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Roots of the nation: folklore and its impact on the formation of Slavic national identities

As a teenager the illuminating world of the Witcher created by Andrzej Sapkowski captured me with its darkness and tragedy. The story of Geralt of Rivia - a stepfather trying to rescue his daughter from various evils of Neverland through traveling many lands and facing various enemies which spans for 9 books and is continued by 3 videogames emits the feeling of hopelessness right to the very end. What makes the Witcher stand out amongst many other dark fantasies is its setting. Sapkowski carefully combined folklores of various European cultures, including Slavic ones, which created a unique universe. Slavic motif particularly stands out. During their travels the audience will meet monsters with Slavic sounding names like *topielec*, *poludnica*, and *leshy*, and characters with names like Radovid and Vesemir.

Similar to how folklore plays an important role in creating an interesting setting with Slavic motif for the Witcher, it also plays an important role in establishing national identity for Slavic nations. In this essay I will analyze the role of folklore in establishing national identities in Czechia and Ukraine through examining the actions of prominent members of nationalistic movements. Czechs and Ukrainians are two Eastern European nations that struggled to establish their identity due to close proximity to much larger and established powers. In the case of Czechs, they struggled to set themselves apart from Germans while Ukrainians struggled to prove that they are different from both Russians and Poles. Certainly, using folklore as a means to show that these nations have their unique background was one way to establish a national identity.

I argue that collection of folklore played an important role for particular individuals from Czech and Ukrainian intelligentsia when establishing their respective national identities. For Czechs collecting folk tales was important because Germans were collecting folk tales as well - their goal was to show that Czech culture and language are not inferior to German culture and language. On the other hand, Ukrainians preferred to collect folk songs, legends and myths about the past to show that their proclaimed nation is separate from Russians and Poles. Prominent individuals from the movement saw folklore as an effective tool to show the authenticity of their people as a separate nation because of its content. Members of nationalist movements deemed language and culture as crucial parts of national identity, which added value to folklore. Essentially, folklore is the intersection of language and culture. Like any other product of oral literature, folklore is delivered through spoken language. Moreover, since folklore is mainly produced by peasants, who constitute the majority of self-proclaimed nations, it was an essential part of culture. Therefore, tight interconnection of folklore with both language and culture made it important for the cause pursued by Czech and Ukrainian nationalists.

I have to note that I consider folktales, legends of the past and fairy tales as pieces of evidence most useful for my analysis because these works are included in collections that were edited by authors. Since folklore was preserved in oral form, it is impossible to trace what the original version of a particular tale looked like, but through comparison of different versions of the same tale it can be deduced that authors of collections made changes for specific purposes. This is the methodology used by Robert Darnton, which will be discussed later. Literature, and any other artwork, with folklore motifs are also useful because authors made a conscious decision to use elements of folklore as the

basis of their work. Belles-lettres that has a nationalistic message, but does not make use of elements of folklore, is not considered to be evidence for this essay.

Analysis of folklore as a tool for establishing national identity in Eastern Europe still remains to be a topic with ambiguities. In 1973 Richard Dorson argued that academic works about folklore written in English cover only British and American folklore. He thinks that not much work has been done on the analysis of folklore of other nations; half a century later the situation largely remains the same.¹ There is still a lack of academic works about folklore of other nations, especially those of Eastern Europe. A lot left to uncover about how the collection of folklore was used as a tool of nationalistic movements in Eastern Europe. Hopefully, this work will be able to fill in the gaps in this question and become an important part of the discourse.

Since this essay raises the topic of nation building, it is necessary to delve into the topic of nationalism. A lot has been said about this topic, yet it still remains to be the subject of many debates. Many scholars proposed their own vision of how nationalism emerged and became influential. For example, in his book "Nations and Nationalism" Ernest Gellner argues that nations emerged because of industrialization. Essentially, his argument is that industrialization led to urbanization whilst living in cities universalized human experiences which, in turn, led to creation of national identities.² In contrast, Hobsbawn argues that nationalism is the product of elites carefully manipulating the narrative to create a certain vision of history. He calls nationalism the outcome of mass politics, which became possible because of industrialization, and argues that nationalism

¹ Richard Dorson, "Mythology and Folklore" in *Annual Review of Anthropology Vol.2* (1973), 123.

² Ernest Gellner, "Nations and Nationalism: New Perspectives on the Past" (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1983), 37.

is meant to manipulate people's behavior.³ Even though both of these scholars discuss how a certain idea was spread to the masses, their understandings of this process in a way contradict each other as they deem two different factors to be important. Still, I am inclined to agree with Hobsbawm to a certain extent. Certainly, industrialization and urbanization were important in universalizing human experience, which contributed towards having a common identity; nevertheless, manipulation of narrative about the past, in my view, was more important in uniting people under the premise of having common origin. This is where folklore comes into play. Collecting folklore gave an opportunity for nationalists to establish a particular narrative about the past of their proclaimed nation that led towards establishing national identities in Czechia and Ukraine.

To develop this idea further, I want to propose my own vision of how nationalism spreads that I will follow in this essay. I attribute the beginning of nationalism to the American and French Revolutions. The American Revolution served as both inspiration and example for the French Revolution. These two major events triggered the gradual weakening of monarchies around Europe. Essentially, the authority of British and French monarchs, rulers over two major European states, was challenged by common people because of supposed inadequacy and inability to govern properly. The French Revolution showed that monarchies can be overthrown, that they are not untouchable, which also toppled their authority. Most importantly these revolutions introduced the idea of nation to people who were involved. As an example, the third article of The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen passed by the Constituent Assembly states this: "The principle of any Sovereignty lies primarily in the Nation. No corporate body, no individual

³ Eric Hobsbawm, "Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality" (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990), 23.

may exercise any authority that does not expressly emanate from it.”⁴ The concept of people, not divine rule, being the source of power was something hardly comprehensible at that point which is the reason why the French Revolution was so important. It was the pioneer of nationhood. In the late 18th century France was one of Europe’s most powerful and influential states from different aspects, especially in terms of population number, military might and language. The example of the French Revolution showed the rest of Europe that there can be a state that holds the basis of its legitimacy in people, not someone being born into a certain family that rules because of divine right, which posed a great problem for European monarchs. Benedict Anderson argued that none of European dynasties legitimacies was based on “nationalness”, which greatly reduced their right to rule from the perspective of both elites and common people. As an example, if Wilhelm II declared that he is the number one German, it meant that he is the first among many people like him, which contradicts the principle of divine rule through which monarchies legitimized their rule.⁵ Just to prove how influential France was, another series of events that involved conflict between social classes - Revolutions of 1848 spread from Paris to other major European cities like a plague. It goes on to show that France was the locomotive of change in Europe, and it began the spread of nationalism. Therefore, American and French Revolutions became a catalyst that began the chain of events that gave birth to the idea of nation. Most importantly, this new idea that the power of any state is based on people meant that governments had to have support of the

⁴ Elysee, “The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen,” elysee.fr, November 16, 2012, <https://www.elysee.fr/en/french-presidency/the-declaration-of-the-rights-of-man-and-of-the-citizen#:~:text=History-,The%20Declaration%20of%20the%20Rights%20of%20Man%20and%20of%20the,There%20were%20many%20proposals..>

⁵ Benedict Anderson, “Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism”. (Verso: New York, 2006), 83 and 85

masses in order to be legitimate. Folklore is one of the ways of acquiring legitimacy. Collecting folklore helps to create a certain narrative about the past that helps to show that a nation is legitimate; it also helps to unite people by creating the notion of “us” against “them” by demonizing opponents.

When discussing nationalism, the aforementioned Benedict Anderson’s “Imagined communities” is a work that has to be mentioned because of its enormous contribution. One of the ideas from this work is particularly relevant for this essay - the development of print capitalism led towards the spread of nationalism as it became easier to convey ideas to masses.⁶ Just to show the difference, before Gutenberg invented the printing press, books had to be copied by hand, which required manual labor and took a lot of time and energy. When this process became mechanized, books were now being published in large quantities. According to the statistics provided by Buringh and Van Zanden, between the years 501 and 1500, 17,352 manuscripts were produced in Western and Central Europe. In comparison, between the years 1454 and 1800 1,745,848 books were published; as a side note, authors consider anything that has 49 pages and beyond as books.⁷ Invention of the Gutenberg press was so influential that in three and a half centuries Western Europe produced a hundred times more books than ten centuries before that. In other words, printing gave the possibility to mass produce books, which at time was the best medium to spread the message. In other words, dissemination of folklore in the form of folk tale, fairy tale and folk song collections was potentially one of the most efficient ways to spread nationalistic agenda to the masses. Moreover, the

⁶ Benedict Anderson, “Imagined Communities”, 67

⁷ Van Zanden et al., “Charting the ‘Rise of the West’: Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe, a Long-Term Perspective from the Sixth through Eighteenth Centuries.” in *The Journal of Economic History* Vol 69, no. 2 (2009), 412 and 418.

increasing number of printed books indicates that demand for the books was increasing; dissemination of folklore, probably, might have been financially beneficial. Such an appeal, from both ideological and financial standpoints, might have made intelligentsia consider collecting folklore a lucrative venture for establishing a narrative of the past that showed their proclaimed nation as legitimate.

This leads to another concept that is fundamental for this essay, which is folklorism. Generally, traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community, passed through the generations by word of mouth, is considered to be folklore. People of one ethnicity can be classified as a community. As co-ethnics they have common origin, history, culture and language that was passed down to them from their ancestors. In other words, folklore creates cultural similarity between co-ethnics. American folklorist Alan Dundes gives meaning to this similarity. He argues that folklore's main function is to preserve national heritage. People use folklore to maintain their link with the past, which helps them with self-identification and understanding of themselves.⁸ Guntis Šmidchens describes a similar concept. He argues that folklorism, which is a practice of adapting certain elements of folklore, is used to show connection with ethnic, regional and national culture. It is meant to show continuity by connecting past and present with each other.⁹ Therefore, according to these authors, folklore serves to maintain a link with the past which is, essentially, what individuals discussed in this essay wanted to accomplish - they wanted to show that their proclaimed nations are authentic nations with their unique history. Common people produce folklore, mostly in oral form, which is the reason why

⁸ Alan Dundes, "Folklore as a Mirror of Culture" in *Elementary English Vol.45 No.4* (National Council of Teachers of English: 1969), 476.

⁹ Guntis Šmidchens, "Folklorism Revisited. Journal of Folklore Research" in *Journal of Folklore Research Vol.36 No.1* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1999), 54.

folklore is mainly served in the form of a tale. Oral form of folklore is especially important for Czech nationalism because Czech nobility spoke German while written Czech largely ceased to exist in the 17th century, which will be discussed later. Such a feature of folklore is another reason why collecting folklore was seen to be important by nationalists because it was a way to revive written Czech language.

Moreover, folklore is easily modifiable as there is no written evidence of original tales. Intelligentsia tried to preserve folklore, but with certain changes, which is the reason why folktales that originally were violent are now family friendly. To continue, Vladimir Propp argued that folklore is tightly interconnected with the field of ethnography because it is knowledge from the past that is preserved. Even if folktales are a work of fiction; there is always a piece of reality in it. As an example, animals like fox, rooster, wolf, hare, goat and bear appear in most folktales because these are the animals that peasants frequently encountered.¹⁰ Essentially, common people, who were the target of narrative manipulation, understood and self-identified through folklore. Folklore allowed peasants to maintain a link with the past. Since folklore mainly existed in oral form, it was easy for intelligentsia to implement changes in written collections, which is the reason why folklore potentially was a very effective tool to establish national identity.

There are other reasons why folklore was seen to be important. It was a very effective tool as a means to establish vernacular language. Vernacular languages were becoming more important in the late 18th century. Europeans became interested in comparative linguistics due to encounters with other languages during colonization after which they began to compare their languages with languages of people that they

¹⁰ Vladimir Propp, "Theory and History of Folklore" (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1984), 10 and 17.

conquered. This gradually led to vernacularization of European languages. Scholars began to translate old works in Greek and Roman to modern languages.¹¹ Folklore played an important role in this process of establishing a universal vernacular language in European states. The most successful case for this is Norway. A literary standard of Norwegian language called Bokmål was established in order to have a language that is common for all members of the nation. It was accomplished through publication of works that are written in Bokmål. To this day it remains to be the literary standard of the Norwegian language.¹² Bokmål helped to dispose of Danish and Swedish influence by having a common language among Norwegians. Having a universal language meant two things. First, people of one country spoke one language, which made the process of spreading information easier. Second, speaking one language meant that there was a similarity that united people who lived in one country. In short, vernacularization of European languages opened access to previously hidden information that ignited interest in politics. It also became another factor of uniting people and made it easier to spread information.

Another reason why folklore was an effective tool in establishing national identity is that people that produce and consume have strong personal connections to it. As the name suggests, folklore is the lore of these people. People can relate to it because folklore is the product of their language, culture and history. The word folklore itself is a neologism of the 19th century.¹³ Using tales produced by common people is an effective way of using their history to unite them. Certainly, it is much more effective than trying to

¹¹ Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities", 70-72

¹² Gjert Kristoffersen, "The Phonology of Norwegian" (Oxford University Press: New York, 2000), 6-9.

¹³ Robert Darnton, "The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History" (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), 17.

educate people about politics. A commoner of the past would not be able to comprehend works of philosophers of the past as most likely they do not have any idea on who these people were and what subjects they are talking about. It would be better to make use of tales about people's past as people are to be aware of their heroes. As an example, when Norway became independent from Denmark in 1814, Norwegian nationalists Peter Munch and Magnus Landstad gathered folk tales about glories of the past, such as the period of Viking invasions and the Kalmar Union in order to create a unity among people of a newly established nation.¹⁴ To break this case, Norwegian people were united under the auspices of their common past and were persuaded through tales about their viking ancestors. They can relate to these tales as they are the ones who preserved them, which makes folklore a useful tool for creating a particular narrative about the past.

Sometimes folktale reflects the people who produce it to the extent that the same tale may vary depending on the region. Robert Darnton explains this phenomenon in the first chapter of his book "The Great Cat Massacre And Other Episodes In French Cultural History." This work offers one of the ways of looking at folklore as a source of information about different cultures, which is comparing and contrasting one version of the same tale. He argues that there are different variations of the same tale among different people of Europe because of different living conditions, which was mentioned before. Darnton believes that these differences reflect values of the society. However, I have to note that his approach is not flawless and there was criticism that Darnton tends to overread and overanalyze texts. Essentially, many versions of the same folk tales appeared because of reasons such as different living conditions of common people due to factors like climate

¹⁴ Richard Dorson, "The question of folklore in a new nation" in *Journal of the Folklore Institute Vol.3 No.3*, 289-290

and geography, that are beyond people's control. As an example, the popular tale about Red Hood has different variations: traditionally she is eaten by the wolf in French tales while German tales have a happy ending.¹⁵ Folklore remains to be a mirror that reflects people. Going back to the topic of the French Revolution, the 18th century was a tough period for French peasants. Even though events of the revolution were unfolding without the majority of peasants' participation, peasants themselves were suffering from constant malnutrition and were spending their days farming in order to pay off their taxes.¹⁶ Similar to that, French folk tales from the 18th century were not happy or positive; they were very brutal and often included things like incest, sodomy, torture, dismemberment of bodies¹⁷. In other words, the 18th century, which was harsh on French people, found its reflection in tales that French people tell that are also dark.

Another theoretical reason why folklore reflects people is that in some way it is meant to show what kind of behavior is expected. In theory, folktales from France must indicate a certain vision of who is an ideal French; what traits he possesses, what values he has and what he does for a living. This reason is theoretical because there is no way to prove whether regional variations in folklore occurred to show what kind of behavior is expected; it can only be deduced by comparing and contrasting different versions of the same tale. Darnton argues that French peasant stories typically portray parents working in the fields while children gather woods, fetch water and do other chores - this is a reflection of the fact that families in Old Regime France needed to act like a single economic unit to survive.¹⁸ Overall, French tales tend to celebrate trickery; heroes in

¹⁵ Robert Darnton, "The Great Cat Massacre", 13

¹⁶ Robert Darnton, "The Great Cat Massacre", 24-25

¹⁷ Robert Darnton, "The Great Cat Massacre", 15

¹⁸ Robert Darnton, "The Great Cat Massacre", 34

French tales always get out of problematic situations by being savvy - maybe this was essential for survival in 18th century France. To further prove his point on folklore reflecting the people, Darnton provides different versions of the tale about the giant killer as a proof: in French tales, the main hero, Jean, sets off to kill the giant by the order of the local monarch. Despite being small, he succeeds by tricking the giant; he does not just kill the giant, he also kills the giant's wife and children by tricking them to roast themselves. In contrast, in the Italian version, the main hero, Jack, is a charismatic lover who sets off to save his princess from the giant; he does it by fighting, not deceiving the giant.¹⁹ What we can observe is that these are two versions of the same tale about a hero who slaughters a monster, but details are different. The French hero was sent by a monarch while the Italian hero went on his own. Moreover, the former turned out to be a sadist trickster who killed a giant and his family while the latter is a romantic who wanted to rescue his lover. Essentially, both tales highlight different traits of their heroes, which serves as a proof that people from different parts of Europe had their unique vision of who the ideal person is. To sum up everything that has been said before, people can relate to folklore as it is about them. Folklore reflects people's culture, values and norms, which, in theory, makes it a very effective tool to spread nationalistic sentiments.

Slavic folklore, that is analyzed in this essay, has its unique features that makes it a little different from folklore of other European cultures. According to Natalie Konenko, who is a folklorist that made a major contribution to this field, slavic folklore always encompassed two themes - the Church and common people. Folk tales, songs, legends and fairy tales tend to focus on either lives of peasants or how important the Church is for

¹⁹ Robert Darnton, "The Great Cat Massacre", 43-44.

determining morality. As for consumers of products of folklore, Slavic commoners did not see any difference between biblical stories and fantasy tales about heroes of the past. Both types of tales were popular because they often tried to explain how the world came to be and why the universe in its current form.²⁰ As for my own observations, there is also a very large amount of stories focused on encounters with supernatural beings such as ghosts like *domovoi*, and witches. Using the theory of Darnton, we could assume that slavic peasants feared these supernatural beings and wanted to avoid encounters with them. Maybe for slavic peasants peace and tranquility at home was much more important than for other European peasants. In addition, the theme of animals is very frequent and usually animals that are involved are wolves, dogs, cats, and baby chicken (цыпленок). Characters from tales also frequently encounter animals that can speak. Lastly, characters in slavic tales tend to have slavic names. After making these remarks, we could see if folklore was a useful tool in establishing national identity in Czechia and Ukraine.

Czech nationalism was an interesting phenomenon. The main struggle of this movement was against German influence as Czech intelligentsia tried to revive Czech culture, and language that was largely extinct since the 17th century, and put it on the same level as German one. This is caused by geographical proximity of Czechia to Germany and intertwined histories of both nations. It has to be noted that Bohemia was always part of the Holy Roman Empire, with a certain degree of autonomy in certain periods, but still part of it. Moreover, there were conflicts between Czechs and Germans even before the concept of nationalism came into existence - during Hussite wars Czechs

²⁰ Natalie Konenko, "Slavic folklore: a handbook" (Greenwood Press: Westport, 2007), 145-146

showed their determination to not be completely overwhelmed by Germans. A conflict that was sparked by a religious difference later attained nationalistic character. In his attempt to organize a rebellious movement against Sigismund V among Czech nobles, leading Czech baron Cenek of Vartenberk wrote that the crusade against the Hussites is a disrespect towards Czech language, crown and religion.²¹ Given that Cenek highlights language in the document, there was a distinct Czech culture and language that he thought to preserve. Four centuries later culture and language would turn out to play an important role in the Czech nationalist movement.

To analyze how important folklore was for Czech national identity, I will review the actions of Czech intelligentsia who followed nationalistic agenda which were often referred to as the Czech National Revival movement. The movement began in the late 18th century and was active in the early half of the 19th century. Initially individuals from this movement like Palacky, Erben and Nemcova, whose actions will be discussed later, wanted to revive Czech culture and language. At this point Czech language existed only as the language spoken by peasants while the elites spoke German - language of the nation from which Czech nationalists tried to set themselves apart. As the movement grew stronger, their goals attained political character and they started to push for stronger autonomy within the Habsburg Empire. Aftermath of their work was the revival of Czech literary language that was on the verge of death. Certainly, the movement succeeded in establishing Czech national identity because at some point in the 19th century there was no doubt on the existence of the Czech nation. In fact, Germans perceived Czechs as important enough to be invited to the Frankfurt Parliament of 1848 to get their support in

²¹ Thomas Fudge, "The Crusade Against Heretics in Bohemia, 1418-1437: Sources and Documents for the Hussite Crusades" (Ashgate: Farnham, 2002), 61

order to weaken the Habsburg Empire. The parliament was meant to discuss the future of the German nation and form a German constituent assembly. Notably, Czech historian Franzisek Palacky was invited to it, but he rejected the offer and explained his decision in his Letter to Frankfurt that he wrote on 11th of April of the same year. In the letter he called himself “a Bohemian of a Slavic origin” and claimed that the Czech nation “never pertained to the German nation.” Palacky argues that it will be better for Czechs to remain within Austria because Austria needs to be strong in order to protect Europe from the East. Palacky and Czech national revival movement, despite being nationalists, shared liberal views. Most likely Palacky is referring to Russia as “the East”.²² Conversely, the next year after this work was written the Russian Empire sent troops to help the Habsburg Empire to stop the revolution that broke out after which Nicolas I got the nickname of gendarme of Europe. Overall, in his Letter to Frankfurt Palacky frequently makes use of history to show that Bohemia has always remained autonomous while remaining part of a greater state.

In general, use of history and language seems to be a conventional rhetorical tool for Czech nationalists. As a matter of fact, Palacky argued that the Czech nation does not have its own state because of Slavic people’s desire to live as equals without any ruling class. He also argued that every nation should have its own state.²³ This is an attempt to promote a particular narrative of history in which the Czech nation is a legitimate nation that happened to not have a state of its own. Apart from Palacky, Czech linguist Josef Jungmann was an important figure in the national revival movement. Notably, he

²² Balázs Trencsényi & Michal Kopeček ed., “Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770-1945): Texts and Commentaries Volume II” (CEU Press: Budapest, 2007), 324.

²³ Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček, “Discourses of Collective Identity”, 55.

translated works of Goethe to Czech and composed a Czech-German dictionary. Jungmann believed that language is a crucial feature of every nation. His point is that the French nation is French, German is German and Russian is Russian not because each of them has their states and administrative units, but because each of them has their language. Jungmann asserts that if these states would hypothetically unite, then this new state will consist of one community with different nationhoods.²⁴ At some point the Czech nationalist movement changed its focus from defending the uniqueness of Czech culture to lobbying political interests of the nation. Despite this change, language, which also includes folklore, was still seen as an integral part of achieving goals of the movement. Actions of the national revival movement led to more publications in the Czech language. For example, there were academic works such as the first systematic history of the Czech language published in 1792 by a Catholic priest named Jozef Dobrovsky.²⁵ Literature was also increasingly published in Czech. Bozena Nemcova is the most notable Czech writer of this period. Appraisal from Franz Kafka is an indication of how influential her figure was for Czech literature. There are two reasons for that: firstly, she published her works in Czech, which was helpful in promoting written Czech language. Secondly, she used elements of folklore in her literary works through which she promoted Czech national identity, which is especially relevant for my analysis.

Apogee of the importance of language in Czech identity is the city of Prague. It was very important from both a strategic and cultural point because it was the largest and most populous city. Prague was multinational and, hence, multilingual, which made it a place for nationalistic contentions. For example, Franz Kafka is a representative example

²⁴ Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček, "Discourses of Collective Identity", 106.

²⁵ Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities", 73

of a German speaking Jew from this city. He was born and lived in Prague; his background led to him having a vague identity. He spoke Czech, but not as fluent as his surroundings; he also admired Božena Němcová for her complex writing in Czech. Similarly, he spoke German, but not as fluently as Germans; he admired Goethe for the “purity” of his language.²⁶ This is what he states in the letter to his lover: I have never lived among Germans. German is my mother-tongue and as such much more natural to me.²⁷ Similarly, another aspect in which this issue reflects itself is street signs. Starting from 1787 Joseph II made a decree that street signs have to be firstly in German, then in Czech. However, in 1861 Prague city council made a decision that signs should be in Czech only.²⁸ This case shows that Prague was a battle ground, if we could say so, of linguistic contention. There were different groups such as Czechs, Germans and Jews, each with their own language, and there were disagreements between the Habsburg government and city council on the main language. Prague was important for Czech folklore as well. In her letter to Karel Erben Božena Němcová mentioned a museum in Prague that stores old books; she argues that it is important that this museum has cultural memorials - it shows that Prague was an important place for collecting folklore.²⁹ In some way Prague could serve as a benchmark for the development of Czech national identity. The fact that the city council decided to follow their own agenda regarding language shows that nationalistic ideas were strong and that the city council was powerful enough to resist the central government.

²⁶ Derek Sayer, “The Language of Nationality and the Nationality of Language: Prague 1780-1920” (Past & Present, no. 153, 1996), 165

²⁷ Derek Sayer, “The Language of Nationality and the Nationality of Language”, 164

²⁸ Derek Sayer, “The Language of Nationality and the Nationality of Language”, 169

²⁹ Božena Němcová, “Listy I” (Městská knihovna v Praze: Prague, 2012), 126.

One way language can be used to spread nationalism is folklore and in some way, German nationalism, that could be considered a counterpart of Czech nationalism, also relied on folklore. Even though Germans were a much more populous nation, there was no unified German government up until 1871 with no definite idea on who Germans are, which was revealed from 1848 Frankfurt Parliament. Still, there is no doubt that the most popular folktale collections were compiled by the Brothers Grimm. Even today there is a high demand around the world for translations of their collections. Even though their collections themselves do not indicate a clear nationalistic purpose, their goal was to convey that German people have their unique way of living. They showed great interest in collecting folk tales and songs. For example, in 1855 Wilhelm Grimm in his letter to Heinrich Pröhle highlighted the importance of studying the past of their people; he believed that it is important for future generations.³⁰ Brothers deemed their work important for German culture and people. What also indicates the intention of the Grimm brothers was the fact that they removed tales that were French in their origin in the second edition of their collection.³¹

A counterpart of the collection of brothers Grimm would be the collection of Czech folklorist Karel Erben. From his younger days Erben had an affection for studying the past because of which he was well versed in written Czech. His nationalistic sentiments began to appear after the Decembrist uprising after which he wrote his first nationalistic poem, but it was in German. A teenager who was studying at the gymnasium at this point, he was told by his friend and classmate Jan Lhota that a Czech must write in Czech to help

³⁰ Albert Leitzmann, "Briefe der Bruder Grimm" (Verlag der Frommanschen Buchhandlung: Jena, 1923), 218.

³¹ Robert Darnton, "The Great Cat Massacre", 11

to improve the literature of his people.³² After such critique Erben wrote his first poem in Czech in 1826. Erben believed that previous Czech folklore collections were incomplete, which prompted him to make a collection of his own. He used shepherds as a source of information and gathered songs and tales talking to local people in his hometown of Miletin and villages around it.³³ Erben's biography indicates that his work had a clear aim of promoting the Czech national cause. A young teenager, at that time, he was inspired by the Decembrist Uprising to follow nationalistic ideas and became a respectable part of the national revival movement.

A concrete example of how folklore has been edited would be a fairy tale called "Riddle" that is a little different in the collection of brothers Grimm and the collection of Karel Erben. The main difference between the two versions is that the German one is appropriate for children. In the German version, the main character is a young prince who takes part in a competition set up by a queen. The prince has to come up with a riddle, if a queen can't solve it, then they get married. In the end he succeeds; they get married and live happily after as it was stated at the end of the tale.³⁴ In contrast, in the Czech version the main character is a queen who chose to marry one king over the other. The second king, angry and bitter, decides to kill the groom, which deeply saddens the queen. To avenge her lover's death, the queen tells the second king a riddle; if he solves it, they get married, if he can't solve it, then he will be executed. In the end, the second king didn't solve the riddle and lost his head while the queen stayed single forever, which was also

³² Martin Stručovský, "Karel Jaromír Erben", (Západočeská univerzita v Plzni Fakulta filozofická: Plzen, 2014), 8.

³³ Martin Stručovský, "Karel Jaromír Erben", 14.

³⁴ Jacob Grimm & Wilhelm Grimm, "*Настоящие сказки Братьев Гримм*" (Litres: Moscow, 2017), 182.

openly stated at the end of the tale.³⁵ This trend continues in all of the folk tales. Tales in Grimms' collection tend to have a positive ending while tales from Erben's collection are much more tragic and violent. Moreover, supernatural beings are more aggressive in Czech tales. For example, in both collections there is a series of tales dedicated towards indoor boggart, or *domovoi*. In German tales boggarts behave friendly and try to be helpful in everyday chores while in Czech tales they are sinister beings that agitate people and bring misfortune to a household that was unlucky enough to harbor a boggart.³⁶ As it was mentioned earlier, *domovoi*, is a mischievous being in slavic folklore. Another difference between two collections is that characters in tales carry names that are reflective of the origin.³⁷ Hansel and Gretel is a famous tale and names of two main characters show that the tale has a German origin. Similarly, tales such as Irka and the goat have Slavic sounding names that indicate their Czech origin.

Such differences appeared because the Grimm brothers and Karel Erben pursued different goals. The Grimm brothers, and especially Wilhelm, believed that making collections of folktales will help to preserve German culture that was passed from generation to generation. He believed that future generations need to know these tales, which means that he targeted younger audiences. This served as a reason for censure which is why violent tales with gore were either excluded or edited starting from the second version of the collection. Karel Erben, on the other hand, believed that collecting folktales and songs would help to establish Czech culture as a legitimate one - a culture that is not inferior to other cultures. It means that Erben targeted a different audience; he

³⁵ Karel Erben, Pyotr Bogatyrev ed., "*Баллады, стихи, сказки*" (OGIZ: Moscow, 1948), 261

³⁶ Jacob Grimm & Wilhelm Grimm, "*Настоящие сказки Братьев Гримм*", 286.

³⁷ Karel Erben, "*Баллады, стихи, сказки*", 281.

did not make the collection for children. Instead of making tales suitable for children, Erben was concerned with making sure that tales in his collection are different. Basically, the difference is that German culture was already strongly established while Czech culture still needed to prove its authenticity.

Another interesting tale is “How Honzik learnt Latin” from the folktale collection of Božena Němcová, which is most likely not authentic as tales from the collection of Němcová and tales from the collection of Erben do not match. The tale is about a young boy named Honzik who decides to travel the world and learn Latin to become an aristocrat. After traveling for a day he learnt some words and started repeating them over and over to not forget them. Honzik came back to his village and after seeing their son talking gibberish, Honzik’s parents came to the conclusion that their son became a lunatic. They decided to pour cold water on his head so that “evil fantasies leave Honzik’s head” after which Honzik immediately forgot Latin words that he learnt. At the end Honzik’s father is glad that his son speaks Czech again and said this “God himself has washed it out of your head, because you are to be an old honest Honza, and not a noble fool. Remember that!”³⁸ Firstly, the tale is trying to promote Czech as the language that needs to be spoken if you are Czech. Secondly, the message of the tale is that it is better to embrace your own identity instead of trying to become someone else. Certainly there is a patriotic message in this. Thirdly, the tale is belittling aristocrats and embracing peasant culture. The notion that there are “us” and “them” can be traced in this tale as it puts heavy emphasis on how important it is to be Czech and not someone else.

³⁸ Božena Němcová, “Narodni bachorky a povisti II” (Městská knihovna v Praze: Prague, 2012), 188-190.

Another interesting fact about this tale is that Honzik is the Czech version of the name Hansel, which could be a specific reference to the famous tale “Hansel and Gretel.” Hansel is diminutive of Hans; the Czech version of the name Hans is Honza and Honzik is diminutive of Honza. However, this tale is completely different from “Hansel and Gretel.” Hansel, just like his Czech counterpart, also leaves home, but for different reasons. Both Hansel and Honzik end up coming back home where they belong. Nevertheless, apart from these, Hansel and Honzik go through completely different journeys and tales convey different messages. Overall, “How Honzik learnt Latin” is an example of one of those tales with a nationalistic message. It emphasizes how important it is to speak Czech and embrace your own identity. Given that it comes from the collection of Bozena Nemcova, a nationalist who was proud of her Czech background and whose works are considered to be essential for Czech literature, this folktale certainly was meant to promote being Czech over being someone else. Her letters serve as another proof of her strong nationalistic stance.

Whilst visiting the city of Zittau Bozena Nemcova met a person named Moravek who was a Czech who assimilated with German culture and possessed around 300 books in Old Czech, most of them were religious. She wrote a letter to Karel Erben to ask if he ever heard of the books in the collection and whether there are copies of these books in Prague Museum because he knew much more about this matter than her. The letter serves as another proof that Czech intelligentsia was eager to collect as many tales and books as possible. It also indicates particularly negative perspective of Nemcova towards Germans:

I arranged for him to put the nicer things from those collections in the Prague Museum, so that it would not ever fall into the hands of the wicked, and it would not be destroyed...It's a pity that so many of our old monuments are in the hands of the Germans.³⁹

This section indicates how important it was for the Czech national revival movement to retrieve knowledge from the past - they deemed these artifacts as cultural treasures that had to be located in Prague and nowhere else. Another interesting trait of this letter is that Germans are referred to as “wicked” and as a direct threat towards cultural monuments. All in all, Nemcova’s letters indicate her very strong nationalistic stance. She traveled to collect “cultural monuments” and knowledge from the past, which is especially important given her poor background - her letters to Palacky where she asks for money and reports on what she found serve as an indication of that.

To sum up, folklore was perceived to be a useful tool when it comes to highlighting one's culture and a certain way of living for both Germans and Czechs. This is especially interesting given that the Czech National Revival movement tried to differentiate themselves from Germans and viewed them as rivals, yet they still used similar methods as Germans. Clearly this is the example of how a smaller nation replicated its larger neighbor. Overall, works of Palacky, Jungmann, Nemcova and Erben show that language and culture were seen by them as integral parts of nationhood. The cross section of language and culture is folklore in the form of folk tales, fairy tales and legends of the past. This made folklore a particularly useful tool in establishing national identity for Czech intelligentsia. Books and tales were gathered as they were valued. Interestingly, efforts of the Czech national revival movement were efficiently coordinated. All of the members were experts in their particular fields; Palacky was a historian, Nemcova was a talented

³⁹ Božena Němcová, “Listy I”, 126-127

writer, Erben was a historian etc. Moreover, all members of the movement were liberals in their political views, which helped them to act as a single force. The movement used different means to achieve their goal which allowed them to grow from a movement for revival of Czech culture to a movement that pushes for Czech autonomy - one of such means was folklore. Therefore, folklore was a tool for prominent members of the Czech National Revival movement to show the uniqueness of their culture and establish a narrative of “us” against “them.”

Similarly, folklore was important for certain members of the Ukrainian nationalistic movements, but for different reasons. There is a factor that makes the Ukrainian case similar yet different from the Czech case. Just like Czechs, Ukrainians struggled to establish their identity because of having larger and stronger neighbors. Moreover, Just like Germans, Russians and Poles did not have a definite national identity in the 19th century. However, the difference is that Czechs were primarily living in one state - the Habsburg Empire. Ukrainians, on the other hand, due to many historic factors lived in different states. Part of the right bank, the region of Galicia, was part of the decentralized and more liberal Habsburg Empire while the rest of Ukraine lived under the autocratic and highly centralized Russian Empire. This caused the emergence of two separate nationalistic movements in Western Ukraine and Eastern Ukraine.

The Habsburg Empire was in slow and steady decline in this period because of which the central government was weak. Cultures and languages of different ethnicities within the empire were not suppressed. Therefore, Ukrainian intelligentsia in the Habsburg Empire faced less constraints than their counterparts in the Russian Empire. Ukrainian nationalists from the Habsburg Empire were mainly based in the region of

Galicia and were active towards the middle and latter half of the 19th century. They also thought that folklore was important for their cause. Just like their Czech colleagues, Galician Ukrainians wanted to promote their identity through the help of language and culture. Yet again it has to be mentioned that folklore is the intersection of language and culture, which made it an important tool for promoting nationalistic sentiments. Most prominent members of the Galician Ukrainian nationalistic movement were Ivan Vahylevich, who was a writer and folklorist, and Yakiv Holovatsky, who was a historian and ethnographer. Vahylevich translated many literary works from Polish to Ukrainian, he also wrote a book on Ukrainian grammar. Overall, he made a significant contribution to the development of Ukrainian language. He also thought that folklore is important for promoting Ukrainian identity. In his letter to Holovatsky he wrote that his acquaintance, an ethnographer named Platon Lukashevich, is doing his best to preserve the chronicle of Lviv and publish it when the best time for it comes.⁴⁰ Most likely Vahylevich implies that Lukashevich is trying to avoid the chronicle from getting into the hands of outsiders, if we could use this term, such as Poles and Jews.

The other prominent member of this movement, Yakiv Holovatsky also perceived folklore as an important part of national identity. In his response to the aforementioned letter of Vahylevich, Holovatsky asked Vahylevich to find books about national songs of Ukrainians who live in Hungary.⁴¹ He wrote this letter in 1843 and in 1878 Holovatsky published three volumes of Ukrainian folk songs called “Народные песни Галицкой и Угорской Руси”. Songs from the collection usually do not have a name; moreover, in the

⁴⁰ “Іван Вагілевіч. Листи. Письменники Західної України 30-50-х Років XIX Ст,” *Ізборник*, accessed April 25, 2024, <http://litopys.org.ua/zahpysm/zah11.htm>.

⁴¹ “Яків Головацький. Листи. Письменники Західної України 30-50-х Років XIX Ст,” *Ізборник*, accessed April 25, 2024, <http://litopys.org.ua/zahpysm/zah16.htm>.

collection it is openly stated from what region and what village song was gathered from. Overall, songs from the collection tend to frequently mention cossack hetmanate and the figure of Bogdan Hmelnytskyi in a very positive way. For example one of the songs describes a cossack who was preparing to defend his homeland. The song has these lines: “Tall gray horse was standing steady/A young cossack Ivasenko for the war was getting ready...As for you my son an hour has come/To not stray away from your heartland.”⁴² Overall, these songs portray defending the homeland as the greatest feat one can do. Moreover, songs from the collections tend to portray Poles in a bad way; they are frequently referred to with a pejorative “Ляхи.” Therefore, in the case of Galician Ukrainians legends and tales about the past were also seen as an important tool of promoting nationalism. Just like in the Czech tale about Honzik, folk songs from the collection of Holovatsky emphasize that it is important to embrace your own identity instead of trying to be someone else. There is also a notion of “us” and “them” that is promoted through folklore.

To continue, just like the Czech national revival movement, Ukrainian nationalists in the Habsburg Empire were liberals. In one of his letters Holovatsky argued that while there was slavery in Greece and Rome, ancient Slavs were free people; he also used the example of Novgorod to show that republicanism suits Ukrainians and other Slavic nations.⁴³ Just like how Palacky used history to justify Czechs decision to stay autonomous within the Habsburg Empire, Holovatsky is using history to justify why the republican form of government suits his nation. It is interesting that nationalistic

⁴² Yakiv Holovatsky, *“Народні пісні Галицької та Угорської Русі. Частина I” (Товариства історії і древностей Російських при Московському університеті: Moscow, 1878)*, 100.

⁴³ “Яків Головацький. Листи. Письменники Західної України 30-50-х Років XIX Ст,” *Ізборник*, accessed April 25, 2024, <http://litopys.org.ua/zahpysm/zah16.htm>.

movements within the decentralized Habsburg Empire were republicans in their views as if the political system within the state affected their views. Moreover, Ukrainian nationalists in Galicia followed a similar path to their Czech colleagues - individuals like Vahylevich and Holovatsky from the movement initially wanted to promote their culture and folklore played a key role in that. Moreover, just like prominent members of the Czech National Revival movement, Vahylevich and Holovatsky were familiar with each other and tried to coordinate their effort in order to achieve their goal.

Colleagues of Galician Ukrainian nationalists had a different fate compared to their counterparts. The Ukrainian nationalist movement in Russia was a movement that persevered through many challenges because of the Russian autocratic government. In particular, Ukrainian language was the point of contention. As the name Little Russian, or Малорусский, it was perceived to be inferior to the Russian language. In fact, in 1798 Ivan Kotlarevsky wrote satirical poem *Aeneid* about Ukrainian life as a response to the stereotype that Ukrainian is the language of yokels. Nevertheless, Ukrainian culture persevered and had a profound influence on the Russian one. In 1819 Ukrainian got its first official grammar, only 17 years after the first Russian one. In 1804 University of Kharkiv was founded, and it quickly became the center of Ukrainian literature.⁴⁴ Language was perceived to be so important by the government that in 1876 Ems Decree banned publication of literature in Ukrainian language. Therefore, language was seen as an important point of contention in Ukrainian identity, just like in the Czech case.

To continue, the existence of the Ukrainian identity was a subject of many debates as different intellectuals had different views on it. Ukraine was in an interesting situation

⁴⁴ Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities", 74

where on one hand they had an authentic culture, the existence of which was accepted, but the existence of Ukraine as a separate nation was denied. For example, Belinskyi outright denied that there is a separate Ukrainian identity while Maikov argued that Ukrainian identity serves as a complementary part for Russian identity. Highlight of this debate over Ukrainian identity is the figure of Nikolai Gogol who remained very controversial. He was Ukraine born, yet he denied the existence of separate Ukrainian people. Importance of his figure could be explained by his popularity, which made him very influential. Interestingly, Sofronova argues that in his early stories such as “Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka” Gogol tends to describe things by using indefinite words such as *кто-то, что-то, некий* and so on.⁴⁵ This coincides with the fact that he wrote this story when he just left Ukraine and moved to Saint-Petersburg. Such ambiguous descriptions may be caused by his uncertainty about his own identity. Moreover, this particular story makes use of folklore motifs.

Prominent figures of The Ukrainian Nationalist movement in Russia were Taras Shevchenko, Mykhailo Drahomanov and Ivan Franko. This movement was active in the middle and latter half of the 19th century. Their objective was not to promote their culture, but to try to preserve it because the government did not want to accept a separate Little Russian identity. Certainly, these individuals felt the effect of such hard pressure on Ukrainian identity. For example, in his letter to Paul Gesse Shevchenko wrote that his series of etchings called “Живописная Украина” is meant to show history and life of Ukrainian people to the rest of the world. Most importantly, in the same letter he wrote this: “не будь родина моя самая бедная, ничтожная на земле, и тогда бы она мне

⁴⁵ Lyudmila Sofronova, Gura, Aleksandr ed. “*Некто’ и ‘нечто’ в ранних повестях Гоголя*” in *Славянский и Балканский фольклор* (Indrik: Moscow, 2011), 317.

казалась краше Швейцарии и всех Италии.”⁴⁶ Essentially, he meant that Ukraine would have been a prosperous place if it wasn't pressed on by the Russian government. Overall, Shevchenko shows very strong love for his motherland in his letters. For example, in his other letter to his brother Shevchenko wrote that letters that they write to each other warm his heart because they are the only way for him to converse with someone in his own language.⁴⁷ Moreover, he felt homesick as he lived in Saint Petersburg for a substantial amount of time. Overall, the figure of Shevchenko was influential. He is mostly known as a poet and all of his literary works, written in both Russian and Ukrainian, had a strong folkloric motif. Apart from that, he also was a talented painter and even his etchings made use of folklore and were made for the purpose of maintaining Ukrainian identity.

Another influential individual of this movement is Ivan Franko. He has a collection of folk tales called “Місія. Чума. Казки і сатири” - it was published in Lviv in 1906 because of censorship - once again a prominent Ukrainian nationalist feels the pressure from the Russian government. Even though this is called a collection of folk tales, these are not genuine tales because there is an obvious use of satire. These tales were definitely made up by Franko himself. A particularly interesting example from this collection to consider would be the tale “Как русин по тому свету слонялся.” The main character of the tale has no name; he is referred to as русин or гайдамака, which translates as rebel from Ukrainian. There is an idealization of Ukrainian people through this character as he is both smart and strong. In the tale he goes to heaven and beats devils, then he goes to heaven and tricks angels to let him in. Interestingly, there is also an excerpt that belittles

⁴⁶ “Листи До Різних Осіб. 1839-1850. Тарас Шевченко. Повне Зібрання Творів. Том 6.,” ІЗБОРНИК, accessed April 25, 2024, <http://litopys.org.ua/shevchenko/shev601.htm>.

⁴⁷ “Листи До Різних Осіб. 1839-1850. Тарас Шевченко. Повне Зібрання Творів. Том 6.,” ІЗБОРНИК, accessed April 25, 2024, <http://litopys.org.ua/shevchenko/shev601.htm>.

Russians and Poles: “Что вы несете, бестолочи! — рывкнул на них Луципер. — Разве не знаете, что с 1860 года *niema Rusi*? А когда ее нет, то и русинов никаких не может быть. Может, это какой-то москаль.” Franko is making reference to Polish politician Agenor Goluchowski who said that there are no Ruthenians by using his exact phrase - *niema Rusi*.⁴⁸ In the same excerpt he is using the pejorative “москаль” to belittle Russians. Once again, there is clear use of folklore in order to promote a certain narrative. The Ukrainian rebel is shown as a good guy who is smart and strong while Russians and Poles are made fun of through satire.

Interestingly, Ukrainian nationalists in Russia were socialists in their political view. Shevchenko, Franko and Drahomanov - all of them expressed political views that lean towards socialism. For example, in one of his letters Mykhailo Dragomanov is placing huge hope on zemstvo reforms, that they one day may lead towards having a reformed Russia where local communities govern themselves.⁴⁹ Moreover, given how hard the Russian government pressed on Ukrainian identity, it should not come as a surprise that Ukrainian nationalists from the Russian Empire did not effectively coordinate their effort. Drahomanov, Franko and Shevchenko, despite similar political views, did not know each other and complement each other's strengths and weaknesses like it happened among members of the Czech National Revival movement and Ukrainian nationalists from Galicia. Lastly, cases considered in this essay reveal a tendency, which is not universal and limited to these three groups of individuals - more authoritative and centralized government leads towards a stronger reactionist movement. Both Czech and Ukrainian

⁴⁸ Ivan Franko, “Місія. Чума. Казки і сатири” (Українсько-Руської Видавничої Спілка: Lviv, 1906), 132.

⁴⁹ Mykhailo Drahomanov & Mykhailo Pavlik, “Переписка. Том 1” (Українсько-Руська Видавнича Спілка: Lviv, 1901), 12 and 13

nationalists from the decentralized Habsburg Empire were advocates of republicanism while Ukrainian nationalists from autocratic Russia leaned towards socialism.

From everything discussed above, a clear distinction between Czech and Ukrainian movements can be made. Unlike Ukrainians from both Habsburg and Russian Empires, Czech nationalists made use of folklore by compiling collections of folk tales. These could be caused by different reasons. Firstly, literacy rates among Ukrainians and Czechs was different. According to the statistics used by UNESCO, in the mid 19th century literacy rates in Czech regions of Bohemia and Moravia were close to 80% while in regions Galicia and Bukovina that were inhabited by many ethnicities including Ukrainians it was around 25%. Similarly, at the turn of the century the literacy rate in the Moscow region was 40% and below 30% in all other regions of the Russian Empire.⁵⁰ According to these statistics, literacy rate among Czechs was much higher than among Ukrainians, which made collection and dissemination of folklore a more useful way of promoting Czech national identity. Given that literacy in regions inhabited by Ukrainians was this low in 1900, it was even lower in the middle of the 19th century, which probably is the reason why Ukrainian nationalists were active in the latter half of the century.

Another reason why Ukrainian nationalists did not publish authentic folk tales could be that tales told by Russian and Ukrainian peasants are most likely the same. To my knowledge there is no folktale collection made in the 19th century, but there are Ukrainian folktale collections that were published in the Soviet period and there are slight differences in certain tales. For that I will use the collection of Russian folklorist Afanasev from the middle of the 19th century and a collection of Ukrainian folk tales published in

⁵⁰ Joerg Baten, "Schooling, Literacy and Numeracy in 19th Century Europe: Long-Term Development and Hurdles to Efficient Schooling" (UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, 2022), 15-17.

1954 and translated by Petnikov. For example the fairy tale about fox and wolf is called “Лисичка-сестричка и волк” in Afanasev’s collection and “Лисичка-сестричка и волк-дружище” in Ukrainian collection. In the Russian version the fox acts as a menace to everyone around her and the wolf is the victim of her trickery for no reason. Overall, there is no particular motivation by the fox - she just lies to everyone for her benefit.⁵¹ In contrast, in the Ukrainian version the fox takes revenge on the wolf for stealing some of her food - there is a clear motivation. Moreover, events in these tales are similar, but their order is different.⁵² Other than that, there are no significant differences in two different versions of this tale.

Folklore was a tool of creating a certain narrative to promote national identity in the past, but what of folklore in today’s time? It certainly remains to be the tool of creating a narrative. Hungary is one of those states: every year there is a Kurultaj that embraces the culture of Huns. People can visit yurts in which nomads used to live, see what kind of clothes they used to wear and see competitions in horse riding and archery skills. The official website of Kurultaj states that it is held regularly in order to remember ancestors. Interestingly, delegations of states that were nomads in the past, including Kazakhstan, are regularly invited to the Kurultaj.⁵³ Embracing nomad culture that was used to be seen as a barbaric threat to European civilization is a risky move, but it certainly might yield a new unique identity for the Hungarian nation. Similarly, the current Czech government is in a way repeating the actions of the Czech national revival movement by celebrating

⁵¹ Alexander Afanasev, “Народные русские сказки А. Н. Афанасьева в трех томах. Том 1” (Наука: Moscow, 1984), 19.

⁵² Petnikov, “Украинские народные сказки” (Государственное издание художественной литературы: Moscow, 1955), 20.

⁵³ Magyar–Turán Alapítvány, “Information,” Kurultáj, accessed April 24, 2024, <https://kurultaj.hu/english/>.

peasant culture. Andrew Lass suggests that the Czech government is trying to establish a notion of authentic Czech culture through this.⁵⁴ Therefore, folklore still remains as a tool for elites to establish a certain narrative. Moreover, development of technologies made folklore even more influential.

Eastern European folklore is gaining worldwide recognition in the entertainment sector. Aforementioned the Witcher - initially it was a series of books that later became a basis for a show by Netflix. Plot of the books is continued by the video game series developed by Polish studio CD Projekt Red. Both the show and videogames are popular and have fans around the world. In May of 2023 PCGamer referred to the game as “classic” and reported that 50 million copies of it were sold, which is a lot.⁵⁵ Similarly, Czech studio Warhorse Entertainment developed a video game titled Kingdom Come: Deliverance that tells the story of how two brothers Sigismund V and Wenceslas IV fought for the title of King of Bohemia. This game also was commercially successful as in February of 2024 the studio reported that 6 million copies were sold.⁵⁶ It may not seem like much, but it is a high number.

The case of Russia is particularly interesting. It is a country that does not have a developed video game development industry. Nevertheless, a video game titled “Смута” was recently developed by a studio called Cyberia Nova from Novosibirsk. As the name suggests, the game is about the Time of Troubles. The plot is based on the novel of Mikhail Zagoskin “Юрий Милославский, или Русские в 1612 году” that has a very strong

⁵⁴ Andrew Lass, “WHAT KEEPS THE CZECH FOLK “ALIVE?” in *Dialectical Anthropology* VOI. 14 No. 1 (Berlin: Springer, 1989), 9.

⁵⁵ Rick Lane, “The Witcher 3 Has Sold 50 Million Copies,” *pcgamer*, May 29, 2023, <https://www.pcgamer.com/the-witcher-3-has-sold-50-million-copies/>.

⁵⁶ Warhorse Studios, Twitter, February 13, 2024, <https://twitter.com/WarhorseStudios/status/1757393214410027231>.

nationalistic pretext as the main character, who is fictional, Yuri Miloslavskii helps Minin and Pozharsky to fight against so-called Polish invaders. The novel itself was written in the 19th century during the period of romanticism; hence this is why the plot portrays Russians as good people who are trying to fight against evil Poles. What is important is that characters in the game will dress and talk the old way, which is folklorism. It seems like the developers paid lots of attention to replicating the atmosphere of 17th century Russia - many reviews are saying that *Smuta* has good graphics, authentic soundtrack and characters, even if it sounds strange, talk as if they come from the past. Review from skillbox.ru even calls it “interactive museum”.⁵⁷ What makes this game stand out from the ones mentioned before is that the development of *Smuta* is sponsored by the Internet Development Institute that receives grants from the government which means that, essentially, the government of the Russian Federation sponsors development of this video game. By July of 2023 IDI invested 490 million roubles in the project.⁵⁸ It seems like the government is trying to instill patriotism in the younger generation through this project. Evidently teenagers and young adults tend to spend their leisure time by playing video games, and this, in theory, is a perfect way to make them interested in the events of Time of Troubles. Again, folklore is still a tool of promoting ideas. Overall, all of these examples indicate that there is increasing interest in Eastern European, or Slavic, folklore. Slavic folklore is becoming increasingly popular and people are willing to pay for and consume such products.

⁵⁷ “Обзор ‘Смуты’ - Игры, Будто Сделанной По Принципу ‘И Та-а-Ак Сойдёт,’” skillbox.ru, April 9, 2024, <https://skillbox.ru/media/gamedev/obzor-smuty-igry-budto-sdelannoy-po-printsipu-i-taaak-soydyet/>.

⁵⁸ Granger, “На Разработку Российской Экшен-Rpg ‘Смута’ Выделили Уже Почти Полмиллиарда Рублей” DTF, June 6, 2023, <https://dtf.ru/games/1872210-na-razrabotku-rossiiskoi-ekshen-rpg-smuta-vydellili-uzhe-pochti-polmilliarda-rublei>.

To conclude, folklore was seen as a significant tool in establishing national identities in Eastern European states. Czech elites considered any knowledge about the past preserved as a very essential part of national heritage. They were eager to preserve “national monuments” from Germans. In a way Czech nationalists replicated what Grimm brothers, and especially Wilhelm Grimm, tried to accomplish - both sides tried to hold knowledge from the past in high esteem and used that for their purposes. Moreover, the Czech national revival movement was very organized. Jungmann, Palacky, Erben, Nemcova - all of them knew each other and effectively coordinated their efforts to present Czech culture in a better light. There is a clear attempt by this group of individuals to use folklore to promote a narrative of “us” against “them” in order to promote Czech national identity. Moreover, as a movement that emerged in a decentralized state, political goals that they obtained later on were moderate.

Similarly, Galician Ukrainians went through similar transformations as the Czech national revival movement. They also thought that folklore was important in their pursuit to promote Ukrainian culture and identity. These individuals also tried to use the narrative of “us” against the outsiders to reach their goals. Moreover, prominent nationalists from Galicia knew each other and tried to coordinate their effort as well. Their movement also obtained political goals as time went on. Their colleagues from the left bank of Dnipro river, however, had a different experience. The Russian Empire was hardly pressing on Ukrainian culture and identity. For them it was the matter of trying to preserve the culture, not promoting it. This also led to Ukrainian nationalists in Russia having views that lean towards socialism. Despite that, they also made use of the narrative of “us” against “them” to reach their goals.

Practice shows that even today some of the Eastern European states still use folklore as a tool of establishing national identity. Different nations from different periods deemed folklore as important. The Czech national revival movement in the early 19th century, Ukrainian movements of the late 19th century and even the current Hungarian, Czech and Russian governments - these are different movements from different nations, yet they all perceived folklore as an integral part of national identity. Hungary is trying to establish their identity through connecting their ancestry to Huns. Essentially, Kurultaj is an example of folklorism when the government uses material culture of the past. Similarly, the Russian government sees the video game about the Time of Troubles as a way to instill patriotism in the younger generation. All of these examples indicate that folklore and folklorism were, and still are, perceived as effective tools for developing national identity. Lastly, it has to be noted that this essay does not claim to explain the phenomenon of folklore as a tool for establishing national identity. Instead, it offers an analysis of how folklore was perceived by Czech and Ukrainian nationalist intelligentsia and how frequently folklore was used as a tool. It takes much more research to understand the role of folklore in establishing national identities in Eastern Europe.

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