

# The Upcoming Duel in the Hero of our Time as a Key Episode of the Novel by M.Yu. Lermontov Two Fights

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## ABSTRACT

The article presents a wide range of ideas and topics reflecting the problems of the Lermontov novel, which embodied the independent trends that occupied Russian society in the second quarter of the XIX century. Here the next Russian timelessness is stated, very vividly and convincingly shown by Lermontov. The writer appeared as a mature realist, having adopted the traditions of free-thinking, constrained by unlimited domestic conservatism.

**Keywords:** *duel, Lermontov, personality, independence, honor*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

After A.S. Pushkin developed a concise, extremely intelligible, figurative literary language, M.Yu. Lermontov immediately used it to reflect his time. But Pushkin still conveyed to his young contemporary the theme he had guessed “an extra man” in Russian society of the 1920s and 1930s. The artistic solution to this theme is very close in the novels about Onegin and Pechorin, primarily at the plot level.

B.M. Eichenbaum believed that Lermontov’s novel is imbued with irony in relation to the time in which he was written and in which his characters act. He notes: “Lermontov originally titled his novel, “One of the Heroes of the Beginning of the Century.” In this version of the title one can also see reflection and a kind of polemic with Musset’s sensational novel “Confession of the Son of the Age” (more precisely, “one of the children of the century”). The subject of Lermontov’s artistic study is not a typical “child of the century” infected with his illness, but a person endowed with the features of heroism and entering into a struggle with his own age [1].

V.V. Vinogradov concretizes this circumstance, noting that the main character, Pechorin, demonstrates with irony and contempt his claims to Grushnitsky, “with whom he plays like a cat with a mouse” [2]. These personalized emotions for a representative of his generation already allow you to transfer the conversation from psychological to socio-historical plane. Pechorin Grushnitsky especially does not forgive him for constantly covering up his poor interior with a soldier’s overcoat, which in the Caucasus has an unequivocal sign of a “political exile”, a demoted officer, and even a rebel - Decembrist.

And it seems to us that to a large extent it is this annoying panache of the “soldier’s greatcoat” that serves Pechorin as one of the incentives to test Grushnitsky in a duel. The scene of the duel and its preparation is generally one of the most striking in the Lermontov novel, here the development of characters reaches the highest severity.

In general, the literary novelty of Pechorin’s diary has long attracted literary scholars — it was here that a specific person was innovatively shown with exhaustive linguistic means, (a person, according to B. M. Eichenbaum, “Hero of Our Time” is the first “analytical” novel in Russian prose: his ideological and the plot center is not an external biography (“life and adventures”), but rather a person’s personality — his spiritual life, taken from the inside as a process [1]), a “rebound” from everyday life. Previously, and in poetry, life situations and feelings were usually constructed (recall, for example, literary experiments in the genre of the ode to M.V. Lomonosov, G.R. Derzhavin, and the logaeda of K.F. Ryleev), but now this has become unacceptable.

Moreover, without a dueling episode, the character of Grigory Alexandrovich Pechorin cannot be fully understood. Pechorin will remain an eccentric aristocrat, peeping, eavesdropping, mocking those he does not like, and then quickly forgetting everything (eloquent entry in the diary of May 22: “Having gone up into the hall, I hid in the crowd of men and began to make my observations” [3]). Moreover, the image of the duel by A. Pushkin in Eugene Onegin and M.Yu. Lermontov in Hero of Our Time is typologically similar. These scenes are united not so much by the similarity of motives of both duels caused by “empty passions” as by the culmination of both events for works.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The methodological basis of the article is the problem of the theory of the author of a work of art (M.M. Bakhtin, V.V. Vinogradov, B.O. Korman, V.V. Kozhinov).

In the 20th century, the forms of manifestation of the artist's personality noticeably intensified in literature, which definitely strives to be a more effective participant in public life and the literary process. This trend has already fully manifested itself in the XIX century. And Lermontov stood at the origins of lyrical romantic prose. His narrator does not yet speak directly to the reader, does not dare to neglect the purely artistic form, but changes in the genre have already been announced.

A writer in a literary work, personifying one of the aspects of contemporary reality by his person, acts as a corrector for a researcher or an ideal reader who is called to own all the contexts of a work. Here, the proselyte of the author-creator is the narrator performing his various "tasks".

The position of this particular person is studied by researchers, perceived by readers. It is most obvious in "lyrical digressions," as it is customary to call those pages where the "someone's" inner world is most fully revealed: sensations, emotions, meditations (as with V. Nabokov) [4]. The famous finale of the first part of "Dead Souls" shows the reader the position of Gogol's "author". His inner world, in turn, is a product of the writer. But they sometimes differ sharply. We perceive the position of the "author" of the "novel-poem" unchanged, while Gogol himself abruptly changed his views on life a few years later.

It is the narrator that represents the "author's" appearance to the reader, expressing the entire work as integrity. The "author" does not directly show his presence anywhere - that's what the artistry is for the author-creator to not openly intervene in the self-moving life of the work. Otherwise, the naturalness of the reconstruction of reality is violated. The author-creator is usually remembered when the narrator most openly assesses what is happening, when his feelings are naked — towards lyricism or satire, and when an "emotionally forced" voice breaks through the narrative text.

In this case, the narrator's consciousness approaches the "author's" consciousness, and in some cases their short-term fusion. Then they usually say: "the author said", "author's retreat", "direct author's word". However, this is an illusion: the word still comes from the narrator! Let him quote the "author", repeat it as an echo - we are listening to the narrator as the "author" proselyte. If we perceived the voice of the "author", then the real text would be understood not as a fiction, but as a journalistic, diary, and the artistic convention would be violated in this case.

In principle, it is not at all the business of the "author" to fulfill the proselytizing role of the narrator or hero in its essence. The genre of a work of art is a rather conservative organization, evolving over the centuries, with strict subordination between the writer, author,

creator, proselyte narrator, hero, reader, instantly disintegrating in the event of any external intervention (by the editor himself whether an inexperienced writer).

It's simply that the work into which the "author" breathed life begins to live according to his own laws, and the creator-creator already "pushes" the heroes into actions ... Therefore, in essence, we are investigating not the author's position, but the position of the "author" artwork. She is more artistic than the position of the writer. Moreover, it expresses the core of the artistry of the work, for it is the bearer of its main idea. The writer only gave birth to this idea and somehow designed it.

The greatest effect of artistry is manifested in the hidden and, in accordance with the plan, the exact functioning of a particular figure in the work ("author", narrator, hero).

In Pushkin's "Tales of the late Ivan Petrovich Belkin", the narrator is the clearly invented figure of the unremarkable landowner of the middle hand who only observes and testifies. But in the "Hero of our time" and in "Theatrical novel" by M.A. Bulgakov, the protagonist himself is the narrator, which gives the story additional tension and persuasiveness. All this is achieved by reinforcing the subjective beginning, because the "story from the hero" allows the author-creator to be more mobile, freely change the masks of the narrator. Nevertheless, the narrator can never be only the "puppet" of the "author". He has his own, albeit proselytizing, function - within the limits of the program "set" by the "author". This is well seen in the dramatic work. There, proselyte functions are prepared for the actors, bringing the play to the audience ("reader"). As if to alleviate this burden in the plays, characters occasionally appear who do not take part in the action, but who reason about what is happening on behalf of the "author" — resonators. Let us recall Starodum from the Fonvizinsky "Malus".

M.M. Bakhtin said that perhaps the first time he saw the problem of the "author", in any case, he clearly felt Socrates. Truth, Socrates argued, is not in the head of an individual person; it is born between people who jointly seek it, in the process of dialogical communication. Socrates called himself a "pander": in his "Socratic dialogues" he brought people together, they argued, and as a result of such discussions truth was born. Thus, the "pimp" provoked the heroes to search for the truth, and he himself with them extracted this truth, and then presented it to the reader.

For a multilateral analysis of the "author's" position, expressed by the totality of the "voices" that sound in the work, at present there is a sufficiently learned methodology, which MM began to develop with us Bakhtin and V.V. Vinogradov.

If the narrator is suddenly revealed at the object level of the heroes, using their vocabulary, living their cares, and even speaking with an "author's" assessment of what is happening, then we have before us a "personal", "subjective-personal" narrative. This is a complex form, but also the most common in world literature, when the concept of a work is formed in front of the reader's eyes

and is formed in parts. This form is followed by F. M. Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*, M. de Cervantes in *Don Quixote*, G. G. Marquez in "One Hundred Years of Solitude."

Often this form is complicated by first-person narration. The narrator and the hero here are highly independent, as far as possible in the literary text. In the first person written "Captain's daughter" A.S. Pushkin, "Zen Self-Knowledge" by I. Zveve, "Through the Eyes of a Clown" by G. Böll.

This method introduces the dramatic tension of the conflict into the epic, and this is its attractive feature, which allows for a wider realization of the plot acuity that is brewing in the fertile plot material.

Pushkin's fluctuations in the definition of the genre and basic intonation (satirical or lyrically-meditative) of the novel "Eugene Onegin" are quite understandable and explainable. Pushkin felt the lyrical and satirical boundaries of such a subjective genre as the narrative about Onegin, which was especially dear to his heart. This predetermined the peculiar, extremely mobile fixture of the narrator in it.

A comprehensive study of the poetics of the novel "Hero of Our Time" is carried out on the basis of system-typological and historical-functional approaches [5].

### 3. RESULTS

A duel — Zweikampf — the agreed battle of two persons with deadly weapons, according to the rules agreed upon for this case or sanctified by custom, usually with the aim of restoring the offended honor [6], played an important role in European culture in the Middle Ages the role of forming the leading part of society. With its help, the concept of duty was cultivated. honor, inner freedom, the conditions were created for applying a direct reaction to arrogance, direct disrespect, offensive forms of manifestation of feelings, as well as protecting the rights and dignity of the individual. The fight against the Romans could not serve to restore honor already because they looked at him as a sight, entertainment, which constituted the despicable craft of gladiators [6]. Other things are with the northern peoples. Here in ancient times, everyone with weapons in their hands could give themselves the right and peace; the concept of honor was subjective and highly individual. According to Tacitus, it became a custom among the Germans to allow all quarrels with weapons. In the Middle Ages, according to the views of chivalry, "honor was nothing more than an armed demand for external respect, which, if necessary, should be forced by force" (Teichmann). Hence the widespread use of the Duel in matters of honor [6].

The monarchical state could not but pursue the manifestation of the independence of citizens in these matters, for it saw in the act of duel distrust of the monarch. It is unlikely that this has always been the case, but a significant proportion of freethinking was present

here — all the Decembrists were duelists. In any case, punishment for participating in a duel was envisaged - at least to deter the number of fights that reduced the nobility and officers.

Peter the Great issued a decree prescribing the death penalty of all participants. However, in Russia this punishment was never cited, the matter was limited to demotion, exile, or even simply closing the eyes of the authorities on cases of unauthorized organization of clarification of relations. However, there is evidence of a different kind: duels in Russia met back in the 17th century [7].

Slightly spoke about the behavioral role of a duel in our public consciousness A.V. Katsura: when, at the beginning of the 20th century, according to historical arrival, the noble layer disappears from Russian society, not only the courteous speech and the French pronon will disappear. Not only politeness and tolerance, respect for the other and the ability to listen to the opponent. The old "motherly barking" will again flood the whole country from the bottom to the very top, and with it will return state and domestic violence, rudeness and lies, cowardice and slander, slander and slander, servility and plebeians, cruelty and contempt for human dignity [7].

Undoubtedly, duel scenes have always been a winning means of manifesting the characters of heroes and a place of concentration of artistic ideas (in addition to the above-mentioned novels, we will name at least Leo Tolstoy's "War and Peace", "Fathers and Sons" by I.S. Turgenev, "Duel" by A.I. Kuprin, not counting the vast range of foreign literature, especially French). And, in addition, the dueling tradition occupied an important place in the public life of Russia in the 19th century. As for the "Hero of our time", it is generally impossible to fully comprehend the novel without a cruel scene unfolding on a "narrow platform" in the Caucasian gorge.

And at the same time, it was correctly noted that despite the generally negative assessment of the duel as "secular hostility" and the manifestation of "false shame", its depiction in the novel is not satirical, but tragic, which implies a certain degree of complicity in the fate of the heroes [2], — what was said about "Eugene Onegin" is quite applicable to the history of Pechorin.

By the way, as in "The Hero of Our Time", in "Eugene Onegin" there is his own, as Pushkin put it, "true sage", a connoisseur of duel etiquette that was observed in Russia at the level of oral traditions and living experience — Zaretsky. But in Lermontov the role of a "sage" is played by an unnamed dragoon captain. Yu.M. Lotman comes to the conclusion that the participants in the duel gave the death of Vladimir Lensky as suicide, which was greatly facilitated by his Heidelberg romanticism [8]. Meanwhile, the duty of the seconds was the first thing to reconcile opponents. Zaretsky, like the dragoon captain, on the contrary, tried to complicate matters.

Both dueling authorities are ironically described in Eugene Onegin:

## IV

*“... Five miles from Redridge Mountains,  
 Lensky villages, lives  
 And still live to this day  
 In the philosophical desert  
 Zaretsky, once a brawler,  
 Gang of ataman,  
 The head of the rake, the stands of the tavern,  
 Now kind and simple  
 The father of the single family,  
 Reliable friend, peaceful landowner  
 And even an honest man:  
 So our age is being corrected!”*

In addition to the collective portrait of authoritative duelists, the future portrait of Grushnitsky is also seen here [9]. In any case, Pechorin clearly saw this, predicting a similar fate: “<...> he is one of those people who have ready-made magnificent phrases for all occasions ... <...>. To produce an effect is their pleasure: they are liked by the romantic provincials to the point of madness. In old age, they become either peaceful landowners or drunkards - sometimes both. They often have many good qualities in their souls, but not a penny of poetry” [3]. Further, quotes from Lermontov are accompanied only by the indication of the pages). In another place: “<...> he could <...> thus satisfy his revenge, without burdening too much his conscience <...>” (294).

In a detailed description of the development of events leading to a duel, characters, portrait descriptions, and nuances of psychological reactions are demonstrated. Pechorin, himself manifesting the inconsistencies of his character, however, is not a stranger to self-reflection. Moreover, he completely feels himself in his element when he exposes Grushnitsky to more and more trials, which is facilitated by the advantage of awareness in the conspiracy, where the former cadet has the main role. Pechorin, of course, is annoyed that Grushnitsky is more and more mired in meanness, but, on the other hand, it is beneficial for him to be so: fate is in his power!

With the formidable theme of fate, the image of Pechorin acquires the features of a typical symbol of the whole modern generation: “And we, their miserable descendants, wandering on the earth without conviction and pride, without pleasure and fear, except that involuntary fear that squeezes the heart at the thought of the inevitable end, we are no longer capable of great sacrifices, neither for the good of mankind, nor even for our own happiness” [2]. Here you can clearly hear the images of the Lermontov Duma and the journalistic style of Chaadayev.

It is characteristic that the convictions, presumably, the political convictions of Pechorin, are not discussed in the text. But there are allusions. At the end of his Journal, Pechorin recalls the night before the duel with Grushnitsky: he writes, walked around the room for an hour, then sat down and opened Walter Scott’s novel lying on the table: they were “Scottish Puritans”. And he was forgotten, carried away by magical fiction (290-291).

What kind of book, or rather, her ideas, made the hero forget about a possible imminent death? Eichenbaum clarified this circumstance: Morton sets forth his political position: “I will resist any authority in the world,” he says, “which tyrannically violates my rights of a free person recorded in the Charter <...>”. It comes to the point that even Lord Evendel, who does not belong to the Whig party, must admit: “From some time I begin to think that our politicians and prelates have led the country to extreme irritation that with all kinds of violence they pushed not only the lower classes from the government, but also those <...> whom the court ’interests do not bind” [1].

But Grigory Alexandrovich, who read out on the eve of the match, is not a stranger to liberal democratic views ... However, Slavophiles who opposed the liberal democrats differed in such views in 19th-century Russia. But be that as it may, the duel procedure in its entirety demonstrated the scale of Pechorin’s personality. This is an unusual person, and a person who is busy with questions of his own independence from the existing order of things, and also forms this order itself. Having accidentally overheard the conversation of the conspirators, led by a dragoon captain, who wanted to laugh at him, he, in turn, not only laughed at them himself, but cruelly avenged them and their representative Grushnitsky, and in their collective face society, for the meaninglessness of existence, for the humility of fate, for the pettiness of thoughts and passions. He is dangerous in their eyes, because he mockingly ironically meets them with any self-manifestations, and he is terrible in their eyes, because he does not forgive even their involuntary baseness.

So Lermontov gave us an idea of Pechorin’s civic views and moods, and even suggested that “<...> he was, truly, a high destination.”

Lermontov’s novel, for obvious censorship reasons, doesn’t talk about politics. But this is not necessary, any Russian novel touches on political topics much deeper than a political treatise. What is worse than the self-characterization of Pechorin, as we have already learned, who prefers to live with reason and not feelings, who has not lost “forever the ardor of noble aspirations”: He admits that he loves enemies, although not in a Christian way. They amuse him, excite the blood. To be always on the alert, to catch every glance, the meaning of each word, to guess intentions, to destroy conspiracies, to pretend to be deceived, and suddenly with one push to overturn the whole huge and arduous building of their tricks and ideas - this is what Pechorin calls life! (274). Characteristics of either a robber or a Voltairian; nihilists in Russia have not yet appeared. A well-meaning subject of the Russian Empire could not be as described here.

“... Why do they all hate me? I thought. For what? Have I offended anyone? Not. Am I one of those people whom one kind already breeds ill will? And I felt that poisonous anger was filling my soul little by little” (282).

“I run through my memory of everything past and involuntarily ask myself: why did I live? for what purpose

was I born? .. <...> And since then, how many times have I played the role of an ax in the hands of fate! <...> My love didn't bring happiness to anyone, because I did not sacrifice anything for those whom I loved; I loved for myself, for my own pleasure; I only satisfied the strange need of the heart, greedily, absorbing their feelings, their tenderness, their joys and suffering - and I could never get enough. <...> And maybe I will die tomorrow! .. and there will not be a single creature on earth who would understand me perfectly. Some reckon me worse, others better than I really ... Some will say: he was a good fellow, others - a bastard! .. Both will be false. After that, is it worth the trouble to live?" (289-290).

#### 4. DISCUSSION

This reflection cannot belong to a nihilist or cynic. Self-digging is beneficial, albeit bitterly for the soul: "I sometimes despise myself ... is that why I despise others as well? (283) <...>

At the same time, Vinogradov discerned the "experimental attitude" of Pechorin to people, especially to women. As a result, a romantic halo is combined with the image of a woman [2]. This is evidenced by the next episode. The princess, apparently, expects an offer from Pechorin: he was on the verge of death for her sake! And he: "- Princess," I said: "You know that I laughed at you! .. You must despise me." — <...> She turned to me as pale as marble, only her eyes sparkled wonderfully. "I hate you ..." she said. I thanked, bowed respectfully, and left. An hour later, a courier troika rushed me from Kislovodsk "... (304).

And then here, in a boring fortress, he often, running through the thought of the past, asked himself why he did not want to take this path opened by fate, where quiet joys and spiritual peace were expected ... No! he would not get along with this share! (305).

Pechorin showed himself to be a "Voltairean", or even "a rebel worse than Pugachev" (according to Catherine's famous expression about the author of *Travel from Petersburg to Moscow*), a rebel with ideas, that is, a revolutionary who goes against the path destined for him by fate. This does not mean at all, of course, that such a person is destined to become the leader of a civilly dissatisfied part of the population, or, at worst, the leader of a band of robbers, but it is undoubted that he is a person from this series, in any case, a kind of reformer of society. I think this was felt by Nicholas I. Here are his assessments of the novel and its author: "I have read "Hero" to the end and find the second part disgusting, quite worthy of being in fashion. This is the same exaggerated depiction of despicable characters found in current foreign novels. <...> this is a miserable book, revealing a great corruption of its author. The character of the captain is outlined successfully. When I started this essay, I hoped and rejoiced, thinking that he would probably be the hero of our time <...>" [10]. One thing is certain: in our

opinion, the Emperor has a perception of Lermontov as an analogue of the image of his character Grushnitsky ...

However, R.V. Ivanov-Razumnik discerned another circumstance of Lermontov's artistic heritage: Lermontov's anti-philistinism was the basis of the content of his work, the side that explains it from head to toe. Lermontov fought against the philistinism of a certain social group, like Pushkin, but against the philistinism of the whole society as a whole, with the philistinism of life itself. This is his original feature, this is his closest connection with the great artist, separated from him by half a century, with Chekhov. Lermontov's anti-philistinism is the key to the whole world; hatred of the "ordinary" led him to a vivid proclamation of the rights of the individual and brought him closer to that true romanticism, which until then had not been in Russia; she put in his heart that "contempt for the world around him, which is considered to be characteristic Lermontov pessimism" [11].

#### 5. CONCLUSIONS

Indeed, Maxim Maksimych, this old simple servant, was liked and liked by everyone, but that is why he is not the main character of Lermontov. Nikolai saw this, as he also saw the vague second semantic layer of the novel, which was written for the sake of a hint of a "foreign fashion" and expressed great regret to the author that Russia had not ripened before this "fashion".

That is why the "Hero of Our Time" constantly discusses fate, destiny, and fate. "The image of Pechorin would have remained incomplete and the irony of the historical doom of the "hero of our time" would not have acquired tragic color if there hadn't been a "Fatalist" [2].

"Bon voyage, Mr. Lermontov, let him clear his head if this can happen in an environment where he finds people to finish to the end the character of his captain, assuming that he is generally able to capture and portray him," — so Nikolay will write I to my wife in June 1840 ... "It is strange that a cavalryman is sent to an infantry regiment," notes the German publisher of the emperor's letters. — It was the fortifications of the Tenginsky regiment that were in serious condition, were half destroyed and dilapidated, lacked food, military equipment, medicine, and fever was raging. Many died, and not only from wounds, but also from hunger and disease. In February-March 1840, the fortifications of the Black Sea coastline were destroyed by the mountaineers one after another, with terrible cruelty. On March 23, the Mikhailovsky fortification fell, where one of the battalions of the Tenginsky regiment was stationed: the garrison was cut down ...

April 11, Nicholas I, who received a report on the events in the Mikhailovsky fortification, will write one word on it — "Awful!" And on April 13 he will order Lermontov to be sent to this regiment ... " [10].

The fate of the young Lermontov is still vague, but bitter for an independent person, and this final tale of

predestination threatening Pechorin with death, which he is not at all afraid of, is not in vain. This delayed death, which found him in Persia, for the novel is only a timid hope for rock, which suddenly brought this “foreign fashion” to its homeland ...

The beginning of the Fatalist seems to be saying this: “Once <...> they argued that the Muslim belief that the destiny of man was written in heaven also finds many admirers among us Christians; each told different unusual cases of pro or contra.

“All this, gentlemen, does not prove anything,” said the old major: “After all, none of you have witnessed those strange cases with which you confirm your opinion ...” (305).

This is the beginning of a new story, but rather the continuation and completion of the former. Pechorin, thanks to a dueling story told in detail, appears to be an outstanding man in the sharpness of his character and the depth of his personality. He is extremely demanding on people, and this feature is enhanced by the fact that he is no less demanding on himself. And Pechorin is a master of intrigue — not so much calculating as impulsive; he is a brilliant improviser. It’s not easy for anyone with such a person, therefore this character only arouses sympathy among strangers, in this case the readers of the Lermontov novel. However, one cannot fail to admit that Grigory Aleksandrovich, being the fruit of a post-war developing society (the Patriotic War of 1812, the Napoleonic Wars, conflict with Turkey), also bears features to the strangeness of a spoiled person. The character of Pechorin seems all the more significant for the enlightened reader, who cannot help but wonder: why this man, *of course*, will not find a proper place in what was then Russia?

This question is nothing but a statement of the next Russian timelessness, very vividly and convincingly shown by Lermontov. Here the writer appeared as a mature realist, having adopted the traditions of European free-thinking, constrained by unlimited domestic conservatism.

The question remains: did the Emperor try on the situation with the duel described in Lermontov’s novel, with the poet’s actual duel with the until now unknown army officer? Is it worth it to talk about *two fights*? The duel of the author of the novel with a hero and the tsar with the poet.

In support of the conclusions of the article, see the work of a modern researcher, which examines the stories of M.U. Lermontov [12], moreover, all of them are associated with the death of A.S. Pushkin. So Lermontov traced the origin and development of independent trends in Russian society, the victim of which he was also destined to fall. But the beginning of this was laid in the century before last, to which our other works are devoted [13, 14].

We see how with the help of the Russian literary language one could already speak clearly and clearly to everyone. In addition, the very presence of such a language testified to the formed, or at least emerging, self-awareness of the nation.

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