski, *Mali zwycięzcy: Przygody dzieci na pustyni Szamo* (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka Wydawnictwo, 2012), 5.

Russian imperial regime towards Poles.<sup>191</sup> Characteristically, in all these cases, the actual protagonists of the adventure narratives are the children or even grandchildren of the people who experienced problems with the imperial regime. Therefore, these explanations do not add information about, for instance, the personality or the background of the protagonist but simply offer a mechanistic justification why these characters are present in the overseas colonies of the European empires and experience adventures there. There is a patriotic element to this motif: Poles are presented as good community members who would not leave their homeland in search of adventures, experience, or jobs, were it not for the evil regime ruling over Poland. This corresponds to the historical fact that there were huge waves of political emigration after each of the failed uprisings for the restoration of Polish independence in the nineteenth century. Yet, emigration driven by economic hardships and overpopulation of rural areas was also very significant throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>192</sup> The persistence of political explanations for Poles' presence overseas seems to gloss over this aspect of Polish history in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

How does *Salt River Canyon* relate to this tradition? The protagonist ventures out into the exotic setting of adventure because the uncle's letter summons him there, not because anything pushes him away from home, as in all examples above. Jacek Bandera is a citizen of independent Poland who does not need to flee from anything in his homeland. To the contrary, independent Poland is depicted as a space where finally both spiritual and economic aspirations can be fulfilled. Regarding the uncle's story of emigration, which happened before independence, back

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<sup>191</sup> Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski, *Skarb wysp andamańskich: powieść dla młodzieży* (Warszawa: Instytut wydawniczy Biblioteka Polska, 1935), 10.

<sup>192</sup> For an overview of the processes of emigration from Central and Eastern Europe, see Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World*, Illustrated edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017).

when the Polish lands were partitioned between Russian, Prussian, and Austro-Hungarian empires, however, the novel sends mixed messages. On the one hand, Kostecki states that the family was very poor: Jacek's elderly father's life-long hard work to provide his son with educational opportunities and advance in life is repeatedly mentioned on each occasion Jacek is in mortal danger. The uncle, too, it seems, had reason to leave Poland to go to the diamond mines in South Africa out of dire need. His inability to return to Poland after he had found some diamonds, however, is explained by the problems he had had with the police, which would end in his arrest upon return. This background information does not add substantially to the main story; it is, again, a mechanistic explanation needed to justify the set-up: why the uncle could leave diamonds as an inheritance and why he ended up in the Wild West; a prerequisite for inscribing the nephew into this adventure narrative in a western setting. What is unique about the usage of this motif in *Salt River Canyon* is that it refers to problems with Prussian (German) rather than with Russian imperial police in all the examples from other Polish adventure novels mentioned above.<sup>193</sup> Upon careful examination, however, it becomes clear that there is an incongruity here: hardly could the Prussian regime stop the elder Bandera from reuniting with his family in Warsaw, which was in the Russian partition of Poland. The recent reprint edition, which I have been consulting and citing throughout my analysis, is based on the third, 1957 edition of the novel, and to the best of my understanding, no copies of the original 1938 edition have survived. My hypothesis is that the author self-censored when he prepared the third edition, to avoid a contemporary interpretation in Soviet-dominated post-war Eastern Europe. Writing about encroachments on Polish national identity in the Prussian partition as a proxy for encroachments on Polish identity in the Russian partition had already been a recognized strategy

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<sup>193</sup> Kostecki, *Kanion Slonej Rzeki*, 130.

in the time of the partitions.<sup>194</sup>

The development of this motif adds an additional symbolic dynamic. The uncle left partitioned Poland; whether it was for economic or for political reasons, that political situation did not give him opportunities to live and prosper at home. He tries to establish a substitute home for himself abroad, but that attempt ended in disaster. The nephew comes as a citizen of independent Poland, a strong modern country that has given him the skills and tools to cope with the challenges posed by circumstances. Moreover, he does not come to stay, he comes to win: his inheritance, a wife, and then to go back to Poland.

The final return to Poland at the end of the novel deserves a separate discussion. The novel's action takes place in 1937–38. After restoring the good name of his family, recovering the hidden treasure (inheritance), and marrying his beloved woman, the protagonist hurriedly returns to Poland because of the alarming news from Europe.<sup>195</sup> The final chapter, which depicts Jacek and his pregnant wife on the transatlantic ship approaching the Polish shore, has a very different feeling from the rest of the novel. Since the novel was published before the outbreak of the war, the alarming news made the protagonist doubt if he would be able to come home before it is too late. The author vaguely suggests that “hostile powers could block his way to his homeland.”<sup>196</sup> This alarming news is clearly not the outbreak of the war itself but final chapter of the novel speaks of the dark clouds gathering over the continent signaling that difficult times are coming, while stressing the need to devote one's energy to the homeland. It is important to distinguish readers' reaction informed by historical knowledge of the circumstances present in

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<sup>194</sup> See e.g. Zdzisława Mokranowska, “Sienkiewicz a Rosja. Prolegomena,” in *Sienkiewicz wobec Europy*, ed. Lech Ludorowski et al. (Lublin, 2004), 134.

<sup>195</sup> Kostecki, *Kanion Słonej Rzeki*, 197.

<sup>196</sup> “Wrogie moce mogły zastąpić mu drogę do Ojczyzny” Kostecki, 199.

the text itself. With the lack of access to a pre-war edition of the novel, it is hard to judge if the author changed anything with this regard when preparing the 1946 and 1957 renewals of the novel, for the readership that already knew what devastation the years to follow would bring to Poland.

It is a common-place interpretation that westerns are an “escapist fantasy.”<sup>197</sup> In *Salt River Canyon*, the adventure in the western setting becomes an escapist fantasy specifically from the anxieties about individual helplessness and despair in the face of the catastrophic premonitions about a great new war in Europe in the latter part of the interwar period.<sup>198</sup> The fact that the final chapter touches upon these anxieties supports the interpretation that the novel is more than a mechanical re-writing of the ready genre for the sake of pure entertainment. Rather, the novel offers the reader a fantasy that an individual hero can come out a winner from the most unfavorable ordeals; moreover, that a brave individual can assert non-violent values in a setting known as very violent and following the law of the jungle. On many occasions, the novel dubs the relations in the “Wild West” as anachronistically primeval, as opposed to the modern world. Yet, the author does admit that in some respects our beliefs that modern civilization is any different is an illusion: “In these parts, the first to draw their weapons was always right. After all, not only in these parts.”<sup>199</sup> This fantasy about victory is a kind of consolation for the anxiety about the violence, which, the author and the reader know, is about to break out.

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<sup>197</sup> Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 209.

<sup>198</sup> More on the discourse of catastrophism in Polish culture of the period, see e.g. Zdzisław J. Czarnecki, “The Axiological Foundations of Polish Catastrophic Thinking in the Interwar Period,” in *Polish Axiology: The 20th Century and Beyond*, ed. Stanisław Jedynek, Polish Philosophical Studies 5 (Washington, D.C.: The Council for research in values and philosophy, 2005).

<sup>199</sup> „W tych stronach zawsze miał rację ten, kto pierwszy zdołał wyciągnąć broń. Zresztą nie tylko w tych stronach” Kostecki, *Kanion Słonej Rzeki*, 110.

## 2.2. “A NOBLER ONE AMONG WHITE NATIONS”: *CARNELIAN SIGNET RING* (1938) BY FERDYNAND ANTONI OSSENDOWSKI

The next novel I analyze, *Pierścień z krwawnikiem* (*Carnelian signet ring*, 1938) by Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski (1878–1945), similarly addressed the catastrophic premonitions and the expectations of a total war. Published in the same year as *Salt River Canyon*, it is very different from that novel in terms of its place in the author’s oeuvre: not a text by a debutante like Kosteczki, it was one of the last works published by an already well-known and widely read author. If anything, Ossendowski knew very well how to use the tastes and demands of the public to write best-selling novels; an extremely famous writer domestically and internationally, he was the second most widely translated Polish writer by 1933, after Henryk Sienkiewicz.<sup>200</sup> Publication of this novel, for example, was a part of an attempt to recover the author’s fallen fortunes during the economic crisis: it was sold together with a chocolate bar named Atri (like the main heroine).<sup>201</sup> It is also not unusual for his fiction to combine adventure plots with judgements on political matters.<sup>202</sup>

The action of *Carnelian Signet Ring* is set in Tibet and northeastern India. The novel’s protagonist is an American doctor of Polish origin, Adolf Firlej, who has been studying Tibetan medicine in a Buddhist monastery. The Pole feels obliged to pause his studies when he finds out that another foreign doctor who had been in the monastery, Sobcow from Soviet Russia, kidnapped a lady. Firlej rushes to the rescue and with the help of several other characters frees the girl in a borderland town in Assam. The girl turns out to be an Indian princess, Atri-Maja, the

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<sup>200</sup> Witold Stanisław Michałowski, *Wielkie safari Antoniego O.: kim był Antoni Ferdynand Ossendowski* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Iskry, 2004), 7.

<sup>201</sup> Michałowski, 224.

<sup>202</sup> See Andrzej Chruszczyński, “O utworach politycznych A.F. Ossendowskiego.,” *Przegląd humanistyczny*, no. 1 (1995): 67–76.

daughter of the raja of Rungpur, kidnapped as political leverage for her unsuccessful suitor, Raja Baab of Balora, a Bolshevik supporter. Firlej and Atri-Maja fall in love and get married, while Baab seeks revenge against Firlej, but is mellowed by his friendliness. There is a parallel storyline around an attempt of the Asian nations to unite in a “joint struggle against white domination” and the eponymous signet ring, also stolen by Sobcow: a symbolic inheritance from Genghis Khan that is supposed to allow its possessor to unite and lead the Asians.

The action is set not earlier than 1937 (as the abdication of the British king Edward VIII is already a past event) and the epilogue of this 1938-published novel reaches into the author’s and readers’ future, depicting the “happy every after” taking place five years after the main events. That is, the novel has a very contemporary setting and, just like *Salt River Canyon*, addresses the anxieties of the late 1930s about the impending global war. In this novel, however, the war in question is imagined as a confrontation between the Western world (European countries and the United States) and the Soviet Union, yet not a direct but a proxy war over their competition for influence over the peoples of Asia, somewhat foreshadowing the Cold War.

Ossendowski’s novel is a literary heir of Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1900) in that it similarly depicts a kind of a “Great Game” where Russian secret service agents attempt to lure individual Indian rajas away from British influence into their own orbit, while the protagonists’ aim in both novels is to undermine these efforts and thus ensure the prosperity of India. Ossendowski’s novel connects to that tradition by suggesting that contemporary Soviet efforts to lure Asians under their influence are a continuation of similar efforts by tsarist Russian agents before the revolution.<sup>203</sup> A difference between *Kim* and *Carnelian Signet Ring* in this aspect is

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<sup>203</sup> It is suggested in the novel that the fake signet rings Bolsheviks are using to add authority to those Asian leaders who support their political program were produced back in the imperial times, with a similar goal to lure into the Russian sphere of influence some of the Asian rulers in the light of the Russian rivalry with Japan around the Russo-Japanese war.

that Kipling presents British and Russian empires as comparable colonial powers and Western contenders for ruling over Asia. Ossendowski suggests that both the Russian empire and Soviet Union are axiologically very different from Western civilization, representing chaos and an antithesis to all Western values. Not only Soviet Russia (whose own ideology put it into opposition to Western countries), but also pre-revolutionary Russia are depicted as infernal regimes, which is informed by the Polish narrative of historical memory. Another trope also based on the protagonist's belonging to the Polish nation is his attempt to distance himself from the colonial situation and to evaluate the crimes of the "white colonizers" against the Asians.

Since the plot of this novel is so intertwined with the images and roles of different nations' representatives, alongside entertaining the reader with fast-pacing events it also teaches us about the political and ideological alliances and divisions in the world. All nations and communities in this scheme are categorized into three large groups, which I will analyze in the following subsections. The communication between the implied author and reader occurs based on the assumption that they share the protagonist's self-identification with belonging to the Polish nation as a virtue to imitate (even though he is a son of émigrés). This narrower conceived in-group that only includes Poles is a part of the wider-conceived in-group of "white people" or "Western civilized nations." Among the out-groups, the antagonistic position of "adversary" is reserved for representatives of Soviet Russia, constituting the second group in the scheme. Finally, the third group of communities, the "others," are the peoples of Asia, whose belonging

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That there were specific fake signet rings produced in St.Petersburg for this goal is a novelistic conjecture, but the legend that defines the significance of such a ring was most likely overheard by Ossendowski during his travels through Mongolia. In his autobiographical account of this journey, *Beasts, Men, and Gods*, he recalls seeing "a large gold ring set with a magnificent ruby carved with the sign of the swastika" that allegedly had belonged to Genghis Khan. (Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski, *Beasts, Men and Gods* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1922), 285.) In the novel, the gem in the signet ring is identified somewhat differently: as a stone that is similar to a ruby but not precious. The Polish name of this stone, *krwawnik*, has the same root as "blood," which simply refers to the color of the carnelian, but also adds connotations about the bloody chaos that is about to unfurl.

to either the first or second group is as yet undetermined.

### 2.2.1. In-group: “white”? “civilized”? “Western”?

The novel’s protagonist, Adolf Firlej, is presented to the reader as an ideal representative of the Polish national group. He is introduced as visually recognizable as an in-group member; he thinks about himself as, first and foremost, a Pole. Through his example, the author demonstrates a set of features and values that a model community member should embody. However, both his additional affiliation with the American nation (being born to Polish émigrés in the US) and his presence in a location where most people have never heard about Poland evoke discussion of wider categories into which individual national communities are grouped.

Such an extended in-group includes a rather ideologically defined list of “Western civilized people.” They are often referred to as “white people,” but the overlap is not full: some people whose skin color is white are excluded from this extended in-group, while some non-whites are included, as I will show below. The racial criterion for defining the in-group in the novel, however, is historically significant: Asians, for example, tend to look at the protagonist as a representative of the “white race,” (to the extent that many locals call Firlej simply “the white friend”<sup>204</sup>) and he is “answerable” to them in this capacity. There is also a sentimental aspect to this feeling of belonging to the white race, which implies (sometimes broken) expectations of greater similarity in values within this group, as well as a greater sense of responsibility for one another. For instance, while the protagonist feels an imperative to come to the rescue of any lady in distress, the idea that the kidnapped woman might be a white woman increases Firlej’s feeling

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<sup>204</sup> Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski, *Pierścień z krwawnikiem* (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Szczepan Szymański, 1993), 66.

of urgency to save her.<sup>205</sup> This sentimental aspect of belonging to the extended in-group of white people also factors in into Firlej's relationship with Sobcow: "Despite being a Bolshevik, in any case, he is the only white man [in the monastery, beside Firlej himself], and this also means something to me."<sup>206</sup> So, although the protagonist has been wary of his Russian colleague for a long time, they have maintained ostensibly friendly relations based on the imagined affinity of being "white people," as opposed to greater cultural distance from the locals, until Sobcow's misdeeds became too obvious.

Here, however, we see a tendency to replace the racial criterion in defining the in-group with ideological and discursive grounds. Ideological differences force some Europeans to be excluded from the in-group, like with the Soviet Russians, as this dialogue about Sobcow shows: "Is there somebody else from Europe here?" [...] 'From Europe as from Europe,' Firlej smiled, 'but from Moscow!'"<sup>207</sup> Firlej's response suggests that some Europeans have characteristics that defy the assumed unity ascribed to this group. Moreover, his smile and the brevity of this remark suggests that the reasons for such re-division are already clear to everyone. The roots of this exclusion of Russians from the category of Europeans may be traced to the long tradition of

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<sup>205</sup> I am reading this passage in the novel not as an instance of racism, that is, a suggestion that a woman of color is less worthy of being saved from kidnappers than a white woman. Firlej claims it is his duty to save her in any case. Instead, if the kidnapped woman is a European or an American, he assumes that they share common culture and thus understand the situation in a similar way: that it is not out of her own volition that she was kidnapped by the Bolshevik. In case if the kidnapped woman belongs to one of the local cultures, the white "savior" enters the zone of uncertainty characterized by the dynamics associated with the phrase "white men saving brown women from brown men," offered by Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak. This reading of the initial scene is supported by the plot development: the fact that Atri turns out to be a mixed-race European-educated person and Firlej's behavior in the light of this discovery supports the understanding that the question is not about racial hierarchy but about shared cultural belonging. (See Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 66–111. See also miriam cooke, "Gender and September 11: A Roundtable: Saving Brown Women," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 1 (September 2002): 468–70, <https://doi.org/10.1086/340888>.)

<sup>206</sup> „Mimo, że jest bolszewikiem, w każdym razie jedyny biały człowiek, to też coś dla mnie znaczy!” Ossendowski, *Pierścień z krwawnikiem*, 25.

<sup>207</sup> „Czy jest tu jeszcze ktoś z Europy?” [...] “Z Europy jak z Europy – uśmiechnął się Firlej – ale z Moskwy!” Ossendowski, 25.

Orientalizing Russia. In Polish discourse, it was connected to the condemnation of Russian imperial rule over Poland: Poland's subjugation to the Russian empire has been a great misfortune not because it is "evil" to subjugate another nation in general, but specifically because a "barbarian," "Asiatic" regime came to rule over a "civilized," "European," "Christian" land (this discourse will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4). However, on the surface at least, this is not what is at stake here: Sobcow is sufficiently "from Europe"; it is not Soviet Russia's Asian rather than European geographical attribution or Sobcow's non-belonging to Europe in racial terms but a discrepancy of values and ideology that creates the tension.

On the other hand, even people of a different ethnocultural background can be seen as members of the in-group because of the belonging to the same intellectual community, as Firlej's encounter with the Japanese doctors shows. They recognize him as someone whose scholarly article they had read, and the protagonist experiences an uncanny feeling of affinity: "What a strange incident! To meet amid the Himalayas someone who has read my article! It's just as if I met a man who had once in New York borrowed a dollar from me and now repays his debt in Tassgong."<sup>208</sup> This suggests that practices associated with modern science and research can also create the networks of meaning that form communities of mutual understanding, just like cultural practices do.

The protagonist belongs to this extended community of "civilized nations" in two capacities: as a Pole, a representative of the "most freedom-loving nation,"<sup>209</sup> and as a US citizen. This brings a typically Polish character to the level of a "universal" representative of Western civilization. He is proud of his parents' homeland that has regained its independence,

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<sup>208</sup> „Co za dziwny przypadek! Spotkać wśród Himalajów kogoś, kto czytał mój artykuł! To zupełnie tak, jakbym natrafił tu na człowieka, co niegdyś w Nowym Jorku pożyczył ode mnie dolara i w Tassgongu zwraca mi swój dług.” Ossendowski, 22–23.

<sup>209</sup> Ossendowski, 96.

but does not hurry to move back there, preferring to work for the benefit of Western science, now that his émigré parents' hard work had provided him with an opportunity to receive a good education. Both layers are important in his identity, as can be seen from the following self-description: "Someone like me – a Pole from Detroit in this cursed Tibet."<sup>210</sup> On his example, one can see how ethnonational self-identification can be combined with civic national self-identification. These components are not equal in his self-presentation. In the situations shown in the novel, Firlej introduces himself as "a doctor from the United States,"<sup>211</sup> and only in certain cases where more friendly relationships are being established, he admits, as if a more important and inner layer of truth: "I must add, to be precise,' Firlej intervened, 'that I am not an American by blood [...] I am a citizen of the United States, but pure Polish blood flows in my veins!"<sup>212</sup> So, his Americanness is the outer layer, his Polishness is something deeper, important information for those who will be in his closest circle. It is also remarkable that this quote suggests the co-existence of these two markers in a system of his self-identification. He considers it important to add that he is not ethnically American. His Polish ethnonational self-identification ("pure Polish blood") is layered with his civic national American self-identification (which materializes further in the story in his symbolic usage of his American documents). But the quote expresses an expectation that such hybridity is something of a deception, and that if anyone self-identifies with a certain nationality, it should be "by blood," whatever being "ethnic American" might even mean.

The novel is imbued with an awareness of the political and moral aspects of declaring

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<sup>210</sup> „Taki jak ja – Polak z Detroit w tym zakazanym Tybecie...” Ossendowski, 63. The author seems to hesitate throughout the novel whether Firlej comes from Detroit, Chicago, or New York.

<sup>211</sup> Ossendowski, 22.

<sup>212</sup> Ossendowski, 23.

one's belonging to a certain nationality. American citizenship gives the protagonist more practical help than self-identification with a country that few around him have heard of. It introduces him to a privileged circle of people whose opinion is considered by those who represent power in a colonial situation, and the protagonist knows to use this potential to his advantage: "In a city where there are British authorities, with my American papers, we will have protection and, if necessary, assistance. I will present it all to these various commanders and sheriffs so tenderly and tragically that they will cry like beavers! Such a Bolshevik will be handcuffed and thrown into prison, and on his 'helpers' the Indian policemen will pour a generous portion of bamboo [cane strokes]." <sup>213</sup> On another occasion, Firlej and an American businessman named Hill (Firlej turns to him for help and relies on him in a critical situation solely as on a compatriot, not being priorly acquainted with him <sup>214</sup>) deliberately deceive an indigenous businessman by waving random papers at him with recognizable American coats of arms to support their claims and position of power in this interaction: "Do you see this gentleman [...]? He is ... an envoy of the Ambassador of the United States of North America. [...] This is not a joke! The only salvation here is to tell the truth, only the truth!" <sup>215</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> „W mieście, gdzie są władze angielskie z moimi papierami amerykańskimi będziemy mieli opiekę, a w razie potrzeby – i pomoc. Już ja tym tam różnym komendantom i szeryfom tak to wszystko rzewnie i tragicznie przedstawię, że popłaczą się jak bobry! [...] Takiemu bolszewikowi nałożą kajdanki i wpakują do uła, a jego „pomagierom” Hindusi-policjanci wsypią hojną porcję bambusów.” Ossendowski, 92–93.

<sup>214</sup> „Sądzę, że widzę przed sobą lojalnego obywatela Stanów Zjednoczonych i dżentelmena? Chcę powierzyć panu, mister Hill, niezmiernie ważną tajemnicę, którą wyświecić muszę właśnie dlatego, że jestem obywatelem naszego wolnego kraju i dżentelmenem.” Ossendowski, 116.

[“I think I see in front of me a loyal citizen of the United States and a gentleman? I want to entrust to you, Mr. Hill, an extremely important secret, which I must unravel precisely because I am a citizen of our free state and a gentleman”]

<sup>215</sup> „- Widzisz tego dżentelmena, mister Hussein? – spytał Amerykanin wzrokiem wskazując na Firleja. – Jest to... wysłaniec ambasadora Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki Północnej.

Grubas przerażonymi oczyma patrzył teraz na Firleja, którego przedtem prawie nie spostrzegł.

- Tak, to jest wysłaniec ambasadora amerykańskiego! – dobijał Persa Hill. – To nie są żarty! Tu jedyny ratunek mówić prawdę, tylko prawdę!

- Allah Akbar... prawdę? – przeraził się jeszcze bardziej Hussein” Ossendowski, 122.

In this way, modern symbols of identity are used in the same way as an (allegedly) ancient symbol: the signet ring that is supposed to add authority to its possessors on totally irrational grounds—Asians’ respect for the heritage of Genghis Khan. The Bolshevik’s efforts to fake this with the signet ring are amply condemned in the novel; to the contrary, the reader is reassured that Firlej’s and Hill’s cause is righteous (saving the kidnapped princess), so no parallel between these similar acts is drawn.

### 2.2.2. Adversaries: The bearers of chaos. Confrontation of forces

The forces antagonistic to the widely conceived in-group I described above are associated with Soviet Russia. Just like the in-group, the adversary is defined not so much by the ethnic origin as by politics and ideology. Soviet expansionist geopolitical intentions are presented as a continuation of similar tsarist policies towards strengthening its colonial influence.<sup>216</sup> Even though many of the characteristics of the antagonists are specifically associated with post-October culture (such as their immorality related to their “godlessness”), Soviet and pre-revolutionary Russia are imagined as a succession of “infernal” regimes. On the other hand, “peoples of Russia subjugated by Germanized tsars,”<sup>217</sup> that is, the subjects of these regimes, do appear on the list of those who owe their freedom to the freedom-loving Poles who fought for it throughout history. The passage containing the list on which I will comment in more detail below characterizes Poles more than other nations on the list. Yet, it is noteworthy that this wording suggests a distinction between the regime and its subjects, instead of ascribing characteristics to all inhabitants of a country based on, for instance, the culture they share.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Ossendowski, 212.

<sup>217</sup> Ossendowski, 96. (Full quote is discussed in greater detail in the next subsection)

<sup>218</sup> His biographer, Witold Michałowski argues that Ossendowski’s political beliefs after the February revolution in Russia were quite in line with those of the Russian democratically-inclined intelligentsia and cites an opinion that

For Ossendowski, such a depiction of the Soviet regime as the incarnation of evil is not only a rhetorical figure or a reproduction of an ideological cliché that is expected to be favored by his readership. His biography reveals that he had personal scores with the Bolsheviks before and during the Revolution. Ossendowski was considered “a personal enemy of Lenin” for his alleged participation in an affair outing the Bolsheviks as a German conspiracy, and his then-recent grave was disinterred by the Soviets in 1945 after their capture of Warsaw to make sure that the writer was, indeed, dead.<sup>219</sup> During the Civil War in Russia, Ossendowski had worked for a while in Kolchak’s anti-Bolshevik government in Siberia, and upon the failure of the monarchist forces he escaped to Poland via Asia.<sup>220</sup> While on this journey, he also took a minor part in another attempt of a monarchist revival – that of Baron Ungern-Sternberg in Mongolia.<sup>221</sup> Some of his experience from that time in Mongolia and his journey through Asia informs the depiction of the Mongols in this novel, as well as his treatment of the events related to the

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only the complete demise of this project made him into a Polish nationalist. Ossendowski’s first literary publications were in Russian, and, as Michałowski puts it, he, as many noble Polish subjects of the Russian tsar, indeed saw the empire as their homeland. See Michałowski, *Wielkie safari Antoniego O.*, 31. Cf. also Andrzej Chruszczyński’s discussion of Ossendowski’s novel *Szanchaj (Shanghai, 1937)* where “not only the character, but also the narrator, even the literary subject, one is inclined to perceive as Russian, as a person authentically nostalgic for pre-revolutionary Russia, warm in that culture and sunken in the life of the intelligentsia and its aristocratic milieu.” (Chruszczyński, “O utworach politycznych A.F. Ossendowskiego,” 75.)

Taking into account that he was also persecuted for his revolutionary activity during the reactionary backlash following the 1905 revolution, the emphasis on the distinction between the regime and the “peoples of Russia” in the novel is perfectly explainable.

<sup>219</sup> It had been alleged that Ossendowski fabricated the so-called “Sisson Documents,” which suggested collaboration of the Bolsheviks with imperial Germany and were publicized in the US to discredit the Russian Revolution. See Michałowski, *Wielkie safari Antoniego O.*, 25–29; Ryszard Desatan, “Zwierzęta, bogowie i skarb barona,” *Profile*, no. 11 (1989): 14. Throughout the decades after 1918 there were attempts to prove both their falsity and their authenticity. The true status of these documents is completely irrelevant here; what is important is that the discourse about their possible falsity included, as one of the versions, an understanding that Ossendowski might have been the person behind the fabrication.

About the grave disintering, see: Witold Stanisław Michałowski, “Syberyjski Lawrence,” *Racjonalista.pl*, May 18, 2005, <http://www.racjonalista.pl/kk.php/s,4141>.

<sup>220</sup> Ossendowski used to claim that it was the position of the finance minister, yet Michałowski suggests that it was much more likely a minor position. Michałowski, *Wielkie safari Antoniego O.*, 24–25.

<sup>221</sup> Willard Sunderland, *The Baron’s Cloak: A History of the Russian Empire in War and Revolution*, 1st edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 197.

Bolshevik's capture of Mongolia, which are referred to in some of the characters' recollections in the novel.

Characteristically, the novel does not present any clear picture of what the "program" of the Bolsheviks is. Without any specification of what "communist order" implies, the menace of the Soviet characters in the novel lies in the fact that it is their intention to spread this order outside their current borders. For instance, a raja who supported them was supposed "to spread communism in India and incite the Hindus against England, which is hated by the Bolsheviks"; to raise an uprising, aided by Soviet troops, to involve Afghans and Nepalese in the war against Britain, and eventually to add "270 million Hindus to our [Soviet] union, in which the Raja will occupy a high position," after which they intended to "commun[ize] the very pliable China and [venture on] a joint war against the most formidable enemy of communism – Japan."<sup>222</sup>

Apparently, Ossendowski's readers in the 1930s were expected to have strong negative associations with the word "communism" from other sources, so that simple mentioning that somebody is attempting to spread it further would clearly mean evil intentions. It was not deemed necessary to give additional explanations as to what exactly about communism makes it so immoral. The closest to explaining why this is an unquestionable evil is the suggestion that the implementation of the communists' plan will throw Asia into chaos. Otherwise, instead of presenting the program of the "adversary" from their own point of view, the novel offers repeated condemnations of them from the viewpoint of the in-group: they are the "counterfeiters

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<sup>222</sup> „...oddać pierścień radży, który miał szerzyć komunizm w Indiach i burzyć Hindusów przeciwko znenawidzonej przez bolszewików Anglii.

- Gdy radża podniesie powstanie, przierzucimy mu do pomocy nasze wojska przez Pamir, namówimy Afgańczyków i Nepalczyków do wojny z Wielką Brytanią i przyłączymy 270 milionów Hindusów do naszego związku, w którym radża zajmie wysokie stanowisko. Następnym naszym triumfem będzie skomunizowanie bardzo podatnych Chin i wspólna wojna przeciwko najgroźniejszemu wrogowi komunizmu – Japonii..." Ossendowski, *Pierścień z krwawnikiem*, 69.

of insignias, ideas, slogans, and morality.”<sup>223</sup> In other words, the antagonism between the in-group (the civilized nations of the West) and the adversary depicted in the novel is not a real political rivalry or an opposition of two value systems. Only one of them is shown as an independent system of values, while the other as an anti-system that is only distorting, upending, and breaking into chaos everything that is considered normal.

This structural opposition is further supported by the following dichotomy. The main character representing the adversary, Bolshevik Russia, is Dr. Sobcow. He is the other white doctor in the Tibetan monastery, along with Firlej, which creates a basis for comparison that reveals that these characters not only take antagonistic positions in major conflicts but are also characterized by several smaller structural oppositions. Sobcow uses medical and scientific research as a pretense to cover up the purpose of establishing Bolshevik hegemony in Asia<sup>224</sup>; Firlej, to the contrary, would prefer not to get engaged in the events to avoid disrupting his studies. For Firlej, his role as a doctor defines the imperative to do everything possible to help the person under his medical care, which is an important and unquestionable part of his system of values; Sobcow is described as a “bold daredevil” in his medical practice, who “would not hesitate [...] to remove a piece of a patient’s cerebral cortex or the entire heart.”<sup>225</sup> Sobcow is a “godless atheist” (“bezbożnik”);<sup>226</sup> Firlej, a devout Catholic. Sobcow kidnaps Atri-Maja; Firlej sets her free. Sobcow attempts to toss in the fake signet ring in order to gain influence over the

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<sup>223</sup> „...falszeraami klejnotów, idei, hasel i moralności?” Ossendowski, 214.

<sup>224</sup> “Tymczasem komisariat polecił swemu agentowi, doktorowi Sobcowowi, udać się do Tassgongu pozornie w naukowej misji” Ossendowski, 68–69.

[“Meanwhile, the commissariat instructed its agent, Dr. Sobcow, to go to Tassgong, allegedly on a scientific mission.”]

<sup>225</sup> „- Czy dobry - tego nie wiem, lecz w każdym razie niezmiernie śmiały z niego ryzykant! - zaśmiał się lekarz. - Michał Sobcow nie zawaha się, jak mi się zdaje, przed wycięciem pacjentowi kawałka kory mózgowej lub całego serca!” Ossendowski, 25.

<sup>226</sup> Ossendowski, 59.

peoples of Asia<sup>227</sup>; ordinary Indians choose to return the insignia to Firlej (not knowing about its significance or its falsity), which symbolically legitimizes the way in which his father-in-law will use it to lead India.<sup>228</sup>

The two embody the virtues and vices inherent in their communities. While Firlej displays by his behavior and attitude the values inherent in the Polish ethos, Sobcow's characteristics are not a realization of a separate ethos with its own positive values but a negative reflection of the protagonist, embodying not what Sobcow's community would consider a virtue but what the in-group would consider a vice. The confrontation between the groups, however, is not direct: the novel discusses the prospects of a world war, but it is not seen as a direct war between the "West" and the "Bolsheviks." The confrontation occurs for influence over the peoples of Asia, who do not yet belong to either group.<sup>229</sup>

### 2.2.3. Zone of uncertainty: the peoples of Asia before the civilizational choice

The third group of communities in the novel consists of the peoples of Asia. They belong neither to the in-group nor to the adversary; cultural differences preclude their inclusion in the in-group,<sup>230</sup> but there is also no a priori alienation, no animosity to this group of "others." While the Bolshevik "adversaries" are undoubtedly irreparable in their vices, it is not so with the Asian

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<sup>227</sup> „Sobcow chciał oszukać Azjatów, rozpalić płomień wojny, pobudzając ich urokiem pierścienia Dżyngiza, fałszywym pierścieniem...” Ossendowski, 212.

[“Sobcow wanted to deceive the Asians, to ignite the flames of war, inciting them with the magic of Genghis's ring, the fake ring...”]

<sup>228</sup> Ossendowski, 210.

<sup>229</sup> In this way, Ossendowski foresees some of the post-WWII developments he does not live to witness: the Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union that had rather “hot” results in the countries of the Third World, where groups backed by the Soviet Union and the US fought against each other, such as in Vietnam, as well as the decolonization process generally.

<sup>230</sup> „Bo i cóż wiązało go [...] z ludźmi Wschodu obcymi mu z ducha i przekonań” Ossendowski, *Pierścień z krwawnikiem*, 34.

[For what even connected him [...] with people of the East, alien to him in spirit and convictions]

“others,” even those who initially fall under the evil communist of influences. It is exactly the fate of this billion people that is at stake in this adventure plot: their future depends on whose lead they will follow. The attitude of the implied author to this group of “others” is ambiguous throughout the novel. In some respects, they are presented as an equal interlocutor, a counterpart in the dialogue. At the same time, many aspects of their depiction in the novel suggest that Asians are still treated as merely an object of civilizational influence, as being unable to discern and choose the appropriate way without external help. In this subsection, I will analyze the dynamics of this ambiguity.

I will first focus on aspects and instances illustrative of the attitude to the “other” as an equal counterpart in the cultural dialogue. This is seen from the fact that their traditional knowledge is ascribed a very high status. Firlej, who is already a prominent scholar of Western medicine takes upon himself the task of studying traditional Tibetan medicine to enrich his knowledge. The otherness and independence of this knowledge is recognized; its comparison with Western medicine does not have hierarchical connotations. Moreover, it is suggested that a combination of both is necessary to achieve excellence in medicine, as the episode with Firlej’s surgery on Raja Baab’s wounds shows. In this way, Ossendowski’s treatment differs tremendously from a typical colonial narrative depicting any native knowledge as a set of barbaric superstitions.

Moreover, Ossendowski also departs from the tradition in some adventure novels (such as Haggard’s) in which it is suggested that Europeans alone have the intellectual level to comprehend the meaning of an ancient tradition mindlessly preserved for them by the natives. In *Carnelian Signet Ring*, the reader is told that different ways of thinking (“Western” and “Eastern”) are better suitable to comprehend these two very distinct traditions of knowledge.

This idea is expressed in the following words Firlej addresses to the Japanese doctors at their first encounter: “I am happy that specifically Japanese doctors got interested in the wonderful results of the Tibetan doctors [...] because the insightful Asian mind, incapable of rushing, will more easily explore what seems to us, white people, an insoluble mystery.”<sup>231</sup> Yet, if this phrase is to be perceived seriously and not as ice-breaking amiability, one cannot ignore the somewhat racist assumption behind this statement, as it dwells on the idea that all “Asians” are characterized by a unique type of thinking different from that of all “white people” – beyond individual psychological inclinations and cultural differences (as his words suggest, belonging to the same group of “Asians” should facilitate mutual comprehension between cultures as remote from one another as Japanese and Tibetan).

The mystical aspects of traditional knowledge that involve ways of interacting with reality rejected by Western rationality are also portrayed in the novel as self-sufficient and effective, not something of the prejudices of “savages.” This also works toward the perception of this culture as an equal “other,” although at the same time this is an element of entertainment for the reader: presenting a foreign culture as exotic and ascribing fantastic elements to it at the expense of misrepresenting it.

Representatives of the Asian peoples are depicted as worthy of recognition and from whom approval is needed – which also raises their relative position in this symbolic interaction. This is most evident in Firlej’s conversation with the Tibetan and Mongolian lamas on their journey through India, when the protagonist suddenly understands the Asians’ hatred for the “whites” caused by British abusive governance practices:

[Firlej] recalled that English planters in India grow poppies only to produce opium and export it to

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<sup>231</sup> “Cieszy mnie to, że właśnie japońscy lekarze zainteresowali się wspaniałymi wynikami lekarzy tybetańskich! [...] Cieszę się dlatego, że wnikliwy, niezdolny do pośpiechu umysł azjatycki łatwiej zgłębi to, co nam, ludziom białym, wydaje się tajemnicą nie do rozwiązania.” Ossendowski, 22.

China, the Philippines and the Sunda Islands. The natives, indulging in the pernicious habit of smoking this poison, killed the energy and desire of their people to fight for a better future, but instead they enriched planters, English merchants and the whole of England, when banks' cash desks were torn apart by excess gold. [...]

- Indeed, there are reasons to hate the white race!<sup>232</sup>

As this exchange goes on, Firlej frantically dissociates himself from these practices, suggesting that they do not characterize all “white people” and explaining that for both nations he empathizes that such practices are unacceptable:

“I am a Pole [...] in my country poppy plantations and “the resin of seven dreams” are not known. Only doctors recommend it in small doses to patients with diarrhea. I am also a citizen of the United States, where they look with contempt and disgust at the opium trade”<sup>233</sup>

First, here we see a vision of a world more complex and more diverse than divided simply and unambiguously into “white” exploiters and oppressed “non-whites” (since hatred for the entire white race was ascribed to the interlocutors). Second, Firlej sees his Asian interlocutors as someone from whom he needs recognition and approval: he sees that the group with which he self-identifies is not perceived favorably, so he is urged to provide additional information for a more nuanced picture of the world. The conversation evolves into a lecture about freedom-loving Poles and cultural contacts between Poles and Asians (specifically with Mongolia, because one of the lamas is a Mongol) that predate the hierarchy established by modern European colonial domination in Asia.

Ossendowski's criticism of colonial practices in *Carnelian Signet Ring* is not limited to unmasking the abuses and exploitation of the colonized population. He also addresses the

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<sup>232</sup> “Przypomniał też sobie, że angielscy plantatorzy w Indiach kultywują mak po to tylko, by sporządzać z niego opium i eksportować je do Chin, na Filipiny i Sundy. Tubylcy, oddając się zgubnemu nałogowi palenia tej trucizny, zabili w swoim narodzie energię i chęć do walki o lepszą przyszłość, ale za to wzbogacili plantatorów, kupców angielskich i całą Anglię, gdzie kasy banków pękały od nadmiaru złota. [...]

- Istotnie, jest za co nienawidzić białej rasy!” Ossendowski, *Pierścień z krwawnikiem*.

<sup>233</sup> „Jestem Polakiem – powiedział – w moim kraju nie znają plantacji maku i „smoły siedmiu snów”. Tylko lekarze zalecają ją w małych dawkach chorym na biegunkę. Jestem też obywatelem Stanów Zjednoczonych, gdzie z pogardą i odrazą patrzą na handel opium...” Ossendowski, 95–96.

discourse about the good that the colonial government has brought to the territory, showing it as untrue. For instance, as the characters enter the Indian road (this setting in the novel borrows in part from Kipling's *Kim* with its Great Trunk Road, although in a different region of India), the protagonist is amazed at how little is done to keep the road from disrepair: "probably since the era of prehistoric Indian kings, the spade and pickaxe have not touched this cursed road."<sup>234</sup> This observation about the condition of the road neighbors depiction of the first sign of "civilization" – a "small brick house with a British flag"<sup>235</sup> – that turns out to be specifically an office of the road inspector. This observation adds to the same effect, as it silently counters the widely used discourse suggesting that even if the British empire economically abuses the colonies, at least it brings civilization, most importantly, infrastructure: roads, bridges, and railroads. As one character in *Kim* puts it, "[t]he Government has brought on us many taxes, but it gives us one good thing – the *te-rain* that joins friends and unites the anxious. A wonderful matter is the *te-rain*."<sup>236</sup> In *Kim*, Kipling juxtaposes two types of infrastructure: railroads as a modern gift of civilization brought by Britain, and traditional roads for pedestrians and carts that the authorities have appointed special people to oversee. *Carnelian Signet Ring*, set some forty years later than *Kim*, depicts a different combination of traditional and modern transportation methods. The traditional are the same ancient roads that are in such disrepair that it seems to the protagonist that nothing has been done for their improvement since British took over India. Modern transportation consists of private automobiles only used by the authorities and the most elite locals, which obviously cannot be seen as a civilizational good brought by the colonizer to the

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<sup>234</sup> „[...] chyba od epoki przedhistorycznych królów indyjskich rydel i kilof nie tknęły tej zakazanej drogi.” Ossendowski, 94.

<sup>235</sup> Ossendowski, 94.

<sup>236</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc, 1928), 194.

masses. In other words, the whole combination of these scenes on the road suggests that not only are the British exploiting India for their own economic interests, but they are also not bringing in the goods of civilization, which is sometimes used as a counterargument for justifying colonial abuse.

Ossendowski's protagonist is shown to commiserate with this criticism, since its target is not the group with which he identifies. He only needs to correct his Asian counterparts' view that envisions all the white race complicit in the injustice. By providing more information about the practices and values in Poland and in the United States he seems to have persuaded the Tibetan and the Mongol that these are, indeed, "noble[r] nations"<sup>237</sup> as compared to those white colonizers they previously encountered.

Here is a phenomenon akin to what I have discussed in Chapter 1, observing how Ukrainian authors of adventure fiction presented a certain triangulation between the parties historically participating in colonization (white colonizers and non-white colonized) and Ukrainians, to whom these authors give moral credit for not being complicit in colonial atrocities. A difference is related to the setting in the past or the present but also, I argue, to the historical circumstances in which these texts were created. Those historical novels analyzed in Chapter 1 added a counterfactual conjecture: *given the opportunity*, Ukrainians would have been much more moral as colonizers. Ossendowski's novel, set in contemporary times, underscores this notion even further by positing that Poles fought for "our and your freedom," never having participated in atrocities such as the exploitation for which the Brits are justifiably hated. And now that Poland is finally an independent nation, Poles enter international situations without the historic burden of exploitative colonial politics. As a result, a discussion of someone else's plight

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<sup>237</sup> Ossendowski, *Pierścień z krwawnikiem*, 96.

turns into a soothing reminder to the readers about the morality and grandeur of their nation:

“Then Firlej began to tell both lamas about Poland, about her heroic defense of her unshielded plain, to which the greedy hands of Tatars, Teutonic Knights, Turks and Muscovites were drawn; talked about famous people and about the fact that Poland loved freedom above all and fought for the freedom of other peoples in America, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia, subjugated by the Germanized tsars, and finally, after many years of oppression and slavery, won independence for herself as well.”<sup>238</sup>

It may seem that it is the protagonist’s Polish values that prompt him to recognize the injustice. He repeatedly describes how central for the Polish ethos is respect for freedom and aversion to any oppression, so it might be that having this as the prism through which he sees the world makes the Pole notice acts of injustice everywhere. (In Chapter 3, I will analyze examples that illustrate this option: novels featuring Soviet protagonists who notice class inequality everywhere because this is a pre-chosen prism.) However, in *Carnelian Signet Ring*, this is not so: the conversation is triggered by the Tibetan’s remark, which Firlej had to ponder for a while before understanding the logic behind it. Firlej’s own first reaction to the signs of British governance in India is the excitement of seeing civilization after a long time and the anticipation of receiving help and support in a British-run town vouchsafed by his whiteness. In other words, Polish “freedom-loving ethos” does not *prompt* reconsidering the attitude to colonial oppression; it is rather evoked *post-factum* as a rhetorical construct to avoid suspicion of being complicit in this injustice. The argumentation in the vein of “but not all [representatives of the dominant group in the hierarchy] are complicit” has been recently shown to be problematic in various contexts, as it only obscures the systemic nature of the oppression.<sup>239</sup> One also should not forget

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<sup>238</sup> „Wtedy Firlej zaczął opowiadać obu lamom o Polsce, o jej bohaterskiej obronie swego niczym nie osłoniętego kraju równinnego, do którego ciągnęły chciwe ręce Tatarów, Krzyżaków, Turków i Moskali; mówił o sławnych ludziach i o tym, że Polska umiłowała przede wszystkim wolność i o wolność innych ludów walczyła w Ameryce, Francji, Niemczech, Italii, Rosji, ujarzmionej przez zniemczonych carów, aż wreszcie po długich latach ucisku i niewoli i dla siebie wywalczyła niepodległość.” Ossendowski, 96.

<sup>239</sup> For instance, Wilkerson discusses this with regard to the racialized social hierarchy in the United States: Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, Reprint edition (New York: Random House, 2020). Elsewhere, the same dynamics are discussed in the context of gender.

that just two pages prior, the protagonist was shown to be very cognizant of his rhetorical skills and ability to tailor his message to a specific audience with a specific end-result in mind: to “present [his story] all to these various commanders and sheriffs so tenderly and tragically that they will cry like beavers.”<sup>240</sup> In this way, Ossendowski’s message for his reader about the reputation of the Poles is the following: we are a modern European nation, *as good as* any whites, and actually even *better than* those other whites because we have not participated in colonial oppression. The latter fact is ascribed to specific Polish freedom-loving values and high morality. However, as is hidden in plain sight in the very quote that asserts this (“...Poland [...] fought for the freedom of other peoples, [until] finally [...] won independence for herself as well”<sup>241</sup>), the actual reason for the lack of this historic experience of economically exploiting non-white inhabitants of overseas colonies is the absence of its own state in the era when most of the world was split into colonies by European empires.

It is noteworthy that for Ossendowski himself, criticizing or praising colonial politics in his fiction and non-fiction writings was also a matter of choice depending on the intended audience – and, occasionally, even the sponsor. In 1924, Ossendowski went on a honeymoon journey through French North Africa. The French administration tended to his and his wife’s every need (“carried us in their arms,” as Ossendowski put it), hoping for good publicity for their civilizing mission in the colonies from under the nib of the author of international bestsellers. The two non-fiction volumes which resulted from this expedition, *Płomienna północ* (*Blazing North*) and *Pod smaganiem samumu* (*Under the Strokes of Simoom*), both published in 1926,<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Ossendowski, *Pierścień z krwawnikiem*, 93.

<sup>241</sup> Ossendowski, 96.

<sup>242</sup> Vol.1: F. Antoni Ossendowski, *Płomienna północ: Podróż po Afryce północnej. Marokko* (Lwów — Poznań: Wydawnictwo Polskie, 1926). English translation published under the title Ferdinand Ossendowski, *The Fire of Desert Folk: The Account of a Journey through Morocco*, trans. Lewis Stanton Palen (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1926). Vol. 2: F. Antoni Ossendowski, *Pod Smaganiem Samumu: Podróż Po Afryce Północnej. Algierja i*

included not only formal acknowledgement of the support from the French colonial administration, for which the author promised to repay with sharing his “sincerest impressions,”<sup>243</sup> but also occasional praise for the colonial government. Michałowski evaluates these passages of praise as rather artificial insertions against a background of more sincere-sounding depictions of indigenous poverty and moral corruptness of the civilization offered by the West.<sup>244</sup> Several years later, Ossendowski sought British support for a similar expedition to the British-ruled Middle East, but as the biographer comments on the possible reasons for the failure of these negotiations, the British were not interested in soliciting additional publicity for their civilizing mission nor in explorations into the souls of subjugated peoples.<sup>245</sup> Ossendowski later went on a journey to Mandatory Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia without the sponsorship of the British authorities, which resulted in the publication of *Gasnące ognie* (*Withering fires*, 1931), in which he did not feel obliged to praise the British administration, so he did not.<sup>246</sup> In mid-1930s, Ossendowski corresponded with the Japanese, promising a series of “articles in the European press praising Japan’s historical mission in the Far East” if they provide him an opportunity to get familiar with the situation on the spot (in Manchuria, which had been occupied by Japan since 1931).<sup>247</sup> Nothing came out of this plan but his high opinion of the Japanese made its way into *Carnelian Signet Ring*.

One can speculate, as Michałowski does, which of the strains in Ossendowski’s writing

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*Tunisja* (Poznań — Lwów: Wydawnictwo Polskie, 1926). English translation published under the title Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski, *The Breath of the Desert: The Account of a Journey through Algeria and Tunisia* (Allen & Unwin, 1927). French and Spanish translations were published even before the Polish original, in 1925.

<sup>243</sup> Ossendowski, *Płomienna północ*, 6.

<sup>244</sup> Michałowski, *Wielkie safari Antoniego O.*, 121–28.

<sup>245</sup> Michałowski, 171.

<sup>246</sup> F. Antoni Ossendowski, *Gasnące ognie: Podróż po Palestynie, Syrii, Mezopotamji* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Polskie R. Wegnera, 1931).

<sup>247</sup> Michałowski, *Wielkie safari Antoniego O.*, 184.

sounds more sincere: the one praising the successes of the colonial government or the one noticing the injustice to the colonized. However, the sincerity might be beside the point when it concerns a fiction text written by an acclaimed author. What is obvious from these examples is the flexibility Ossendowski had in tailoring his depiction of colonial governance practices, depending on his general message, interests of the intended readership, and even sponsorship status. Adding a scene in the *Carnelian Signet Ring* that criticizes colonial government practices is an effective narrative strategy if it reinforces in the reader's mind the image of the moral freedom-loving Poles, respected as such all over the world. This strategy proves effective, regardless of whether the author truly believes that the British brought only economic exploitation and improperly mended roads to India and their other colonies. Switching to depicting the idyll that India will become under British guidance with Polish help (which I analyze below) is an equally effective narrative strategy, since it provides the reader with an entertaining reading according to the conventions of the genre, regardless of whether the author really believed that something like that is possible.

This example shows another facet of the connection between the adventure genre and the propagation of ideological messages. In many novels analyzed in this dissertation, I show how authors used the entertaining form deliberately as an accessible vehicle for a message they wanted to convey to their readers. However, the situation may involve far less deliberation on behalf of the author. Sometimes an author like Ossendowski might be interested in writing a good-selling novel and choose a message that would be perceived favorably by the reader. Demonizing communists was most likely done based on his honest conviction, but depicting British colonizing policies less or more favorably was not. However, the mechanism of perpetuating the views that define the divisions and alliances in the imaginary world of the novel

works the same regardless of the reason for which they were chosen.

Another theme in *Carnelian Signet Ring* that appears already in Ossendowski's accounts from the 1924 expedition is an assumption that Muslims, along with Buddhists (with whom he became familiar in his previous journey through Asia), are the force whose antagonistic feelings toward the Western Christian world may be exploited by the Soviet Union.<sup>248</sup> This idea reappears in *Carnelian Signet Ring*, depicting both an attempt of the aggrieved peoples of Asia to organize and create a single front against the "white oppressors"<sup>249</sup> and a Soviet attempt to exploit this force in their own interest of spreading communism and fighting against their ideological enemies in the West. The novel depicts a secret "congress" of leaders of different Asian nations arguing about who should lead these billion people on their way to the "final liberation from the influence of the white race."<sup>250</sup> The candidates include Muslims, who have strong support not only in Asia but also in North Africa; the Japanese, who have reached a level of technical development equal to that of West; or the Hindus, who already have the largest amount of experience in fighting against the British...<sup>251</sup> It is eventually suggested that the leader of all Asia should possess Genghis's signet ring, but it had been stolen by Soviet agents.

The whole endeavor, however, fizzles out in the novel. Or, rather, the structure of the formula genre is used to mitigate the menace for the in-group related to the self-organization of a large group of people who have every historic reason to feel aggrieved by European colonization. This is where the second type of attitude to the Asians becomes dominant in

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<sup>248</sup> Ossendowski, *Płomienna północ*, 151–52 and passim.

<sup>249</sup> The novel uses predominantly racial identifiers, speaking of "white oppressors" with regard to the colonial policies of the European empires. As I have shown above, the novel does acknowledge the incongruence of this simple division into "white oppressors" and "non-white oppressed," factoring in many other aspects. However, on the textual level, the racial markers are still very widely used.

<sup>250</sup> Ossendowski, *Pierścień z krwawnikiem*, 47.

<sup>251</sup> Ossendowski, 47–50.

*Carnelian Signet Ring*, which views them as not self-sufficient and subordinate. Their development can happen only through an imitation of one of the ways – the “right” or the “wrong” one, from the point of view of the author. In addition, the choice between two paths will depend on those who lobby or impose a certain ideology, not on the Asians themselves.

Interestingly, this change in attitude that happens half-way in the novel also corresponds to a significant change in the genre convention that the novel follows. It would be an exaggeration to say that what started as a spy novel becomes a love romance; this is still an adventure novel, and the challenges the hero must overcome on his way to the happy end are still the challenges characteristic of an adventure hero (wild animals, assassination attempts). The explanation behind the challenges, however, changes from political rivalry to romantic rivalry. Most characteristically, when the kidnapping of Atri-Maja was first mentioned, it was suggested that Sobcow and his henchmen kidnapped her to give political leverage to their supporter, Raja Baab, against Atri’s father.<sup>252</sup> Later on, it is explained that Raja Baab rather chose to give support to communist agents because they could help in procuring Atri for him, after her father refused to marry the daughter off.<sup>253</sup> In fact, both explanations are compatible with one another: Sobcow’s interest in the collaboration was political, Raja Baab’s, personal. However, this again suggests that the Asians, even leaders of entire principalities, do not understand political matters and make important decisions about ideological alliances based on impulsive personal feelings.

After all, the same might be true with regards to the “good” Raja Ghas-Bogra, Atri’s father, as his political views, it seems, are equally determined not by his ideological beliefs, but by connections with the bearers of certain views from outside:

Allegedly, Baab has Bolshevik advisers from Russia with him, and they incite him against the good Mahatma Gandhi and the British, and our ruler instead is a friend of the viceroy and governor of

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<sup>252</sup> Ossendowski, 69–70.

<sup>253</sup> Ossendowski, 185–86.

Bengal...<sup>254</sup>.

Asians are supposedly easy to deceive; it requires an intervention from a Western hero who exposes the fraudulent advisers, leads the peoples of Asia out of delusion and ensures harmonious development in cooperation with the West. This is exactly what happens when Raja Baab, who initially welcomed Soviet help, is mellowed by Firlej's amicability and forgiveness:

"I now understand the deceptiveness and the wickedness of my Bolshevik advisers," wrote the Raja of Balora. "So I scattered them into four winds, and when one of them, disregarding the ban on entry to my country, returned and was captured by the police, I ordered to flog him and to hand him over to the British resident. I swore to myself that I would fight communism together with my noble friend, Ghas-Bogra, because it is the enemy of Allah and the Prophet, a destroyer of states and a spreader of disastrous, immoral slogans, stupefying and leading peoples to the defeat of war, slavery, hunger, poverty and despair and fall! So I decided to oppose this with increased protection for my people. I do what I can, and when you return to India, sahib, I will ask you for advice and guidance"<sup>255</sup>

Several aspects are remarkable in this quote. Firlej's friendly attitude and medical help instead of vengeance as the reaction to attempted murder literally opened Baab's eyes, and he is now able to see what he could not. This new truth (the wickedness of communism) is presented as eternal, as it is explained through the values of religious tradition. Since it can be assumed that the values of Islamic tradition did not change this abruptly, it follows that the Muslim raja was only able to understand them in this moment of revelation. That is, a Western Christian hero has helped a Muslim better understand the values of his religion. (There is a very similar instance when Firlej opens a Buddhist's eyes to the values of his own religion.<sup>256</sup>) Finally, this restoration

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<sup>254</sup> „Podobno Baab ma przy sobie doradców-bolszewików z Rosji i ci buntują go przeciwko dobrotliwemu Matatmie Gandhiewi i Anglikom, nasz zaś władca jest przyjacielem wicekróla i gubernatora Bengalu...” Ossendowski, 185–86.

<sup>255</sup> „Zrozumiałem teraz podstęp i nieszczemność moich bolszewickich doradców – pisał radża Balory. – Rozpędziłem ich więc na cztery wiatry, a gdy jeden z nich, nie licząc się z zakazem wjazdu do mojego kraju, powrócił i został przez policję schwytyany, kazałem ukarać go chłostą i oddać rezydentowi brytyjskiemu. Przysięgłem sobie, że wraz z dostojnym druhem moim, Ghas-Bogra, zwalczać będę komunizm, do jest on wrogiem Allah i Proroka, burzycielem państw i szerzycielem zgubnych, niemoralnych hasel, ogłupiających i prowadzących ludy do klęski wojny, niewoli, głodu, nędzy, rozpacz i upadku! Postanowiłem więc przeciwstawić temu wzmożoną opiekę nad moim ludem. Robię co mogę, a gdy powrócisz, sahibie, do Indii, będę prosił ciebie o radę i wskazówki.” Ossendowski, 215–16.

<sup>256</sup> „-Należało zabić! Należało zabić!

- Czy taką też radę dałby mądry Sakkia-Muni, wielki mistrz? – spytał doktor. [...]

of the correct order that happened because of Firlej's intervention is also a restoration of the "correct" hierarchies: he now recognizes the primacy of Ghas-Bogra (which he did not in his "deceived" condition<sup>257</sup>) but most importantly the primacy of the Europeans is restored. A "British resident" is the higher authority a raja appeals to. Moreover, he asks for "advice and guidance" in running his principality from Firlej himself, who is not a political expert but a medical doctor. The happy outcome of the novel includes restoration of the hierarchy characteristic of many adventure novels where *any* white person knows better than *any* non-white person (as I have showed above, this status quo of the genre had been questioned in the earlier part of the novel).

The final chapters of the novel outline a paternalistic idyll into which, first the principality of Raja Ghas-Bogra and then all of India, following this model, will develop in close cooperation with Europeans, who will not only bring and help to introduce scientific knowledge and modernization,<sup>258</sup> but also help maintain order. Various markers of family and friendly ties play a significant role in the description of this utopian vision. Ghas-Bogra is such a "good but stern" father to his subjects, who love him very tenderly.<sup>259</sup> The raja is attentive to Firlej's

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- Głupi jestem jak „tyme” [wielbłąd]” Ossendowski, 196.

[“They should have been killed! They should have been killed!”

“Would that also be the advice of the wise Sakkia-Muni, the great master?” the doctor asked. [...]

- I'm stupid like [a camel]”]

<sup>257</sup> Ossendowski, 186.

<sup>258</sup> „Z pomocą radży założymy centralny szpital i zakład medycyny doświadczalnej. [...] Pozwolicie mi sprowadzić kilku wybitnych lekarzy Polaków z Krakowa, rodzinnego miasta moich rodziców, a my już zrobimy swoje, rozslawimy państwo Rungpuru i jego postępowych władców!” Ossendowski, 206.

[“With the help of Raja, we will open a central hospital and a center for experimental medicine. [...] Let me invite here some prominent Polish doctors from Krakow, my parents' hometown, and we will do our part to glorify the state of Rungpur and its progressive rulers!”]

<sup>259</sup> „Ojciec wydaje się dumny i surowy, ale to tylko na niby, bo inaczej radza nie może wyglądać. Co by pomyśleli sobie poddani... dwadzieścia milionów poddanych?!” Ossendowski, 169.

[“Father looks proud and stern, but this is only in sight, because a raja cannot look differently. What would the subjects think ... twenty million subjects?!”]

“Zostanie poruszone całe nasze państwo, bo lud kocha papę i nas z mamą, chociaż one jest cudzoziemką...”

modernization projects for two reasons, personal and political: “not only as the future father-in-law of a young doctor, but also as a ruler, caring for the welfare of the people and the civilizational development of his country,”<sup>260</sup> which, however, converge into one, because the whole principality becomes an extended family in which the raja is the patriarch, while his whole family, including his wife, daughter, and son-in-law, take care of the subjects.<sup>261</sup> The Raja’s family is also connected with British administration officials as a circle of good friends who know each other’s bad habits and forgive one another small imperfections.<sup>262</sup> This prospect of India’s development “with the help of Great Britain,”<sup>263</sup> personified by Ghas-Bogra and his new son-in-law is symbolically legitimized by the eponymous signet ring: Genghis’s ring (though false), is given to Firlej by the representatives of the poorest people (whom he helps as a doctor), who are aware neither of the significance nor of the falsity of the relic.

This utopia is also used to reinforce the image of Poland as a modern Western country and of Poles as people who have not only fought for everyone’s freedom throughout history but also continue in the present to save the world in the most remote places. It is Polish doctors and researchers whom Ghas-Bogra and Firlej invite to the new exemplary medical center in the

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Ossendowski, 169.

[“Our whole country will be touched, because the people love Dad and me and Mom, even though she is a foreigner.”]

<sup>260</sup> „Radza słuchał go uważnie, nie tylko jako przyszły teść młodego lekarza, lecz i jako władca, troskający się o dobro ludu i cywilizacyjny rozwój swego państwa. Ossendowski, *Pierścień z krwawnikiem*, 206.

<sup>261</sup> Ossendowski, 193.

<sup>262</sup> „Przyjedzie do nas wicekról, wspaniały dżentelmen z małżonką, bardzo godną i rozumną lady, przyjadą też najmilsi Mellingtonowie, a potem sir Reginald będzie miał atak podagry, bo popije starego burgunda z naszych piwnic, a jemu właśnie burgunda nie wolno; zjadą się radżowie – napuszeni, śmieszni w swej posągowej powadze, ruchome wystawy klejnotów, ostatnie rozdziały historii Indii i ostatnie echa jej świetności! Śmieszni są, ale i wzruszający zarazem.” Ossendowski, 169.

[“A viceroy will come to us, a wonderful gentleman with a wife, a very dignified and wise lady; the kindest Mellingtons will also come, and then sir Reginald will have a gout attack, because he will drink the old burgundy from our cellars, and he is not allowed to burgundy; Rajas will come - puffed up, ridiculous in their statuesque gravity, mobile exhibitions of jewels, the last chapters of India’s history and the last echoes of its splendor! They are funny, but also touching”]

<sup>263</sup> Ossendowski, 192.

novel's epilogue.<sup>264</sup>

In this way, Ossendowski uses the logic of the adventure genre to mitigate the catastrophic premonitions of a potential war between the West and previously colonized and otherwise exploited non-Western nations. According to Ossendowski's conceptualization of the situation based on his years-long observations in Asia and in Africa, Europeans themselves have prepared the situation by their abusive practices of colonial governance, but the final impetus that can make this menace a reality is the instigation from the communists. The logic of the adventure genre is used in *Carnelian Signet Ring* to offer a fantasized solution to this potential threat: the novel explains through individual deception what elsewhere in Ossendowski's non-fiction writing was attributed to the spread of political ideologies, offering individual heroism as a solution instead of economic and political measures. Moreover, this individual action of the hero that saves the day from the menace is not the type that one could find in a spy adventure; it is noteworthy that Firlej saves Asia from the communist threat not by cunning action but by his exceptional morality. The final section of this analysis will be dedicated to the values ascribed to the exemplary hero and their function for the message of the adventure story.

#### 2.2.4. The hero and his virtues

The novel *Carnelian Signet Ring* conveys the image of an impeccable hero whose example sends the reader a message about virtues and ethos of a model community member. Some features are descriptive, aimed to induce recognition by the reader as "one of us": "A tall, broad-shouldered young man with fair, slightly curling hair, gray eyes and a bold, weather-beaten face, on which a cheerful, slightly mocking smile never faded,"<sup>265</sup> "cheerful and

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<sup>264</sup> Ossendowski, 228–29.

<sup>265</sup> „Wysoki, barczysty, młody człowiek o jasnych lekko wijących się włosach, szarych oczach i śmiałej, ogorzałej

sociable.”<sup>266</sup> These establishing descriptions are important to facilitate the work of a reader’s imagination, as one will follow Firlej’s adventures. Combining typical (fair hair, grey eyes) and ideal (tall, broad-shouldered) characteristics associated with the in-group makes this image more relatable to the Polish reader, a prerequisite for offering the protagonist’s ethos as an example.

The life of the protagonist is determined by several imperatives that determine that he will not be able to behave in a different way, even if what his conscience suddenly demands is completely contrary to rational plans. Keywords denoting these axiological behavioral patterns are “gentleman,” “Christian,” and “doctor.”

The dominant “gentleman” makes the protagonist abandon his studies in Tibet and go after a wrongdoer, about whom it is only known that he kidnapped woman:

“I do not know who she is, but, perhaps a white woman. I have reason to think so because she writes correctly in English [...] I must rescue her. I would laugh at myself if she turned out to be [old and fat], but even then, I would defend and rescue her, because I am a man and a gentleman! I would, however, prefer to see a young, beautiful girl who would smile at me, her liberator, in a way that would be sufficient for me as full gratitude.”<sup>267</sup>

Even then, long before the couple became acquainted, the situation was structured according to the canons of the adventure genre (inherited from the chivalric and fairy tale tradition), according to which the rescued “princess” (in Ossendowski’s novel, she is indeed a princess) also becomes her rescuer’s reward. Although Firlej insists that the role model of a “gentleman” forces him to come to the rescue of *any* woman, there is a clear suggestion that a white woman and a woman corresponding to societal aesthetic ideals is more worthy of helping. This hierarchy is evoked once more when the protagonist finally finds out who Atri-Maja is:

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twarzy, na której nigdy nie gasnął wesoły, trochę szyderyczy uśmiech.” Ossendowski, 13–14.

<sup>266</sup> „Wesoły człowiek i rozmowny!” Ossendowski, 18.

<sup>267</sup> „Nie wiem kto ona jest, ale być może jest kobietą białą. Mam powód tak myśleć, gdyż pisze poprawnie po angielsku... [...] muszę ją ratować. Śmiałybym się z siebie, gdyby okazała się opasłą, zezowatą babą na nogach-słupach i lśniącem od tłuszczu obliczu księżycą, ale i tak bym jej bronił i ratował, bo jestem mężczyzną i dżentelmenem! Wolałbym co prawda ujrzeć młodą, piękną dziewczynę, która uśmiechnęłaby się do mnie, swego zbawcy, tak, że starczyłoby mi to za wszelką podziękę!” Ossendowski, 66–67.

“[...] Why did you, Mr. Hill, call her educated? What education can an Indian girl have, even if she were a Raja's daughter?”

“As I can see, you don't know anything!” Hill got agitated again. “Ghas-Bogra is married to a French woman, and his daughter was educated at the aristocratic institution of the Loretan sisters in Paris, and then attended the university, where she studied biology...”

“Let's save her!” Firlej exclaimed impatiently.<sup>268</sup>

Thus, despite previous claims that the behavioral pattern of a “gentleman” demands of him to come to the rescue of any woman of equal measure, there is still a clear gradation. The new information about the kidnapped woman situates her much closer to Firlej himself in various aspects of their backgrounds: she is half-European, but more importantly, university-educated and his coreligionist. All these details increase the urgency of rescuing her tremendously, which is shown through his emotional exclamation. Interestingly, Atri herself imagines the situation in a similar way, as follows from the fact that in her messages, which she randomly threw out, she asked to “inform the other white man who is nearby about it [the fact that she had been kidnapped].”<sup>269</sup> So, the imperative to leave everything behind and rush to the rescue is defined by the models of “gentleman” and “white man.”

Religious identity also plays a role here. The fact that Sobcow is a “godless atheist” makes his crime even more horrendous.<sup>270</sup> Unlike the model of “gentlemen” that urges the protagonist to act and rush, religious self-identification is presented mostly as something that would restrain a person from unworthy deeds. The understanding that Sobcow, unlike Firlej,

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<sup>268</sup> „- [...] Dlaczego pan, mister Hill, nazwał ją wykształconą? Cóż za wykształcenie może mieć hinduska dziewczyna, choćby była córką radży?

- To pan, jak widzę, nic nie wie! – znowu zapalił się Hill. – Ghas-Bogra ożeniony jest z Francuzką, a jego córka kształciła się w arystokratycznym zakładzie sióstr Loretanek w Paryżu, potem zaś uczęszczała na uniwersytet, gdzie studiowała biologię...

- Ratujmy ją! – wyrwał się Firlejowi niecierpliwy okrzyk.” Ossendowski, 116–17.

<sup>269</sup> „...powiadomcie o tym innego białego człowieka, który jest blisko...” Ossendowski, 61.

<sup>270</sup> „nie mogę pozwolić, żeby jakiś tam bezbożnik, komunista Sobcow więził kobietę! Nic mnie nie obchodzi jakiś tam pierścień, ale kobieta, mistrzu, zrozum, kobieta w niewoli! Na myśl o tym wszystko się we mnie buntuje” Ossendowski, 59.

[I cannot allow some godless communist Sobtsov to imprison a woman! I don't care about a ring there, but a woman, master, understand, a woman in captivity! Everything in me rebels at the thought of it]

does not have this component in his ethos suggests that the antagonist would not stop from committing any atrocity. The same role of religious identity is invoked with regard to Firlej himself in the situation with Raja Baab's attempt on his life. A very well-timed tiger's attack did not let the raja kill the protagonist, but Firlej's reaction – to offer medical help instead of vengeance – totally astounded Baab. Here Firlej's actions are guided by the ethical model of a “Christian” and a “doctor”: “Don't be afraid! I will not do it [revenge on the wounded Baab]! I am a Christian and a doctor. This defends you more effectively than your guard! [...] I will do everything to save you!”<sup>271</sup>

The author presents these models as worthy of imitation: the protagonist is rewarded for fidelity to the principles of the “gentleman,” “Christian,” and “doctor.” The rescued girl turns out to be a princess with European education, with whom the hero finds marital happiness and the opportunity to realize his professional aspirations; providing medical care to the enemy leads to his re-education and joining the common path of building a happy, prosperous, and civilized India.

Among the virtues of the protagonist, which are effective in interaction with the world, is also the fact that he is “brave and extremely, for our times, modest and moral.”<sup>272</sup> The message for the implied reader, therefore, is that these “outdated” traits should not be abandoned, as they can help achieve the most desirable result in personal and professional life.

## CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 2

The novels analyzed in this chapter, *Salt River Canyon* by Tadeusz KostECKI and

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<sup>271</sup> “Nie obawiaj się pan! Ja tego nie uczynię! Jestem chrześcijaninem i lekarzem. To cię broni skuteczniej od twojej gwardii! Cha-cha-cha! Zrobię wszystko, żeby cię uratować” Ossendowski, 189.

<sup>272</sup> „całym sercem pokochała tego dzielnego, niezwykle jak na nasze czasy skromnego i moralnego, młodzieńca!” Ossendowski, 165–66.

*Carnelian Signet Ring* by Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski, are quite different in many respects but very similar in others, most importantly in the messages that they convey about the contemporary world, the place of Poland in it, and about what it means to be a good representative of the Polish national community. In this regard, both novels are a product of Polish culture of the late 1930s, with its catastrophic premonitions, discussions about modernity, and self-fashioning as a strong European country that finally has an opportunity to develop and modernize itself after many years of foreign domination, while preserving the values associated with the national tradition.

The pre-existing sub-genre models used in these two novels are very different, but they are modified by including a Polish protagonist into their typical overseas settings to address some similar issues. For instance, both tackle the motif of pre-independence Polish emigration to the US – as a way into meritocratic conditions that make possible achieving prominence by hard work, something that in Poland itself only happened after independence, as Kostecki shows. Kostecki's approach to the question is more daunting, since in his vision all attempts to recreate home away from home end in disaster; only in the independent homeland is it possible to realize one's potential. Ossendowski's vision of these dynamics in his novel is somewhat more optimistic, as here emigration out of partitioned Poland allowed the protagonist's parents to provide their children with education and other prerequisites to achieve prominence. Here, a different threat emerges: effacement of Polishness if not in the children's self-identification then in their public identity. To the wider public, the protagonist is known simply as "a doctor from the United States," while his Polishness remains a detail about him for a close circle of friends. It requires an independent modernizing country for her children to be able to work for her glory: the novel's end shows Polish doctors being invited to India as highly educated and valued

experts.

Structurally, both novels include the same element, which the adventure genre inherited from fairy tales: male protagonist meets his future wife when he comes to her rescue. Out of gratitude and in recognition of his high moral qualities, the rescued young lady falls in love with him (we will see the same element once more in Chapter 5 in my analysis of Ivan Bahrianyi's novel *The Tiger Hunters*). Both in Kostecki's and in Ossendowski's novels these young ladies are local to where the events are set: Ann is American, Atri, half-Indian, half-French. In contrast to the strong imperative against out-marriage, which was imagined as a threat to national identity in the Ukrainian novels analyzed in Chapter 1, none of the Polish authors analyzed here make an issue about out-marriage, just like this was not an issue for many of their predecessors. What is probably more important here (although it is never stated overtly) is the religious affiliation: since both protagonists are depicted as devout Catholics, it is important that Atri is also Catholic, like her mother, and not Hindu, like her father.

The novels are also quite similar in their target audience. Unlike many (but not all) texts under analysis in this dissertation, they are not explicitly addressed to a young reader. Nothing in particular would stop an adult from reading them; that is, they would not be perceived as inappropriately juvenile by an adult simply opting for a more entertaining than intellectual reading experience. At the same time, it can be suggested that they were written to include adolescents in their target audience, as both novels depict rather suppressed levels of violence, protagonists' naivete and lack of experience in love matters, and most importantly, they offer guidance in terms of which values and moral qualities one should develop, using the example of the protagonists.

Both protagonists, Jacek Bandera and Adolf Firlej (by funny coincidence, both names are

hard to imagine in an exemplary Polish protagonist just several years later because of the inevitable associations with historical figures marked negatively in Polish narrative of national memory), are, in fact, very similar. On the one hand, they are portrayed as exemplary in-group members, including ever-present “fair hair” and “grey eyes.” They possess all the necessary qualifications to face the challenges that the adventure plot puts before them: they can shoot, box, ride horses, and do everything else that is physically demanded of a protagonist of an adventure story. At the same time, despite possessing these skills by chance, they are both representatives of educated elites. What their roles as a lawyer and a doctor allow them to do and also demand of them are much more important to the development of the story than the impressive tricks they demonstrate in some fast-paced entertaining episodes. Each is presented as a kind of a self-made man, as it is emphasized that they are coming from very humble backgrounds economically. They are both very shy around women, and that is just one of the aspects in which, as it is commented about both, they are, “as for modern conditions,” too moral, too driven by principles. One of these principles is refraining from violence, which in both novels is presented as a specific characteristic of the protagonists, contrary to what is “normal” and expected of someone in their situation. Both novels considered in this chapter assert the ideals of non-violence as a viable solution in the light of the looming international conflict, the exact proportions of which were not yet clear at the moment of the novels’ creation in 1938. Yet, the fact that extreme violence and devastation were about to unfurl not only could be predicted from the observation of the international events a year before the start of the WWII, but also anticipated by the discourse of catastrophism that was so pervasive of Polish interwar thought that it made its way even into such an optimistic genre as adventure fiction. What the authors associate the impending catastrophic events with differs: for Kostecki, it is a war that is about to

break out in Europe itself, for Ossendowski, a war of decolonization instigated by the communists. The structure of the adventure genre, optimistic in its nature, was used in both cases to mitigate the catastrophic premonitions and to give some suggestions to younger readers about what qualities one should nurture to face the circumstances.

**CHAPTER 3. SEEKING RECOGNITION IN THE FUTURE: SOVIET RUSSIAN  
“EXTRAORDINARY VOYAGES” AND THE PROMISE OF THE WORLD  
REVOLUTION IN THE 1920S**

This chapter considers two Russian-language narratives featuring Soviet adolescents who venture out into the world outside the borders of the USSR. They bring with them the promise of emancipation for all the “wretched of the earth,” as the oppressed classes were dubbed in the then Soviet anthem, the *International*. Back from their journey, they bring to their Soviet readers observations about the capitalist exploitation in the countries outside the Soviet Union. Both texts under scrutiny in this chapter include allusions and structural similarities to the “extraordinary voyages” by French author Jules Verne. As Ben Hellman observes, “Jules Verne was by far the most popular author among Soviet youth,”<sup>273</sup> so no wonder that the authors used elements from what they already knew was appealing to their readers in their new adventure stories. According to Pierre Macherey, what made Verne’s works so attractive to the Soviet audience is the centrality of the conquest of nature to their ideology, which also aligned with the Soviet agenda of modernization.<sup>274</sup> Yet, both those adventure novels in Verne’s oeuvre that follow realistic conventions for their set-up and those in which science fiction elements are central are known to combine a fascination for technological progress with one for the Western colonial enterprise and imperial expansion.<sup>275</sup> In this chapter, I analyze how Soviet authors used

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<sup>273</sup> Ben Hellman, *Fairy Tales and True Stories: The History of Russian Literature for Children and Young People (1574–2010)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 338.

<sup>274</sup> Pierre Macherey, “Jules Verne: The Faulty Narrative,” in *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 159.

<sup>275</sup> Admittedly, Verne also often mocked British colonial efforts, however, this was criticism aimed at the main rival of France in establishing a colonial empire rather than criticism of the general idea of European domination over overseas colonies. For a more detailed discussion of Verne’s geopolitical imagination, see Jean Chesneaux and Frances Chew, “Jules Verne’s Image of the United States,” *Yale French Studies*, no. 43 (1969): 111–27,

recognizable elements from Verne's adventure fiction to convey ideological messages that were, at the same time, highly critical of and even explicitly antagonistic to, western imperialism and capitalism.

### 3.1. SPREADING THE SOVIET 'GOOD NEWS': "AROUND THE WORLD IN FIFTY DAYS" (1928) BY IAKOV KALNITSKII AND VLADIMIR IUREZANSKII

*Vokrug sveta v piatdesiat dnei* (*Around the World in Fifty Days*, 1928) is a novella co-authored by Iakov Kalnitskii and Vladimir Iurezanskii. Addressed to children, this text is an outlier in the works of both authors, who predominantly wrote for adult audiences. At the time of the novella's creation and publication, both authors resided in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Iakov Kalnitskii (1895–1949) was a Soviet author and publicist of Jewish origin, who published in both Russian and Ukrainian. Many of his works include science fiction elements. In 1938, Kalnitskii was arrested and served a sentence in the labor camps until 1941, after which he was never again published in his lifetime.<sup>276</sup> Vladimir Iurezanskii (real last name Nos, 1888–1957) originated from the Ufa region, from a peasant family of Ukrainian background. His oeuvre combines an attachment to these two regions; his childhood and pre-revolutionary experiences in the Urals are reflected in his poems and short stories, while his more widely known and internationally translated works are dedicated to Soviet modernization in Ukraine.<sup>277</sup> As I will show further, the two regions, imagined as two examples of Soviet provinces, also

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<https://doi.org/10.2307/2929640>; Philip Dine, "The French Colonial Empire in Juvenile Fiction: From Jules Verne to Tintin," *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 23, no. 2 (1997): 177–203.

<sup>276</sup> "Kal'niŭskiiĭ Iakov Isaakovich (1895)," Otkrytyĭ spisok zhertv politicheskikh repressiiĭ v SSSR, accessed December 7, 2021, [https://ru.openlist.wiki/Кальницкий\\_Яков\\_Исаакович\\_\(1895\)](https://ru.openlist.wiki/Кальницкий_Яков_Исаакович_(1895)).

<sup>277</sup> Aleksandr Shmakov, "Pevets dvukh kraev," in *Na literaturnykh tropakh* (Cheliabinsk: Iuzhno-Ural'skoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1969), 119–34; Vladimir Pavlovich Biriukov, "V. T. Iurezanskiĭ," in *Zapiski ural'skogo kraevedy* (Cheliabinsk: IuUKI, 1964), 57–61.

feature in the novella *Around the World in Fifty Days*, which is the only case of collaboration between the two authors.

*Around the World in Fifty Days* starts with introducing the reader to two Soviet teenagers, Mikola Omelchenko from Kharkov (Kharkiv), then the capital of Soviet Ukraine, and Antoshka Zhukov from a village in the Perm region of Soviet Russia, both of whom learned about a lottery that lists among its prizes a journey around the world. Their dreams to win the lottery come true; together with other winners, they get to travel to several European countries. In Paris, however, they stray off the itinerary planned by the Soviet Aviakhim (the Society for the Assistance of Defense, Aircraft and Chemical Construction) and during a leisurely airplane ride get into a storm. From this point on, the narrative focuses on Antoshka, Mikola, Nezdymishapka—another lottery winner, and Sidorenko, the pilot, whom they initially believed to be French but who appeared to be a Ukrainian deployed in France during WWI and dreaming of returning to the USSR ever since. Because of the storm and a faulty airplane, the four end up in South America. They resort to the help of indigenous communists in Brazil, get engaged in a shoot-up with the representatives of the British colonial administration in Jamaica and get arrested in Mexico before returning under the auspices of the Soviet diplomatic mission and crossing the Pacific as paying passengers. In Shanghai, they experience further adventures against the backdrop of the anti-communist purges under the rule of Chiang Kai-shek. The novel ends as the four protagonists return to Soviet soil in Vladivostok, after a narrow escape with the help of Chinese communists.

### 3.1.1. Eighty or fifty days

The first thing that draws readers' attention is the novella's title, which is a close reworking of the title of the Russian translation of Jules Verne's novel *Le tour du monde en*

*quatre-vingts jours* (*Around the World in Eighty Days*, 1872): *Vokrug sveta v vosemdesiat dnei*.

By using a recognizable title, the authors are appealing to the existing interest in exotic adventures among young readers.<sup>278</sup>

Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* is not his only novel whose elements can be found in the novella by Kalnitskii and Iurezanskii. For instance, the storm that brings the protagonists from Paris to South America very much resembles the one in Verne's *The Mysterious Island* that brings a balloon from Richmond to the eponymous island in the South Pacific. Just like in Verne's case, the function of this plot element is to move the protagonists to an exotic destination, contrary to their plans; this is something of a fantastic premise that makes the rest of the story possible. To replicate the same plot line with an aircraft instead of a balloon, the authors make several further assumptions such as that the plane had been fueled up for a transatlantic competition and that the steering wheel had broken down, which made it impossible to control the direction of the flight. However, even though there are additional allusions to other Verne novels, because of the direct allusion in the title, I will mostly focus on the similarities and dialogue between Kalnitskii and Iurezanskii's novella and *Around the World in Eighty Days*.

In Verne's novel, the "eighty days" in the title are of central importance: the protagonist ventures on an around-the-world journey because he had made a wager that current technological progress makes it possible to circumnavigate the world in as little as eighty days. The world becomes smaller thanks to new technological inventions and the creation of infrastructure. As Mohit Chandna puts it, "the geographical expanse is inversely proportional to the increasing travel velocity."<sup>279</sup> In this light, it is noteworthy that the Soviet novella's title promises a journey

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<sup>278</sup> More on real-life cases and literary or theatrical works that replicated the structure of Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* in Russia and elsewhere, see Vitalii Ivanovich Bugrov, "Po sledam Fileasa Fogga," in *1000 likov mechty, O fantastike vser'ez i s ulybkoï* (Sverdlovsk: Sredne-Uralskoe knizhnoe izdatelstvo, 1988), 23–30.

<sup>279</sup> Mohit Chandna, "Around the World in Eighty (One) Days," in *Cartographies of Affect: Across Borders in South*

around the world in fifty rather than eighty days. In this text, unlike in Verne's, the reader will not see a detailed calculation of the days of the journey; fifty days is quite a random number of days to which the individual episodes do not exactly add up.<sup>280</sup> Unlike the carefully planned journey of Verne's Phileas Fogg, the Soviet youths' journey includes a lot of fortuities, random movements, changes of plans, and backtracking due to wrong turns. As I will show further, something different is at stake here than proving what modern technology is capable of: the sheer excitement of exotic encounters, narrow escapes, and daydreaming of adventure, along with the ideological messages about the presence of allies of the communist idea all over the world.

However, it is still noteworthy that the title of the Soviet novella describes a journey in fifty days, faster than the Western version, which suggests the technological advantage of Soviet modernity, now that new exciting modes of movements are available. In fact, the part of the journey that is the organized trip for the lottery winners very much depends on the existing infrastructure of the countries on the itinerary (the Soviet authorities provide funds and support through the local diplomatic missions) and is not supposed to be happening predominantly by air. But the mythology around the possibility of winning participation in the journey is founded on excitement to "fly," as the following popular retelling of the first news about it shows:

"People are going to fly."

"To fly?"

"Such tickets were released. A lottery will be conducted. If you win the lucky one – you fly around the world."<sup>281</sup>

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*Asia and the Americas*, ed. Debra A. Castillo and Kavita Panjabi (Delhi: Worldview, 2011), 70.

<sup>280</sup> In this aspect, the novella reminds adventure novels analyzed by Mikhail Bakhtin in "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel." (M. M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84–258.) In Chapter 4, I will dwell more on his theory and what it adds to the understanding of the adventure fiction written in the twentieth century. Some of those considerations also apply to the organization of the mini-adventures along the trajectory of the around-the-world journey in *Around the World in Fifty Days*.

<sup>281</sup> "- Лететь народ собирается.

- Лететь?

- Билеты такие вышли. Лотерея будет разыгрываться. Выиграешь счастливый – лети кругом света." Īakov

The lottery is, moreover, organized by Aviakhim, that is, the Society for the Assistance of Defense, Aircraft and Chemical Construction. In fact, this rather suggests that the lottery tickets are sold to raise money for the development of these industries in the Soviet Union. Yet, the popular perception of “Aviakhim’s lottery” as organized by this institution, invokes the excitement about aviation as the new, modern way of covering distances, which cannot but lead to the reduction in the number of days it takes to travel around the world, as compared with “western modernity” epitomized by the itinerary of Verne’s protagonist.<sup>282</sup>

In Verne’s *Around the World in Eighty Days*, the wager is triggered by news about the launch of the railroad in British India, which allegedly shortens the route. In general, Phileas Fogg’s route lies to a great extent through the localities of British colonial presence all over the world. European colonial interests are what brings modern technological infrastructure to remote places. Kalnitskii and Iurezanskii offer a drastic contrast to this. Their protagonists’ journey happens between all the remote locations in the world where they can find ideological allies, that is, grassroots communist movements, such as in the jungles of Brazil or in China. This produces a revised map of “allies” and “enemies” on the mental map of the world.

### 3.1.2. Friends and foes outside Soviet borders

Verne’s novel seems to assert that the world is becoming smaller and more uniform because of the ubiquitous presence of European colonialists. As Mohit Chandna argues, borders become obsolete in the world represented by the novel because “imperialist hegemony” and “technologically-triggered replication” makes geographically remote locations “indistinguishable

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Kal’nit’skii and Vladimir Iurezanskii, *Vokrug sveta v piat’desiat dnei* (Khar’kov: Proletarii, 1928), 14.

<sup>282</sup> In reality, it took 175 days to fly around the world with the technology existing in the 1920s. “First Flight Around the World | Pioneers of Flight,” Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, accessed November 12, 2021, <https://pioneersofflight.si.edu/content/first-flight-around-world>.

from each other.”<sup>283</sup> In the Soviet novella, there is a similar promise of the obsolescence of borders, yet it is ascribed to a different logic of humankind’s development. What makes the world homogenous is the ubiquity of class exploitation and the suffering of working-class people, but also the ubiquity of dissent with capitalist exploitation that is shared by random people the protagonists meet in random, remote places.

The dynamics of the encounter in the jungles of Brazil deserves dedicated analysis. These indigenous Brazilians, referred to in the novella as “Indians,” first treat the protagonists in a hostile way. Sidorenko’s attempt to pacify them “with several English words” is fruitless and only makes “the Indians’ shouts even more wrathful.”<sup>284</sup> The situation is resolved when Antoshka interjects: “What don’t you understand? We are Russians, Soviets, that’s who we are!..”<sup>285</sup> The Indians do not know the Russian language that Antoshka uses but recognize the key words, so their ire immediately ceases. They turn out to be caoutchouc gatherers who admire Lenin and even have “a dusty old photo of Illich [i.e., Lenin], apparently, cut out from an American newspaper” hanging on a wall in the corner in their poverty-struck hut.<sup>286</sup> Regardless of what it could mean in a South American indigenous culture to hang a picture of someone in the corner, to the Russian readership it clearly refers to the function of a religious icon. The conversation that follows looks rather awkward: “Instead of ‘hello,’ everyone said: ‘Lenin! Lenin!’”<sup>287</sup> They have no common language, but they feel a belonging to a common realm of

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<sup>283</sup> Chandna, “Around the World in Eighty (One) Days,” 69.

<sup>284</sup> Kal’niṭskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, *Vokrug sveta v piat’desiat dneĭ*, 74.

<sup>285</sup> “Чего не понимаешь? Русские мы, советские – вот мы кто!..” Kal’niṭskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 74.

<sup>286</sup> “В углу висела запыленная старая фотография Ильича, повидимому, вырезанная из американской газеты.” Kal’niṭskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 76.

<sup>287</sup> “Вместо «здравствуйте», все говорили:

- Ленин! Ленин!

И индеец утвердительно и важно кивал головой, вежливо повторяя:

- Ленин! Ох, Ленин!” Kal’niṭskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 75.

values, so mutual respect and sympathy between the Brazilian Indians and the Soviet travelers is signaled by repetition of Lenin's name that is very important to them all.

The mutual understanding achieved between the protagonists and the Brazilian locals differs from some other scenes in the novel, when the protagonists watch the suffering of some "exploited classes" in different countries as observers, often aware of the fact that the paradigm of class struggle is their knowledge but not necessarily that of the oppressed themselves. The sightseeing impressions of numerous cities are often accompanied by statements that alongside the riches, they witnessed the exploitation of workers. The following description of visiting Para, a city in Brazil, is a good example of how these two impressions are juxtaposed: "The travelers crossed the entire city by tram. Lots of shops, green gardens, parks... They trade, trade, trade. And... nearby—Indians, exhausted by the backbreaking work on feverous caoutchouc plantations flooded with water, hungry, indigent peasants, begging for alms among this richest nature."<sup>288</sup> Allegedly, the ideologically educated protagonists know enough to notice outrageous class inequality in what is an undisputed status quo for the participants of the scenes; in fact, the novella itself offers this appropriate ideological education, teaching the reader to make the correct interpretation.

On another occasion in South America, the protagonists are again met in a hostile way by a group of indigenous people, who counter the newcomers with "bows and arrows, sometimes rifles." The protagonists are in anguish at the impossibility to "let them know that [they] are not enemies, that [they] are from the USSR."<sup>289</sup> This encounter is naturally contrasted with the one

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<sup>288</sup> "Путешественники на трамвае пересекли весь город. Масса магазинов, зеленых садов, парков... Торгуют, торгуют, торгуют. И... рядом – истомленные непосильной работой на затопленных водой лихорадочных каучуковых плантациях индейцы, голодные, нищие крестьяне, просящие подаяния среди этой богатейшей природы." Kal'niťskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 81.

<sup>289</sup> " - Ну, как им дать понять, что мы не враги, что мы из СССР?" Kal'niťskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 89.

with the Brazilian communists, not only for the reader but for the protagonists themselves. Several explanations for the differences are offered simultaneously. The categories of “culturedness” vs. “savagery” are evoked. Unlike the Brazilian Leninists, who are here recalled as “cultured,” in comparison, the description of this group identified as Caraibes (most likely referring to what is nowadays known under the name of Kalina people) includes many elements suggesting that they are very primitive people behaving like animals. They are naked; the sounds they make are described with the words usually referring to sounds of animals: “roar and howling” (“rev i voi”).<sup>290</sup> The solution the protagonists resort to in order to save themselves in this encounter also resembles what can be often found in adventure novels about European encounters with “primitive people”: they scare the attackers away by the sheer awe of the technology they possess, using the fear aroused by the roar of the airplane’s engine.

There is, however, an alternative explanation for the hostile nature of this encounter that is offered in parallel to the traditional tropes of the civilization-savagery binary, common in the tradition of adventure fiction. After all, the Caraibes’ weapons include rifles, which means that they are in contact with the technological progress of civilization. Sidorenko explains the impossibility of establishing the same kind of mutual understanding as with the Brazilian Leninists: “They are browbeaten and downtrodden. Local landlords treat them rough on purpose, to make it easier to squeeze them [i.e., to economically exploit].”<sup>291</sup> This claim, ostensibly simply used to counter Mikola’s suggestion to once again mention their Soviet origin as a way to reconcile with the hostile crowd, has several implications. It suggests that keeping the subjugated in an animal-like condition, away from “culturedness,” is a ploy of the exploiters to maximize

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<sup>290</sup> Kal’niťskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 88.

<sup>291</sup> “Запуганы они, забиты. Здешние помещики держат их в черном теле специально, чтоб выжимать было легче.” Kal’niťskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 89.

their profits. Allegedly, access to education would unquestionably lead them to recognizing that specifically people from the Soviet Union are not enemies but friends.

If the knowledge that the protagonists are from the Soviet Union changes the attitude to them from hostile to friendly, questions arise: whom are they mistaken for in the first place? Toward whom is it “natural” that indigenous people’s attitude is hostile? In the Brazilian encounter, Sidorenko’s attempt to calm the Indians with English words caused a further explosion of ire. Apparently, it is the Soviet protagonists’ visual, i.e., racial similarity to the European imperialists that makes an encounter with the non-European subjugated groups dangerous for them. I will return to this motif in greater detail in my analysis of Viktor Goncharov’s *Under the Tropics’ Sun* further in this chapter, as in that novel, unlike in the novella by Kalnitskii and Iurezanskii, this aspect is made explicit.

The fact that the workers encountered in Brazil revere Lenin and perceive the visitors from the Soviet Union as their ideological allies means that these people have already come to “class consciousness,” a necessary prerequisite for the worldwide socialist revolution, which the protagonists are looking forward to. In Paris, they imagine walking through the city center with red banners; they acknowledge that if they did that alone, they would be arrested, but if some half a million French workers joined the cause, they could succeed. Hence, the capitalist societies are observed through the prism of the inevitability of socialist revolution. The protagonists from the Soviet Union already in the novella’s present represent a world that is a glimpse into what will be the general rule sometime in the future.

In this way, the fact that the protagonists not only observe the suffering of the toiling masses under capitalist exploitation everywhere outside the borders of the Soviet Union but also meet people who have started organizing and learning the classics of Marxism-Leninism is the

promise of the near world-wide revolution, an important aspect of Soviet ideology in the 1920s. The novel ends with the phrase: “The train carried them to their native regions, home, to the wonderful joyful work that should make all peoples on earth brothers.”<sup>292</sup> This promise for the future unification of the world is the conclusion of the protagonists’ observations of exotic countries and the take-away message for the reader.

Interestingly, specifically British colonial possessions, which are the core points on Phileas Fogg’s journey in Verne’s pretext, are decidedly out-of-reach for the Soviet protagonists. As they pass through other European countries, such as Poland, Germany, and France, they are highly critical of everything they see there, because they recognize capitalist exploitation behind everything. However, it is assumed that despite the ideological differences, there exist some diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and these countries; in any case, the protagonists are allowed to travel through their territories and get assistance vouchsafed by the diplomatic presence. This seems not to be the case with Britain and British colonies, such as Jamaica.

Britain had figured in the Soviet propaganda discourse as the epitome of imperialist evil. However, additional, specific historic background explaining such portrayal of British possessions on the imagined map of the world in the novella is that Soviet-British diplomatic relations were severed in May 1927, the year when the novella is set.<sup>293</sup>

When the protagonists need to make a stop on the Jamaican shore to repair the airplane, it is made clear from the very beginning that any encounter with people would be dangerous to them specifically because of the British governance of the island. Noteworthy are the metaphors used to describe this supposed danger: “Everywhere here are enemies worse than tigers”; they

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<sup>292</sup> “Поезд нес их в родные места, домой, к чудесному радостному труду, который все народы на земле должен сделать братьями” Kal’nit’skii and Ĭurezanskii, 126.

<sup>293</sup> For additional details, see Roger Schinness, “The Conservative Party and Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1925–7,” *European Studies Review* 7, no. 4 (October 1, 1977): 393–407, <https://doi.org/10.1177/026569147700700403>.

are afraid of “getting into the Englishmen’s paws like a rooster into cabbage soup.”<sup>294</sup> Both of these images evoke the idea of an encounter not between two human subjects but between a human and an animal. While the human and the animal parts switch between the parties in the two comparisons, in both cases the English enemies are imagined as able and willing to kill easily and without any humane considerations, as a wild animal hunting for prey or a person killing poultry for food. Moreover, even in the second phrase, where the protagonists are likened to an innocent animal killed by a heartless human, the Englishmen are supposed to have “paws” (*lapy*), which again likens them to animals. Since both parties are in fact human beings, this adds cannibalistic connotations. None of the two phrases, obviously, is used literally. The phrase “(to get) into the cabbage soup like a rooster” – “(*popast’*) *kak kur vo shchi*” – is an idiomatic phrase in Russian, meaning “to get into unexpected trouble, hardship.”<sup>295</sup> Another instance in the novella where the ideological enemy is likened to a wild beast is in Shanghai, where the protagonists witness the atrocities of the counterrevolutionary regime against anybody suspected of sympathy toward communism: “Antoshka's heart sank, he felt unbearably stuffy and scared, as if he were in a menagerie, where all the cages were open and the enraged beasts rapaciously burst out into the visitors’ aisles.”<sup>296</sup>

The connotations created by these metaphors intertwine in an interesting way with both the tradition of adventure fiction and the socialist ideology. The cannibalistic connotations are, after all, quite in line with the socialist discourse about class struggle that depicts the “exploiting

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<sup>294</sup> “Мы, как кур во щи, в лапы англичан попадемся”; “Тут везде враги хуже тигров.” Kal’niĭskiiĭ and ĭurezanskiĭ, *Vokrug sveta v piat’desiat dneĭ*, 92.

<sup>295</sup> “Kur,” Bol’shoĭ tolkovyĭ slovar’ russkogo ĭazyka Ushakova, accessed December 8, 2021, <http://ushakovdictionary.ru/word.php?wordid=26570>.

<sup>296</sup> “Сердце Антошки упало, ему стало невыносимо душно и страшно, точно он попал в зверинец, где все клетки были открыты, и исполненные ярости звери хищно вырвались в проходы для посетителей.” Kal’niĭskiiĭ and ĭurezanskiĭ, *Vokrug sveta v piat’desiat dneĭ*, 117.

classes” as flesh-eating animals or as cannibals. For comparison, one can examine the French revolutionary song *L’Internationale*, whose translation into Russian was the anthem of the Soviet Union until 1944. The initial version of *L’Internationale* included the line “C’est de nos chairs qu’ils se repaissent!” (“It is our flesh that they [the idle class] feast on!”), and the final version calls the rulers and the senior military officers “ces cannibales” (“these cannibals”).<sup>297</sup> The shorter version that was the Soviet anthem does not include this specific verse, but rather the metaphor of “parasites,” which is also a part of the semantic field recurrent in the lyrics of the song that imagines the interaction between the classes through a comparison to relations between animals, where one devours the flesh or otherwise uses the resources of another: parasites, scavengers (“vultures”), and pests (“caterpillar nest”).

In the tradition of adventure fiction, from which the novella by Kalnitskii and Iurezanskii draws, the European “cultured” protagonists could literally put their lives at risk in the encounter with wild beasts and cannibals. For instance, the structure of many of Verne’s novels can be described by the characteristic Philip Dine gives to the plot of one of them: “a string of [...] technical problems [...] and formulaic confrontations with wild animals and savage natives.”<sup>298</sup> The Soviet novella uses the underlying structure where the adventurers experience technical issues with the aircraft and are threatened by cannibals and wild beasts while reassigning who is meant by “wild beasts” and “cannibals.” The shift occurs in accordance with communist doctrine, where the words in this semantic field (“animals eating animals” or “humans eating humans”) are metaphorically associated with the exploiting classes, and in the international context, with imperialists exploiting their overseas colonies, such as the British in Jamaica.

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<sup>297</sup> Robert Brécy, *Florilège de la chanson révolutionnaire de 1789 au front populaire* (Milan: Éditions Hier et Demain, 1978), 136–40.

<sup>298</sup> Dine, “The French Colonial Empire in Juvenile Fiction,” 184.

### 3.1.3. Soviet children's dreams of exotic adventures

The first third of the novella is dedicated to Mikola and Antoshka's lives before they come to Moscow as lottery winners to go on an around-the-world journey. In the remainder of the book, during their observations of the social injustices and economic misfortunes in the capitalist countries, the boys often seem to be something of visitors from a future world where such problems and hardships had been solved a long time ago, hence their perception of the observed inequality as outrageous. This is the ideological prism through which the differences in the societies in various countries are depicted: it is suggested that a socialist revolution and removal of the exploiting classes from society brings about prosperity and enlightenment for working people. The Soviet travelers' observation of societies in different countries happens from the standpoint that in their country this ideal has already been achieved.

However, the depiction of the boys' own lives in the Soviet Union in the first part of the novella does not conform to this scheme. In fact, their daily lives before coming to Moscow as lottery winners were not at all characterized by the exuberance of Soviet modernity, which they get to experience and represent on their journey. In this subsection, I will focus on the portion of the novella dedicated to the boys' lives before their journey and its contrast with the rest of the text, as well as the additional community-building functions of these background stories.

The authors suggest that however different Kharkov's urban and the Perm *guberniia*'s rural village settings might be, the Soviet adolescents in these provinces, remote from one another and from the center, are quite similar in how they experience everyday life, what they believe in, and what they strive for. This creates a sense of an overarching community that trumps regional and ethnic differences. Mikola Omelchenko, Nezdyimishapka, and Sidorenko all have very saliently Ukrainian last names. Mikola's first name is a transliteration of the Ukrainian

name Mykola, the ethnic specificity of which is underscored by mentioning him alongside a classmate by the name Kolia Pankratov, that is, someone with the Russian version of the same first name. Antoshka Zhukov's name suggests that he is ethnic Russian. This choice of names is very different from the very ambiguous strategy I will discuss in Chapter 6, even though explicitly there is only one identification of the protagonists in ethnic terms throughout the novella. It is Antoshka's interjection, "we are Russians, Soviets, this is who we are!.." that was commented on above. Notably, the person who says this phrase is the only one in the group whom we have the reason to consider an ethnic Russian, and he equates the terms "Soviet" and "Russian," thus propagating the ethnonym to his fellow Soviet citizens. The novella remains silent as to whether the other travelers would subscribe to this. As for the dynamics between the protagonists themselves, instead of identifying them through ethnonyms, when they are introduced to one another they are presented through regional identity: Mikola as someone who "arrived from Ukraine,"<sup>299</sup> Antoshka as a local of the Perm region (*permiak*),<sup>300</sup> Nezdyimishapka as a *komsomolets* from Donbass.<sup>301</sup> This representation of protagonists from different parts of the Soviet Union furthers the notion of the Soviet-wide imagined community, in which also the reader partakes, since reaching out for an adventure novella suggests that the reader, too, like the protagonists, values fantasies about the exotic faraway. Notably, the protagonist's self-identification as "we are Soviet" might be reminiscent of the later, widely used notion of "Soviet people," yet as Anna Whittington shows in her study, this phrase would only become a staple in official discourse in the mid-1930s.<sup>302</sup> Rather than reproducing a ready ideological stencil, this

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<sup>299</sup> "Там у нас уже есть один мальчик – Микола Омельченко – из Украины приехал" Kal'nitskii and Iurezanskii, *Vokrug sveta v piat' desiat' dnei*, 40.

<sup>300</sup> Kal'nitskii and Iurezanskii, 51.

<sup>301</sup> "комсомолец-шахтер из Горловского рудника в Донбассе по фамилии Нездыймишапка" Kal'nitskii and Iurezanskii, 44.

<sup>302</sup> Anna M. Whittington, "Forging Soviet Citizens: Ideology, Identity, and Stability in the Soviet Union, 1930–

self-identification in the novella represents an early instance of negotiating the identity associated with belonging to the Soviet-wide imagined community.

The authors depict two psychologically similar paths that Mikola and Antoshka go through between the moment they learn about the lottery and the moment they win it. The lottery and the opportunity to travel to exotic countries becomes a dream that motivates both boys to last through an exhausting, cold winter and strive to improve.

Antoshka, after buying a lottery ticket, abandoned his leisurely pastimes and mischief and “threw himself into study.”<sup>303</sup> Previously, he had not been a diligent pupil but from this point on, he became eager in learning everything geography classes could teach him. Two more sources of information that nurtured his imagination were his father’s stories—his dad travelled extensively as a soldier during WWI and the Civil War—and Grandfather Nazar’s fanciful “fairy-tales” about the wonders of foreign lands: “On the one hand, the sober stories of his father, on the other, fantastic ramblings of Grandfather Nazar. The boy got into a kind of a circle where it was hard to distinguish between the real and the fantastic.”<sup>304</sup> For Antoshka, whose own purview is limited to his village, the credibility of both sources is of a similar kind. His fascination for the outside world, instigated by the dream to win the lottery and travel, propels the boy to learn more about the world, to establish a firmer connection to events in Soviet society outside his village. For instance, he subscribes to the newspaper “Pravda” (which signifies a level of dedication: Antoshka has to walk nine *versts* in each direction to the nearest post office every day to receive

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1991” (A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (History), University of Michigan, 2018), esp. 36-37. Also see her “Making a Home for the Soviet People: World War II and the Origins of the *Sovetskii Narod*,” in *Empire and Belonging in the Eurasian Borderlands*, ed. Krista A. Goff and Lewis H. Siegelbaum (Cornell University Press, 2019), 147–61.

<sup>303</sup> “Антошка давно забросил свою ледяшку, перестал озорничать и налег на учебу.” Kal’niṭskii and Īurezanskiĭ, *Vokrug sveta v piat’desiat dneĭ*, 27.

<sup>304</sup> “С одной стороны, трезвые рассказы отца, с другой – фантастические бредни деда Назара. Мальчик попал в какой-то круг, в котором трудно было отличить реальное от фантастического.” Kal’niṭskii and Īurezanskiĭ, 28.

his copy), starts to follow all current events, and relays the news to his family members and other villagers. So, the dreams about winning the lottery and travelling around the world—still empty fantasies at this point—help Antoshka become more committed and educated, and a better community member.

As opposed to Antoshka, Mikola is presented to the reader as a middle-school pupil whose favorite school subject is geography already at the initial introduction. It is immediately revealed that this fascination for knowledge about faraway countries and exotic people plays an important role in escapism from his less than exciting real life: his father had died during the war, and his mother has been working hard but struggling to provide for the son's education. He is so poor that he cannot afford the lottery ticket: he attempted to cut his expenses such that he “grew pale and hollow-cheeked,”<sup>305</sup> but that only saved him five kopecks, way less than needed for the ticket. Mikola only later obtains one because a more affluent classmate raffles off his own. “And because of the poverty, because of the gray days, Mikola more and more aspired to bright colors and fantastic inventions.”<sup>306</sup> Apparently, Mikola is respected by his teachers for his excellent knowledge of geography and by his peers for his ability to tell vivid stories about exotic people because both learning and inventing stories about wonderful faraway gives him the psychological support necessary to go through his poverty-stricken daily life. (Just like in Antoshka's case, factual and invented stories about the exotic faraway mix and intertwine here, playing the same function.) The news about the lottery that could give an opportunity to experience the exciting faraway works along the same lines:

“The winter grew stronger and stronger, and Mikola began to feel deeply the holes in his clothes. And the colder it was to run to school in the morning, the stronger the tooth chatter was, the more

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<sup>305</sup> “Целых две недели Микола отказывал себе в самом необходимом. Он побледнел, осунулся, но вся его экономия дала пять копеек.” Kal'niŭskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 8.

<sup>306</sup> “И от убогости, от серых дней Микола все больше и больше стремился к ярким краскам и фантастическим вымыслам.” Kal'niŭskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 7–8.

Mikola dreamed about other countries, about emerald steppes, about mysterious and shady forests, about the eternal roar of the surf, about noisy and distant European capitals.”<sup>307</sup>

Notably, in this quote the unpleasant “here and now” is depicted through very specific experiences and bodily reactions, while the “there and then” is introduced through several abstract images, or dreamlike impressions. In this case, the difference in the modes of expression is quite understandable since the contrast here is between the character’s perception of a space he experiences first-hand and his ideas about spaces which he can only imagine. However, throughout the novella, when it is assumed that the characters get to *experience* the journey around the world, the descriptions of the protagonists’ impressions mostly remain at the level of specificity one could imagine them simply *dreaming* about such a journey.

The three main semantic fields evoked by the metaphors used to describe the protagonists’ impressions on their journey are dream (*son*), cinema, and dizzying/dazzling impressions. Instead of providing factual, even if encyclopedic, information about the cities the travelers pass through on their journey, the authors turn to use general words belonging to these semantic fields.

The first set of metaphors compares the impressions of the exotic faraway to dreams. While I have already mentioned a lot of instances when fantasies and fanciful stories are evoked, here it is specifically the dreams one sees while sleeping that are used, which is a separate word in Russian (*son*). For instance, the boys’ impressions from a day’s sightseeing in Berlin are summarized by likening them to “a complicated, incomprehensible dream.”<sup>308</sup> The take-off on

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<sup>307</sup> “Зима все крепчала, и Микола начал основательно чувствовать прорехи в своей одежде. И чем холодней было бежать поутру в школу, чем гуще была дробь зубов, тем больше мечтал Микола об иных странах, об изумрудных степях, о таинственных и тенистых лесах, о вечном рокоте морского прибоя, о шумных и далеких европейских столицах.” Kal’niĭskii and Ĭurezanskii, 8.

<sup>308</sup> “Тяжелый гранитный Берлин промелькнул в сознании Антошки, как сложный, непонятный сон.” Kal’niĭskii and Ĭurezanskii, 49.

the airplane is again likened to something one may experience while sleeping and dreaming: “[Antoshka] suddenly felt that the earth began to fly off somewhere, recede down with the same breathtaking swiftness as often happens in a dream.”<sup>309</sup>

The second semantic field to which impressions are compared is cinema. “A day in Hong Kong passed like a dazzlingly varied cinema show”;<sup>310</sup> after visiting Berlin, which offered a lot of impressions, it is as if Antoshka continues to see a movie in his mind’s eye: “as soon as Antoshka closed his eyes, a continuous ribbon [or film, movie – *lenta*] of bright colorful spots, like a live stream, swept in front of him.”<sup>311</sup> The fact that seeing the exotic faraway as a part of the journey and seeing it on the cinema screen are imagined in the novella as somewhat interchangeable options is highlighted in the scene where Kolia Pankratov, Mikola’s only classmate who could afford the lottery ticket in the first place, decides to raffle it off because of the next exciting thing that captivated everybody’s imagination after the news of the lottery. This “newest sensation” is that “Benia Krik arrived” in town, meaning that the movie, based on the *Odessa stories* cycle by Isaak Babel’, started to be shown in movie theaters.<sup>312</sup> In cinemas, the feature film was supplemented by a “fast-paced sightseeing [motion] picture” (“bystraia vidovaia kartina”), apparently a documentary with footage from different countries. The description of how scenes from different localities followed one another in this movie is not unlike the fast-paced description of the travelers’ impressions on their journey: on a train ride through dozens of

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<sup>309</sup> “...вдруг почувствовал, что земля стала куда-то отлетать, удаляться вниз с такой же захватывающей дух стремительностью, как это часто бывает во сне.” Kal’nit’skii and Iurezanskii, 57.

<sup>310</sup> “День в Гонконге прошел, как ослепительно разнообразный сеанс в кинематографе.” Kal’nit’skii and Iurezanskii, 114.

<sup>311</sup> “...стоило Антошке зажмуриться, как непрерывная лента ярких красочных пятен, точно живой поток, проносилась перед ним.” Kal’nit’skii and Iurezanskii, 49.

<sup>312</sup> “Однажды он явился в школу с новейшей сенсацией.

- Прибыл Бенья Крик! – громко заявил Колька.” Kal’nit’skii and Iurezanskii, 9.

cities, “Pictures changed, one after another, like in the cinema.”<sup>313</sup> I have mentioned the notion of a “better” Soviet modernity implied by the title of the novella, since it was now possible to experience the entire world in just fifty days. An even faster, and also astonishingly modern way to experience the entire world is on a cinema screen, and the novella’s poetics seem to suggest that these ways are nearly synonymous or at least perfectly interchangeable.

The third semantic field recurring in the descriptions of the boys’ impressions of exotic places is the physiological reaction to these exposures suggesting that they are “head-spinning,” “breathtaking,” “dizzying” and the like. The “wonders” in Mikola’s and Antoshka’s lives begin as soon as they arrive in Moscow. The capital of the Soviet Union, a city they could not realistically afford visiting if it were not for the lottery, is the beginning of the exciting world of dreams: its description has more in common with the depiction of other exotic faraway places on their journey than with the descriptions of the boys’ native provinces, more realistic in style. Antoshka’s impressions from arriving in Moscow are introduced thus: “The sun was shining, noise, knocking, talking, clanging, ringing – thousands of sounds deafened unaccustomed ears.”<sup>314</sup> In the capital, the boy is re-made from his rural self into what would be appropriate to send on a journey as a representative of Soviet modernity: “This day for Antoshka was full of dizzying impressions”,<sup>315</sup> “Antoshka didn’t know where to look first [*razbezhalis’ glaza*, lit. “his eyes ran away in all directions”]: he could not concentrate on anything.”<sup>316</sup> The epithets describing everything as dazzling, transparent, and made of glass, which are used to describe Moscow’s modernity, reoccur when Paris is described: “Everywhere smiles flashed, laughing

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<sup>313</sup> “Картины сменялись, одна за другой, как в кинематографе.” Kal’niṭskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 50.

<sup>314</sup> “Сияло солнце, шум, стук, говор, лягз, звонки, - тысячи звуков оглушали непривычные уши.” Kal’niṭskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 37.

<sup>315</sup> “Этот день для Антошки был полон головокружительных впечатлений.” Kal’niṭskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 40.

<sup>316</sup> “у Антошки разбежались глаза: он не мог ни на чем сосредоточиться.” Kal’niṭskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 41.

eyes shone, teeth glittered, kisses of greeting were heard. The glass vaults of the huge train station overwhelmed with their magical height and transparency. Ceilings, doors, windows – everything sparkled.”<sup>317</sup> Such a description focusing on impressionistic details and their effect on the perception of the travelers – or rather on their physical limitations to perceiving and embracing the experiences instead of factual details about the visited places typical for the genre – might in fact be a psychologically “realistic” strategy addressing the boys’ unreadiness to process the impressions of places and situations so different from their everyday lives.

Within the literary conventions and the contract between the authors and the reader about what is real within the literary world and what is imagined, the protagonists *do* travel around the world and not just dream about it. Yet, the tropes used to describe the journey make it somewhat of an extended fantasy similar to those that dominated both boys’ imaginations upon learning about the lottery. The authors reduce the descriptions to the same tropes one would use while just fantasizing about the exotic faraway, focusing on the overwhelming qualities of the unusual and exotic places, and on the two things already in the experience on which the fantasies can be based: dreams and cinema. This strategy effectively limits any informative function of the novella, which is unusual for adventure fiction about faraway travels.

Hence, the function of most of the story is the sheer excitement of adventure, the pure joy of experiencing the exotic and unknown, as summarized by the phrase describing Antoshka’s emotions: “absolutely extraordinary, unheard-of happiness [...] – worldwide, round-the-world journey.”<sup>318</sup> Within this discourse, an absolute preference in value is given to everything

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<sup>317</sup> “Всюду мелькали улыбки, сияли смеющиеся глаза, блестели зубы, раздавались поцелуи приветствия. Стекланные своды огромного вокзала ошеломляли своей волшебной высотой и прозрачностью. Потолки, двери, окна, - все сверкало...” Kal’nit’skii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 51.

<sup>318</sup> “совершенно необыкновенное, неслыханное счастье [...] - всемирное, кругосветное путешествие” Kal’nit’skii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 17.

“exotic,” everything outside the known purview. This discourse clashes against the ideological discourse, according to which life in the Soviet Union is given preference in value, since this is the society that has already vanquished class inequality and injustice, a society of the future that is an example for working people all over the world. The expression of the excitement of adventure above finds a counterpart in the closing paragraphs of the novella, which suggest that the protagonists “extraordinarily rejoiced [...] to feel Soviet soil under their feet again. [...] they felt like the happiest people in the world.”<sup>319</sup> Noteworthy is the usage of some of the same words in both quotes: “extraordinary” and “happiness.” The change in what this “extraordinary happiness” is associated with – venturing out or coming home – is not, however, presented as dynamic, a development in the characters’ worldview, or a conclusion they come to after dangerous adventures. The interrelation between the two discourses seems to be more of a clash between what the story the authors fancied telling and what was deemed appropriate for publication.

This unreconciled combination of two discourses results in some paradoxes in how very structurally similar situations are evaluated at home and abroad. For instance, the drastic difference between the boys’ native poverty-stricken provinces and the exuberant modernity of Moscow is presented as a positive and exciting thing. The same difference between poorer countryside and richer and more developed capital city, which they observe on their journey through Poland, leads to a very different reaction, based on the Marxist critique of social inequalities in capitalist society:

“During a hasty sightseeing visit to the city, Antoshka was most struck by the luxury of the palaces of former Polish kings and magnates, the motley colorfulness of officers' uniforms that caught the eye at every step, and the elegant satiety of the public that filled the central streets. [...]

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<sup>319</sup> “Необыкновенно радостно было [...] снова почувствовать под ногами Советскую землю. [...] они чувствовали себя самыми счастливыми людьми на свете” Kal’niŕskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 125–26.

- [...] Eh, it just makes my soul sick to look at this fat. Probably, their peasants [*muzhyki*] live a little skinnier?..

And, indeed, when we then rode through the territory of Poland, the beggar-looking villages and hamlets pricked Antoshka like a caustic, restless splinter. Poverty shone through everywhere, and after the dressed-up, carefree streets of Warsaw, it seemed especially undisguised and terrible.”<sup>320</sup>

The readers are left to their own devices to understand that almost all the same tropes were used in the novella before to describe the “greyness and poverty” of Mikola’s life before winning the lottery and the boys’ impressions from the exuberance and colorfulness of Moscow.

Another instance of an uncommented parallel between two similar but very differently evaluated situations is related to the representation of anti-Asian racism. When the travelers cross the Pacific on an American ship, the reader is presented, as yet another manifestation of the inhumane capitalist world, the captain’s treatment of his servant, a Chinese man, which is commented on as a combination of class exploitation and racism. The servant is treated worse than a dog; dehumanizing treatment of the working class is exacerbated by the racial difference: “Whom to beat if not the yellow-muzzled one [*zheltorozhego*, derogatory for Asians]? The best conversation with the Chinese is a fist!”<sup>321</sup> The protagonists are enraged by what they witness. Antoshka seriously plans to take revenge on the captain, but Mikola persuades him to abstain from precarious actions, referring to the possible danger for them while they are aboard the ship amidst the ocean. Mikola suggests that instead of individual revenge, another type of struggle is what is needed to change the situation: “One should not fight this in such a way!”<sup>322</sup> What the

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<sup>320</sup> “При торопливом осмотре города Антошка больше всего был поражен роскошью дворцов бывших польских королей и магнатов, кричащей пестротой офицерских мундиров, которые попадались в глаза на каждом шагу, и нарядной сытостью публики, заполнявшей центральные улицы. ...

- ... Эх, прямо душу мутит смотреть на это сало. Наверно, мужики у них немножко тощее живут?..

И, действительно, когда проезжали потом по территории Польши, нищий вид сел и деревень колот Антошку, как едкая, беспокойная заноза. Бедность сквозила всюду и после разряженных, беспечных улиц Варшавы казалась особенно неприкрытой и страшной.” *Kal’niŭskii and ĭurezanskiĭ*, 48–49.

<sup>321</sup> “Кого же и бить, если не этого желторожего? С китайцами самый лучший разговор – кулак!” *Kal’niŭskii and ĭurezanskiĭ*, 112.

<sup>322</sup> “С этим не так надо бороться” *Kal’niŭskii and ĭurezanskiĭ*, 113.

author suggests here is that a socialist revolution that would eliminate the possibility of the upper classes exploiting the workers would also do away with the hatred driven by racial differences.

The authors do not in any way remind the reader here that this is not the first instance in the novella when Antoshka intervened on behalf of a Chinese person being physically abused by white people because of the racial difference. And that incident took place in his native village, where he confronted a gang of his peers attacking a Chinese man:

- Guys, what are you doing! - Antoshka interrupted them.
- This Chink [*khodia*] is unbearably funny. Come, let's beat him up! Come join us.
- Drop it!
- Eh, you clunker! Kick the Chinese [*kitaezu*] around, thrash the yellow-muzzled face [*zheltorozhego*] with snow! Hold him! A-la-la-la ... A! A!
- You must have gone crazy? – Antoshka’s voice boiled with anger. – And what if you were bullied like that? Would it be good? <sup>323</sup>

Admittedly, this scene is not completely on par with the scene on the ship: there is a difference between the daily beating of one’s servant and a one-off attack by children that, presumably, uses snowballs as the “weapon.” What is identical, however, is the persuasion that racial difference is a sufficient reason to treat someone with physical violence; even the racial slurs repeat across the two scenes. Obviously, Antoshka stands up against the violence in both cases, making a good example the implied reader is supposed to follow.

The juxtaposition of the two scenes, however, shows the fallacy of the ideological premise with which the ship scene is presented to the reader. Apparently, a socialist revolution that allegedly removed class inequality did not also eliminate the racial violence at all. Similarly, in the encounter with the Caribes, their aggression to the racially different strangers was

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<sup>323</sup> “-Ребята, что вы! – остановил их Антошка.

- Да ходя больно смешной. Иди, прогонку ему хорошую сделаем! Иди скорей.

- Бросьте!

- Э, размазня! Шпыняй китаезу, шпарь желторожего снегом! Держи его! А-ля-ля-ля... А! А!

- Да вы, никак, ошалели? – зазвенел Антошка вспыхнувшим голосом. - А если вас так травить? Хорошо будет?” Kal’niŭskii and ĭurezanskiĭ, 18.

explained, according to the ideological stencil, by the landlords' evil will that kept them from learning about the world and identifying friends and enemies. The same ideological stencil is put to the test with the Soviet children's aggression to a racially different stranger. Allegedly, in the "futuristic" Soviet society, where the social exploitation has been done away with, nothing would preclude the children from educating and enlightening themselves, so that animal-like hostility towards the other, based purely on racial difference, should become unimaginable (as is suggested about the Caribes) – yet here they are, gathering to beat up an innocent passerby because his racially distinct appearance seems funny to them.

These are just two examples of incongruences between the novella's "realistic" portion about the protagonists' life in the Soviet provinces and the "fantasy" portion about their journey. These incongruences can be interpreted in several ways. The first option is that the authors did not expect their reader to notice or mind the paradoxes, captivated by the overwhelming and fast-paced adventure. The "at-home" portion was simply realistic about the conditions in the Soviet Union: that there is still poverty, especially away from the centers, that the idealistic principles that "all people are brothers" have not yet ubiquitously trickled down and there is still aggression towards those who are perceived as different. The "away" portion of the novella, then, for which neither the authors nor the readers had access to realistic experiences, was imbued with the ideologically correct messages, which would allow the novella to be seen by the state institutions as something that is appropriate for the ideological education of youth.<sup>324</sup>

The second interpretation is that the reader was expected to notice the incongruences, which would lead to an ironic distancing from Soviet realities and their reevaluation against the

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<sup>324</sup> The Ukrainian translation of the novella was published with this exact designation. Iakiv Kal'nyts'kyi and Volodymyr Iurezans'kyi, *Navkolo svitu za p'iatdesiat dniv: povist' dlia ditei z maliunkamy v teksti* (Kharkiv: Derzhvydav Ukrainy, 1928).

very ideology serving as the prism for understanding the world. In this case, the fantasy of the exotic faraway is also a fantasy of the Soviet Union living up to its own ideals.

### 3.2. POLITICAL EDUCATION FOR “PRIMITIVE” TRIBES—AND SOVIET PIONEERS: “UNDER THE TROPICS’ SUN” (1926) BY VIKTOR GONCHAROV

Many of the themes analyzed above reappear and are developed in a novel by Viktor Goncharov, *Pod solntsem tropikov: Pochti skazochnye prikliucheniia pionera Pet’ki v Avstralii* (*Under the Tropics’ Sun: The Almost Fairy-tale Adventures of Petka the Pioneer in Australia*, 1926). Instead of the panoramic view of class exploitation all over the world offered by Kalnitskii and Iurezanskii, Goncharov zooms in on a Soviet boy’s encounter with one Aboriginal Australian tribe and their struggle against and demise at the hands of the greedy colonizers.

Little is known about the author, Viktor Goncharov, apart from the fact that he was a prolific writer of popular fiction with elements of adventure and science fiction genres over a short period of time between 1923 and 1927, as the authors of bibliographies and histories of early Soviet science fiction observe.<sup>325</sup> *Under the Tropics’ Sun* is somewhat of an outlier in Goncharov’s oeuvre. His other works include science-fiction set-ups, such as time travel and journeys to other planets. *Under the Tropics’ Sun* also includes “fantastic inventions,” yet here, these science-fiction elements are rather a literary device to introduce and justify an encounter that would not be otherwise realistically possible – between a Soviet pioneer and an Australian tribe. The novel follows the conventions of the “extraordinary voyages” type of adventure fiction, such as many of Jules Verne’s novels, where a sci-fi element is used to introduce and

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<sup>325</sup> Kir Bulychev, “Padcheritsa epokhi ili Vtoroe prishestvie Zolushki [reprint from magazine ‘Esl’ for 2003],” *Zona osobogo vnimaniia*, October 18, 2014, <http://www.zov.od.ua/16th-band/poehziya/32.php>; Vitalii Ivanovich Bugrov and Igor’ Georgievich Khalymbadzha, *Dovoennaia sovetskaia fantastika. Materialy k bibliografii*, Biblioteka prikliucheniia i nauchnoi fantastiki 18 (Alkonost, 2016), 35–36.

organize, in literary form, existing knowledge about the world rather than science fiction proper, where certain fantastic assumptions are made to make conjectures about the human society and explore and put to test certain trends of its development. Goncharov's works, however, are a good illustration of the fact that notions of adventure (*prikliucheniia*) and science fiction (*fantastika*) were closely intertwined in Soviet literature, as Matthias Schwartz amply shows in his study of the two genres' history in Soviet literature.<sup>326</sup> Rafail Nudelman also shows that the Western tradition of adventure fiction became one of the important sources for nascent Soviet science fiction, along with the genre of mystery, "in addition to using Jules Verne's and H.G. Wells's innovations in SF."<sup>327</sup>

The novel opens with the introduction of a fantastic invention, a lighter-than-air "boat," whose trial run is going astray as the inventor's young daughter is carried away by a wind current. The inventor sends the eleven-year-old pioneer Petka to follow the current in a second boat, find the girl, and bring her home. This is a decoy plot set-up: the girl later returns home on her own, while Petka is brought by the wind current directly to Central Australia where the rest of the novel is set. Petka joins the Urabunna tribe, who initially treat him in a hostile way, but then, together with mixed-race tribe member Bambar-biu, the boy helps the tribe leave their primitive practices behind and organize to join the world-wide movement against capitalist exploitation.

The latter element, "struggle for the rights of the oppressed ones," is a stable element across Goncharov's various novels, according to the bibliographers of early Soviet science

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<sup>326</sup> Matthias Schwartz, *Expeditionen in andere Welten: Sowjetische Abenteuerliteratur und Science-Fiction von der Oktoberrevolution bis in die Stalinzeit*, 1. Auflage (Köln: Böhlau Köln, 2014).

<sup>327</sup> Rafail Nudelman, "Soviet Science Fiction and the Ideology of Soviet Society (La Science-Fiction Soviétique et l'idéologie de La Société En URSS)," *Science Fiction Studies* 16, no. 1 (1989): 39.

fiction Vitalii Bugrov and Igor Khalymbadzha.<sup>328</sup> Goncharov's writing received mixed evaluations from critics. In his overview article, "Science Fiction Born by the Revolution," Nudelman describes Goncharov as an author "undoubtedly talented, gifted with lively humor," but having "overactive [*buinoe*] imagination and too strong a leaning toward adventure," instead of the original "scientific and social ideas" expected of science fiction authors.<sup>329</sup> Kir Bulychev in his history of Soviet science fiction characterizes Goncharov's books unapologetically as "written badly but rakishly" and their addressee as "mentally underdeveloped Komsomol members."<sup>330</sup> These characterizations may come across as rather different but the contrast may be attributed to the circumstances in which both histories of the early Soviet SF were written. In the study written between the late 1980s and early 2000s, Bulychev could already negatively evaluate the characteristics of the works resulting from the author's orientation toward readers selected by adherence to Soviet ideological views ("mentally underdeveloped Komsomol members"), while in the 1960s and before emigrating from the USSR, Nudelman still had to give credit for the same orientation while admitting Goncharov's overzealousness in the novel's style, a drawback also acknowledged by Bulychev. Bulychev discusses but refutes the widely held critics' opinion that Goncharov's novels should be read as parodies, arguing that by the time they were published, an established tradition that could be the basis for the parody did not yet exist.

I want to dwell for a while on the latter claim that Goncharov's novel has been seriously conceived as original work rather than a parody. In *Under the Tropics' Sun*, there are allusions to the preexisting tradition of the adventure genre, which function not only as polemics on specific

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<sup>328</sup> Bugrov and Khalymbadzha, *Dovoennaia sovetskaia fantastika. Materialy k bibliografii*, 36.

<sup>329</sup> Rafail Nudel'man, "Fantastika, rozhdennaia revoliutsiei," *Fantastika-66. Sborniki fantasticheskikh povestei i rasskazov*, no. 3 (1966).

<sup>330</sup> Bulychev, "Padcheritsa epokhi."

aspects (which I will discuss further) but also in a parodistic way. There are several occasions in the novel where the author directly discusses the expectations a reader might have about what occurs next in the given context, for instance, with the following parenthetical remark: “Let the reader not expect my hero to be devoured by a shark or taken into a dark abyss by a bloodthirsty octopus; neither this nor that will happen to him, although it could have happened.”<sup>331</sup> These suggested options are not random but something a reader might expect to happen based on the horizon created by previous reading experiences. Where are these experiences supposed to come from? At some point in the opening chapters of the novel, still at home in Soviet Russia, Petka is interrupted by a visitor from reading an issue of the journal *Mir prikliucheniĭ* (*The World of Adventures*). Still under the impression from the short story or novella he was reading, the boy is somewhat delirious in his reactions and reproduces clichés from his reading.<sup>332</sup> The text that has allegedly impressed the boy so greatly is mentioned under the title “The Black Death, or Professor Chamberlain’s Devilish Invention.” It is not a real title published by the journal, as far as examination of the issues predating the publication of Goncharov’s novel shows. Instead, it is a parody on the generic idea of the type of texts offered to the Soviet reader at this very intersection of adventure and science fiction that Goncharov himself wrote. The paragraphs dedicated to this made-up text suggest that it includes exotic-sounding settings such as western Canada, dangerous swamps, sci-fi inventions, and also clichéd stock character types such as a “brave cowboy” and an “evil inventor.”<sup>333</sup>

*Mir prikliucheniĭ* was one of the journals that published both translated and original

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<sup>331</sup> “Пусть читатель не ждет, что героя моего слопает сейчас акула или кровожадный спрут-осьминог увлечет в мрачные пучины; ни того, ни другого с ним не случится, хотя случиться могло” Viktor Goncharov, *Pod solntsem tropikov. Pochti skazochnye prikliucheniĭa pionera Pet'ki v Avstralii*. (Moskva - Leningrad: Molodaĭa gvardiĭa, 1926), 44.

<sup>332</sup> “Голова его не особенно ясно варила” Goncharov, 16.

<sup>333</sup> Goncharov, 16–17.

Russian-language fiction and was very popular in the 1920s (its print run differed between the years but could be as high as 30,000 copies). For the rank-and-file reader, these texts constituted a single pool because of the same channel of distribution, regardless of the various original languages in which they were written. Even though specifically Soviet adventure and science fiction were only nascent in these years, this pool of texts, along with the pre-revolutionary translated editions, constituted the background against which the dialogue between the author and the reader was conducted, making possible the parodistic elements found in *Under the Tropics' Sun*. By introducing the discussion of readers' expectations and mentioning the sources on which these expectations are based, the implied author hints to the reader: all that follows is mostly a recombination of what is already known, what can be expected based on the previous acquaintance with the genre. However, this recombination of pre-existing elements is also conducted in such a way as to promote specific ideological views and educate the reader about political theories. The ideologically marked elements in Goncharov's novel also have a connection to the short-lived tradition that was dubbed "pioneer fiction" [*pionerskaia belletristika*] by its critics. The image of a Soviet pioneer and the potentially transformative power associated with this hero are all clichés from this tradition, as Svetlana Maslinskaia shows.<sup>334</sup> At the same time, as I will show below, Goncharov's novel also casts doubt on the premises of this corpus of texts, such as what was referred to as "adventurist heroics" [*avantiurnaia geroika*], that is, an oversimplified representation that individual heroism can solve complex social issues and confrontations.<sup>335</sup>

One more genre connection – in addition to adventure, science fiction, and "pioneer

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<sup>334</sup> Svetlana Maslinskaia (Leont'eva), "Pionerskaia belletristika vs. bol'shaia detskaia literatura," in "*Ubit' Charskuu...*": *Paradoksy sovetskoï literatury dlia detei. 1920-e–1930-e gg.* (Sankt-Peterburg: Aleteia, 2014), 231–45.

<sup>335</sup> Maslinskaia (Leont'eva), 293.

fiction” – is suggested by the subtitle of the novel, which calls Petka’s adventures “almost fairy-tale-like” (*pochti skazochnye prikliuchenia*). On the surface, this adjective means simply that the adventures of the protagonist are improbable – indeed, under realistic conventions, the Australian encounters of a Soviet eleven-year-old are hardly imaginable. The science fiction elements are introduced to explain their possibility to the reader, but alternatively, topoi from fairy-tales could have been invoked in the role of the same introductory explanation without significant changes to the narrative structure. The choice to fuel Petka’s flight to Australia by fictional science rather than by fictional magic is in line with the author’s strategy that manifests throughout the novel. Goncharov repeatedly unmasks as backward superstitions expectations that something might be explained by magic or other “folklore” forces at play. Moreover, these expectations never originate from the progressive-thinking pioneer Petka, but rather from his adult uncle (the narrator). This treatment is quite in line with the wider processes in the early Soviet culture. In the 1920s, fairy tales – both folk and literary – were frowned upon as propagating alien class values and thus inappropriate for upbringing Soviet children.<sup>336</sup> The allusion to fairy tales in the subtitle is then yet another instance of the authorial play with the reader: the reader might be interested in reading something like a fairy-tale and is promised to be given one, but instead of that, they receive a text teaching them, among other things, that looking for “magical” explanations suggested by folk beliefs is exercising a backward, superstitious way of thinking unfitting for the progressive Soviet reality.

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<sup>336</sup> For an overview of the state-sponsored criticism of the fairy tales in the 1920s and their return to the literary stage with the newly recognized potential to serve the ideological goals in line with the doctrine of socialist realism after 1934, see Marina Balina, “Fairy Tales of Socialist Realism: Introduction,” in *Politicizing Magic: An Anthology of Russian and Soviet Fairy Tales*, ed. Marina Balina, Helena Goscilo, and Mark Lipovetsky (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 105–22.

### 3.2.1. Rewriting Australia

Given the popularity of Verne's novels in Russia, his *In Search of the Castaways* (*Les Enfants du capitaine Grant*, 1867) could have been the most widely known adventure novel featuring Australia, a source from which Goncharov's audience could have previously learned about adventures taking place on that continent. Its translation into Russian had at least six editions by 1909, before a retranslation for the first Soviet collected works of Jules Verne was commissioned in late 1920s.

Several scenes in *Under the Tropics' Sun*, particularly those dedicated to nature and wildlife, are rather similar to those presenting the same elements of the natural setting in Verne's *In Search of the Castaways*. This indicates a closer connection between the two novels than the mere fact that both depict the same part of the world, suggesting that Verne's novel could have been one of the sources of information about Australia for Goncharov. The general approach to supplementing an adventure narrative with abundant details about geographical and natural features of the places where the action takes place is also quite similar to Verne's (unlike the rather non-informative approach to describing the exotic places in the novella by Kalnitskii and Iurezanskii analyzed above). Specific details about the Urabunna tribe have their source in a two-volume 1912 ethnographic study *Across Australia* by Baldwin Spencer and Francis James Gillen.<sup>337</sup> Goncharov mentions this study in the novel itself as an explanation of how a non-initiated "apostate" from the tribe could know information kept secret by its elders.<sup>338</sup> This study informs Goncharov's very detailed description of the daily life and beliefs of the Aboriginal tribe, the level of specificity of which is beyond comparison with the depiction of the indigenous

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<sup>337</sup> Baldwin Spencer and Francis James Gillen, *Across Australia*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1912).

<sup>338</sup> Goncharov, *Pod solntsem tropikov*, 147.

Australians in Verne's novel. Yet, the two fictional representations of Australia and its inhabitants in Verne's and Goncharov's novels can be effectively compared to identify how the Soviet author chose to write about something already familiar to his reader, in order to convey the new message about different people in the world and the role of Soviet youth in it.

*In Search of Castaways* presents different groups of people in Australia, a British colony: settlers (farmers and miners), escaped convicts, and indigenous people. In this novel, the French author depicts British colonial rule quite ambiguously. Since his description of British governance over Australia is focalized through the perception of the protagonists, who include a group of Scots (devoted to the idea of Scottish independence from Britain) and one Frenchman, colonial practices are presented with irony and criticism. However, individual settlers are depicted very positively, especially if they are not English but, for instance, Irish by origin. Europeans who have arrived in Australia because the government is parceling out land for farm use are opposed in the structure of the plot to those Europeans who have arrived in Australia because the government uses it as a penal colony. In Verne's novel, the two uses of the continent are strictly separated in space, and he suggests that the British empire forbids even for those convicts who had fully served their sentence to settle in the provinces of South-Eastern Australia (where the novel's action is set). Of course, it is later revealed, in a turn of events common for adventure fiction set on a frontier where societal guarantees are put to the test, that despite the ban, a band of escaped convicts is pestering the sparsely populated areas through which the protagonists are passing and threatens them. That is, even though Verne is presenting certain practices of the British colonial administration with irony and disapproval, the "normal order" that is challenged and restored here, as is typical for adventure narratives, is the order established by the colonial government.

Goncharov upends the opposition between peaceful law-abiding settlers and evil convicts. In his novel, he presents a different version of the history of European settlement of Australia, specifically through the lens of its impact on indigenous people. It appears that their plight has increased drastically since the British government stopped using the continent solely as a penal colony and opened it to settlers, but the difference is mostly in numbers. The boundary between settlers and criminals, who are opposed to one another in Verne's novel, is blurred. For instance, the capitalist and wealthy cattleman Iakov Brumlei, from whose activity the Urabunna tribe suffers most during the novel's immediate timeframe, is proud of descending from a well-known criminal, "a London killer and a strangler of children."<sup>339</sup> It is said about the contemporary Brumlei that "the laurels of the strangler [i.e. the ancestor] were keeping him awake,"<sup>340</sup> which suggests that one who is now considered a respected and wealthy citizen of Australia is continuing the practices of a convicted criminal. It is noteworthy that to make his point, Goncharov chooses as an epitome of the settlers a large-scale cattle owner, a capitalist whose profits allow him to easily bribe government officials to make even more profit – that is, a stock character of the narrative about class struggle. In this, Goncharov follows the Marxist paradigm that neatly classifies everybody as either a large-scale exploiter or themselves exploited, suggesting that the former prosper at the cost of the latter. Someone like Paddy O'Moore, Verne's chosen type of European settlers in Australia (who is presented as a person who could finally prosper through earnest hard work after settling in the colony, which was impossible at home because of economic reasons), does not find a place in the binary scheme of Goncharov's representation.

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<sup>339</sup> Goncharov, 90–91.

<sup>340</sup> "лавры душиателя не давали ему спать" Goncharov, 91.

The distinction between a law-abiding citizen and an escaped convict is also blurred in Goncharov's novel in the story of Bambar-biu, whose evaluation is somewhat ambiguous but mostly positive since he helps Petka while their goals align. He is also an escaped convict, though not from a penal colony in his native Australia but from a French penal colony in South America. He had been convicted for refusing conscription during WWI as he did not want to side with any of the countries participating in "the imperialistic slaughterhouse."<sup>341</sup> The clear-cut distinction between law-abiding settlers and bandits punished by the law is thus problematized in a way that questions the goals of the institutions that define on which side of the law certain practices fall: refusing to be drafted as illegal and stealing lands from indigenous people as perfectly legal. In another instance, the fairness of the law is questioned by describing the Urabunna's attempts to restore their rights to ancestral lands and concluding that "the whites' laws are white only for the whites and for blacks, they are as black as a black night."<sup>342</sup> That is, Goncharov problematizes the core notions on which the structure of the adventure narratives is built. It is typical that a pre-existing order is temporarily disrupted by outstanding events in the course of the adventure story and should be restored to the status quo by its end. Here, by contrast, no pre-existing order is depicted as something that is worth restoring through the efforts of the adventure's protagonists. Instead of restoring the temporarily challenged order by the end of the adventure novel, Goncharov only outlines the path to establishing a just order sometime in the future, which is aligned with the communist doctrine and based on the idea of worldwide revolution, in anticipation of which the oppressed classes (of indigenous and European origin alike) should organize themselves.

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<sup>341</sup> Goncharov, 210.

<sup>342</sup> "законы белых белы лишь для белых, а для черных — черны, как черная ночь" Goncharov, 92.

In Verne's novel, indigenous Australians appear only in a few scenes throughout the part of the novel dedicated to this continent but are mentioned more often, sometimes in comparison with indigenous people of other regions the protagonists pass through; this is an important part of deciphering the letter that could help the protagonists find the eponymous castaways. Australians are depicted as particularly timid, peaceful, and non-bloodthirsty. The one instance when Verne's European protagonists encounter an Aboriginal tribe it engenders a discussion about whether or not the Aboriginal people should be considered "monkeys or humans."<sup>343</sup> While this identification is an object of contention between two Europeans, what is offered as an objective and ubiquitously accepted fact on which they can compromise is that these "savages" are "children of nature" to whom complex human feelings such as gratitude are unknown: after hunting down a better prey, the Aboriginal people immediately forget the humble meal the protagonists shared with them.<sup>344</sup>

Goncharov's *Under the Tropics' Sun* incorporates many of these ideas about indigenous people, to provide the reader with recognizable details, but also to refute the existing interpretations and offer new ones that align better with the new ideological doctrine. This is a noteworthy example of how the ideological message chosen by the author co-exists with and clashes against the tropes imported from the pre-existing tradition of adventure fiction.

It is declared in the novel itself that "communists see no difference in skin color."<sup>345</sup> Yet, the Aboriginal people's racial features, including skin color, are often objectified as exotic for the reader. For instance, Petka's very first encounter with the indigenous boy, Doi-na, is

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<sup>343</sup> Jules Verne, *A Voyage Round the World: Australia* (G. Routledge, 1877), 192–203; Jules Verne, *Les enfants du Capitaine Grant: voyage autour du monde.*, vol. 2ème partie: l'Australie, Les Mondes connus et inconnus (Paris: Collection Hetzel, 1908), 215–27.

<sup>344</sup> Verne, *A Voyage Round the World*, 203; Verne, *Les enfants du Capitaine Grant*, 1908, 2ème partie: l'Australie:226.

<sup>345</sup> "Для коммунистов нет разницы в цвете кожи" Goncharov, *Pod solntsem tropikov*, 161.

described in the following way: “He was as black as low-quality chocolate, as curly as a piece of hemp fiber.”<sup>346</sup> In this quote, the appearance of an Aboriginal boy is not only presented through a comparison to consumer goods, but to those of “low quality.” The metaphor likening Australians’ skin color to chocolate repeats nine times throughout the novel, ultimately becoming a parody of itself. At some point, an emotional reaction associated with becoming pale is described through the suggestion that Doi-na’s face became the color of “milk chocolate produced by the ‘Red October’ factory, and Petka’s, of grey manila paper.”<sup>347</sup> For a critically inclined reader, this may lead to the conclusion that the information about the unknown is as exaggerated as the information about the known: a comparison of a black person’s skin to chocolate is as superficial as likening a white person to grey manila paper. Therefore, both a reception that reinforces the stereotypes and one that subverts them is made possible, based on whether the reader considers adventure stories a genre for passive consumption or for critical engagement.

The animalistic comparisons akin to those in Verne’s novel discussed earlier also abound. The introductory description of Doi-na quoted above continues with ascribing to him a “piercing animal-like [*zverinyi*] glance.”<sup>348</sup> Other members of his tribe are also described at their initial appearance in the story as moving in “animal-like [*zverinye*] leaps” and “with the dexterity of their fore-fathers who had had tails.”<sup>349</sup> This comparison almost literally replicates the argumentation in Verne’s novel that indigenous people are animal-like specifically because of

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<sup>346</sup> “Он был черен, как низшего сорта шоколад, кудряв как шмоток (sic!) пакли...” Goncharov, 54.

<sup>347</sup> “Дой-на лицом стал походить на молочный шоколад фабрики «Красный Октябрь», Петька же — на серую оберточную бумагу.” Goncharov, 66.

<sup>348</sup> “смотрел пронзительным звериным взглядом” Goncharov, 54.

<sup>349</sup> “Охотники сбросили с обрыва убитую птицу и звериными прыжками оседлали могучие ветви нижних эвкалиптов. С ловкостью своих прародителей, имевших хвосты, они добрались по ветвям к стволу и отсюда скользнули по сметанной коре на песок.” Goncharov, 77.

their dexterity in hunting down other animals.

As Petka and Doi-na meet these other tribe members on their way to the tribe's camp, one more typical paradigm of thinking about the indigenous peoples is evoked. Doi-na is reprimanded by one of the adults and flees from Petka in a leap that throws the other boy into a river. The pioneer explains to himself this occurrence using yet another trope one had already seen in Verne's novel – that of “forgetful” “children of nature”: ““Go figure them out, these children of nature,’ he reasoned ‘in an adult way’: without anger or bias, ‘one moment they swear loyalty to you, the next moment they arrange wet nasty things.’”<sup>350</sup> The authorial interjection in Petka's thoughts suggesting that the eleven-year-old is an adult in comparison to the savage “children of nature,” especially marking the phrase “in an adult way” with quotation marks as something Petka himself thinks about his stance, creates a sense of distance from the evaluation as something that is not necessarily true. The irony is especially striking since just in the previous sentence the boy has been described as “perplexed and resentful” and “sad” because of the event, that is, not at all compliant with the assumed pose of someone capable of an objective evaluation of the situation “without anger or bias.” The opposition of indigenous people as “children of nature” to representatives of civilization as “adults” is just a stencil Petka is using in his head because he has read too much adventure fiction about Europeans' encounters with indigenous people before endeavoring on this journey – something the reader already knows about him from previous chapters.

Events develop dangerously for Petka: he is captured by the Aboriginal people, who discuss what method of torturing him to death would be most appropriate. This is definitely something in line with the expectations of “primitive savages” from adventure fiction tradition.

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<sup>350</sup>“Вот и пойми их, этих детей природы, — рассуждал он „по-взрослому“: без злобы и пристрастия, — то они тебе клянутся в верности, то устраивают мокрые гадости.” Goncharov, 80.

However, all these events and actions suddenly receive a very different explanation: the Aboriginal people behave in the way they do not because they are “animal-like,” “primitive” “children of nature” disconnected from the society of the civilized people. To the contrary, their actions are explained through their connection to civilized society, mistreated and exploited by it, and considering themselves effectively at war with the Australians of European descent.

### 3.2.2. Racial anxiety and the Soviet “refusal to be white” in adventure fiction

As I have shown, Goncharov incorporates into his novel the clichés of “primitive,” “animal-like” savages and “children of nature” to refute these clichés. The Aborigines’ aggression toward Petka is ultimately explained not by their natural “savagery” but by the fact that they had been abused by the state and are fighting back. After yet another land grab by a capitalist and a failure to restore their rights to their ancestral lands by legal methods (by appealing to democratic institutions), the Urabunna have decided to kill any white person who intrudes their territory: “to eliminate without pity and without a vestige.”<sup>351</sup> The latter detail suggests cannibalism – yet has its origins not in the “primitive” or “bestly” nature of the Urabunna but in the legal quandary they find themselves in: the antagonist claimed their lands specifically because an ancestor of his had once found refuge there. Eliminating intruders “without a vestige” is just a necessary precaution to prevent the legal precedent from repeating.

Petka nearly falls victim to this rule demanding killing any white person intruding upon tribal lands, before Bambar-biu, a mixed-race descendant of the tribe, recognizes Petka as a Soviet citizen thanks to his red pioneer tie. He persuades the Urabunna that the boy is a white person of a different kind than those who have abused the Aboriginal people:

“The little white-skinned one is not an oppressor... [...] Have you heard about Lenin? About the

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<sup>351</sup> “уничтожать без жалости и без остатков” Goncharov, 92.

great white Lenin, who liberates country after country and will soon come to us to free us from the Brumleis and other stranglers of the black people... The little white-skinned one is a disciple of the great white Lenin, who is even more red than white, because he carries a red fire with him ... The little white-skinned one came to us to proclaim that Lenin is approaching, that he knows and remembers us blacks, and suffers with us our sufferings...”<sup>352</sup>

There are several premises behind the effectiveness of this rhetoric (Petka is, indeed, released and accompanies the tribe for several weeks). It is suggested that the Aboriginal people are already familiar with the concepts of oppression and exploitation. They need not be taught the theoretic paradigm of struggle against exploitation from scratch; rather, it is necessary to amend their existing paradigm to include the possibility that the categories of oppressors and oppressed do not align with the groups defined by skin color. Here it is asserted that some white people (“Lenin and his disciples”) do not oppress people of color but, to the contrary, liberate them from oppressors. Later in the novel, this idea is furthered by suggesting that instead of antagonizing all white people, the Urabunna should unite with the majority of the white people who are oppressed themselves, in the common struggle for liberation from oppression.<sup>353</sup> Interestingly, the novel does not make an emphasis on elucidating the class dynamics within the tribe itself – at least, not to the extent it became a stock element of Soviet literature of the 1930s, as I will show in Chapter 6.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> “Маленький белокожий — не угнетатель... [...] Слышали вы про Ленина? Про великого белого Ленина, который раскрепощает страну за страной и скоро придет к нам, чтобы освободить нас от Брумлеев и прочих душителей черных... Маленький белокожий — ученик великого белого Ленина, который еще более красный, чем белый, потому что он несет с собой красный пожар... Маленький белокожий пришел к нам, чтобы возвестить, что Ленин близко, что он знает и помнит о нас, чернокожих и страдает вместе с нами нашими страданиями...” Goncharov, 109.

<sup>353</sup> Goncharov, 160.

<sup>354</sup> This difference between the adventure stories of the 1920s and 1930s corresponds to the general thinking of ethnographers and anthropologists about “backward” peoples in line with Soviet ideology. The difference in “development” between ethnic and racial groups was ascribed to socio-historic circumstances (Goncharov dedicates a lot of attention to this aspect in the novel), and the Leninist doctrine in the 1920s suggested that “revolutionary actors” can hasten these “backward” groups through the stages of historical development. The emphasis on class enemies within each group as prerevolutionary “survivals” (*perezhitki*) as a factor that held the “backward” nationalities and tribes from effectively “catching up” became a staple in the ethnographers’ narrative only after Stalin’s “great break.” See Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, 1st edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), chap. 6.

The quote above contains a noteworthy turn of phrase identifying people through colors: Lenin – and with him, any “disciple of his” (and every Soviet citizen could count as a “disciple”) – is “white ... [but] even more red than white.” While “white” here is a racial characteristic, belonging to European descent, “red” is not a reference to the “red-skinned” people indigenous to the Americas, but a symbol associated with communist ideology. However, it is noteworthy that the two adjectives referring to colors are used in this discourse as grammatically homogenous characteristics, as if having a specific skin color also implies ideological beliefs. By saying that “Lenin’s disciple” Petka is “white ... [but] even more red than white,” the author implies that despite having the same skin color as those white people known to oppress the Aboriginal people, Petka does not share their ideology; therefore, Urabunna’s resentment should not be directed at him.

This is a recurrent motif in Soviet adventure fiction in the 1920s: the need to prove that Soviet protagonists are “more red than white” lest they suffer the aggression of non-white people who are on the warpath against white European imperialists. In my analysis of the novella by Kalnitskii and Iurezanskii earlier in this chapter, I discussed two situations when the indigenous people of South America initially react with hostility toward Soviet protagonists, based on their appearance and attempts to speak English. In one case, the hostility is resolved by mentioning internationally recognized communist symbols; in another, it is assumed that the hostile indigenous people are not educated enough to decipher communist symbols. Kalnitskii and Iurezanskii do not mention the Soviet protagonists’ whiteness in either of these situations, yet based on the comparison, it is obvious that structurally it is the same situation as the one just analyzed in Goncharov’s novel: the Brazilian Leninists’ hostility toward the Soviet protagonists dwindles after mentioning the Soviet Union as their country of origin; they manage to prove that

they are “even more red than white.” Similarly, in the encounter with the Caraibes, in the suggestion that hostility would be resolved had it been possible to explain that the travelers originated from the USSR, it is unstated but implied that the aggression towards them is not a reaction *any* outside intruder would be met with but specifically aggression to people who look just like those white people who had been oppressing the colonized non-whites. The novel by Nikolai Karintsev *Vokrug sveta na aeroplanе* (*Around the World on an Airplane*, 1926) brings another example of a structurally similar situation: the travelers make an emergency landing in revolutionary China and are nearly killed under the motto “Let us kill the white dogs!” before they show a red amulet that signifies their ideological alliance with the locals despite their skin color.<sup>355</sup> Structurally, this is very similar to what I have just analyzed in Goncharov’s novel and in the novella by Kalnitskii and Iurezanskii.

Of course, being confronted or captured by hostile natives and finding a way to outwit them or prove that they should treat the adventurers in a friendly rather than hostile manner is a common adventure fiction plot element. A comparison will help identify more precisely what aspect is new about this plot element in 1920s Soviet adventure novels. In the same *In Search of the Castaways* by Jules Verne, a similar plot element takes place in the part of the novel dedicated to the journey through New Zealand. Māori, who are shown as cruel cannibals and at war against British colonial presence, capture the protagonists. They are known to consider every “English” person their enemy, regardless of whether they participate in the war. Yet, the Scotch protagonist, when asked if he and his fellow travelers are “English,” responds affirmatively “without hesitation,”<sup>356</sup> even though throughout the novel, he had repeatedly asked not to be

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<sup>355</sup> Nikolaï Aleksandrovich Karintsev, *Vokrug sveta na aeroplanе*, vol. 5: V stane velikogo Suna (Moskva - Leningrad: Molodaïa gvardiïa, 1926), 10–11.

<sup>356</sup> Jules Verne, *Les enfants du Capitaine Grant: voyage autour du monde*, vol. 3ème partie: Océan Pacifique, Les Mondes connus et inconnus (Paris: Collection Hetzel, 1908), 141–42.

referred to as “English.”<sup>357</sup> The reasoning is that he expects that it would help him be exchanged for Māori prisoners of war captured by British forces. That is, even when a specific group is marked as an enemy, the choice is made to self-identify with it because it gives added social capital in the existing structure of power relations between the groups. In the three Soviet texts, the rescue is associated, to the contrary, with breaking the natural expectation that white protagonists belong to that specific group endowed with social capital in the existing power relations structure. Here, the protagonists claim belonging to the group that promises to destroy the existing power structure by “bringing the red fire.” The difference is not simply in the protagonists’ choice in how to act in similar situations; the difference is in the assumptions about the dynamics of the groups’ relations in these fictional representations. These scenes in the adventure novels constitute quite a literal replay of what the African American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois would later call “[Soviet Russia’s] refusal to be ‘white.’”<sup>358</sup> To the young Soviet reader, these adventure novels also provide “evidence” that all over the world, there are people ready for Soviet help in upending the existing power relations between classes and races, reinforcing the ideologeme about the inevitability of worldwide socialist revolution. It is revealing as the underlying dynamic behind the similarity in all three texts: anxiety about the discovery of being perceived as belonging to and sharing the responsibility for a group whose practices, values, and ideology one does not support. This also implies the discovery of race as a factor intervening in the overarching narrative about class struggle.

However, this anxiety about race as a factor is more complex than simply concerning a

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<sup>357</sup> Verne, *Les enfants du Capitaine Grant*, 1908, 2ème partie: l’Australie:101.

<sup>358</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, “Color Lines,” *National Guardian*, February 12, 1953. cited from Christy Monet, “The Afterlife of Soviet Russia’s ‘Refusal to Be White’: A Du Boisian Lens on Post-Soviet Russian-US Relations,” *Slavic Review* 80, no. 2 (2021): 320, <https://doi.org/10.1017/slr.2021.88>. For a contextualization, see also Kate A. Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922–1963* (Duke University Press, 2002), 176–80.

misidentification of the Soviet protagonists' intentions based on their visual racial features. It goes beyond the need to rectify the indigenous peoples' beliefs that all white people are oppressors to include the idea that some whites are themselves against the system of oppression and exploitation – that is, something focused exclusively on the outer identification. Race can also imply a sense of a community, of shared practices, beliefs, and values. The discovery of race problematizes the simple clear-cut idea about solidarity along class lines, promoted by the officially espoused doctrine. Its neatness is unexpectedly problematized for the protagonists by the encounters with the non-white people, with whom they believe their goals and values to be aligned according to the Marxist doctrine. In Karintsev's novel, one of the protagonists is depicted as having a dream about the uprising in Shanghai, in which he participates as a “muscular Chinese peasant,” until it dawns on him within the dream that, in fact, he is not one.

The internal monologue associated with this discovery is rather self-deprecating:

“But I am not Chinese. I am a person of the white race, the race of the oppressors. I am also responsible for the suffering of the working Chinese people. I did nothing to impede my compatriots and other representatives of the white race in their vile attempts to extract with sword and firearms blood and sweat from the Chinese people.”<sup>359</sup>

The protagonist's own discovery that he does not actually belong to the vital force he is admiring is followed by the same discovery by the revolutionary masses, accompanied by the calls to “kill the white dogs,” which turn out to be reality rather than a dream. This episode demonstrates that behind the need to prove that one is “even more red than white” are not simply considerations of outward resemblance but an anxiety about complicity and responsibility for the misdoings of “the race of oppressors” to which the protagonists belong. Unfortunately, since only one of the installments of Karintsev's novel out of at least six is currently available for examination, it is unclear if such self-criticism on behalf of this protagonist is in any way a

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<sup>359</sup> Karintsev, *Vokrug sveta na aëroplane*, 5: V stane velikogo Suna:9.

reflection of this character's social background and life experiences introduced in one of the earlier installments, or is supposed to be shared by all representatives of the white race.

Goncharov's *Under the Tropics' Sun* also provides material for reconsidering the "European" practices that might be shared even by the "perfect" Soviet protagonist, who otherwise expresses awareness of the exploitative nature of colonial relations. Petka and Bambar-biu find a repository of wooden tablets that have crucial symbolic meaning for the tribe members, depicting their entire lives in pictorial form. Bambar-biu is interested in the place because he wants to find his own tablet and amend the narrative the tribe's elders have written about his own life, filling in the gaps for the periods when he was wandering away from central Australia. That is, despite his worldly experience, European education, and disagreement with many of the tribe's practices that he considers backward superstitions, he still endows this symbolic practice with a level of importance and wants to reclaim and rewrite the narrative on the tablet according to his own values rather than ditch the whole practice as backward. Petka, to the contrary, demands a tablet for his collection, planning to place it in the museum of his pioneer squad alongside the skins of exotic snakes collected on his journey. Bambar-biu likens this desire to exhibit meaningful elements of the Aboriginal people's spiritual life for museum visitors' amusement to the practices of other white people who had previously looted many repositories of the tablets that ended up en masse in the museums of European cities, including Moscow and Leningrad (presumably since before the revolution). Petka's treatment of another cultural group's spiritual life as an ethnographic curiosity is exposed as standing in line with the attitude of other "white people [who] do not know or do not want to know" how meaningful these tablets are for the Australians, even though this attachment is just a superstition.<sup>360</sup> This

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<sup>360</sup> "Белые не знают или не хотят знать, что для австралийца-туземца потеря чуринги равносильна потере жизни, во всяком случае, утере радости жизни. Конечно, это предрассудок, но предрассудок, как видишь,

wording suggests that ignorance is a choice, one Petka also seems to be making. The discussion that follows makes Petka feel embarrassed for his fellow Europeans [*zemliakov-evropeitsev*]. The way out of such a psychologically uncomfortable situation is to dissociate from the negatively described group: he reminds himself that in the eyes of Europeans Russia is “a country of barbarian Bolsheviks,” which brings him a huge emotional relief. A dialogue that follows and ends the topic, however, does not offer easy solutions to the dilemma.

“Bambar. I am an Asian. I am not in the least involved in famous European culture. Please don't think anything like that...”

“Okay,” responded Bambar-biu, “but do you still want a *churinga* [the tablet] for the museum?” Petka paused to think.

“I would take some junky one [*driannenkuiiu*]...”

“You won't get even a trashy one,” snapped Bambar-biu. “Because the junkiest one is probably mine.”<sup>361</sup>

Instead of suggesting that Petka, an exemplary pioneer, follows an exemplary line of behavior, the author leaves the reader with a complex picture: Petka is uncomfortable about being counted with the Europeans based on his skin color, so he tries to prove that he is “even more red than white” and himself considered a barbarian by those Europeans. *But* he still wants a tablet for the museum, that is, he views the same “museifying” ethnographic glance as acceptable. He is ready to treat his friends respectfully on an individual basis: for instance, he denies Bambar-biu the derogatory status of “indigenous” [*tuzemets*]: “you are as much an indigenous person as I am a crocodile.”<sup>362</sup> *But* he assumes that there exist other people whose lives and fates are “junky” enough to treat them as an ethnographic curiosity for museum use.

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укоренившийся в тысячелетиях. С ним нельзя так бороться.” Goncharov, *Pod solntsem tropikov*, 205–6.

<sup>361</sup> “— Бамбар. Я — азиат. К прославленной европейской культуре я ни капельки не причастен. Пожалуйста, не подумай чего-нибудь...”

— Ладно, — отвечал Бамбар-биу, — а чурингу хочешь для музея?

Петька задумался.

— Дрянненькую какую-нибудь я бы взял...

— И дрянненькой не получишь, — отрезал Бамбар-биу. — Потому что самая дрянненькая это, наверное, будет моя.” Goncharov, 208.

<sup>362</sup> “Ты такой же туземец, как я крокодил.” Goncharov, 188.

### 3.2.3. Popularizing political information by means of adventure fiction

One more aspect in which the “red” Soviets are very similar to those other “white” Europeans in the context of their interaction with indigenous Australians is that both groups consider the Aboriginal people merely an object of civilizational influence. The evaluations given to the two instances of interaction in the novel are very different. It is suggested that the British colonial government is teaching the Aboriginal people Christianity through the missionary school system in order to foist obedience and exploit them better. On the other hand, the changes that are suggested by Petka in the course of his introduction of the pioneer organization to the tribe’s youth and the ones initiated by Bambar-biu in his challenging of the century-old superstitions are meant to empower the Urabunna. Both types of changes, however, are supposed to transform the Aboriginal culture beyond recognition and to uplift them from their “primitive” form. Moreover, the Marxist-Leninist teaching is presented to the Urabunna in the same religious terms (a savior will set you free if you follow his teaching). This parallel is not explicitly discussed in the novel, unlike the comparison of Petka’s desire to grab a tablet for the museum to the actions of those whites who looted the sacred repositories for European collections, which I discussed above. The protagonist’s actions and plans with regard to the Urabunna tribe exemplify what Francine Hirsch calls “a Soviet version of the civilizing mission”: a combination of “cultural evolutionism [...] with the Marxist theory of history [...] and added to it the Leninist conceit that revolutionary actors could speed up historical progress.”<sup>363</sup> Petka and Bambar-biu are such “revolutionary actors” in the novel’s space.

After spending some time with the tribe and learning the basics of their language, Petka starts to introduce communist ideas to the Urabunna, beginning with the youngest tribe members,

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<sup>363</sup> Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 86.

whom he organizes in a pioneer squad. The chapter dedicated to this activity is titled “The pioneer Petka is pioneering” [*Pioner Pet’ka pionerit*],<sup>364</sup> which also attests to parodistic layer in the novel. The word “*pionerit*” has in the later Soviet period entered the Russian language as slang for “to steal” but it did not have this meaning in the 1920s yet.<sup>365</sup> What it refers to here is an ad hoc derivative of the word “*pioner*,” that is, “to do pioneer things or things typical for a pioneer.” What types of activities fall under this category is determined significantly by the tradition of the “pioneer fiction” I mentioned earlier in this chapter, where Soviet pioneers proved to be especially apt, among other things, in indoctrinating unorganized masses – for instance, peasants or homeless youth.

The “pioneer things” in Goncharov’s novel are mostly educational activity: starting from the very practical rules of the pioneer organization, like the requirement to exercise and practice proper hygiene, to more theoretical aspects of Marxist-Leninist doctrine, like allies and foes in the class struggle. It can be assumed that the intended readers of Goncharov’s novel were supposed to already have a good acquaintance with the rules of the pioneer organization from their own participation in it in the Soviet Union. This can be inferred from the text itself: these rules are mentioned as something well-known to the reader and comical effect around attempts to explain them to children from a drastically different culture would not be possible had the reader not known the rules very well. As for the latter aspect (that is, the theoretical aspects of the doctrine and application of the theory to practical interpretation of the world), the implied reader is apparently imagined as someone who could benefit from an additional lesson as well. Of course, the language in Petka’s exhortations before the Aborigines differs greatly from the

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<sup>364</sup> Goncharov, *Pod solntsem tropikov*, 155.

<sup>365</sup> “*pionerit*,” *Slovar’ russkogo argo*, accessed January 11, 2022, [https://russian\\_argo.academic.ru/8957/пионерить](https://russian_argo.academic.ru/8957/пионерить).

language of the third-person narrator's passages presenting this topic; yet, in a way, it can be stated that "pioneer things" are also done to the reader by the means of the whole story.

Goncharov dedicates a significant portion of the text to presenting the Marxist interpretation of world history, focusing on social injustice and capitalist exploitation. It is characteristic for adventure fiction to focus on some kind of absence that is restored to presence in the course of the storyline: missing people or objects are recovered, secrets unveiled, and justice restored. Despite dedicating a lot of attention to the injustice engendered by capitalist exploitation in general and the acts of capitalist greed that hurt the Urabunna specifically, Goncharov does not use the potential of an adventure plot to restore justice for this tribe. Instead, he suggests that the correct way to a fairer society sometime in the future is the work of organizing the masses, like what Petka does by establishing a pioneer squad among the Urabunna children, rather than individual heroic action typical of adventure narratives. This is not a lack of mastery with the genre conventions on behalf of the author. To the contrary, apparently aware that fast-paced adventure scenes about individual heroic action make for more exciting reading, the author includes such plot development. An attempt to rectify the injustice by heroic effort is included in the novel but marked as ideologically wrong according to Marxist-Leninist principles of dialectics.<sup>366</sup> In this way, the author both fulfills the assumed demand for a certain kind of entertaining reading and brings the reader to an ideologically acceptable conclusion. Furthermore, the introduction of this distinction allows the novel to fulfill the function of political education in a more nuanced way.

Bambar-biu is the character who attempts to restore justice for his tribe through individual heroic action. Using his own outstanding physical and intellectual abilities, as well as

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<sup>366</sup> "Не прав я по-ленински, знаю..." Goncharov, *Pod solntsem tropikov*, 212.

Petka's paralyzing gun (received from the inventor along with the flying boat), Bambar-biu scares the capitalist Brumlei into obedience and procures from him a deed for the lands previously stolen from the tribe. The episodes of sneaking into town for this purpose and then leaving town while escaping police pursuit in a shootout provide this breath-taking reading experience associated with the notion of *avantiurnyi roman* ("adventurist novel") that some of the readers might be looking for when reaching out for titles marked as adventure fiction. However, Goncharov writes that such an approach is worthy of an anarchist rather than a proper communist: "He doesn't get along with the communists, and the communists can't get along with him because he is an anarchist. [...] And always when doing this he pretends to be a communist, covering the communist party with bad fame..."<sup>367</sup> Petka condemns Bambar-biu for discrediting the image of communists, and even the Urabunna—with whom the seeds of Petka's ideological education have started to grow—refuse to accept a gift procured this way, aware that siding with the person considered a criminal by the state will bring them more trouble than good.

In this way, Goncharov's novel provides more nuanced political information for readers. Social injustice and capitalist exploitation is the root of all troubles but not any action against the exploiting classes corresponds to the proper communist way of restoring social justice. The episode reminds one in the *Around the World in Fifty Days*, where the Soviet protagonists chose to abstain from aggression and personal revenge against an exploiter, even though outraged by his actions because "these issues should be solved not in this way." In Goncharov's novel, the reader is likewise taught that communists are interested not in individual revenge against exploiters but in world revolution. The emphasis on abstaining from individual terror or personal

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<sup>367</sup> "С коммунистами он не ладит, и коммунисты не могут с ним ладить, потому что он анархист. [...] И всегда при этом он выдает себя за коммуниста, покрывая незавидной славой коммунистическую партию..." Goncharov, 272.

revenge on the class enemy in both texts might be a reflection of the famous phrase “we will go another way,” ascribed to Vladimir Lenin and signifying the parting of ways with the anarchist idea of individual terror upon the execution of his brother for participating in a conspiracy to kill the emperor. In *Under the Tropics’ Sun*, the strategy of “bloody terror” and “exploding corpulent bellies,” which Bambar-biu himself acknowledges to be “wrong from the Leninist point of view,”<sup>368</sup> is opposed to the work of organizing the masses in anticipation of the world revolution. Goncharov reiterates several times that the upcoming world revolution is the measure of success: “the deed of gift not in the slightest expedited the revolution”<sup>369</sup>; Bambar-biu is considered by Australian communists to be wrongly taking too much upon himself:

“to imagine [...] that by the efforts of one person, no matter how strong and smart this person is, one can make a revolution, or at least force the capitalists not to be capitalists, to imagine this is more than ridiculous, hmm. And Bambar-biu not only imagines, but also acts very energetically in this ridiculous direction.”<sup>370</sup>

Bambar-biu, who chooses immediate action, is described as simply too impatient “to wait for some five or ten years for the world revolution to come.”<sup>371</sup> This impatience is stereotypically ascribed to his “furious mixed blood.”<sup>372</sup>

The requirements of the genre and the considerations of ideological doctrine clash against each other. Goncharov includes a fast-paced culmination in his novel but leaves the narrative arc about the injustice suffered by Urabunna unfinished. The solution of this storyline is postponed into an allegedly near but indefinite future when the world revolution will bring about a more

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<sup>368</sup> “Не прав я по-ленински, знаю...” Goncharov, 212.

<sup>369</sup> “дарственная – ерунда, она ни на шаг не приближает нас к революции” Goncharov, 299.

<sup>370</sup> “Вообразать [...] что силами одного человека, как бы ни был этот человек силен и умен, можно сделать революцию или, по крайней мере, заставить капиталистов не быть капиталистами, вообразать это - более чем смешно, хым. А Бамбар-биу не только воображает, но и действует весьма энергично в этом смешном направлении.” Goncharov, 272–73.

<sup>371</sup> “Я не могу ждать, не в моей натуре это, когда через 5 – 10 лет придет мировая революция...” Goncharov, 212.

<sup>372</sup> “Неистовствует во мне смешанная кровь.” Goncharov, 212.

just world for everyone. Unlike his other novels that have a more typical sci-fi setting, such as on another planet, where such a revolution could happen as part of the story, Goncharov obviously could not finish a novel with a contemporary setting by claiming that world revolution took place in the immediate timeframe without straining the limits set by genre conventions. While the typical “adventurist” heroic action like the one espoused by Bambar-biu is condemned as inappropriate, it remains quite hazy what mode of action is appropriate for the communist goal. Hence, the novel ends with rather general ideas that the black Australians should organize themselves and unite with the oppressed whites to fight against injustice together. To further this goal, Petka arranges that a white Australian pioneer will spend some time with the Urabunna and continue the work of educating them. Moreover, future visits of pioneers from the Soviet Union are promised.

### CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 3

The 1926 novel *Under the Tropics' Sun* by Viktor Goncharov and the 1928 novella *Around the World in Fifty Days* by Iakov Kalnitskii and Vladimir Iurezanskii both draw on the pre-existing traditions of adventure fiction, most prominently the “extraordinary voyages” by the French author Jules Verne, but reconsider many of its elements to offer the reader interpretations compatible with Marxist-Leninist doctrine and 1920s Soviet foreign policy. A panoramic view of societies in European, Latin American and Asian countries in *Around the World in Fifty Days* and a more focused depiction of Australian society in *Under the Tropics' Sun* present to the reader a series of confirmations of the general rule: everywhere in the world, the capitalists are exploiting the toiling classes, and the exploited are welcoming help from the Soviet Union against this injustice. In both texts, Soviet adventurers visit these exploited and oppressed people on their journey as messengers from the country where justice for workers has prevailed; who

bring with them a promise that this will ultimately be possible for all working people everywhere. In these terms, both texts have a very prominent orientation toward the future: instead of mending the identified absence by the end of the story as a result of heroic actions, as is characteristic for adventure fiction, both texts only promise that sometime in the future justice will also prevail for all those whose plight the travelers witness on their journeys. Goncharov's novel, which was written before the USSR adopted the policy of Socialism in One Country in 1926, is more outspoken about the expectation that the world revolution will happen in some five to ten years. Kalnitskii and Iurezanskii's novella is vaguer in this regard and offers as the final conclusion the idea that the protagonists should return home to the Soviet Union and dedicate themselves to honest work that will – sometime in the indefinite future – “make all people on earth brothers.” Adventure fiction like the two analyzed texts supplies “evidence” to support internationalist ideological claims: all the representatives of the oppressed classes in this big world who are educated recognize the leading role of the Soviet Union and perceive Soviet visitors as moral support; those who are not should be educated to rectify their false views, such as, for instance, the idea that oppression is happening along racial rather than class lines.

Both texts incorporate imagery of characters and places that have become staple elements for adventure fiction about journeys to exotic places, but they are often included with an inverted meaning, reapplied to refer to a different structure or explained in a new way. For example, on the many journeys depicted in Verne's novels, the colonial outposts of European empires, particularly the British ones, are the core nodes between which the adventurers travel, experiencing dangers from wild beasts and savage natives in the “unorganized” territories in-between. In both Soviet texts, by way of contrast, specifically British colonial outposts (Jamaica in *Around the World in Fifty Days* and India in *Under the Tropics' Sun*) are the places where the

protagonists engage in the most dangerous encounters with ideological enemies, even including firefights. Both texts include reinterpretations of the traditional “civilization”/“savagery” dichotomy. It is suggested that indigenous people might engage in violent practices not because of their innate “bestly nature” but as a reaction to the exploitation they experience: out of ignorance in which they are deliberately kept or as the last resort for counter-action. Kalnitskii and Iurezanskii additionally include metaphors of “cannibals” and “wild beasts” to refer to the capitalists and imperialists – which rethinks the typical dangers encountered in adventure fiction along the lines of socialist discourse, such as that reflected in the imagery used in the *International*.

To the best of my knowledge, neither Goncharov’s novel nor Kalnitskii’s and Iurezanskii’s novella saw renewed editions after their initial publication in the second half of the 1920s, despite their far-fetched takes on using the entertaining genre of adventure fiction to teach young readers about Marxism-Leninism, the ideology that would remain the core of Soviet doctrine for decades. What would change much sooner is the ideology’s attitude to a key element of this strain of adventure fiction: the exotic faraway. In the 1930s, Soviet culture would become that of “inflamed borders,” conceiving everybody outside of the USSR as enemy – as opposed to the 1920s’ fair mixture of imperialist exploiters and friendly toiling masses, who are in the process of organizing themselves in the expectation of world revolution, as we have seen in this chapter. I will return to Soviet adventure fiction of the 1930s in Chapter 6 to see what implication the ideological turn had for this genre.

## PART 2. COMING HOME

### CHAPTER 4. RETURNING HOME: POLISH ADVENTURE FICTION OF THE 1920S

In 1918, Poland became independent after more than a century of being divided between neighboring empires and erased as a state. Previously subject to censorship under imperial rule,<sup>373</sup> at this time Polish literature got a chance to process themes that were previously restricted. As Polish researcher of literature for children Joanna Papuzińska suggests, with the regaining of independence Polish literature started “to desperately, emotionally articulate all that was prohibited by censorship.”<sup>374</sup> A new freedom allowed Polish literature to attend to the tragic experiences of suffering under foreign oppression, to create a “library” of national martyrology and heroism, and to use these texts for the upbringing of the next generation. The genre model of adventure was used among others to familiarize the young readers with important, previously restricted topics. The events of 1914–1920, that is, the First World War and the Polish-Soviet War, which led to creation of the Second Polish Republic and the definition of its borders, were also amply addressed in the literature for children and young adults throughout the interwar period, used for informing the young readers about these key moments of recent national history.<sup>375</sup>

Moreover, creation of the national state as an outcome of heroic efforts and adventurous

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<sup>373</sup> On the censorship under Russian imperial rule, for instance, see Malte Rolf, *Pol'skie ziemie pod vlast'iu Peterburga: Ot Venskogo kongressa do Pervoi Mirovoi*, Historia Rossica (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2020), 216.

<sup>374</sup> Joanna Papuzińska, *Mój bazarz*, Nauka, Dydaktyka, Praktyka 113 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SBP, 2010), 17.

<sup>375</sup> In her study titled *Three legends*, Anna Maria Krajewska analyzes more than one hundred texts of various genres addressed to children and young adults, that thematize only three “legends” out of the entire war experiences of 1914-1920: the formation of Piłsudski’s Legions, defense of Lwów in the Polish-Ukrainian conflict and the Polish-Soviet War. Anna Maria Krajewska, *Trzy legendy: walka o niepodległość i granice w polskiej międzywojennej literaturze młodzieżowej* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 2009).

activities – which became a safe haven of a national “home” in contrast to the dangers and insecurities of existing under foreign rule – fits well into the dynamics offered by the adventure genre. As readerly expectations of this genre include a happy ending, which is often structurally associated with progression from a dangerous space of adventure to a safe space, the existence of a national home provided such a symbolic haven for the protagonists to aim for. In this chapter, I will analyze several adventure novels that exemplify this combination of the genre of adventure and home-coming into a newly independent Poland.

#### 4.1 COMING BACK FROM EXILE: TADEUSZ DYBCZYŃSKI’S *ACROSS SIBERIA* (1928)

The novel *Wpoprzek Sybiru* (*Across Siberia*, 1928) by Tadeusz Dybczyński, identified on the title page as “a wanderer novel for youth,” tells the story of seven Polish scouts – boys and girls aged between fourteen and sixteen – who are sent into exile in Siberia during the First World War before Russian troops retreated from Warsaw.<sup>376</sup> They are joined by three adults: the elder brother of one of the boys, Tadeusz Tęczyński, who had been exiled to the same region earlier, the father of one of the girls, Mirski, who accompanies them voluntarily, and the engineer Marczyński, also an exile. Mirski’s money and Marczyński’s fantastic technological invention, a motorboat turned submarine turned hydroplane, allows the group to flee from the exile, literally “across Siberia” – down the Ob’ river to the Arctic Ocean. There they encounter a French ship, which brings them to Europe, and from there, they arrive in Poland just in time to

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<sup>376</sup> The term in the original is „zesłanie administracyjne,” which is a Polish translation of the Russian legal term “administrativnaia vysylka.” I am rendering it in this chapter as “exile,” while the English term is much wider than this legal practice peculiar to the Russian empire. Richard Pipes in his *Russia Under the Old Regime* uses the terms “to exile administratively” and “exile for settlement” when referring to this legal practice. This is not exile for hard labor (*katorga*), and since 1878, it was enough “merely to arouse suspicion” to be “liable to exile.” (See Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*, History of Civilisation (New York: Scribner, 1974), 299, 310.) As I will show below, such an exile without proper indictment is exactly what happens in the novel, although in this case the situation is exacerbated by wartime conditions.

participate in the final battles for its independence.

Tadeusz Dybczyński (1886–1944) based the novel *Across Siberia* on his own experience in exile in the Narym region in 1915–1917. As a university student of natural sciences in Lwów, he was a member of clandestine organizations and an activist in the scout movement, which might have been among the causes for sending him to Siberia once the Russian army conquered the city in 1915.<sup>377</sup> Tadeusz Tęczyński can be easily recognized in the novel as an alter-ego of the author: like Dybczyński, he is a geologist and a scout leader. Dybczyński's own exile ended only in 1917, after the February revolution, while in the novel he conjures a very different outcome for his protagonists. His experience in the Narym region, before being represented in the adventure novel, was also reflected in his study *Narym Region and its Nature* (1924) – one of many works authored by Dybczyński as a geologist, paleontologist, and a popularizer of scientific knowledge about nature, though most of these works are dedicated to Polish nature.<sup>378</sup> In 1937, together with the second edition of *Across Siberia*,<sup>379</sup> the novel *Tajemnice Łysogór (The Secrets of the Holy Cross Mountains)* was published. It continues the popularization of

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<sup>377</sup> Scouting movement in Poland had strong connections with the independentist ideology from its beginning. See more in Waldemar Potkański, “Spór o oblicze ideowe polskiego skautingu przed pierwszą wojną światową,” *Przegląd Historyczny* 94, no. 4 (December 2003): 397–410.

As follows from the recollections of Henryk Bagiński, who participated at the beginnings of the Polish scout movement in the Austrian partition, in Lwów, practices associated with the English scouting movement, such as described in Robert Baden-Powell's seminal book *Scouting for Boys*, were adopted on the Polish ground into the existing attempts to organize school-age youth for the independentist cause. See Henryk Bagiński, *Geneza Polskiego Skautingu* (Warszawa: Nakładem komisji kół harcerzy z czasów walk o niepodległość przy Naczelnictwie związku harcerstwa polskiego, 1937), esp. 11-15.

Krajewska in her *Trzy Legendy* also mentions many texts where scouts were depicted in connection to military action for Polish independence during and immediately after First World War. These depictions, which should at least partly be based on the actual events, mean that scouting movement in Poland was perceived as synonymous with the notion of “youth engaged in the national cause.” This explains unstated assumptions in the novel, based on which participation in the scout movement is a sufficient offense against the imperial order, sufficiently justifying exiling the protagonists to Siberia.

<sup>378</sup> Jerzy Gągol, “Tadeusz Dybczyński (1886–1944) i bibliografia jego prac,” *Posiedzenia Naukowe Państwowego Instytutu Geologicznego* 65 (styczeń 2008 – grudzień 2008) (2009): 16–18.

<sup>379</sup> Tadeusz Dybczyński, *W poprzek Sybiru*, 2nd ed. (Lwów: Państwowe Wydaw. Książek Szkolnych, 1937).

information about Polish nature in a novelized form and features the same characters as *Across Siberia* three years after their return home. In the sequel, the protagonists hike through the Holy Cross mountains in Poland and get acquainted with the nature of their native land. I will occasionally mention the sequel in my following analysis of *Across Siberia*.

*Across Siberia*, too, informs quite abundantly about the region in which the action is set: its geographical features, species of plants and animals (with omnipresent Latin nomenclature), and ethnographic details. Although the characters are busy with escaping from the exile, they are willing to use the opportunity to get acquainted with this exotic land, which they “hopefully” will not have another chance to visit. Apparently, the author considered that in this way he can enhance the reader’s knowledge in both historical and scientific planes. However, the “encyclopaedic” layer in *Across Siberia* (unlike, e.g. *The Secrets of Holy Cross Mountains*) is subordinate to the logic of the wanderer adventure, a fantasy about a victorious escape from exile in particular and establishing a more powerful position in the encounter with the adversary, the Russian imperial forces, in general.

#### 4.1.1. Encounter with the adversary

The novel’s action is set in the period when Poland was ruled by foreign regimes, particularly the Russian empire, which exercised its sovereignty over Poles and aggressively countered attempts for national self-determination. The political background defines the central structural opposition in the novel: in-group – Poles – and its adversary – Russians and the Russian empire. On their journey to the location of the exile and during the escape, the Polish protagonists meet representatives of many other groups. Apart from three separate characters, a Czech, a Ukrainian, and a Jew who are all Austrian subjects and prisoners of war, those who are encountered in numbers and as groups are mostly either local ethnic groups (Tatars, Ostyaks –

more on these indigenous people later) or members of other minorities of the Russian empire exiled to Siberia, such as Finns. There are, of course, also ethnic Russians among the characters who are not representatives of the regime: the settlers in Siberia and exiles. Since the latter are banished into exile for political reasons—they are in opposition to the Russian government as are the independence-seeking Poles or Finns—they are described very positively.<sup>380</sup> However, it is Russians who are the “definitive Other,” the “Adversary,” through opposition to, and delimitation from, whom the Polish in-group is constituted, as the following example shows.<sup>381</sup>

In one of the villages, they meet a married couple of descendants of Polish post-1863 exiles, the Paǰowskis. The man is introduced to the reader with the following words: “This was a man of about fifty years of age, with very nice, not Russian, facial features.”<sup>382</sup> About his wife, it is said that “[h]er facial features did not resemble those of local Russian women either.”<sup>383</sup> It is revealing that both the man and the woman are described through negation of similarity to ethnic Russian anthropological features, which suggests that they are recognizably “Polish”, “ours” to the protagonists. Obviously, the described couple and the Polish protagonists differ from the indigenous “Others” inhabiting the region (such as the Tatars and the Ostyaks), much more than from ethnic Russians. In fact, in the case of the protagonists, both their anthropological features

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<sup>380</sup> During the convict transport, the protagonists are reciprocally helping to a group of “politicals”; Kargasok, the destination of the exile settlement is described as the most moral community where one does not even have to lock the doors.

<sup>381</sup> This understanding is in line with Fredrik Barth’s idea that boundaries between groups are essential for group identity: “the ethnic boundary [...] defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses” Fredrik Barth, *Process and Form in Social Life.*, International Library of Anthropology. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 204. Leonidas Donskis brings a similar example: the discourse of Lithuanian nationalism “desperately” endeavored to assert that “Lithuanians were, first and foremost, non-Poles and, certainly, non-Russians.” The importance of coming up with a clear distinction is especially high with those out-groups with whom there is a long and intertwined shared history. See Leonidas Donskis, *Troubled Identity and the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 26.

<sup>382</sup> „Był to mężczyzna lat około pięćdziesięciu, o rysach twarzy bardzo sympatycznych, nie rosyjskich.” Dybczyński, *Woprzek Sybiru*, 2:16.

<sup>383</sup> „Z rysów też nie przypominała tutejszych kobiet rosyjskich.” Dybczyński, 2:17.

and cultural and language competencies allow them to “pass” for Russians in encounters with Russian settlers and officials during their escape. None of the other groups mentioned is supposed to be able to do that.<sup>384</sup> This suggests that Poles are culturally closest to Russians, as compared to the other groups. Yet, Polish anthropological features are presented as specifically “non-Russian.”

Here, ideology interferes with purely anthropological difference. On the one hand, the ideology in which the author partakes depends on a clearer and more unambiguous boundary between the Polish nation and the “adversary,” the Russian empire. The latter is largely presented as an empire of Russians, even if some of ethnic Russians are “on the good side” and equally persecuted by the regime. On the other hand, the anthropological non-Russianness of the Pałowski is brought up to emphasize a lack of Polishness on other levels, especially as compared to what could be expected of the children of people sufficiently mobilized in their Polish self-identification that they chose to fight for it, earning themselves life-long exile as punishment. The Pałowski barely speak the language, although still understand it and keep some warm memories related to the Polishness of their parents. Their children, that is, the third generation after the exile, are completely denationalized, a success of the imperial identity-building effort. The protagonists engage in a conversation with one of their school-age children, whose words of introduction are given in transliterated Russian:

“Moja familija Bronisław Iwanowicz Pałowski. Ja russkij...”<sup>385</sup>

[“My last name [sic!] is Bronisław Iwanowicz Pałowski. I am Russian..”]

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<sup>384</sup> Finns, because of the language: a teenage son of a Finnish political exile speaks little to none Russian; the only language the scouts have in common with him is broken German. The three Austrian prisoners-of-war are from a totally different world: the Czech man cannot even comprehend the need for warmer clothing in Siberia. The indigenous people have been under the Russifying effort for quite a long time already, still, they are very recognizably different.

<sup>385</sup> Dybczyński, *Wpoprzek Sybiru*, 2:19.

When asked about his grandfather, Broniek reproduces school-taught knowledge about the Polish uprising:

“Słyszałem, ale nie chcę być takim, jak on... [...] Dieduszka był miateżnikiem (buntownikiem)”<sup>386</sup>

[“I heard [about grandfather] but I do not want to be like him. [...] Grandfather was a mutineer.”]

In this exchange, the author is using a peculiar strategy to convey the impression of difference through language. It is assumed that the boy does not know Polish and is speaking to them in Russian; the author, however, combines transliterated Russian and Polish translations in order to balance between the aesthetic effect and comprehensibility to the reader. However, with the word “mutineer,” the author includes both the Russian word and the Polish translation: he does not expect the reader to understand the original but includes it to emphasize that the boy is simply repeating what is taught to him at school.

In his study of Russian governmental practices in Poland, Rolf claims that it can hardly be said that there was a definitive policy aimed at “turning all Poles into Russians,” yet while discussing the administrative management of the Polish provinces by the Russian empire, he repeatedly returns to specific examples of practices and discourses with this end. He argues that at least before the last decades of the imperial period, “Russian” would mean “neutral imperial” identification rather than “ethnic Russian,” and it was this “neutral” identity of “a citizen of empire” that ethnic minorities were invited to partake in, given that they abandoned their “marked,” “particular” national identification. By the time in which the novel is set, there had developed a new discourse of ethnic Russian national identity; yet both understandings are still visible in the novel: Russian as neutral imperial and Russian as ethnic are intertwined.<sup>387</sup> When the regime’s ideology is Russification and evening out the differences of the minorities’

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<sup>386</sup> Dybczyński, 2:19.

<sup>387</sup> Rolf, *Pol’skie zemli*, 148, 150, 152, 203–4, 209, 245, 494, 525.

“particularity,” self-identification becomes an ethical action, especially if composition of one’s ancestry actually provides for some “choice.”

The father Pałowski is ethnically half-Pole, half-Russian, born to an exiled Polish participant of the 1863 uprising and a Russian woman, yet one of the protagonists exclaims: “So, if you are a son of a Pole, Sir, you are a Pole, you must be one!”<sup>388</sup> At first glance, it may seem that this phrase proclaims a primordial identity of patrilineal inheritance. However, what is at stake here is not the discussion of whether Pałowski is more like his Polish father or more like his Russian mother. The “Russian” component that is responsible for diluting his Polishness is related not to his mother’s ethnicity but to the regime’s Russification policies. Against the backdrop of the imperial education system’s success in Russifying Pałowski’s son, to say “you are a Pole if you are a son a Pole” is more like saying “you are a good man if you are a son of a good man.” The imperial system is quite eager to accept minorities into the ranks of “normal,” “non-distinct” subjects named “Russians.” Keeping actively self-identifying as a member of a minority is then an ethical action, the meaning of which is that the person did not forget the injustice: violent crackdown on the uprising, banishing the dissenting members of national elites from their homeland into Siberian exile.

The protagonists are ready to give the benefit of the doubt to Pałowski, but as they leave the family’s abode, they sadly recognize they were wrong in that: “The scouts became sad as they heard these words. They understood that the Polish spirit is totally dead in this house of a son and a daughter of exiles.”<sup>389</sup> The scene opens with an observation about the distinctly Polish and non-Russian looks of the Pałowskis and ends with an observation of their non-Polish and

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<sup>388</sup> “Jeżeli więc jest pan synem Polaka, to pan jest Polakiem, powinien pan nim być!” Dybczyński, *Wpoprzek Sybiru*, 2:17.

<sup>389</sup> „Posmutnieli harcerze, usłyszawszy te słowa. Spostregli, że w tym domu syna i córki wygnańców ducha polskości zamarł zupełnie.” Dybczyński, 2:19.

Russified spirit. The “evilness” of the adversary includes, then, not only direct violent action and outrageous arbitrary treatment against the inhabitants of the “mutinous peripheries,” but also the discursive attempts to wipe out the perceived difference and to upend the values system, teaching “true Poles” that they are in fact Russians and that what they might have believed to be heroism is mutiny.

Interestingly, this discrepancy between the two axiological systems (the one associated with the Polish spirit and the other foisted by the empire) is brought to the next level in the protagonists’ own story. No evidence is available about whether Dybczyński’s real-life banishment to Siberia was legally attributed to his affiliation with the clandestine organizations; in the novel, however, the arrest and banishment to Siberia of the five scouts from Warsaw is left without any explanation at all.<sup>390</sup> It is not that they are punished for something that is evaluated positively according to the in-group system of values but considered a crime by the imperial government. Rather, it looks as if the imperial government simply randomly exercises its power over its subjects, because (and while) it is able to do so. Not only the reader is not given an explanation why the protagonists are persecuted by the state: the protagonists are described as waiting in incarceration to find out what they will be charged with and it never becomes clear.<sup>391</sup> This lack of any reasonable explanation adds to the built-up impression of unfairness and senselessness of Polish existence under the Russian rule, which should be ended. The situation with two other scouts, a brother and a sister from Lublin’s vicinity, who join the group during the transport to Siberia, is different. They are said to have climbed a hill to look at the Polish regiments of the approaching Austrian army, which was interpreted by the Russian troops as an

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<sup>390</sup> Rolf, however, mentions that administrative exile was a very widely applied means of punishment, used even when there was, admittedly, not sufficient material to legally exhibit a charge. Poles constituted about one third of the total number of people in administrative exile in the Russian empire. Rolf, *Pol’skie ziemie*, 430, 446.

<sup>391</sup> Dybczyński, *Wpoprzek Sybiru*, 1:4.

act of espionage. Here, again, it is suggested that the characters are doing a normal and natural thing, satisfying their curiosity, as if the war, with its additional restrictions imposed on personal mobility, was not occurring around them, and as if the area in which they are living was not claimed by an empire with its own laws and regulations.

None of the protagonists are arrested and banished into exile as a punishment for their conscious acts, which would be undertaken with the understanding of risks involved, but deemed appropriate despite the possible consequences because of their importance to the national cause. The protagonists seem to be living and acting according to a different axiological system, utterly surprised that somebody with another view – such as the Russian imperial government and police – is exercising power over their bodies as imperial subjects. In this regard, an evaluation of the previous historical period from the standpoint of a future that is supposed to be shared by the author and his readers in late 1920s for whom Polish sovereignty from imperial rule is an unquestioned condition, is inscribed into the protagonists' appraisal of the contemporary event.

The whole novel is imbued with a teleological perception of development towards this effect: from the phrase on the first page on the text dating their arrest “on the memorial night [...] before the Muscovite left Warsaw for good”<sup>392</sup> and to the penultimate page suggesting: “And although they were not returning to a free Poland yet, they believed that freedom will come for sure soon. And it came a year later.”<sup>393</sup> Everything between these key events - the (de facto)

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<sup>392</sup> Dybczyński, 1:3.

That is, August 4, 1915. However, an attempt to put the events of the novel on the timescale suggests that they were arrested at least a couple months earlier than this date, not exactly “the night before.” During the months following the arrest which they spent in a prison in Moscow, the protagonists are described as not knowing what is happening in the outside world, consequently, they could hardly know that during this time the Russian troops have left Warsaw. Thus, it is possible to say that this time setting is yet another example of how the events in the novel are described not in the way they would have been perceived from within the situation but in relation to a later understanding and evaluation of the events.

<sup>393</sup> “I choć nie do wolnej jeszcze Polski wracano, wierzono, że wolność wkrótce napewno zadnieje. I zadniała po upływie roku.” Dybczyński, 5:68.

end of Russian imperial rule over the Polish capital and the actual establishment of independence – is also imbued with the anticipation of Polish independence as a certain fact of very near future. The protagonists act based on this future certainty, symbolically proclaiming their motorboat the territory of independent Poland and renouncing their status as imperial subjects.

#### 4.1.2. Logic of the fantasy

Joanna Papuzińska mentions Dybczyński's novel as one of those that appeared in the 1920s and discussed previously censored topics such as Siberian exile and the suffering and displacement of thousands of Poles, now that it was finally possible to address these traumatic issues.<sup>394</sup> However, this novel does something more than just depict previously censored experiences. It offers the reader a fantasized solution and a reworking of these traumatic experiences that were painful not only for the wide readership (if they had internalized the national narrative of collective memory) but also very specifically for the author, who himself experienced Siberian exile.<sup>395</sup>

In this context, when I use the concept of fantasy with regard to Dybczyński's novel, I do not simply refer to the fact that the author introduces a “fantastic,” sci-fi element into this narrative, which he does. Rather, I invoke the meaning of “fantasizing” as used by Sigmund Freud in his essay “Creative writers and day-dreaming”: “The motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single phantasy is the fulfilment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality.”<sup>396</sup> One can imagine the author's own feeling of helplessness before the

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<sup>394</sup> Papuzińska, *Mój bazarz*, 17, 82–87.

<sup>395</sup> What I call here “a fantasized solution” is similar to what Papuzińska calls, without developing this idea further, “fairy-tale transformation, fairy-tale transfer from the space of fear and humiliation.” Papuzińska, 85.

<sup>396</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming (1908),” in *On Freud's “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming,”* ed. Ethel Spector Person, Peter Fonagy, and Sérvulo Augusto Figueira (Yale University Press, 1995), 146.

arbitrary conduct of a regime that had the power to disrupt his life and studies and move him to a remote region with a harsh climate. At the same time, it is a collective experience of the helplessness of generations of Poles in the face of intensifying efforts of the empire to establish its own rules and send into exile anyone who disagreed for a century. The novel is a fantasy in this Freudian sense, approaching the topic of interaction with the imperial regime as a correction of this unsatisfying reality, the fulfillment of a wish for a more powerful position in this interaction with the regime.

In this subsection, I will explore several aspects of this fantasy. First, the experience in exile is rewritten to amend the discourse of despair associated with the decades of imperial rule in the narrative of Polish collective memory, offering instead a fantasy about a less humiliating and excruciating exile experience. Second, a fantastic invention is introduced as a vehicle for physically and symbolically challenging the empire's power over the protagonists. Third, the author connects his narrative to the tradition of adventure in order to completely diminish the significance of the adversary. These three stages roughly correspond to the linear development of the plot. They are also associated with asserting moral, intellectual, and technical (civilizational) superiority of the Poles over the adversary.

First of all, the novel offers a fantasy about the possibility that the experience of exile can be not as dehumanizing as it might have been personally for the author and as it was for all exiles, according to the national collective memory narrative. Even those portions of the novel dedicated to convict transport and being in exile have a certain optimistic undertone to them. Mirski, the father of one of the girl scouts, introduced as a traveler and rich merchant, follows the group from the beginning of their journey from prison to the exile settlement, and with his money bribes officials to make the adolescents' lives in incarceration easier by providing them

with nicer food, a more comfortable cell, and generally making sure that they are allowed to stick together. As Papuzińska notes, “it can be said, they are getting acquainted with Siberia in a domesticated form that saves them from many sufferings and humiliations.”<sup>397</sup> So, for example, it is stated that “[t]hey did not worry about the future, what was primarily at stake is the best possible passage through the convict transportation.”<sup>398</sup> After all, one of the characters feels that “[i]n a way, this Siberia is not as dreadful as they paint it. [...] Travelling here, [he] imagined everything in a much worse light.”<sup>399</sup>

A possibility of this “less dreadful” experience is based on two fantasized assumptions. One is that they have access to unlimited funds through Mirski, but equally important is the depiction of the system as functioning in such way that these funds can improve their situation: the representatives of the system are eager to do favors in exchange for bribes. The adversaries are depicted as corrupt and self-serving. Numerous detention officers, directors of the prisons and other officials, on whose decisions the fates of the exiles depend, represent the system and its power over the subjects, but not one of them is presented as an ardent believer in the ideology behind the imperial policies they implement on practice. Part of this fantasy about superiority of Poles over Russian officials and gendarmes is that the adversaries are easily outwitted and easily bribed, as the author puts it, willingly “agree to [Mirski’s] ‘convincing’ requests.”<sup>400</sup> This is obviously also a morally debasing characteristic of the adversary. Interestingly, Mirski’s participation in the same act of bribery as the briber does not mark him negatively in the moral scale, since he does this out of care for the Polish exiles, and the act of state violence against

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<sup>397</sup> Papuzińska, *Mój bazarz*, 83.

<sup>398</sup> „O przyszłość nie troszczono się, chodziło głównie tylko o możliwe najlepsze przetrwanie etapu.” Dybczyński, *Wpoprzek Sybiru*, 1:19.

<sup>399</sup> „Swoją drogą, ta Syberia to nie taka straszna, jak ją malują [...] Jadąc tutaj, wyobrażałem sobie wszystko w świetle o wiele gorszem.” Dybczyński, 2:29.

<sup>400</sup> „Pan Walther zgodził się na moje „przekonywujące” prośby...” Dybczyński, 2:45.

Poles removes any expectations of moral conduct (and, as I will later show, submitting to the legal and symbolic order of the empire in general) on their behalf. The fact that the officials willingly accept these bribes, however, marks them as both morally corrupt and intellectually lacking. The latter is because the self-serving behavior ultimately blurs the line between allowing for a more comfortable existence in exile in exchange for a bribe and missing the moment when these special favors make the escape possible.

It follows from this “mitigated” take on the Siberian conditions in exile that the protagonists dare to start a dangerous journey to escape from the place of exile not because remaining there is such an unbearable experience for them.<sup>401</sup> Rather, “it is a waste of time” “to sit here without anything to do” when Poland is at war and presumably needs their participation in this fateful moment in its history.<sup>402</sup> This also attests to the moral superiority ascribed to Poles: they flee not to return to a safe home from unbearable and dangerous conditions but, to the contrary, to the dangers and uncertainties of war from safe and relatively comfortable exile because this is what their patriotic persuasion demands of them. And so they flee, within the logic of fantasy, not out of dire necessity but out of exuberance, which is, along with “superiority,” another key word that characterizes this fantasy on all levels.

On the second stage of the fantasy about the more powerful position of Poles in interaction with the imperial regime, the author introduces a fantastic invention, a motorboat, which also suggests the intellectual and technical superiority of Poles. Contriving a method for

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<sup>401</sup> This is to a noticeable contrast with some other adventure novels thematizing escapes from Siberia. In Bahrianyi’s *The Tiger Hunters*, the escapee “competes with death,” as the metaphor used by the author suggests. Even in the series about Tomek by Alfred Szklarski, which, just like Dybczyński’s texts, dedicates much attention to natural knowledge and “sightseeing,” the fifth volume (*Tajemnicza wyprawa Tomka, [Tomek’s Mysterious Expedition, 1963]*) in which the protagonists organize an escape from Siberian exile for Tomek’s cousin suggests that the reason for doing so is saving his life, as remaining in Siberia is deleterious for Zbyszek’s health.

<sup>402</sup> Dybczyński, *Wpoprzek Sybiru*, 3:17.

escaping from Siberia that would allow the protagonists to outwit their adversaries by “just a bit” or “just barely enough” would make adventure reading much more rewarding. Instead, the author “supplies” his protagonists with a vehicle for fleeing, which gives them a huge advantage in speed and modes of movement. Exuberance characterizes this fantasy about an encounter with the imperial regime, which is to a striking contrast to the modes of interaction throughout the century of increasingly harsh imperial policies in the Kingdom of Poland. The following encounter with a Russian steamboat on the river is illustrative of this enormous advantage given to the protagonists.

“Who’s travelling and where to?” [...]

““White Eagle,”” from Tomsk to Warsaw! [...]

At these words, the motorboat twitched and began to scatter the waves with a tripled momentum. From the distance one could hear the voice of the amazed Muscovites.

“What is it? What does it mean?”

However, this voice remained without response. [...] The “White Eagle,” now moving fast, was certainly unseen from a distance. For “Rassia” [the name of the boat that inquired their identity – a phonetic rendering in the original] - it appeared and disappeared like a meteor, arousing in the unsuspecting Muscovites genuine astonishment, and maybe even superstitious fear.<sup>403</sup>

They flee faster than the news of their escape, which is a part of the effect described in the quote that suggests that the interrogators were “unsuspecting” (unprepared that they should be wary of escapees), “amazed,” “astonished,” in “superstitious fear.” The latter characteristic suggests a subversion of the ideas about the limits of “normal” and “natural.” The fantastic speed of the motorboat makes the fortuitous spectators think of supernatural powers, yet the idea of physical limitations is not the only thing that is subverted in this exchange. The protagonists also

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<sup>403</sup> „-Kto jedzie i dokąd? [...]

- „Orzeł Biały” z Tomaska do Warszawy! [...]

Motorówka na ten rozkaz drgnęła silniej i zaczęła pruć fale potrojonym pędem. Z oddali doleciał jeszcze głos zdumionych widać Moskali.

-Co to! Co to znaczy?

Głos ten pozostał jednak bez odpowiedzi. [...] „Orła Białego”, mknącego teraz już szybko, nie było można z oddali zapewne zobaczyć. Dla „Rassii” – zjawił się i znikł jak meteor, budząc w niespodziewających się niczego Moskalach niekłamane zdziwienie, a może nawet zabobonny przestrasz” Dybczyński, 4:29-30.

challenge the ideas of what can be normally expected as a response in such a conversation between someone in a position of power and anybody else who is answerable to the side possessing symbolic power as a subject of the empire. The act of claiming Polish identity for the boat and declaring their route to be “from Tomsk to Warsaw” is as unthinkable and subversive of the symbolic order of the imperial space as their motorboat is a fantasy challenging the limits set by the state of engineering knowledge at the time.

This escape is not only an act of physically setting oneself free from the rule of the Russian empire; it is also an act of symbolically claiming their right to do so, as they proclaim their boat an extraterritorial piece of independent Poland and renounce their Russian citizenship.<sup>404</sup> Another, even more daring symbolic act is performed when they move ashore in Surgut, a town on their way, but soon suspicion arises (as information about their escape had been sent down the river by telegraph) and they are asked to present documents. Here, instead of allowing a Russian policeman to arrest them as somebody endowed with authority to do so, they lure him onto the boat and “arrest [him] in the name of the Polish Republic.”<sup>405</sup>

The latter incident happens because the technical advantage of the fantastic invention is so striking that the success of their escape is never doubted, and the protagonists are even bored with the monotonous journey and decide to visit Surgut, where they pretend to be merchants looking for furs, “and, perhaps, adventures.”<sup>406</sup> This brings us to the third level of the fantasy about a more powerful position in the interaction with the regime. On this level, the author includes in the novel activities hardly expected of someone who is persecuted and fleeing for

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<sup>404</sup> „Od chwili ruszenia jesteśmy teraz prawnie już jakby w Polsce i polskimi obywatelami, pod własną flagą płynącymi. Inna rzecz, czy państwo, po którego terenie jedziemy, za takich nas uznaje. Faktem jest, żeśmy z tą chwilą wyparli się rosyjskiego poddaństwa, co za tem idzie, popełniliśmy zradę wobec cara.” Dybczyński, 4:22.

<sup>405</sup> „Proszę w tej chwili oddać broń! Aresztuję was w imieniu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej!” Dybczyński, 4:38.

<sup>406</sup> „Dybczyński, 4:32.

freedom. This includes day-long hunting stops and sightseeing outings: they decide “to visit something along the way, rightly assuming that no one will probably not have an opportunity to be in these parts again.”<sup>407</sup> The privilege of tourist-like nonchalance is not what one would associate with the position of a persecuted escapee. The author makes connections to the adventure genre tradition by introducing briefly-mentioned imagery resemblant of classical adventure, references to adventure classics, and even entire episodes similar to what one can see elsewhere in wanderer adventure fiction.

I offer three coexisting explanations for what these connections do in Dybczyński’s novel. First, and most superficially, one could say that episodes including hunting, hikes through “primeval” forest, and excursions to pagan sites simply add volume and events to the novel. Since the fantastic invention provides the protagonists with such advantage against the pursuers that this simply cannot create collisions that would be interesting and exciting enough, the author needs something else to “fill in” the journey of the escapees from starting point to destination.

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<sup>407</sup> „Postanowiono obecnie nietylko posuwać się wciąż dalej ku morzu, lecz w miarę możności po drodze coś niecoś zwiedzać, słusznie przypuszczając, że drugi raz w życiu nikomu pewnie nie trafi się okazja być znowu w tych stronach” Dybczyński, 4:41.

This idea is also reiterated in the beginning of the 1937 sequel to the novel:

„-Wydaje się to wszystko snem, nie rzeczywistością, którą przeżyliśmy i dziś tak mile wspominamy – odezwał się Stefan.

- Bo przeminęło i już nigdy nie wróci... – dorzuciła Zofia.

- Tak, choćbyśmy nawet chcieli udać się w tamte strony, nieprędko będzie to możliwe”

Tadeusz Dybczyński, *Tajemnice Lysogór* (Lwów: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Książek Szkolnych, 1937), 6.

[“It seems to be a dream, not the reality that we lived through and today are recalling it in such a nice manner,” reacted Stefan.

“Because it passed and will never come again...” added Zofia.

“Yes, even had we wanted to go to those places, it won’t be possible anytime soon”]

In the 1930s, it was a part of the discourse of national memory that the tragic pages of Polish experience in Siberia are closed forever. This is highly ironic, since, as Timothy Snyder shows in his *Bloodlands*, Poles were overrepresented among the victims of Stalin’s Great terror in the second half of 1930s. (Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 89–104.) Jim Poker in his adventure duology *Zdzich szuka matkę* (*Zdzich in Search of his Mother*, 1934) and *Zdzich szuka ojca* (*Zdzich in Search of his Father*, 1935) approaches this position of Poles in the Soviet Union as objects of persecution and exiles to labor camps despite the existence of a sovereign Polish national home, which for Dybczyński is a once-and-forever solution.

And he does not have much else to borrow from other than from narratives about wanderers, explorers, and hunters.

Second, these allusions to more traditional adventure narratives also aim to inscribe Siberia into the list of adventure settings, rehabilitate the topic as comparable to and compatible with exciting stories associated with the adventure genre in the eyes of young readers in independent Poland. For example, Mirski is presented as a seasoned traveler who repeatedly mentions his experiences in exotic countries all over the world, alluding to typical tropes of adventure. He had used his rifle to “shoot tigers in Sumatra and Java, crocodiles and orangutans, as well as sharks in the ocean,”<sup>408</sup> and now he uses it to hunt in the taiga. Another direct comparison occurs when Tadeusz is mentioned as wanting to experience adventures similar to those encountered by the heroes of, for instance, Mayne Reid’s novels, and his Siberian experiences are then introduced as “in no way dwarfed by those described in these novels.”<sup>409</sup>

The third explanation that is the most important for my argument about fantasizing is related to the ideology associated with those adventure narratives that are based on the opposition of an adventurer, the representative of civilization and technical progress, and nature in the form of wild animals, “primitive” people, and elements, since it is particularly this type of adventure encounters that are borrowed into the novel. Fleeing through territory that is dangerous for the escapees particularly because of human presence (existence of power structures of the state for whom the protagonists are criminals) is reinterpreted as an adventure where the dangers to the protagonists originate from the absence of humans. The forest through which they pass is

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<sup>408</sup> „biłem z niego tygrysów na Sumatrze i Jawie, strzelałem tam do krokodyli i orangutanów, na oceanach zaś do rekinów” Dybczyński, *Wpoprzek Sybiru*, 3:14.

<sup>409</sup> “A choć wówczas pragnął zaznać podobnych przygód, jakie spotkały bohaterów owych powieści, nie przypuszczał, że los go później zawiedzie aż w te dalekie strony i nasunie dość przejść i wrażeń, nie ustępujących pod żadnym względem opisywanym w tych powieściach” Dybczyński, 1:12.

imagined as “real primeval forest [where] no human foot has yet stood,”<sup>410</sup> “untouched by people,”<sup>411</sup> which invokes a typical trope in the adventure fiction of getting lost in the forest and being attacked by wild beasts. This is precisely what happens to the heroes on a sightseeing hike to an Ostyak religious site.<sup>412</sup> They disentangle from this situation in a way very typical for the adventure tradition: by using the power of technology that makes physically weak human beings stronger than nature.

This reevaluation of the setting as dangerous for the protagonists because of its natural characteristics instead of because of the existence of an “evil regime” on this territory is the third level of the fantasy about symbolic slippage of the Polish protagonists from the Russian empire’s discursive power. They started as disenfranchised, persecuted people over whose homeland and lives the imperial structures could exercise any arbitrary actions without any pushback or consequences. This symbolic reevaluation makes them simply adventurers, representatives of the progress of civilization, who with their rifles and knowledge about primitive people encounter wild animals and “primitive” cultures in the “primeval” taiga. In this fantasized development, the Russian empire with its arbitrary conduct and police regime totally disappears from the equation.

As I have showed in this subsection, Dybczyński’s treatment of the topic of Siberian exile includes a fantasy that may be interpreted as a psychotherapeutic “working-through” of traumatic experiences: both as personal experience of the author and as a part of the collective memory narrative. This fantasy includes rebalancing power dynamics: rendering the Polish protagonists more powerful in their encounter with the Russian autocracy and its various representatives. By

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<sup>410</sup> „-Tu dopiero prawdziwa puszcza pierwotna! – rzekł inżynier. W tem miejscu, gdzie jesteśmy, ręczę, jeszcze żadna ludzka noga nie postąpiła, w każdym razie żaden cywilizowany człowiek tu nie zaglądał” Dybczyński, 5:13.

<sup>411</sup> „zarosłem ponurym, nietkniętym przez ludzi urmanem.” Dybczyński, 4:42.

<sup>412</sup> Dybczyński, 4:52-57.

including “touristic” undertones and other adventure tropes, the novel restores the agency of the protagonists, whose position vis-à-vis imperial regime from the outset of the novel was characterized as powerless.

These “tourist” activities include a visit to a site (identified from what looks very similar to a tourist guide!<sup>413</sup>) related to a indigenous religious cult in the middle of the taiga and hunting practice. This, along with other encounters with Siberia’s indigenous people and nature allow for a discussion of a Polish stance on colonization and exploitation of Siberia, which will be the focus of the next section.

#### 4.1.3. Discussing the politics of Siberian colonization

The protagonists’ journey through Siberia, both as prisoners and as escapees, is supplemented with a thick layer of information about the lands they are travelling through. This includes geographical, natural-scientific, and ethnographic knowledge, none of which is reduced to the practical needs of planning the escape. The author describes, in detail, local ethnic groups, which allows him to express, through his characters’ words, an opinion on the colonization of Siberia and colonial politics in general.

Inhabitants of Siberia are divided on the mental map created by the novel into several uneven groups. First, there is the “immigrant” or “newcomer” population (*ludność napływowa*), which consist of Russian colonists and exiles of all nationalities of the empire, among whom, however, Poles are noticed to have constituted a large proportion.<sup>414</sup> Then, there are indigenous groups.

In the beginning of the sleigh ride from Tomsk northward to the place of exile, there are

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<sup>413</sup> Dybczyński, 4:41.

<sup>414</sup> Dybczyński, 2:22.

Tatar villages. Tatars are depicted as “similar to Russians in all respects except for religion.”<sup>415</sup>

This mostly refers to certain cultural practices, which interest the protagonists in a very utilitarian way: in Tatar villages, just like in Russian ones, they can expect to find rooms to spend a night and hot tea to warm up at daytime during their trip. In Narym region proper and further to the north, on the territories the protagonists pass during their escape, indigenous populations consist of Ostyaks (properly, Khanty) and Samoyeds, and even more fleetingly mentioned, Zyryans (properly, Komi). These indigenous groups differ much more from the Russian settler population.

Both Ostyaks and Samoyeds belong to the Finno-Ugric, or Uralic group, identified linguistically, but also quite often, including in the novel, ethnogenetically. The idea that “this ethnic group on the verge of extinction [is] among the closest relatives of the cultured Finns”<sup>416</sup> is offered not simply to connect the new to the known information, but with an undertone of surprise at this mismatch. Although “cultured” Finns and “almost extinct” Ostyaks and Samoyeds are only explicitly connected or compared in these ostensibly objectively scientific and purely informative passages, there is in fact an unspoken comparison following from the fact that both “cultured Finns” and these indigenous populations of Siberia are subjects of the imperial policies of the Russian empire.

Finns are mentioned in the novel because the protagonists meet among the exiles a “great Finnish patriot” and his son, with whom the teens converse a little bit. They see a similarity both in their individual and national fates and express mutual interest on this basis: the Finnish boy “was interested in Poland and Poles,” specifically because it was “subject to the same invader

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<sup>415</sup> Dybczyński, 2:11.

<sup>416</sup> Dybczyński, 2:22.

scepter as his still oppressed land of a thousand lakes.”<sup>417</sup> Just like Poles themselves, Finns are described as Europeans, which makes them culturally superior to Russians, as it is suggested that the civilizational level of Russians can be compared to Europeans only with reservations (“not that true Europe, only Eastern, Russian”).<sup>418</sup> Based on this assumed cultural hierarchy, it is simply outrageous that the Russian empire exercises its power over both Poles and Finns.

Quite different is the situation with the Finnic people of Siberia under Russian rule. When they are described as “nearly extinct” (*wymierające*), the question is not primarily of their decrease in numbers. Anthropological descriptions of Ostyaks suggests degradation and degeneration:

It was very unpleasant to see small figures with weak breasts and long arms, staring straight ahead with black, narrow, eternally festering eyes. All faces were dirty gray in color with protruding cheekbones, wide mouths with thin lips. The heads were covered with thick, hard black long hair, which, never combed, was full of dirt and vermin.<sup>419</sup>

This short description of Ostyaks as an anthropological type combines an idea of racial difference with a negative evaluation (“unpleasant to see”). The idea of degeneration is associated both with cultural practices unacceptable by European standards (“never combed hair”) and purely physical features (“weak breasts”).<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> „Okazało się, że młody Svenvhud interesował się Polską i Polakami. Ten syn wielkiego patrioty finlandzkiego, walczącego o niepodległość swej ojczyzny, musiał dużo słyszeć o Polsce, podległej potąd temu samemu najezdniczemu berłu, co gnębiona dotąd i jego kraina tysiąca jezior” Dybczyński, 2:36.

<sup>418</sup> “tu jest trochę cywilizacji [...] jest tu trochę Europy... - Chyba jednak nie tej prawdziwej Europy, lecz wschodniej, rosyjskiej” Dybczyński, 2:29.

<sup>419</sup> “Niemile robiły wrażenie niewielkie postacie o słabej piersi i długich rękach, patrzące przed siebie czarnymi, wąskimi ropiejącymi wiecznie oczami. Twarze wszystkich były brudno-szarej barwy z wystającymi kośćmi policzkowymi, usta szerokie o cienkich wargach. Głowy pokryte gęstymi twardymi, czarnej barwy długimi włosami, które, nigdy nie czesane, pełne były brudu i robactwa.” Dybczyński, 2:23-24.

<sup>420</sup> See also Marina Mogilner’s discussion of how Russian scholars adapted European racial psychiatry but “recalibrated” its racial hierarchy to place Russians “closer to advanced European races than to ‘real’ degenerate or primitive peoples.” Those latter included “Iakuts, Ostiaks, Tunguses, Kalmyks, and other Asian peoples associated with the ‘primitive’ culture of shamanism.” Note the same combination of biological bodily criteria and cultural practices in the quote from the novel analyze above. (Marina Mogilner, *Homo Imperii: A History of Physical Anthropology in Russia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), Ch.8, quotes from p. 194.)

Ostyaks are suggested to be “handicapped by nature” („z natury dość upośledzeni”<sup>421</sup>) and therefore, as the protagonists decide when discussing this encounter later, they need someone to rule over them. A discussion follows in which a less informed perspective of the teens is opposed to a more knowledgeable position of Mirski, who, one can assume, has seen many other encounters of “primitive peoples” with colonizers during his travels. Critical, as they all are, of Russian imperial government, the teens imagine a possibility that “the local people, these Ostyaks, Samoyeds, or Tatars, will want to govern over themselves” and suggest that “the local Muscovites should remember that they are newcomers, invaders here.”<sup>422</sup> In other words, they make an interpolation from the familiar situation in the Kingdom of Poland, where the imperial government ruled with constant awareness that the locals might want to govern themselves, and thus took effort to actively prevent this. Mirski, who knows better about “primitive peoples” (“ludy pierwotne”), doubts that they “will want and be able to become masters of this region.” According to him, it is the fate of the primitive ones to “die out in the encounter with more cultured peoples,” so that only a small fraction of the population will be able to rise to a higher civilizational level.<sup>423</sup> Do they approve of the Russian practices of colonizing Siberia, then? No, they are critical of the impact of Russian rule: what the Russian empire is giving the indigenous people is alcohol and diseases. Much later, when the protagonists pay a visit to an Ostyak-Samoyed pagan site, this idea that Russian imperial rule brings mostly demise to indigenous people is reiterated.<sup>424</sup> Even though it is deemed a general rule and almost

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<sup>421</sup> Dybczyński, *Wpoprzek Sybiru*, 2:30.

<sup>422</sup> „Ale, proszę pana, powinni by tutejsi Moskale pamiętać, że są przybyszami tylko, najeźdźcami, można powiedzieć – odezwał się Stefek. – Może ludność miejscowa, ci Ostjacy, Samojedzi czy Tatarzy zechcą tu sami rządzić, co wówczas zrobią przybysze ze swemi tremami i gramofonami?” Dybczyński, 2:30.

<sup>423</sup> „Wszystkie ludy pierwotne, ci Ostjacy np., jak to oddawna stwierdzone, giną stopniowo w zetknięciu z ludźmi of siebie kulturalniejszymi, a zaledwie mała częśćka podnosi się na podobny stopień cywilizacyjny.” Dybczyński, 2:30.

<sup>424</sup> Dybczyński, 4:47-48.

inevitable that indigenous peoples will be decimated by encountering a more civilized group, it is incumbent upon the colonizer to at least raise that small fraction that can accept a higher civilizational level. Information about Ostyaks and Samoyeds in the novel suggests that the Russian empire fails in this regard: for example, they are nominally considered converted into Orthodox Christianity, while in fact they remain adherents of pagan rites.<sup>425</sup> Someone else would do it better, they suggest:

“But I grudge Siberia to Muscovites!” Józek said.

“Would you prefer if Siberia belonged to Ostyaks or Tatars?” Mirski asked.

“Or that someone else would be the ruler of this endless country?” Stefan added.

“Of course!” [Józek] Królicki replied. “Why should Muscovites have so much land and not other nations? Why wouldn’t at least a piece here belong to us as well? For all past and present forced labor and exiles...”

“Sure, for we are not worse than the Muscovites,” Julcia supported her brother.<sup>426</sup>

Specifically, it is suggested that it would be fair if these mismanaged lands would be given to govern over to the Poles. It is noticeable that these opinions are given to Królicki siblings to express, as the least sophisticated and educated members of the group. They are perhaps naïve enough to say this out loud, but this position does not meet opposition from the rest of the group nor is it rectified by the knowledgeable Mirski, who argues against the previous idea that indigenous people might want to claim back sovereignty over their lands.

This encounter with the indigenous people of Siberia sheds additional light on the central conflict between Poles as a national community and the Russian imperial government. The

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<sup>425</sup> „Ostjacy i Ostjako-Samojedzi oficjalnie wszyscy są uważani za prawosławnych, faktycznie jednak pozostali poganami jak dawniej.” Dybczyński, 2:23.

[Ostyaks and Ostyako-Samoyeds are officially all considered Orthodox, but in fact they remain pagans as before.]

<sup>426</sup> „-Szkoda mi jednak Sybiru dla Moskali! – rzekł Józek.

- Wolałbyś, żeby Syberja była ostjacką czy tatarską? – zapytał Mirski.

- Żeby kto inny był władcą tego niezmiernego kraju? – dorzucił Stefan.

- A pewnie! – odpowiedział Królicki. – Czemu to Moskal ma mieć tyle ziemi, a inne narody nie? Czemu i nam tu się choć trochę nie należało? Za dawne i obecne katorgi i zesłania nasze...

- Pewnie, żeśmy nie gorsi od Moskali – poparła brata Julcia.” Dybczyński, 2:31-32.

reason for the protagonists' espousal of the Polish independentist cause (to the extent that, as I have shown above, Russian imperial claims to impose their rules and law over Poles are seen as a temporary absurdity) is not their belief in universal rights to sovereignty over one's fate as an ethnolinguistic group. Rather, Russian imperial rule over such lands as Poland or Finland is considered outrageously wrong because they believe these conquered peripheries to be of a higher cultural and civilization level than the imperial core. Otherwise, it is a completely natural thing, to impose one's rule over others provided one is "good enough." It is just another historical injustice of the tsarist oppressor that Poles do not get to be the official colonizers and masters of Siberia when they are already shedding their sweat and blood there.

In the moment when the ideas expressed in the book were offered to the public – in 1928 or in 1937 when it was renewed – the notion of Polish suzerainty in Siberia was not, of course, a real possibility. In the dialogue quoted above, it was expressed by those members of the group who were the least sophisticated and least aware of the real politics. However, the discussion of colonizing policies might be a proxy for thinking about some "internal colonization" mission performed by the Polish second republic.<sup>427</sup> On the structural level, this is supported by the fact that the sequel to *Across Siberia*, 1937's *The Secrets of the Holy Cross Mountains*, is dedicated to becoming familiar with Polish nature, specifically the nature of a Polish mountainous region, traditionally considered the most remote space from the urban centers of civilization on the symbolical scale between "nature" and "culture." The same "natural scientific" and

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<sup>427</sup> I am using the term "internal colonization" here in a way similar to how Alexander Etkind uses it in connection to Russian imperial history: "the culture specific domination inside the national borders, actual or imagined." (Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2011), 7.) Etkind's approach combined the usage of this term with regard to the inner colonies and minorities of the European empires in terms of interaction between different strata in society: the elites' discourse about the lower classes and their "colonizing" efforts towards them. Both aspects are important in my analysis. See also: Alexander Etkind, Dirk Uffelmann, and Ilya Kukulkin, "Vnutrenniaia kolonizatsiia Rossii: mezhdru praktikoi i voobrazheniem," in *Tam, vnutri: Praktiki vnutrennei kolonizatsii v kulturnoi istorii Rossii* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2012).

“ethnographic” glance is in the sequel directed at the Polish countryside. Indeed, even though the Polish second republic did not get to rule over overseas colonies, there was no lack of internal “Others” upon whom the nationally conscious elites performed the civilizing mission, not unlike that associated with colonialism. In the final subsection dedicated to analysis of Dybczyński’s novel, I will discuss other ways, in addition to offering a “fantasized” correction of the past grievances, that this book might present a model for describing contemporary issues at the moment of its creation and an equally “fantasized” solution to them. Specifically, I argue that it discusses the project of integrating the lower classes into the national community.

#### 4.1.4. Scout community as a prototype of Polish society: class differences

The young protagonists’ belonging to the scouting community is a key notion in their self-identification, along with their belonging to the national community of Poles. And that is not only because they are initially “punished” exactly for being members of scout organizations. Identifying them as scouts is not simply a pretext to inscribe these teens into an adventure around an escape from a Siberian exile. Scout ethos is an important component of the characters’ behavior in the situations they experience, a moral stem that saves them from despair in the emotionally challenging times of imprisonment and convict transport. This characteristic is one of the first pieces of information that the third-person narrator gives the reader about the teen protagonists: “Were it not for the fact that they are scouts, indeed, it would be difficult for them to control themselves any longer and not succumb to complete doubts and despair.”<sup>428</sup> During the planning of the escape, their adherence to the scout ethos is a promise that they can be disciplined and organized enough to endure the hardships of the dangerous enterprise, as Mirski

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<sup>428</sup> „Gdyby nie to, że są harcerzami, doprawdy, trudnoby im było panować nad sobą dłużej i nie poddać się zupełnemu zwątpieniu i rozpacz” Dybczyński, *Wpoprzek Sybiru*, 1:4.

expresses it, “[a]nyway, they are all scouts and that means a lot.”<sup>429</sup> However, the way in which belonging to the scouting movement helps them endure hardships is not only through previous training and developed discipline, it is also a deliberate mental act, a spiritual duty to react to the challenges of life in a certain way. This can be seen from the following phrase the adolescents address to one another: “[w]hether it is bad or good, we should always be cheerful and calm in spirit; this is our scouting duty.”<sup>430</sup> Interestingly, on another occasion, Zosia Mirska’s Polish identity is supposed to play the same role as a moral stem. Her father instructs her, “[s]tay healthy and don’t worry, don’t lose your heart, don’t forget that you are Polish.”<sup>431</sup> In this way, the idea of belonging to the scout movement and sharing its ethos becomes synonymous to strong national self-identification.<sup>432</sup> The scouting ethos is an intensification of the national ethos.

Self-identification as Polish scouts is also what brings the group of protagonists together. The reader first meets three teenage boys from Warsaw who are unaware of any external events since their imprisonment, waiting for the decision of their fate in Moscow. In prison, one of them finds that his sister, also a member of the scout movement, is likewise incarcerated together with her comrade from the girl-scouting squad. That comrade is Zosia Mirska, and this is how all five of them become the object of Mirski’s efforts and help. They are for sure not the only Poles in exile.<sup>433</sup> But a narrower in-group of “Polish scouts” becomes something like a Polish society in miniature; moreover, since they are all in their teens, they are a proxy for a Polish society of the

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<sup>429</sup> „Zresztą wszyscy są harcerzami i to dużo znaczy...” Dybczyński, 3:42.

<sup>430</sup> “Czy źle, czy dobrze, mamy być przecie zawsze weseli i pogodnego ducha, to nasz harcerski obowiązek” Dybczyński, 1:40.

<sup>431</sup> „Bądź zdrowa i nie martw się, nie upadaj na duchu, nie zapomnij, żeś Polką!” Dybczyński, 1:20.

<sup>432</sup> It is recognized, of course, that scouting movement is an international one: the previously mentioned son of an exiled Finnish activist is also a scout.

<sup>433</sup> When planning the escape, the protagonists arrange that some useful household items they had in Kargasok be given away to their “compatriots” remaining in the settlement.

future rather than that contemporary society. The way in which Józek and Julcia Królickis are embraced by the rest of the group is even more illustrative in this regard.

Boys and girls meet the brother and sister in one of the prisons half-way on their journey to the location of the exile, in the male and female common rooms full of other prisoners. Hence, the same story is presented two times, describing the steps of recognition and embracing of the newcomers as in-group members. The first reason for their mutual interest in each case is similar age. After that, they find out that they are also Poles: in the boys' case, after a direct question in Russian; in the girls' case, when Julcia overhears "young ladies" ("panienki") talking in Polish. Julcia is happy to have found someone who is "also from Poland, our people [*swoi*], not these Muscovites!"<sup>434</sup>

Królicki siblings, however, are peasants, while the others are from families that belong to urban educated elites, studying in a gymnasium in Warsaw, and class difference is something they all are painfully aware of. Józek, for example, is depicted at this point as "glad that he found compatriots and peers in age, although they were some kind of 'students,'" <sup>435</sup> – a description that lists class identification as the remaining divide despite the ethnic and age identification that brings them together.

As each of the conversations goes on, however, it is revealed that Józek and Julcia are also scouts, as a result of the quite improbable organization by the young master and mistress (teen children of the landowner) of scouting squads from among the peasant teens. This is what allows them to finally feel the camaraderie above class divisions: "so you are our comrade, a scout, give me your paw! Stay awake!" <sup>436</sup> At this point it is acceptable to drop the formal

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<sup>434</sup> „Toćżeście też z Polski, swoi, a nie te Moskale!” Dybczyński, *Wpoprzek Sybiru*, 1:46.

<sup>435</sup> „...ucieszony, że znalazł rodaków i do tego rówieśników, choć jakichś „studentów”” Dybczyński, 1:45.

<sup>436</sup> „toś ty nasz druh, harcerz, dawaj łapę! Czuwaj!” Dybczyński, 1:49.

address with which both peasant siblings started the conversation with their peers from Warsaw. Is the difference totally wiped out from now on? As I have noted above, it is Królickis to whom some of the least educated guesses in the conversations are given. The proverbial scouts' discipline is also probably somewhat weaker on Józek's side: it is because of his carelessness the group almost suffers a bear attack at night in the taiga. The differences are very slightly noticeable in the remainder of the story, but the fact that they are not very outspoken testifies not to their absence but rather to a conscious decision of the author to attempt to present the group of scouts as homogenous.

Starting from that night when they met in prison, "[t]he boys whole-heartedly took care of Józio; the girls, of Julcia, sharing everything and considering them their friends."<sup>437</sup> Given that this description refers to a situation in incarceration, where everybody is disenfranchised by the regime, it might seem just a description of good moral qualities and camaraderie. Indeed, all of them were disenfranchised by the regime as mutinous Poles, but not all equally: the Warsawian scouts have access to a support nexus, impersonated by Mirski, who is providing the actual help but is backed by all those educated elites in Warsaw for whom the incarceration of the gymnasium students was an outrageous act of the regime. Good will to include Królickis into the group is still a paternalistic act: on behalf of her father, Zosia promises "that now her father will bear them, Królickis, in mind as well, and that now they will share future fates together."<sup>438</sup> This promise to take care of them is extended to their future in Poland<sup>439</sup> – something that no one else in the group needs, as they are supposed to be of good standing through their own family

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<sup>437</sup> „Chłopcy serdecznie zaopiekowali się Józkiem, dziewczęta Julcią, dzieląc się wszystkim i uważając ich za swych przyjaciół” Dybczyński, 1:53.

<sup>438</sup> „że teraz jej tatuś i o nich, Królickich, nie zapomni, że teraz już razem będą dzielić dalsze losy” Dybczyński, 1:50.

<sup>439</sup> „i obiecał zaopiekować się nimi nawet w kraju” Dybczyński, 2:9.

connections. Indeed, in the epilogue and in the sequel the reader learns that Mirski has taken Józek and Julcia from their family to his manor, where they are being educated together with his daughter.

This example shows how membership in the scouting identity becomes a proxy to membership in Polish national identity. During the 1863-64 uprising and in the following decades, both nationally conscious, independence-seeking elites and the tsarist administration attempted to lure peasants in the Kingdom of Poland to their side.<sup>440</sup> Therefore, one could say that there were reasons to expect the teens of peasant origin to be unaware of their “true Polish identity.” At least, one could expect special efforts necessary to bring up these Poles to become fully-fledged members of the national group. Belonging to a scouting squad becomes a prototype of such activity that, by the interwar period, was understood as necessary to be done on a much wider level.

I have explored how in the newly independent Poland the adventure genre is used for several goals related to national identity formation. On the simplest level, it familiarizes, in an age-appropriate form, Polish young readers with previously censored topics of national traumas and grievances at the hands of foreign oppressors – something that was not even allowed to be expressed in print during imperial rule. Then, using the victorious logic of the adventure genre, which includes a “fantasy” correction for unsatisfying reality, this novel also helps to come to terms with the past grievances and traumas of the narrative about Polish suffering at hands of the Russian regime. Moreover, choosing not just any Polish teens but specifically scouts for the novel’s protagonists moves the accent from past to future: the moral qualities of the Polish scouts

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<sup>440</sup> Rolf, *Pol'skie zemli*, 127–28, 145–46 and passim.

are presented as an intensified version of the moral qualities and virtues all Polish teens should possess. The group of scouts, the novel's protagonists, becomes a prototype for Polish society united under one idea – not as it was even in the 1930s (as Witold Gombrowicz's satiric description of “fraternizing” between urban elites and peasants in *Ferdudurke* suggests) but as it should become.

#### 4.2. COMING BACK THROUGH REVOLUTIONARY TURMOIL: WACŁAW NIEZABITOWSKI'S *THROUGH SNOWS AND RAVAGES OF WAR* (1922)

Similarly to Dybczyński's novel analyzed above, the next adventure novel for children and youth under consideration, *Przez śniegi i pożogę* (*Through Snows and Ravages of War*, 1922) by Wacław Niezabitowski, is structured around a return home to Poland that is finally independent, through twists and turns of adventures on the vast territory of Russia. One of the surface differences is that in Dybczyński, the evils to flee from were associated with the regime of the Russian empire itself; in Niezabitowski, rather, with the chaos initiated by the fall of the Russian empire. In the pages that follow, I will show, among other things, what the choice of the revolutionary era adds to the message and the construction of the national identity in interwar Poland.

The novel *Through Snows and Ravages of War* tells the story of a journey from Vladivostok to Warsaw, undertaken by Jurek, a thirteen-year-old Polish boy, who is joined in Khabarovsk by ten-year-old girl Stasia and, in Nerchinsk, by an elderly exiled participant of the 1863 uprising, “grandfather” Plichta. Both Jurek's and Stasia's adult relatives under whose care the children were remaining in the Far East have died – naturally or violently. In the meanwhile, their other adult relatives, that is, Jurek's parents and Stasia's father, were for various reasons in the European part of Russia when the October revolution happened and could not return to their

homes in Siberia to help the children, returning to Poland instead. The two children and the elderly man flee from the Bolshevik-governed Far East through Siberia, crossing the Siberian Civil war front and then Soviet-Polish war front, finally arriving home, where they are not only finally safe but also save a division of the Polish Army by bringing them information about the Red Army's tactic plans.

Set between December 1917 and March 1919, first published in 1922, this novel addressed very recent events, undoubtedly familiar to the reader at least in general. The motif of getting out from distant parts of a former Russian empire torn by revolution and Civil War to Poland was a recurrent one in the discourse about the first years of Polish independence, as it indeed touched many Polish families.<sup>441</sup> The text dealing with this theme that perhaps reached the widest readership is *Beasts, Men and Gods* (1922) by Ferdinand Ossendowski, whose work I discussed in Chapter 2. Ossendowski's autobiographic narrative, however, describes him escaping from Russia eastward and returning to Europe through Asia and the United States. A historical study of a large group of Polish "Siberian children" who were aided and temporarily hosted by Japan also suggests that this was a more likely direction of flight from the war-torn lands of the former Russian Empire.<sup>442</sup> Niezabitowski, however, chooses a less probable route for his protagonists. In my opinion, this is not done in order to have his protagonists witness specific historic events and thus inform the reader about them (I will show that geographical and historical accuracy of the novel is wanting). I argue that what the novel does, instead, by bringing the protagonists through nerve-rattling and sentimental scenes on their long journey is provide the reader with an ethical appraisal of the Soviet regime and its ideology.

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<sup>441</sup> On such narratives, see an excerpt from a 1923 book review in Michałowski, *Wielkie safari Antoniego O.*, 91.

<sup>442</sup> Wiesław Theiss, *Dzieci syberyjskie 1919–2019: z Syberii przez Japonię i Stany Zjednoczone do Polski* (Kraków: Muzeum Sztuki i Techniki Japońskiej Manggha, 2020). See also *Dzieci syberyjskie, czyli jak Japonia ratowała Polaków*, YouTube video, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQIA-2JhGk>.

*Through Snows and Ravages of War* was the prose debut of Waclaw Niezabitowski (1886–1928), who is (somewhat) better known to the Polish reader for his fantastic novels, published in the last year of his life and posthumously. He was a schoolteacher, as well as a journalist and an editor at several periodicals, including *Gazeta Grudziądzka*, published in the Pomerania region. This newspaper and the press that published it (Zakłady Graficzne Wiktora Kulerskiego) are also listed as the publisher for both editions of the novel *Through Snows and Ravages of War*, in 1922 and 1924/5.<sup>443</sup> The two editions are somewhat different: the second edition most likely reflects the work done on the novel to prepare it for publication in a periodical in serial installments, as was commonly done at the time in the numerous periodicals with which Niezabitowski collaborated in those years.<sup>444</sup> However, it is most likely that the novel was never published in serial form.<sup>445</sup>

Even so, the connection to the newspaper *Gazeta Grudziądzka* gives valuable information about the context in which the communication between Niezabitowski and his reader was happening. The reason for this is that even separate book editions published by the press were often distributed for free to the subscribers of the newspaper.<sup>446</sup> The newspaper *Gazeta Grudziądzka* positioned itself as a periodical for a non-elite readership that would cover the

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<sup>443</sup> Dates in the frontmatter and on the cover of the second edition differ.

<sup>444</sup> Janusz Hinz, *Waclaw Niezabitowski (1886-1928) i jego zapomniana powieść "Przez śniegi i pożogę"* (Grudziądz: Koło Miłośników Dziejów Grudziądza; Klub "Centrum" Spółdzielni Mieszkaniowej, 2009), 5–7.

<sup>445</sup> Janusz Dunin and Zdzisław Knorowski, *Polskie powieściowe serie zeszytowe: materiały bibliograficzne* (Łódź: Uniwersytet Łódzki, 1984); Janusz Dunin and Krystyna Mierzwanika, *Polska powieść zeszytowa: materiały bibliograficzne* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1978); Oskar Czarnik, *Bibliografia powieści odcinkowych 1918-1926* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1979); Stanisław Poręba, "Powieści odcinkowe w 'Gazecie Grudziądzkiej' (1918–1939)," in *W kręgu "Gazety Grudziądzkiej" (1894–1939): artykuły, szkice, notatki*, by Stanisław Poręba (Grudziądz: Koło Miłośników Dziejów Grudziądza; Urząd Miejski, 2005), 19–24.

None of these bibliographies of serially published novels includes Niezabitowski's novel or mentions his name. I am grateful to Mr. Jan Adamczyk of Slavic Reference Service at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and to Ms. Barbara Bułat, senior librarian at the Sekcja Informacji Naukowej in Biblioteka Jagiełłońska for helping me ascertain this fact.

<sup>446</sup> Poręba, "Powieści odcinkowe w 'Gazecie Grudziądzkiej' (1918–1939)," 20.

intellectual needs of the whole family: in addition to the thrice-weekly newspaper, it distributed in different years free supplements addressed to children (*Przyjaciel dzieci*), to youth (*Przyjaciel młodzieży*), to rural youth (*Młoda Polska*), to agricultural workers (*Dodatek rolniczo-przemysłowy; Gospodarz*), to factory workers (*Robotnik*), to female agricultural workers (*Dobra gospodyni*), to mothers (*Kobieta polska – obywatelka – matka – gospodyni*), as well as to other more narrowly defined audiences, such as organists.<sup>447</sup> Many of these supplements published Polish and translated fiction in serialized form; the orientation towards lower-class addressees can be understood not only from the abundance of supplements occupied specifically with subjects of interest for peasants and workers, but also from the fact that these original and translated texts were often adapted to a popular audience, with potentially difficult words and expressions explained.<sup>448</sup> The newspaper also had a defined Catholic orientation, which is seen both from the existence of specific supplements that published religious texts (*Dodatek świąteczny, Gość świąteczny, Robotnik katolicko-polski*),<sup>449</sup> as well as the religious undertones in their general-interest publications.

This all helps identify the intended readership of the novel *Through Snows and Ravages of War*: it should have been read by or to pre-teen children of not highly-educated Poles, imagined as devout Catholics. If not the children themselves, then their parents should have a general idea of the developments in Soviet Russia, where the events in the novel are taking place – and they could get this general understanding from the newspaper itself, as it abounds with news about Soviet Russia. The author does not consider it necessary to explain the meaning of

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<sup>447</sup> Stanisław Poręba, “*Gazeta Grudziądzka*” i jej dodatki (1894–1939): słowniczek (Grudziądz: Koło Miłośników Dziejów Grudziądza; Urząd Miejski, 2004).

<sup>448</sup> Poręba, “Powieści odcinkowe w ‘Gazecie Grudziądzkiej’ (1918–1939),” 19.

<sup>449</sup> Poręba, “*Gazeta Grudziądzka*” i jej dodatki (1894–1939): słowniczek.

words such as *czrezwyczajka* (Cheka) or *komisarz* (commissar); neither does he explain the sides of the political and military confrontation in the Russian revolution – it is assumed that the reader should be familiar with these.

Hence, the novel, which depicted the misadventures of two Polish children and an elderly man in the chaos of newly established Bolshevik rule and the ravages of war, had a lesser degree of informational function than that of moral education. It was supposed to reinforce the moral evaluation of the communist regime as evil and to engage young Poles with an ideology that emphasized the need to nurture patriotic feelings and a sense of belonging to the national and religious community in order to build a strong Poland that would be able to continue fending off this proclaimed evil. In the following sections, I will first analyze formal features of this adventure novel that help grab attention and convey moral educational messages; then show how the author uses the spatial organization of the world depicted in the novel and how, to further these goals, he builds up a system of values ascribed to different actors in it.

#### 4.2.1. Serial installments and the form of an adventure novel

It is likely that Niezabitowski had been reworking his novel for serial publication in a periodical, as formal changes between the two editions suggest. The text is organized in a different number of chapters in the first and second editions (15 vs. 28), with some of the passages moved around (sometimes at the expense of narrative logic) and some omitted to achieve a more uniform length of the individual chapters. In this subsection, I discuss the features of a specific subtype of adventure narrative that works especially well with the idea of serialization.

Publishing *Through Snows and Ravages of War* in serial installments would be in no way an innovation in the genre. In fact, many classical examples of adventure and other popular

fiction genres were published as serial novels, including Polish classics of adventure fiction by Henryk Sienkiewicz, whose novel *W pustyni i w puszczy* (*In Desert and in Wilderness*, 1910) was an obvious emulation model for Niezabitowski. Serialization, which “prov[ed] itself immensely effective as a means of catching and keeping audiences,”<sup>450</sup> works quite in line with other genre features of adventure that aim at the same type of engaging readership, even though in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Europe, publication in installments was not at all limited to “genre” literature but became “a vehicle for the age’s best literature.”<sup>451</sup> Just as repetitions are noticeable across various texts in the adventure genre that expected to be a highly formulaic one, there are repetitions within a single adventure novel in installments, which should consist of comparable-length chunks with similar internal dynamics. The chapters in *Through Snows and Ravages of War* often end in “cliff-hangers,” that is, episodes that aim to raise the reader’s interest in the outcome of the events, since serialization “essentially creates the demand it then feeds: the desire to find out ‘what happens next’ can only be satisfied by buying, listening to, or viewing the next installment.”<sup>452</sup> Subsequent chapters describe the ways the previous dangers were solved and introduce new circumstances that, once more, arouse a desire to find out will happen next. In this novel, one can also see more reminders to the reader than one would expect in a text intended for uninterrupted reading, e.g., about the origin of certain objects in protagonists’ possession that are used to solve problematic situations.

Not only the superficial changes introduced in the second edition, but a specific type of plot organization is in question here. To a greater extent than other adventure novels analyzed

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<sup>450</sup> Jennifer Poole Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures: Active Audiences and Serial Fictions from Dickens to Soap Opera* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 3.

<sup>451</sup> Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial*, Victorian Literature and Culture Series (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 8.

<sup>452</sup> Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures*, 3.

here, Niezabitowski's novel *Through Snows and Ravages of War* reminds of Mikhail Bakhtin's observations about the chronotope of adventure, which he analyzes on the example of Hellenistic Greek romances but also traces the reemergence of this type of adventure writing in various epochs ever since. In the following paragraphs, I will draw on Bakhtin's analysis and highlight some ways in which Niezabitowski's novel replicates the centuries-old features of the genre. The purpose of this is not to simply state Niezabitowski's conformity to pre-existing models, but to draw attention to the ways in which the form is at odds with its contemporary usage.

Bakhtin describes this type of adventure novel as consisting of a series of events between two occurrences in the protagonists' lives, the second being the consummation of the desire created by the first event. It is "an extratemporal hiatus between two moments of biographical time," which "changes nothing in the life of heroes and introduces nothing into their life."<sup>453</sup> In the Hellenistic examples analyzed by Bakhtin, these two events include the falling in love of a boy and a girl of marriageable age in the beginning of the novel and the consummation of their love by marriage at the end. In *Through Snows and Ravages of War*, the entire novel's plot—summarized succinctly by the subtitle, "adventures of two Polish children on their way back to their homeland"—is just a journey from Vladivostok to Warsaw, which under peaceful contemporary circumstances could have been undertaken in about two weeks. Yet, it is the series of impediments on the way that turn the brief subtitle into a novel whose events span over almost a year and a half.

The need to endure and survive "snows of Siberia and ravages of war" puts the children in many dangers that account for exciting reading but do not really change anything in their personalities. From the beginning, 13-year-old Jurek and 10-year-old Stasia are already resolute

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<sup>453</sup> Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," 90.

and brave enough to venture forth; the hardships of the journey do not change or teach them anything, in this same way as Bakhtin describes all the hardships the protagonists endure as a hiatus between biographical events that “leaves no *trace* in the life of heroes or in their personalities.”<sup>454</sup> Admittedly, this is not at all an inherent feature of *all* adventure novels published in serial installments. Many such novels whose protagonists are children or young adults, including Niezabitowski’s emulation model, Sienkiewicz’s *In Desert and in Wilderness*, have features of *Bildungsroman*. In Sienkiewicz’s novel, the protagonists grow and mature during the hardships they go through. In Niezabitowski’s, by contrast, Jurek is already distinguished by high moral qualities and heroism and even skills necessary to face dangers, and Stasia is “braveheart” (“*zuch*”) in the beginning of their journey as at the end.<sup>455</sup> Such a novel needs not necessarily be published in installments, and a novel published in installments does not have to be of this kind; however, technically, when the separate mini-adventures hardly play any role in the general dynamics, there can be as many or as few of them as the author is able to contrive – or as their publisher is willing to publish. All this fits well with what Jennifer Hayward calls the serials’ tendency to “postpone narrative resolution.”<sup>456</sup>

In *Through Snows and Ravages of War*, one can observe very vividly a realization of what Bakhtin calls “adventure-time” (*avantiurnoie vremia*<sup>457</sup>), a term that characterizes how time is organized within each separate adventure episode: “[w]hat is important is to be able to escape, to catch up, to outstrip, to be or not to be in a given place at a given moment, to meet or not to

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<sup>454</sup> Bakhtin, 90.

<sup>455</sup> Stasia is referred to as „braveheart” („*zuch*”) or „heroine” („*bohaterka*”) throughout the novel: Waław Niezabitowski, *Przez sniegi i pożogę: Przygody dzieci polskich w drodze do kraju* (Grudziądz: Zakłady graficzne Wiktora Kulerskiego, 1925), 51, 65, 155.

<sup>456</sup> Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures*, 4.

<sup>457</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, “Formy vremeni i khronotopa v romane,” in *Voprosy literatury i estetiki* (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1975), 241.

meet and so forth.”<sup>458</sup> Niezabitowski’s novel consists of a series of mini-adventures conjured along these lines: the children need to get on a train before their disappearance from the orphanage is noticed at a certain hour; to find medical help for Stasia’s typhus before it is too late; to flee from the spot where they killed the bandits at an appropriate moment for a blizzard to cover the traces; and of course, in the culmination of the novel’s plot, to cross the Soviet-Polish frontline just in time to warn the Polish soldiers about their enemy’s tactic plans. Just like in the material analyzed by Bakhtin, “within the limits of a given adventure, days, nights, hours, even minutes and seconds add up,”<sup>459</sup> but the way in which they would add up together is problematic, although in a different way than in Bakhtin’s analysis.

The classical examples of such adventure novels have their events, Bakhtin observes, take place in a generalized “alien world”<sup>460</sup> where “there are absolutely no indications of historical time, no identifying traces of the era.”<sup>461</sup> This helps remedy the incongruity of adventure-time and protagonists’ biographical time. To the contrary, Niezabitowski’s novel is set in a very specific historical setting, both geographically and chronologically. Whereas for Bakhtin the term “alien world” means that “everything in it is indefinite, unknown, foreign, [...] including the heroes’ homeland [...]; there is no implied native ordinary, familiar world (the native country of the author and his readers) against whose background the otherness and foreignness of what is foreign might be clearly projected.”<sup>462</sup> Such a point of departure for comparison, lacking, to the contrary, in the Hellenistic romance, is very prominent in Niezabitowski’s novel. This is quite in line with what Bakhtin describes (as a counterfactual alternative to what he observes in

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<sup>458</sup> Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel,” 91.

<sup>459</sup> Bakhtin, 91.

<sup>460</sup> Bakhtin, 89.

<sup>461</sup> Bakhtin, 91.

<sup>462</sup> Bakhtin, 101.

Hellenistic texts): “the otherness of what is foreign is emphasized, savored, as it were, and elaborately depicted against an implied background of one’s own ordinary and familiar world.”<sup>463</sup> Adversities which Niezabitowski’s protagonists experience are also to a great extent related to the “alienness” of the setting both synchronously and diachronously. A later section will be dedicated to these oppositions.

Despite having a very historically specific setting, though, this adventure novel has the same feature of incongruity between adventure-time (hours and days that count in separate mini-adventures) and the larger time Bakhtin notices. Unlike the examples in his analysis, in which all the events, if thoroughly accounted for, would last so long that the protagonists should have aged and grown old, in Niezabitowski’s novel, the adventure-time of the separate episodes does not add up to cover the span of months it is supposed to cover.

Here are some external markers that organize time in the novel. Jurek’s journey from Vladivostok starts in December 1917, which is retrospectively mentioned when the reader meets him in Khabarovsk three weeks later, when he is caught on the railway and taken to an orphanage. Vladivostok and Khabarovsk are governed by the newly established Soviet rule, which, according to historic accounts, was established in any form only by mid-December 1917.<sup>464</sup> However, in the novel, too many events “manage to fit in” in the period between the October Revolution and establishment of the Soviet government in the Far East, on the one hand, and the date in December when Jurek flees Vladivostok, on the other; their description leaves the reader with a feeling that at least several months should have passed. Namely, it should have

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<sup>463</sup> Bakhtin, 101.

<sup>464</sup> See e.g. Ivan Sablin, *Dal'nevostochnaia respublika: ot idei do likvidatsii* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2020), 130; Iurii Tsipkin, *Grazhdanskaia voina na Dal'nem Vostoke Rossii: formirovanie antibol'shevistskikh rezhimov i ikh krushenie, 1917–1922 gg.*, 3rd ed. (Khabarovsk: Khabarovskii kraevoi muzei im. N.I. Grodekova, 2012), 10.

taken some time for Jurek's uncle and aunt to realize that there is no mail connection with the European part of Russia, for which Jurek's parents left just slightly earlier; to get a letter from the parents suggesting that they and Jurek should try to leave for Poland via Japan and Europe; to plan for such a journey and to be prevented from it by the Bolshevik government; finally, to get arrested and executed.<sup>465</sup> On the contrary, later events take less narrative time than the historical time they are claimed to span across. For instance, after Jurek and Stasia find refuge at old Plichta's home in Nerchinsk where she takes time to recover from typhus, they leave this city in early April 1918, and literally before anything else happens, it is already September when the three protagonists arrive in Novonikolaevsk (as Novosibirsk was called at that time), although they are now travelling as paying railroad passengers, not hiding in occasional freight cars as Jurek did from the beginning.<sup>466</sup> It feels almost as if the author did not plan the events ahead, which the characters are supposed to experience, and dated the beginning of the novel with a far too early date. A more relevant explanation, however, is probably that he was more interested in the symbolism of overcoming the "snows of Siberia" on their way home than in realistic dating, so the novel shows the children walking their feet off and travelling in cold freight cars in one winter and then, immediately from the point of view of the narrative, stopped and captivated by a Bolshevik band and taken on a horse-wagon ride through immense snow-covered steppes of Southwestern Siberia the next winter.<sup>467</sup>

The events in the novel end in spring 1919, as the children and Plichta cross the frontline between the Polish and Soviet positions in Podolia, where the children are wounded but survive

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<sup>465</sup> Niezabitowski, *Przez śniegi i pożogę*, 14–17.

<sup>466</sup> Niezabitowski, 60–61.

<sup>467</sup> With this, the author might be connecting to the tradition of representing Russia as immense snow-covered "uniform whiteness" that also invokes the ideas about it as a blank page of history and a passive population, as this is done in Joseph Conrad, *Under Western Eyes* (New York, London: Harper, 1911), 32.

while Plichta dies, fulfilling, however, his ultimate dream “to close his eyes amidst his own people.”<sup>468</sup> It is obvious that the author needed to space out the events so that they span into the time of the Polish-Soviet war, which started in February 1919; however, here, again, it seems less important for the dating of the final episode that the military confrontation was taking place in a specific locality at specific historic moment than the symbolism of spring-time rebirth associated with the moment when the children were able to help save their newly-independent country.

As I have showed above, Niezabitowski’s novel *Through Snows and Ravages of War* replicates the old tradition of adventure-writing in which an adventure novel’s plots consists of endless impediments to the fulfillment of a desire that arises at the very beginning of the novel. During these impediments, neither the desire itself nor the protagonists’ personalities change in any meaningful way, hence, there is no internal dynamics between the separate episodes in the adventure novel, of which, consequently, there can be as many or as few as the author can come up with. However, unlike the Hellenistic or Baroque adventures with a plot type organization mentioned by Bakhtin that take place in a generalized “alien world” in no historic time, in Niezabitowski’s novel, events are specifically situated in time and space. Specific historical events shatter the livable space of the Russian empire into the hell of Soviet-ruled territories and the heaven of a newly independent homeland, Poland. The events are organized along the road from Vladivostok to Warsaw, and different localities along this road are described as more hostile or more home-like, based on the author’s ideology. One could follow the movements of the protagonists on a map, but, from the novel, the reader would hardly get more information about the places they pass than from the map itself. Dybczyński in the novel analyzed above

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<sup>468</sup> Niezabitowski, *Przez śniegi i pożogę*, 156.

combined the ideological message about Polish confrontation with the Russian imperial regime with encyclopedic and first-hand knowledge from the places he described. To the contrary, for Niezabitowski, who quite likely had never been in the Far East or Siberia,<sup>469</sup> different localities where the events take place are rather random settings. They were most likely only chosen for their potential to symbolize advancement from the starting point to the destination and for their potential to expose the atrocities of the Bolshevik regime. In the following section, I will explore how, using a classical genre proved effective in catching the reader's attention, the author conveys ideological messages related to this new situation.

#### 4.2.2. Oppositions in time and space

I have already pointed to the connections of Niezabitowski's novel *Through Snows and Ravages of War* with *In Desert and Wilderness* by Henryk Sienkiewicz. Among these connections is that their plots are organized along a journey in geographical space, which is reflected in both titles. Both novels, most schematically speaking, show how two children (a teenage boy and a younger girl<sup>470</sup>) are, through a great disruption of their normal lives, separated from their families and thrown into the chaos engendered by a revolt. They have to find their way through two types of impediments mentioned in the titles to reunite with their families.

Since the plot of *Through Snows and Ravages of War* is so obviously organized along movement in space – physical passage through eponymous snows of Siberia and war-torn lands – synchronous geographical difference distinguishing spaces from one another is very important here. Yet, that initial great disruption – the October Revolution – is also something that divides

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<sup>469</sup> Judging from the scant biographical information available to the scholars, as summarized in Hinz, *Wacław Niezabitowski (1886-1928) i jego zapomniana powieść "Przez śniegi i pożogę."*

<sup>470</sup> The importance of Sienkiewicz's novel for the tradition of Polish children's adventure novels is reflected, among other things, in repeated choices of this gender-age combination of the protagonists.

the “home-like” and the “hostile.” In this subsection, I will explore the spatial differentiation, while in the next one I will focus on the dynamics of the changes triggered by the revolution.

The spatial difference is not simply between “foreign land,” Russia, and “homeland,” Poland; it is more nuanced than that. In the following paragraphs, I will follow the novel’s plot to analyze the characteristics of the spaces through which the protagonists pass, and to highlight the moments of border-crossing.

The Far East, Vladivostok and Khabarovsk, are ruled by Bolshevik government. This makes this space dangerous; to survive, the protagonists need to physically escape from there, and Jurek’s aunt and uncle are executed for their attempt. Somewhere between Khabarovsk and Nerchinsk, however, the children cross the invisible line separating the Bolshevik-governed Far East from the parts of Russia not yet under Soviet rule. Train conductors no longer remove them from the trains and accuse them of espionage; on the contrary, they even help the children with food and cover from the elements.<sup>471</sup> This is the least noticeable of all the “frontlines” they cross on their way to Poland: the surroundings simply become less dangerous to them. No wonder the next problem they need to deal with is related not to evil people but to natural adverse conditions: Stasia’s illness caused by exhaustion.

In Siberia, they find friends and support: most importantly, “grandfather” Plichta, who joins the endeavor to return to Poland from where he had been banned for decades, but others

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<sup>471</sup> Compare: „A ot niewiadomo co za ptaszek, z dworca go prowadzę, mówili, że towarowym pociągiem przebiegał się, no na dworcu dostrzegli. Kontr-rewolucjonista zapewne.” Niezabitowski, *Przez śniegi i pożogę*, 7.

[And no one knows what kind of bird he is, I am bringing him from the train station, they said that he used a freight train to get through, well, they noticed it at the station. A counterrevolutionary probably.]

„Służba kolejowa parokrotnie zamierzała usunąć dzieci z pociągu, lecz błagania ich zmiękczyły serca konduktorów i ci po paru pogróżkach, machnąwszy ręką, odchodzili, a nawet często zaopatrywali je w chleb i herbatę.” Niezabitowski, 52.

[Several times the railway service intended to remove the children from the train, but their pleas softened the hearts of the conductors, and after a few threats, they would give up on the idea and leave, and often even provided them with bread and tea.]

help the children as well. In Irkutsk and Novonikolaevsk, anti-Bolshevik rebellion is gathering, which involves the first Polish soldiers they meet.<sup>472</sup> The protagonists are helped significantly by a group of Russian volunteer soldiers fighting against the Red Army, whom they see perish at hands of a Bolshevik band as they approach the next frontline, with the Soviet-ruled European part of Russia. That is, the Polish protagonists, although their age (too-young and too-old) lets them pass as non-dangerous persons, obviously non-combatants (somewhat reducing the danger of their situation),<sup>473</sup> are not at all similarly removed from the sides of the Civil war in Russia. Having escaped from the bandits, the protagonists deviate from the railroad line that brought them all the way from Vladivostok to the Urals: the frontline is porous here, and they need to cross it to continue moving to their aim, yet they are obviously better-off and safer while they are in a territory so remote from any centers and so godforsaken that the Bolsheviks had not claimed it yet. Here they find the last home-like space before home. All of a sudden,<sup>474</sup> they encounter a peasant who was during the First World War an officer's orderly – and the officer at whose help he stood was Stasia's father. The officer had once saved the soldier from death and they had become good friends despite the gap in hierarchy (belonging to different ethnicities is not mentioned at this point at all), so the encounter with the soldier and his family is a very sentimental moment. A local (Orthodox) priest in the same village is another person who helps the (Catholic) protagonists. The phrase with which this priest announces to the children and Plichta that they are in a friendly setting is worth additional attention. He says, "Mówcie śmiało, my swoi ludzie, nie potrzebujecie się obawiać niczego," which can be idiomatically translated as

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<sup>472</sup> Niezabitowski, *Przez śniegi i pożogę*, 61.

<sup>473</sup> „Nie jesteśmy wojskowymi, lecz zwyczajnymi pasażerami i może bolszewicy nie zrobią nam nic złego.” Niezabitowski, 71.

[We are not military, but ordinary passengers, and perhaps the Bolsheviks will not hurt us]

<sup>474</sup> Quite in line with Bakhtin's observations on sudden meetings and unexpected benefactors.

“Speak your heart, we are in the same boat, you don’t need to be afraid of anything.”<sup>475</sup> Literally, the wording “swoi ludzi,” means “people of one’s own,” which suggests a feeling of affinity, mutual understanding, shared values, belonging to the same group. The difference in confessions becomes secondary, as now they are on the same side in opposition to “godless communists.” With the help of the peasant-orderly, the protagonists get to Orenburg, where they not exactly cross the frontline between the “whites” and “reds” so much as have it move upon them as the Bolsheviks overtake the city. (The author acknowledges that these “frontlines” of the Civil War were unlike European frontlines of the First World War; that there was not uniform control of the territories but rather military formations that were capturing towns and strategic objects like railroads; yet he still uses the word “frontline.”)

From here, they continue their way by railroad until they reach the Podolia in Ukraine where the Red army is fighting both bands of local warlords and the Polish army. It is obvious and quite expected that in the latter conflict, the protagonists self-identify with the Polish side, whose positions looming on the horizon unambiguously signify “home,” the goal of the months-long journey. But even in the conflict between the Bolsheviks and the anti-Bolshevik bands, the protagonists are not at all non-partisan civilians caught in the “ravages of war,” as they are eager to help a warlord with information on the enemy’s whereabouts, and the next adventure they experience is to slip away from the dangers incurred upon them by the Bolsheviks for suspicion of their affiliation with this warlord.

As I have showed, the space the protagonists pass through on their journey is not at all a generalized “alien world” but in a very nuanced way differentiated into friendly and hostile spaces even beyond the ultimately safe home-space. This differentiation correlates well with

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<sup>475</sup> Niezabitowski, *Przez śniegi i pożogę*, 82.

whether the protagonists can tell their true story or must pretend to be someone else for the sake of survival.

There is, however, also a temporal differentiation in the background. The general dynamics here is different from Dybczyński's novel, where the protagonists are *taken* to exile in Siberia, which is inherently and eternally the antipode of home for generations of Poles, hence they need to undertake a risky journey to return home. In *Through Snows and Ravages of War*, the protagonists were quite comfortably *at home* in the Far East of the Russian empire when the chaos of revolution fell upon these homes. (Admittedly, Plichta spent more than half a century of his life in Siberia as a participant of the 1863 uprising, because he had been banished from returning to Poland, not because he chose this home.) Jurek's father was a valued specialist, a railroad engineer, who was evacuated from the Kingdom of Poland when all the institutions of the Russian empire retreated from there during the First World War. The same moment when Russian imperial institutions were leaving Warsaw before the onslaught of the German troops in 1915, when Dybczyński's protagonists were notoriously "kidnapped" from their home at autocracy's arbitrariness, in the backstory of Niezabitowski's protagonist is the moment when his family was taken care of and evacuated from the dangers of war. "It was a great joy" for Jurek and his parents to make Vladivostok their home also because his uncle, also an engineer, had been living there with his spouse even earlier.<sup>476</sup> Something similar is true about Stasia's family, quite established in the Russian imperial society as well: her father was an officer in the imperial army, presumably deployed in the Far East before he was sent to the European frontlines of the First World War. When the October Revolution broke out, he could not return to Siberia not only because of the disrupted transportation connections, but also because remaining

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<sup>476</sup> Niezabitowski, 13.

in Russia as an *imperial* officer was additionally dangerous for him. This inability to return to his wife and daughter remaining in Siberia is referred to as inability to return *home*.

The basic point is that although the regime of the Russian empire was not friendly for Polish national strivings – it was their home, a comfortable and livable status quo, which is destroyed and brought to chaos with the October Revolution. Neither Jurek nor Stasia are old enough to be consciously, rather than symbolically, attached to any other home than this. Belonging to the Russian imperial order also endowed them with connections (such as the unexpected support from the peasants in the South Urals mentioned above, with whom the only connection they had was through the Russian imperial army’s hierarchy) and skills that are beneficial to them on their journey. “Remember, you are my sister Kuznetsova, we are returning to our parents in Nerchinsk, do not address me in Polish when strangers can overhear us,” instructs Jurek, as he and Stasia flee from the orphanage in Khabarovsk. “So, we will be pretending to be Russians?” responds Stasia excitedly.<sup>477</sup> Back in the orphanage, it was specifically appearance that helped both children recognize one another as Poles.<sup>478</sup> Yet, it is assumed that both have the appropriate language skills and Slavic looks that would allow them to pass for Russians. They repeat several more times the twist of pretending to be Russians returning to their families somewhere further in Russia along the route of their journey to Poland.

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<sup>477</sup> „Jesteś moją siostrą, Stasiu, rozumiesz? Nazywasz się Kuźniecowa, a rodzice nasi mieszkają w Nerczyńsku, dokąd się mamy zamiar udać. ... I pamiętaj jeszcze jedno, przy ludziach nigdy nie będziesz odzywać do mnie po polsku. Zapamiętaj to sobie dobrze.

- Aha, to my będziemy udawać Rosjan, prawda?” Niezabitowski, 40–41.

<sup>478</sup> “Najmłodsza z nich, mogąca mieć najwyżej lat 10, o wielkich, niebieskich oczach i krótkich warkoczykach, spadających jej na plecy, wyróżniała się tak swoim wyglądem z grona towarzyszek, iż Jurek z ciekawością spoglądał na nią, a widząc, że dziewczątka nie spuszcza zeń oczów, uśmiechnął się do niej przyjaźnie” Niezabitowski, 24.

[The youngest of the girls, who could be no older than ten years of age, with big blue eyes and short braids falling on her back, was so different from the group of her companions that Jurek looked at her with curiosity and, seeing that the girl did not take her eyes off him, smiled kindly at her]

In Dybczyński's novel, analyzed above, the ideological message about the split into "us" and "them" was based on the idea of essential, preexisting difference. It is explainable by different types or levels of civilization. In Niezabitowski's novel, much more important is the temporal disruption of the October Revolution. The novel's adversary – the Bolsheviks – are equally the enemy of Poles (menacing to specific Polish protagonists and to Poles in general in the context of war between Soviet Russia and Poland) and of friendly Russians such as peasants, an Orthodox priest, and a warlord, the most unexpected allies encountered along the way. While the possibility that among Poles there can also be "bad people" is not allowed at all, the difference between "good" and "bad," which is imagined as huge, does not lie along any ethnic or national lines. Unlike some other narratives that depict the Soviet-Polish war of 1919–1920 as the continuation of conflicts between Russian and Poles, Niezabitowski's novel does not associate Bolshevism with Russianness. Bolshevism is something that is happening in Russia and to Russia, which makes its territory dangerous, but non-affiliated Russians are also suffering from it, and there are also people of other ethnicities (such as Latvians) who are mentioned as partaking in the atrocities.

This difference, as a result, is imagined as moral and axiological. This line-up is much more similar to the situation in Russian Soviet literature itself, where, too, the historical disruption of October Revolution splits the world into axiologically differently evaluated progressive "now" and retrograde "before," while everybody outside the realm affected by the revolution is evaluated as an ally of the "before" or as someone working on helping bring in the progressive future. In Niezabitowski's novel, the same diachronic scheme can be traced with inverted signs: an ally is whoever is a remnant of the pre-revolutionary world or an enemy of the Bolsheviks. In the final section of this chapter, I am going to show which specific values are

associated in Niezabitowski's novel with the in-group and how through the description of the axiological opposition with the adversary, the author aims to raise in his readers' awareness of importance of adherence to these values.

#### 4.2.3. "Our" morality, "their" immorality

One pervasive opposition between "us" and "them" is the dichotomy of materialistic and spiritual values. In this context, I use the word "spiritual" to refer not only to religion but a wider range of emotional and mental dimensions as well: in Slavic languages words like "soul" and "spirit" are cognates and these words and their derivatives used for everything that is not purely materialistic.

This dichotomy accompanies different encounters with the Bolsheviks throughout the novel. Under Soviet rule, no right to private property is respected, a violent reminder of what marks one of the transitions between friendly and hostile spaces described above.<sup>479</sup> Yet the property itself, as apparent from the very beginning of Jurek's misfortunes, is very much appreciated, as the scene after his aunt and uncle are executed shows. Getting rid of alleged counterrevolutionaries, the Bolsheviks eagerly make use of their material possessions: "the house, the furniture and all belongings of the executed couple were taken away by the Bolshevik authorities by the right of confiscation." Still, Jurek got to "inherit" what is most valuable to him: "a couple of Polish books presented by his parents and photos of his mother and father"— as these things are "deemed of no value" by the Cheka.<sup>480</sup> This opposition is very important, since the

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<sup>479</sup> Niezabitowski, 73.

<sup>480</sup> „Dom, meble i wszystkie rzeczy rozstzelanych zabraly prawem konfiskaty wladze bolszewickie, pozwalajac jedynie Jurkowi na zebranie cieplejszego ubrania i paru drobiazgow, ktore w oczach agentow czezwyczajki nie przedstawialy zadnej wartosci. Na drobiazgi te skladowalo sie pare ksiazek polskich, darowanych przez rodzicow, oraz fotografie ojca i matki. ... Tulac do piersi caly swoj majatek, zawiniety w szal matczyny, Jurek udal sie...” Niezabitowski, 17.

decision to take books is a big one given that everything one has must be carried around in a shawl. Polish books are his sense of belonging to an entity larger than what he is left with.

It is not that Jurek is so selfless and spiritual as to not value the material aspects of life at all. Obviously, he also needs warmer clothes, which he is fortunate to be allowed to take as well. Also, what ultimately persuades him that he needs to endeavor from Vladivostok to Warsaw is that “here, an inevitable death by starvation awaits him,”<sup>481</sup> not the lack of spiritual community. Stasia, to the contrary, is given food at the orphanage, but she is physically mistreated by a tutor, so her decision to take on the hardships of the journey to Poland is also a combination of bodily and spiritual needs. Material needs of the body are quite prominently defining the fate of the protagonists on their journey, as they must deal with hunger, cold, and illness. Covering these basic needs is obviously a value in their axiological system, as it is a condition for survival.

The difference, rather, is that the Bolsheviks are militantly promoting that one must limit oneself to material needs, deeming everything that goes beyond material needs suspicious and counterrevolutionary. For instance, it is suggested that a wish to reunite with one’s family is just a guise, a pretense for scouring around to spy for “white” enemies – and Jurek’s longing to return home is interpreted in this way when his case is “tried” at a commissar’s office in Khabarovsk. The next idea the commissar comes up with is even more illustrative of this material/spiritual dichotomy: “There are many of you wandering around, pretending to be looking for your mother-father, but indeed your only goal is to create some trouble, to blast a bridge, to set a warehouse on fire...”<sup>482</sup> Very illustratively, in this quote, *spiritual* (emotional) longing to reunite

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<sup>481</sup> “Po paru dniach tułaczki Jurek powziął rozpaczliwy iście plan przedostania się do Warszawy za wszelką cenę, gdyż rozumiał, iż tutaj czeka go niechybna śmierć z głodu.” Niezabitowski, 17.

<sup>482</sup> „-Ten oto młodzieniec wybrał się do Warszawy?

- Tak, towarzyszu-komisarzu – odrzekł urzędnik. – Opowiada, że tam ma swych rodziców.

- Durny on – rzucił komisarz. – Jakżeż jemu dojechać tam! A może ty nasłany od przeklętych białogwardzistów – może ty szpieg, co? – marszcząc brwi, przemówił do Jurka.

with family is claimed to only be a pretense for doing *material* harm. Of course, being at one's adult relatives' side also covers a child's material and safety needs – but, according to the Bolshevik authorities in the novel, these can be even better fulfilled at an orphanage, where Jurek is taken next.

Jurek's reaction to the decision that he should be taken to the orphanage is also very illustrative of this dichotomy of material and spiritual. This is a favorable development for the boy in several regards: since the alternative was a real jail for adult criminals, he imagines it will be easier to escape from the orphanage; he is also exhausted from hunger and the hardships of his journey, so he hopes that spending some time at the orphanage will help him cater to these bodily needs; finally, he lacks basic information necessary to plan his further journey and hopes to find some there – it is an educational institution, after all. Jurek is indeed satisfied with the outcome of the commissar's "trial," but outwardly he pretends that he indifferently agrees to it for totally different reasons: "Why would one escape when there is food, and it is warm? It's not comfortable to wander around in cold, with an empty stomach."<sup>483</sup> That is to say, the adversary only recognizes material values and needs as a feasible explanation of actions; the protagonist, to the contrary, recognizes the importance of both while giving precedence to spiritual needs, but he is also aware of the discrepancy between his system of values and the adversary's, and is able to replicate the argumentation of the adversary to further his own interests.

Apparently, this awareness of several layers of values, where fulfilling material and bodily needs is only the foundation for the ability to achieve more meaningful, spiritual goals, is

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Jurek milczał.

- Dużo was takich włóczy się teraz po świecie, niby ojca, matki szukając, a w rzeczywistości tylko patrząc, aby jaką nieprzyjemność wyrządzić, most wysadzić lub magazyny podpalić... Niewiniątka! – mówił dalej komisarz. – Już my takich zuchów znamy, niejednego wysłałim na tamten świat za podobne sztuczki" Niezabitowski, 10–11.

<sup>483</sup> „Poco uciekać, jak jeść dadzą i ciepło będzie? Tułać się po mrozie i o głodzie nie jest przyjemnie” Niezabitowski, 12.

also a sign of a higher level of spiritual development. At this moment of pretending to be limiting one's aspirations to the food and warmth of the orphanage, Jurek is described as "rejoicing inside" – literally, "he was laughing in spirit," „śmiał się w duchu.”<sup>484</sup> One must have a spiritual core to be able to appreciate the irony, it seems. The adversary cannot comprehend the (spiritual) longing to return home to one's family, the author suggests; the protagonist, to the contrary, is able to imitate the adversary's limitation to material interests.

On other instances throughout the novel, too, Jurek is able when necessary to imitate allegiance to the Bolsheviks' system of values, to pass for an in-group member if this helps his own aims. This is not a consistent line of behavior for the protagonist, though: he can occasionally pretend, but he cannot abstain from actions that his system of values demands of him, even if this will cause him problems and suffering. So, for example, in the orphanage, he does not abstain from his evening prayer despite the threat of being beaten and cannot abstain from speaking up to the tutor who is physically abusing Stasia – although this immediately causes him problems with the director and hinders his plans to recover from cold and hunger. These are mostly imperatives dictated by Jurek's religiousness: the novel suggests that he as a devout Catholic, as any good Pole must be. Krajewska, in her analysis of Polish texts for children and young adults about the Polish-Soviet War, observes that "characters' religiousness is one of the key features of this type of literature for young adults."<sup>485</sup> Unlike the texts for adult addressees where war experiences are often connected to a crisis of faith, "these works do not reflect the crisis of religiousness of the turn of the century, nor individual doubts of the literary characters."<sup>486</sup> The set of texts analyzed by Krajewska does not include Niezabitowski's novel

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<sup>484</sup> Niezabitowski, 12.

<sup>485</sup> Krajewska, *Trzy legendy*, 270.

<sup>486</sup> Krajewska, 270.

but her observation about the secure place of religion in the system of values promoted by these novels equally applies to *Through Snows and Ravages of War*.

The scenes set in the orphanage are also one of the key points in the novel conveying why it is important for the Poles, including the readers educated by Niezabitowski through his novel, to oppose and fight back against the Soviet system. Specifically, it is suggested that the anti-order, the anti-system of values promoted by the Bolsheviks is aggressively asserting itself and sprawling. In line with the same dichotomy of material and spiritual values, the orphanage is the place where spiritual values, if the children happened to have any through “improper” up-bringing, would be deracinated. The tutors who were employed at the orphanage before the revolution had been replaced with “‘comrades’ whose only job was extirpation of religious and moral foundations from the souls of children under their care.”<sup>487</sup> According to Jurek’s observations, this job is already quite successful, as only a few children differed in their looks and behavior from the general mass of “boys and girls of low levels of intelligence and domestic up-bringing, which could be easily seen from their tableside manners and contents of the discussions.”<sup>488</sup> This is yet another example of the distorted representation of historic time in the novel: given that the events are set in January 1918, it seems highly unrealistic that the system of communist upbringing would be already as well-established and fruitful as it is depicted in the novel. Yet, apparently, it was more important for the author to create a powerful image that would be part of his ideological message than to adhere to historic verisimilitude.

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<sup>487</sup> „Wychowawczynie, które przed przewrotem zajęte były w ochronie, usunięto, jako nie nadające się do wychowania dzieci w duchu komunistycznym i zastąpiono je „towarzyszkami”, których jedyną pracą było wykorzenienie z dusz powierzonych im dzieci zasad religijnych i moralnych” Niezabitowski, *Przez śniegi i pożogę*, 18–19.

<sup>488</sup> „tak chłopcy jak i dziewczęta były to dzieci o niskim stopniu inteligencji i wychowania domowego, co łatwo spostrzec było można po sposobie zachowywania się przy stole, oraz z treści prowadzonych rozmów. Jedynie kilkoro dzieci z obecnych zachowywało się odmiennie od reszty swych towarzyszy...” Niezabitowski, 25.

In practice, this deracination of spiritual foundations means that Jurek is forbidden to pray and rudely cursed at and beaten for his disobedience. The communist anti-system of values is in general to a great extent represented to the reader by rude swearing and physical violence. The author quite unimaginatively depicts various characters affiliated with the communist idea repeatedly shouting out the same curses: “You counterrevolutionary! Spy! Little Pole!”<sup>489</sup> [*Polaczyszka* – diminutive has derogatory functions in this naming transliterated from Russian]. The very first representation of society under communist rule is supposed to create the image of a morally degraded one through the suggestion that swearing and physical violence are the most common ways of interaction here: “the impatient guard broke out with a whole stream of curses of the worst kind, and often the sound of whip blows was also heard [...] Someone answered the guards’ curses with comparable curses.”<sup>490</sup> Swearing and violence are the level to which all communication is brought, according to the novel’s author.

It is suggested that this community has lost its human qualities and stands out as abominable to anybody who can respond to the question “who are you?” with “obviously, a human,”<sup>491</sup> as does Jurek, although at this point he rather resembles a skeleton in rags.<sup>492</sup> This is clearly an allusion to the Christian motif of *Ecce Homo*, which refers to the scene in the New Testament and a popular subject in religious art, juxtaposing “a brutalized, beaten, battered body [of Jesus] on the precipice of death”<sup>493</sup> with the violent crowd.<sup>494</sup> Here, as it has developed in

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<sup>489</sup> „Ach ty, polaczyszka przeklęty, ty szpieg, ty kontrrewolucjonista” Niezabitowski, 22.

<sup>490</sup> „straż zniecierpliwiona wybuchła całym potokiem połajanek najgorszego gatunku, a nierzadko dawał się również słyszeć odgłos uderzeń nahajką [...] Na łajania strażników ktoś odpowiadał takiemiż łajaniem...” Niezabitowski, 6.

<sup>491</sup> „No, wiadomo, człowiek” Niezabitowski, 7.

<sup>492</sup> „Z żywego, wesołego chłopca zrobił się szkielet prawdziwy, zczerniał na twarzy, jedynie oczy gorzały mu niezłomną energią i uporem” Niezabitowski, 18.

<sup>493</sup> Kent Brintnall, *Ecce Homo: The Male-Body-in-Pain as Redemptive Figure* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 22.

<sup>494</sup> James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 110.

Western culture, this allusion to *Ecce Homo* refers to deplorable human condition in light of contemporary civilization, and in this case, the threat of the violent crowd is very specifically associated with the nascent communist society. As I will show, it is also not random that the Christ-like figure is a Polish boy – this theme resonates with other religious motifs in this novel.

Bolshevik-ruled territories, however, are not simply the reign of godless, immoral doctrine and materialistic worldview. Its inherent feature is that it dynamically sprawls out and aims to conquer the whole world, so that there will nowhere be a place for spiritual values. This idea engenders a call for counteraction, for nurturing one's religious morals and national belonging, which is a message to the young reader implied in the novel. In the orphanage, the communist "comrades"-tutors are actively performing "the task of deracinating those deleterious practices" so as to turn the children under their care into "people who will become pioneers of the communist idea and help it rule over the whole world."<sup>495</sup> Meanwhile, while the properly indoctrinated children have not grown up yet, it is the Red Army that performs the same task. Later in the novel, the protagonists meet a navy sailor, whose boastful speeches about the successes of the Red Army Jurek decides to play up to in order to find out what is happening on the Polish-Soviet frontlines.

"Nobody will be able to resist us, he says; after we finish with the internal enemies, we will go to Germany, France, England and the whole world, overturning the old order and establishing a new, Bolshevik one. Nobody will be able to resist us – invincible Latvian battalions and navy squads. We will conquer the world!"<sup>496</sup>

Here, too, the communist idea of worldwide revolution is presented not as emancipation of the

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<sup>495</sup> „Ochronka nasza ma za zadanie wykorzenić z was te wszystkie szkodliwe i nikomu niepotrzebne praktyki religijne i zrobić z was ludzi, którzy będą pionierami idei komunistycznej i dopomogą do zapanowania jej nad całym światem” Niezabitowski, *Przez śniegi i pożogę*, 27.

<sup>496</sup> „Nam się nikt nie oprze – mówił – czerwoarmiejcy zwyciężą wszystkich wrogów wewnętrznych, a skończywszy z nimi, pójdą do Niemiec, Francji, Anglii i w cały świat, wywracając stary porządek, a zaprowadzając nowy, bolszewicki. I kto nam się oprze, nam, bohaterom rewolucji, niezwyciężonym bataljonom łotewskim i oddziałom marynarzy? Nikt! Zawojujemy cały świat!” Niezabitowski, 96.

working classes in other countries but as conquest and destruction, just like the practices in the orphanage are presented not as nurturing specific values but as the destruction of existing ones. This conversation develops to conclude that the Red Army, indeed, has a chance to conquer the whole world, despite the inevitable huge death toll in their own ranks, because “we have a lot of people; [the enemies] will eventually deplete.”<sup>497</sup> For the author, this is a threat emanating a wrongful system of values, as shown clearly by the nascent Soviet worldview that sees no value in human life not only when it comes to the dehumanized enemy on the battlefield, but even to their own adherents. “You can be happy that you haven’t been killed, which, after all, should have been done,” the protagonists are told on one occasion, “nowadays, there’s no right to private property,”<sup>498</sup> as if suggesting that with the abolition of private property, human life also becomes not the individual’s “property” but the Bolsheviks’ “nationalized” property.

In view of this threat, the Polish national role is explained. Even the boastful sailor’s ardor in imagining how easily the Red Army will conquer the entire world lessens somewhat at the memory that Poles’ military resistance had not been crushed yet:

“[...] only the Poles need to be dealt with; they are the only ones that block the road to Europe.

At the mention of the Poles, the sailor cooled down a bit in enthusiasm.

“[...] Bold nation, there's nothing to say.”<sup>499</sup>

Poles are presented here as the last obstacle for the realization of the adversary’s plans to spread an immoral order and system of values to the whole world. Hence, this scene is very

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<sup>497</sup> „My mamy narodu dużo, a oni wreszcie wyczerpią się” Niezabitowski, 97.

<sup>498</sup> “Plichta począł się skarżyć towarzyszowi dowódcy, iż zabrano mu pieniądze i zegarek, lecz ten, wzruszając pogardliwie ramionami, odrzekł ze śmiechem:

- Dobrze jeszcze, że was na miejscu nie rozstrzelali, co trzeba było zrobić! Zresztą – dodał złośliwie – teraz jest komunistyczny ustrój! Niema prawa własności.” Niezabitowski, 73.

<sup>499</sup> „- ... tylko z Polakami trzeba zrobić porządek; oni jedni nam przecinają drogę do Europy.

Na wspomnienie o Polakach, marynarz ostygł nieco w zapale.

- ... Śmiały naród, niema co mówić” Niezabitowski, 96.

important to understanding the message of the author to his readers. It revitalizes, in a modernized setting, the image of Poland as “Bulwark of Christendom,” *antemurale christianitatis*, the idea spread since the fifteenth century of Poland as the last bulwark defending Europe and Christianity from the barbaric hordes because of its borders with Muslim regions. In the nineteenth century, this image became an important part of the romantic mythology of Polish messianism and the representation of Poland as “the Christ of nations.” Polish historical defeats and losses of statehood were interpreted within this discourse of religious martyrdom.

In the novel, this mythology is revitalized and reappropriated to the new historic situation. “Barbaric hordes” from whom Poland is defending Europe and the whole world are no longer Muslims but “godless Bolsheviks.” The dynamics of martyrdom for the sake of humankind is also reiterated in several ways in the novel’s culmination. First, the Polish division that should be “killed to a man”<sup>500</sup> according to Bolshevik plans is presented as innocent victims, “beloved Polish soldiers” – “kochane żołnierzyki polskie.”<sup>501</sup> This phrase is also prominent as a linguistic construction, as it uses the diminutive for “soldiers.” This diminutive requires not the plural form used in the Polish language only for nouns that are grammatically masculine and refer to persons, but the plural form used for other nouns, thus likening soldiers to children, women, or objects, together suggesting a lack of agency. To restore them to the active position usually associated with the armed forces, Jurek needs to warn them about the planned attack, and this is the second iteration of the same dynamics of an innocent victim for the greater good. “He must save them; he must, even though he had to pay for that with his own life. But even if he had

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<sup>500</sup> „Wyginą co do jednego”, “wyginą co do nogi” is repeated in very similar words several times: Niezabitowski, 137,138,139.

<sup>501</sup> Niezabitowski, 139.

to die, that doesn't matter. That's for the sake of Poland...,"<sup>502</sup> Jurek contemplates. Unlike with the soldiers who are presented as mere objects of somebody's acts, this is a conscious decision to become a martyr for the greater good. Eventually, the young readers' nerves are strained for compassion but spared: Jurek and Stasia are badly wounded as they cross the border, but they survive. It is "grandfather" Plichta who dies, the one among the three protagonists whom it is the least heart-breaking to see perish, as he is already very old and also manages to fulfill his dream "to die among our own people."

#### 4.2.4. Class dimensions of the dialogue with the reader

By the time Niezabitowski wrote this novel, the Polish-Soviet war (1919–1921) was over, and the Polish army was indeed able to stop the expansion of communism into Europe by fending off the Red Army. Consequently, Niezabitowski's message dwelled on the events of the very recent past but was to be applied not in that immediate context but in the future. His novel uses some pre-existing models of adventure-writing, although his most palpable imitation model, Sienkiewicz's *In Desert and in Wilderness* was written some twelve years earlier. There is little that is innovative or remarkable in the form of this novel. An old form is used, however, to convey a very time-specific message to its intended readers. It reiterates the importance of adherence to Polish national and Catholic religious values for the youth of newly independent Poland, because of the imminent threat of the anti-values of the enemy in the East, who immediately challenged Poland's young independence but was fended off thanks to heroic actions, such as those described in the novel, to which readers should also strive emulate as they grow up.

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<sup>502</sup> „On musi ich ocalić; musi, choćby przyszło zginąć, to nic. To dla Polski...” Niezabitowski, 139.

The necessity to grow up as good Poles and devout Catholics ready to defend their country is a message applicable to all social strata. Considering that the novel was published by and distributed with a newspaper addressed specifically to workers and peasants, as I explained above, it performs an additional ideological task for readers of these social groups, not just children but also the adults reading to them. Certain aspects of this novel can be seen as addressing the concerns about the potential fascination of Polish working classes with the communist idea. As a reaction, the author makes appropriate emphases in his depiction the bearers of this idea and the society that is being created in Soviet Russia. When both the October Revolution in Russia and the Bolsheviks' plans for world revolution are mentioned in the novel, nothing is said about emancipation of the workers and peasants as the rationale behind the revolutionary events. As I showed in detail above, it is suggested that the only aim of the communists is destruction: physical annihilation and moral degradation of enemies and adherents equally. Although peasants and workers as the intended beneficiaries of the revolution are never mentioned in the novel, still, it is supposed that the reader might have heard this idea elsewhere, so Niezabitowski introduces into his novel a counter-example to this premise. He shows his readers "real" Russian peasants, who remain loyal to their upper-class benefactors from before the revolution and content with the place given them by religious and social hierarchies. Adam Leszczyński, in his *People's History of Poland*, brings examples of the elites' dissatisfaction with the peasants' reluctance about the perspectives of the Polish independence in 1918 and unwillingness to engage in the defense of its borders in the external conflicts in the immediately following years, as well as the fears about the influence of the Bolshevik propaganda on them.<sup>503</sup>

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<sup>503</sup> Adam Leszczyński, *Ludowa historia Polski: historia wyzysku i oporu : mitologia panowania* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo WAB, 2020), 445–48. Specifically on propaganda, oriented at peasants during the Soviet-Polish war, see Leszczyński, 453.

The novel *Through Snows and Ravages of War* seems to partake in this discursive effort.

#### CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 4

In this chapter, I have considered two examples of Polish adventure stories appearing in the 1920s that thematize recent events in Polish history. The historical setting structures both plot and space in the novels. The relative normalcy of the protagonists' lives in the Russian empire is disrupted by the violence and arbitrariness of the imperial regime (in Dybczyński's case) or Soviet power (in Niezabitowski's), which is not unlike the empire in its expansive policies. The protagonists need to endure a series of adventures in the non-homelike vastness of Siberia to be able to return ultimately to their "own" space: newly independent Poland.

By retelling these stories about the young Poles' adventure in the final years of the Russian empire and during the Polish-Soviet war, which were then the most recent critical moments in Polish national history, the authors performed several functions in their communication with young readers. First, it is a purely informative function for readers who might have not witnessed the events themselves or witnessed them too young. Second, this depiction of the recent past constructs the opposition of the in-group and various out-groups that depict Poles in invariably positive light, as representatives of European Christian civilization vis-à-vis a lesser civilized adversary. The exact characteristics of the adversary and, hence, the key criteria in the opposition, vary between the novels. Dybczyński makes emphasis on the level of civilization; Niezabitowski, on the morality and religiousness. Third, the novels create, through the depiction of the protagonists, a set of characteristics that a good Pole should bear in him- or herself. In this way, the novels intend to mobilize the readers to develop the same level of loyalty to the values of the in-group and to continue the struggle to defend its independence when the necessity comes. This connects the plot from what is already history (even though a very recent

one) to the issues and needs relevant to 1920s Polish society.

One of the contemporary issues that can be recognized as looming in the background of both novels is the propagation of the national culture and its values – which were before independence espoused mostly by a small share of the population, the nationally conscious educated elites – to the wider population of the Second Polish republic, in class terms if not in terms of the ethnic minorities. In *Across Siberia*, the need for the moral education of the peasantry to share the national values is addressed through the example of the scouting movement, which includes peasant teens and bridges the gap between them and the gymnasium students from the capital. While *Across Siberia* depicts this need and this gap as something its educated readers might deal with, *Through Snows and Ravages of War*, addressed to a less educated readership, partakes in this process itself. The latter novel not only “heats up” the relevance and urgency of the Polish national identity through sentimental scenes and religious associations. By depicting loyal and god-fearing Russian peasants that have nothing to do with godless Bolsheviks it also aims to prevent identification with Marxist ideas among the lower classes by hijacking the potential for transnational self-identification along class lines.

## CHAPTER 5. LEAVING ONCE AND FUTURE HOME: UKRAINIAN ADVENTURE NARRATIVES OF THE POST-WWII EMIGRATION

Adventure, as a formula genre, can be said to have the following structure: leaving a safe home-space, voluntarily or due to an external force; venturing into the space of adventure, in which the adventurer is supposed to overcome a number of ordeals so that the initial order is restored; and the adventurer returning back to the safe home-space. It is also said that much of the literature for children and young adults follows the same formula, if the “ordeals” are understood more loosely.<sup>504</sup> The subtype of adventure stories that I am focusing on in my dissertation are those in which the adventure involves a physical journey in the geographical space. The space of adventure is then characterized by the encounter with geographical and cultural otherness. Hence, this opposition of the “safe haven” of home vs. the dangerous space of adventure also often coincides with the movement outside of and return to the nominal geographical home.

In this subsection, I analyze several examples of Ukrainian adventure stories, in which the connection I have described above is disrupted. While the formula of adventure as a progression from safe into dangerous and back into safe adventure space is preserved, the role of the space that is nominally associated with one’s “own” community in this dichotomy is revised. This subsection considers three novels in which the adventure plot culminates around the efforts to leave the nominally “own” space. I argue that this change is not a coincidence randomly appearing in these works, which are very different in many other aspects, but an implication of a particular situation in Ukrainian history, and also of the ways in which Ukrainian émigré

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<sup>504</sup> Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult*, 223.

community members attempted to reinterpret their place in the world. This new directionality, which justifies the actions of specific protagonists of the adventure, also reflects the émigrés' making sense of their living outside of their historic home.

#### 5.1. "THEY WILL RETURN WHEN BETTER TIMES COME": *THROUGH FOREIGN LANDS* (1947) BY M. BRADOVYCH

The novella *Chuzhynoiu* (*Through foreign lands*) was pseudonymously published by M. Bradovych, a pen name of Mykola Trots'kyi (1883-1971), who had been living abroad, mostly in Switzerland, ever since he left Ukraine in 1909 because of his persecution by Russian imperial police as an activist for the national cause. As a separate book, the novella was first published in 1947 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The book edition, however, mentions that it is a re-print from a periodical, *Nash Klych*. Periodicals under this title were published in different years in the 1930s and 1940s by various Ukrainian groups in Polish-ruled Western Ukraine, Great Britain, and Argentina. It is hard to determine for sure whether the novella was written soon before its book publication or rather in the 1930s, the time when the action is set. If the novella was written in the 1930s, it would mean that the issues at stake in this sub-section can be characterized as pertinent not exclusively to post-World War II emigration, the period from which the other two novels originate.

The novella's action takes place in Istanbul, Turkey in early-to-mid 1930s. It is centered around two Ukrainian couples. The reader meets Marko Stodorih, an undercover agent of the Ukrainian underground who arrives in Istanbul to make necessary arrangements with his Turkish and Azerbaijani counterparts in order to establish escape routes from the Soviet Union into Turkey where the two countries share the border in the Caucasus. It is suggested that these escape routes which could be used by different nations, including Ukrainians, particularly

Kuban' Ukrainians. Dmytro Nosenko (on other occasions, spelled Nosiienko), the other male protagonist of the novella, is a diplomat of Ukrainian origin working in the Soviet embassy in Istanbul. Dmytro falls from grace with his superiors at the embassy after saving a Romanian ship from an explosion. The attempt to destroy the ship was presumably ordered by the Soviet diplomats, because it was carrying Ukrainian refugees, who had fled over the Soviet-Romanian border. Because of their activity, Marko and Dmytro and their love interests, Khrystia and Melasia, experience several life-threatening encounters with the representatives of the Soviet embassy and their mercenaries, before they finish their affairs in Istanbul and leave the city. Dmytro and Melasia join the Ukrainian refugees from the rescued Romanian ship in their emigration to Argentina, while Khrystia joins Marko in his return to Vienna to continue his clandestine activity for the sake of the Ukrainian cause.

As even the short plot summary shows, the novella is centered around the idea of fleeing Soviet Ukraine. The reason for this necessity is that the Soviet government is deemed dangerous for Ukrainians according to the author, both in the physical sense—as it incarcerates them and sends them into labor camps where they physically perish—and the ideological sense—as it intends to indoctrinate young generations with dangerous false ideas. This novella justifies emigration as a strategic retreat, as it repeatedly suggests throughout the text: “This rescue is not an escape from action, he said, but a possibility to continue with it under better conditions. Those who are escaping now will return to continue the struggle or will be at least capable of doing so.”<sup>505</sup> The idea is that they will be able to preserve and consolidate strength for future struggle rather than avoid such struggle. Moreover, it is suggested that situations like this, demanding a

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<sup>505</sup> “Рятунок цей не є втечею від чину, казав він, а можливістю продовжити його в кращих умовах. Ті, що втікають тепер, вернуться для продовження боротьби, чи принаймні матимуть змогу для цього” Bradovych, *Chuzhynoiu*, 14.

strategic retreat from the homeland, already happened in Ukrainian history before.<sup>506</sup>

Interestingly, while polemicizing with a discourse that evaluates emigration negatively, the author eschews marking his heroes with the term “émigré” itself. Historically and contemporarily, Ukrainians “[who] had to seek safety in the foreign land were enemies not of their own government but of a foreign oppression and considered leaving their homeland as nothing else but a way to fight the Muscovite oppressors and wished for nothing more than a possibility to return to Ukraine.”<sup>507</sup> He argues that this does not correspond to what is usually associated with the term “émigré,” which typically signifies those leaving their country for good (suggesting self-seeking reasons for this), and those who do so because of a conflict with their own government. Despite the authorial preference in terminology, I will be using the words “émigré” and “emigration” throughout my analysis in a neutral sense.

#### 5.1.1. Ukrainian nation, its enemies, and other actors on the mental map

Central both to the structure of the novella’s adventurous plot and to its ideological contents is the opposition of Ukrainians, on the one hand, and what the novella often refers to as “Muscovites,” on the other. The latter designation makes no distinction between the Russian imperial and Soviet projects. At the basic plot level, specific Ukrainian protagonists are in conflict with specific people from the Soviet embassy. However, these clashes are presented as just another page in the centuries-long struggle between the two sides. This opposition is depicted not as a historically determined one, but an eternal, ontological opposition between “good” and “evil,” as the following quote shows: “In the beginning was the nation, he claimed,

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<sup>506</sup> Bradovych, 82.

<sup>507</sup> “мусіли шукати рятунку на чужині, були ворогами не свого уряду, а чужонаціонального поневолення, бачили в опущенні батьківщини лише засіб боротьби проти московських гнобителів і не бажали нічого палкіше, як можності повороту в Україну.” Bradovych, 24.

and Muscovy has been its enemy for many centuries. Since the nation is the basis of human development, the source of good, culture, and every real progress, so its opposition, Muscovy, is the source of every evil.”<sup>508</sup> Allusion to the Bible with the anaphoric structure “in the beginning was...,” as well as the usage of the categories of “good” and “evil” attests to the totalizing, all-encompassing understanding associated with the nation. Here and in other works, Bradovych repeats the idea that “Muscovy” is a state without a nation, so the opposition is not of two nations, rather the quality of being a “nation” is already a positive one, which the author denies the ideological enemy. A closer look at his non-fiction brochure, *The State without a Nation* (*Derzhava bez natsii*, 1952), where Bradovych explicates some of the ideas also included in *Through Foreign Lands*, allows identifying how his idiosyncratic understanding of the concept of nation correlates with other existing understandings. His differentiation between the Ukrainian collective as a nation and “Muscovy” as “a state without a nation” dwells on the idea that a nation can only arise organically out of an ethnic group. He argues against Soviet claims of the creation of a “Soviet people” or a “Soviet nation,” suggesting that an organic unity cannot be created out of different groups gathered within state borders by the regime’s violence. In these terms, he sees the Muscovite tsardom, the Russian empire, and the Soviet Union as a succession of such despotic states, whose population was defined on the basis of subjugation by the regime, not organic unity between all these people, some of whom have belonged to national formations long predating such state attempts.<sup>509</sup>

The importance of belonging to the national collective in the system of values proposed

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<sup>508</sup> “Спочатку була нація, твердив він, її ж ворогом є від віків Московщина. Оскільки нація є основою розвитку людства, первнем добра, культури й кожного справжнього поступу, є її протилежність Московщина джерелом кожного лиха” Bradovych, 88.

<sup>509</sup> M. Bradovych, *Derzhava bez natsii* (Niu Ĵork: Vydannia holovnoi upravu Orhanizatsii oborony chotyrokh svobid Ukraïny, 1952).

by Bradovych can be illustrated by the way he deals with the opposition of individual and collective. There are two aspects to this interaction. On the one hand, the author suggests that life “is usually very valuable for every individual, but for the nation [the individual life] is only as valuable as the deeds one performed,”<sup>510</sup> which subjugates individualistic values to collective ones. On the other hand, this subjugation of the individual to the collective is exactly what promises a chance to symbolically outlive individual mortality, as can be illustrated by the following quote: “Death is only the end of life when it lacked action. The nation, however, is alive as long as there are among its children those who are ready to die for it.”<sup>511</sup> It is suggested that dying for the sake of the national collective is exactly what allows continuing to live on in the collective. Towards the end of this section, I will return to the analysis of individualistic/collective dichotomy in the novella.

The notion of community as eternal and immutable in its deepest essence, is introduced in order to talk about the harsh events of Ukrainian history. This historical plight is partly explained by the fact that there have always been traitors among Ukrainians who would cooperate with the enemy. However, it is assumed that being a Ukrainian is a primordial quality, and even somebody corrupted by the enemy might be able to recognize their sins and “expiate one’s national guilt” if only they have that Ukrainian soul hidden somewhere inside, “even under a thick layer of Muscovite influence and military drill.”<sup>512</sup> High value is ascribed to people who possess a unique ability of “igniting a Ukrainian soul” in such misled compatriots. “National guilt” is usually mentioned regarding the characters that at some point come to awareness that

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<sup>510</sup> “[життя] має звичайно велику ціну для кожного, але для нації не більшу ніж чини dokonani протягом його.” Bradovych, *Chuzhynoiu*, 43.

<sup>511</sup> “Смерть є кінцем життя лише тоді, коли воно було нечинним. Нація ж живе доти, доки знаходяться між її дітьми готові вмерти за неї.” Bradovych, 89.

<sup>512</sup> “Здавалось, що він носив в собі рід національного полумя, яким розпалював українську душу в кожному, у кого вона справді була, хоч і під найгрубшою верствою змосковщення та військової муштри.” Bradovych, 58.

their previous actions might have served the enemy rather than the national cause—such as in serving in state institutions. Nosenko, for instance, is described as delusional up to a point thinking that he can do something positive for the Ukrainian cause under the auspices of Soviet diplomacy. What is referred to here is his belief that it would be a lesser evil if he was filling the position rather than “some Muscovite.”<sup>513</sup> Ultimately, he realizes that his service makes him complicit in the Soviet state’s crimes against other Ukrainians, but simply ending his affiliation with the embassy is not enough, he needs to “expiate” his previous complicity with an act disruptive to the evil Soviet plans, which nearly costs him his life. However, “expiating the national guilt”<sup>514</sup> is usually not about actual harm that needs to be undone. Rather, even not doing enough when brethren are suffering is already a basis to be proclaimed “guilty.” “Igniting a Ukrainian soul” having collected dust under wrong influences is what the novella itself is aiming to do with regard to its readership, hence all the embedded “motivational” passages about national suffering.

Enemies who do not have that “Ukrainian soul,” on the contrary, are hopeless and ontologically evil: “Nothing human has been left in the essence of our enemies, and they are subject neither to human nor to divine law.”<sup>515</sup> This, on the one hand, is an explanation for the atrocities conducted toward Ukrainians throughout history, while on the other a justification not to stop short of the harshest method of counter-action. In the plot of *Through Foreign Lands*, any counteraction that Ukrainians can conduct against the Soviet regime is mostly defensive. However, this treatment of the opposition between the Ukrainian nation and “Muscovy” extends

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<sup>513</sup> Bradovych, 25.

<sup>514</sup> Bradovych, 8.

<sup>515</sup> “Нічого людського не лишилось в естві наших ворогів і не підлягають вони, ані людському, ані божеському закону” Bradovych, 3.

beyond this specific novella; in other fictional and non-fictional texts, Bradovych repeats the same idea of the opposition between the ontologically good and evil. His 1951 novel *Na Moskvu* (*Against Moscow*) focuses on an early seventeenth-century military campaign under the leadership of hetman Sahaidachnyi, during which Ukrainians and their Polish allies were on the offensive side of the conflict, nearly capturing Moscow. That novel, similarly, depicts “Muscovites” as just a “mob without kith or kin,” “cattle rather than people.”<sup>516</sup> This dehumanizing treatment of the enemy is the justification of bemoaning a missed opportunity to “kill them all” pre-emptively, justified by the anticipated geopolitical developments.<sup>517</sup>

As I have shown above, the novella *Through Foreign Lands* is centered around the opposition between the Ukrainian nation and “Muscovy.” The depiction of characters of all other national and ethnic origins is subjugated to this dichotomy. All “Others” are there only because of the role they play in the battle between the in-group and its adversary. Other groups’ interests and actions are mentioned only to the extent that they are helpful, unhelpful, or detrimental to the protagonists in this central struggle.

The action is taking place in Istanbul, so the novella inevitably mentions Turks. The most attention is dedicated to Sabri-pasha, a representative of the old Turkish aristocracy, who solves many of the protagonist’s problems as a “deus ex machina.” Sabri-pasha’s help in Ukrainians’ and Caucasians’ activity against the Soviets is depicted in contrast to the general attitude of the establishment and institutions of the young Turkish republic. The fact that the latter is not strong enough to be able to counter foreign malevolence on their territory is exactly what turns Istanbul into a dangerous space of adventure.<sup>518</sup> It is not any of its inherent “exotic” characteristics, as is

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<sup>516</sup> M. Bradovych, *Na Moskvu* (Filadelfiia: Vydavnytstvo “Ameryka,” 1951), 62.

<sup>517</sup> Bradovych, 49.

<sup>518</sup> “Становище Туреччини було таке, що треба було чекати й мати терпеливість.” Bradovych, *Chuzhynoïu*, 49.

often the case in adventure stories set in Oriental places, where local culture, “barbaric” customs, wild fauna or harsh climate may make the exotic space into a space of adventure, that is, a space requiring the protagonists to exercise their heroic qualities. The dangerous qualities of the novella’s setting are imported to this “Others” space by the adversary: “Muscovites carry the prison with them, even as they travel.”<sup>519</sup> (Similarly, Belgrade is described as a dangerous place on the protagonists’ way from Turkey because it is infiltrated by Soviet agents). As a result, the setting of the Turkish city is simply another battleground in the central conflict between the in-group and the adversary.

Descriptions of individual characters of Turkish origin such as Sabri-pasha and of the Turks’ group characteristics are full of admiration and respect. For example, it is said that Turks, “even as they serve, preserve their natural dignity.”<sup>520</sup> However, even such comments are used not for the sake of characterizing the Turkish people as such or adding detail for a more vivid setting of the novella. This characteristic is introduced, again, only as a means of highlighting the central ideological dichotomy of the novella. The information about this collective feature of the Turks is introduced to create a contrast, to suggest that a certain character is *unlike* the Turks, who preserve their dignity even when they are servants. Hence, he is a suspicious Soviet henchman of unidentified origin who, indeed, ends up attempting to drown Marko in the Bosphorus. “They looked like Greeks but spoke Muscovite,”<sup>521</sup> it is said about this and another character hired by Soviet diplomats on another occasion. This characteristic deliberately leaves room for interpretation: Are these characters “Muscovites” pretending to be Greek? Are they

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[Turkish situation was such that one had to wait and be patient.]

<sup>519</sup> “Москвини й подорожуючи возять вязницю з собою.” Bradovych, 20.

<sup>520</sup> “[Турки] й служачи заховують звичайно свою природну гідність.” Bradovych, 45.

<sup>521</sup> “Вони виглядали як греки, але розмовляли по московськи.” Bradovych, 32.

Greeks who have lost a connection with their community and assimilated? I will later return to the fact that uncertainty about someone's group belonging, such as in this case, is already a negative characteristic.

A lot of attention is dedicated in the novella to the Turkic people of the Caucasus and Central Asia. They are also depicted with admiration and respect as “freedom-loving” peoples.<sup>522</sup> However, these again are not independent characteristics. These Turkic people are important in the novella as Ukrainians' allies in the struggle against “Muscovy”: “in the meanwhile, having a common enemy calls for collaboration.”<sup>523</sup> Bradovych condemns the Soviet notion of brotherhood of the peoples as the enemy's ideological ploy,<sup>524</sup> while at the same time calling for real collaboration among all the oppressed peoples (for example, for the sake of establishing escape routes from the Soviet Union).

Jews are the only “other” group described in a bad light, and that, too, happens not independently but in relation to the central opposition between the in-group and its adversary. One of the antagonists from the Soviet embassy, “Soboliov (in fact, Varshauer)”<sup>525</sup> is described as having all the characteristics needed for a proper servant of the evil empire: “he did not have any political convictions and was always ready to sell even his own father and mother for a good price.”<sup>526</sup> What would be a characteristic of one separate evildoer is, however, carried over to the whole group he represents by suggesting that this personal trait makes him a decent group

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<sup>522</sup> “Гострі контрасти величньої непогамованої природи південно-східнього Туркестану притягали його не менше ніж прикмети його вільнолюбного населення” Bradovych, 22.

[Harsh contrasts of the untamed nature of the South-Eastern Turkestan attracted him no less than the features of its freedom-loving population]

<sup>523</sup> “а тим часом, спільний ворог — спільна справа” Bradovych, 66.

<sup>524</sup> Bradovych, 4.

<sup>525</sup> Bradovych, 16.

<sup>526</sup> “не мав властиво ніяких політичних переконань і був завжди готовий продати за добру ціну навіть власного тата й маму” Bradovych, 16–17.

representative: he “was, nevertheless, an exemplary son and a pride for his entire kahal.”<sup>527</sup> Just as positive depiction of Central Asian and Caucasian ethnicities was related to the assumed positive role they can play in Ukrainians’ struggle against the Soviet Union, this negative depiction of Jews is solely explained by the idea that they allegedly make good functionaries of the Soviet regime.

### 5.1.2. Adventure tropes

The ideological messages summarized above comprise the main content of the novella, often expressed in loose connection to the level of action in the plot. Indeed, in the novella the author reiterates ideas that appear elsewhere in his non-fiction, often at the expense of the literary qualities that make the adventure genre entertaining reading. For instance, he gives priority to theoretical digressions over condensed action and neglects the build-up of suspense and its timely resolution. The narrative arc of the adventure plot, which culminates with Marko’s survival after being drowned in the Bosphorus, ends approximately halfway through the page count. Another example of this formal failure may be the passage depicting wounded Dmytro fleeing to the apartment of Melasia’s family after the clash with his seniors from the embassy, which ends, quite anti-climactically, in a lengthy digression about the doctor who attended to him, a Circassian who was “to the same extent a friend of Ukrainians as he was an enemy of Moscow.”<sup>528</sup> The digression does not serve to keep up the suspense with regard to the outcome of the clash for the protagonist’s well-being. Rather, the dangerous clash that ends in wounds serves as an excuse to introduce the passage about the Ukrainians’ friendship with a Circassian doctor. The ideological point is the need for cooperation between Ukrainians and peoples of the

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<sup>527</sup> “був поза тим вірцевим сином і предметом гордості цілого свого кагалу” Bradovych, 17.

<sup>528</sup> Bradovych, 30.

Caucasus, both oppressed by the empire, to achieve liberation.

Precisely because this novella so blatantly fails to effectively capture the reader's attention with the plot that it is interesting for scholarly investigation: it presents an attempt to utilize the tropes of adventure for furthering ideological messages. The same ideas that are elsewhere in Bradovych's works expressed in purely theoretical constructions are here interspersed with the following recognizable elements from the tradition of adventure fiction. The Oriental setting suggests a quasi-colonial situation: the action is taking place in the modernizing Turkish republic but this state is depicted as a weak political structure, so that foreign powers are disregarding its sovereignty and minding their own interests in Istanbul.<sup>529</sup> A café with an appropriately exotic name, "Marmara" or "Morea," whose mistress claims ("only partly falsely") a princely origin, serves as a hub for dubious characters, spies, and kidnapers.<sup>530</sup> An attempt to kidnap Khrystia by stupefying her with drugs is outwitted by simply swapping coffee cups; to be able to do so, she previously asks someone to make a phone call that serves as a distraction. The author cannot create a proper excuse for this, so his heroine admits she did not know why she would ask. Because their ethnic origin is mysterious, the evildoers' henchmen are even more ominous, as in the case of the mercenaries passing for Phanariot Greeks mentioned above. Dangerous escapes are made by rainwater pipes. And, of course, the protagonist's superhuman abilities let him emerge alive after being drowned in the Bosphorus and struggling with the elements for hours.

These adventure tropes are interspersed among treatise-like ideological digressions and

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<sup>529</sup> As Martin Green suggests, one of the characteristics of adventure fiction, as opposed to "fine literature," is that it shows spaces where the ordering power of human society is weak – and that may be on the periphery of the civilization, where human society has not yet introduced its order, or, in other subgenres of adventure, in the grey zones within human society. See Green, *Seven Types of Adventure Tale: An Etiology of a Major Genre*, 35.

<sup>530</sup> Bradovych, *Chuzhynoïu*, 9, 63.

embedded stories drawing attention to “Muscovite” atrocities against Ukrainians, their collective struggle and hope. Hypothetically, adventure tropes are supposed to make the topic more appealing to the readership who might avoid reading about similar matters in a non-fiction brochure. Thus, their use has the goal of re-heating national awareness and the feeling of urgency to fight for the national cause in the émigré community. This effect is important because, according to Bradovych, the rationale behind emigration is physical survival, preservation of identity, and gathering energy for the future struggle.

The novella aims to create in its implied readership a mobilized feeling of national identity: it is a good idea to have “political convictions,” as one may assume from the fact that exactly the opposite is characteristic of an antagonist. What is considered evil, however, is not only explicitly destructive action: not caring enough is also something that requires “expiating national guilt.” Ideally, one should be ready to die for the in-group; Bradovych claims that it is the number of the nation’s children ready to do so that measures a nation’s strength. Through his non-fiction, as well as his adventure prose, the author is trying to increase the number of nationally mobilized Ukrainian émigré youth.

In fact, the novella itself depicts a process of coming to national consciousness through acquaintance with adventure literature, and with that, original French adventure fiction rather than texts specifically molded for a Ukrainian reader. A flashback into Nosenko’s young years describes how friendship with a French teacher’s son in his hometown in the Chernihiv region made him fluent in the language and let him read French literature, which saved him “from the detrimental influence of Pushkin, Turgenev, Tolstoys, and other troubadours of the Muscovite imperialism on the backs of serfs, as well as translations into ‘the commonly understood’

language,”<sup>531</sup> that is, Russian. However, the listed texts that made possible this discursive alternative are predominantly texts from the adventure tradition and related popular genres: specifically, *Les Enfants du capitaine Grant (In Search of the Castaways)*, *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo (The Count of Monte Cristo)*, and *Les trois mousquetaires (The Three Musketeers)*; later, Eugène Sue and Victor Hugo.<sup>532</sup>

Nosenko’s youth reading list overtly states the origins of the tropes that are used in the novella in a rather undisguised manner. The author is obviously trying to replicate the effect that adventure fiction had on this character’s becoming aware of national issues through his own text’s effect on the reader. He does this by combining the ready tropes from this reading list with a more explicit “preaching” on issues of national identity.

As evident from the above tropes, *Through Foreign Land* has many connections with the listed texts. The protagonist’s miraculous escape by swimming for hours when his enemies have every reason to consider him dead under the water is as if borrowed from the story of the Count of Monte Cristo. More systematic connections, however, can be seen with the *City mystery* tradition of popular fiction associated with the name of Eugène Sue. As Stephen Knight argues in his book, *The Mysteries of the Cities: Urban Crime Fiction in the Nineteenth Century*, dedicated to the early examples of this subgenre, these stories were a reaction to, and “themselves [...] creatures of[,] modernity,”<sup>533</sup> depicting the new reality and threats of massive conurbation in rapidly growing cities in the 1840s, as opposed to “well-established rural communities in which everyone was known and where social hierarchy and popular tradition acted as forces of

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<sup>531</sup> “був хлопець урятований від розкладових впливів Пушкіна, Тургенєва, Толстих та інших співців московського імперіалізму на кріпацьких спинах, також як і від перекладів на «загально зрозумілу» мову.” Bradovych, 41.

<sup>532</sup> Bradovych, 41.

<sup>533</sup> Stephen Knight, *The Mysteries of the Cities: Urban Crime Fiction in the Nineteenth Century* (Jefferson, U.S.: McFarland & Company, Incorporated Publishers, 2011), 5.

control.”<sup>534</sup> Anonymity and the lack of traditional social ties in cities made it easier for certain groups of people to become “agents of both violent and white-collar crime,”<sup>535</sup> and for others to fall prey to these criminals. These are all recognizable elements in Bradovych’s novella, including the fluid connection between “white-collar crime” (in the Soviet embassy) and the swashbucklers of the big city’s underclasses.

In Bradovych’s novella an implicit opposition along these lines lies between traditional life back in Ukraine within the ties of a community versus existence in a dangerous modern city – particularly, Istanbul, but also any city infiltrated by Soviet presence, including Belgrade, which the protagonists briefly pass, and those back in the Soviet Union. All four protagonists are increasingly in danger the more disconnected they are. Their progressing to a safer position toward the end of the novella is associated with building ties. In particular, Khrystia comes to Turkey alone, as her father is killed by Soviet border guards during their crossing of the Soviet-Romanian border. Her specific position as a young female in such a situation activates another motif characteristic of the *City Mystery* genre, as Knight describes it: “unguarded by the old-style extended families, people, especially young women, could fall into danger, both physically [...] and morally, suffering degradation and despair at the hands of exploitative men and women.”<sup>536</sup> A futile attempt to kidnap and sell her into sexual slavery is included in Khrystia’s story with no apparent need for plot development or even for the explicit ideological message of the novella. However, as a must-have element of the *City Mystery* genre Bradovych dwells upon, it helps to recognize this genre’s input into the novella’s implicit ideology. It is noteworthy that two new families are formed by the end of the novella and no wonder that the destination of the Ukrainian

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<sup>534</sup> Knight, 5.

<sup>535</sup> Knight, 5.

<sup>536</sup> Knight, 6.

refugees, where they are planning to re-create the community, is not any big city but rural Argentina, where they will be able to preserve these ties and safety net as a way to undo the damage of modernity.

The use of the *City Mystery* genre makes it clear that what is explicitly presented as the synchronous opposition of the Ukrainian nation and its adversaries is implicitly an opposition between pre-modern values and the threats of modernity. The agents of these threats are the Soviets, most outrageous of whom are explicitly described as devaluing any familial ties, disregarding any value for the community, and, most ironically, being praised by the community for this. Uprootedness is, within this discourse, another vice of modernity, hence all the emphasis in the novella is on Ukrainian refugees never willingly choosing mobility and emigration; only the greater threat of physically perishing or receiving wrong ideological indoctrination in the Soviet Union justify mobility. The positive evaluation of the pre-modern or even anti-modern values of community within this conservative discourse is transposed onto the community that is deemed to be characterized by these values, that is, the Ukrainian nation. Trevor Erlacher, in his intellectual biography of the ideologue of Ukrainian nationalism, Dmytro Dontsov, observes a similar tendency to turn to pre-modern ideals specifically in response to being displaced into a cosmopolitan, multicultural setting.<sup>537</sup>

These key concepts of modernity and its vices, mobility and uprootedness, though treated by the author in a different and definitely more nuanced way, will reappear in my analysis of the next novel that similarly culminates around an escape from the Soviet Union: Ivan Bahrianyi's *The Tiger Hunters*.

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<sup>537</sup> Trevor Erlacher, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the Age of Extremes: An Intellectual Biography of Dmytro Dontsov*, Harvard Series in Ukrainian Studies 79 (Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2020), esp. 158-170, 430.

## 5.2. “HE WOULD RETURN HOME AS AN AVENGING CONQUEROR”: IVAN BAHRIANYI’S *THE TIGER HUNTERS* (1944)

Just like *Through Foreign Land*, Ivan Bahrianyi’s *The Tiger Hunters* was published as a book edition in the immediate post-WWII years, after being first published in journal installments. Its action is similarly set in the 1930s, a by-gone epoch by the time of publication. The similarity is not limited to the circumstances of creation and publication: the focus of both novels is the need to escape from the Soviet Union, which is explained by the fact that the regime is destroys Ukrainian protagonists both physically and ideologically.

Ivan Pavlovyeh Lozoviiaha (or Lozoviiahin, 1907–1963), best known under his pen name Ivan Bahrianyi, authored the novel in 1943, while he was hiding from the German occupation police in a Galician town as a member of Ukrainian underground. This version, published in a Krakow journal in 1944 under the title *Zvirolovy* (*The Beast Hunters*), already became an event in Ukrainian literature. Like many Ukrainian intellectuals, Bahrianyi decided to follow the soon-to-be-defeated German forces westward before the Red Army’s recapturing of Ukraine, as he expected further repressions upon the Soviet return. In emigration, he recreated the text of the novel under the title *Tyhrolovy* (*The Tiger Hunters*), which was reprinted many times. Among the Ukrainian texts under consideration in this study, it is by far the most widely internationally acclaimed work, having been translated into English under the title *The Hunters and the Hunted* in 1954, with additional print runs in 1956 and 1957.<sup>538</sup> Based on the English text, translations into German, Dutch, and Spanish followed. Since Ukrainian independence in 1991, the novel

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<sup>538</sup> I will refer to the novel as *The Tiger Hunters* rather than by its title in the existing English translation, as I will later focus on the multiple reasons the original title was significant. I will be using quotes from this translated edition to the extent that they reflect the original emphasis. Unfortunately, the translation is often somewhat too liberal with the original, and on some occasions, it seems to have been based on a different version of the Ukrainian text than the full text I used for the Ukrainian quotes. Quotes marked by a citation from the English translation are taken from it; others are my own translation or a revised version from the English-language edition.

*The Tiger Hunters* has been included into the high school curriculum in Ukrainian literature, clearly a recognition of both its literary qualities and its potential for patriotic moral education.

The novel starts as a 25-year-old Ukrainian political convict, Hryhorii Mnohohrishnyi, escapes from a train taking him to a forced labor camp in Kolyma. He makes his way through the taiga in the Far Eastern Region (most often referred to as DVK, an abbreviation of the name transliterated from the Russian) and is about to die of hunger and exhaustion when, in a last semi-conscious effort, he saves a Ukrainian girl, Nataalka, from a bear. The Sirkos, the girl's family, are the eponymous tiger hunters; they are one of those families who relocated for economic reasons to the Russian empire's Far East in the late nineteenth century.<sup>539</sup> Hryhorii spends almost a year with them, participating in their various hunting activities in the taiga, until he learns that the police officer Medvyn, who had ruined his life and tortured him, was also relocated to DVK to personally coordinate the search for the escapee. Encountering Medvyn in the taiga, Hryhorii avenges himself and flees to the Japanese-ruled Manchuria across the border, joined by Nataalka. They plan to circumnavigate the world to return to Ukraine, which remains outside the novel's plot. The novel is to a great extent based on the author's own experience as a political convict in the DVK in the 1930s, and Bahrianyi himself indeed ran away from labor camps and spent two years in relative freedom in the region, only to be recaptured when he was visiting his mother in Ukraine.

### 5.2.1. Is *The Tiger Hunters* an adventure novel?

The novel is not offered to the reader as an example of the adventure genre, as far as

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<sup>539</sup> "In the period between 1859-1900 the Ukrainians formed nearly 75% of the colonists [of the Russian Far East] and later in 1900-1912 about 65%." John V. Sweet, "The Soviet Far East," *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (Winter 1955): 66.

para-textual material is concerned. Nor is its dark subject—political repressions and the suffering of millions under a totalitarian regime—a usual one for this genre known for a light reading experience. However, already in 1946, Iurii Sherekh-Sheveliov, a prominent literary critic, commenting on trends of Ukrainian émigré literature, noticed that *The Tiger Hunters* follows the model of a Western European adventure novel in order to contemplate on the ideological aspects, important for Ukrainian identity. Sheveliov argues that,

“should one leave aside ideology, it is a typical West European or even American adventure novel. And [Bahriahyi’s] imagery could be encountered in such a novel – apart from thematic and ethnographic motifs, of course. Transferring this genre into Ukrainian literature, combining it with Ukrainian militant ideology is a very good thing and even worth imitating. First, for the sake of moral education, and then, for genre enrichment of Ukrainian literature. But there is an inevitable task: Ukrainianize not only the idea but also the imagery, the style, and the composition.”<sup>540</sup>

Indeed, one can distinguish structural elements of adventure genre in the plot of *The Tiger Hunters*. The protagonist is presented as a hero, a unique personality among the thousands and millions of convicts who experience a similar fate. He is treated with special vigilance in the convict transport, his presence checked at every stop. Yet despite this treatment he is the only one who manages – the only one who dares! – to escape. Other people, against whose background he stands out, are described as a faceless mass: “the crowd lethargically fell prone in the dust.”<sup>541</sup> This description suggests that people comprising this “crowd,” as if it became one collective subject performing a single action and having a single reaction, rather than a multitude of separate personalities. It is highlighted, however, that such is not their original condition but rather the result of months and years of dehumanizing treatment by the regime.

By surviving his jump out of the train Hryhorii passes the second test of extraordinary

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<sup>540</sup> Іурій Шерех, “Styli suchasnoï ukrains’koï literatury na emihratsiï,” in *Porohy i zaporizhzhia: literatura, mystetstvo, ideolohii*, vol. 1, Ukrains’ka literatura XX stolittia (Kharkiv: Folio, 1998), 175.

<sup>541</sup> “Юрба апатично лягла в пилюку ниць.” Іван Багряній, “Tyhrolovu,” in *Tyhrolovu; Morituri*, by Іван Багряній (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2001), 14.

heroic qualities: “He could only have jumped to his death, yet the prisoner would not admit defeat. There were at least ninety-nine chances out of a hundred that he had ended up in bits and pieces; yet he had jumped.”<sup>542</sup> Thus marked as extraordinary, the hero is characterized with further outstanding talents and skills, as it pertains to a hero of adventure (to fly, to shoot<sup>543</sup>), and with moral virtues (the most important of which is that he “loved his hapless country and people”<sup>544</sup>).

He must face a series of ordeals, the ultimate of which is, even if metaphorically, named in fairy-tale/adventure terms. When Hryhorii needs to explain his encounter with Medvyn to Nataalka, he explains his revenge on the officer with the words: “I have killed a dragon.” This rendering of the antagonist as the evil dragon, and, respectively, of Hryhorii as a fairy-tale hero, also suggests the inevitability of such an encounter, as the protagonist himself explains: “What I did I had to do.”<sup>545</sup> Only emerging victoriously from an encounter with the evil “dragon,” he is entitled to a prize – “princess” Nataalka and a promise of happiness.

Sherekh-Sheveliov names the import of the traditional adventure fiction by naming the typical “Western European” and “American” adventure novel. The scholarship on individual formulas within the more broadly defined “adventure fiction,” which has appeared during the decades since the critic’s characterization, allows identifying most important connections with two formulas: that of the wanderer-adventure and the western, which Bahrianyi leverages to tell his story.

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<sup>542</sup> Ivan Bahrianyi, *The Hunters and the Hunted* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1957), 8. “Стрибнув у певну смерть, але не здався. 99 шансів проти одного було за те, що від нього залишаться самі шматки, але стрибнув.” Bahrianyi, “Tyhrolovy,” 15.

<sup>543</sup> Bahrianyi, “Tyhrolovy,” 83, 117.

<sup>544</sup> Bahrianyi, 224.

<sup>545</sup> Bahrianyi, *The Hunters and the Hunted*, 225. “Слухай, Наталко! Те, що я зробив, — те я мусив зробити. Розумієш? Я вбив одного дракона...” Bahrianyi, “Tyhrolovy,” 224.

Structurally, this plot has many similarities with the western subgenre of adventure fiction, which I discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. In this vein, the Far East is construed as an analogue of the Wild West of the westerns: the setting that symbolically belongs to the settlers and is a kind of a last refuge from the encroachment of the society's institutions. It is a setting where the hero is evaluated based on his physical and moral qualities rather than legal or illegal status in society. In fact, there are also more specific structural similarities between the novel *Salt Canyon River* by Tadeusz Kosteki (which I analyzed as a Polish rewriting of the western in Chapter 2) and *The Tiger Hunters*. I attribute these similarities to the import of the western genre, rather than any direct connection between the two texts. For instance, in both cases, the male protagonist is a falsely accused escaped convict who is introduced into a family of settlers in the wilderness after saving a daughter of the family from a wild beast's attack. In both cases, the marital happiness of the couple is only possible after gets his revenge against the detractor. These are structural similarities of the plot that are, however, associated with rather different ideas that the novels convey. Aspects connecting Bahrianyi's novel with the structure of western, such as the opposition of society and nature, will reappear throughout my analysis of the novel. However, I will start with aspects of movement through space that are also very significant for *The Tiger Hunters* and connect this novel with the tradition of "wanderer adventure," though, as I will show, in a rather subversive way.

### 5.2.2. The modus of exotic adventure: mobility of the privileged or displacement of the disenfranchised

As it can be seen from the brief overview above, the novel quite literally follows the most general structure of adventure. This is combined with an exotic setting, travels away from home, and the taming of nature on the frontier of civilization. However, this is not a typical "wanderer

adventure” seen in Western literatures. Unlike Sherekh-Sheveliov, who claims that only “ethnographic” additions on top of the existing structure from Western literatures characterize this novel as a Ukrainian one, I argue that it diverges from West European predecessor texts on a deeper level that has to do with the structuring of the artistic world and different actors on its mental map.

Martin Green associates an ability to travel in the “wanderer adventure” genre type with the power of modernity, which distinguishes the representatives of the modern world from all those “pinned” to their respective localities.<sup>546</sup> Bahrianyi in his *The Tiger Hunters* overtly works to complicate this connection between movement in space and the privilege accompanying belonging to the modern system. This is most conspicuously done through the description of several trains and their passengers: the elite “Pacific express no. 1” that crosses the entire Soviet Union from West to East, the trains used for bringing convicts to the labor camps, and a passenger train ironically called “the express that carries fire-wood and lumber.”

Interpretation of travelling as a privilege of the modern system, of movement as conquering space is presented in *The Tiger Hunters* in connection to the passengers of the “Pacific express no. 1”: “This was the finest, most modern express in the USSR; the most comfortable in the so-called worker-peasant State. Its round-trip reached half-way round the earth.”<sup>547</sup> In the excerpt about this “imaginary extra-territorial world”<sup>548</sup> of “the cream of the workers’-peasants’ empire,”<sup>549</sup> the author uses many tropes that are associated with adventure-seeking, travel for its own sake, topoi from stories about well-known wanderers. “They were

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<sup>546</sup> See Green, *Seven Types of Adventure Tale: An Etiology of a Major Genre*, 145–46.

<sup>547</sup> Bahrianyi, *The Hunters and the Hunted*, 11.

<sup>548</sup> Bahrianyi, 13.

<sup>549</sup> Bahrianyi, 12.

looking for something and escaping from somewhere – seekers of fortune and escapers into the unknown;”<sup>550</sup> what propels them to move across the Soviet Union is a “reckless drive towards a half-real chimera, an exotic Eldorado.”<sup>551</sup> And just like the exotic, unknown New World attracted Europeans after Columbus’s discovery, these “adventurers” iconize Vladimir Arseniev, who “was the Columbus ... the discoverer of the unique; the conquering hero of the unconquered, the champion of the most exotic and most fantastic region in the world – the Russian or rather Soviet Klondyke.”<sup>552</sup>

Bahrianyi, however, does not hide irony when describing these “adventurers,” suggesting that the real aim of “conquering” the “fantastic worlds” is career and financial benefits. It is noteworthy that parallels with the localities in the New World include specifically Eldorado and Klondike, the places associated in cultural imagination with a possibility of quick enrichment. The lofty descriptions of the drive towards the unknown clashes with the suggestion that what indeed interests these travelers is material enrichment and status gains, when the author calls them “seekers of dangerous adventures and even more fast-paced careers; seekers of fortune and ‘long rubles’ [high income]; jugglers of long work trips and even longer figures on bank cheques.”<sup>553</sup> Unlike the true heroes and the true *masters* of the DVK, these people are hysterically afraid of tigers, who govern over their thoughts already on the train.

The protagonist and other members of the in-group end up in the places remote from their home for reasons that very different from those moving the passengers of the Pacific express. Some are sent there by the regime—sentenced to labor camps as Hryhorii or exiled in Siberia as

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<sup>550</sup> Bahrianyi, 12.

<sup>551</sup> Bahrianyi, 13.

<sup>552</sup> Bahrianyi, 14.

<sup>553</sup> “Аматори довгих відряджень і ще довших чисел у банкових чеках.” Bahrianyi, “Tyhrolov,” 18.

“kulaks,” as some other Ukrainians he meets. In some cases, economic hardships propelled relocation to the Far East, as is the case with the Sirko and other Ukrainian families. In all these cases, mobility is imposed on disenfranchised citizens. The following scene epitomizes the fact that the regime is exercising its power over the subject by moving them around the huge territory of the Soviet Union, and this is not limited to those who are repressed.

Another train pulled in from the opposite direction and stopped on the next track. [...] Convict transport!

On the other side of the ‘express’ there was a similar train going in the opposite direction. Car platforms were patrolled by men armed with triple-edged bayonets. Someone called from the express on the left to the train on the right.

‘Hello, countrymen! Where are you going?’ and the fellow laughed with gallows laughter.

‘To the Far Eastern Camps. And you?’

‘To the Northern Camps! Ha, ha, ha!’ [...]

Someone lost their mind in this country. One convict transport went eastward, the other one westward, and between them – yet another one, only without patrol.<sup>554</sup>

The train “without patrol” in between the two convict transports is the sarcastically called “express that carries fire-wood and lumber,” the passenger train which Hryhorii and Nataalka’s brother Hryts’ take on a visit to Khabarovsk. Its passengers are free, unlike the convicts in the trains on the other tracks, but in all other respects it seems that these passengers’ experience could not differ more from the privileged ones of “Pacific express no. 1.” In contrast with the lofty “drive to the unknown,” these people are travelling out of dire need, because of prohibitions and state violence. The scenes on this train are used to offer a panoramic view of human suffering in the Soviet Union, which the author achieves by creating a kind of a polylogue of people’s voices in the carriage. While the author is focusing on Ukrainians – he always

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<sup>554</sup> “Назустріч підкотився інший ешелон і став поруч [...] Е т а п!

З другого боку «експресу» стояв такий же етап, лише в другий бік. На гальмових площадках маячили патрулі з тригранними багнетами. Хтось гукав зліва через «експрес» до другого етапу:

- Здорово земляки!... – і сміявся шибеничним сміхом. – Куди Бог несе?!..

- В «Дальлаг», а вас?

- В «Сєвлаг»!.. Ха-ха-ха! [...]

Хтось з’їхав з глузду в цій країні. Один етап ішов на схід, другий на захід, а посередині – ще один етап, тільки без конвоя.” Bahrianyĭ, 179.

emphasizes that when the Ukrainian protagonists meet someone they recognize as a Ukrainian based on their language (Ukrainian or accented Russian) – the general assumption about those not specifically recognized as Ukrainian is that they are Russian. Jews are also fleetingly mentioned on this train ride as such a disenfranchised group whom the Soviet regime made “forget their Palestines” and relocate to the Far East, to Birobidjan.<sup>555</sup> Other non-local nationalities of the Soviet Union are not mentioned, but this diversity means that in ethnic terms there is no difference between the passengers of the “Pacific” and the “firewood” “expresses,” which suggests that the author does not connect Soviet privilege to any ethnic origin. In fact, Bahrianyi shows that while some groups may be overrepresented among the disenfranchised, there is no characteristic that would guarantee keeping one’s privileged position. How quickly one can change one’s status is shown in the final scene of the chapter set in the “Pacific express,” when one of the privileged “adventure seekers” is nearly arrested because of his resemblance to Hryhorii’s description, whose escape was just made known. In a totalitarian state, any privilege is a temporary illusion.

### 5.2.3. Returning home as the drive: Ukraine as the axiological center

So, this story is not about a “drive” towards the unknown and exotic, but rather about returning home, which is the ultimate desire of the protagonist and other in-group members, from which they are prevented by the regime. The axiological center on their mental map is undoubtedly Ukraine (as opposed to those “Pacific express” passengers who “had escaped from the hateful reality at one end of the earth and were now dashing off towards the other”<sup>556</sup>). For the protagonists, specifically, Hryhorii and Nataalka, at the moment when they leave Soviet Union

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<sup>555</sup> Bahrianyi, 178.

<sup>556</sup> Bahrianyi, *The Hunters and the Hunted*, 12.

for exotic foreign countries, the only urge to go into yet new unknown lands is the aim to ultimately return home:

Their road led forward, into the unknown. Somewhere around the world. They were ready for all hardships, to severe struggle and losses; they burnt the ships behind them and believed in their star that lit their road – the road into life. The road in that direction – somewhere to that remote, completely unknown place for one of them, sunny Ukraine. Or to a heroic battle and death for that remote, that unknown, that dreamt-of Ukraine.<sup>557</sup>

It is only by necessity and under external force that they get to experience the exotic otherness of places they traverse on this symbolic life-long way home. One of those is the Far Eastern Region. From the very first mention and throughout the novel, this space is presented as exotic, almost fantastic, “ephemeral,” “some weird, dangerous, fantastic land.”<sup>558</sup> The attention is drawn to its climatic contrasts, unexpected combinations of flora and fauna, that is, all that which emphasizes an external gaze directed at this space, which dwells on ideas from elsewhere about how climate, flora, and fauna should “normally” combine.

The encounter with the natural otherness of this space, however, is not combined with an encounter with cultural otherness. Indigenous people of the region are mentioned but as artistic details that enhance exotic flair, along with the flora and the fauna, not full-fledged actors on the mental map offered by the novel. This creates an image of a “no-man’s land” that was settled and colonized by Ukrainians decades ago, which makes them its rightful masters. This is what allows connection to this land as a second, symbolic Ukraine that the migrants had recreated for themselves in the Far East. This parallel between the two spaces is the most striking in the scenes of Hryhorii’s first encounter with the Sirko family. Semi-conscious in the taiga, he responds to

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<sup>557</sup> “Шлях їм прослався вперед, в невідоме. Десь навколо світу. Приготовані на всі труднощі, на жорстоку боротьбу й на втрати, вони спалили всі кораблі за собою та й вірили в свою зорю, що присвічувала їм шлях, — шлях в життя. Шлях туди — десь на ту далеку, для одного з них зовсім незнану, сонячну Україну. А чи в героїчну битву і смерть за тую далеку, за тую незнану, за тую омріяну Україну.” Bahriianuī, “Tyhrolovu,” 237.

<sup>558</sup> “Дивна якась, небезпечна, фантастична країна.” Bahriianuī, 13.

Natalka's call for help because she is calling him by name – that is, she is calling her brother of the same name. Delirious, Hryhorii is babbling about another Natalka he left behind in Ukraine – his sister. He asks Natalka's mother permission to call her mother, because she is “just like his mother.”<sup>559</sup> After he regains consciousness, it takes a rather lengthy comic exchange to identify their whereabouts, because they are mentioning the same toponyms, only that Hryhorii thinks of places in Ukraine (and cannot comprehend how it is possible that he arrived back in Ukraine), while the Sirkos mean those places in the DVK named after places in Ukraine. Of course, the illusion is only possible because they interact in the same language. The following description of Natalka's mother's life experience and her connection to both the original and the “second” Ukraine captures this symbolic overlap of the two spaces:

But I love this land too. Here I grew up, here I got married, here I bore children, four of whom I buried in this earth. As did my mother and father. No, I cannot separate myself from this land anymore. But I am equally drawn there. As I remind myself my mother's stories, those cherry orchards, those vast steppes, quiet rivers, clear starry nights.<sup>560</sup>

This quote also shows another aspect of this longing: it is directed into the past. The mother's nostalgia for the original Ukraine is dwelling on her childhood memories; her connection to the “substitute” Ukraine is based on important events that took place there, that are personalized by six dead family members. After Natalka's mother shares her feelings, Hryhorii hesitates to “tell this mother that that quiet land does not exist anymore, that blue-skied sunny Ukraine. That the cherry orchards had been cut down, the rivers muddied, the steppes soaked in tears, and the clear sky darkened over people.”<sup>561</sup> This suggests an interesting paradox: for Hryhorii and Natalka, the

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<sup>559</sup> Bahrianyĭ, 57.

<sup>560</sup> “Але я й цю землю люблю. Тут-то зросла, тут віддалась, тут діток породила, та в цій землі чотирьох і поховала. І матір, і батька поховала тут. Ні, від цієї землі вже несила відірватись. Але й туди тягне. Як згадаю материні розмови, тії сади вишневі, тії степи широкі, ріки тихі, ночі ясні, зоряні” Bahrianyĭ, 75.

<sup>561</sup> “Хотілось йому сказати цій матері, що немає вже того тихого краю, України тієї, ясної, сонячної. Що садки вишневі повирубунані, ріки збаламучені, степи сльозами обпоєні, і небо ясне людям потемніло... Але він мовчав. Нехай. Нехай любить її такою, якою пам'ятає” Bahrianyĭ, 75.

route that will bring them home leads to the future, but at the same time, home is something that belongs to the past, as in the novel's present day it is damaged by the actions of the Soviet regime.

#### 5.2.4. The key conflict in *The Tiger Hunters*

The key binary opposition in the novel is that of the preexisting harmonious order and the evil regime that infringes upon the preexisting harmony and attempts to reorganize this order to its own liking. This "own" space, encroached upon by the adversary (the Soviet regime), includes to the same extent both Ukraine and the DVK, which, as I have shown above, is perceived as a "second Ukraine," even if it is presented to the reader as exotic. The reason for this is that this region has been settled by Ukrainians who domesticated the space by naming the localities in recognizable ways, and who, comprising a sizeable part of the population of the region, have a common language.

The language criterion is an important one for identification of "in-group" members. In numerous situations when "on the edge of the earth," the Ukrainian protagonists are unexpectedly answered in their own language, and in all cases these compatriots turn out to be very decent and worthy of compassion. The discourse of the regime often appears in the text as a transliteration from Russian, which reinforces the opposition between the "in-group" and the adversary.

In the background to this central opposition, there are numerous "others." First, many indigenous groups that inhabit the exotic region are mentioned: Evenki (traditionally and in the novel called Tungus), Udege, Nanai people (traditionally and in the novel called Golds). Typical

epithets to describe them in the novel are “laughable,” “naïve,” and “wild.”<sup>562</sup> Indigenous peoples are described with the tropes of primitivism, which discursively justifies that the region has been settled by, and “truly belongs” to, Ukrainian colonizers.

Another group traditionally inhabiting the region is the Russian Old Believers, who are also depicted as victims of the regime.<sup>563</sup> Yet, there is something potentially more ominous about them, at least because of the connection of the Old Believer beauty Fiona with the officer Medvyn.

Even more distant margins are represented by Japanese and Chinese people. In Khabarovsk, the two Hryhoriis visit a Japanese restaurant and make fun of themselves and their inability to enjoy Japanese noodles, which requires being a part of the thousand-years culture;<sup>564</sup> however, this is an encounter with an interesting, exotic “otherness” with no threat attached to it. Japanese and Chinese “others” are also respected for a long cultural tradition and a strong identity.

The “free lands” to which Hryhorii and Natalka will flee from the Soviet Union in order to eventually return home start with Japanese-controlled Manchuria.<sup>565</sup> The two ways in which this territory is opposed to the Soviet Union make it a safe destination for escape. First, synchronously, it is controlled by Japan, a militant rival of the USSR for control over the Far East. Although any real battles between the Soviet Union and Japan did not take place until 1938, while the novel is set in the early 1930s, both sides are already protective of the border and ready to assert their military might and shoot across the river-border, which makes easy cover for

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<sup>562</sup> Bahrianyĭ, 136,172,210.

<sup>563</sup> Bahrianyĭ, 113.

<sup>564</sup> Bahrianyĭ, 192.

<sup>565</sup> No commentary whatsoever is made in the novel about the Japanese occupation of this part of China.

the escaping couple.

The second and more important opposition, however, is a diachronic one. Nataalka and Hryhorii are crossing over to visit “an aunt,” a family member living in Harbin. (It remains unclear in the novel if they actually plan to visit a family member or this is a code to inform Nataalka’s parents of the successful crossing of the border.) Harbin and Sakhalin are mentioned as places where many of “ours” live.<sup>566</sup> “Ours” here most likely refers to Ukrainians, but what is important is that this population came into being as part of a project of the Russian empire to seize control over the Far East beyond its borders in the last decades before the revolution. Indeed, there is evidence that Harbin still remained to a great measure a “Russian” city in the 1930s; it retained its face and flair as an urban space of the Russian empire, whereas in the Soviet Union the cities have changed drastically.<sup>567</sup> This adds a new level of understanding to the

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<sup>566</sup> Bahrianyiĭ, “Tyhrolovy,” 230.

<sup>567</sup> Harbin became “the provincial capital of Russian Manchuria,” in connection with the Russian empire’s “policy of ‘peaceful penetration’” into Manchuria and concession on building the Chinese Eastern Railroad around the turn of the century. (David Wolff, *To the Harbin Station: The Liberal Alternative in Russian Manchuria, 1898–1914* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 7–8.) After the October revolution, Harbin became a destination for émigrés, which doubled its population and made it “the only Russian city outside the Soviet Union.” (Wolff, 8.) According to a British report on refugees by John Hope Simpson, which collected the statistics in the 1930s, Harbin remained “a town mainly Russian” until the Japanese invasion into Manchuria, when “[i]ts importance as the centre of the refugee community in the Far East has disappeared,” as “the Russians have been ousted from many occupations which were their monopoly” and many left, primarily for Shanghai, while “there remain those who accepted Japanese domination [...] and those who were unable to escape.” (John Hope Simpson, *The Refugee Problem: Report of a Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 495.) Even so, in 1936 some 44,888 “emigrant Russians” remained in Manchuria, which does not include Soviet citizens (Simpson, 497.).

The impression about the persistence of urban space in the Russian empire into the 1930s, up to the Japanese invasion, comes from a memoir: N. M. Valeev and N. G. Valeeva, *Potomkam Ivana Grigor'evicha Stakheeva Posviashchaetsiia. Elabuga, Xarbin, Sidneĭ* (Kazan': Idel'-Press, 2007). Blaine Chiasson comments on this discourse in Russian memoirs about Harbin: “Harbin itself is often bathed in the perpetual light of a golden autumn as the last citadel of pre-war Russian culture in the world” (Blaine R. Chiasson, *Administering the Colonizer: Manchuria's Russians Under Chinese Rule, 1918-29*, *Contemporary Chinese Studies* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 7.). One example he quotes specifically reflects this notion of Harbin as pre-revolutionary Russian space: “Harbin became, to all intents, a really free Russian town: a place where life continued as previously, in the old Russian way, a place of calm and contentment. As in old Russia, the deep solemn tones of the cathedral bell called the congregation to early morning service, and in the evening people crossed themselves once more as its measured tolling summoned them to mass.” (Viktor Petrov, “A Town on the Sungari,” in *The Other Russia: The Experience of Exile*, eds. Michael Glenny and Norman Stone (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), 208, cited in Chiasson, 7.). At the same time, Chiasson emphasizes how this discourse, which is exactly reflected in Bahrianyiĭ’s novel, is reluctant to admit the place of Chinese culture in the city, as Harbin was administered by the Chinese before the Japanese invasion, and the Soviet

central opposition on the mental map of *The Tiger Hunters*.

The Russian imperial regime was apparently not ideally supportive of the protagonists' family in particular, and the in-group in general. After all, the economic hardships in Ukraine in the tsarist times made the Sirko family emigrate to the Far East. Moreover, the political repressions in the Soviet Union are described as a continuation of tsarist era repressions: Hryhorii Mnohohrishnyi is a (symbolic) heir of the Ukrainian Hetman Dem'ian Mnohohrishnyi, who is called in the novel "the first Siberian convict."<sup>568</sup> (Dem'ian Mnohohrishnyi was a late-seventeenth-century Ukrainian political leader who was exiled to Siberia for attempting to bring Left-Bank Ukraine out of Muscovy's sphere of influence).

In comparison with the new Soviet regime, however, the tsarist empire was a bearable, established status quo: "In the past, before the revolution, our people lived well here,"<sup>569</sup> recalls Natalka's mother. They had an opportunity to achieve what they strived for, even if that was not in their native land but in a different part of the empire. "We toiled honestly, so we earned. And that should be added – there was what to do and where to earn [...] We wouldn't eat grey bread, son. Even if here it were a poor harvest year, we would have foreign flour [...] And what rifles and all possible contraptions the boys acquired!.. We lived here better than back at home. This became our second Ukraine, a new Ukraine, son, but a happier one."<sup>570</sup> In other words, back in tsarist times it was possible to find a place where they could recreate their symbolical order in a way that the order of the empire would not interfere with it too much.

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presence.

<sup>568</sup> Bahriany, *The Hunters and the Hunted*, 9.

<sup>569</sup> "Колись, до революції, здорово жили тут наші люди." Bahriany, "Tyhrolovu," 73.

<sup>570</sup> "Трудилися щиро, то й мали. І те сказати — було що робити і де заробляти [...] Ми хліба сірого, синку, не їли! І коли навіть недорід тут був, то ми мали борошно заграничне [...] А які рушниці та всіляке начиння наші хлопці добували!.. Жили ми тут ліпше, як дома. Це була наша друга Україна, нова Україна, синку, але щасливіша." Bahriany, 74.

What makes the new, Soviet regime a more threatening and eviler adversary is its striving for total control, for absolute regimentation of long-existing customs and practices. To escape from this regimentation, the Sirko family had to resettle from their village in the Far East where they thrived to a more secluded place in the taiga: “New times, new ways. The things that happened made people catch their breath. The Soviet Government came and turned everything inside out [...] And we spat at all that and came here so that we could finish our lives in our own way [*po-svoiemu*] without seeing or hearing what was going on.”<sup>571</sup> Living in a region where tens of kilometers separate their house from the next human dwelling, they imagine that this “resource” is not depleted yet and that they can resettle deeper into the forest to obtain several more years of quiet life, but the Soviet system is armed with more and more contraptions of modernity; there is nowhere to hide. “The NKVD was now penetrating the taiga; the Old Believers were being ‘dekulakized’ and a whole village had been deported. There were unheard-of arrests and nobody could keep or use arms without special permission.”<sup>572</sup>

The novel includes numerous instances of opposing the “true” masters of this land to the false pretenders. The true masters, according to Bahrianyi, are Ukrainians who came to colonize this land just several decades ago. The following quote describes Hryhorii’s thoughts comparing a Soviet functionary’s and Hryts’s (Natalka’s brother’s) moral rights to be considered master of the region:

Let Lavrentiev govern over the regional committee of the Party – this contemporary Muraviov-Amurskii – what does Hryts’ have to do with it? Hryts’ is a master and a god of the taiga, and Lavrentiev... is a plug. Hryts’ did not know who he was, doesn’t know and doesn’t need to know.<sup>573</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> Bahrianyi, *The Hunters and the Hunted*, 74. “Нові часи, нові порядки. І настало таке, що люди за голови хапаються. Прийшла советська власть і все перевернула. [...] А ми плюнули на все та й перебравлись сюди, щоб і не чути, і не бачити, та щоб **по-своєму** таки віку доживати.” Bahrianyi, “Tyhrolovu,” 74.

<sup>572</sup> Bahrianyi, *The Hunters and the Hunted*, 112.

<sup>573</sup> “Хай собі Лаврентієв керує крайкомом ВКП(б), — цей новітній Муравйов-Амурський, — яке до того діло

Bahrianyi claims that a recent colonizer is a true master of the land. Indigenous people who had lived in taiga for centuries before that do not matter. This idea in the novel is reflected in the qualification of *The Tiger Hunters* by Sherekh-Sheveliov as dwelling on the model of the *American* adventure novel. Indeed, in Bahrianyi's novel, one can observe the same duality John Cawelti comments on with regard to the adventure set on the Western frontier, on the example of the Leatherstocking series: "From one angle, it appears to be an affirmation of the benevolent progress of American civilization; from another, it is an attack on that same civilization as measured against the natural nobility of a pastoral hero."<sup>574</sup> On the one hand, Bahrianyi's tiger hunters are proclaimed the masters of the taiga because they were the first to come here with the contraptions of modern civilization. As the following quote shows, the competition for first-coming that matters is only among "Christian souls," that is, it totally ignores the indigenous peoples that have been living there for a long time because they were exploiting nature's riches in a different way. On the other hand, a comparison of their right to the taiga with the Soviet regime's claims is a moral attack on modern civilization, as mentioned by Cawelti: "So they want our arms! Some managers [*khazii*]! We have lived a lifetime here without having asked them what to do. Where were they when the first Christian human being set foot on this soil, ha? Damned Herods!..."<sup>575</sup> This quote also refers to a recurrent reason to allude to this "struggle" for the symbolic power over the DVK, the new regime's requirement to register all units of firearms: "Dumb oxen! Who in the world would seriously ask them for a permit? We have lived a lifetime there without asking their permission, and we don't propose to ask for it now... Either

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Грицеві. Гриць є пан й бог нетрів, а Лаврентієв... затичка. Гриць його не знав, не знає й не потребує знати." Bahrianyi, "Tyhrolovu," 192.

<sup>574</sup> Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, 207.

<sup>575</sup> Bahrianyi, *The Hunters and the Hunted*, 113. "— Зброї їм!.. Хазяї теж!.. Та ми вік тут прожили, їх не бачили, та й їх не питали. Де вони були тоді, як тут і нога людська, християнська не ступала, га?!.. Іроди!.." Bahrianyi, "Tyhrolovu," 113.

we are the masters [*khaziiai*] there or we are not.”<sup>576</sup> As hunters, the Sirkos have many different units of firearms, and the regime does not agree that they are entitled to so many. Their status as the alleged masters of the taiga is obviously won with firearms in hand: as *tiger hunters* they are claiming their place in the hierarchy above the strongest and the most dangerous inhabitant of the taiga. The Soviets are claiming the title of hunters too, though: mayor Medvyn is said to think of himself as an unrivaled master of “this type of hunt,” that is, a human hunt.<sup>577</sup>

The story with the firearms is intertwined with Hryhorii’s revenge on Medvyn. This allows deciphering one more unexpected symbolic heritage in Hryhorii’s rebellion against the Soviet regime. Upon arrival to Sirko’s house, Hryhorii receives from the old hunter a rifle he had just got from Marshal Bliukher in Khabarovsk. A civil war veteran under Bliukher, Sirko receives it as a memory gift, “into reliable hands.”<sup>578</sup> Hryhorii immediately finds it ironic that the rifle is given by a Soviet hero and with such a parting request, taking into account that Hryhorii is considered a political criminal by the same regime that was created with Bliukher’s efforts and which considers the Marshal a hero. Towards the end of the novel, Hryhorii uses the same firearm to kill Medvyn, which is why this symbolic heritage of Hryhorii’s revenge might not immediately catch the reader’s eye, as the author does not remind us about it. Still at the height of power in the early 1930s when the action takes place, Bliukher had been accused of counter-revolutionary activity and in 1938 died in prison while under investigation by the time Bahrianyi wrote the novel. This tiny detail adds additional understanding to the central opposition in the novel. Unlike, for instance, Bradovych, who presents the antagonism of “Ukrainians” and

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<sup>576</sup> Bahriany, *The Hunters and the Hunted*, 188. “І хто б це їх справді всерйоз просив про дозвіл! Та ми вік прожили тут — в них дозволу не питали. То й питати не будемо. Або ми не хазяї...” Bahrianyi, “Tyhrolovy,” 190.

<sup>577</sup> Bahrianyi, “Tyhrolovy,” 31.

<sup>578</sup> Bahrianyi, 80.

“Muscovites” as an eternal one, Bahrianyi obviously suggests a more historical view: the Soviet regime is evil because it encroaches on the bearable normalcy established in the tsarist times and also as it goes astray from the revolutionary impetus.

#### 5.2.5. Belonging to the realm of modernity

The opposition between the “true masters” of the taiga, the Ukrainian settlers, and the pretenders, the Soviet regime, is also related to the dichotomy of belonging/non-belonging to the realm of modern civilization or culture. At times, it is an objective difference in experience of those living in the taiga from those living in the city. When the two Hryhoriis visit Khabarovsk out of the necessity to reconfirm some contracts (for supply of furs) and restock in supplies, Hryhorii immediately notices a progression from Hryts’s realm to his own and Hryts’s helplessness in it, as they need, for instance, to take the train full of people “by storm,” that is, to make way into an overcrowded carriage. In the city, Hryts’ objectively lacks some of the competences required for survival:

As he spoke Hrytsko waved his arms and raised his voice, forgetting that he wasn’t in the forest now. Hryhory had to calm him down. He also had to guide him by the arm because Hrytsko did not know how to walk on pavements and did not recognize any rules for crossing the street. He insisted on jay-walking, and had it not been for Hryhory he would have found himself on several occasions under the wheels of one of the trucks that dashed back and forth, clanging their chains.<sup>579</sup>

At times, though, his lack of cultural skills is something of a play with the adversary using existing stereotypes. The following quote includes Hryts’s own retelling of his encounter with the authorities: “I pretended to wither under all this attention: ‘Of course – yes – I don’t know...’ And they: ‘You see, he is completely wild. Yes – no culture, no newspapers, no theatres. What

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<sup>579</sup> Bahriany, *The Hunters and the Hunted*, 188. “Розмовляючи, Гриць розмахував руками та підвищував голос, забуваючи, що він не в лісі. Аж Григорій мусив його отямлювати, та ще й брати під руку, — Гриць-бо не вмів ходити по пішоходах і не визнавав ніяких правил вуличного руху, — пер через вулицю навскіс і, якби не Григорій, мусив би не раз за те поплатитися десь під колесами тягарівок, що снували вулицями, як навіжені, ляскаючи ланцюгами.” Bahriany, “Tyhrolovy,” 190.

do you do there evenings and holidays? Probably drink!”<sup>580</sup> In this case, pretending to be “wild,” someone whose interests and purview do not include “newspapers”—that is, ideological awareness—is a strategy for non-cooperation with the regime.

Bahrianyi’s depiction of the opposition of “culture” and “nature” (the latter meaning a more traditional life in contact with nature) treats negatively this type of “culture,” represented by Soviet society, as exemplified by the following scene in a restaurant they visit in Khabarovsk:

Before him moved wave upon wave of perspiring painted and powdered human flesh. The builders and reconstructors of the world! Impotents galvanized by alcohol, builders of empire! Aristocracy! Modern aristocracy! Masters of situations... Rulers...  
Trash!!! All these dolls, all these bimbos and their easy-riders – sugar-coated ‘commanders,’ some pompous ‘responsible persons,’ some subjects pretentiously dressed up ‘à la Europe’ – all this trash, now moving around the room with their skinny knees stuck between women’s. And all these beslobbered, shop-worn girls and women with blue-black rings under their eyes, eaten away by alcohol, lust, perfume and syphilis...<sup>581</sup>

There are several important leitmotifs in this invective on modern Soviet culture that are intertwined and densely combined in this quote: sickliness, substance abuse, promiscuousness. All these items suggest somewhat a reversal of a natural order, which would imply unadorned healthy looks and adherence to traditional gender models in a relationship. These negative characteristics are supposed to highlight the falsity of the pretensions of these Soviet elites to their status of “reconstructors of the world.” The same leitmotifs reappear in the description of the passengers of the “Pacific express no. 1,” which suggests that every single instance of depiction in the novel of the privileged strata in Soviet society is accompanied by an invective on

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<sup>580</sup> Bahrianyi, *The Hunters and the Hunted*, 187. “Я удаю на цвіту прибитого і: «Еге... Так... Не знаю»... А вони: «Бач, дикий зовсім. Дійсно — ні тобі культури, ні тобі газет, ні театрів. Що ви там робите святами та вечорами? Мабуть, пиячите?!»” Bahrianyi, “Tyhrolovu,” 189.

<sup>581</sup> “Перед ним вихалась хтива веремія людського спітнілого, фарбованого і пудрованого м’яса. Будівники і реконструктори світу! Згальванізовані спиртом імпотенти, творці імперії! Аристократія! Сучасна аристократія! Пани становища... Володарі...  
Мотлох!!! Всі ці ляльки, всі ці кралі й їхні альфонси — личковані командири, й якісь надуті “відповідальні”, і якісь претензійне вбрані “а-ля Європа” суб’єкти — все це мотлох, що вихав по залі, затисши свої худосочні коліна межи жіночі. І всі ті заслинені, заязозені панни і пані, з синцями під очима, з’їдені алкоголем, розпустую, парфумами і люесом...” Bahrianyi, “Tyhrolovu,” 197.

what this Soviet modernity brings.

Against this background of idealization of life in nature and the harsh criticism of life in Soviet society, there remains a noteworthy fact that Hryhorii himself somehow shares both sets of competences, those for life in the city and those for life in taiga, which fits well with what an idealized protagonist of an adventure story should look like. Admittedly, he needs to be taught a lot by the Sirko family about their specific methods of hunting, but he has what it requires to pass the initial test that deems him suitable for this. It is clear for everybody, however, that he belongs elsewhere. When they encounter another Ukrainian family in the taiga, the old Sirko faces a need to explain why there is a stranger by their side:

‘Obviously, he is not local.’ The lanky son-in-law continued his enquiry.

‘No, he is not local,’ was the old man’s offhand reply.

‘Well, who is he?’ [...]

‘A relative ... from the centre ...’

‘Maybe a Party man. Seems to be...’

Sirko dug around in his pipe with his finger for a while.

‘No... take it higher.’ He reflected for a moment and then added proudly, firmly and a bit too loudly:

‘An engineer, so there!’ [...]

The son-in-law was confused and impressed by this terrible word which he had heard before, but never really understood. This secret foreign word, like a wizard’s spell, overwhelmed him.<sup>582</sup>

Being a party man or an engineer is, indeed, among the few “legitimate” reasons for a stranger to be in the taiga – and though Hryhorii’s reason to be in the taiga is totally illegitimate for the Soviet regime, he is, indeed, an engineer by training. He had once belonged to that world that could have sent him to the taiga in this capacity before that world denounced him as a criminal for his “love of the fatherland.” His other competencies are rather fantastic for the people of the taiga. In the quote above, old Sirko simply used an impressive word to cast off the other family’s questions; when Hryhorii confirms that he is an engineer, he is asked if he can fly,

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<sup>582</sup> Bahriany, *The Hunters and the Hunted*, 107.

too. This question combines two meanings: for the Sirkos, it is the next fantastic conjecture about something that is way out of their routine experiences, but Hryhorii responds affirmatively in quite a literal sense, meaning piloting the airplanes he had been engineering. The only other occasion when this same set of characteristics – “engineers and aviators”<sup>583</sup> – is used is with regard to the passengers of the “Pacific Express no.1.” Hryhorii, undoubtedly, to a much greater extent shares competencies and a background with these mobile educated elites of the USSR, yet he shares the values with the Sirkos and their like. There is no doubt that even if he had not been convicted, he would not go to work as an engineer to the other edge of the Union “out of boredom” and “for the sake of long paychecks.”<sup>584</sup>

Returning to the argument made by Sherekh-Sheveliov, that Bahrianyi borrows the structure of a Western adventure novel and adds some Ukrainian flair to it – my claim is that Bahrianyi, indeed, draws massively on the tropes of the adventure novel established in the European tradition, but he also turns them upside down within its structure, using the tropes connected to the American tradition of westerns. Movement as a privilege of modern civilization, typical in the wanderer adventure, is opposed here to the movement of disenfranchised masses by the regime. Modernity, in its Soviet version, is dubious as culture, and instead of being a civilization that needs to be brought to exotic remote places, it is a totalitarian regime that encroaches on the rightful, traditionally established order.

The novel ends, as Hryhorii and Nataalka flee from the Soviet Union to Manchuria, with a plan to fight their way into Ukraine. This plan is ever more virtual and ephemeral, as the novel is written on the eve of another escape: before Soviet troops recapture Ukraine during the Second

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<sup>583</sup> Bahrianyi, 12.

<sup>584</sup> Bahrianyi, 12; Bahrianyi, “Tyhrolovy,” 18.

World War. Although Bahrianyi was also persecuted by the German wartime authorities as he wrote the novel, he chose to flee to Germany, where he lived for the remaining years of his life. As the masses of displaced Ukrainian people in Europe were targeted by Soviet propaganda urging them to repatriate to Soviet Ukraine, Bahrianyi wrote a manifesto, “Why I do not want to return to USSR.” This text mostly explains his and his fellow countrymen’s position to Westerners, whom the same Soviet propaganda tried to make believe that these Ukrainians are criminals if they do not want to return home.<sup>585</sup> In fact, the main destination of the “repatriated” persons would be labor camps.<sup>586</sup>

Superficially, it may seem that unlike *Through Foreign Land*, *The Tiger Hunters* offers leaving the exotic space (the Far East) for the sake of the return to their “own” space (Ukraine). In fact, especially considering the circumstances of the novel’s creation, it becomes clear that Bahrianyi similarly proposes to leave the nominally “own” space (“far beyond the borders of this ‘fatherland’”<sup>587</sup>) because of the totalizing efforts of the adversary. The way the author situates the imaginary home in the past and in the future reveals his recognition that Ukrainian’s

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<sup>585</sup> For this specific rhetorical figure, see Ivan Bahrianyi, *Chomu ia ne khochu vertatys' do SSSR* (Vynnyep: Nakladom komitetu ukraintsiv Kanady, 1946), 4.

<sup>586</sup> More on the Soviet Return-to-the-Homeland Campaign, see Glenna Roberts and Serge Cipko, *One-Way Ticket: The Soviet Return-to-the-Homeland Campaign, 1955–1960* (Penumbra Press, 2008). Although the primary focus of the book by Roberts and Cipko is a later period, it provides information on the immediate post-war period, too. Roberts and Cipko quote an example of the discourse of Soviet propaganda in the Ukrainian-language version of the official newspaper of the campaign, which distorts the relation of Ukrainian refugees to Ukraine in a way similar to what Bahrianyi and Bradovych comment on: “the local OUNites [members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists] [...] look at Ukraine with hostile eyes,” *Za povernennia na Batkivshchynu*, no.1 (1956), 4, cited in Roberts and Cipko, 79.

<sup>587</sup> “Далі, далі! Скільки вистачить сил! Ще трохи — і тоді він врятований! І тоді подивимось! О, тоді ще подивимось! Він чкурне геть за межі цієї “батьківщини”, геть в Маньчжурію, Японію, Аляску, в Китай... Нові краї, дивні, незнані. Він об’їде навколо світу і повернеться додому. Так. Прийде, але вже як завойовник, як месник. Вибув на схід, а повернеться з заходу ” Bahrianyi, “Tyhrolovu,” 43.

“Farther, farther, as long as your strength lasts.’ Just a bit farther and he would be safe. ‘Then we shall see. Oh, yes, then we shall see.’ He would flee far beyond the borders of this ‘fatherland’, into Manchuria, Japan, Alaska, China... new, strange, unknown countries. He would go round the whole world and then return home. Yes, he would come back an avenging conqueror. He would escape going eastwards but he would return from the West.” Bahrianyi, *The Hunters and the Hunted*, 36.

symbolic home does not exist anymore, and “returning” to it would require regaining it from the adversary—an attempt which might cost one’s life—and rebuilding it according to the restored values of the in-group.

As the newly formed couple of protagonists venture out across the Soviet-Japanese border with a view to return to their remote fatherland, it becomes clear that for one of them this fatherland is totally unknown – that is, for Nataalka, who was born and spent her whole life in the Far East. As I have shown in the beginning of this section, *The Tiger Hunters* implement the general structure of adventure or fairy tale with regard to its typical male hero, who receives a beautiful girl’s fondness as a prize for his achievements. It is assumed that her values and goals are aligned with those of Hryhorii, although for her, the mental map of home vs. faraway should have looked quite differently. In the final section of this chapter, I will analyze a case where a female heroine becomes the focal point of an adventure story. Similar to *The Tiger Hunters*, that novel culminates around an escape from persecution in their own space contaminated by foreign rule, but is different in some other aspects partly because of this focalization on the female protagonist.

### 5.3. REVISITING ADVENTURE HEROES’ GENDER ROLES: HALIA LAHODYNSKA’S *TOWARD THE SUN* (1955)

Halia Lahodynska (Halyna Lahodysn’ka, later Lahodysn’ka-Zales’ka, 1900-1964) authored the novel *Do sontsia – do voli* (lit. “To the Sun, to Freedom,” English title page *Toward the Sun*) in 1955–56, soon after she moved to Buffalo, NY, in the United States. The novel was published in 1960 by a Ukrainian publishing house in Chicago. The novel’s action is set in the mid-1930s in Eastern Galicia, that is, part of Western Ukraine that was at that period under Polish rule.

The novel, whose subtitle is “A Journey of Youth,” tells the story of four Ukrainian students’ hike through the Carpathian Mountains. Two of them, Oleh and Oksana, are members of an underground Ukrainian nationalist organization. Two other members of the group, who are unaware of their affiliation, are Oleh’s fiancée Marusia and Roman, who is in love with Oksana but they are just about to confess their feelings as the action unfurls. The two weeks’ hike is supposed to be just a vacation – a respite both from their studies and from their clandestine activity – but in its course Oleh and Oksana find out that one of their comrades, Slavko, is sought by the Polish police, so they have to find him themselves, facilitate his escape over the Polish-Czechoslovak border, and identify the traitor who denounced Slavko to the police.

### 5.3.1. Split hero and gender roles

The novel is, at first glance, quite simply organized along the hikers’ journey, in chapters that with few exceptions strictly correspond to the days of the hike. However, it has several intertwined and parallel plotlines.

Slavko is the adventurer by force of circumstances; he is the protagonist of the storyline that culminates around crossing the border away from one’s “own” space into foreign lands, because one’s “own” space is ruled by an oppressive regime, in this case, Polish. This “strategic retreat” into the foreign lands puts this novel on a par with the other ones in this chapter. The combination of circumstances makes him a tragic hero: “Betrayed by a friend, devoid of the last hope to being loved by a dear girl, pursued by the police, he left into the dark night, into the unknown, full of dangers..!”<sup>588</sup> However, although his troubles are first mentioned as early as

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<sup>588</sup> “Зраджений приятелем, позбавлений останньої надії на кохання дорогої дівчини, переслідуваний поліцією — пішов у темну ніч, в невідоме, повне небезпек..!” Halia Lahodyns'ka, *Do sontsia – do voli. Mandrivka iunosti* (Chikago: Vydavnytstvo Mykoly Denysiuka, 1960), 208.

four pages into the novel, he is only virtually present in most of the text, as Oleh and Oksana are furtively looking for his traces.

The real active heroine in the novel is Oksana, who plays the main role in identifying the traitor who denounced Slavko and single-handedly organizes Slavko's escape. She humbly dismisses the qualification of her as a hero, recognizing that the escapee's troubles are much harsher: "Abandon that, Roman, I am not a hero. I am still leisurely hiking in the mountains, while the true hero is sitting somewhere out there in some hiding place, waiting for night to come [to cross the border]." <sup>589</sup> But these words are more of a pose of demureness, as she totally recognizes her own active role in the events: "I, by chance once more, in the course of our hike, picked up the trail of the likely traitor, and I pinned him down." <sup>590</sup> The double repetition of "I" in this quote, which is not required by Ukrainian grammar, is noteworthy, as it underscores her agency.

Completely parallel to Oksana's story is Roman's, which is a separate plot although they are happening in the same time and space. Roman's spiritual adventure takes him multiple times all the way between the heaven of Oksana's promised love and the hell of distrust and jealousy when he cannot comprehend her behavior and contacts. This is in striking contrast to the tradition of the adventure genre, which is quite typically a prerogative of a male hero, who would receive the passive heroine's love as a prize for his success.

A revision of the traditional gender roles is present in the structure of the novel and is discussed explicitly, in the following dialogue between Roman and Oksana:

"Has it ever occurred to you that this dangerous work should be left to the stronger gender – the men?"

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<sup>589</sup> "Лиши, Романе, я ніякий герой. Я покищо спокійно мандрую по горах тоді, коли правдивий герой сидить десь, у якійсь криївці, чекаючи ночі." Lahodyns'ka, 224.

<sup>590</sup> "Я ж знову випадково під час мандрівки, попала на слід правдоподібного зрадника, і я — пришила його." Lahodyns'ka, 221.

“No, never. It is not about physical strength; the strength of one’s spirit is more important.”<sup>591</sup>

In this exchange, the female protagonist calls for a revision of the idea of what qualities are needed to effectively perform dangerous clandestine activity. At the same time, as it was quoted above, she says that she is not a “hero” [*heroi*], using the masculine form of the noun. Together, this suggests an invitation to revise the association between the characteristics of typically male “heroic behavior” and the struggle for the national cause.

One possible explanation for the revision of the gender roles is the factor of feminine authorship. (Oksana has some autobiographic features: she is an accomplished piano player, like Lahodynska herself, who is much more known as a musician than as an author, notable for her performances and teaching both in the interwar period and in emigration.<sup>592</sup> Oksana is studying music in L’viv conservatory, but expresses vague plans to apply for a scholarship to study abroad after graduation, for example, in Vienna, where Lahodynska herself studied some fifteen years before her protagonist.) Of course, the simple fact that the author is a woman is not sufficient for the change. For instance, the adventure novel *Otaman Volia* (*Otaman Freedom*, 1959) by Lesia Khraplyva, which is close to *Toward the Sun* in time and circumstances of creation (and with that, written by an author of a younger generation), adheres to quite traditional gender roles.<sup>593</sup>

All Ukrainian novels analyzed so far—in Chapter 1 and in the current chapter—have recognized the important role of a woman in the preservation of a national community. However,

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<sup>591</sup> “— Чи тобі ніколи не прийшло на думку, що ту небезпечну роботу краще залишити сильнішій статі — мужчинам?”

— Ні, ніколи. Тут не йдеться про фізичну силу. Сила духа тут важніша.” Lahodyns’ka, 242.

<sup>592</sup> On interwar period professional musicians: Nataliia Kashkadamova, “Ukraïns’ka fortepianna muzyka v repertuari pianistiv Halychyny (60-i roky XIX st. – 1939 r.),” in *Zapysky Naukovoho tovarystva imeni Shevchenka*, vol. CCXXXII. Pratsi Muzykoznavchoï komisii (L’viv, 1996), 125–53.

On Ukrainian Musical Institute of America, in which Lahodynska was the head and the piano teacher in the Buffalo branch: L.V. Obukh, “Ukraïns’kyi Muzychnyi Instytut Ameryky: zberezheniia tradytsii vitchyznianoï muzychnoi osvity ta perspektyvy rozvytku,” in *Naukovi zapysky Ternopil’s’koho natsional’noho pedahohichnoho universytetu imeni Volodymyra Hnatiuka. Ser. Mystetstvoznavstvo*, vol. 3 (Ternopil’: TNPU, 2012), 108–14.

<sup>593</sup> Lesia Khraplyva, *Otaman Volia* (München: Ukraïns’ke vydavnytstvo, 1959).

this role was more of an educator of future generations and preserver of spiritual values than an active role of a fighter in the struggle against the oppressor. In *A Son of Ukraine*, it was lamented how detrimental to the national identity of the progeny it is to marry a foreign woman, thus emphasizing the need for nationally conscious Ukrainian women to preserve national identity. In Bradovych's novella *Through Foreign Lands*, the role given to Ukrainian women in the process of temporary preservation of the community in emigration cannot be underestimated, but in the two protagonist couples, it is the men who are taking the adventurous action that is supposed to save the community. Melasia is only a spiritual savior for Dmytro. Khrystia is more active as Marko's helpmate, yet still she is only a helper. Khrystia's own adventure is only about avoiding being kidnapped—this is the limit of agency given to a female protagonist. In Bahrianyi's *The Tiger Hunters*, Natalka is remarkably free of constraints enforced on her gender by the traditional society in which she lives: she participates in all the hunting activities on a par with her father and brother, and in their first encounter Hryhorii believes he had saved a boy. Still, Hryhorii's way into Sirko family starts with saving Natalka as a "damsel in distress," and ends with taking away Natalka as his fiancée after he had killed the enemy and thus restored his masculinity (cf. Tadeusz Kosteki's novel in Chapter 2). Natalka might be described as an active person transgressing the limitations of her gender but she is never the focal point of the narrative; thus, her ignoring of Hryhorii's feelings and later her decision to join him on his escape are perceived by the reader only as retribution or gratification for his ordeal.

In contrast, Lahodynska's Oksana is neither a "damsel in distress," nor a prize or a helper. The reader never learns what illegal activity the protagonists are involved in, but Oksana's role in the organization is an assessment of people's trustworthiness; she is valued for her intuition and psychological acumen that had never led them astray. However greatly she values Slavko as

a comrade and activist, she makes it clear that his feelings for her are not reciprocated: she refuses to become a prize for his achievements. As she finds him right before the police does and helps him disguise himself into the likeness of a false passport right under the authorities' nose, both risk legal retribution. For her, however, the stakes are greater: she also risks the contempt of friends and strangers who are made to believe she is having an affair. Oksana is not an accessory in Slavko's story, who would follow the adventurer on his strategic retreat because it is only his journey that matters. Oksana also refuses to follow Roman's lead and play by his rules in the relationship they are building before the reader's eyes. As Roman finally finds out about his friends' and beloved girl's dangerous illegal affiliation, he tries to take upon himself the role of savior for a weak female, of someone who knows better what to do for both of their happiness.

Oksana challenges this approach in the following exchange:

"I will take you, Oksana, on a journey, and we will wander away, far-far away, where none of these nightmares will bother you."

"Is this an allegory, Roman? And are you sure that I will follow you on such a journey?"

"If you love me, you will. I want you to be happy."

"I love you, Roman. But I will never leave my world to go far-far away. I am happy in my world."

"And you do not want me to be at least a little bit happy?"

"Do I really have to renounce my world for you to be happy?"<sup>594</sup>

As we can see, Oksana refuses both to make company to a man just because this would make him happy (either Slavko or Roman) and to let the man decide what can make her happy, which is a drastic contrast to the female characters we have seen so far in the Ukrainian adventure stories, as well as in the very model associated with the tradition of the adventure

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<sup>594</sup> "-Я візьму тебе в мандрівку, Оксанко, і підемо геть, у світ-за-очі, туди, де не будуть непокоїти та тривожити тебе жодні кошмари.

- Чи це алегорія, Романе? І ти певний, що я піду за тобою в таку мандрівку?

- Якщо любиш мене, підеш. Я хочу, щоб ти була щаслива.

- Я люблю тебе, Романе. Але ніколи не кину свого світу, щоб піти в світ-за-очі. Я щаслива в моєму світі.

- А мені не бажаєш ти ні трохи щастя?

- Чи справді я мушу зректися свого світу, щоб ти був щасливий?" Lahodyns'ka, *Do sonts'ia – do voli. Mandrivka iunosti*, 240–41.

genre. Her fondness is not anymore a prize for heroic capabilities: if anything, she chooses based on emotional affinity rather than on abstract “virtue” and by checking off points in the list of in-group values. Her choice, moreover, is not Slavko but Roman: the one who is shown as “less worthy” and himself repents his selfishness later on.

Finally, as this quote shows with Oksana’s own words, “she is happy in her world.” It is suggested that a woman can have her own affiliation to the community, her own life goals and values that are not subsumed by her feelings towards her significant other and his membership in the community, life goals, and values. In this case, “her world” includes the importance of struggle for national independence. This reflects increased participation of women in the public sphere at the time. In a survey conducted among students at Ukrainian high schools in L’viv in 1924, the respondents were asked, among other things, what they consider to be the necessary prerequisites of their personal happiness. Both for girls (36.36%) and for boys (38.595%), the most popular option was “Ukrainian independence,” which was chosen 2.5–3 times more often than the next most popular option, which was “quiet married (family) life; marrying, starting a family” and “being physically and mentally healthy, strong,” for girls and boys, respectively.<sup>595</sup> This suggests that for the real-life representatives of the generation and of the milieu to which Lahodynska’s protagonists belong, a highly mobilized version of national identity was quite common for both boys and girls. If anything, Lahodynska’s novel is rare in depicting the female in the center of the struggle for national independence, which attests rather to the fact that adventure fiction continues to reproduce models from the genre’s tradition and lags in reflecting changes that happen in reality in this regard. In the next segment, I will analyze what exactly “Oksana’s world,” which she refuses to leave, looks like.

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<sup>595</sup> Volodymyr Kalynovych, *Nasha molod' u perelomoviĭ dobi: chym tsikavyt'siâ, do choho zmahaie i shcho dumaie molod' v ukraïns'kiï seredniï shkoli*, Biblioteka “Novoho chasu” (L’viv: Panorama, 1926), 69.

### 5.3.2. Whose are the Carpathian Mountains?

The protagonists of the novel, Ukrainian students living in Western Ukraine under Polish rule, have a very salient and mobilized national identity. Hence, the opposition between the in-group, Ukrainians, and the adversary, Poles, organizes the world of the novel on several levels.

The protagonists' involvement in unspecified illegal activity, of course, raises the stakes and makes the encounter with the adversary, e.g. Polish police, more dangerous. The boundaries of the in-group close tighter because of this; any connection to the out-group is perceived as a threat. For example, Ivan's betrayal of his comrades and of the Ukrainian cause in general is associated with his plan "to flee to Warsaw where he had a beloved Polish woman,"<sup>596</sup> in a contemporary replay of the *Taras Bulba* conflict. Ivan's actions remain by and large without motivation, while the hypothesis that he turned Slavko in for the financial reward is mentioned but is not very convincing.<sup>597</sup> So the only thing the reader understands for sure from this explanation is that any rapprochement to a representative of the adversary is only possible at the cost of betrayal of one's comrades, fatherland, and identity: in a telegram to the Polish girl Ivan subscribes by the Polish version of his name, Janek.<sup>598</sup>

Behind this level of opposition that is related to their illegal activity there is a wider one, which manifests itself in the everyday life of the patriotically inclined protagonists (and which presumably was the reason for their involvement in the underground struggle). This is the struggle for cultural domination in Western Ukraine in general and more specifically in the area depicted in the novel, which is referred to as the Carpathians or Hutsulshchyna (the land of

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<sup>596</sup> "утекти до Варшави, де мав кохану-польку" Lahodyns'ka, *Do sontsia – do voli. Mandrivka iunosti*, 251.

<sup>597</sup> "Фільмова зірка не прийняла б такого голодранця..." Lahodyns'ka, 125.

[“A film star would not accept such a ragamuffin...”]

<sup>598</sup> Lahodyns'ka, 123.

Hutsuls). Hutsuls are an ethnographic group living in the Ukrainian Carpathians.<sup>599</sup> Currently, most of the people identifying themselves as Hutsuls live within the territory of Ukraine, but some reside in the adjacent territory in Romania. In the 1930s, the borders between Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia divided the area where this group lived. They are currently most commonly believed to speak a Ukrainian dialect.<sup>600</sup>

Obviously, drawing dividing lines between a dialect and a language or identifying to which of the cognate “fully fledged” languages a dialect belongs is a question of identity politics and power balance to a greater extent than pure linguistic observations. The protagonists in the novel believe that Hutsuls are Ukrainians and that Hutsulshchyna is undoubtedly a Ukrainian space, and the author and the implied reader are supposed to partake in this belief. But the “competitors,” the Poles, also have a developed system of argumentation to support their discursive right to this space. The protagonists discuss this attitude in the following exchange:

“Why do they not go to their Tatras? What did they forget here?”  
“Oleh, you are forgetting that ‘*Hutsul land is a Lesser Poland region,*’ and ‘*Hutsuls are our Lesser Polish folk,*’” responded Oksana.<sup>601</sup>

In this quote, the phrases I am showing here in italics are included in the Ukrainian text as transliteration of Polish utterances. What Oksana is actually saying is that “Oleh, when you are asking why Poles do not go to *their* Tatras, you are forgetting that Poles believes that the Hutsul

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<sup>599</sup> Ivan Pop, “Hutsuls,” in *Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture*, ed. Paul Robert Magocsi and Ivan Pop (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

<sup>600</sup> For example, Anthony J. Amato in his environmental history of the Hutsul region defines the people in focus in his study as “the Greek Catholic Ukrainian-speaking peasants who carried the name ‘Hutsuls.’” Anthony J. Amato, *The Carpathians, the Hutsuls, and Ukraine: An Environmental History* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, an imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc, 2021), 16. “Beginning with the early twentieth century the Hutsuls gradually adopted a Ukrainian national identity.” Pop, “Hutsuls,” 207. On using ethnographic and linguistic classifications of different groups of Carpathian highlanders, including Hutsuls, as a means for furthering outside national projects, see also Paul Robert Magocsi, “The Fourth Rus’: A New Reality in a New Europe,” *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 35–36 (2010 2011): 167–77.

<sup>601</sup> “«Чому не йдуть у свої Татри? Що вони тут згубили?» —«Олегу, ти забуваєш, що „Хуцульщина — малопольскі край”, а „Хуцулі — наш малопольскі людек”», — озвалась Оксана.” Lahodyns’ka, *Do sontsia – do voli. Mandrivka iunosti*, 229.

region is *theirs* to the same extent as the Tatras.” At the same time, by using code-switching, the quote reflects awareness that the medium is the message: the phrase “Hutsuls are our people” pronounced in Ukrainian suggests that the claim is that they are part of the Ukrainian ethnos; the same phrase pronounced in Polish suggests that they are a part of the Polish ethnos. From the logical standpoint, both utterances cannot be “true” if they are understood as something that describes reality. I suggest that instead, such utterances function closer to performative ones, which aim to establish social reality rather than describe it. In this subsection, I will analyze this discursive confrontation for the “ownership” of the region, which, I argue, Lahodynska, as an author revisiting the situation from both a temporary distance of several decades and an ironic distance informed by her experience since the events, complicates by introducing several language codes: Ukrainian, Polish, and the Hutsul dialect.

At first glance, the setting of Lahodynska’s novel puts it apart from other adventure novels in an exotic setting analyzed so far. Some other adventure novels, e.g. Stepan Liubomyrs’kyi’s *Doba strakhit’* (*The Age of Trepidation*, 1953) and *Prometeiiv vohon’* (*Prometheus’ Fire*, 1977), similarly published in the post-war émigré circles, are also set in Eastern Galicia and depict Ukrainian underground fighting against an occupation, this time the Soviet one. Here is what makes *Toward the Sun* more interesting for this analysis of the subgenre of *exotic* adventure.

Although the action is taking place in a space that is allegedly their “own,” the perception of this space is exoticized. At least for one of them the hike is an encounter with a completely unfamiliar space: Roman studies in Vienna and rarely has the possibility to come back to Ukraine for vacation; he is much more familiar with the Alps and compares the unknown space

of the Carpathians to the known space of the Alps.<sup>602</sup> Including in the group of protagonists a person who is completely new to the Carpathians seems to be a narrative device to make it believable that protagonists spend so much time discussing their impressions. For the author, it seems, sharing detailed memories about the space of the Carpathians was likely one of the goals. Three other hikers are already familiar with some of the places they visit, they have an extensive network of family members, friends, acquaintances, and comrades they can rely on in most of these villages and towns. Yet for them, too, it is not something they experience on an everyday basis.

These are urban, educated, European, “cultured” people who “return to nature” and come closer to “their folk,” having only two weeks a year to do so. And they are very conscious of this difference, as the following dialogue shows:

“Our peasants, whose life is so closely connected with the nature, feel it with a greater intensity, and we cannot even imagine how happy they are... Culture and technology cut off the human being from nature and inflicted a lot of harm in this way. Nature is for us a luxury at times of leisure, just like theater, art exhibition or a concert for the peasants.”

“But at least we, people of culture, are more conscious of the magnitude, power and beauty of nature and of the fact that we are its integral part.”<sup>603</sup>

They may be travelling by foot and spending most of the nights in the most basic conditions – on a haystack – but still they are moving through this space with ethnographic

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<sup>602</sup> “Він не знав ще добре наших гір. Виріс на Поділлі, на студіях перебував у Відні [...] Знав добре Альпи і любив форсовні партії.” Lahodyns’ka, 11.

[He was not yet familiar with our mountains. He grew up in Podillia, studied in Vienna [...] He was well familiar with the Alps and loved extreme hikes].

Roman’s exoticized perception on the Carpathians may be also related to the fact that he comes from a different part of Ukraine – Podillia – but this background fact seems to be inconsistent throughout the novel. Later on, we learn that he was a schoolmate of Oleh, assumedly in L’viv.

<sup>603</sup> “Наші селяни, яких життя так тісно пов’язане з природою, відчувають це багато інтенсивніше, і ми навіть не уявляємо собі, які вони щасливі... Культура і техніка віддалили людину від природи і зробили їй цим велику кривду. Для нас природа — це люксус у хвилини відпочинку і дозвілля, так, як для селянина театр, мистецька виставка, чи концерт.

— За те ми, люди культури, краще усвідомлюємо собі велич, силу і красу природи, і цей факт, що ми нероздільно до неї належимо.” Lahodyns’ka, 38–39.

glance equipped with modern civilization's contraptions to fix and discursively organize whatever they see. Roman uses up endless film rolls to photograph not only the mountains and his friends but also the locals – the Hutsuls, whom the hikers observe, discuss, and classify in terms of the types of embroidery on their Sunday best clothes in different villages, but also in terms of human types.<sup>604</sup>

The protagonists' encounter with "our peasants," or rather Hutsuls, is based on the ideological assumption that they are part of the same ethnonational group, but they are "othered" as an ethnographical curiosity rather than perceived as total in-group members. This "othering" is, however, totally reciprocated. Local people do not perceive the protagonists as members of their in-group:

"Tell me please, how come you can sing so... in our way [manner, language, style – anything can be assumed here]?"

"But how could we sing other than in our way?"<sup>605</sup>

The protagonists repeatedly claim their belonging: "We are not guests here, we are on our own native land, just like you. And this [river] Cheremosh and the [mountain range] Chornohora and all these songs are native to us just like they are to you."<sup>606</sup> As I have shown above, "guests," in fact, better describes their encounter with this space, given that a hike like the one described in the novel is a two-week respite from their urban routines. Protagonists believe that they are members of the same ethnonational group as the Hutsuls, so the space markers will be of the

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<sup>604</sup> On photography as shaping "a way of comprehending the world" that is not unrelated to a colonizing "comprehensive knowledge" and discursive domination over or "possessing" the observed "Other," see Ingrid Kleespies, "A Russian Observer Catches the London Eye: Envisioning Imperial Modernity in *Frigate Pallada*," in *Goncharov in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Ingrid Kleespies and Lyudmila Parts (Academic Studies Press, 2021), 167–92.

<sup>605</sup> "—А скажіть, звідки ви знаєте так... по-нашому співати?"

— А як маємо співати, як не по-нашому?" Lahodyns'ka, *Do sontsia – do voli. Mandrivka iunosti*, 170.

<sup>606</sup> "Та й не гістьми ми тут, але на своїй рідній землі, як і ви. І цей Черемош і Чорногора та й усі співанки так само рідні нам, як і вам." Lahodyns'ka, 170.

same symbolic importance for them as for the people who actually inhabit that space and deal with it on a day-to-day basis, just based on this feeling of belonging.

But this feeling of belonging to the same imagined community is not shared by many of the Hutsuls. Not that they claim cultural separatism, rather, they are othering the protagonists based on class identity, and the hikers are aware of this difference: “We are not Poles, sir [*gazdo*, form of address used by Hutsuls], we are not from Warsaw or some Częstochowa, but Ukrainians from L’viv, just like you, except that we are from a city and dressed – as you say – like ‘masters.’”<sup>607</sup> Repeatedly, the students are engaging in attempts to convince the Hutsuls that they want to be addressed in Ukrainian rather than in Polish. However, these interactions are mostly fruitless and bitter, as their counterparts mulishly stick to the previously learned understanding that class difference equals cultural/linguistic difference:

“Ma’am [*gazdyne*, form of address used by Hutsuls], why are you speaking Polish to us?”

“So that you would understand me better.”

“But we are Ukrainians and understand Ukrainian better than Polish.”

“Masters want to be addressed in Polish...”

“We are neither masters nor Poles”<sup>608</sup>

The protagonists are depicted as convinced that they are speaking the same language as the Hutsuls and belong to the same culture and symbolic space. The author herself, however, seems to take a detached stance on interactions like these, whether the grain of irony in depicting

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<sup>607</sup> “Ми не поляки, газдо, не з Варшави, чи якоїсь Ченстохови, але українці зо Львова, такі самі, як і ви, тільки з міста, та й „по панськи” — як ви кажете — вдягнені.” Lahodyns’ka, 170.

“*Po-pans’ky*” in this phrase literally means “in a noble way,” “as nobility”; however, while it was meant to signify class difference, in Polish and in Western Ukrainian usage by the beginning of the twentieth century, it was not specifically about aristocracy. Rather, this marker grew to signify urban educated elites in general, since in Polish society, the intelligentsia mostly came out of the impoverished nobility.

<sup>608</sup> “— Газдине, чому ж говорите до нас по-польськи?”

— А щоб ви мене краще зрозуміли.

— Але ж ми українці і розуміємо краще по-українськи, ніж по-польськи.

— Пани хочуть, щоб до них говорити польською мовою...

— Ми не пани й не поляки.” Lahodyns’ka, 160.

this conversation is related to the “delusional” Hutsuls’ reluctance to accept “the truth about their identity” or to the excessive ardor of her protagonists. The following exchange is especially noteworthy:

“So, you are Ukrainians,” he said with some disbelief. “Because, you know, here’s how it is: how can you recognize in a master, who he is? Masters come, and a Christian person doesn’t know what to say to them: *Slava Isu* [traditional Hutsul salutation, lit. “Glory to Jesus”] or *Dzin dobry* [deformed Polish “good afternoon”]”

“Why don’t you know, sir? Are you afraid to greet in your own language or what?”

“Not really. But, you know, masters love if you talk to them in Polish”<sup>609</sup>

In this conversation, while the protagonists are trying to convince the man that they should speak a language they have in common, it is clear, even from the transcription of the Hutsul dialect of the man, that they are speaking different, though cognate, languages. It is also notable that while the protagonists are trying to push the idea that “we are Ukrainians, like you, sir,” the Hutsul peasant only accepts and reiterates the part of it that “these students are Ukrainians, not Poles.” He never inscribes himself and his folk under the same umbrella with the protagonists, and as he mentions – himself, but in a generalized manner – contemplating what language to use to address a “master,” he identifies himself not as “Ukrainian” or “Hutsul” but simply as “a Christian” (“*khrystienyn*”). So, it can be understood that, although the protagonists do not subscribe to this, the Hutsuls perceive the tourists coming to spend vacation, hike, or otherwise enjoy the mountains, as “Polish” or “Ukrainian” but do not see themselves fitting under either of these denominations. Interestingly, in the scene with Slavko’s disguise, Oksana and Slavko opt to speak Polish in front of the police and pretend that Slavko is a Pole. This suggests that the protagonists’ cultural background, language skills – *habitus*, in general – are more appropriate to successfully convincing Poles that they belong to one group than convincing

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<sup>609</sup> “—Так ви українці! – сказав якомсь недовіжливо. – Та бо то, знаєте, так: як можна пізнати пана, хто він такий? Приходе пани, а христенин не знає, як йому сказати: Слава Йсу, чи Дзінь добри!  
—А чому, газдо, не знаєте? Боїтеся по-своєму поздоровити, чи як?  
— Та не. Але, знаєте, пани любле, аби їм по-польськи сказати.” Lahodyns’ka, 170–71.

Hutsuls of the same.

Admittedly, the Hutsuls' preference to assume that the tourists are Poles and address them as such is related to economic factors. First, there are simply more Polish-speaking tourists. The protagonists acknowledge, "our tourist movement is weak, especially in this region. Did you notice, the 'memory book' contains almost exclusively Polish last names."<sup>610</sup> They hypothesize: "It could be somewhat different, perhaps, if more of our tourists were hiking in the Hutsul land," as they acknowledge that they encountered only one Ukrainian hiking party apart from themselves on their journey.<sup>611</sup> Second, the Poles pay better, which makes them more appealing to cater to for the local inhabitants: "Polish tourists have flooded the Hutsul land, they are more appealing for Hutsuls, as they have more money, so they bend their backs."<sup>612</sup>

We never learn what illegal activity Oksana, Oleh, and Slavko are involved in, but even on their vacation trip, they continue working on raising the national consciousness of those who they believe to be the uneducated masses within their own ethnonational group. The indirect struggle for discursive influence on the "masses" is the main "battlefield" of the clash with the adversary. Apart from the plotline related to the police's search for Slavko, there is only one direct confrontation with the representatives of the adversary. This single direct confrontation happens in a Polish hostel in the mountains where it is prohibited to speak Ukrainian, although this is the first language for many employees and some guests. The protagonists engage in an outright verbal confrontation with the owners of the hostel and feel forced to leave.

Other than that, despite their stance against Polish presence and domination in what they

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<sup>610</sup> "Наш туристичний рух слабий, а зокрема в цих околицях. Ти бачив, майже самі польські прізвища в його «пам'ятковій книзі»." Lahodyns'ka, 146.

<sup>611</sup> "Воно було б, може, трохи інакше, коли б більше наших туристів ходило по Гуцульщині. За дев'ять днів нашої мандрівки, крім товариства в Космачі, не стрінули ми більше нікого." Lahodyns'ka, 160.

<sup>612</sup> "Польські туристи залляли Гуцульщину, імпонують гуцулам, бо мають трохи більше грошей, тому ті й гнуться перед ними." Lahodyns'ka, 160.

perceive as their land, they have nothing against utilizing the comforts of civilization associated with this Polish presence, such as staying at this hostel, even if this “civilization” and the influence of the Polish presence on the local population receive a negative ethical evaluation: “Yeah, this Polish ‘culture’ totally demoralized the Hutsuls. And all this for the sake of a slice of bread.”<sup>613</sup> The description of a Polish company of tourists they meet in the mountains includes typical contemporary vices of civilization: excessive make-up, lighthearted music, frivolous dances, female smoking, and loose behavior: “The Polish company was making a racket, singing the newest ‘hits,’ one couple, in a tight embrace, was dancing the foxtrot. The women were painted, smoked, and behaved like girls from a cabaret.”<sup>614</sup>

The above description of the representatives of Polish modernity is a striking contrast to the imagery used to introduce the protagonists, who are associated with health and natural life energy. Roman is introduced to the reader with the following phrase: “The wind flaunted his exuberant hair, his face tanned with sun, he was life and health itself.”<sup>615</sup> And Marusia is presented as an incarnation “of the type of brown-eyed, healthy Ukrainian girl.”<sup>616</sup> The protagonists’ introduction ends with the phrase “... and above all that, there was shining gold, life-giving sun.”<sup>617</sup> In this way, the four young Ukrainians themselves become the incarnation of the “sun” and “freedom” mentioned in the novel’s title as an aim of striving.

“Freedom” is a destination, indeed, if one considers Slavko’s endangered situation or their struggle for independence from a non-native government. On the level of imagery,

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<sup>613</sup> “Так, ця польська „культура” цілком деморалізує гуцулів. А все — хліба ради.” Lahodyns’ka, 237.

<sup>614</sup> “Польське товариство галасувало, співали найновіші „шлягери”, одна пара, в тісних обіймах, танцювала фокстрота. Жінки були вималювані, курили цигарки та поводитись, наче кабарекові дівчата.” Lahodyns’ka, 229.

<sup>615</sup> “Вітер розвіяв буйне волосся, обличчя засмалене сонцем, — було саме життя і здоров’я” Lahodyns’ka, 7.

<sup>616</sup> “Рівні ростом, він — тип ясноволосого Германського Зіґфріда, вона — кароокої, здорової української дівчини.” Lahodyns’ka, 9.

<sup>617</sup> “...а над усім світило золоте, життєдайне сонце.” Lahodyns’ka, 7.

however, as can be seen even from the introduction of the characters, neither sun nor freedom is lacking from the experience the novel talks about: The destination of the longing “toward the sun, toward freedom” is in the future for the protagonists, but in the nostalgic past for the narrative.

### 5.3.3. Once and future home

During the hike through the Carpathians, Roman, who is visiting all these places for the first time in his life, repeatedly claims upon seeing new picturesque spots that here is where he will build a summer house for himself and “someone else” (meaning Oksana, if she agrees to become his fiancée and wife) once he graduates and is settled in life. His friends are also fighting – legally and illegally – for a future home, a metaphorical “own space,” which they want to build independently of Polish rule.

The action takes place around 1935, which the reader assumes from the statement that Polish domination has continued for 17 years already. Had the novel been written during the same period, these strivings for the future should have been taken at face value. The novel was written some twenty years later, however, after the author had to leave the home space represented in the novel for good, moving to Vienna in 1944, then to Germany, then Argentina, before finally coming to the US in 1955.<sup>618</sup> The author – and her émigré reader, who made approximately the same journey or was born to parents who did – already knows that Roman will not have enough time to graduate, start a family, and build a house in one of his chosen spots in the Carpathians before the current world order will be destroyed. Moreover, by the time of the novel’s creation, the Ukrainian underground activists’ struggle against Polish dominance is

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<sup>618</sup> “Lahodyns’ka-Zales’ka Halyna Mykolaïvna,” *Entsyklopediia Suchasnoi Ukraïny*, accessed September 18, 2020, [http://esu.com.ua/search\\_articles.php?id=52847](http://esu.com.ua/search_articles.php?id=52847).

already passé, as stronger armies had destroyed the Polish state. This development hardly brought relief to Ukrainian activists, who were immediately subjected to far harsher persecution by the Soviets. Many representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, whether or not they were involved in any nationalist organizations, would have to flee much farther than to Czechoslovakia (where Slavko goes), whose mountains the hikers again and again see on the horizon during their journey. Only once throughout the novel does the author betray her knowledge of the future, specifically, of the quick defeat of the Polish army in 1939, when she mentions that the protagonists should prepare themselves to stand up for their cause in any unforeseen situation: “But how can any of us know what might come? In case of any military turmoil, they [Poles] will run away so that the air will be full of dust. We know the power and the bravery of this “empire.” But we must do everything to be ready at the appropriate moment.”<sup>619</sup>

Two strivings organically coexist in this novel: the nostalgic one, aimed toward the past, as it depicts in great detail and with most positive emotional connotations a “journey of youth” in a no-longer reachable home space, and the motivational one, aimed toward the future. The mood in the novel changes toward its ending. In the beginning, the values of individual experience and fulfillment prevailed. Oksana and Oleh did not know if they should, in fact, be worried about Slavko at all, or if he was already safely beyond the border, and they could mostly bother with their own trip. Oksana was contemplating going to study abroad after finishing her degree in L’viv. Roman’s emotions and jealousy seemed to be of at least comparable importance with Oksana’s actions, which were causing these emotions. In the end of the novel, after Slavko’s

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<sup>619</sup> “Але хто з нас може знати, що ще може прийти? На випадок якоїсь воєнної завірюхи будуть тікати, аж куритиметься за ними. Знаємо ми, яка сила і яка відвага такого „моцарства”. Але ми мусимо робити все, щоб у відповідний час бути готовими.” Lahodyns’ka, *Do sentsia – do voli. Mandrivka iunosti*, 230.

narrow escape organized by Oksana and after Oksana and Oleh confide Roman and Marusia to share their activity, the emphasis moves to the communal values. The author suggests that individual interests should be aligned with the interests of the (national) group. The exchange about individual happiness that I analyzed in detail above in the context of changing gender roles in adventure suggests not only that Roman's vision of individual happiness should not dominate Oksana's vision, but also that they can reach individual happiness only when they are fighting for the ideals, prosperity, independence, and happiness of the community. Confiding the clandestine affiliation to Roman and Marusia carries the expectation of a readiness to subordinate personal values to those of the community: "You will take upon yourself part of the responsibility for things that are more important than our personal happiness, or unhappiness, than our love."<sup>620</sup> Moreover, an ethical evaluation of focusing on either appears for the first time in this conversation:

"And yet, individual safety is not a thing of first importance. Neither individual safety, nor individual comfort, nor individual happiness. How can one be personally happy and indifferently oversee the plight that is happening around? How can one feel personally safe when the roof is burning above one's head? To close up in the narrow circle of one's personal interests, one must be blind and deaf"<sup>621</sup>

The fact that Roman might expect a different order of priorities is forgivingly explained by the long period he had already spent abroad because of his studies: "You are keeping yourself a bit alienated, but that's because you are constantly living in a different surrounding, in Vienna. But I know that our ideology is close to you. A long-lasting stay abroad is doing its job. But you will not stay there forever."<sup>622</sup> In the text, these words are directed to Roman, but they might as

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<sup>620</sup> "Ти перебереш на себе частину відповідальності за речі, багато важніші, як наше особисте щастя, або нещастя, як наша любов." Lahodyns'ka, 218.

<sup>621</sup> "А втім, особиста безпека не є річчю першої ваги. Ні особиста безпека, ні особисті вигоди, ні особисте щастя. Як можна бути особливо щасливим і байдуже глядіти на все, що діється довкруги? Як можна почуватися особисто безпечним, коли горить дах над головою? Щоб замкнутись у вузькому колі своїх особистих інтересів, треба бути хіба сліпим і глухим." Lahodyns'ka, 242.

<sup>622</sup> "Ти тримаєшся трохи здалека, але це тому, що постійно перебуваєш в іншому оточенні, у Відні. Але я

well be directed to the reader. Unlike Bradovych and Bahrianyi, Lahodynska is not suggesting any specific timing when the Ukrainians leaving their “own space” in the text (or those readers who were obliged to do the same in the real life) will be able to return home. The imagery she uses is mostly nostalgic, but at the same time her novel reminds the reader about the need to be a part of the community and to be mindful of the interests and goals of the community, even in the emigration, where there is a temptation to focus on one’s own interests.

#### CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 5: UKRAINIAN ÉMIGRÉ ADVENTURE STORIES AND THE HUNTED MAN ADVENTURE STORY TYPE

The three adventure novels analyzed in this chapter were all published by publishing houses established by the Ukrainian émigré community after World War II. Their authors’ paths to emigration were very different, as were their experiences in general, as partly reflected in the novels themselves. Yet they touch upon some common themes that became important for Ukrainian émigré thinking in this period and were reflected in adventure fiction, including mobility and displacement, modernity and tradition, belonging and symbolic ownership of the space. All three novels reflect on the political conditions that led the authors and their implied readers into emigration in the first place: the fact that Ukraine was ruled by a government perceived as an adversary of the imagined community of Ukrainians that persecutes Ukrainians for their adherence to their national values. In Bradovych’s and Bahrianyi’s texts, the oppressive government in question is the Soviet one; in Lahodynska’s novel, it is that of the Second Polish Republic. Structurally, however, the understanding of the situation reflected in the novels is rather similar; the difference between them that distinguishes Lahodynska’s depiction of the

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знаю, що наша ідея тобі близька. Довге життя за кордоном – робить своє. Та ти там не будеш вічно жити.” Lahodyns’ka, 249.

confrontation in a more muted and nostalgic light is that Polish domination over Western Ukraine had been over by the time the novel was written, while the Soviet Union still ruled over Ukraine. Thus, Bradovych's and Bahrianyi's messages that aimed to mobilize the readers for the future struggle were offered as still very relevant.

This focus on persecution of the protagonists by the evil regime, as well as some of the metaphoric imagery used to talk about this antagonism, makes it possible to draw a connection with the sub-genre of adventure Martin Green calls "The Hunted Man story type," which focuses exactly on the clash between an "unaided individual" and the large governmental corporation. This connection can be seen in all three novels under scrutiny in this chapter, along with the individual connections with other sub-traditions of adventure I commented on in specific sections. Green comments on examples of this sub-genre that are often connected with "the more amorphous "thriller" category" from British and American literature, such as authored by John Buchan and Raymond Chandler. Popular since the 1910s and well into the Cold War period, stories of this type should have been known to the authors, even if they are not directly mentioned in the texts, unlike the key words, names, and titles from the other traditions of adventure. According to Green, the "Hunted Man story type" is characterized by a clash between an individual and corporations, conspiracies, or governments. The way in which this clash unfurls makes it inherently the most liberal structural type "because they promise the reader that the unaided individual can take on large organizations and conspiracies that are subverting the state or the nation and can triumph over them."<sup>623</sup> This story type, which is the most contemporary of all analyzed by Green, both in terms of its creation and in terms of its imagery,

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<sup>623</sup> Green, *Seven Types of Adventure Tale: An Etiology of a Major Genre*, 187.

becomes the “energizer” of “modern [twentieth-century] society”<sup>624</sup> in the same way the Robinson story or the wanderer story was the “energizing myth” of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European empires.

Having acknowledged the central similarity of the clash between an “unaided individual” and the large governmental corporation in the “Hunted Man story type” analyzed by Green in British and American literature and the Ukrainian émigré adventure fiction I have scrutinized in this chapter, I am going to highlight the differences. For Western societies like the British or American, such texts were mostly entertaining, “nerve-tickling” stories that reminded of the fragility of societal guarantees but reinstated them by the end of the text. Although some of the same tropes are used in the analyzed Ukrainian émigré adventure stories, their “psychotherapeutic” function for the readership is of a rather different kind. For the community that came into being out of dissent with the “adversary” governing over their space, the traumatic stories about the clashes of in-group members with the regime (Soviet or Polish and then Soviet, depending on the origin of the authors) became a constituent part of group identity. The myth about the ability of the “unaided individual [to] take on large organizations and...[to] triumph over them”<sup>625</sup> would not be compatible with these traumatic stories of group identity, because their very existence in the emigration was a lingering proof that the adversary has prevailed, at least for the time being. What these adventure stories offer instead—as means to soothe, to reconcile with trauma, and to energize for the future struggle—is the myth about the “unaided individual’s” ability to slip away from the regime. In Bahrianyi’s novel, the rumor of Hryhorii’s escape gives hope to prisoners degraded into the condition of a mute and docile herd. Similarly,

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<sup>624</sup> Green, 188.

<sup>625</sup> Green, 187.

the authors' focusing on the escapees rather than those who perished under the regimes' repressions is a way to make the narrative about suffering a source of anger and mobilization rather than solely despair. The émigré readership is supposed to have come into being because of such dramatic "escapes" from the adversary-ruled "own space." Upon this reader, properly motivated by the adventure fiction, will fall the responsibility to return to and re-build home when "better times come."

## CHAPTER 6. DEFENDING HOME: SOVIET UKRAINIAN ADVENTURE NARRATIVES IN THE STALINIST ERA

One January night sometime in the 1930s, Oleh Bashmachnyi, one of the three 13-year-old protagonists of the novel *Shkola nad morem* (*A School by the Sea*, 1937) by Oles' Donchenko, notices a dark silhouette wandering the streets of his native village on the Black Sea shore of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic. This mysterious figure turns out to be the elderly school gardener, who retained his position as gardener after a former mansion was repurposed into a school. It is hard to say which sounds more sinister: the nickname given to this person, Kazhan (bat), accompanied by demonic stories based on his reclusiveness, or his real name, V'iacheslav Romanovych Dzemydkevych (which indicates a possible, though never articulated, Polish connection) and his former position as a private teacher at the mansion. That January night he tried to be inconspicuous as he carried a letter with “unknown foreign stamps” that he had just retrieved from the nearest city’s main postal station.<sup>626</sup> The vigilant Oleh Bashmachnyi manages to intercept the letter, thus immersing the reader in an adventure in which the school lives of sixth-grade students are intertwined with life-threatening encounters with foreign insurgents. The narrative shows how ideological battles are waged simultaneously against external evils that encroach on Soviet territory from abroad and against internal enemies like Kazhan, and how the plot provides a moral education that will turn the young protagonists into good Soviet citizens. This chapter describes how these three intersecting conflicts were represented in Ukrainian adventure narratives written during the Stalinist era for young adults and children.

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<sup>626</sup> Donchenko, “*Shkola nad morem*,” 347.

Recent scholarship on Ukrainian literature from the Stalinist period has increasingly focused on the authors of the “Executed Renaissance,” the name given to a generation of authors who were prolific in the first decade and a half of the Soviet regime and were repressed during the 1930s. These authors were physically destroyed as human beings—they were sent to labor camps and executed—and their works were erased from the canon of Ukrainian literature. In contrast, this chapter deals with authors who were widely read, who were promoted by the Soviet state for their didactic function, and whose works were reprinted in multiple editions throughout several decades after their initial publication in the 1930s or 1940s. Considered remnants of a bygone epoch, Ukrainian adventure narratives compliant with Soviet orthodoxy have been mostly forgotten since the fall of the Soviet Union. However, analyzing these popular texts intended for young adults provides valuable insight into how literature participated in the fashioning of Soviet citizens. I argue that the genre and target audience of these texts made them a powerful cultural mechanism, while contributing to their neglect in scholarship.

In the previous chapters in this dissertation dedicated to Ukrainian adventure fiction, I have analyzed those texts where the didactic potential of the genre was used to further values of and the feeling of belonging to the community imagined in ethnonational terms. Meanwhile, the same genre form was used to promote a class-based and (allegedly) supra-national identity in Soviet Ukraine. In his book on the creation of the Soviet readership, Evgeny Dobrenko claims that any culture is formed through the “interaction of production and its consumers; in the process of this interaction, in getting ‘used to’ each other, they remove each other’s ‘rough edges’ and acquire [...] distinctiveness.”<sup>627</sup> However, Dobrenko indicates that this general consideration is especially pertinent in the case of Soviet literature:

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<sup>627</sup> Evgeny Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Reader: Social and Aesthetic Contexts of the Reception of Soviet Literature* (Stanford University Press, 1997), 2.

The Soviet reader, spectator, or listener is not simply a recipient (or in the Western sense a “consumer of books”): in accordance with the doctrine of “reshaping society” that lies at the heart of Socialist Realism, he is the object of reshaping, “molding.”<sup>628</sup>

The role that the Soviet state envisioned for its writers was metaphorically referred to as that of “engineers of human souls,” according to the often repeated saying that is usually ascribed to Joseph Stalin, but was initially coined by Iurii Olesha. In this chapter, I approach adventure narratives from the perspective that Soviet Ukrainian authors intended to “re-forge” or “engineer” their young readers. The cultural production was “re-forged” in the process of this interaction as well. Just like I have showed in Chapters 4 and 5, ideological imperatives and cultural anxieties important for a culture lead to certain master narratives being retold over and over, ending up in what we can call a new sub-genre formula. In this chapter, I consider Soviet Ukrainian adventure narratives from the Stalinist period that belong to two such new “formulas.” I start the chapter by analyzing the novels *“Lakhtak”* (*“Lakhtak,”* 1934) and *Shkhuna “Kolumb”* (*Schooner “Columbus,”* 1940) by Mykola Trublaini, and *A School by the Sea* (1937) by Donchenko, all of which depict a foreign intrusion into the Soviet borderlands. Further on, I focus on the novel *Hospodari Okhots'kykh hir* (*The Owners of the Okhotsk Mountains*, 1949) by Ivan Bahmut and several short stories by Trublaini and Donchenko, which are all retellings of the Marxist master narrative about the class struggle, made into adventure plots. I argue that these entertaining readings both establish the borders of the imagined community (now encompassing the entire Soviet “people”) and define the meaning of belonging to this community.

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<sup>628</sup> Dobrenko, 2.

## 6.1. “WHAT KIND OF SOVIET CITIZEN WILL YOU GROW INTO?”: NOVELS BY MYKOLA TRUBLAINI AND OLES DONCHENKO OF THE 1930S

### 6.1.1. The Borders of the Empire

Adventure stories are a valuable source to examine boundaries in a given epoch's cultural imagination because of their plot structures, which necessitate a strict distinction between the in-group and the out-group. In Soviet Ukrainian adventure narratives, the borders of the Soviet Union are among the important limits of the imagined community due to the fact that, as Dobrenko claims, “Soviet culture was a culture of inflamed borders.”<sup>629</sup> Meanwhile, cultural and identity differences within the Soviet borders have an entirely different meaning, which I will focus on in a later section of this article. The proximity of the Soviet Union's borders transforms unremarkable villages on the Ukrainian Black Sea shore into spaces of adventure in the novels *A School by the Sea* by Donchenko and *Schooner “Columbus”* by Trublaini. Neither of the two novels identifies the enemies in national or ethnic terms, which adds to the generalization that everybody outside the Soviet borders is an enemy.

In *A School by the Sea*, the adventure starts with an intrusion from abroad. This transgression of Soviet boundaries occurs first in the form of a letter with foreign stamps and later in the form of a human intruder. Any connection to foreign countries is already suspicious: the foreign stamps on the mysterious letter are a sufficient reason for the adolescent Soviet protagonist (fashioned as an example to same-age readers) to not hesitate in intercepting a letter addressed to another person. Later on, the impossibility of having innocuous human connections

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<sup>629</sup> Evgeny Dobrenko, “The Art of Social Navigation: The Cultural Topography of the Stalin Era,” in *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*, ed. Eric Naiman and Evgeny Dobrenko (University of Washington Press, 2003), 186.

with anybody outside the Soviet Union is reinforced when the young protagonist naively interprets the coded message in the letter as an expectation of the arrival of a “normal brother” (“zvychainyi brat”<sup>630</sup>). The head of the border guard denies such a possibility: “A ‘brother’! He had many of them [...] Fascist spies, diversionists. A warm familial company.”<sup>631</sup> In this type of discourse, no acceptable human relations may connect a Soviet citizen to anyone abroad, and the existence of any such connection should cause deep suspicion. Furthermore, any foreigner is automatically perceived as an evil-doer and an enemy of the Soviet state, since the only foreigners that are depicted in the novels are the ones who have illegally penetrated the Soviet borders. In other words, the adventure narrative represented in *A School by the Sea* by Donchenko and *Schooner “Columbus”* by Trublaini overlooks the existence of peaceful and even oppressed laborers among the residents of foreign countries, which is a drastic difference with the focus in Soviet literature of the 1920s on the plight of the exploited working classes which I have analyzed in Chapter 3.

Trublaini’s *Schooner “Columbus”* uses a plot structure similar to that in *A School by the Sea*. Here, too, the specific origin of the foreign insurgents remains unnamed, but only for the reader, which makes this strategy even more evident. Donchenko’s protagonists did not understand what country issued the unknown foreign stamps, but the antagonists in *Schooner “Columbus”* speak “some foreign language” (“iakoius’ chuzhoiu movoiu”<sup>632</sup>) that one of the protagonists understands and their insignia are eventually recognized as belonging to what is called “a state known for its aggressiveness” (“vidomoi ahresyvnoi derzhavy”<sup>633</sup>). For the reader,

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<sup>630</sup> Donchenko, “Shkola nad morem,” 483.

<sup>631</sup> Donchenko, 483.

<sup>632</sup> Mykola Trublaini, “Shkhuna ‘Kolumb,’” in *Shkhuna “Kolumb”*: povisti, opovidannia (Kyiv: Radians’ka shkola, 1989), 315.

<sup>633</sup> Trublaini, 306.

however, their identity remains undefined. The foreigners' interests are described in Trublaini's text with greater specificity than in Donchenko's novel. In Trublaini's novel, the object of contention is a natural resource found on a coastal island in the Black Sea, which might benefit Soviet technological development and become an asset in the anticipated war (reflecting the ideological discourse of the 1930s expecting the ideological confrontation with the foreign enemies to ultimately become an armed conflict).<sup>634</sup>

Another common feature in the depiction of the opposition between the true members of the in-group and both hidden inner enemies and foreign agents in the novels by Donchenko and Trublaini is that the horizontal, territorial division that separates the Soviet Union from other countries is reinforced by a temporal division, which distances the Soviet Union from its territory's history. Hidden inner enemies, such as Donchenko's Kazhan, mentioned earlier, and a similar figure in Trublaini's novel, Koval'chuk (more on whom later), are recognizable because of their erroneous political affiliations in the revolutionary or pre-revolutionary past. The main antagonist in Trublaini's novel, Anch, who is supposed to infiltrate the Soviet Union and disrupt the development of the resource-rich island, is qualified to do so because he lived in the Russian Empire before the Revolution of 1917.

Unlike the two novels analyzed above, Trublaini's "*Lakhtak*" is set on a Soviet ship during its unplanned overwintering in the Laptev Sea, where its crew encounters a mysterious foreign ship. Prior to their identification, the Soviet sailors perceive the "Others" as ominous: "Is it possible that this is a foreigner: a German, an Englishman, an American?—contemplated the

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<sup>634</sup> The four parts of the novel were written and published separately starting in the late 1930s and continuing during World War II, although Soviet participation in said war is totally ignored in the text. As a result, there is an increasing feeling of turmoil and violence as the novel proceeds from one part to another; yet, following the convention of the adventure genre, by the end of the novel the Soviet youths (two girls and a boy) succeed in saving their community and country from the evil-doers and the surviving two of them construct peaceful plans for themselves.

hunter.”<sup>635</sup> As the Soviet protagonists get acquainted with some of the sailors from the Norwegian ship, another criterion of differentiation between “us” and “them” important for Soviet discourse emerges, that is, class affiliation. It turns out, quite in line with the Marxist ideology, that only the skipper (i.e., somebody in a ruling position) is hostile to the Soviet sailors. The common crew-members are proven to be good men, and one of them even joins the Soviet ship crew in the end; that is, he is embraced as a potential member of the in-group based on his class affiliation. As I have shown, the “others” are represented as unambiguously hostile, ideologically alien, and ill-willed when they enter what is perceived to be a part of one’s “own” symbolic space. The situation in “*Lakhtak*” is complicated by the fact that the Soviet sailors consider the Arctic seas, where the plot takes place, a part of their “own” territory with its resources belonging unequivocally to the Soviet people.<sup>636</sup> The Norwegians, however, believe that they are acting in neutral waters, which are grounds to “acquit” at least some of them as earnest workers and not evil-intentioned foreign intruders. In all the cases described above, the borders of the Soviet Union remain the most important demarcating lines, both in delineating space and in marking affiliation to the in- or out-group. In the novels analyzed so far, adventure and an encounter with the “other” takes place in the symbolically native space (whether or not the “other” consents to such appropriation). There is an interesting difference in this regard between Ukrainian Soviet literature and Russian Soviet literature. Researchers of Russian Soviet adventure narratives from the 1920s and 1930s notice a change between the two decades. In the

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<sup>635</sup> Mykola Trublaini, “Lakhtak,” in *Shkhuna “Kolumb”*: povisti, opovidannia (Kyiv: Radians’ka shkola, 1989), 92.

<sup>636</sup> The Soviet Union declared the Arctic seas its possession from the state borders to the North Pole. Exploration of the Arctic was a significant theme in the public discourse of the 1930s. The sub-polar land area, the seas, and the North Pole itself were considered “the country’s last terra incognita, its final blank space on the map” and a chronotope for the new Soviet man to show his best qualities (John McCannon, “Tabula Rasa in the North: The Soviet Arctic and Mythic Landscapes in Stalinist Popular Culture,” in *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*, ed. Eric Naiman and Evgeny Dobrenko (University of Washington Press, 2003), 242.). This novel by Trublaini draws heavily from this mythology.

1920s, the protagonists of adventure stories tended to bring the Soviet system of values to the “others,” such as in the texts analyzed in Chapter 3, whereas encounters with “others” who penetrate the Soviet space predominate in the 1930s.<sup>637</sup> This abrupt genre change is consistent with the general understanding of the shift that happened in the Soviet culture of the 1920-30s: “drawing away from internationalism . . . [for the sake of] ‘socialism in one country,’ that is, the doctrine that it is possible to pull off a socialist revolution in a single country, such as Russia, without a broader proletarian revolution.”<sup>638</sup> In comparing the observation about the shift in Russian Soviet adventure stories to the Ukrainian context, one can see that the use of these two motifs, exotic and domestic adventure, is quite different. While the aforementioned Ukrainian novels by Donchenko and Trublaini, which were written in the 1930s, illustrate the second motif, the first motif is only marginally offered to Soviet Ukrainians. Texts using the first motif, with Soviet protagonists venturing to foreign exotic lands, was still available to the Ukrainian reader in translations from Russian. This also included texts like *Around the World in Fifty Days* which Ukrainian readers could perceive as even more relevant to their personal experiences since they feature Ukrainian adolescents along with adolescents from other parts of the Soviet Union.<sup>639</sup> However, no original adventure stories in this vein are known in Ukrainian Soviet literature from 1920s. This difference makes one think tentatively about the politics that determine which members of the Soviet community are allowed to act as mouthpieces for even a state-sponsored message, especially since any differences within this community are diminished at an explicit level, as I explore further.

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<sup>637</sup> Irina Lupanova, *Polveka: Sovetskaïa detskaïa literatura: 1917-1967* (Moskva, 1969), 166.

<sup>638</sup> Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931-1941*, 1st ed (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011), 7.

<sup>639</sup> Published in Russian and simultaneously in Ukrainian with no marking on the edition that it was not an original. Kal’nyts’kyi and Iurezans’kyi, *Navkolo svitu za p’iatdesiat dniv*.

### 6.1.2. Porous Communities

As I have shown above, the shift to class and ideological affiliation as the criteria (as opposed to national and ethnic criteria) that constitute the imagined communities of the “in-group” and the “out-group” allows for the possible inclusion of those who are outside of the imagined community because of their foreign origin, though in the 1930s this possibility dwindles in comparison to the 1920s. However, the imagined community’s constitution via class and ideological affiliation also allows for the possibility of discovering “alien elements” among alleged members of the in-group. I will consider two aspects of this failure to correspond to the ethos of Soviet identity: the first relates to “passing” for a loyal in-group member by an adult, while the second concerns the cultivation in children and adolescents of the qualities necessary to be true Soviet citizens.

There is always the potential to discover a class enemy disguised as “one of us,” and these internal enemies can be more or less conspicuous. In Oles' Donchenko's novella *Rozviduvachi netriv* (*The Explorers of the Wilderness*, 1934) the antagonists are clergy members hiding in the taiga.<sup>640</sup> They are not only the enemies of the Soviet youths exploring the forest, they are also the enemies of all the progress represented by the Soviet system. They do not disguise their class or ideological affiliations in any way, which immediately makes their hostility obvious. A plot twist in which the words or actions of someone assumed to be a member of the community betray his or her alterity is a more effective narrative strategy in adventure stories than marking someone as undisguised enemy outright, as is done in *The Explorers of the Wilderness*. In Trublaini's “*Lakhtak*,” only in a moment of crisis three members of the crew reveal their true nature as class and ideological enemies. Unlike the rest of the exemplary crew,

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<sup>640</sup> Oles' Donchenko, “Rozviduvachi netriv,” in *Tvory v shesty tomakh*, by Oles' Donchenko, vol. 2, 6 vols. (Kyiv: Molod', 1956), 5–72.

they are interested in Arctic resources that can lead to personal gain, such as gold and fur, instead of resources that will bring general prosperity for the Soviet society, like oil. They question the need to sacrifice their personal comfort for the common good, which is taken for granted by the rest of the exemplary Soviet sailors. To make the message to the young reader definitive, the author describes the outcomes of pursuing these two systems of values: “our” crew members remained healthy and benefitted the country as a whole when they spent the winter in the Laptev Sea, while the “renegades” fell ill with scurvy.

This juxtaposition might make it seem as though affiliation with the in-group is a matter of choice. However, this is not the case in Soviet adventure narratives, because tell-tale signs always ultimately expose the fact that someone is not “one of us.” People *are* defined by their choices but these are not present choices but ones that were made in the past and cannot be undone. For instance, Koval'chuk's choice of the “wrong side” in the revolutionary struggle of 1918 in Trublaini's *Schooner “Columbus”* and Kazhan's affiliation to the old landowner in Donchenko's *A School by the Sea*, as shown below, cannot be reversed, since they are perceived as a manifestation of their nature, which cannot be changed. Both characters try to blend in with the Soviet society, but the “truth” is necessarily unveiled as the adventure narratives unfold.

There is something suspicious about Kazhan from the very first moment he is introduced: he fails to act as a proper member of the community, and his reclusiveness and secretiveness engender two sets of suspicions about him. His nickname (“bat”) reflects the village inhabitants' rumors about him that draw from folk demonology, and his outer appearance reinforces this demonic discourse: “He had large ears and sharp eyes under hairy eyebrows. Bushes of hair looked out from his sharp nose, from his ears, grew on his bony fingers.”<sup>641</sup> A second set of

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<sup>641</sup> Donchenko, “Shkola nad morem,” 491.

beliefs about Kazhan's flawed nature is grounded in Soviet ideology. He is too secretive to be a proper member of the collective; he evidently has something to hide because no one knows why he chooses to walk many kilometers to the city, suggesting that he does so to participate in an activity frowned upon by Soviet ideology—to go to church. Rumors about his connections to the former mansion owner and his possibly Polish last name add to this suspicion. Although the two discourses (folk demonology and Soviet ideology) seem opposed to one another and the progressive younger villagers mock the old women's suggestions about Kazhan's demonic nature, it turns out that both means of characterizing Kazhan's transgressive nature are reliable. Since the narrative later reveals Kazhan's anti-Soviet activity and his role in helping foreigners, all the sightings of him that were initially interpreted through folk demonology receive explanations within the discourse of anti-Soviet crimes.

The fish inspector Koval'chuk in Trublaini's *Schooner "Columbus"* tries harder to belong or to pretend to belong to the Soviet community of the island, yet tell-tale signs of his inherent "wrongness" betray him as well. Trublaini provides the reader with a more psychologically complex depiction of his "internal" antagonist than Donchenko provides for his. Trublaini shows that Koval'chuk collaborated with foreign invaders not out of his own evil will but because they blackmailed him with evidence of his non-Bolshevik affiliation during the revolution, which "will not be excused" by the Soviet regime.<sup>642</sup> This additional level of complexity makes this character's biography and motivations closer to the actual historical experience of his generation, whose representatives had to work hard to prove to the regime their adherence to orthodox Soviet ideology, including the author who was in good standing with the regime but saw on the example of his colleagues how easily this might change. This was especially true if they were,

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<sup>642</sup> Trublaini, "Shkhuna 'Kolumb,'" 234.

like Koval'chuk, unlucky enough to have expressed unorthodox political beliefs before, during, or just after the revolution, when the window of historical possibilities had not yet closed.<sup>643</sup> Even with these added psychological insights, other signs of Koval'chuk's crookedness, such as his bad treatment of his daughter, indicate that it is only natural to expect him to commit state treason. In short, despite the different level of psychological complexity in the description of the "inner enemies" in Donchenko's and Trublaini's novels, both of the antagonists are portrayed as being bad by nature, which manifests in their past choices and political affiliations. Their efforts to blend in will only delay the inevitable exposure of their evil natures.

Choice and personal efforts matter only in the second aspect of the "porosity" of the in-groups, that is, the necessity of cultivating the proper qualities to be a good Soviet citizen. In this aspect, the adolescent protagonists of adventure narratives model the formation of correct beliefs and growth into worthy Soviet citizens for the adolescent readers of such texts. Tellingly, a 13-year-old protagonist of *A School by the Sea* (and, simultaneously, the story's reader of approximately the same age) is posed the question: "What kind of a Soviet citizen will you grow into?"<sup>644</sup> This quote is worded, literally, "will grow out of you" ("Iakyi hromadianyn Radians'koho Soiuzu z tebe vyroste?"), as if it was an act of a different subjectivity. Children are something of a raw substrate out of which a new ideologically correct subjects will arise. Donchenko's novel as a whole is especially illustrative of the didactic function of adventure narratives, revealing this genre's connection to the Bildungsroman genre, which manifests itself whenever the protagonists of the modern adventure are children, adolescents, or young adults. In the course of the novel, three 13-year-olds learn important lessons that will facilitate their growth

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<sup>643</sup> It might be argued that, in creating these texts that are highly in-line with orthodox Soviet ideology, some of these authors might have been trying to prove their belonging.

<sup>644</sup> Donchenko, "Shkola nad morem," 491.

into exemplary Soviet citizens while they fight a foreign insurgent. Sashko Chaika's understanding of personal development becomes more complex and he decides to develop not only his poetic skills, but also his physical fitness; Halyna Kukoba learns to prevent personal emotions from affecting the interests of the collective; and Oleh Bashmachnyi learns to abandon his futile dreaminess and to pursue goals approved by authoritative adults. As with the adults described above who are suspicious when they seem to be insufficiently participating in the life of the collective, young Soviet protagonists' ideological upbringing is, first and foremost, about belonging to the collective, and about considering collective goals as a priority over personal feelings. An immediate collective, such as a school class, is an intermediate step through which the adolescent protagonists from the small village become members of a larger community of the entire Soviet people, and where the student learns to align his/her actions and goals with the goals of the collective. These everyday aspects of coming-of-age and nurturing the feeling of belonging and responsibility for the collective are combined in Donchenko's novel with heroic acts that are required of the adolescent protagonist to save their community that is physically threatened by enemies. Marina Balina points out that such a combination is typical for what she calls a "distorted novel of education" in Soviet children's literature of the 1930s and 1940s. "Banal" and "everyday concerns, such as schoolwork" is combined there with "extreme sense of duty." These texts aim to teach that "everyone in the world of the Soviet values [should be] prepared to rise to the level of hero, thus rendering a unique act of self-sacrifice common and acceptable."<sup>645</sup> In Donchenko's novel, all adolescent protagonists survive the encounter with the enemy, but in *Schooner "Columbus,"* the female protagonist dies such a heroic death that

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<sup>645</sup> Marina Balina, "Creativity through Restraint: The Beginnings of Soviet Children's Literature," in *Russian Children's Literature and Culture*, ed. Larissa Rudova and Marina Balina, Children's Literature and Culture (New York: Routledge, 2008), 14.

destroys the enemy that threatened the entire Soviet Union, this being the instance of the main character perishing among all the adventure narratives with a contemporary setting analyzed in the present study. Interestingly, in post-humous renewals of Trublaini's novel later in the twentieth century,<sup>646</sup> the ending was slightly edited to imply that the heroine survived, which also attests how specific the author's choice to let her die is to the sensibilities of the Stalinist era.

Thus far, I have considered the identities represented in Soviet Ukrainian adventure stories in terms of how the in-group within the Soviet Union is opposed to the out-group outside of its borders. I have shown that this strict horizontal opposition is modified by the criteria of class and ideology, and that ostensible in-group members might be revealed to be internal enemies. Additionally, these criteria enable some foreigners to be included in the in-group based on their class affiliations and beliefs. In the final segment of this chapter, I investigate another aspect of in-group imagery: how adventure stories gloss over the enormous cultural differences between the diverse peoples allegedly embraced by the newly-created Soviet identity.

## 6.2. REPLAYING THE MASTER NARRATIVE OF CLASS STRUGGLE: *THE OWNERS OF OKHOTSK MOUNTAINS* (1949) BY IVAN BAHMUT

The novels and stories presented here are texts representing Ukrainian Soviet literature. They were written in Ukrainian, and they were intended for Ukrainian adolescent readers. Proper names and names of localities suggest that the events in *A School by the Sea* by Donchenko and *Schooner "Columbus"* by Trublaini happened somewhere in the territory of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and the characters are Ukrainian adolescents, but this is never stated explicitly. For example, in Donchenko's novel, the word "Ukrainian" appears only a few times.

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<sup>646</sup> Trublaini died in 1941, during the first months of the Soviet-German conflict while serving as a war journalist.

It is used as an adjective three times, in each case referring to the school subject of Ukrainian language and literature. The subject is mentioned for two reasons. First, the teacher who teaches it is an important role model for the youths. Second, literature classes are in the spotlight in the story because this allows defining proper reading practices and interpretations for loyal Soviet adolescents. The only time that the word “Ukrainian” appears as a noun is toward the novel’s end, in the description of the diversity of the Soviet in-group that the protagonists have saved from the foreign menace:

letters from all ends of the boundless country started to arrive. The letters came from Moscow, from Kyiv, from Vladivostok, from Tashkent, from Minsk . . . Those who wrote were pioneers from the far-away Kazakhstan and from the cold shores of the White Sea, they were soldiers in the Red Army and pilots, they were professors and workers, Russians and Ukrainians, Uzbeks and Georgians, Bashkirs and Tatars . . .<sup>647</sup>

One might appreciate the careful construction of the hierarchy among the different subgroups within the Soviet Union, expressed in the order of the list of nationalities and the cities they inhabited. “Russians,” “the elder brothers,” are mentioned first, then three more “titular nations” of the Soviet republics are listed, followed by two “titular nations” of autonomous republics within the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic. This novel was published in 1937, which is after a significant shift, dated by historians as taking place in the mid-1930s, when, as Jonathan Platt has stated,

the “affirmative action” [as coined by Terry Martin] of the first fifteen years of Soviet rule—which promoted the national identities of even the smallest ethnic groups to the detriment of “great Russian chauvinism”—[was replaced by] the new “friendship of peoples” policy [that] limited the number of national units and firmly positioned the Russians at the center of the Soviet polity as “first among equals.”<sup>648</sup>

In fact, in several texts written during this period, Ukrainian authors depict adventure in the vast territories of the Soviet Union, without explicitly comparing or connecting these

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<sup>647</sup> Donchenko, “Shkola nad morem,” 538.

<sup>648</sup> Jonathan Brooks Platt, *Greetings, Pushkin!: Stalinist Cultural Politics and the Russian National Bard*, 1 edition (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 8.

locations to the experiences that their imagined Ukrainian reader might have. Let us dwell for a while on this subcorpus of adventure fiction that lack Ukrainian specificity, which, to my mind, all follow the same pattern.

The scheme of this type of adventure narrative can be summarized as follows: people of a specific nationality live according to their traditional ways, the good people are uneducated and poor, while the rich people and/or representatives of the clergy oppress them. Someone who represents the center of the Soviet Union, or a local who has experienced the larger world and learned communist ideology, arrives to disturb this picture. After a series of breathtaking adventures, this figure helps to establish justice and a new social order in which the liberated honest laborers live happily ever after. This aspect of the narratives is consistent with the history of the genre; that is, from when it discursively supported Western European colonial projects, despite the Soviet disavowal of imperialism as pertaining to ideological enemies. In classical adventure stories set in exotic locations, it is also common for a hero who represents the ideological center to arrive, to help save the locals from themselves, and to establish a just social order bound to the center's (metropolis's) ruling over the "backward" locals. The difference lies in the Soviet narratives' attempt to show that the "common laborers" of the exotic nationalities might have more in common with toilers of other Soviet nationalities than with the "exploiters" from among their own kin. This plot scheme resonates with Katerina Clark's idea about the spatial organization of socialist realism across the arts: "[a]t the heart of [...] socialist realism lie spatial myths in which 'heroes' or 'leaders' function as human embodiments of, or emissaries from, a higher-order space."<sup>649</sup> In the case of literature, this implies that

at the level of deep structure, the hero's mission is not ultimately his public task to build that power station, raise those economic yields, or drive out that enemy, not even just to grow as a communist,

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<sup>649</sup> Katerina Clark, "Socialist Realism and the Sacralizing of Space," in *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*, ed. Eric Naiman and Evgeny Dobrenko (University of Washington Press, 2003), 3–4.

but to mediate between two different orders of space that might somewhat tritely be classified as the sacred and the profane.<sup>650</sup>

The novel *The Owners of Okhotsk Mountains* (1949) by Ivan Bahmut is a clear-cut example of this pattern.<sup>651</sup> This text is a temporal outlier, as it was created in the later part of the Stalinist period. Yet the events described in this adventure novel take place in the 1930s, as do the sensibilities and ideologies that the novel reflects. Bahmut tells the story of a Ukrainian boy named Iura who travelled with his father, a sea captain, and was accidentally left behind on the shore of the Okhotsk Sea. Unable to return to civilization, Iura joins a family of Orochi deer keepers, who only occasionally visit the shore, and who contact representatives of the Soviet state only to exchange the furs they collect as they roam with the deer. However, Iura learns that the common Orochi, like the ones he travels with, do not own their herds; instead, they work for a small group of rich people in their tribe who own all the deer and other resources. These rich tribal members use their power to keep their poor compatriots from starting their own herds and freeing themselves from exploitation. The shaman of the tribe uses his dominant position and the common people's belief in the spirits to reinforce this classic capitalist oppression. Apart from that, the rich Orochi—the internal enemy—are supported by an external enemy, the Japanese, who are interested in using this anti-Soviet outpost for their own purposes. Ultimately, Iura and several ideologically conscious Orochi manage to overturn the situation, overcome the oppressors' discursive power, and establish a just, socialist society, in which the Orochi will be the true owners of the Okhotsk mountains and all the resources therein, as the title of the novel hints at.

Additional examples of this plot type in Soviet Ukrainian literature can be found in the

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<sup>650</sup> Clark, 4.

<sup>651</sup> Ivan Bahmut, *Hospodari Okhots'kykh Hir* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo TsK LKSMU Molod', 1951).

novella about Kazakhs, *Aul Irhiz* (“Yrgyz Aul,” 1932) by Donchenko, and in Trublaini’s series of short stories for pre-school children, including “Malyi poslanets” (“The Young Messenger,” 1933) and “Kryla rozhevoi chaiky” (“The Wings of the Red Seagull,” 1934) that are about the Chukchi and the Eskimos.<sup>652</sup> As if to highlight the schematic character of this plot, the pattern is repeated twice in Trublaini’s short stories: first, a Chukchi community is “saved” by a Soviet person from the mainland, and, in a second story, an Eskimo community is “saved” by the Chukchi girl who was the protagonist in the first story. These texts are also addressed to different age groups, making sure that on every stage of growing up, children get reminded about the all-pervasive meaning of class struggle.<sup>653</sup>

It is typical of any adventure story to depict protagonists who overcome increasingly dangerous obstacles while proving their bravery and other virtues, thus demonstrating that they are worthy of a prize. In the stories mentioned above, the obstacles that the protagonists encounter are associated with the wily representatives of the pre-Soviet village or tribal elites, that is, the rich people and/or the spiritual leaders (including clergy and shamans). These pre-Soviet elites are economically interested in the preservation of the old way of life and oppose the social and scientific progress associated with Soviet rule, out of mere greed. The state-sponsored message and the generic form fit well together, so the plot can be (and was) retold again and again about different national groups or tribes in the Soviet Union. The early decades of the Soviet regime witnessed a proliferation of nations and nationalities, support for the development of local languages, and the fostering of local elites’ participation in local governance as a part of

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<sup>652</sup> Oles’ Donchenko, “Aul Irhiz,” in *Tvory v shesty tomakh*, by Oles’ Donchenko, vol. 1, 6 vols. (Kyiv: Molod’, 1956), 109–82; Mykola Trublaini, *Malyi Poslanets*’ (Kyiv: Veselka, 1976); Mykola Trublaini, *Kryla rozhevoi chaiky* (Kyiv: Veselka, 1982).

<sup>653</sup> On Soviet literature developing separate strictly-defined categories of children’s literature, depending on age, see Balina, “Creativity through Restraint,” 11.

the *korenizatsiia* (indigenization) policy. It was suggested that national form—each community’s first language—is necessary for the socialist content to be disseminated to the heterogenous populations in all parts of the Soviet Union, including the most “backward” ones. These texts were all written in Ukrainian and therefore are not examples of the socialist message being propagated in various languages. But they tell the (regime’s version of the) story of *how* this message was propagated into every small and remote community. In this, they too reflect this imperative process of dissemination “socialist content” in “national form”: the latter is the specific features characterizing a community in focus, e.g. the type of traditional labor the exploited of the described groups practice and the type of spiritual beliefs the elites are using as a part of the discursive strategy to keep workers in obedience. The fact that it is possible to distinguish a uniform scheme, as I have shown above, is due to the requirement of a uniformity of “socialist content,” only tinted with local coloration. According to Yuri Slezkine, since at least 1928, the discourse on national policies presupposed that “all nationalities without exception had to produce their own exploiters, heretics, and anti-Soviet conspirators,” an endeavor reflected in the examples of adventure prose mentioned above.<sup>654</sup>

The young reader encountered such narratives about adventures in various parts of the Soviet Union alongside stories containing more detail specific to the Ukrainian context because of the setting, such as in the novels by Trublaini and Donchenko discussed earlier in this chapter. In the case of adventure narratives featuring protagonists from various Soviet nationalities, the unfamiliar cultural context of the narratives enabled the authors to explicate the ideologeme in a “clearer,” untainted form. The dramatic “conflict of the classes” could unfurl countless times in a sanitized form. Namely, the exotic locations allowed the authors to avoid a juxtaposition of the

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<sup>654</sup> Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 440, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2501300>.

official Soviet historical narrative with conflicting versions of local history provided by memories passed down through family and personal observations about the contemporary reality. These texts obscure the complications of the Soviet rise to and consolidation of power, including the years-long violent events that accompanied the dismantling of Russia's monarchy, the annexation of territories, and the creation of the Soviet Union, of which to some degree the young readers would have been aware. Instead, this type of adventure story represents the introduction of a socialist societal order in an idealized, fantasized fashion in which the "just" socialist order replaces the "unjust" traditional one as effortlessly as if a magician had waved a magic wand.

Moreover, by familiarizing young readers with their peers in remote places, these adventure narratives extended the notion of the "in-group" to incorporate the entire "imagined community" of the Soviet Union. Despite their disparate depictions of everyday life, these texts suggested that Ukrainian readers and the exotic protagonists had similar experiences in the most significant aspects of life—adherence to Soviet ideology and values. In other words, adventure narratives promoted the "brotherhood of peoples" and furthered the creation of the Soviet nation.

Earlier I mentioned that the scheme anticipates that a representative of the Soviet center interferes in these peripheral communities to establish a "just" social order. An example of such interference is depicted in Bahmut's novel, *The Owners of the Okhotsk Mountains*, where a Ukrainian boy helps the Orochi. From the boy's Ukrainian last name—Zub—we may deduce that he is Ukrainian, but the Orochi cannot make this distinction and refer to his nationality as Russian ("rus'kyi"):

"Let us wait until spring," said Byiakan, "there are many Russians on the shore, they will help, it is scary without them." "We have a Russian," answered Illia, pointing at Iura. Kuz'ma nodded with

energy and joy: “Let us not wait until spring. We have a Russian!”<sup>655</sup>

Admittedly, “Zub” can also be a Russian last name. However, it is much more common for Russian last names to have standard suffixes, “-ov” and “-in,” while it is more common for Ukrainian last names to be derived from nicknames without added suffixes. Using an ambiguous last name instead of one with a clearly Ukrainian suffix like “-enko” or “-chuk” or one with a clearly Russian suffix leaves space for interpretation. Moreover, the author interchangeably uses two short versions of the protagonist’s first name, Iurii: “Iura” (traditional Russian but used by many Soviet Ukrainians) and “Iurko” (traditional Ukrainian), with, admittedly, a statistical preference given to the first version. This might be a conscious authorial strategy for creating a character ethnically non-particular but potentially more relatable to the Ukrainian reader than somebody with an unambiguously Russian-sounding name. For example, Donchenko’s novella *The Explorers of the Wilderness*, mentioned earlier, features such unambiguously Russian protagonists exploring taiga in Siberia. The subtle difference between the two cases is quite illustrative of the measure to which it was allowable to be overtly Ukrainian in the post-*korenizatsiia* period.

The same confusion and lack of explicit Ukrainian identity can be seen in other Ukrainian Soviet adventure narratives. Often, we can infer that the protagonists are Ukrainians only from their last names, and from the facts that they live in the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic and study Ukrainian literature at school.

To comply with censorship, the texts cannot mention that the protagonists *are* Ukrainians because a good Soviet protagonist and role model for young readers must not have ethno-national identity as a *salient* one, that is, having a core position among the various social

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<sup>655</sup> Bahmut, *Hospodari Okhots'kykh Hir*, 64.

categories one identifies with.<sup>656</sup> For the discourse of Soviet adventure, as well as a wider ideological discourse, the salience of a character's ethno-national identity either marks enemies of the Soviet regime or marks so-called "backward" peoples, who have come into contact with Soviet society and have been included in the orbit of Soviet interests, like the Orochi, the Chukchi, or the Eskimos in the stories discussed above. As Francine Hirsch puts it, Soviet nationality policy "saw nationalism as a necessary but transient phase in the development of a more universalistic identity."<sup>657</sup> Hence, the regime supported coming to one's ethno-national identity in those groups of people whom it treated as "backward," belated in progression through the stages on the "Marxist historical timeline," but considered the same expression of national peculiarity unacceptable in those groups that were considered having formed as nations previously. This is why the authors of the adventure narratives who strive to comply with the regime's ideology, avoid ascribing to their positive characters that being "Ukrainian" is an important aspect of their identity. Olena Palko in her study *Making Ukraine Soviet* makes a distinction between two separate cultural projects that emerged in the 1920s: "Soviet Ukrainian literature" and "Soviet literature in Ukrainian," the latter being defined by the fact that language is the only feature that characterizes these texts as Ukrainian, otherwise reflecting "universal proletarian culture."<sup>658</sup> The texts under scrutiny in this chapter seem to perfectly fall under the category of "Soviet literature in Ukrainian." I suggest that the exotic peripheries of the Soviet Union were safer settings than Ukrainian soil for authors like Trublaini and Bahmut. While focusing on ethnicities for which it was "acceptable" to be identified through ethno-national

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<sup>656</sup> On salience of an identity, see: Karina V Korostelina, *Social Identity and Conflict: Structures, Dynamics, and Implications* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 20.

<sup>657</sup> Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 103.

<sup>658</sup> Olena Palko, *Making Ukraine Soviet: Literature and Cultural Politics under Lenin and Stalin* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 4.

terms unlike Ukrainians themselves, the authors avoided potential censorship accusations in nationalistic inclinations. In her chapter on the Ukrainian writer and film director Oleksandr Dovzhenko, Lilya Kaganovsky illuminates a similar dynamic in her analysis of his two first sound films from the 1930s. Although quite orthodox in its socialist message, Dovzhenko's first sound film in Ukrainian was condemned as "nationalistic" based on his choice of language, after which the director turned to the topic of the Soviet conquest of the Far East in his Russian-language *Aerograd (Air City)* to avoid "'politically suspect' Ukraine."<sup>659</sup> Although the texts analyzed in this article were chosen based on their compliance with and success in reproducing Soviet ideology, this compliance may not be reflecting the authors' untainted belief but a result of their conscious selection of topics and locations that would be ideologically safe for their adventure prose. Bahmut spent the second half of the 1930s as a political convict in the Soviet labour camps, having been falsely accused of "counter-revolutionary activity." It is only because he survived this experience that one can analyze his postwar prose, which contains prominent examples of adventure stories that educate young Ukrainian readers to be proper Soviet citizens. His pre-arrest prose reflected an individual who was a marginal member of the "executed Renaissance."

## CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 6

The genre form of adventure stories used in the Soviet Union, particularly in Ukrainian Soviet literature, was refashioned to suit Soviet ideology and instill Soviet identity and ethos in their young readers, while also promoting an image of the "imagined community" of "Soviet people."

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<sup>659</sup> Lilya Kaganovsky, *The Voice of Technology: Soviet Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1928–1935* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018), 163.

Several specific textual strategies facilitated the construction of the Soviet imagined community. The structure of the adventure genre was used to enforce the strict opposition of “us” within Soviet borders vs. “them” outside. An opportunity to enlarge the Soviet “family of nationalities” after the world revolution remained on the radar but became a minor theme in the 1930s, as opposed to the focus on the anticipated world revolution and liberation of all the oppressed in Soviet adventure fiction of 1920s analyzed in the Chapter 3. At the same time, differences within the borders of the Soviet Union were obscured to the greatest possible extent. The protagonists were not allowed to have any ethno-national peculiarities if they were assumed to be Ukrainians. A realization of the formula of socialist realism—“national in form, socialist in content”<sup>660</sup> (as proclaimed by Joseph Stalin)—was evident to the reader only when the authors related adventures in remote places of the Soviet Union.

These adventure stories of the Stalinist era promoted a highly mobilized Soviet identity. All the aforementioned texts express a high degree of anxiety about the possibility of “alien elements” disguising themselves as the members of the Soviet imagined community. Through the young protagonists, these texts attempted to inform young readers about the orthodox interpretation of Soviet identity. Together with texts aimed at adult readers, these narratives participated in the promotion of a Soviet values and self-identification among the diverse populations from which the “Soviet people” were to be created. Written in Ukrainian, they obscured any sign that they belonged to the national literary tradition. Only two things remained distinctive to this dissemination of Soviet “socialist content”: the vehicle (the language), and the addressee (the young person who was to be molded into a good Soviet citizen).

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<sup>660</sup> Iosif Stalin, “Politicheskii otchet Tsentral'nogo Komiteta XVI s"ezdu VKP(b) 27 iunია 1930 g.,” in *Sochineniia*, vol. 12 (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1949), 235–373.

## CODA

The intended readers of the adventure narratives analyzed in this study lived in times of great turmoil. Their homelands were invaded by foreign armies; their countries appeared and disappeared from political maps; state borders shifted; revolutions not only brought extreme violence but also upended the systems of values and morals; they could have been displaced by the regimes that ruled over them or forced into emigration because of state-sponsored violence or born to people who have experienced such displacement and were recreating their temporary homes in foreign lands. With all these uncertainties, adventure stories promised something that real life in Eastern and Central Europe in the period often lacked. They promised that there is a meaning to challenges, that “our” community has it right and will be rewarded for adhering to its values. They promised that individual sacrifices would make the community stronger but that it might be enough to be ready to commit them without actually losing what is at stake. They promised that the boundary between right and wrong in individual and collective behavior is an easy one to distinguish and an easy one to stay on the correct side of. They promised that it is easy to differentiate between allies and enemies among other communities.

The exact content of these promises differed a lot among the adventure stories analyzed above, and quite often they work directly against one another. The communities in which these texts appeared often perceived one another as enemies not only on the pages of popular fiction but also in political and military confrontations. For instance, Poland and Soviet Russia imagined one another as ideological adversaries throughout the interwar period, which is reflected in the adventure fiction in the two cultures. The same elements are, then, used with diametrically opposed meanings in the stories about this confrontation: adherence to religion and to pre-

revolutionary hierarchies, and intentions to spread one's ideology abroad. The texts analyzed allow us to see how the evaluation of certain elements could drastically change within one culture as well, even over a very short period: from the idea that everywhere in the world there are friends waiting for Soviet help in liberating them from the class oppression in the 1920s to the idea that everybody outside of the Soviet borders is an enemy in the 1930s. These changes in the representation in popular fiction reflected, in a form digestible by a wide readership, the changes in official political doctrines.

One of the goals behind the selection of the texts for this analysis was to choose adventure fiction written to align with as wide as possible a variety of ideological imperatives. The "imagined communities," whose image these texts reflected as one's "own," include a nation fighting for its independence that needs to clearly demarcate itself from the "others," a newly established nation-state that is interested in propagating the national values of the elites to all strata of society, a socialist republic that is reimagining the boundaries of the political nation along class rather than ethnic lines, and an émigré community that is searching for balance between preserving the values of its own ethno-national culture and openness to the society of the host country. By analyzing what different messages adventure stories offer in differing political and cultural situations, I aimed to identify the common seed related to how the genre was used in the processes of communication with the implied reader concerning boundaries between "us" and "them" and the need to actively stand up for the values of their own community.

Adventure stories, including those analyzed in this dissertation, typically include extraordinary challenges that adventurers need to overcome. The readers' daily lives most likely do not include ordeals like jumping off trains for one's freedom, crossing frontlines, fighting

wild beasts with their bare hands, or narrowly escaping cannibals. Yet, despite the heightened level of dangers encountered on the pages of the adventure fiction, readers typically reach out to them for entertainment and solace, as dangers are expected to be resolved by the end of the story, something that real life can rarely offer. Adventure stories promise us the possibility of a world “more benevolent and more fulfilling” than the one we live in, but also a world that offers more meaning and less confusion than the real one.

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