

The aim of my dissertation was to create a synthetic narrative about the history of “sarmatianism” (understood both as a word and as an idea) and to demonstrate the most important continuities and fractures within set history. I sought answers for the following questions: what was the role of “sarmatianism” in historical discourses? How was “sarmatianism” understood and what ideas did this word describe? What are the similarities and differences between individual discourses that use “sarmatianism”? Which elements of its semantic field have been the most persistent? Who and why has talked about “sarmatianism”? To what extent is “sarmatianism” a fundamental idea of the modern notion of Polish identity? I was chiefly inspired by two methodological approaches – the history of ideas (particularly Reinhart Koselleck’s *Begriffsgeschichte* and Cambridge school’s methods) and the critical discourse analysis (CDA).

The first chapter can be viewed as a follow-up to the introduction – it is the most comprehensive part of all. I demonstrated selected discursive modes of shaping the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth’s ruling class’s identity. I argue that these modes were rooted mainly in the Renaissance humanist distinction between the barbaric North and civilized South. By showcasing particular texts representing different time periods, I aimed to underline the longevity of some early modern narratives about the Poles’ and Lithuanians’ shared *barbaricum*, construed to delineate the civilizational borders according to then current political needs. This brief overview was crucial for the dissertation as it illustrates how the local identity discourse functioned before the political crisis of the Commonwealth, which occurred at the time when the cultural center of Europe was being narratively relocated from the South to the West. I considered the emergence of “sarmatianism” to be a result of this relocation, because of which a part of Polish elite internalized the Western narrative about Polish culture being incongruent and backward in relation to the West.

The second chapter concerns the initial phase of functioning of the “sarmatianism” in the Polish language, which occurred roughly during the reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski. I analyzed, among others, the king’s diaries, various articles from “Monitor” and comedies of Franciszek Bohomolec, Józef Bielawski and Franciszek Zabłocki. The political conditions that mandated the emergence of “sarmatianism” in the discourse of the king’s party were outlined, along with the relationship between the word itself and the plan of national reforms postulated by the enlightened court. I demonstrated different modes of the historical uses of “sarmatianism” – especially the ironical and the non-ironical ones – by which I proved that the word was probably not used commonly because of its considerable emotional and axiological charge. Moreover, I indicated that the initial meaning of “sarmatianism” was substantially

different from the contemporary ones, as it was mainly used to describe the political and cultural reality of the 18th century, not the whole culture of the early modern Commonwealth's nobility.

The third chapter tackles the history of "sarmatianism" in the 19th century, and the source material for the analysis consists of literary works (e.g. by Cyprian Godebski, Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, and Henryk Rzewuski), excerpts from press and academic texts, and definitions from dictionaries and encyclopedias. Until recently, the 19th century was viewed (and, to an extent, rightly so) as a period when "sarmatianism" was not among the most important ideas organizing Polish national thought. However – perhaps due to the relatively low frequency of its use – this was also precisely the moment when the word gained a myriad of new meanings, among them the first positive ones. I showed how the term, intentionally rejected by the generation of the Kościuszko Uprising, gradually reappeared in language in a variety of discourses, especially in Polish historiography. The chapter ends with a subsection devoted to the analysis of "sarmatianism" as a lexeme, which illustrates the changes of its meaning as they occurred between the formulation of Samuel Bogumił Linde's definition at the beginning of the century and the brief encyclopedic description produced by Zygmunt Gloger about a hundred years later.

The fourth chapter is an analysis of texts from the interwar period. I researched predominantly the political and academic discourses, in which "sarmatianism" was starting to play an increasingly more important role. It was then that the term was established as a label commonly applied in the humanities to describe major historical processes; that said, it was used chiefly by scholars of the history of literature (in this context I concentrated on the works of Ignacy Chrzanowski and Aleksander Brückner). At the time, "sarmatianism" was still not well-defined, while it maintained a strong and predominantly pejorative axiological charge. As I concluded, this valuation resulted from the widespread need to accentuate the interwar Poland's modernity, expressed in the press of the era. "Sarmatianism" began to epitomize "Polishness" as a feature that distinguished Poland negatively from other European nations (in the view of both liberals, like Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, and conservatives, like Roman Rybarski). Sometimes, however, it referred to genuine local culture, perceived as a quality that had to be defended from foreign elements (labeled, for example, as "Semitism" or "Germanism").

The fifth chapter focuses on the period between the end of the WW2 and the end of the 20th century. I decided to limit the analyzed material to academic texts debating the definition of "sarmatianism", because this is the context in which the most crucial semantic changes influencing the contemporary understanding of this term took place. My aim was to demonstrate how this process was affected on one hand by the political conditions (Stalinism, the

“nationalization” of history during Gomułka’s regime, and the fall of communism) and on the other by various philosophical notions (Marxism, structuralism, and poststructuralism). The chronological organization of the 20th century’s thought on “sarmatianism” also allowed me to underline the most important interconnections between consecutive academic definitions. It also allowed me to indicate which of those approaches should be considered the most influential.

The conclusion is a short overview of contemporary political and academic takes on “sarmatianism”. I do not, however, offer any prognoses or meticulous analyses, while only indicating how today’s discourses about “sarmatianism” continue the traditional ways of understanding it.