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"Wilderness which emerged from the forest only yesterday": Polish-Ukrainian Borderlands and the colonial imaginary in the fiction of Aleksander Groza.

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Introduction

The position of Poland in contemporary postcolonial studies is rather distinct due to the fact that the country represents both the colonizers and the colonized (cf. Dąbrowski 2008: 94). Hence, in Polish literary texts the "imperial" and the "colonial" egos have appeared alongside one another (see Ritz 2008: 115-32). The nobility and magnates of Polish and Lithuanian background exerted their influence in the territory inhabited by ethnic Ukrainians and Belarusians for several centuries. Vast landed estates, fiefdoms, gradually transformed the feudal system, inclining it towards increasingly severe exploitation of peasants. During the grain trade decline of the latter half of the seventeenth century, the landed gentry radically inflated the burden of serfdom, which led to Ukrainian peasants being almost entirely deprived of their freedom, as they were forced to toil endlessly for the Polish nobility (Magocsi 2017: 211-12). Various sociological, religious, and political factors—including the European wars and peasant revolts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—shaped the attitude which eventually crystallized among the majority of Poles towards Ukrainians and Belarusians, its quintessence being the very name of those territories. "Ukraine" in Polish means "the fringes" of culture, civilization, and the reach of Catholic religion. The other name of the region, equally often used in Polish literature, i.e., *Kresy,* is synonymous with borderlands, outskirts, periphery, suggesting a reference to a 'center' from which Ukraine was considered to be distant (cf. Panas 1986: 605–13).

The situation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) was soon to change, and the subsequent Polish-Ukrainian relations were determined by the period of the Partitions. Poles and Ukrainians entered the nineteenth century with different historical and cultural baggage but in a similar situation: without their own state, as subjects of tsars and emperors. It is under such conditions that they had to confront each other within the framework of modern concepts of nation and nation-state. As a result of three territorial divisions (the so-called partitions) of the multinational Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Poland ceased to exist as a state in which a significant part of the Ukrainian people

lived. Poles and Ukrainians were divided by the new borders and often persecuted by the imperial regimes (Zaszkilniak 2021: 36).

The Romantic era introduced many myths to Polish culture, which have not lost their relevance even today; however, there is among them one that embodies possibly all the fascinations of that generation—the myth of Ukraine. The literary vision of Ukraine gained so much distinctness, on the one hand, and universality, on the other, that it became inscribed for a long time in the Polish imaginarium. It was because of this richness of themes and motifs that Maria Janion referred to Ukraine as "one of the favorite mythical regions of the Polish imagination" (Janion 1989: 175). At the same time, as suggested by Bogusław Bakuła, the regions of *Kresy* and *Inflanty* (Livonia) evolved over time in the Polish national imagination into an idyllic land, a Slavic Arcadia, most likely due to a kind of compensation mechanism involving nostalgia for Poland's lost statehood, combined with a specific "mutilation-centred complex" (Bakuła 2014: 96–123), resulting in a cult of the lost territories.

The task of revealing the postcolonial character of the Polish literature of the Eastern Borderlands is a complex endeavor because of the ambiguous character of source material. The cult of Ukraine—including that of the Cossacks, the role models in Polish Romantic literature of free, autonomous people (qualities unattainable for Poles under the partitions)—often reverberates with the landowners' clear conviction of their own superiority. Thus, Ukraine appears in the Polish literature of the nineteenth century as a land of contrasts that are difficult to capture and categorize. An Arcadia or a wilderness? A country inhabited by fascinating, natural, and beautiful people, or by "savage" barbarians, if also downright broken, who should be taught European culture and sophistication, forced into near-slave labor? (see Beauvois 2005)

The "Ukrainian School" in Polish Poetry

In Polish literature, such an ambiguous vision of Ukraine, wherein various orders and standpoints blend, came to the forefront during the lifespan of a phenomenon called "the Ukrainian school in Polish poetry" (Makowski 2012: 9). The name of this category was created by Aleksander Tyszyński in his didactic novel *Amerykanka w Polsce* (an American in Poland), published in 1837. Tyszyński divided writers into regional schools, including a Ukrainian school, which was to be characterized by the following stylistic features: "savagery, gloominess, bloody images, crimes" (Tyszyński 1837: 47).

After 1837, the literary representatives of the "school" included: Józef Bohdan Zaleski, Seweryn Goszczyński, Michał Grabowski, Antoni Malczewski, Tymon Zaborowski, Maurycy Gosławski, Tomasz Padura, Tomasz August Olizarowsk, Michał Czajkowski, Juliusz Słowacki (partly), Aleksander Groza and others. What was driving these writers was a turn towards the "Slavic" roots of literature, exploration (which subsequently developed into appropriation) of the motifs of Ukrainian folk poetry, and the cult of supernatural elements

expressed in traditional Ukrainian folklore (Makowski 2012: 9–11). The majority of authors in the "school" came from the areas inhabited by ethnic Ukrainians; however, the writers were all Polish (larger or smaller landed) estate-owners. Therefore, the new, distinctive feature of their poetry within Polish literature was its thematic focus on these territories (including their rich history and culture). The Ukrainian Cossack thus became the Polish equivalent of a Byronic figure of English literature. However, in spite of this alleged ennoblement, Poles continued to cultivate their sense of cultural superiority over Ukrainians, concurrently accompanied by the conviction of a claim to ownership of the Eastern Borderlands, which came to be treated as a self-evident property belonging to the Polish and Lithuanian Commonwealth. That conviction was associated with a willingness to carry "the torch of enlightenment," a condescension as well as attraction to the "wilderness" or the "mob" (*czerń*—as Ukrainians were referred to in Polish literature), who only through their contact with the Polish nobles were supposed to abandon their "brutish" form, and be endowed with "something" more human.

The aim of this paper is to analyze works by Aleksander Groza, one of the representatives of "the Ukrainian school in Polish poetry," to draw attention to implicitly and explicitly expressed beliefs of Polish superiority over Ukrainians. The subject seems intriguing insofar as we are not dealing here with colonialism in the form it tends to be conceived of in Western European discourses (see Korek 2007). Poles and Ukrainians established a slightly different relationship between the colonizer and the colonized: a relationship all the more treacherous because more insidious. First of all, Poles and Ukrainians both belonged to the same ethno-linguistic group of Slavs. The features of their appearance (for example, common Slavic ideals of beauty), their language, culture, and customs were highly familiar to Poles. For that reason, over the past ten years there has been a debate over the *raison d'être* of postcolonial studies on Poland and Ukraine. After all, the traditional concept of "a colony" does not match the Polish and Ukrainian situation (Nizalova 2019). The close textual analysis undertaken in this article supports the direction taken by postcolonial studies in recent years: a broadening of the initially narrow definition of "colonization." Mieczysław Dąbrowski has recommended a re-reading of Polish Kresy literature, particularly the works of the Romantic Ukrainian school, with regard to key issues in the postcolonial studies framework. He suggested, for instance, taking into consideration social and political dimension and the reverse of "the mythos of Eastern Borderlands"—not only the perspective of the Polish nobility, but also that of the colonized group; he also proposed scouring the works of Polish writers to find injurious stereotypes, but also for the figure of a "Stranger," or "Other" (most often—a Cossack), at the same time laying bare Polish national complexes (Dąbrowski 2008: 98–9).

It is worth adding, however, that not all the authors associated with the Ukrainian school express these beliefs explicitly. It can be said that, among the poets assigned to this current, there was a group

affirming Ukraine and its culture, as well as another convinced of Polish cultural superiority. The former includes, for example, Józef Bohdan Zaleski and Tomasz Padura, who both considered themselves "Poles with a Cossack soul" (Makowski 2012: 21), creators of the Borderlands and referred to themselves as members of the two nations at the same time. Today, literary scholars regard the Ukraine of Zaleski ("the Ukrainian nightingale") and Padura as bright, cheerful and full of singing, in opposition to the "dark and gloomy" Ukraine of Goszczyński and Malczewski. Padura, in particular, thought of himself as "a child of Mother Ukraine" (Makowski 2012: 22). At the same time, it is worth noting that such an attitude among the creators of the Ukrainian school is much rarer. Even the Ukrainians did not regard Polish writers with sympathy: Taras Shevchenko treated Padura contemptuously, mocking his attempts at pretending to be a Ukrainian when in fact he remains a Pole (Nachlik 2012: 595). Interestingly, Padura himself, in turn, treated Ukrainian national poetry with reluctance.

As stated, among others, by Mieczysław Dąbrowski and Ewa Thompson (*Trubadurzy imperium. Literatura rosyjska i kolonializm* [Troubadours of the Empire. Russian literature and colonialism]) the vast majority of Polish Romantic authors revealed their colonial world-view towards the Ukrainian people, hidden behind an apparent indulgent interest in local culture.

Proceeding in line with Dąbrowski's proposal, I analyze the following works by Aleksander Groza: *Pan Starosta Kaniowski* (first edition 1837, in the article I also use the extended version of 1855), *Mogiły* (1843), *Hryć* (1858), and *Śmieciński* (1860). In these, Groza refers, among other things, to events that occurred in Ukraine, such as the Koliivshchyna rebellion, and the Confederation of Bar. The first of these events was a peasant revolt in Ukraine directed mainly against the Polish nobility and the Catholic clergy. The slaughter reached its greatest extent during the massacre of Uman, where thousands of people seeking refuge from the persecutions were murdered as a result of the treachery of the officer of the Cossack court militia officer, Ivan Gonta. The Cossacks, supported by the Ruthenian population of Uman, captured the town and slaughtered the Polish and Jewish people. The Bar Confederation of 1768 was in turn an armed union of the nobility formed to defend the independence of the Republic.

Due to the analysis of specific literary texts that are, as I shall try to prove, a manifestation of colonial relations between the Polish nobility and the Ukrainian peasants, in this paper I focus on historical events that are most often referred to by Aleksander Groza himself. At the same time, it should be noted that the Polish-Ukrainian relations were determined by many more phenomena, of not only a political, but also social and cultural nature, for example the Polish national uprisings that broke out successively in November 1830 and January 1863. The Borderlands did not join the armed insurrectionary activities of the Kingdom to any significant extent. Regarding November 1830, the borderland nobility lived at a great distance from Warsaw and was unable to communicate effectively with the uprising's leaders. The

actions undertaken in Volhynia, Podolia and Kiev were more a manifestation than a real armed struggle. The uprising covered only part of the districts. This was mainly due to anti-landowning sentiment (resulting from the peasant revolts), which the Tsar used to harass Poles and Catholics. The efforts of the November conspirators met with the hostility of the Orthodox peasantry in Ukraine, who perceived the insurrection as the affair of the landowning gentry (Zaszkilniak 2021: 39). The January Uprising reached as far as the right-bank Ukraine. An important step was directing to the Ukrainian peasants appeals printed in their language, which included requests for help in the fight against the common enemy–Russia. The fall of the uprising strongly accelerated the disappearance of the Polish ethnic group, while the Ukrainian national revival movements gained strength (Zaszkilniak 2021: 40-41).

The phenomenon of "peasant-mania", which concerns the Polish and Ukrainian intelligentsia, is in turn related to the modernist era, i.e. a period later than the time in which Aleksander Groza worked. His interest in folk culture was of a slightly different nature than the fetishization of the people by the poets of the Young Poland movement. It more likely resulted from attempts at a literary transformation of Groza's critic, writer and mentor, Michal Grabowski's assumptions. Grabowski believed that it was in the "wild" lands of Ukraine that the "all-Slavic" national spirit was best preserved; he considered that this spirit should be restored and the people should be united under the leadership of a strong Slavic state, but it should be Poland, not Russia. The culture-forming role of the Polish nobility during the Partitions had a fundamental aim: to save that culture which could compete with that imposed by Russia. The attractiveness of the Polish culture was unquestionable. The native culture could not resist Russian expansion and aggressive Russification. Polish "defensive nationalism," as Thompson calls this phenomenon, focused on the preservation of tradition and self-identity in defense against the flow of Russianness; the achievement of a certain multicultural community under the dominance of the Polish culture was a force capable of confronting the common enemy (Samborska-Kukuć 2012: 94). Groza also gives an account of the traditions and beliefs of the Ukrainian folk, and created intriguing figures of Cossacks characterized by their individualism. However, he proves unable to rise above the typical colonial convictions of the Polish nobility of which he was a member.

Between 1815 and 1820, Polish Romantic writers such as Zaleski, Goszczyński and Grabowski studied in the Basilian Fathers College in Uman. It was there that Groza met a group of famous romantic poets (ZaGoGra) and then quickly became their slightly younger friend and ardent follower. From the outset, Groza was fascinated by the works of these other Ukrainian school authors and shared their fondness for Ukrainian folk songs. At the same time, the company he kept influenced his literary image of Ukraine, as it began to fuse the macabre reality of *Zamek kaniowski* by Goszczyński with the folk-song-inspired melancholy poetry of the "nightingale" Zaleski.

Groza provides an account of Ukraine seen from a "nobleman's armchair" (Grabowski 1961: 453). Under the pretext of an interest in the local culture, he, in fact, depreciates and disregards it (cf. Samborska-Kukuć 2009: 96). He draws heavily from Ukrainian songs (collected by Panteleimon Kulish); however, he translates them into a self-consciously literary form, considering the originals primitive and vulgar.

Pan Starosta Kaniowski: Only the Pole Deserves a Second Chance

The verse novel *Pan Starosta Kaniowski* tells the story of a famous adventurer, Mikołaj Bazyli Potocki, a Polish nobleman, whose debauchery and follies were remembered in Ukraine several decades, even centuries, after his death. Potocki eventually became the hero of bloody folktales, songs, and legends (Zielińska 1984: 113–5). One such work, a ballad popular in the nineteenth century, titled *Пісня про* Бондарівну ([Pisnia pro Bondarivnu] *The Ballad of Bondarivna*), was used by Groza as a prototype for his *Pan Starosta Kaniowski* (вісник [Visnik] 1928). Groza's story cannot, therefore, be seen as original. However, the author did introduce certain creative variations: most importantly, he vindicated the figure of the Polish nobleman, ultimately redeeming him by having him found a monastery in Pochaiv and return to Catholicism.

Groza makes a beautiful woman, Hanna Bondarivna, like Helen of Troy, the cause of the tragic conflict between the two main characters. In the first edition, the verse novel opens with a description of the district head's [*starosta*] two favorite servants, Aron and Szulak: "The *starosta* of Kaniów had two hounds he would unleash when hunting people" (Groza 1836: 133). In the description of these servants, the author uses zoomorphism. The simile presenting a Jew and a Ukrainian as "hounds" is meant to evoke connotations of canine loyalty; however, it reduces both men to subhuman status. In a later passage, the Jew is also compared to a "monkey," and to a "lizard" (Groza 1836: 134, 135). This marks an instance of a dehumanization typical of post-independent imagery, referring to dirty, infernal animals. The Polish nobleman, a Sarmatian[1] Potockiis, for all his flaws, is presented as a rightful master of his "hounds": Aron and Szulak. This impression is further strengthened by the verb "to unleash," suggesting the servants' viciousness. Archyp Szulak is a Cossack; completely faithful to his master, he does not desire any form of Ukrainian national autonomy. His loyalty goes so far that he spies on *haidamakas*[2] in the Motronyn Monastery of the Holy Trinity, a place which played a great role during the Koliivshchyna rebellion.

Not only can Potocki enjoy the services of loyal Cossacks—throughout the work the fact is also mentioned by his companions, colonels under him, such as Świderski: "I, too, have such Cossacks, who for mere fun / Shoot pistols at the tiniest of birds flying" (Groza 1855: 9). The verb "to have" clearly indicates the Polish speaker's

sense of his ownership of Cossacks adept at shooting. Not one of the nobles seems to suspect or even imagine the coming rebellion of *haidamakas*, driven by their desire to seek retribution for cruelty and exploitation.

Returning now to Szulak, his character serves to focus attention on the complexities of Polish/Ukrainian relations. The internal conflict plaguing the character may be read as symbolizing the strife between Cossacks and nobility in general. Bracka writes that Szulak would never be able to resolve the conflict he experiences, which stems from the peculiar combination of his loyalty to and disdain for the *starosta*, not only for the latter's Polishness, but also his religion (cf. Bracka 2012: 451). Szulak realizes that he himself has betrayed Ukraine, which worsens his inner turmoil, particularly when the Polish "Master" kills Szulak's aunt during a drinking bout, having first humiliated her, by ordering her to climb a tree and imitate a cuckoo: "Once she had with great pains clambered up the tree, / He ordered her to make a cuckoo call—she does; he twiddles with his arquebus / Whether willingly or not, and the old woman—lifeless / Fell" (Groza 1855: 27). This scene illustrates vividly Potocki's complete callousness towards his Ukrainian servants.

An intriguing story based on a Ukrainian folk account of so-called "wild children" (see Dombrowski 2011: 81–93) is related to Potocki by Hanna's father. As an infant, the mother of the beautiful Bondarivna was discovered on the outskirts of the village, where she was being reared by a female dog as one of her litter. Here Ukraine once more appears as a region where fantastical events occur, things only known to Western culture from legends. It is the land of a dark imaginarium, which brings to life various monsters that affect the lives of the characters. Nature seems untamable; in spite of its beauty, it is dangerous and abounds with hostile creatures.

Bondarivna lives in the hut of an old witch, Mokryna, where she is secretly visited by Szulak. Additional drama arises because Szulak falls in love with a beautiful peasant girl whom he is supposed to find and deliver for his master's pleasure. It is not the first time that his loyalty has been put to test, but for the first time the Cossack acts against orders. Until that moment, not even confrontations with his own brothers made him double-cross his master. Thus, Groza underscores the specific nature of "familiar" Ukrainians—loyal to their Polish masters, but passionate and romantic. Polish-Ukrainian relations appear even stranger in light of the fact that after the secret wedding with Hanna, Szulak once more follows Potocki's order, and goes to Chłodny Jar, to become his master's spy among the *haidamakas* planning the Koliivshchyna.

From the outset of the story, Groza furnishes Szulak with the features of a brave warrior, experienced in fighting and killing, and indulging in violence. Only over time does his character deepen when his capacity for love becomes evident. The character of the Cossack is well reflected in the description of his grief for his aunt, who had raised him after his parents died:

> Through a dark field, Szulak grapples with his thought,
> Till they wither away, and run wild; so he bathes them in gore,
> Dries them in the fire, and twists the kinzhal in his hands,
> Muttering under his breath, across its edge his finger spans,
> And he bows his head. (Groza 1855: 29)[3]

A drive to rebellion starts to slowly form in his soul; however, before he encounters Hanna, the Cossack does not venture to openly oppose his master. He blames Aron for his aunt's murder (even though Potocki was responsible for it), but he does not dare attack the *starosta*'s other favorite servant; instead he takes revenge on local Jews, murdering them brutally.

In typical Romantic style, the verse novel ends tragically. Both Szulak and Hanna die. The girl's father, Aron the Jew, and Szulak's aunt also lose their lives. Meanwhile, the *starosta* of Kaniów—Potocki—goes on living; in the final scene, he abandons his reckless and wild existence, having been converted by a Catholic priest, Reverend Anzelm. Thus, only the Pole is given another chance, all his crimes forgiven.

Hryć—When a Polish Master Desires to Become a Ukrainian

In another work, a play titled *Hryć* (1858), Aleksander Groza portrays a Polish youth named Alfred, a member of the nobility who decides to live among the people. This work, like the previous one, also has its prototype in the Ukrainian literature. This time Groza used the folk song *Ой, не ходи́, Гри́цю, та й на вечорни́ці*[4] originating from the mid-seventeenth century, whose authorship is attributed to the legendary poetess Маруся Чурай. Ukrainian poets also referred to the plot of this song many times, however Groza changed it considerably, shifting the emphasis of the work to the Polish-Ukrainian relations, and making the story of unhappy love only a pretext for taking up other threads.

Claiming to be a Ukrainian peasant called Hryć, Alfred goes to live in a village on his estate. From the very first dialogue between the young master and the priest Father Prawota, Polish culture is presented as exclusive, serious and dominant. Alfred (educated abroad, intelligent and worldly) says the following about Ukrainians: "For half a year wolves, for another half, people" (Groza 1858: 10) and "Wilderness which emerged from the forest only yesterday" (idem). These passages demonstrate and expose the author's attitude towards Ukrainians. When Alfred is described in the text by his uncle and the priest as "rotten," they both mean precisely his fraternization with the people, regarded as a dangerous, young master's whim. The uncle and the priest represent reason, prudence and the rightness of views, while the character of Alfred is created as a "warning" to the readers, which can be seen, for example, by the fact that all his ideas inexorably end in disaster and tragedy.

The scene conveys a sense of Polish cultural superiority, and, consequently, of the need to rule over Ukrainians, who are referred to with animal metaphors, reduced to subhuman level in the domains of

semantics and imagery in *Hryć* (cf. Samborska-Kukuć 2009: 96). Alfred attributes the entire credit for the gradual "civilising" of Ukrainians to his noble ancestors and their Catholic priests, who fulfilled the mission of bringing "the truth" to people with a half-pagan mentality (Groza 1858: 10). In Alfred's opinion, Ukrainians do not aspire to higher forms of being. In the center of the semantic field, wherein the villagers are inscribed, we encounter either animalistic attributes, or traits associated with small children: even adult Ukrainians are considered to be dependent, uncouth, infantile, and patronizing diminutive forms are used to describe them, such as "bear cubs" (Groza 1858: 63). This imagery has further implications; these will be covered in the analysis of the next text, *Śmieciński*. As the Ukrainians here are "animal-like," their natural duty and purpose of their existence is to serve the Polish master—their natural state is that of work, as it is for ants and bees: "Heaps of grain, as if houses in the city. Who taught these constructors their art? Ask the ants where they have received their schooling, ask the bees: as an ant and as a bee, that is the mind of the people in our hamlet" (Groza 1860: 47).

That social ladder, typical for the Commonwealth of old, has its root in the philosophy shared by most landowners. For it was paternalism that constituted the central line of their thought. The philosophy placing the "father-master" at the center not only determined the family models, but also the entire feudal hierarchy. Seen alternately as "animals" or "children," people not fully developed, or even not fully formed, Ukrainians are presented as requiring the guardianship of their Polish masters, which in practice meant a gradual abandonment of their customs, considered pagan, primitive, and barbarous, and the dominance of a Polish model of culture and religion in the Eastern Borderlands (cf. Samborska-Kukuć 2009: 98). That is why, when in *Hryć* Alfred decides to dress as a forest guard (*podbereźnik*), and live among the inhabitants of the hamlet, Father Prawota says, almost in terror:

> What now? You want to abandon your position? Instead of being the father to your people, you want to debase yourself and condescend to their nothingness? (Groza 1858: 15–26)

The priest refers to the idea of living among the villagers as "wallowing in the dirt" (idem).

When young master Alfred becomes Hryć, it very soon transpires that he is unwilling to work the field alongside other Ukrainians, or hunt game, for these tasks prove too difficult for him, and also because he soon becomes bored with them (Groza 1858: 116). As Bracka writes, "his sense of superiority over the people with whom he lives manifests itself at every step" (462). He takes active part in village fairs, including joining in the custom of jumping over the fire on Kupala Night, the Slavic sensual rite of love (Grochowski 2020: 213–33). Resorting to a colonizer's notion, he perceives the life of peasants as a mere entertainment, a "folk Arcadia," completely ignoring the strenuous labor involved, and the villagers' poor access to medical care or education. Alfred-Hryć asks the local children to sing

him songs, pays no attention to their social needs, and spends most of his time seducing village girls. In the text, the Ukrainian girls become objects of sexual abuse for the Polish master. When Alfred-Hryć becomes involved in a more complex relationship with Justa and Tatiana, he seems unable to comprehend why the young women are jealous of one another. Alfred-Hryć cynically comments on Justa's assurances of her love for him:

> O sacred simplicity! A heart innocent and true at once, every word—the image of her soul's stance. Why cannot I be so honest with mine? A disbeliever, I do not trust my own mind. Worse still, I do not trust hers: so rapidly started a flame that so strongly burns? A single step, she would go crazy! How could that even possibly be? (Groza 1858: 55).

On the one hand, he disregards the feelings of both girls, commending their "simplicity" with sympathy colored with a sense of superiority; on the other, he tries to justify himself by not believing in the earnestness of their declarations (although they threaten to commit suicide if he disgraces them by failing to keep his promises).

When Alfred's uncle arrives at the manor, he calls the young man "a tree rotting in its trunk" (Groza 1858: 68). This metaphor—put in the mouth of a character who was intended to represent the "voice of reason" among the other *dramatis personae*—fully reveals the writer's colonial worldview:

> Meanwhile, here he is, disgracing his family, romancing his peasant women . . .. Though he is a young lad at the beginning of his road, he seems to have stuck in the first mud puddle he came across. . .. And he is ready to forsake the whole world, only to sing ballads (*dumki*) under the willow tree; when the country awaits his strong arm, he fritters his powers away with a sickle in his hand! (Groza 1858: 69).

The Ukrainian women seduced by Hryć cannot count on other members of his family to help them. Quite the contrary, the priest together with the uncle spare no efforts to have him marry Aniela, a Polish noblewoman, a figure meant to contrast with the "peasant" girls. Ukrainian women are presented as simple, prone to love affairs, wild, and uneducated—Aniela proves mild-mannered, modest, pious, and well-educated (Groza 1858: 98-100). Through the character of Aniela, the text once again implicitly underscores the superiority of the nobles' culture over the local culture.

It is interesting to observe how the drama presents the people's reaction to the news that their master, the owner of the estate, has left (gossip spread by Alfred-Hryć himself). Ukrainians are described as lost and confused, as people who do not know what to do or how to behave without the help of a guardian. After a while, they become irritated, quarrelsome—as they claim—because of their great longing for their master:

> One by one we depart from this world, while our master remains nowhere to be seen; let him learn how grateful we are to him; any head here, whether young or grey, is happy to bow down before him, for they are good and so is he.

> There, he thinks about our fates, and we miss him and call for him in all earnestness (Groza 1858: 61).

Finally, the village farmers decide to hold a council. The conviction of their simplicity and naiveté is once more highlighted in the passage in which Ukrainian peasants confide in Father Prawota that they are afraid of ghosts and witches, to which he responds (addressing adult men, some older than him): "You should be ashamed of yourselves, you should be ashamed of yourself, children!" (Groza 1858: 134).

The untimely death of Alfred, poisoned by the desperate, abused, and humiliated Justa, makes it evident to the villagers that they cannot manage without him: "What grief! What a great loss! Such a young heart, such a young head, and yet so wise! What can we do without him? . . . Yes, brothers! Whatever good we have has come from him" (Groza 1858: 141). Thus, the message of the work was the following: if you fraternize with the people, you die. The ending brings a fairy tale-like twist: Alfred rises from the dead because Justa unawares had given him a herbal brew which paralyzed him only temporarily. Perhaps Groza intended the story to be read as a metaphor (a miniature) for a historic cross-section of Polish-Ukrainian relations: when the master is killed (as in the Koliivshchyna rebellion), Ukraine plunges into chaos, which can only be kept in check by a return to Polish rule, and civilization. The miraculous return of the risen Alfred to his "nobleman's armchair" symbolizes the return or appropriation of the "severed" Ukraine into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the dream of the majority of Poles representing an anachronistic worldview, until as late as the twentieth century.

Śmieciński—the Polish Evaluation of the Armed Rebellions in Ukraine

Another verse novel to be analyzed here is *Śmieciński*, whose historical setting is that of the massacre of Uman in 1768 (Sokyrska, Srogosz 2017: 7-40). What emerges from this story—presented from the point of view of its protagonist, a young nobleman named Mikołaj Cyryl—is a double portrait of Ukrainians. Some of them, those who are ready to serve their Polish masters, are portrayed positively, if also as uncouth. The rest, led by Iwan Gonta (for Groza introduces historical figures in his work) are portrayed as veritable "satans" (Groza 1860: 191), "people not worthy of a human name" (191), "headsmen," and "a pack of wolves" (194). Groza does not address the causes of the peasant rebellion in Ukraine, even though in his story he does render the behavior of Polish landowner characters which helps to incite the wave of revolts. Groza's opinion of the Ukrainians who joined the *haidamakas*' uprising is unequivocally negative. They are, for him, soulless murderers and criminals.

The main hero of this verse novel, Mikołaj Cyryl, is brought up in a manor house, surrounded by servants of Ukrainian descent. From the peasant farmers to Tymko Zozula, and even Artem the Cossack, they

all seem to exist only to secure the material needs of the young Polish master, and to amuse him. Tymko Zozula, an old servant of the Śmieciński family, openly states that the lands in which he had been the first settler (many years earlier) were *purchased* by the Polish lord; nevertheless, that does not stop him from accepting Śmieciński as their rightful owner, even though the latter arrived from afar and appropriated the territory owned by ethnic Ukrainians, and made them work in his manor. Among the expressions supporting the feudal order, there is, for instance, the following one: "With the flying birds, crowds of folk grow / And in new huts they swarm as bees / Who collect wax and honey for their liege" (Groza 1860: 30). In this text, the Ukrainian village is pictured as an idyllic Arcadia, where everyone feels satisfied, for everyone knows their place. The Ukrainians as settlers in the village are referred to in the text as, respectively: "mushrooms" (41) (as opposed to the Poles: "grains"), "troops" of the Polish lord working his field (45), "ants," and "bees" (47) created for work. During the harvest festival (*dożynki*), the young Polish lord—Mikołaj Cyryl—feels dejected, because he has to return to his school in Uman, while his Ukrainian playfellows work all days in the field together with their families.

When the father of the young lord dies, Artem the Cossack, the son of Tymko Zozula, becomes the boy's closest friend. Their cordial relationship is not without its hierarchy: after Cyryl's return from school, the abashed Ukrainians do not want to eat supper at one table with him (Groza 1860: 80); Artem, though the same age as the boy, offers to serve him as his Cossack:

> Young lord [you] must finish your schools. We shall gather boys like hawks, we shall organize a banner of Petryhorcy, we shall buy ourselves horses, and spears, and standards, who's to say we are not going to outshine the lords from Granów… . When my father's hair has gone grey, having learned from him, I shall stand at your side, as the most eager of them all. And we shall ride out to the four winds, against haidamakas, and against non-haidamakas. (Groza 1860: 103)

Moreover, he addresses the boy as "sir," and "eagle" (Groza 1860: 111). He is also used by Cyryl to do the "dirty work"—during the Pole's conflict with a jurist, over their rivalry for the love of beautiful Hanna, it is the Cossack, cloaked by the night, who has to rough up the unwelcome suitor, so that Cyryl is the sole contender for the girl's hand.

The individual history of Śmieciński is used as a pretext to talk about the massacre of Uman. The initial reaction of the representatives of the Polish nobility, when they learn of the armed rebellion in Ukraine, attests to their ignorance and shortsightedness, as they treat the situation lightly. Szafrański says: "Let women and men with their pots, their children, flee far away, but why should we, merely because some frogs croak, abandon our land?" (Groza 1860: 180). Over time, the Polish characters fall prey to the chaos, bestiality, and barbarity of the *haidamakas*. The reader is manifestly manipulated with the in-text use of a clear-cut, explicit division between the "good" (Poles) and the

"evil" (Ukrainians). As befits the feudal order, the rebellion against the "masters" constitutes a condemnable act, indicating the animal-like status of the "Cossack satans" (Groza 1860: 190–1). As noted by Michał Płusa, the Polish literary accounts of the Koliivshchyna make it clear that "[w]ithout the involvement of the Polish nobility in the social life of Ukraine, the province would have become the site of bloody massacres, revealing the legendary savagery of the region" (2015: 93). A justification for such an interpretation may also be found in the words of the authorial commentary included at the end of the book, after the main text of *Śmieciński*: "When we were children, there still lived the witnesses and victims of the riots perpetrated by the savage mob, who as though driven by their bloodlust, ran amok competing in murderous deeds, until they were killed in the first ambush against them" (Groza 1869: 229).

Mogiły—Deceitful "Cossack Mob" Wipes Out the "Flower of Polish Chivalry"

One more poem referring to the bloody conflicts between the Poles and the Cossacks, *Mogiły*, was published in the collection titled *Poezje Aleksandra Grozy* of 1843. Scholars have included it among the works presenting a bloody, demonic vision of Ukraine.

The person regarded by Groza as his mentor and advisor, Michał Grabowski, was a Polish literary critic and writer, known for his ultraconservative view of Polish-Ukrainian relations. For Grabowski, Ukraine should have remained a mere province of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth—a province whose inhabitants could not be forgiven for their "rebellions" against their Polish masters either in the form of the Cossack rebellions of the seventeenth century, or of the aforementioned Koliivshchyna. Alarmed by the allegedly over-idealized view of Ukraine in Groza's writings, Grabowski advised Groza to take up the subject of the bloody military skirmishes between Polish knights and the Cossacks. Such was the origin of the poem titled *Mogiły* (Bracka 2012: 457).

As the central adversary of his work Groza selected Bohdan Khmelnytsky, the Hetman of Zaporozhia, and the leader of the Cossack uprising against the Commonwealth of 1648-1657 (see Glaser 2015). Today Khmelnytsky is regarded as a national hero in Ukraine, the symbol of their struggle for autonomy whereas in the majority of Polish literary works he has remained "a traitor," "devil," "demon," "Caligula" (Groza 1843, I: 103). Khmelnytsky, the Cossack Ataman, is said to be "worse than the Tatars" (Groza 1843, I: 107), and to "betray, slash, murder" (108). He also frequently switches sides, and cannot be trusted (109). However, even for all his brutality, drunkenness, and complete lack of a moral compass, Khmelnytsky is presented in *Mogiły* as a man educated in military science, intelligent, and cunning. The same cannot be said of his troops. Cossacks are described with the following epithets: "a horde" (Groza 1843, I: 106), "a howling mob" (109), "an incoming cloud" (110), "four hells" (111), "camp mob, unruly and prepared to do anything for spoils" (117), "an exuberant

weed" (122). This dense, dark crowd is intended to contrast vividly with the betrayed and defeated "flower of the Polish chivalry" (113). The Romantic exaltation furnishes the work with images of severed heads, and pyres of Polish corpses, on which Cossacks dance to celebrate. They throw the heads to one another; while drinking vodka, "they poke the eyes out of this one, cut the arms off, before letting it go" (129), of another "they break hands, and the legs at the knees" (129). Their savagery and cruelty being beyond human measure, they are referred to in the poem as "satans" (129). Hence, on the one hand the Cossack troops are presented as a "mass" devoid of any individual qualities (much like in Conrad's description of the inhabitants of the Congo in *Heart of Darkness*), on the other hand, their great aggression and brutality towards the Polish "heroes" are accentuated. Besides, this contrast is highlighted on several occasions throughout the work: for the first time, when the Polish knights attend a Mass before going to battle, a detail which indicates their nobility and piety, while drawing the reader's attention to cultivated Catholic traditions, a determinant of national identity and an element uniting the community. The Cossacks, though formally orthodox (in the eyes of many Poles, pagan), are shown in the poem as people without any religious or ethical thought whatsoever. Whereas in the earlier works, in the figures of Szulak or Żelaźniak, faith did play some role in the lives of the characters (for instance, in the scenes of the consecration of pikes and kinzhals in the Motronyn Monastery), here the brutal and vicious haidamakas merely ridicule Polish piety. Another element intended to highlight the superiority of hussars over Khmelnytsky's army is the scene in which the leader of the Ukrainian rebellion betrays the men captured to be slaves of the Tatars. As it turns out, he does not bail them out from the khan to be safely sent home after a victorious battle, and spared their lives in the name of "friendship with the Polish Crown," as he pretends to—instead he orders the "hauling" (Groza 1848, I: 110) crowd of Cossacks to murder the innocent captives, unable to defend themselves in any way. Such a morally reprehensible act further demonstrates Khmelnytsky's treacherous and evil nature. The tomb (sing. *mogiła*, plur. *mogiły*) of the title will become a place of remembrance of the martyrdom of the Polish heroes, betrayed and brutally slain by their Slavic brothers. The depiction of such bloodthirsty and savage Cossacks is meant to justify the Polish attitude of superiority and presumed right to rule over Ukraine and its people, who, if left without the guardianship of their Polish "masters," bringing them culture and civilization, are alleged to be no more than a throng of murderous bandits.

Concluding Remarks

To sum up, Aleksander Groza, following other authors hailing from the "Ukrainian school in Polish poetry," presents an ambivalent image of Ukrainians and Cossacks. The "good" are the infantile and naive ones who choose to work for their Polish "masters," landowners, nobles, and magnates. The "bad," rebellious Ukrainians abuse the

position allotted to them, or worse still, they engage in revolt against the Poles, Poland (the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), Polish culture, and religion. The Polish heroes created by Groza demonstrate their superiority over Ukrainians, while what emerges from the text is a vision of Ukraine, either directly or indirectly expressed, as a land—for all its beauty, rich gifts of nature, and an Arcadian allure—inhabited by simple, at times wild people, who should be kept "on a short leash," and led towards the "light" of "European culture." This analysis of a representative group of works by Aleksander Groza allows us to lay bare his colonial outlook, shared by a large majority of Poles for a very long period of their history. By exposing similar attitudes and stereotypes, we are better able to understand the history of the complex contemporary relations between Poland and Ukraine.

Notes

1 Sarmatian – Sarmatism was a cultural formation in Old Poland. It manifested itself in the ideology, customs and lifestyle of the Polish nobility from the late 16th to the mid-18th century. Today it is associated with a conservative worldview, xenophobia, and the belief of the Polish nobility in its superiority.

2 Haidamakas – an armed movement composed of peasants and Cossacks in Ukraine in the 18th century directed against the Polish and Lithuanian nobility, representatives of the Catholic religion, townsmen and Jews (Turkish *hajdamak* means 'to attack', 'to plunder', 'to rob').

3 All poetry translations are my own.

4 *Oйve been made by the author of the art* – the authorship of this folk song is attributed to Леся authorsh. Aleksander Groza most probably knew it from the collections of songs of the most important folklore collectors – Zorian Dołęga-Chodakowski, Krystyn Lach Szryma, Wacław from Olesko or Panteleimon Kulish.

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