Reading Gogol′ in Azeri: Parodic Genealogies and the Revolutionary Geopoetics of 1905

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In 1909 the Azeri writer, critic, dramatist and editor of the renowned satirical journal *Molla Nəsrəddin* (Molla Nasreddin) Jelil Memmedquluzade announced the arrival of a strange word in his journal—a "Qoqol."[1] Hidden beneath the old-script Azeri transliteration was none other than Nikolai Gogol′, "from under (whose) overcoat," in a statement famously attributed to Fyodor Dostoevskii, all modern Russian writers had emerged. The tensions between Gogol′'s valorization in the national literary canon and his ethno-linguistic identity as a Russophone Ukrainian subject of the empire has been the focus of a rich body of recent scholarship.[2] How do we approach his reappearance, masked in a non-Slavic language, at a far more distant outpost of the Russian empire at a new threshold of modernity—four years after the 1905 revolution?

The importance of Gogol′'s works, especially his signature parodic prose, for Memmedquluzade is evident from a copy of "The Wanderings of Chichikov or Dead Souls" (*Pokhozhdeniia Chichikova ili Mertvye dushi*) in his personal library.[3] However, beyond demonstrating the influence of the nineteenth-century author on Memmedquluzade the Azeri persona of "Qoqol" provides a unique vantage point for examining the enduring ways in which Gogol′'s representations of time and space generated a complex network of *geopoetic* landscapes across Russia's diverse imperial peripheries. Gogol′'s geopoetics of Ukraine from the nineteenth century provide the template for Memmedquluzade's architecture of a revolutionary Azeri identity at the dawn of the twentieth century, despite the obvious differences between the two writers' geographic origins, languages, and ethno-religious identities.

Geopoetics, in this case, mobilizes the intersections between memory

1. Jelil Memmedquluzade (*Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə*, 1866–1932) was a dramatist, poet, prosaist, and literary critic. In 1887, he graduated from the Gori Pedagogical Seminary and taught at local schools in the Georgian countryside. In 1903 he moved to Tbilisi to work as a correspondent for the leading Azeri language newspaper *The Russian East* (*Şərq-i Rus*), which was edited by his friend Məhəmməd ağa Şahtaxtinski. When the paper closed he bought the press and founded the Azeri language satirical paper *Molla Nəsrəddin* (Molla Nasreddin) in 1906. His most notable works include the short stories: "The Events in the Danabash Village" (*Danabaş kəndinin əhvalatları*), "The Russian Girl" (*Rus Qızı*), "Freedom in Iran" (*İranda hürriyyət*), "Gurbanali Bey" (*Qurbanəlibəy*), and "The Post-box" (*Poçt qutusu*), as well as the plays: "The Dead" (*Ölülər*) and "My Mother's Books" (*Anamın kitabı*).

2. See: Edyta M. Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007); Myroslav Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and the Discourse of Empire from Napoleonic to Postcolonial Times* (Montreal, 2001); Roman Koropecky and Robert Romanchuk, "Ukraine in Blackface: Performance and Representation in Gogol's *Dikan′ka Tales*, Book 1" *Slavic Review* 62, no. 33 (Fall 2003), 525–47.

3. Memmedquluzade's Russian language books are collected in the Institute of Manuscripts of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences in Baku (*Əlyazmalar İnsitutu*) f. 6, v. 552, s. 319.

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and geography, which Edward Said famously described as "the study of human space."[4] The cultural theorist W. J. T. Mitchell, in turn, aligns geopoetics with a dialectical triad—space, place, and landscape—drawing on the work of Marxist geographer David Harvey. Indeed, Mitchell's and Harvey's efforts to synthesize the phenomenological and experiential traditions with French Marxism expose the geopolitical, cognitive and affective dimensions of geopoetics.[5] A critical geopoetics also attends to the ways in which poetic geographies were tied to institutional structures that authorized them and the social imaginaries that produced them. Such a reading of Gogol′ opens up a previously unexamined transnational and interdisciplinary dimension of the Russian literary canon.[6] The geopoetics of Ukraine, Russia's proximate periphery, which Gogol′'s work generated, has enabled contemporary critics to invoke the formal device of parody in his work as a generative analytical frame for the ongoing geopolitical conflict in the region.[7]

4. Edward Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place," *Landscape and Power*, 2nd ed., ed. W. J. T Mitchell (Chicago, 2002), 241.

5. In particular Mitchell points to the influence of Gaston Bachelard, Martin Heidegger, Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Michel Foucault on Harvey's *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*. See W. J. T. Mitchell, "Preface to the Second Edition of *Landscape and Power*," *Landscape and Power*, vii-xv. Mitchell explicitly uses the term geopoetics in his introduction to a 2000 volume of Critical Inquiry. See Mitchell, "Geopoetics: Space, Place and Landscape" *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 173–74.

6. Indeed, a collection of recent scholarship has made important efforts to expand the canon. Examples of such interventions include: Bruce Grant, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (Ithaca, 2009); Rebecca Gould, "Topographies of Anticolonialism: The Ecopoetical Sublime in the Caucasus from Tolstoy to Mamakaev," *Comparative Literature Studies* 50, no.1 (2013): 87–107; Erika Haber, *The Myth of the Non-Russian: Iskander and Aitmatov's Magical Universe* (Lanham, 2003); Harriet Murav, "Violating the Canon: Reading Der Nister with Vasilii Grossman" *Slavic Review* 67, no.3 (Fall 2008): 642–61; Harriet Murav, *Music from a Speeding Train: Jewish Literature in Post-Revolutionary Russia* (Stanford, 2011); Harsha Ram and Zaza Shatirshvili. "Romantic Topography and the Dilemma of Empire: The Caucasus in the Dialogue of Georgian and Russian Poetry." *Russian Review* 63, no.1 (2004): 1–25; Lisa Yountchi, "An Ode to Great Friendship: Russia, Iran, and the Soviet Tajik Writer" *Clio* 41, no. 2 (2002): 173–96; Naomi Caffee, *Russophonia: Towards a Transnational Conception of Russian-Language Literature* (PhD diss, UCLA, 2013); Kathryn Schild, *Between Moscow and Baku: National Literatures at the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers* (PhD diss. University of California at Berkeley, 2010).

7. As Thomas de Waal's recent article in *Foreign Policy* attests, Gogol′'s work is still called upon to explain Soviet and post-Soviet geopolitics. De Waal writes, "How about skipping the political science textbooks when it comes to trying to understand the former Soviet Union and instead opening up the pages of Nikolai Gogol, Anton Chekhov, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky?" See: Thomas de Waal, "How Gogol Explains the Post-Soviet World (and Chekhov and Dostoevsky.) The case for re(reading) Russia's Greatest Literary Classics" *Foreign Policy* 192 (2012), 106–11; Most recently, the Jordan Center at NYU hosted two blog entries from contemporary Slavists discussing the 2014 revolution in Ukraine through Gogol′'s oeuvre. Edyta Bojanowska's entry from April 22, 2014, "All the King's Horses: Ukraine, Russia, and Gogol's Troika," traces the troika as a symbol for Russian messianism from Gogol′'s work in the nineteenth century to the recent Olympic program. See: www.jordanrussiacenter.org/news/kings-horses-ukraine-russian-gogols-troika/#.VxUzcPkrLcs (last accessed 29 January 2016); In a post from March 2, 2014 entitled "Russia and Ukraine: Stupidity, Cynicism or Both?," Eliot Borenstein concludes his critique of the historical inaccuracy of US media representations of Ukraine by turning to Gogol′ to explain

Displacing Gogol′'s parodic genealogy to the south Caucasus, however, reveals the emergence of a geopoetical intervention marked by a qualitatively different kind of colonial alienation. Memmedquluzade's reception and translations of Gogol′ illustrate the role of Russian imperial literature in forging cultural connections and anticipating ruptures between the Muslim south Caucasus, the Russian imperial metropole, and the transnational Turkic Muslim world. The discourse of Russia's simultaneous attraction and alienation from Europe, a window through which the colonial encounter was imagined by exiled Russian poets, can be more dynamically addressed from the experience of the Muslim subjects 'writing back' to the empire. Gogol′'s parody presents a formal model for thinking through the processes of literary imitation and translation. Furthermore, Gogol′'s popularity in the Caucasus speaks to the importance of approaching his work not only through the optic of intra-Slavic relations, but also as a potent model for considering a broader Eurasian community of subaltern writers, thinkers, and activists. Such a reading also contributes to growing scholarship on Turkic-Russian encounters within and beyond the Russian empire.[8]

Gogol′'s Ukrainian birth and Russophone legacy complicate his place in the Russian canon, alongside Pushkin, Tolstoii and Dostoevskii. Gogol′, who indeed instrumentalized his Ukrainian identity for his own literary success, thus presents a somewhat perplexing foundational example for the postcolonial turn in Slavic studies.[9] While such crucial interventions in the authorita-

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the fruitlessness of disputes over identity, citing both Gogol′'s Russified and Ukrainainized names, "You said it, Nikolai! Or Mikola. I really don't care which one." See: www.jordanrussiacenter.org/news/russia-ukraine-stupidity-cynicism/#.VxU0kfkrLcs (last accessed January 29, 2016).

8. Notable scholarship on Russian/Soviet imperial connections with pan-Turkic culture includes the work of Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908–1918* (Cambridge, 2011); Ada Holland Shissler, *Between Two Empires: Ahmet Agaoglu and the New Turkey* (London, 2002); Samuel J. Hirst, "Anti-Westernism on the European Periphery: The Meaning of Soviet Turkish Convergence in the 1930s," *Slavic Review* 72, no.1 (Spring 2013): 32–53; Hirst, "Transnational Anti-Imperialism and the National Forces: Soviet Diplomacy and Turkey, 1920–1923," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 33, no.2 (2013): 214–226; Nergis Ertürk, "Toward a Literary Communism: The 1926 Baku Turcological Congress" *Boundary 2*, 40.2 (2013):183–213; Azade-Ayse Rorlich, "The Challenge of Belonging: The Muslims of Late Imperial Russia and the Contested Terrain of Identity and Gender," in *Democracy and Pluralism in Muslim Eurasia*, ed., Yaacov Ro'i (London, 2004); Azade-Ayse Rorlich, "Intersecting Discourses in the Press of the Muslims of Crimea, Middle Volga and Caucasus: The Woman Question and the Nation," in Feride Acar and Ayşe Güneş-Ayata, eds., *Gender and Identity Construction: Women of Central Asia, the Caucasus and Turkey* (Leiden, 2000).

9. Postcolonial readings of Gogol′ (most notably those of Myroslav Shkandrij and Edyta Bojanowska) conceptualize representations of Ukraine through the conflicting forces of exoticization and domestication. Russian imperial narratives presented Ukraine through divergent and often anachronistic discourses of Romantic nationalism, westernization and Orientalism, marking its geopolitical linkages to Russia, Poland and the Caucasus. Shkandrij's *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and the Discourse of Empire from Napoleonic to Postcolonial Times* is structured around a comparative Orientalism, linking representations of Ukraine to the Caucasus in Russia's Asiatic or Oriental imperial periphery. Indeed, as Shkandrij highlights, Ukraine and its inhabitants were often described as "Asian." Myroslav Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine*, 79. Bojanowska's *Nikolai Gogol: Between Russian and Ukrainian Nationalism* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007) also dramatizes

tive vision of Russian literature emphasize the central role of the Ukrainian "periphery" on Russian imperial history, this article instead focuses on the nuances of the colonial encounter from both within and outside of a national Russian linguistic and literary tradition. Memmedquluzade's parodic reception of Gogol′'s identity (both personally and lyrically) invites a genealogical inquiry into the forms of power that link the Russian literary canon to discourses of Russian/Soviet imperialism and Orientalism. In this way, the transnational geopoetics of Gogol′'s work reveals the ways in which the discourse of Gogolian hybridity, arguably part of a larger discourse of Eurasian hybridity, was itself entangled in colonial relations of power.[10] Comparing Gogol′'s own ambivalent relationship to the imperial metropole with his work's legacy in the Caucasus reveals how his writings not only produced knowledge about the empire, but more crucially shaped the formation of local anti-imperial discourses on the periphery.

Gogol′'s parodic prose, not surprisingly, features prominently in recent engagements between Slavic studies and postcolonial theory. Dragan Kujundžić accounts for this doubled vision of Gogol′ in his discussion of parody. Tracing Tynyanov and Bakhtin's writings to Nietzsche, he argues that parody functioned as a force for renewing genres, "a mechanism of literary and historical change, as well as a discursive performance by which we measure the cyclical passage of time."[11] Parody here functions as the marker of epistemological shifts in Russian literary history. Building on Homi Bhabha's "ambivalent temporalities of the nation-space," Kujundžić argues that "Parody is the effect of 'translation' from one literary system to another; it preserves the memory of the old system while actualizing the potential of the new."[12] This capacity of parody to maintain a vestige of the old while generating the new renders it a historical practice. Alexander Etkind offers a similar vision of Russian history, also reading Gogol′ through Bhabha to describe Russia's internal

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the tension between these conflicting identity discourses and geopolitical alignments in Gogol′'s writings, focusing in particular on the ways in which Gogol′'s works project the culture of the periphery onto their vision of metropolitan Petersburg. While Gogol′ has been the most popular focus of postocolonial readings, post-Soviet scholarship has also considered the topic of Pushkin's blackness. See: Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy, Nicole Svobodny, and Ludmilla A. Trigos, eds., *Under the Sky of My Africa: Alexander Pushkin and Blackness* (Evanston, 2006).

10. In his compelling discussion of translations and productions of Shakespeare in post-revolutionary Russia, Aydin Dzhebrailov highlights the ways in which these adaptations reveal a dynamic interplay between avant-garde and socialist realist aesthetics and Stalinization. Dzhebrailov notes the influence of Caucasian productions of *Othello* on Stalinist kitsch aesthetics. Though he focuses largely on the individual cult of Stalin and his role as a master censor, he nonetheless identifies the production of the play in the Caucasus and its thematic concern for political marginality as motivation for its ascension to prominence in the Soviet canon. See: Aydin Dzhebrailov, "The King is Dead. Long Live the King! Post-Revolutionary and Stalinist Shakespeare," trans. Cathy Porter, *History Workshop* 32 (1991): 1–18.

11. Kujundžić engages with Mikhail Bakhtin's discussion of parody in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* as the force generating the renewal or rebirth of the novelistic genre. Dragan Kujundžić, *The Returns of History: Russian Nietzscheans After Modernity* (Albany, 1997), 40–41.

12. Ibid, 39.

colonization as a process whereby post-Enlightenment man is tethered to a colonized double, generated through the experience of loss and division characteristic of the colonial encounter.[13] Kujundžić's and Etkind's models of self-reflexive or internal colonization expose the poetics of colonial alienation embedded within Gogol′'s own geopoetics.

Russia's expansion south into the Muslim Caucasus, however, informed the creation of another sequence of revolutionary ideas that challenged the metropolitan experience of the Russian colonial encounter.[14] Internal colonization envisions the colonial encounter from both the intra-Slavic and imperial perspectives, in which the other is projected as an extension of the self, as part of the internal body of the Russian empire. However, the location of the Caucasus and Central Asia as part of Russia's contiguous expansion made these spaces crucial to defining the limits of the "Oriental half" of the Russian empire.

Parody thus emphasizes the distance between the trans-imperial Russophone and Turkic traditions in which Gogol′ and Memmedquluzade participated, as well as the possibility of their mutual translation, in part, owing to the epistemological currency of the parodic form within both Russian and Turkic literatures. Memmedquluzade's reading of Gogol′'s work not only dramatizes the relationship between forms of romantic imperial and national identity, but radicalizes an internal alterity within its formal tissue. When Memmedquluzade "translates" Gogol′, he does not reproduce the text or even the plot of Gogol′'s story, but transcribes the rhetorical-political violence that animates his work. The reception of Gogolian parody in the Caucasus represents an important epistemic shift or "translation" of a Russian identity through its encounter with an emerging discourse of Muslim Turkic identity.

1905 marked a pivotal moment in the Russian imperial metropole as well as on the periphery. Violence and unrest enveloped the South Caucasus after a series of constitutional revolutions erupted in the Russian empire in 1905, Persia in 1906, and Turkey in 1908.[15] Rioting, inter-ethnic violence and protests occurred in Baku as well as in the countryside. Peasants demanded redistribution of lands, workers better conditions, and the emergence of increasingly polarized Armenian and Azeri identity discourses stoked violence.[16] On

13. Etkind argues that postcolonial criticism not only clarifies Gogol′, but that similarly Gogol′ explains Bhabha's theory of "colonial doubling." He appropriates the term from Bhabha's influential essay "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" in his 1994 book *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994). Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge, 2011), 14–15.

14. Despite their common interest in Bhabha, methodologically Etkind's analysis focuses on estranging postcolonial theory by exposing Bhabha's and Said's unacknowledged Russian sources. Kujundžic, on the other hand, introduces a critical reading of parody through which he reads the geopolitics of Russian imperialism. This entails introducing an intellectual genealogy—from Nietzsche to Mikhail Bakhtin and Yuri Lotman—as a way of thinking through the geopolitics of Formalist poetics.

15. These included the series of uprisings across the Russian empire in 1905–1906, the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1907, and the Young Turk Revolution 1908.

16. For a discussion of social relations and the battle for identity in the 1905–1906 Azeri-Armenian conflict see, Leslie Sargent, "The 'Armeno-Tatar War' in the South Caucasus, 1905–1906: Multiple Causes, Interpreted Meanings" *Ab Imperio* 4 (2010): 143–69.

the other hand, the 1905 revolution also brought liberal censorship policies, which generated a boom in local print culture across the Caucasus and Central Asia. The two leading Azeri literary journals of the time, *Füyuzat* (Enlightenment) (1906–1907) and *Molla Nəsrəddin* (1906–1931), introduced their readers to Russian and European works of literature and philosophy, printing translations and articles on writers and thinkers including Goethe, Schiller, Shakespeare, Tolstoii, Pushkin and Gogol′.[17] The expansion of the Azeri press, which made literary works available to a broader public, was accompanied by an interest in both class and language politics in the Caucasus.

These interests were answered through social and labor organization leading up to and following the 1905 revolution. The Muslim Social Democratic party (*Hümmət*) was founded in 1904 and a Conference for Muslim Teachers held in Baku in 1906.[18] The creation of a Muslim Social Democratic party secured a bond between the worker's cause and a supranational Muslim culture linked to the *Ummah*, or the international community of Islamic believers. The Conference for Muslim Teachers instead addressed national causes including the issue of Russification and the promotion of Azeri-language instruction and textbooks. The preferred term for the languages of the empire used at the conference was "Muslim language," however, bridging these two cultural and political discourses. This interest in the cause of "Muslim language" reform, which lay at the heart of the new journals' objectives, signaled that identity was necessarily inscribed within the domain of a supranational Muslim culture, though one articulated in the particular geopolitical space of the Russian empire and more specifically the south Caucasus.[19] This print boom in the south Caucasus generated a corpus of texts that provided a unique vision of identity shaped by the revolutionary transformation of the periphery.

It was in this context that Memmedquluzade introduced Gogol′ to his

17. *Molla Nəsrəddin* was an Azeri language satirical journal edited by Memmedquluzade. It was published between 1906 and 1917 in Tbilisi, in 1921 in the northern Iranian city of Tabriz and between 1922 and 1931 in Baku. The major issues of reform covered in the journal included education, as well as women's and worker's rights. See: Jala Garibova, "Molla Nasraddin—The Magazine: Laughter that Pricked the Conscience of a Nation" *Azerbaijan International* 4, no.3 (1996), at www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/43_folder/43_articles/43_mollamag.html (last accessed 29 January 2016); See also Əziz Mirəhmədov, *Azərbaycan Molla Nəsrəddini* (Baku, 1980); Alexandre Bennigsen, "'Molla Nasreddin' et la presse satirique musulmane de Russie avant 1917" *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 3, no.3 (July-September 1962), 505–20; Alexandre Bennigsen et Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, *La presse et le mouvement national chez les musulmans de Russie avant 1920* (Paris, 1964). *Füyuzat* (Enlightenment) was a literary journal edited by the Azeri author and critic Ali bey Hüseynzade and was published in Baku between 1906 and 1907.

18. For more information about the mobilization of oil workers in the Caucasus and the recognition of the Hümmət—the first all-Muslim Social-Democratic party—at the Sixth Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party in 1906, see: Alexandre A. Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World* (Chicago, 1979), 14; See also Lutz Kleveman, *The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia* (New York, 2003), 11–30.

19. See Audrey Altstadt, "The Azerbaijani Bourgeoisie and the Cultural-Enlightenment Movement in Baku: First Steps Toward Nationalism," in Ronald Grigor Suny, ed., *Transcaucasia, Nationalism, and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia* (Ann Arbor, 1983), 199–209.

local readers. Gogol′'s journey to the Caucasus during the first two decades of the twentieth century took two forms. His prose was evoked in the pages of the journal *Molla Nəsrəddin* and his play "The Government Inspector" became one of the most popular shows on the local revolutionary stage.[20] Memmedquluzade's interest in Gogol′'s prose centers on three major themes: the relationship between the imperial metropole and the provincial periphery, discourses of modernity rooted in a vision of literature as social critique and a rejection of westernization, and the trope of mistaken identity as a model for reading history. Drawing upon satire and parody as political and structural literary forms, Memmedquluzade reframed Gogol′'s critique of the tsarist bureaucracy through the colonial context and re-envisioned the imperial canon through this Turkic 'translation' of Russian prose. His reception of Gogol′'s works refracts Gogol′'s geopoetics through the prism of an Azeri Muslim colonial ethno-linguistic identity. Drawing upon Gogol′'s work, he implicitly situates Azeri literature in relation to the Russian imperial past. In so doing, however, he also anticipates a revolutionary break and the creation of an anti-imperial future.

Speaking in Tongues: Ukrainian and Turkic Literary Others

Launching its first issue in 1906, Memmedquluzade introduced the journal *Molla Nəsrəddin*, not only as one of the first Azeri literary journals in the Caucasus, but as one with a particular aesthetic and political interest in developing Turkic and Muslim culture. While Memmedquluzade and his work with the journal have been framed in contemporary scholarship and the journal's institutional ties to the Soviet government in the 1930s and an overstatement of the journal's early political and cultural opposition to the pan-Turkism of *Enlightenment*, such a cohesive presentation of the journal's politics is more convenient than historically accurate. The journal's title announced its projected readership as an international community of Muslims familiar with the popular folk character Molla or Hoja Nasreddin. Through this appeal to a broad Muslim cultural community, the journal's aims do not center on a particular ideological narrative (such as those of the *jadids*) so much as an interest in encouraging social change more broadly.[21] The location and dislocation of modernity between Russia (as Europe) and the Islamic world reframed the journal's claims to generate a modern Azeri literature as a supranational project, concerned with diversity and contingency over national purity. Noting a break from the aesthetic and linguistic forms of both the classical traditions of Ottoman and Persian poetry, Memmedquluzade's prose and the style of the

20. Indeed, the play was performed six times in Tbilisi in 1906 and thus would have been familiar to the journal's readers. See: Takhira Gashamkyzy Mamed, *Azerbaidzhanskaia natsional'naia dramaturgiia* (Tbilisi, 2001), 91.

21. For a discussion of the particular reform agenda of the jadids see: Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley, 1998). This interest in reform as such can be read as analogous to the Russian avant-garde's interest in revolution as such. On this topic see Nina Gurianova's discussion of the "aesthetics of anarchy," Nina Gurianova, *The Aesthetics of Anarchy: Art and Ideology in the Early Avant-garde* (Berkeley, 2012).

journal's contents more broadly reflected an interest in the variegated terrain of the folktale genre and the syntax of spoken Azeri. The first issue introduces the title character and offers a short address to the readers, as well as a description of the broad objectives of the journal. Memmedquluzade writes,

> Hey, I came to talk about you my Muslim brothers. I am talking about the people who do not like my discourse and make excuses to run from me, such as: going to have their horoscopes read, (watching) a dog fight, listening to the tales of dervishes, sleeping in the bathhouse, and others of these types of important desires. But the powers have ordered: say these words to those people who do not lend an ear. Hey my Muslim brothers! There were times when you heard some of my humorous words, opened your mouths to the sky, closed your eyes as the "ha-ha!" of laughter almost tore your intestines, wiped your faces and eyes with the hems (of your caftans), and said "curse Satan!" Don't assume that you are laughing at Molla Nasreddin. Hey my Muslim brothers! If you want to know at whom you laugh, then put a mirror in front of yourselves and take a careful look at your own faces.[22]

Memmedquluzade defines his readership as both Muslim brothers and Turkic speakers, referring to their Turkic mother tongue: "while rocking you in the cradle your mothers told you lullabies in the Turkic tongue."[23] He also uses the term "Muslim" to address the diverse communities of Muslims across the Russian empire, as well as internationally.[24] The particular figure of the Azeri Muslim participates in a series of relational ethnic, cultural, and linguistic discourses. He or she is both an insider and outsider among other Muslims of the Russian empire such as Uzbeks and Tatars, the irrevocable outsider for the Russian, and yet also a political insider as a subject of the empire. The term "my Muslim brothers," in turn, operates on multiple planes of speech. It refers at once to the everyman, the community of Muslim believers, and the populist cause of the workers in the Caucasus.

Written after the workers' protests and the 1905 revolution during the final decade of Russian imperial control, Memmedquluzade's Azeri audience included both elite intellectuals and the working masses. In this way, the journal aimed to enlighten the same Muslim masses, which also served as the object of its critical gaze. Though literacy in the Caucasus among Muslims was only around 4–5% in 1905, the journal included a large selection of political cartoons and Memmedquluzade was known to read selections aloud in local teahouses.[25] The journal thus played on the tension between elite and

22. *Molla Nəsrəddin* 1 (1906), cited in Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə, *Əsərləri 4 cilddə* (Baku, 2004), 2: 4.

23. Ibid.

24. For instance, to a Persian an Azeri might be called "Turk" whereas for a Georgian, Armenian or Russian an Azeri speaker would be called "Muslim." This shift was particularly relevant after the Russian annexation of the Caucasus brought more "gaurs" or unbelievers (as Russians were called) to the region. The general term Muslim would have also been used to refer to both Sunnis and Shi'a Muslims.

25. See: Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905–1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge, 1985), 30; see also: Audrey Altstadt, "The Azerbaijani Bourgeoisie and the Cultural-Enlightenment Movement in Baku: First Steps toward Nationalism," in Suny, *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change*, 199–209.

popular readership, not only as part of an aesthetic project to create a new genre of prose, but as a political project to urge social reforms. This tension between the journal's function as a work of literature and an agitator for political action is further emphasized in the final line of the passage, which recalls one of the most famous lines of Gogol′'s play "The Government Inspector."[26] Memmedquluzade offers a symbolic mirror of social critique to his community of readers. He addresses his "Muslim brothers," in turn, as both readers of Gogol′ and objects of a Gogolian satire. Emphasizing the proximity between life and fiction, Memmedquluzade draws upon Gogol′'s work to highlight the civic quality of literature to enlighten as well as entertain.

The grotesque imagery and colloquial tone captured in the journal present folk culture as a source of both entertainment and enlightenment, which serve as the basis for Memmedquluzade's new literary genre. The style of the passage and *Molla Nasreddin's* eponymous guide recall Gogol′'s experimentations with Ukrainian culture in his collection of short stories, *Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki* (Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka, 1831–32). Gogol′'s Rudy Panko, the fictional editor of the collection, performs the role of an exoticized "sly *khokhol*," or Ukrainian peasant for Gogol′'s Russian readership. Similarly, Memmedquluzade appropriates the legendary folk figure of Molla Nasreddin as both his pseudonym and the title of his literary journal. Panko and Nasreddin are storytellers importantly linked to non-Russian popular Ukrainian and Muslim folk culture; although Molla Nasreddin is also a central figure in Sufi mystic philosophy.

Panko is the product of the author's divided personae as a native informant who is also a member of the Russian intelligentsia and contributes to the Russification of Ukrainian culture. However, at the same time, Gogol′ deconstructs the very notion of Russianness by charging a Ukrainian peasant with narrating his Russian language tales. Panko thus positions Gogol′'s work between Russian national discourses that contested Ukrainian otherness, viewing the history of Kievan Rus' as evidence of its cultural ties to the modern Russian empire, and Ukrainian national discourses that insisted on Ukraine's unique cultural identity.[27] While for Gogol′ this struggle manifests internally, writing in Russian for a Russian readership, Memmedquluzade both presents

26. Gogol′'s line completes his satire of the provincial imperial bureaucracy when the mayor breaks the fourth wall to address the audience. He inquires of the audience, "What are you laughing at? You are laughing at yourselves!" (*Chemu smeetes′? Nad soboiu smeetes′!*). Gogol′, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 14 tomakh* (Moscow, 1937–52), 4:94. The trope of self-reflection also alludes to the play's epigraph, which reads, "There is no blaming the mirror if your face is crooked" ("*na zerkalo necha peniat,' koli rozha kriva"*). Gogol′, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 14 tomakh*, 4: 4.

27. The early figures of the Ukrainian national movement include, the poet Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861) and the ethnographer Mykola Kostomarov (Nikolai Ivanovich Kostomarov) (1817–1885). In his seminal Ukrainian nationalist ethnography, "Two Russian Populations" (*Dve russkie narodnosti*), Kostomarov distinguished the autocracy and collectivism of *Northern* or Great Rus′ (Russia), from the liberty and individualism of *Southern* or Little Rus′ (Ukraine). See: Nikolai Ivanovich Kostomarov, "Dve russkie narodnosti," *Osnova* 3 (1861): 33–80 and Mykola Kostomarov, "Two Russian Nationalities," in Ralph Lindheim and George S. N. Luckyj, eds., *Towards an Intellectual History of Ukraine: An Anthology of Ukrainian Thought from 1710 to 1995* (Toronto, 1996), 122–45.

an otherness through his work's implicit ties to a foreign literary legacy and cohesion through the sense of continuity shared by Nasreddin's popularity across the former Russian, Ottoman and Persian empires.

The form of the archetypal Nasreddin story also enters Memmedquluzade's play. The elliptical structure of the stories, while a common folk quality, is heightened by its Sufist ethos, which emphasizes the subversion of religious institutions and the moral objectives they formalize. Most stories hinge on a vision of Nasreddin as an idiot savant, whether emphasizing his inability to distinguish image from reality, word from action, or self from other. This dynamic is most clearly illustrated in the stories themselves, such as the following example.

> Molla Nasreddin was nailing a painting to a wall when suddenly his nail slipped and he punched a hole in the wall. Staring into the hole he noticed a herd of goats grazing, but didn't realize that he had broken through to his neighbor's yard. In a fit of excitement he called to his wife,
> "Come, come, you will not believe what I have found!"
> "What Molla?" his wife asked bemused.
> Molla replied in astonishment:
> "You will not believe it! I was standing here nailing in this picture and discovered an entire universe in this room—a universe of goats!"

The primacy of form is emphasized by the variability of the specifics, where the painting and goats could be replaced by a television and highway depending on the whims of the teller as well as the language in which the tale is told. Rather, the function of the tale illustrates both Molla's blindness, seen in his inability to distinguish the image from the real or copy from original, as well as his visionary capacity to reflect on the arbitrariness of the mimetic process itself. In the stories the cycle of laughter is always directed back at the meaninglessness of the teller's own tales as well as the specter of the teller himself. The details of the tale are after all as replaceable and universal as an Azeri Molla Nasreddin is interchangeable with his Turkic, Persian and Arabic doubles Hoja, Efendi, Juha or other iterations of the global archetype. While the Nasreddin story invites the search for meaning, it remains ultimately content to lead its listeners astray. In this regard, it does not necessarily *achieve* satire although it might *function* as parody. Molla's power lies in highlighting the porousness of the boundaries between life and tale, just as this particular story emphasizes the fluidity between art and life.

Through the satirical oral tradition embodied in *Molla Nəsrəddin*, Memmedquluzade thus parodies Gogol′ and Russian literature more broadly. In so doing, he generates a literary language marked by a fusion of Turkic, Persian and Russian cultural references as well as through literary elite and popular satire. Furthermore, if orality is somewhat lost for Gogol′ through his performance of Ukrainian otherness in Russian, it is at least partially recovered in Memmedquluzade's creation of the historical journal *Molla Nəsrəddin* from the elusive folk figure. While Panko's stories were collected as texts, Nasreddin's literality accompanied his emergence as a political-cultural icon for an image-based journal that was also regularly staged, that is, read aloud in public spaces. In this way, while the printing of the journal in 1906 at once shaped

the ways in which it would be read, the journal's reliance on the forum of the coffeehouse oral performance generated a broader popular base for its civic function.

The vision of Gogol′'s work as the beginning of a genealogy of indigenous Russian literature as social critique was indebted to the work of Vissarion Belinskii and Nikolai Chernyshevskii.[28] Gogol′'s connection to an intertextual and social space of global exchange however owes its debt to the Russian Formalists including Iurii Tynianov, Boris Eikhenbaum and Dmitrii Chizhevskii, as well as the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, who highlighted Gogol′'s literary appropriation of the oral tale.[29] Eikhenbaum famously described Gogol′'s oral style as *skaz*, referring to "devices of verbal mimicry and gesture" whereby in a sort of "play-acting" "words and sentences are selected and ordered not according to the principle of mere logical speech, but more according to the principle of expressive speech, in which a special role is played by articulation, mimicry, sound gestures, etc."[30] For Eikhenbaum, meaning is governed by the rules of sound instead of signs. Both Eikhenbaum and Tynianov highlight the performative aspect of *skaz*, that is, the way in which language exposes itself as a mask. While for the Formalists *skaz* revealed the inner expressive quality of folk forms in literature, Bakhtin moved a step further from an account of the linguistic to that of the metalinguistic, arguing that *skaz* represented a double-voicedness, an "orientation toward someone else's discourse."[31] Central to all of these early Soviet critical formations was the notion that *skaz* revealed an inner otherness in language, in which otherness was constituted beyond the rational for the Formalists or beyond the individual subject for Bakhtin.

Emphasizing the role of oral mimicry in transcending the rational individual subject, these Formalist paradigms betray a strong debt to Nietzsche's parodic philosophy.[32] The influence of Russian Nietzscheanism on Formalism offered a new vehicle for an old debate, namely the nineteenth century po-

28. The vision of literature as social critique is indebted to a genealogy of nineteenth century Russian social and aesthetic theory including the work of Gogol′, Vissarion Belinskii and Nikolai Chernyshevskii. To this end Chernyshevskii described this engaged literary tradition as "the Gogol′ period in Russian literature." See: Nikolai Chernyshevskii "Ocherki gogolevskogo perioda russkoi literatury," *Svoremennik*, 12 (1855), 1–2, 4, 7, 9–12 (1856); "Essays on the Gogol Period of Russian Literature," in N. G. Chernyshevsky *Selected Philosophical Essays* (Moscow, 1953).

29. Gogol′ gained new popularity, particularly in the American academe, through the work of the Russian Formalists and Semioticians during the first part of the twentieth century. These include the essays of Tynianov, Eikhenbaum, Chizhevskii, and Bakhtin from the 1920s and Lotman's work from the 1960s.

30. Eikhenbaum describes this in particular as "imitative *skaz*." See Eikhenbaum, "How Gogol's 'The Overcoat' is made," in Priscilla Meyer and Stephen Rudy, eds., *Dostoevsky and Gogol: Texts and Criticism* (Ann Arbor, 1979), 119–21.

31. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. and ed., Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, 1984), 194; Yuri Tynianov, "Dostoevsky and Gogol: Towards a Theory of Parody," in *Dostoevsky and Gogol*, 101–18; Boris Eikhenbaum, "How Gogol's 'Overcoat' is Made," in *Dostoevsky and Gogol*, 101–18; Dmitri Chizhevsky, "On Gogol's 'The Overcoat,'" in *Dostoevsky and Gogol*, 137–60.

32. Kujundžić illustrates the seminal role of Nietzsche in Russian Formalist thought. Dragan Kujundžić, *The Returns of History*.

lemic over whether the Russian writer's role was to *imitate* the literature and philosophy of western Europe, or to *innovate* unique Russian cultural products that reflected its status as a world empire. These discussions of Russia's cultural legacy which informed Gogol′'s representations of Ukraine as both an exotic other and an embodiment of the Herderean notion of the *Volksgeist*, or spirit of the people, returned in the linguistic and metalinguistic theories of *skaz* and parody. In the 1830s, Gogol′ provided details about Ukrainian life while a century later the Formalists employed Gogolian *skaz* to provide a linguistic ethnography of the internal otherness of the Russian language. However, before Gogolian *skaz* could become a talisman of Soviet internal otherness, it provided a form for articulating a colonial identity in the Caucasus.

Memmedquluzade's interest in Gogol′ in 1906, nearly a decade before his appropriation by the Formalists, highlights the ways in which Russian prose not only internalized its own otherness, but generated parodic discourses that contributed to the formation of an anti-imperial Azeri literary canon. Memmedquluzade not only echoes Gogol′'s social satire and assimilation of (Ukrainian) folk culture, but also generates a parody of the lexical-syntactic hybridity in Gogol′'s text. These resonances also reveal similar methodological and political challenges in thinking through the fragmented and relational discourses of identity, which emerge in Gogol′'s and Memmedquluzade's work, without either subordinating them to more institutionally established literatures (Russian, Polish, Persian or Turkish) or projecting them onto ahistorical narratives of cohesive Ukrainian and Azerbaijani national identity.

While Gogol′'s *Dikanka* cycle presents Ukrainian culture as part of a common Slavic yet non-Russian imperial identity, Memmedquluzade highlights networks of cultural exchange in Azeri speech, which include Russian, Persian and Turkic syntax and vocabulary. The second issue of *Molla Nəsrəddin* includes an anecdote titled *Bizim 'obrazovanı'lar* (Our educated ones) about an Azeri youth who after attaining a Russian education returns home and scoffs at his "Tatar" mother tongue, reflecting his new Russified status.[33] Memmedquluzade writes:

> They say that while my friend was in Russian school, one day he says to his mother:
> —Mother! Pojalusta svarit me something (that is, cook)!
> His mother answers:
> —My child what did you say?
> My friend answers:
> Oh, Oh, you don't understand anything; I said cook something.
> —My child, what shall I cook?
> —chort ego iznaet. I forgot . . . Its round; minced and cooked in a (clay pot) or on a grill . . . It has some kind of name . . .
> —My child, do you mean kufta?
> —yea. .yea . . . qofta, qofta.[34]

33. The term Tatar language was used by Russian officials and orientalists to refer generally to Turkic Muslims of the Russian empire. However, the term designates distinct ethno-linguistic groups of Turkic Muslim communities inhabiting the Crimea, the Volga region, and Siberia.

34. Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə, *Əsərləri 4 cilddə*, 2:11–12.

The child's Russian inflected speech asking his mother to "please cook something" (*pojalusta isvarit*) is reflected in the mutual unintelligibility between the child and his mother, as well as his inability to remember the classic Azeri dish. The episode recalls a passage in the *Dikanka* cycle in which Gogol′ describes a boy who cannot remember the word "rake" until it strikes him in the face. The boy's Latin education literally causes him to lose his native tongue and culture, his Eastern "Orthodox faith" (*pravoslavnyi*) tied to his native "language" (*iazyk*).[35] The boy's aphasia is connected both to a disappearance of his cultural identity—his Orthodox faith—as well as physical injury—the blow to the face. Similarly for Memmedquluzade, the child's cultural assimilation, embodied in his inability to remember the dish, is caused by his linguistic loss. In Gogolian fashion the gustatory register is connected to the domain of language. Indeed, in Azeri the word *dil* signifies both tongue and language, like the Russian word *iazyk*. Memmedquluzade emphasizes the maternal and nourishing elements of his native tongue, as well as its psychic and material loss. The title of the short anecdote reveals the multiple linguistic registers interacting in this text, connecting the Azeri "our" to the Russian term for education (*obrazovanie*), meaning cultural formation or education. Creating a hybridized text of unknown or appropriated foreign words, Memmedquluzade offers his parodic critique of the new generation's Russian acculturation in his fusion of the multiple languages and registers of speech resulting from the imperial encounter in the Caucasus.

In addition to the double register of Russian and Azeri, the journal also plays on its reader's knowledge of Persian. In a recurring column of the journal Memmedquluzade includes a satirical Persian-Azeri dictionary. The section uses the form of dictionary entries to confuse the relationship between linguistic signs, their sound and their meaning. For example, one entry reads, "Ishtirak—that is to smoke opium during working hours. It is a Farsi word, but it is often used in Nakhchivan and Iran."[36] Memmedquluzade plays on the sound of the Persian word *ishtirak* meaning to participate, but which to a Turkic reader would sound like *ish-tirak*, a portmanteau for "opiumwork," a combination of "to work" (*iş*) and "opium" (*tiyək*). As the Arabic or Persian word is used also in a socialist political context from the root *sh-r-k*, meaning to share, the dictionary links the notion of socialist labor to opium smoking.[37] On the one hand, the entry seems to submit to an orientalist cliché, namely that of the opium smoking Persian evoked by Gogol′ in his story "Nevsky Prospect."[38] However, to a reader of Arabic or Persian, the line juxtaposes the

35. Gogol′, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v 23 tomakh*, eds. E. I. Annenkova and Iu. Mann (Moscow, 2003) 1:70.

36. *Molla Nəsrəddin* 5 (May 5, 1906) reprinted in *Molla Nəsrəddin, 10 cildə* (Baku, 1996), 1:6.

37. The Muslim modernist thinker Jamāḷ Al-Dīn Al-Afghāni used the term to signify Islamic socialist governance. See Anwar Moazzam, *Jamāḷ Al-Dīn Al-Afghāni: A Muslim Intellectual* (New Delhi, 1983), 34.

38. In the story, the romantic painter Piskarev procures opium through a Persian cloth merchant. As payment the merchant asks for a painting depicting himself accompanied by a beautiful woman reclining next to him on a divan. The orientalist fantasy thus serves as a frame for Piskarev's hallucinations. Gogol′, "Nevskii Prospekt," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 14 tomakh*, 3:7–46.

idea of socialist participation against the practice of opium smoking, reflecting the failures of early Bolshevik revolutionary efforts. In a clever inversion of Marx, Memmedquluzade parodies a bourgeois vision of collective labor as the opium of the masses. In addition to the recognition of a certain *skaz* or sound meaning the joke hinges on a necessary bilingualism.

Drawing upon the form of the dictionary, Memmedquluzade deconstructs the perceived rational order governing language. In this parodic dictionary, language provides a source of cultural and perhaps political knowledge, but one that can often betray its masters. Like Gogol′, Memmedquluzade draws upon both popular oral forms of speech as well as Russian and Persian languages to render his own language as if foreign. In so doing, he also traces a history of imperial cultural influences in the Caucasus from the Persian to the Russian empires, and finally to his new Turkic language journal. Building on Gogol′'s oral parody as a model, he complicates the vision of Ukrainian culture as an internal other, by tracing the intersecting cultural legacies of the Russian and Persian empires. While Memmedquluzade at once externalizes these cultural influences as pretentious and backward, he does so self-consciously to produce a Turkic literary language that defines itself in relation to its hybrid constitution of Persian and Russian idioms. Like Gogol′'s work, Memmedquluzade's parody not only highlights the foreignness of these words, but seeks to assimilate and reenvision them in his new literary world. For Gogol′ this process manifests as a struggle to reconcile Russian and Ukrainian identity and simultaneously to decenter the authority of both, albeit within the limited medium of Russian prose. For Memmedquluzade the confusion of tongues not only lends to a satire of the history of overlapping empires, but to a revolutionary parody of the very mechanism of cultural imperialism. Gogol′'s performance of Ukrainianness thus generated a language through which identity could be imagined on the periphery in 1906, preceding the emergence of the orientalist institution of the Soviet nationalities policies of the 1920s.

Modernization on the Periphery: Vehicles of Translation

One of Memmedquluzade's most sustained engagements with Gogol′'s wordplay occurs in a 1906 story "Gurbanali Bey" (*Qurbanəli Bəy*), which offers a translation and adaptation of a lesser-known work, Gogol′'s short story "The Carriage" (*Koliaska*, 1836).[39] "The Carriage," like his play "The Government Inspector" and his novel *Dead Souls* (*Mertvye dushi*, 1842) highlights the foolishness and corruption of the landowning gentry. Memmedquluzade attacks the

39. In his article, "Gogol and Molla Nasreddin," Aziz Sharif describes Memmedquluzade, citing his pen name Molla Nasreddin, as "the Azerbaijani Gogol′." Sharif affirms that a comparison between "The Carriage" and "Gurbanali Bey" would provide "(t)he best means of determining the degree of the Gogolian influence on the Azerbaijani writer." While the short format of the article does not allow Sharif to elaborate in detail on this comparison, he similarly cites Memmedquluzade's attention to language, his capability to "masterfully construct his artistic language, which excites the reader's passionate indignation regarding (these) events and their participants" as a distinguishing feature of his work. Aziz Sharif, "Gogol′ i Molla Nasreddin," *Bakinskii rabochi*, March 4, 1937.

imperial bureaucracy by focusing on the complicity of the Russified Muslim landowning class. While Memmedquluzade sets his story in the south Caucasus, he translates Gogol′'s poetics, namely his use of sound repetitions and metonymy, creating a literary Azeri marked by stylistic allusions to Gogol′'s Russian text. Drawing upon the formal devices in Gogol′'s text, he remaps Gogol′'s representations of the Russian imperial provinces onto the geopoetic space of the Caucasus. However, aiming his critique at the Russification of the landowning class, Memmedquluzade negotiates the process of cultural assimilation in the colonial encounter through his parody of oral mimicry.

"Gurbanali Bey," like "The Carriage," satirizes the class pretensions of two provincial landowners who fail to impress a group of Russian officers with the status and wealth of their estates.[40] Both texts situate discussions of identity in the context of the relationships between hosts and guests in the bourgeois imperial space, where issues of class and ethnic identity, in particular, become manifest. The figure of the westernized landowner Chertokutskii in "The Carriage" finds a parallel in the figure of the Azeri Muslim landowner Gurbanali in "Gurbanali Bey," who is westernized *à la russe*. The nearly identical plots of the two stories follow the landowners who attend feasts held by groups of visiting Russian officers. The landowners boast about their modes of transport (in Gogol′'s text—his carriages and in Memmedquluzade's text—his horses), become intoxicated at the party, and return home, forgetting that they have invited the officers to visit their estates the next day. When the landowners awaken and find their guests at the gates, they hide in a carriage and barn respectively, only to be discovered and humiliated by the officers. The objects of both Gogol′'s and Memmedquluzade's critiques are figures of class and imperial power—the landowning westernized or Russified elite and the Russian imperial authorities. In Memmedquluzade's text, these institutional critiques are particularly marked by class, ethnic and civic identity.

While the action of "The Carriage" remains within Russia, Gogol′ highlights the marginal position of the provinces in relation to the imperial metropole through his parody of the alienating forces of modernization. Gogol′ represents the arrival of the imperial officials to the provincial town by exaggerating his descriptions of objects in a metonymic play that confounds people with animals and inanimate things. As critics have noted, while Gogol′ often attacks the French, his wordplay suggests an interest in Honoré de Balzac's poetics, particularly his fetishization of objects.[41] Gogol′ parodies Balzac's prose in order to critique the forces of westernization. His staging of

40. Gogol′'s story was originally published in Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin's journal *The Contemporary* (*Sovremennik*). See: Gogol′, "Koliaska," in *Polnoe sobranie sochenenii v 7 tomakh* (Moscow, 1937–1952), 3:177–89. Memmedquluzade's story was originally published in a booklet form by the publisher Qeyrət in Tbilisi, Georgia. See: Məmmədquluzadə, "Qurbanəli Bəy," in *Əsərləri 4 cildə* (Baku, 2004), 1:174–93.

41. Priscilla Meyer argues that Gogol′ drew upon elements of Honoré de Balzac's fiction as material for his descriptions of city life, combining elements from Balzac's psychological sketches with supernatural and fantastic traces of German Romanticism and Ukrainian culture when writing the Petersburg tales. Among the formal features of Balzac's prose, his metonymic description of the carrik in *La Comédie humaine* (1815–1830), as Meyer argues, forms the basis for Gogol′'s "The Overcoat" (*Shintel′*, 1842). Priscilla Meyer, *How the Russians Read the French: Lermontov, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy* (Madison,

Russia's ambivalent geopolitical relationship to western modernity through an engagement with Balzacian metonymic play frames a geopoetics, which is in turn, inspired Memmedquluzade's own parodic prose. Gogol′ contrasts the quiet provincial town with the liveliness of the officers' arrival, which introduces an estranging effect on his prose as it alters the social space of the town. Mocking the pretention of the officers, Gogol′ describes their hats as "plumes" (*sultan*), which like the English cognate also signifies an "eastern monarch."[42] The officer's mustaches serve as metonyms, emphasizing their intrusions into the daily lives of the townspeople: "If the tradespeople gathered at the market with their scoops, there were sure to be mustaches peering over their shoulders."[43] While Gogol′ draws attention to the officers' arrival, he also mocks their authority by reducing them to their most recognizable features. Their entrance fosters a state of linguistic disorder whereby objects suddenly take on a central focus in the text.

Confusing his nouns in this absurdist play, Gogol′ draws a parallel between the arrival of the officials and French culture, both through the French phrase and evocation of Balzac's style, lodging a critique against the imperial administration's policies of westernization. For example, confusing animals with people, Gogol′ elicits his reader's laughter at the officers' expense. Treating the word 'Frenchmen' as a derogatory term for pigs, the narrator describes how the streets of the town "fill up with those burly animals, which the local mayor calls Frenchmen."[44] The mayor's confusion of the animal and the nation both superficially satirizes the French people, while it unhinges a chain of signification. The sentence forms a structure of sound meaning, linking the "burly animals" (*dorodnymi zhivotnymi*) and the "local mayor" (*tamoshnii gorodnichii*), whereby root pairs are formed from the repetition of the sounds of the first and last words *dorod/gorod* and *zhivot/tamosh*. The word pairs also outline a relationship of proximity and distance, the second syllable *rod* in *dorod/gorod* signifying the homely and native, while *tam*, "there," in *tamosh* emphasizes distance. As Gogol′ suggests connections through these aural correspondences between the encroaching forces of westernization and imperial authority, he also disorients his reader's relationship to language itself.

Gogol′ describes the drunkenness that ensues at the feast through a reference to Napoleon's invasion of 1812, similarly eliding sound and sense. He writes, "A long conversation continued around the table, but somehow it was conducted strangely. One landowner who served in the campaign of 1812 recounted a battle that had never been and later for completely unknown reasons removed the stopper from a decanter and stuck it into a pastry."[45] The battle of 1812, marking Napoleon's campaign in Russia and one of the pivotal historical moments in Russian intellectuals' rejection of French cultural influence, here forms a turning point in the order of the party and the narrative.

2008), 26–33. See also Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Dickens and Balzac* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), 101–29.

42 Ibid.

43. Ibid. Indeed, these mustaches are echoed in Gogol′'s description of Akaky as a mustachioed ghost in "The Overcoat."

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid, 185.

The landowner's story is displaced from historical record only to be replaced by the logic of sound repetition. The landowner places the bottle stopper inside a pastry combining the *p* sound of *probka* or stopper with that of the *pirozhnoe* or pastry. Gogol′ orchestrates a play of signification by generating a semantic order of alliteration. In so doing, he undermines the authority of the narrative of westernization by creating a new logic of sound meaning. The "strangeness" of the conversation, which locates its historical authority in a battle that never occurred, both presents and subverts Petrine modernization as haunted by the influence of French westernization.

The use of the title figure of the carriage is a persistent theme in Gogol′'s work that serves as an ambivalent symbol of both the force of modernization and Russia's destiny. Gogol′ presents this struggle to envision Russia's future through his emphasis on the native and foreign quality of the carriage. Two words are used to signify "carriage"—*ekipazh* from the French borrowing and *koliaska* from the Russian root. Gogol′ uses the French *équipage*, which more generally signifies a team or crew, to highlight pivotal moments in the story. The arrival of the main character, the provincial landowner Pifagor Pifagorovich Chertokutsky, is announced by the foreign *mot-de* transport. This arrival, Gogol′ notes, generates "more noise than anyone at the elections (and) arriving there in a dandy équipage."[46] Indeed, his own name evokes both order—Pythagoras—and chaos—Chertokutsky, being a combination of the word devil (*chert*) and dock-tailed or short (*kutsy*). The *ekipazh* emphasizes the artificiality of Chertokutsky's appearance and contrasts his inelegant and noisy presence. Again at the end of the story Chertokutsky's wife recognizes the arrival of the unexpected guests through their *ekipazh*, foreshadowing the confusion that will soon ensue. The disorder that follows the *ekipazh*, whether semantic—in the case of Chertokutsky's name—or narrative—in the case of the unexpected guests—emphasizes the confused destiny of the empire, or perhaps more literally, a sense of ambivalence toward the French word and the western technology.

The appropriation of the Balzacian synechdoche produces an inverted vision of the town in which the part or fragment decenters the whole. The arrival of western modernity as a distortion or disorder of sound and sense generates a new optic. Mammedquluzade foregrounds the peripheral setting of Gogol′'s story, rendering it central to his portrait of Azeri modernization. In so doing, he also positions language at the center of his critique of the artifice of western modernity *à la russe*. His use of word play and foreign borrowings highlight the forms of exchange that underlie the act of translation while sound repetitions and lists similarly emphasize the materiality of his prose. In his description of the police chief's wife's name-day celebrations, he emphasizes the excessive consumption and labor required to amuse the Russian officers. The feast preparations require the procurement of an almost grotesque number of four or five hundred eggs.[47] Paralleling Gogol′'s subversion of bureaucratic and semantic orders, Memmedquluzade represents a state of chaos that

46. Ibid, 179.

47. Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə, "Qurbanəli Bəy," 175. The name-day is a tradition in Russian Orthodoxy that corresponds to the days of celebration for the Orthodox saints.

undermines the authority of both the Russian officers and the Russian language. He describes the noise and commotion at the police chief's house, "In the police chief's yard a dog wouldn't recognize its master."[48] Memmedquluzade compares the police chief's estate to ineffectual dog-masters, highlighting the state of semantic and political upheaval at this public celebration.

In his rewriting, Memmedquluzade parodies Gogol′'s description of the feast preparations by exaggerating his use of onomatopoeia, littering his portrait of the town with the sounds of the feast preparations. In "The Carriage" the cooking is described through the "stook of cooks' knives," which could be heard from the gates of the town.[49] In "Gurbanali Bey," the same "tap-tap" conveys the sound of men's voices and meat cleavers, while the sounds of the Russian officers mimic the chickens, producing the same "howls." This description of the yard noise is repeated several times, "Again the tack-ing of the meat (mincing) knives, the tack-ing of people, the neighing of horses, the howling of chicks, hens, and (Russian) officers, as well as the haff-ing of hounds mixed with one another."[50] As Memmedquluzade confuses the sounds of people and objects to represent the state of commotion in the yard he also subversively compares the arrival of the Russian officers to the noise of animals coming to slaughter. Indeed, the word used to signify the officers is a Russified invention. The word *qlavalar* combines the Russian word for head (*glava*) with the Turkic plural form. Thus, the strangeness of the word in Azeri, which gestures toward the figure of the sovereign militarized head of state, renders it indistinguishable from the other objects and animals listed in the paragraph.[51] Memmedquluzade blends the officers into the background noise of the bustling scene. Drawing upon the setting of "The Carriage," he contests the authority of the Russian officers by offering sound as an alternative source of meaning.

Memmedquluzade's portrait of the Russian officers also emphasizes the artificiality of their appearance. When the Russian party travels to the Azeri landowner Gurbanali's estate, their arrival is announced according to their clothing accessories, which function as signifiers for their otherness. Like the officers who are introduced at the name-day celebration in a grocery list, these guests are similarly recognized at Gurbanali's estate as inanimate objects. When his servant spots the riders from the kitchen rooftop he notes that

48. Ibid.

49. Gogol′, "Koliaska," 179.

50. Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə, "Qurbanəli Bəy," 175. The term "meat (mincing) knives" refers to the specific knife used for preparing *katlet*, a Russian dish made of ground meat, formed in a patty and pan-fried.

51. Jacques Derrida outlines a relationship among outlaws: the beast and the sovereign. The beast is one who is ignorant of the law, and the sovereign is one who can suspend the law; yet man's sovereignty operates between the figures of the beast and God. The sovereign makes/has himself a beast and in exercising this relationality between these forms of power and outsideness, Derrida highlights the intertwining relationship between logos and the nation-state, which in turn calls for the latter's deconstruction. In this way, the sovereignty of the Russian police chief is both upheld and subverted by his objectification/animalization. See Derrida, *The Beast and The Sovereign*, vol. 1, Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Ginette Michaud, eds., trans., Geoffrey Bennigton (Chicago, 2011), 60–61.

from within a group of horses he "clearly recognized the officer's and police chief's buttons and the wives' hats."[52] The focus on the minute elements of their dress from the servant's distant rooftop vantage point highlights the prominence of these features in the text. The markings visually distinguish the Russians' clothing from local styles of dress. A Russified term is used to refer to the womens' hats (*şlyapaları*), again creating a parallel between the semantic and narrative functions in the text. Memmedquluzade's translation of this Gogolian technique renders the Russified terms as if foreign or strange accessories, much like the otherness of the Russians themselves. Indeed, Memmedquluzade uses a similar strategy to illustrate the Russians' vision of Gurbanali's alterity. When Gurbanali invites the officers to dine at his house, the officer's wives agree, if only so that they can see what the bey's wife will wear.[53] Memmedquluzade reverses the orientalist gaze of the officer's wives, interested in the dress of their Muslim hostess, when he marks their arrival by focusing on their Russified hats and military buttons. Like Gogol′, Memmedquluzade emphasizes the materiality of language, alienating the Russian officials by bringing the reader's attention to the artificiality of their appearance. Drawing upon Gogol′'s parody of French westernization, Memmedquluzade highlights the estranging process of Russification.

In "Gurbanali Bey," shifts between Azeri and Russian words inform the negotiations of discourses of identity in the story. The reciprocal gaze of the Azeris and Russians is framed through the poetic space of the apartments. The view of the street is described from inside the Russian police chief's apartment: "from an open windows a horse's whiney rose from the street."[54] While facing the same windows from the street side the townspeople observe the police chief's apartment: "The villagers arranged themselves in front of the window(s) to look at the police chief's windows."[55] The window provides the frame through which both the Russian officials and local villagers are connected in a reciprocal gaze. The word used for window is a transcription of the diminutive form of the Russian word (*akoshka*). Memmedquluzade's use of the Russian word emphasizes the Russian cultural space of the apartment. His selection of the Russian word—particularly in its diminutive form—also indicates a mocking tone, belittling the Russian gaze through which the village street enters the narrative. Memmedquluzade plays on the Pushkinian image of Petersburg as "window to the west" by offering a westernizing gaze through his Russified lexicon. Similarly, the arrival of the Russian party is announced when Gurbanali's wife looks out her window: "The lady ran inside and from the window looked out onto the street and saw that the street was filled with horsemen."[56] When the wife recognizes the Russian horsemen, the Azeri word for window (*pəncərə*) is preferred. Furthermore, once the drinking begins, Azeri and Russian words are used interchangeably to refer to drinking vessels including "a shot glass" (*riumka*) "a bottle" (*butylka*) and "a match"

52. Məmmədquluzadə, "Qurbanəli Bəy," 191.
53. Ibid, 185.
54. Ibid, 177.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid, 191.

(*spichka*). Presented with his first drink, the bey refuses the Russian shot glass (*riumka*) and insisting that "for us," representing his identity as an Azeri Muslim, it would be considered a thimble for sewing.[57] He instead drinks from a tea glass, though here he fills it with vodka. Memmedquluzade offers a fusion of the two cultural traditions, albeit not without a spirited layer of irony.

Memmedquluzade's choice to set Gogol′'s narrative about the Russian provinces in the context of the imperial Caucasus undermines the authority of the Russian imperial bureaucracy, while it offers a metacommentary on the unequal processes of linguistic and literary exchange that occur in the colonial encounter. Written in 1906, Memmedquluzade's story exposes the function of parody as a structure for imagining a diverse comedic space of literary production and contagion within a revolutionary moment in the Russian empire. His text at once critiques Russian acculturation as it generates a new cultural space for the Turkic Muslim reading public, albeit one in which nationalist politics remain somewhat ambiguous. Gogol′'s poetics expose French and Ukrainian semantic play as mimicry through the processes of translation and poetic innovation. Building on this vision of the dynamism of literary language and translation, Memmedquluzade's repetition of Gogol′'s story frames this process through the context of the colonial encounter and its effects on historical inscription. While it might be tempting to read Memmedquluzade's engagement with Gogol′ through an interest in promoting Pan-Turkic, Russian revolutionary, or Muslim modernist discourses, the text at once inscribes and erases cohesive ideological positions. Memmedquluzade instead prefers an elliptical refusal of institutional power characteristic of his penname and journal's namesake: the folk and Sufi figure Molla Nasreddin. The mimetic process is similarly exposed through doubles: Nasreddin's function as penname and journal, teller and tale, as well as Gogol′'s play of mirrors in "The Government Inspector." Memmedquluzade's parody shifts the focus of "Gurbanali Bey" onto the arrival of a form of social critique that is not only embodied in the revelation of a new form of 'transport' in the Gogolian intertext of "The Carriage," but also in the revelation of the figure of Gogol′ himself.

Unmasking Gogol′: False Pretenders and Revolutionary Literary Genealogies

New historical and literary genealogies often begin with a sacrificial death. Memmedquluzade opens "Gurbanali Bey" by announcing his debt to Gogol′'s literary legacy. However, his epigraph, which is also an epitaph, is neither addressed to "Gogol′" nor "Hohol" according to his Russian or Ukrainian appellations, but rather provides a new linguistic identity for the famous writer as "Qoqol." Further estranging the author's name, the dedication/memorial is accompanied by a common Islamic expression recited in the name of the dead: "Gogol′, May Allah have mercy on you!" (*Qoqol, Allah sənə rəhmət eləsin!*).[58] With this gesture, Memmedquluzade memorializes the writer through an Islamic idiom, and in so doing anticipates a new Azeri literary genealogy in-

57. Ibid, 178.
58. Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə, "Qurbanəli Bəy," 174.

scribed in Gogol′'s death. However, what would such a genealogy look like? Unlike Gogol′'s attempts to assimilate Ukrainian history and culture for his Russian audiences, Memmedquluzade disseminates Gogol′'s story through his translation across the transnational spaces of the Turkic speaking Russian, Persian and Ottoman empires. In dedicating his work to Gogol′'s death, Memmedquluzade highlights the complex discourses of identity that pervade the writer's work and personal biography as a point of departure for his story's fractured vision of Azeri identity. The reader begins the epigraph as an epitaph in prayer, only to be met with the surprise ghostly appearance of a Russian writer hidden beneath the phonetic rendering of the word "Qoqol."

Memmedquluzade not only memorializes Gogol′ in his dedication, but furthermore performs his death at the end of the story. The day after the party, Gurbanali is woken from his drunken stupor by his guests' arrival and realizing he has not made any preparations, he hides in a bed sheet. In a gesture of self-sacrifice to his Russian guests Gurbanali's act of feigning dead anticipates the symbolic death of the colonial bourgeoisie. Indeed, Memmedquluzade plays on Gurbanali's name, which in Azeri means "the greatest sacrifice." In the sheet, Gurbanali disguises himself first as if in a *charshaf* or *chador*, gendering himself as a woman, and then as if in a burial shroud.[59] Both masks present relationships of otherness and opposition—man and woman, as well as life and death.

When the Russian officer discovers Gurbanali lying in the stable in a burial shroud, he curses in Russian. The juxtaposition of the image of Gurbanali wrapped in a sheet and the Russian curse echoes the epitaph to Gogol′'s death. Gurbanali rests in the stable manger as a symbolic sacrifice to Russian imperialism. The unveiling of the bed sheet mask elicits surprise from the Russian officer who utters a most Gogolian curse: "Let the devil take it" (*chort vozmi*).[60] The common Russian exclamation of surprise or annoyance expressed at this pivotal moment in the story recalls Gogol′'s figure of chaos par-excellence—the devil—as well as Gurbanali's double, the "Dock-tailed Devil"—Chertokutsky. The reader indeed finally uncovers Chertokutsky, and by extension Gogol′, hiding beneath Gurbanali's sacrificial shroud. In this final gesture, Memmedquluzade unveils his text's Gogolian mask, revealing the tensions between ethnic and class identity in the colonial space of the Russian empire that are hidden beneath the folds of his parody. His work simultaneously creates a space for Gogol′ in Azeri, as he draws upon Gogol′'s work to critique the influence of Russification. These Gogolian masks at once introduce the work of Gogol′ to his reader and problematize the relationship between appearance and reality, the original and the translation, as well as Russian literature and its colonial politics.

Memmedquluzade's interest in the mimetic function of literature extends to his discussion of "The Government Inspector." In the 1909 article entitled "Qogol" in *Molla Nəsrəddin*, Memmedquluzade frames Gogol′'s work as a civic lesson for his local readers. He writes, "That is to say, our critics have forgotten something, all at once forgotten that the headline written concerning Gogol′

59. Ibid, 191, 193.
60. Ibid, 193.

will carry this "warning": hey Muslim brothers, a hundred years ago in Russia a man was born who wrote a comedy against the Russian officials, such that the man, after reading it also believes that a *revisor* (inspector) is coming on behalf of the government to Nachivan, Susha and to all of the Caucasian villages and small cities."[61] Mocking the population's ignorance of the Russian writer, Memmedquluzade evokes the hysteria of a local reader of "The Government Inspector" awaiting the immanent arrival of a Russian official. In so doing he emphasizes both the consistent social reality of a corrupt authority that transcends the metropole into the "Caucasian villages and small cities," as well as the translatability of Gogol′'s text. While the play is set outside of the imperial center, it is haunted by the symbolic ordering function of the imperial bureaucracy. Indeed, the character of the government inspector, like many of Gogol′'s central characters, recalls the ordering system instituted through Peter the Great's westernizing reforms. The play thus stages a critique of both the capital and the provinces, as well as the corrupting rather than civilizing effect of the former on the latter.[62] The Petersburg dandy Khlestakov is mistaken for the real inspector, exposing the emptiness of this modern order of imperial authority. The confusion of Gogol′'s text with an actual imperial bureaucrat also extends Gogol′'s critique of authority to the subject of the mimetic force of the Russian play itself.

Memmedquluzade's revelation of the resemblance between Gogol′'s text and the real inspector parodies the pretensions of both the Russian official and the literary canon itself. As Memmedquluzade seems to author a sense of continuity with the Russian tradition, he also marks a rupture in this genealogy. His representation of Gogol′'s death at the beginning of the story and his recasting of another overcoat, as a site of regeneration, in Gurbanali's burial shroud anticipate a new literary canon. The false inspector in Gogol′'s work, indeed recalls the series of illegitimate heirs to Ivan the Terrible's throne, linking literary production to the broken filial lines of the Russian monarchy. [63] For Memmedquluzade, however, neither the filial bonds of the monarchy nor the affilial bonds of Gogol′'s literary tradition survive their transport to the Caucasus completely. Memmedquluzade instead asks us to read Gogol′/Qoqol both *elsewhere* and *otherwise*.

In *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Edward Said describes the processes of the dissemination and maintenance of a literary tradition and its attendant reading practices as the transformation of naturally filial to systematically affilial relationships. Such models, Said argues not only sustain strong linkages with the past, but secure a system through which a western canon retains an authority to determine literariness. In his calls to read "Qoqol" Memmedquluzade offers if only a moment of respite from the cyclical returns of Russian imperial history and its reflexive acts of colonization when he reverses the mi-

61. *Molla Nəsrəddin* 14 (1909), see Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə, *Əsərləri 4 cilddə*, 4: 183–84.

62. See Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol*, 189–210.

63. As Dragan Kujundžić argues, the very idea of the false inspector in Gogol′'s work recalls the series of pretenders to the Russian throne by alleged sons of Tsar Ivan the Terrible, a tradition that "profoundly affected Russian genealogical, patrilinear certainty." Dragan Kujundžić, "'After' Russian Post-Colonial Idenity," 897.

metic relationship between literature and life. Memmedquluzade's portrait of the revolutionary Caucasus in this way seems to repeat Gogol′'s fiction, and yet it not only mimics but challenges the location of literary social critique within a nineteenth-century Russian aesthetic tradition. That is, Memmedquluzade raises the notion that art could produce life, not only by indebting himself to a Russian aesthetic genealogy, but by staging its encounter with local forms of socially engaged traditions, such as through the Sufi folk figure Molla Nasreddin. While Memmedquluzade continues to offer an invitation to reread Russian imperial history, he alerts his readers to the dangers of the false authority of the Gogolian text. His prose reveals hidden Gogol′s, which instead serve a greater purpose of raising the self-critical mirror to his own readers and their vices. This Qoqol, read strangely, contributes to the creation of a new tradition of Azeri literature that decenters the metropolitan vision of the revolutionary moment. Memmedquluzade invites the reader to remain attentive to the dimensions of ethno-linguistic, national and imperial identity within the literary text as he exposes its mutual imbrication with literature, politics, and experience underling the imperial encounter and its literary legacy. In so doing, he renders legible a form of critique that not only chronicles the arrival of Russian culture and forms of knowledge, but also implicates Turkic Muslim culture in the production of new revolutionary literary genealogies.