

Ukrainian Literature on the Black Sea

1 The Cultural Space of Ukraine and the Black Sea

Geographically, Ukraine¹ belongs to the politically and culturally heterogeneous Black Sea region: Its southern border is formed by several hundred kilometers of the northern Black Sea coast. As a political space that according to Friedrich Ratzel has a certain abstract quality,² during the course of history the south of Ukraine became one of the border zones between the Ukrainian and Ottoman or Tatar culture and between the Christian and Muslim faiths, a Black Sea “borderscape”³ that not only separates the riparian states but has also resulted in several points of contact. It would be of relevance here to emphasize that over the centuries, the northern Black Sea coast formed part of the arena for the political presence and hegemonic rivalry of such states as the Roman Empire, Byzantium, the medieval Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Ottoman Empire, tsarist Russia, and the totalitarian Soviet Union. On the other hand, Ukraine, which always had to fight for its national independence, had no imperial relationship with the coastal lands: it never had to struggle for access to the Black Sea and hence it never had to annex territories: As a politicogeographical space, the land settled for many centuries by the Old East Slavic and later by the Ukrainian population was connected to the Black Sea coast.⁴ For this reason, the Black Sea played an important role in Ukrainian geopolitical thought as attempts were made to establish a sovereign state

1 The name “Ukraine” was first mentioned in 1187 and originally meant, as the historian Andrii Plakhonin claims, “a military border” with Asia. In the course of time, it spread westwards and came to denote the entire country: Dmytro Shurkhalo, “Iz samoho pochatku tse buv viiskovyj kordon, i zaraz tse znachennia zberihaieia – istoryk Plakhonin pro nazvu “Ukraina”,” *Radio svoboda*, February 9, 2017, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28300421.html>. It was not until the late nineteenth century that the population’s self-identification as “Ukrainians,” which originated in Kharkiv, spread to Lviv via Kyiv. In the course of history, the main entholinguistic and ethnonational term used was “Rusyny” (“Ruthenes,” in the Habsburg tradition). To avoid ambiguity, throughout this chapter the name “Ukraine” and the term “Ukrainian” are also used for the Old East Slavic group on the territory of Ukraine before the nineteenth century.

2 Friedrich Ratzel, “Über die geographische Lage,” in *Raumtheorie: Grundlagentexte aus Philosophie und Kulturwissenschaften*, ed. Jörg Dünne and Stephan Günzel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), 390.

3 Johan Schimanski, “Border Aesthetics and Cultural Distancing in the Norwegian-Russian Borderscape,” *Geopolitics* 20, no. 1 (2015): 35–55.

4 The first state structure on the territory of today’s Ukraine—the Cossack state “Hetmanshchyna,” which emerged in the mid-seventeenth century—bordered the Crimean Khanate. The Black Sea played a large role in the political visions of the Ukrainian Cossacks and their hetmans. As an independent republic, Ukraine had direct access to the Black Sea in the years 1917–1921, and as the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic within the Soviet Union. It has also had direct access as a sovereign state since 1991.

from the early twentieth century onwards. Notable ideas in this context were those advanced by the founder of the cartographic orientation within Ukraine, Stepan Rudnytskyi, in his volumes published in 1910–1914,⁵ and the concept of “orientation towards the Black Sea” in *Na porozi novoi Ukrainy: Hadky i mrii* (On the Threshold of the New Ukraine: Ideas and Dreams) published in 1918 by the prominent historian and first president of the Ukrainian People’s Republic (1917–21) Mykhailo Hrushevskiy.⁶ In these works, both thinkers place emphasis on the significance of the sea for the idea of Ukrainian statehood. These ideas were developed further by Ukrainian intellectuals in subsequent decades. Important works in this respect are Iurii Lypa’s *Chornomorska doktryna* (Black Sea Doctrine)⁷ of 1940 and the atlas *Chornomorskyi prostir* (The Black Sea Region), published as a manuscript by the Ukrainian Institute for Black Sea Studies in Odesa the following year⁸ and written by Iurii Lypa and Lev Bykovskiy. Both publications were popular with the Ukrainian politicians and cultural figures living in exile in the 1930s and 1940s and considered the Black Sea region one of the most important for Ukrainian statehood. In all of these concepts, the maritime border of Ukraine as one of the Black Sea riparian states played an important role as a link not only economically and politically but also in a cultural context. For in contrast to the politics of the colonization of the Black Sea coast by the Great Powers, life in the southern regions of Ukraine was characterized by cohabitation with other peoples, cultures and religions, manifested not only in resistance and struggle but also in dialogue and cooperation. The Black Sea entered the cultural mind of Ukrainians as a natural border that divides and unites, evoking strong images in Ukrainian culture.⁹

These circumstances were of great importance for the mental mapping of the Black Sea region not only in its political but also in a poetic dimension, as demonstrated by the centuries-old tradition concerning the Black Sea established in Middle Ukrainian folklore and in Ukrainian literature of the early modern period and from the early nineteenth century onwards.¹⁰ It should be noted that here the term literature is to be understood in its broader sense; in the spirit of the literary turn, the text corpus is expanded from the genres of aesthetic writing (prose and poetry) to include

5 See Stephan Rudnyckij, *Ukraina: Land und Volk. Eine gemeinfassliche Landeskunde* (Vienna: Verlag des Bundes zur Befreiung der Ukraina, 1916).

6 Mykhailo Hrushevskiy, *Na porozi novoi Ukrainy: Hadky i mrii* (Kyiv: Petro Barskyi u Kyievi, 1918).

7 Iurii Lypa, “Chornomorska doktryna, Vseukrainska trylohiia,” in *Biblioteka ukraïnoznavstva*, ed. Vasyli Iaromenko (Kyiv: VAT, 2007), 2:392.

8 Iurii Lypa and Lev Bykovskiy, *Chornomorskyi prostir: Atlas* (Odesa: Ukrainskyi Chornomorskyi Instytut, 1941).

9 Oksana Szuptya-Wiazowska, “‘Chornomorska doktryna’: Obraz i kontsept Chornoho moria v ukrainskii kulturnii svidimosti,” in *Odesa i Morze Czarne jako przestrzeń literacka*, ed. Jarosław Ławski and Natalia Maliutina (Białystok: Prymat, 2018), 305–12.

10 Regarding the history of the Ukrainian language, Michael Moser distinguishes between Old Ukrainian (988–1340) and Middle Ukrainian (1340–1798): Michael Moser, “Grundzüge einer Geschichte der ukrainischen Sprache,” in *Vom Rand ins Zentrum: Perspektiven auf die Ukraine*, ed. Peter Deutschmann, Michael Moser, and Alois Woldan (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2023), 54, 58.

other text types and cultural manifestations such as folk poetry. The study's methodological framework with respect to the specifics of the location, the history, the political processes, and the different ideas concerning identity is formed by post-imperial or post-colonial questions, the concepts of alterity and otherness, the cultural-theoretical paradigm of "similarity," and the thought model of geopoetics in contradistinction to geopolitics. These terms are well suited, as Magdalena Marszałek and Sylvia Sasse emphasize, to "analyzing and describing different correlations and interferences between literature and geography," since the "question of the role of geographical attitudes, perceptions, or materialities" is provoked in literary practice and production, "irrespective of whether these are cultural constructs or naturally given."¹¹ The combination of these approaches enable examination of the Ukrainian local texts on the Black Sea and on Crimea and Odesa in specific. The proposed survey of the most important texts and names is structured chronologically by historical and artistic epoch.

2 The Topos of the Black Sea and Crimea in Ukrainian Folk Poetry of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period

Ukraine's appropriation of the Black Sea dates back over a thousand years, as also demonstrated by one of its historical names: "Ruske more" (the Sea of Rus), which was used in the era of the East Slavic empire of Kyivan Rus¹² on the territory of today's Ukraine (882–1240), as the East Slavic annals of 858 to 1485 and Arabic chronicles relate. From the fifteenth century onwards, the Black Sea coast began to be settled by the population from today's Ukrainian territory, especially the limans—the estuaries of the Dnipro, Dniester (Dnister), the Southern Buh, and the northern side of the Danube Delta—which served as places of refuge. It was here that there developed a rich Middle Ukrainian folklore in which the limans formed an entity with the Black Sea. The estuary connects the sea and the steppe, the river and the sea, is easier to appropriate and settle, and provides safety. Thus in the mid-fifteenth century the "free" people—that is, those not subject to the law—who came from other regions of today's Ukraine¹³ and were later given the Tatar designation "Cossacks" began to establish themselves in

¹¹ Magdalena Marszałek and Sylvia Sasse, eds., *Geopoetiken: Geographische Entwürfe in den mittel- und osteuropäischen Literaturen* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2010), 9.

¹² It was not until the nineteenth century that Kyiv's large medieval empire, "Rus," was termed "Kyivan Rus," mainly by Russian historians in order to distinguish it from "Moskavian Rus."

¹³ In 1340, the regions of the Ukrainian-speaking world were divided between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which were united in a personal union in 1386 and in a real union in 1569; cf. Moser, "Grundzüge einer Geschichte der ukrainischen Sprache," 58.

the south.¹⁴ Linguistic history plays a considerable role here: “the language of the Cossacks,” notes Michael Moser, “was mixed, but characterized above all by a compromise between various Ukrainian dialects of origin. This meant the birth of the extraordinarily homogeneous Southeastern Ukrainian dialects that were later drawn upon as the basis of the Ukrainian standard language.”¹⁵ The Cossacks were, as Andreas Kappeler also emphasizes, “communities of warriors, [...] predominantly of Ukrainian provenance.”¹⁶

Although the social and cultural space of the northern Black Sea coast was also extremely heterogeneous in the Middle Ages, the medieval period was not marked by permanent confrontation between the difference ideas concerning identity. The researcher on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Crimean folk poetry Ivan Erofeev is of the view that there were no hostile relations between Slavs and Crimean Tatars in the first half of the fifteenth century.¹⁷ Relations were primarily connected to trade-based communication. From the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries onwards, one of the oldest and most important sidelines for the Ukrainian population, especially in the central and eastern territories, was “chumatstvo,” the transport of goods, mainly salt, from the Black Sea coast and Crimea to the north. This trade, practiced until the early nineteenth century, was undertaken not only by peasants but also by the urban population and Cossacks. The role this source of income plays in the Ukrainian memory is demonstrated by several tales and songs as well as paintings by such prominent painters as Ivan Aivazovskii, Aleksei Savrasov, Józef Brandt, Arckyp Kuindzhi. It is striking that the Ukrainian name for the Milky Way became “Chumatskyi Shliach” (*Chumak Way*).

14 Andreas Kappeler, *Die Kosaken* (Munich: Beck, 2013); Kerstin S. Jobst, *Geschichte der Krim: Iphigenie und Putin auf Tauris* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 137–40. There are various interpretations of the origins of the Ukrainian Cossacks. In contrast to the position of historians in tsarist Russia and the ideologically tailored interpretation of Soviet historiographers, who connected them with settlement on the Black Sea coast and the border to the “wild steppe” by the “serfs who had fled,” the hypothesis of Mykhailo Hrushevskiy seems to reflect the truth and also enjoys the support of today’s Ukrainian historians: Hrushevskiy connects the emergence of the Cossack communities with the military measures of the then feudal elites and middle strata following the example of the Western European orders of knights. For both, in addition to defence, conquering new territories and material gains played a large role. The Zaporozhian Cossacks’ legitimation as an “Antemurale Christianitatis” from the sixteenth century became a narrative framing the Ukrainian nation. See Stefan Rohdewald, “Vom ukrainischen ‘Antemurale Christianitatis’ zur politischen Nation? Geschichtsbilder der Ukraine und muslimische Krimtataren,” in *Religiöse Pluralität als Faktor des Politischen in der Ukraine*, ed. Katrin Boeckh and Oleh Turij (Munich: Biblion-Media, 2015), 396–97.

15 Moser, “Grundzüge einer Geschichte der ukrainischen Sprache,” 62; Georg Y. Shevelov, *A Historical Phonology of the Ukrainian Language* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1979), 557–58.

16 Andreas Kappeler, “Konkurrierende Narrative der vorsowjetischen ukrainischen Geschichte,” in Deutschmann, Moser, and Woldan, *Vom Rand ins Zentrum*, 14.

17 Ivan Erofeev, “Krym v malorusskoi narodnoi poezii XVI – XVII vv., preimushchestvenno v dumakh,” *Izvestia tavrisheskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi komissii*, no. 43 (1908): 73–87, accessed May 24, 2024, https://www.uknol.info/ru/Records/Krym_v_malorusskoj_narodnoj_poez.html.

However, after the Ottoman Empire, which had its own designs on control over the Black Sea, had conquered the northwestern coast in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, it began to subjugate Crimea: From 1478 onwards, the Crimean Khanate, which had emerged in 1441, became an Ottoman vassal state and was transformed into an area for concentrating troops for assaults on other territories, primarily Christian ones. The Ukrainian Cossacks became an important obstacle in path of the Ottomans and their subordinate Tatar invaders. As their military-political organization grew in size and developed, the Cossacks not only repelled these attacks but also led preventative campaigns themselves against the Ottoman-Tatar fortresses in the northern Black Sea region, not seldom in the form of looting raids. In this period, the Black Sea region began to play an increasingly large identity-shaping role for the bordering Ukrainian territories: as a space with a decidedly heterogeneous quality that includes several differences, mainly cultural ones such as language, religion, customs, and history, it became a space of direct confrontation of the Ukrainian Cossacks with the “Other.” Of central importance here is the topos of the struggle against the Other, the conflict between Christianity and Islam, between Europe and Asia.

From the late fifteenth century onwards, military activities undertaken by the Cossacks against both Ottomans and Crimean Tatars were expressed in Middle Ukrainian folk poetry, in which a striking role is played by the particularly rich corpus of *dumy* (emotionally charged historical ballads)¹⁸ and historical songs. Central to these texts is the subject of protection from enemies, rescue from peril, and liberation from captivity and slavery. The protagonists of this poetry, which was often recited performatively with accompaniment on the *kobza* (*bandura*), a popular string instrument in Ukraine, were the Cossacks, especially the Dnipro Cossacks of the Zaporozhian Sich, a military federation on the lower bank of the river. In the Ukrainian imagination, the phenomenon of Cossackdom was always bound up with moral and aesthetic concepts such as willpower, heroism, honor, loyalty, justice, patriotism, and self-sacrifice in the name of the homeland. Hence its tight connection to the poetic creativity of the common people was quite deliberate. The symbolic myth of the Cossacks still plays a large role in the cultural consciousness of Ukrainians to this day. The value attached to it, observes Kappeler, is evident in the Ukrainian national anthem, which stems from the nineteenth century.¹⁹

Some of the most frequent motifs in the Ukrainian *dumy* are a Cossack setting out to war with the magical prediction of his death, dramatic circumstances conspiring to cause his death, slavery as a result of Tatar attacks, and the dramatic fate of Cossacks in Ottoman captivity. This tradition also gave rise to a series of historical ballads from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century with the culmination of the Cossack wars against the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire. One of the first scholars to ex-

18 The term “Duma” defining a genre of Zaporozhian Cossack epic oral poetry is first mentioned in the chronicle by S. Sarnytsky in 1506.

19 Kappeler, “Konkurrierende Narrative der vorsowjetischen ukrainischen Geschichte,” 22.

amine these texts was the founder of Ukrainian folklore studies, Prince Mykola Tserteliev (Russian: Nikolai Tsertelev, also Tsereteli), the ethnographer and pedagogue of Georgian origin and a great lover of Ukrainian culture. In 1819 he published the volume *Opyt sobraniia starinnykh malorossiiskikh pesnei* (The Experience of Collecting Old Little Russian Songs),²⁰ which had a large influence on subsequent researchers. Tserteliev concerned himself with the theoretical problems of folklore, the specifics of the genre, and its classification; he condemned the falsifications of folkloristic and ethnographic works that appeared in the age of Romanticism. The old Ukrainian *dumy* and songs of this period were also the subject of commentaries by the next collectors of the nineteenth century, Volodymyr Antonovych and Mykola Kostomarov, and a little later Pavlo Zhytetskyi, Mykhailo Drahomanov, and others, who examined their connection to historical events.²¹ They recorded over 140 variants of thirty *dumy* and a number of historical songs. They reflect the history of the Ukrainians' struggle against the Crimean Tatars and Ottomans and have a direct connection to the Black Sea.²² Particularly renowned examples are: *Pro znyshchennia bureiu turetskoho korablia* (On the Destruction of a Turkish Ship by the Storm), *Plach nevilnykiv u turetskii katorzi* (The Lament of the Slaves in the Turkish Jail), *Vtecha triokh brativ z Azova* (The Flight of Three Brothers from Azov), *Vtecha Samiila Kishky z turetskoi nevoli* (Samiilo Kishka's Flight from Turkish Captivity), *Plach nevilnyka v turkiv pro vykup* (A Slave of the Turks' Lament for Deliverance), and *Kozak provodzhaie sester svoiikh* (A Cossack Takes Leave of his Sisters).

Middle Ukrainian *dumy* and historical songs of the sixteenth and seventeenth century contain a strong focus on Crimea, since it was from this peninsula that the regular Tatar raids on regions settled by Ukrainians in the south of the country emanated. It was also renowned for its slave markets, the largest of which, in Caffa (Crimean Tatar: Kefe; today: Feodosiia) delivered slaves to Istanbul and other parts of the Ottoman Empire—beyond the sea, then. The name “Crimea” was often avoided in the texts, however, and replaced by metaphors such as unfreedom, slavery, “Turkish,” “Busurmanic”²³ forced labor, or stony, walled dungeons into which the sun never shines. Some *sujets* were particularly popular, as in the poems about Marusia Bohuslavka, for example, who became the protagonist of many ballads in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She won the sultan's mercy in the Ottoman harem, but remained loyal to her

20 Mykola Tserteliev, *Opyt sobraniia starinnykh malorossiiskikh pesnei* (St. Petersburg: Tip. Karla Kraia, 1819). The term “Malorossia” (Little Russia) is one of the historical names for the region of central Ukraine and the left bank of the Dnipro in the second half of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century. The term “Little Russia” was artificially spread through Ukrainian lands by Russian tsarism, although the Ukrainians themselves did not use the name as their ethnonym or to denote their territory. See Evhen Nakonechnyi, *Ukradene imia: Chomu rusyny staly ukraintsiamy* (Lviv: Lvivska naukova biblioteka NAN Ukrainy im. V. Stefanyka, 2001).

21 See Dmytro Doroshenko, *Slovianskyi svit u ioho mynulomu i suchasnomu* (Kyiv: Tempora, 2010), 518.

22 Erofeev, “Krym v malorusskoi narodnoi poezii.”

23 Busurmany – an old term in Ukraine for people of a different faith, above all Muslims.

homeland and freed seven hundred captured Ukrainian Cossacks. In “Marusia Bohuslavka,” the Black Sea is interpreted as a barrier, as a boundary between two worlds—the familiar and the alien, giving rise to the symbolic, the figurative. This dichotomy pervades all texts of the old Ukrainian *dumy* and songs. It is striking that in them, the Crimean Tatars and Ottomans, who are almost always identified as such, are portrayed as other, as alien: They are the enemies of the Ukrainian people, in league with each other, Godless people who raid and loot villages, hunt people in the vast steppe, and kill them in the most brutal fashion, defiling the corpses. Ukrainian historical poetry contains a cycle of slave songs that stress the toughest aspect of the Tatar raids—the extermination of children. In these works, Ukraine is personified, as for instance in the historical song *Zazhurylas Ukraina* (Ukraine Mourns): “Ukraine mourns that it no longer has a place to live, small children are trampled to pieces by the Horde’s horses, the bigger ones taken, driven to the khan, despairingly she stretches her arms after them.”²⁴

Ukrainian folklore of the sixteenth and seventeenth century offers a particularly artistic portrayal of nature, which becomes an important protagonist. This holds especially for the descriptions of the vast steppe landscapes and the storms on the Black Sea, for instance in the ballads about Oleksii Popovych: On the Black Sea, all the stars in the sky have grown dark, a strong wind blows, raising the high waves that split the Cossack ships. The “Tatar horde”²⁵ is likened to a black cloud; the enemy warriors are rejected even by nature: For instance, the birch by which the Tatars stop loses its green leaves. In these ballads and songs, the Black Sea becomes a permanent topos as the natural boundary between the homeland and the Other; it is often associated with galley slavery. For the treatment of the prisoners at the hands of the Tatars and the Ottomans is depicted in the old folklore as merciless. These laments create a true-to-life portrayal of the desperate plight of Christian slaves, to which several historical sources also bear witness.²⁶ For instance, Erofeev refers to a statement by Mustafa Ağa in Warsaw in 1650 in which he stressed that the Tatars needed war.²⁷ The sixteenth-century *Kronika świata* (Chronicle of the World) by the Polish historiographer Marcin Belsky contains horrific details on the Tatar raids. And the nineteenth-century Crimea scholar Feokrist Khartakhai describes the Tatars’ campaigns and the capture of Slavs in the same colors as the Ukrainian Medieval poetry: The captives were driven to Crimea, surrounded by a chain of riders, whipped, and branded with a hot iron.²⁸ The figures of the Other were, then, as the tradition of Ukrainian folklore with its medieval roots demonstrates, extremely negative. Yet the cruelty of the Cossacks during their

24 Erofeev, “Krym v malorusskoi narodnoi poezii.” Here and henceforth the original Ukrainian quotations are rendered into English by the author and the translator.

25 Erofeev, “Krym v malorusskoi narodnoi poezii.” In these ballads, the use of the term “the horde” is thoroughly pejorative.

26 Erofeev.

27 Erofeev.

28 Erofeev.

raids on land and sea was sometimes equal to that of the Tatars and Ottomans. For instance, the abovementioned chronicle by Marcin Belsky relates that after their invasion of Crimea in 1575, the Cossacks “burnt everything and left nothing alive.”²⁹ But this was a “widespread practice among all groups throughout the region,”³⁰ writes Oleksandr Maiboroda; thus, he stresses, “a more nuanced view must be taken of the references to the Crimean Tatar practice of raiding humans prevalent in Ukrainian historiography [...]”³¹

But there were also cases of compassion on both sides, especially when the defeated party had to pay a ransom. For as unpleasant as the old enemies’ traits were, their positive aspects could not be ignored. In the seventeenth century, during the Ukrainian war of liberation against Poland-Lithuania, there was even a military alliance between Zaporozhian Cossacks and the Crimean Tatars.³² Consequently, the centuries-old historical, political, and cultural process in the south of today’s Ukraine, on the Black Sea coast, and in Crimea were highly ambivalent; the alterity also led to the formation of a peculiar identity that over time displayed hybrid characteristics. For example, in the early twentieth century, the thesis became widespread among Polish and Ukrainian historians that Ukraine was influenced by the Crimean Tatars. Relevant in this regard was the view expressed by Viacheslav Budzynovskyi in 1907 that Ukrainian Cossacks’ adopting practices of the “Asians” had to be assessed positively: “Learning from their opponent enabled their own defense.”³³ This author described “clearly long and close cohabitation with the Tatars,” even if he “remained within the discourse of the time” and mentioned the “hordes of the Asians.”³⁴

Hence one can say that over the course of the centuries, the rich tradition of historical Ukrainian folk poetry that emerged in the heterogeneous Black Sea region from the Middle Ages onwards served as a bridge to the subsequent periods of Ukrainian literature. Even the first of the works written in today’s vernacular, which laid the cornerstone for the new linguistic art in Ukraine—Ivan Kotliarevskyi’s (1796–1838) *Aeneis* burlesque published in 1798—is written in the form of a Cossack epic. But this tradition also had a strong influence on the Romantic poets, the most prominent being the Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko (1814–61).

²⁹ Erofeev.

³⁰ Oleksandr Maiboroda, “Istoriia ukrainsko-krymskotatarskykh vidnosyn iak skladova ukrainskoi natsionalnoi svidomosti,” in Ivan Kuras et al. (eds.) *Problemy intehratsiï krymskykh repatriantiv v ukrainske suspilstvo* (Kyiv: Svotohliad, 2004), cit. Rohdewald, 410.

³¹ Maiboroda.

³² A striking example is the battle at Zhovti Vody in 1648, in which the Polish-Lithuanian troops were defeated by Bohdan Khmelnytskyi’s Ukrainian Cossack troops and their Crimean Tatar allies.

³³ Viacheslav Budzynovskyi, *Nashi hetmany* (Lviv: Nakladom avtora, 1907), 11, accessed May 25, 2024, http://irbis-nbuv.gov.ua/cgi-bin/ua/elib.exe?Z21ID=&I21DBN=UKRLIB&P21DBN=UKRLIB&S21STN=1&S21REF=10&S21FMT=online_book&C21COM=S&S21CNR=20&S21P01=0&S21P02=0&S21P03=FF=&S21STR=ukr0001150, see also Rohdewald, “Vom ukrainischen ‘Antemurale Christianitatis’ zur politischen Nation?,” 398–99.

³⁴ Rohdewald, 399.

3 Topoi of the Black Sea and Crimea in Ukrainian Literature of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Shortly before the Russian tsarist empire's victory over the Crimean Khanate, in which the Zaporozhian Cossacks offered great assistance, and the peninsula's subsequent incorporation "into the holdings of the Russian Empire" proclaimed by Catherine II's manifesto of April 8, 1783,³⁵ the Cossack federation of the Zaporozhian Sich was liquidated in accordance with her order of June 15, 1775. This event had drastic consequences for the subsequent history of Ukraine: From the late eighteenth-century onwards, the colonization of the territories of today's Ukraine began. The south of the country, including the Black Sea coast, which belonged to the "Free Land of the Zaporozhian Sich," and the territory of the Crimean Khanate and some other former regions of the Ottoman Empire were given the new official name of "Novorossia" (New Russia). In addition to the many economic and political measures taken by the Tsarist Government, the Black Sea was to be eliminated from the cultural consciousness of the Ukrainians. Russification played a large role in this. Resistance was offered by, among other things, literature, by geopoetics as a counterpart to geopolitics. For, as Shevchenko wrote in 1839 in the poem "Do Osnovianenka" (To Osnovianenko), a melancholy depiction of the glorious Ukrainian history of the previous centuries: "Our idea, our song will not die, will not go under."³⁶ Here, as in many other poems and epics of the Ukrainian national poet's first period, considered to belong to Romanticism, we encounter the topos of the Black Sea and the wars of liberation fought by the Cossacks, who advanced as far as Crimea and Istanbul (Ukrainian: "Tsarhorod") to free their enslaved compatriots. Along with this poem there are the works "Dumka" (A Brief Duma) ("The river flows into the blue sea"³⁷), "Ivan Pidkova" ("It was once in Ukraine, the canons roared, it was once—the Zaporozhian Cossacks had fought"³⁸), and the poem "Hamaliia," in which the Cossacks' navigation of the Dardanelles to "Byzantium" is depicted. Thematically and poetologically, these verses of Shevchenko's are close to the old ballads and songs, with which he was familiar (as is well known, the poet was a friend of Tserteliev's), but they accentuate different aspects: Shevchenko portrays the Ukraine of old as a free land in contrast to the time in which he is living and writing. His poetry is about the enslavement of his homeland by Russian tsarism. The Black Sea, Shevchenko's depictions of which are particularly nuanced, and the figures of the Ukrainian Cossacks as fighters for freedom are charged with many of the symbols of the day, which remain prevalent throughout his oeuvre. For instance, since the Romantic era the

³⁵ Jobst, *Geschichte der Krim*, 163–69.

³⁶ Taras Shevchenko, *Kobzar* (Kyiv: Korbush, 2008), 64.

³⁷ Shevchenko, 14.

³⁸ Shevchenko, 67.

Black Sea has been an important part of Ukrainians' cultural memory and is also expressed in subsequent literature. Another role is played by the maritime themes in the texts written in or about Crimea in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

As the periphery of the Russian Empire but at the same time a site of several cohabiting peoples, Crimea also began to take on a prominent position in Ukrainian literature during the nineteenth century. The peninsula, whose natural backdrop was the bordering Ukrainian steppe, receives a different connotation here than in the old folklore characterized by several traumatic cataclysms, in which even the name was avoided. Rich in nature and culture, thanks to the dry subtropical climate on its southern coast the peninsula was seen as a place that bestowed good health on the sick. It was in this period that Crimea obtained its "geopoetic" truth; It became a source of inspiration for many Ukrainian cultural and literary figures. It is also noteworthy that Ukrainian as a literary language was subjected to repression in the Russian Empire, particularly between 1876 and 1905; the intention was to drive it out of the cultural sphere. Irrespective of this situation, one can speak of the Ukrainian "local Crimea text" in this era as a semantically stable entirety of texts devoted to a geospace. Although the representation of literature on Crimea became increasingly Russocentric due to the colonial cultural policy of the tsarist empire and, later, the Soviet Union, as demonstrated by most anthologies³⁹ and the corresponding literary criticism, two other literary histories of Crimea should be mentioned besides the Russian Crimea topos; the Ukrainian and the Crimean Tatar, which previously received little attention. This also includes the Crimean Tatar topos in Russian and Ukrainian literature. In this context, it would be vital, however, to consider these two "local Crimea texts" for the representation of the literary landscape of the peninsula, which was always an ethnically, religious, and culturally heterogeneous entity. I refer here to the works of some authors who are representative of the Ukrainian "local Crimea text," although its systematic study remains a desideratum.

One of those who lived in Crimea and dedicated himself to the art of poetry was Stepan Rudanskyi (1834–73), who worked as the town doctor in Yalta. He wrote ballads, lyric poetry, and a drama about the life of *Chumaky* who moved to Crimea to collect salt, fish, and other goods. The play is set on the coast. But Rudanskyi also attained renown for his Ukrainian translations of Classical literature, especially Homer's *Iliad*. Another poet, publisher, and scholar of this era, Amvrosii Metlynskyi (1814–70) lived in Yalta due to his health problems. His legacy includes the collection *Dumy i pisni ta shche deshcho* (Ballads, Songs, and Other Writings). In his letters he calls Crimea an oasis offering health and inspiration. A "Crimea pilgrim" was the moniker given to Mykola Kostomarov (1817–85), who walked the boundary between Russian and Ukrainian

³⁹ One example would be the collection *Poeticheskii atlas Krima* (Simferopol: Tavriia, 1989), which was published in Simferopol along with four other anthologies in 1989 and only contains texts by Russian poets, with the exceptions of Adam Mickiewicz's "Crimean Sonnets."

literature. The historian and poet traveled around Crimea several times. It was here that he wrote poems such as *Aglaie-Chesme*, *Do Marii Pototskii* (To Maria Pototska)—a poem touching on the themes of Pushkin's poem *Bakhchisaraiskii fontan* (The Fountain of Bakhchisarai) and Mickiewicz's sonnet *Bakhchisarai*, and the lyrical dramas *Pantikapaion* and *Iupiter svetlyi plyvet po zelenym vodam kimmeriiskim* (Russian; The Light Jupiter Sails over the Green Cimmerian Waters). After visiting Chersonesus in 1870, he wrote the historical drama *Elliny Tavridy* (Russian; Hellenes of Tauris). The late-nineteenth-century poet Iakiv Shchoholiv (1824–98) became renowned as an idiosyncratic landscape poet who devoted many of his works to the southern Crimean coast. He called Crimea “a magical land,” a “green paradise on the endless sea.”⁴⁰ Somewhat dissonant is the mention of the pale, sickly-looking passerby on the promenade in Yalta, the petals of whose life mercilessly fade into this blossoming land. A special place in Crimea's literary landscape is occupied by Liudmyla Vasylevska (Dniprova Chaika) (1861–1927), a poet who has been called the first female Marinist of Ukrainian literature. Her symbolist prose poems *Morski maliunky* (Pictures of the Sea), written in Crimea, were highly regarded by Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi, Serhii Iefremov, and Maxim Gorki.

One of the most striking characteristics of the work of Ukrainian writers and poets of the age who wrote about or in Crimea is their acceptance of the peninsula's old local population, the Crimean Tatars—in stark contrast to the poetic intentions of the classical Russian authors, such “troubadours of the empire” (to cite Ewa M. Thompson)⁴¹ as Aleksandr Pushkin, Leo Tolstoy, Maxim Gorki, and others. Over the centuries, as imperial claims to power in Crimea changed radically and both peoples—the Ukrainians and the Crimean Tatars—were oppressed by Russian tsarism, relations between them underwent a clear evolution. Drawing on the cultural-theoretical paradigm of “similarity,”⁴² juxtaposed with the dichotomy of “Self”/“Other,” we can trace an analogous initial situation with respect to the sociohistorical circumstances of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in the context of the Russian Empire from the late eighteenth century onwards. In the new historicopolitical situation, the Ukrainian authors had different principal intentions to those encountered in medieval Ukrainian folk poetry: Their work was shaped by a keen interest in the way of life, customs, history, and culture of the Crimean Tatars. For instance, in the works of the most prominent authors of Ukrainian Modernism that have entered the literary canon, the prose of Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi and the poetry of Lesia Ukrainka, we can trace the parallels between the Cri-

40 Cit. Svitlana Kocherha, *Pivdennyi bereh Krymu v zhytti i tvorchosti ukrainskykh pysmennykh 19.–poch. 20-ho stolittia* (Yalta: RIO KHU, 2011), accessed May 27, 2024, <https://www.vesna.org.ua/txt/kocherhas/metod.html>.

41 Ewa M. Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2000).

42 Anil Bhatti and Dorothee Kimmich, eds., *Ähnlichkeit: Ein kulturtheoretisches Paradigma* (Konstanz: Konstanz University Press, 2015), 7–34.

mean Tatars' social and political situation and that of the Ukrainians in the tsarist empire.

A striking example in this respect is Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi's (1864–1913) Crimean cycle consisting of four longer narratives. In 1892, he started working in Odesa, in the phylloxera commission; three years later, he went to Crimea as an inspector. The peninsula made an unforgettable impression on the writer. Kotsiubynskyi worked in the Simeiz region and in the Alushta Valley. During subsequent stays in Crimea he visited Alupka, Sevastopol, and Bakhchisarai. While fulfilling his occupational tasks, he observed what for him was the unusual lifestyle of the Crimean Tatars, taking an active interest in their culture. The result was three novellas written between 1899 and 1904: *V putakh shaitana* (In the Chains of the Shaitan), dealing with the modernization of Crimean Tatar society in conflict with the patriarchal tradition; *Na kameni* (On the Rock), a tragic story of "forbidden love" between a married Tatar woman and a young shipwrecked Turk that becomes a metaphor of protest against unmoving tradition; and *Pid minaretamy* (Under the Minarets), in which the author opposes the fanaticism and obscurantism of the age. The generational conflict is portrayed on the cultural level. Scholarship has emphasized that the "literary reflection of the Crimean Tatar reform and nationalist movement in the Russian Empire by the Ukrainian author Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi [...] can also be understood in the context of Ukrainian and Russian literature and their tendencies toward popular enlightenment in the second half of the nineteenth century."⁴³

A somewhat different thematic orientation is demonstrated by the fourth narrative in Kotsiubynskyi's Crimea cycle: *U hrishnyi svit* (Into the Sinful World), about a convent in a gorge in the majestic Crimean Forest, whence four novices are banished. The work depicts the dissonance between Orthodox asceticism, the nuns' lack of morality, the perfection of nature, and the fullness of a free life. The banished recognize the harmony of the colors and sounds of the Crimean morning forest, the panorama of the sea, and the Alushta Valley: "The distant sea opened its wide arms to the green earth and fluttered joyfully, like the lively blue of the sky [...]. And all this wonderful land floated somewhere in the sea of warm light in a vast, borderless space."⁴⁴ Along with the new, "exotic," but also ethnically and socially engaged content, Kotsiubynskyi's Crimea texts are fascinating due to the richness of the Ukrainian language and their depiction of their setting: With the play of colors, the Impressionist Kotsiubynskyi lends depth to the psychological traits of the characters and attempts to fill all the elements of the plot with meaning.

Sojourns on the Black Sea and especially in Crimea also left a profound mark on the works of Lesia Ukrainka (Larysa Kosach-Kvitka, 1871–1913), the central figure of Ukrainian Modernism. Due to severe illness (the poet suffered from tuberculosis)

⁴³ Helena Ulbrechtová, Siegfried Ulbrecht, Kerstin Susanne Jobst et al., *Die Halbinsel Krim in Geschichte, Literatur und Medien* (Prague: Czech Academy of Sciences, Slovanský ústav, 2017), 11.

⁴⁴ Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi, "U hrishnyi svit," in Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi, *Tvory v 6 tomakh* (Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo akademii nauk Ukrainy, 1961), 2:158.

she spent almost a thousand days and nights in the peninsula, three of the forty-two years fate granted her. For her, the Black Sea and Crimea became not only a place of healing but also a source of vitality and inspiration. The principal motifs in her poetry in this period were the sun, the sea, inner peace, and hope. Lesia Ukrainka wrote her first poem about the peninsula and the beauty of the sea in 1890 in Ievpatoriia—"Tysha morska" (The Silence of the Sea) in the cycle *Krymski spohady* (Memories of Crimea), in which she called Crimea "the land of light and the golden blue."⁴⁵ But her Crimea poems also contain motifs of estrangement, loneliness, nostalgia, the disharmony between the wonderful landscape and the feeling of being a "captive," as her letters from this time testify.⁴⁶ She wrote in a letter to her mother of October 1897, for instance: "Although this land is despised by people, it is not Godforsaken, if only it were not so alien..."⁴⁷ She increasingly complained about her "lonely life," as in a letter from Yalta to her cousin Ariadna Drahomanova in April 1898: "I have now been in Crimea for 10 months, for 7 of them I have lived completely alone—that is not little!"⁴⁸ This psychic state also influenced the motifs in her poetry. Here, in Crimea, Lesia Ukrainka discovered "mythic Tauris" and turned to it in her works. In 1898 she wrote a dramatic scene, "Ifigeniia v Tavrydi" (Iphigenie in Tauris), part of the cycle *Krimski vidhuky* (Sounds of Crimea). As she mentioned in a letter to her mother,⁴⁹ it was not intended for performing on stage; the work consists of a dialogue between a choir of Tauric girls and a long monologue by the protagonist composed of Homeric epithets which is also the author's internal monologue. The principal motif is yearning for her homeland: In Iphigenia's heart only her beloved Hellas remains; here, in this beautiful, majestic land she wanders like a sad, faded, powerless shadow.⁵⁰ As a poet of Modernism, Lesia Ukrainka creates a subjective, non-traditional image of Iphigenia, if we think of Euripides and Goethe. In her letters she also compares her psychic state with that of Agamemnon's daughter. The poet's personal circumstances had a large influence on her perception of Crimea as an alien world. But her work was also shaped by her turning to the Classical legacy as a whole that is particularly discernible in Crimea. For instance, in Yalta in 1907 Lesia Ukrainka completed one of her most important works, the dramatic poem *Cassandra*, the "tragedy of the truth" she had begun in San Remo in 1903. It was in Yalta that she would also write the five-act play *Rufin i Pristsilla* (Rufin and Priscilla, 1907/8), dedicated to early Christianity in ancient Rome.

A particularly noteworthy aspect is Lesia Ukrainka's interest in the culture and fate to the Crimean Tatars, to whom her poetic works are devoted. Similarly to Kotsiu-

45 Lesia Ukrainka, "Tysha morska," in Lesia Ukrainka, *Zibrannia tvoriv u 12 tomakh* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1975), 1:99.

46 See Lesia Ukrainka, *Lysty*, vol. 1, 1876–1897, vol. 2, 1898–1902 (Kyiv: Komora, 2016–17).

47 Lesia Ukrainka, "Lyst do Kosach O. P., 1.10.1897," in *Lysty*, 1:461.

48 Lesia Ukrainka, "Lyst do Drahomanovoi A. M., 27.03.(8.04.) 1898," in *Lysty*, 2:40.

49 Lesia Ukrainka, "Lyst do Kosach O. P., 21.01.1898," in *Lysty*, 2:17.

50 Lesia Ukrainka, "Ifigeniia v Tavrydi," in Lesia Ukrainka, *Tvory v desiaty tomakh* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1964), 5:7.

bynskyi, Ukrainka sees their social position in the tsarist empire from the colonial perspective: The Crimean Tatars are an oppressed people that has to assimilate. The imperial regime seeks to homogenize the territory settled by this people for centuries—that is, to appropriate it without the “alien” culture, tradition, religion, or language. In this regard, the themes and moods in Lesia Ukrainka’s Crimean poetry display several parallels to the circumstances of the Ukrainians in the tsarist empire. During her very first stay in Crimea in 1891, in Ievpatoriia, Lesia Ukrainka wrote the poem “Nehoda” (Storm), in which she compares Crimea—“this splendid, God-blessed land”⁵¹—with a shipwreck and laments that the people there are ruled by foreigners and live the lives of slaves. Crimea appears to Lesia Ukrainka in the figure of a dying wild horse from the steppe already surrounded by a flock of predatory birds. The poet dreamt that the sea, awakened by the people’s anger, would liberate the unhappy land from imprisonment. She was convinced that Crimea was a Tatar land, and was fascinated by the Crimean Tatar culture, as demonstrated by her emotional poem “Tatarochka” (A Tatar Girl), describing a young Crimean Tatar girl in national costume. The poem conveys warm feelings on the part of the poet, admiration for the beauty of a girl who still lives freely, and fascination with her national costume.⁵² In Crimea, Lesia Ukrainka was interested in the Crimean Tatars’ language, folklore, and applied art. She collected their national embroidery and considered them similar to the Ukrainian – pointing to the hybridity of the popular culture of two peoples living in close contact for several centuries. In a letter to Mykhailo Drahomanov, she wrote that she wanted to publish the Tatar patterns she had collected in Crimea.⁵³ During her life in Crimea, Lesia Ukrainka’s interest in Islam also intensified. In 1907 she wrote a poetic dialogue, “Aisha ta Mohamed” (Aisha and Mohammed), describing Mohammed’s love for his deceased wife Khadidzha (Crimean Tatar: Hatice), to whom he was married for twenty-four years. After marrying the young Aisha, he recognizes that his love for the deceased was something eternal that lives on, hears his words and thoughts, and speaks to him with a secret voice.

Like her renowned poetic predecessors Pushkin, Mickiewicz, and others, Lesia Ukrainka visited Bakhchisarai, with whose beauty she was enthused. Like them, she also wrote a series of sonnets about the old Crimean Tatar capital, expressing her admiration for the former seat of the khans. In “Bakhchysarai”⁵⁴ and the other two sonnets, “Bakhchysaraiska hrobnytsia” (The Bakhchysarai Crypt) and “Bakhchysaraiskyi dvoret” (The Palace of Bakhchisarai), Lesia Ukrainka corresponds with the other poets in turning to the topic of the fountain of Bakhchisarai. Hers is a different emphasis, however: It is not the beauty of the harem, the sad Maria, and the passionate Zarema

51 Lesia Ukrainka, “Nehoda,” in Lesia Ukrainka, *Zibrannia tvoriv u 12 tomakh*, 1:104.

52 Lesia Ukrainka, “Tatarochka,” in Lesia Ukrainka, *Zibrannia tvoriv u 12 tomakh*, 1:106.

53 Lesia Ukrainka, “Lyst do Drahomanova M.P., 22.08.1891,” in *Lysty*, 1:157.

54 Lesia Ukrainka, “Bakhchysarai,” in Lesia Ukrainka, *Zibrannia tvoriv u 12 tomakh* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1975), 1:107.

that lie here, but “even the glory of Bakhchysarai!”⁵⁵ The poem “Bakhchysaraiskyi dvorets” (The Palace of Bakhchysarai) is full of reminiscences about the history of the Crimean Tatars and reflections on their present lack of freedom: As the final strophe observes, while power and slavery once dominated here, the power has disappeared, everything lies in ruins, but slavery still prevails.⁵⁶

Another Crimean work by Lesia Ukrainka can be considered in this context: the story “Nad morem” (By the Sea), which can be seen as one of the series of texts constructing the southern coast of Crimea, especially Yalta, as a seaside holiday destination. Here, the summer guests, particularly those from the central territories of the Russian Empire, are described as alien. Their boredom, the emptiness of their interests and the transience of their artificial feelings of love are juxtaposed with the imposing beauty of the cliff coastline and the majestic sea as media of eternity and vastness. Her narrative is thus reminiscent of Anton Chekhov’s renowned novella *Dama s sobachkoi* (*The Lady with the Lapdog*). Lesia Ukrainka’s final visit to Yalta was in 1908. She would later refer to Crimea as the cradle of her creativity, a role the peninsula later also played for the next generation of Ukrainian Modernist poets such as Oleksandr Oles and Pavlo Tychyna, but in particular for the neo-Classicists Mykola Zerov and Maksym Rylskyi and the poets of the 1960s, one of the most prominent of whom was Mykola Vinhranivskyi. The aura of antiquity peculiar to Crimea, the intoxicating nature, and the feeling of freedom suggested by the sea’s expansive horizon was experienced and reflected with a sense of immediacy by the Ukrainian lyric poets of the twentieth century.

One of the most illustrative examples of the constant presence of the topos of the Black Sea and Crimea in Ukrainian literature is the novel *Liudolovy* (People Hunters) by Zinaida Tulub (1890–1964). Appearing in two volumes between 1934 and 1937, it is considered one of the best examples of Ukrainian historical-psychological prose of the twentieth century. The author, born into a Kyiv aristocratic family with roots in Crimea, was a historian by training. She began writing in the 1920s, during the policy of “rooting” (*korenizatsiia*) and the “Ukrainian Cultural Renaissance.” Because her biography did not correspond to proletarian values, she was forced to spend the time from 1937 and 1957 in Soviet gulags. In her childhood, Tulub often stayed in Crimea; she was familiar with the Iphigenia Cliff, Simeiz, Feodosiia, Koktebel, and other places. Her greatest success—the novel *Liudolovy*, which won an award in Paris in 1937—depicts the plight of the Ukrainian people in the days of the Crimean Tatar and Ottoman raids as well as the attacks on the country by the Polish aristocratic invaders in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The idea behind this epic work was to create a literary biography of the Cossack hetman Petro Sahaidachnyi, which then gave rise to a broad panorama of life in Ukraine and in Crimea. Due to her enthusiasm for ethnog-

55 Lesia Ukrainka, “Bakhchysaraiska hrobnytsia,” in Lesia Ukrainka, *Zibrannia tvoriv u 12 tomakh*, 1:108.

56 Lesia Ukrainka, “Bakhchysaraiskyi dvorets,” in Lesia Ukrainka, *Zibrannia tvoriv u 12 tomakh*, 1:107.

raphy, the author had a good knowledge of Ukrainian folklore; old legends, historical ballads, and songs became one of the sources for the novel, with Crimea as one of the main settings. The text is also particularly revealing with respect to Ukrainian—Tatar relations and attributions of the Self and the Other. In terms of equality, peculiarity, and similarity, Tulub creates several convincing portrayals of the Western and Eastern cultural worlds and the bridges of historical understanding. Notably, she does not idealize Ukrainian Cossacks; their campaigns to Crimea, especially Caffa, are just as merciless and cruel as the Tatar raids on Ukrainian land. The writer adopts the humanist stance that there is no such thing as a “just” or an “unjust” war. A great deal of attention is paid to the ethnic phenomenon of the Crimean Tatars; the author distinguished between the Nogai hordes of the steppe⁵⁷ and the sedentary Tatars on the peninsula’s southern coast, who for centuries were subjected to the influence of the Greek and Italian culture in Crimea. She thereby avoids creating hostile stereotypes. Of particular aesthetic value are the novel’s description of the steppe,⁵⁸ the natural world of the Black Sea coast,⁵⁹ and Crimea as the lifeworld of the Crimean Tatars.⁶⁰

One of the more recent literary publications in Ukraine on the subject of Crimean and the complicated mix of cultures in the peninsula is Anastasiia Levkova’s *Za Perekopom ie zemlia: Krymskyi roman* (There Is an Earth beyond Perekop: A Crimean Novel, 2023), which can be categorized within the genre of autosociobiography combining individual biography with social analysis. The work deals with the complicated path to emancipation taken by the protagonist, who perceives herself as an ethnic Russian and whose male forebears were active collaborators in the Soviet regime, in forming her own personal identity, something that became possible due to her turning to the Ukrainian language in close intertwinement with the language and culture of the Crimean Tatars. The story develops against the panorama of the traumatic epochal upheavals in Crimea from the late 1980s to the present day. Anastasiia Levkova’s novel, writes Alim Aliiev in the blurb, is a “Crimean travel guide,” but not of the glossy tourist kind: It is a portrayal of the complicated world of human relationships that have emerged in recent decades between Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians, and Russians in the peninsula, a demonstration of how the political turbulence has been reflected in the everyday lives of the local people.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Jobst, *Geschichte der Krim*, 133–34.

⁵⁸ Zinaida Tulub, *Liudolovy* (Simferopol: Tavria, 1980), 1:15, 32, 47, 81, 100, 110, 230.

⁵⁹ Tulub, 1:115, 130, 154, 158, 160, 173, 175, 190, 193, 196, 202, 216, 259; 2: 9, 56, 58, 68, 84, 85, 99, 102.

⁶⁰ Tulub, 1:158, 172, 176, 236; 2:2, 3, 15, 36.

⁶¹ Alim Aliiev, in Anastasiia Levkova, *Za Perekopom ie zemlia: Krymskyi roman* (Kyiv: Laboratoriia, 2023), Cover.

4 The Topos of the Black Sea and the Port City of Odesa

To a lesser extent, the Ukrainian literary landscape includes Odesa, the most important port city in the south of the country, whose culture has always been characterized by large Russian-Jewish-Ukrainian hybridity. With the works of Ivan Nechui-Levytskyi (1838–1918), we also encounter the topos of the Black Sea in Ukrainian Realist prose of the second half of the nineteenth century; he even entitled one of his novels *Nad Chornym morem* (On the Black Sea, 1890). With this psychological work, the author opens a new chapter in Ukrainian prose: the novel examines the Ukrainian intelligentsia with progressive views whose educational work offers people the perspective of a new, free, and meaningful existence. The novel's settings include Odesa and the Black Sea coast; the sea becomes a medium of vastness, freedom, and beauty. His poetic descriptions often contain mythological motifs and figures: "The sea became black once more, and the shine fell again from Heaven onto the Black Sea, as if someone's hand were throwing golden wreaths, golden bouquets of flowers. [...] 'It seems that the Sirens have surfaced from the water and are swimming and playing in golden wreaths in the sea,' said Mavrodin."⁶² Thus in Ukrainian Realist literature, the Black Sea is no longer depicted as a dividing boundary, as an alien, dangerous space; its image is positively charged and poeticized.

Odesa is also associated with Lesia Ukrainka's first stay of convalescence on the Black Sea in 1888. The city's multiculturalism made a great impression on the young poet; she describes Odesa as loud, full, with a fast rhythm of life and a kind of southern exoticism.⁶³ A large impression was also made by the people: imposing Slavs with their own peculiar language quite different to hers, pedantic Germans, loud and temperamental Greeks, Italians, Moldavians.⁶⁴ It was here that Lesia Ukrainka saw for the first time in her life the boundless sea that so impressed and enthused her. She described its beauty in the cycle "Podorozh do moria" (Journey to the Sea); of its ten chapters, five are devoted to Odesa. It was first published in 1893, in the collection *Na krylakh pisen* (On the Wings of Songs) and dedicated to the family of the renowned Odesan literary critic and folklore scholar Mykhailo Komarov. Later, Lesia Ukrainka visited Odesa almost annually.

The Black Sea port is also associated with other Ukrainian literary figures. Liudmyla Vasylevska (Dniprova Chaika) spent her youth there, and from 1892 to 1897 it was home to Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi, who described his impressions of the southern city and its multinational atmosphere in the narrative *Dlia zahalnoho dobra* (For the

⁶² Ivan Nechui-Levytskyi, *Nad Chornym morem* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2008), accessed May 29, 2024, <https://osvita.ua/school/literature/n/71948/list-40.html>, 41.

⁶³ Tetiana Ananchenko, "Odeskymy stezhkamy velikoi poetesy," *Vecherniaia Odessa*, February 25, 2021, <http://vo.od.ua/rubrics/dalekoe-blizkoe/45927.php>.

⁶⁴ Ananchenko, "Odeskymy stezhkamy velikoi poetesy."

Common Good). The first representatives of Ukrainian literary Modernism were also active in Odesa: Mykola Voronyi, Ivan Lypa, and his son, the Neo-Romantic poet Iurii Lypa. In subsequent years, the Odesite literary space was presented by several Ukrainian poets and dramatists, the most renowned being Volodymyr Sosiura, Mykola Kulish, Mykola Bazhan, and Iurii Ianovskiy, who lived in Odesa from 1926 and devoted two novels to the city: *Maister korablia* (The Master of the Ships, 1928) and *Holivud na berezi Chornoho moria* (Hollywood on the Shores of the Black Sea, 1930). In this respect, it should be mentioned that the first Ukrainian film studio was founded in Odesa in 1907. The port's cultural space was always characterized by tolerance, including during the Soviet era, and hence one can also speak of the Ukrainian themes, motifs, and topoi in the works of the Russian and Jewish authors who have written in or about Odesa.

In conclusion, one can say that the literary topoi of the Black Sea, Crimea, and Odesa in Ukrainian literature expand our view of this independent cultural landscape characterized by heterogeneity. Both the Old Ukrainian folk poetry and the works of several Ukrainian authors of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries prove to be a peculiar phenomenon that can contribute to a better understanding of individual components of this multidimensional, historical, and cultural space. The discourse of power is thus juxtaposed with the geopoetics of the Black Sea coast, Crimea, and Odesa.