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Politics of popularity in the November Uprising (1830–31)

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to explore the cultural politics of the November Uprising through the lens of popularity. It investigates both the idea of popularity that pervaded the discourse of the time and the social practice of using popular reputations to shape the politics of the Uprising. Instead of treating popularity as just another manifestation of the ideological conflicts typical of the age of revolutions, this paper posits that the discourse surrounding popularity became a crucial axis of conceptualizing public individuality during the uprising. The debates surrounding popularity, including those concerning the dangers of hasty political ambitions, the increasing importance of personality in public life and the search for alternative sources of legitimacy, fostered an evolving political landscape in which it became possible to envision a different way of being a public figure and to reconsider the tools available for shaping public opinion.

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In the early hours of 30 November 1830, Prince Franciszek Ksawery Drucki-Lubecki received disturbing news: a rebellion erupted in Warsaw, the capital of the Kingdom of Poland he had administered as member of its head council. The Uprising drove people to take to the streets, forcing the Russian troops stationed in the city to withdraw. Lubecki's immediate concern was whether the rebels had established a new government. Upon discovering that they had not and that they were instead waiting for a reaction from prominent local figures, he decided to act and called on an extraordinary meeting of the Administrative Council, expanded to include some 'popular personalities'. While this decision might have temporarily placated the revolutionary crowd, it immediately drew the scrutiny of Lubecki's peers, who saw the appointment of these new members – and, indeed, their 'popularity' – as a threat to the ruling aristocracy.

Amid these tumultuous events, 'popularity' emerged as a particularly potent force. The term became a common refrain in the public square as well as in salons, and made for a powerful reference point in the public discourse. As the events of that November night initiated a Polish Uprising against the Russian Empire, the fixation on popularity reflected the rapidly changing political landscape with a government reliant on popular

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support and a press market newly freed from Russia-imposed censorship. The language of the era's sources, whether official documents, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, daily journals or later memoirs, abounded with references to popularity. Its significance extended beyond mere adulation. It became a dynamic term expressive of cultural tensions that had long simmered in Poland: the conflict between conservatism and radicalism, the emergence of Romanticism challenging the prevailing Classicism, and the generational gap in political culture. The November Uprising evolved into a boiling pot of cultural experimentation, with 'popularity' at its epicentre.

This study seeks to explore the cultural politics of the November Uprising through the lens of popularity. It aims to reconstruct the discourse surrounding popularity during the Uprising, shed light on the growing concern regarding the role of reputation and public image in political life, and explain the attitudes and motivations underlying them. Despite its absence as a topic of study in historical literature on the Uprising, popularity was not a peripheral issue of the time. In fact, the perception of one's reputation and the negotiation of the concept of popularity were crucial for the Uprising's politics as both sources of the political conflict and the tools used to resolve it. The leaders of the Uprising utilized the appeal of personality to shape public opinion; popular reputations helped to establish political legitimacy or remain in power when it wavered; and the concept of popularity mobilized cultural conflict for political gain.

This analysis draws from a range of sources, including official documents, newspapers and magazines, pamphlets, and diaries from the period, as well as political discussions and memoirs written in the following years. The removal of censorship during the Uprising gave rise to a remarkably prolific printing market in Poland, providing a wealth of material. However, it also introduced some important points of consideration concerning the biases of the sources, as they can reflect the political climate, loyalties and personal agendas, as well as the influence of hindsight in memoirs. Despite these challenges, this discourse remains vital for highlighting diverse interpretations and the emergence of new cultural norms during the Uprising.

My approach to understanding the idea of popularity is significantly informed by the perspective of a cultural historian with a keen interest in the history of fame. Between 1750 and 1850, the notion of popularity underwent a semantic shift closely entwined with the change of attitudes towards public figures. The period witnessed the emergence of the idea of 'celebrity' or 'célébrité' – an immediate, media-driven fame tied to the whims of mass readership, which stood in stark contrast to the traditional reverence for saintly virtue and aristocratic lineage.¹ Simultaneously, the notion of popularity, originally used to describe things comprehensible to ordinary minds, gradually evolved to signify mass adulation and populist politics. Historians of fame have therefore assumed that the new meaning of popularity merely mirrored the rise of celebrity, as evidenced by the increasing ability of renowned individuals to harness their appeal for political influence and the growing use of celebrity mechanisms by politicians during the age of revolutions.²

However, the key role of popularity during the November Uprising reveals a more intricate picture of how shifting ideas about public individuality shaped political culture. Popularity indeed reflected the changing perceptions of public figures, but not simply in the form of transgressions between the cultural and the political spheres (politicians becoming celebrities and celebrities becoming politicians). The discourse surrounding the idea of popularity mirrored classic tenets of contemporary debates

surrounding fame, particularly the clash between fleeting celebrity, immediate and driven by mass appeal, and aristocratic glory, historical and sanctioned by the elites, and gave them further political meaning.³ Moreover, popularity became a crucial discursive signifier of attitudes towards revolution and democracy, to the point of an interchangeable use of adjectives 'popular', 'revolutionary' and 'democratic'. This confluence represented not only a political stance, but also its embodiment and personalization, encompassing the new idea of a politician who was first and foremost a public figure.⁴ As popular politicians sought to reframe political representation drawing on new ideas of fame, popularity served as a prefigurative form of democratic governance.⁵

Examining the role of popularity in 1830 and 1831 also contributes to a fresh cultural interpretation of the November Uprising. So far, Polish historiography has primarily focused on establishing essential facts related to the course of the Polish–Russian armed conflict in 1831 and featured a partial exploration of the Uprising's domestic politics, the way it found resonance in folk culture, and individual biographies of its key participants.⁶ The last attempts to interpret its course and central political conflict were made during the time of the Polish People's Republic, and often reduced it to the result of class struggle.⁷ The influence of generational conflict and the emerging Romantic sensibility has been acknowledged, yet the extent to which the cultural changes shaped the public sphere in Poland has been largely overlooked, often because scholars see it as underdeveloped relative to the West and focus on studying its suppression and limitations.⁸

The significant discursive role of popularity, as described in this article, indicates a more profound influence of culture on shaping the course of the Uprising. Ideas related to popularity as a revolutionary and democratic quality did not emerge out of thin air in the discourse of the Uprising. They were closely linked to the aforementioned re-evaluation of the concept of fame and the social distinction of individuals in society, as well as to new concepts regarding the public sphere and political representation that had been developing in Polish lands since the late eighteenth century.⁹ While the scholarship on fame has not yet extensively covered Eastern Europe, there are strong indications that the transformation described by historians of celebrity did indeed unfold in post-partition Poland. The period saw a rising prominence of iconic figures who served as focal points for Poles in the absence of the state institutions, alongside a progressive democratization of culture, and a slow erosion of noble status and aristocratic influence in political life.¹⁰ A significant facet of these changes was the unprecedented growth of the press market. Until the 1790s, it had largely been monopolized by a single political newspaper. However, between 1788 and 1792, it experienced significant expansion, reaching new levels in 1807 and 1815, and finally peaking when censorship was abolished during the Uprising. Between 1830 and 1831, Polish newspapers achieved a level of circulation never seen before, remaining unmatched in the subsequent 50 years of Russian repressions.¹¹ Although the awareness of the power of public appeal was on the rise in Poland, the constraints imposed by censorship and political repression limited its exercise, at least until the Uprising created an emergent political reality where it suddenly became possible to reconsider the tools available for shaping public opinion and to envision a different way of being a public figure.

Political landscape of the November Uprising

Following the disintegration of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795, Polish elites sought to re-establish their state, often forging difficult and conflicting alliances. They saw partial successes in the Duchy of Warsaw, founded as a Napoleonic puppet state in 1807 as well as in 1815, when the bulk of the Duchy's territory became the Kingdom of Poland controlled by Russia through personal union. Despite being under the rule of Russian Tsars – first Alexander I, then Nicholas I – who assumed the title of the Polish king, the Kingdom's internal affairs were nominally overseen by the Council of State, a broad legal body, headed by the Administrative Council, a smaller group consisting of five ministers and a viceroy (Pol. *namiestnik*). The Council of State held responsibility for legislative initiatives presented for approval in the parliament (Sejm) and for executing decisions made by the king. Although its members were primarily drawn from the local elite, often hailing from prominent magnate families and appointed by the monarch, the Council's authority was significantly limited. It possessed jurisdiction over specific administrative and economic issues but had no say in most domestic and foreign policy matters, which remained under the direct control of the Tsar. Even the viceroy of the Kingdom was largely a symbolic figure with little real authority, as the military governor, Grand Duke Konstantin (who was also the Tsar's brother), had the final word in most affairs.

The November Uprising began when a group of young military officers attacked the residence of Grand Duke Konstantin at the Belweder Palace, aiming to assassinate him. Although Konstantin managed to escape, the insurgents, together with the people of Warsaw, swiftly seized control of the city, driving out the Russian troops stationed there. Having no connection to the local authorities, the insurgents waited for the response of the Administrative Council, hoping that it would proclaim a national uprising with the objective of liberating Poland from Russian dominance. The initial days of December 1830 saw the Council grappling with efforts to quell the unrest in the capital while navigating the tensions between the revolutionary fervour in the streets and their sworn allegiance to the Tsar. On 3 December, the Council was transformed into a Temporary Government. Responding to popular pressure, its members proposed military leadership of the Polish army to Józef Chłopicki, a conservative general highly regarded in Warsaw for his previous resistance against Konstantin. Chłopicki accepted the role on the condition of wielding dictatorial powers. Meanwhile, loyalists tried to reconcile with Grand Duke Konstantin, who had positioned his troops just outside Warsaw. In contrast, radicals, who had yet to gain representation in government, established the Patriotic Society, sometimes called the Club, as a reflection of its 'Jacobin' aims: as a pressure group advocating for a military insurrection. Negotiations with Konstantin were abruptly terminated, although he and his troops were permitted to leave Polish territory without incident.

The newly convened Sejm officially declared a national uprising on 20 December. As negotiations with the Tsar reached an impasse, Chłopicki relinquished his dictatorial powers, and on 25 January 1831, Sejm dethroned Nicholas I and established the National Government. Hostilities with Russia ignited in February, marked by several minor Polish victories and a significant setback in the Battle of Ostrołęka in late May. The military campaign was

primarily overseen by conservative leaders who displayed hesitancy in confronting Russian forces. Following the mob's attack on the Royal Castle in Warsaw, which held political prisoners accused of spying, dictatorial authority was assumed by Jan Krukowiecki, a sympathizer of the radical cause, in the second half of August. However, soon after, on 6 September, Russian forces occupied Warsaw. After the capture of the city, the National Government disbanded, effectively concluding the November Uprising.

During this tumultuous era, Polish domestic politics experienced significant tensions among various stakeholders, including the parliament, the government and the impassioned public taking to the streets. While there was a consensus on the need to confront Russia, divisions emerged over the Uprising's objectives, leading to the presence of three distinct political factions. The conservative one, whose opponents often referred to it as the 'aristocratic faction', was led by established members of the Administrative Council. Faced with popular demands conflicting with their loyalty to the Tsars as Polish kings, they aimed to maintain the Kingdom's existing political order and use the Uprising as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the Tsar to regain territories that were once part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The legalist faction, led by prominent parliamentarians, the Niemojowski brothers, was committed to securing the Tsar's promise to uphold the Kingdom's Constitution, a central grievance motivating the Uprising. In contrast, a group of liberal radicals envisioned broader reforms aimed at ending the Russian dominance and aspired to transforming the Kingdom into a more democratic state. Radicalism found fertile ground among young writers and journalists such as Maurycy Mochnacki. Initially, the radicals had limited influence within the authorities, but they gained substantial support from the citizens of Warsaw. Over time, the spectre of grassroots violence bolstered their influence in shaping events. These factional conflicts, particularly the rivalry between conservatives and radicals, extended beyond parliamentary negotiations and power struggles, playing out prominently in the public sphere. Radical newspapers capitalized on the newly abolished censorship to spread their messages through widely circulated dailies like *Nowa Polska*. Notably, Warsaw played a central role as the historical capital of Poland, housing all central institutions and key figures, as well as serving as the epicentre of print and media, with broad influence over the rest of the Polish lands.

Revolutionary popularity

What shaped the fundamental conception of popularity on the eve of the Uprising? In the early nineteenth century, the term already belonged to the new political dictionary of the age of revolutions. The word itself existed before: the adjective 'popular', rooted in the Latin *popularis*, was used in many European languages throughout the early-modern era as 'referring to or belonging to the people', 'suited to ordinary taste' or 'easily comprehended'. However, in the eighteenth century, it began to be used more frequently in relation to public figures, specifically those who were defined by 'love of the people'. French definitions of the word underlined its active grammatical use, which referred to the populist nature of an individual who 'loved the people' or wanted to manipulate public attention.¹² Samuel Linde's first modern Polish dictionary published in 1811 echoed the same sentiment, defining popularity as 'grasping the public by its weakness

and thus persuading the public opinion' and 'populist' as a 'friend of the people, a democrat'.¹³

This context put popularity at the centre of revolutionary vocabulary, especially among the movements towards democratization that led the French and the American Revolutions. In this sense, revolutionaries were closely associated with popularity because they were fighting for the possibility of popular politics.¹⁴ Moreover, it helped establish the passive use of the word, taken by the French to be an Anglicanism, as the love 'of the people for a man'. As the revolutionary language spread throughout Europe, it became standard to view a popular politician as someone whose political legitimacy was based on their reputation and the affection of the public. However, the association with revolution also led to a negative perception of popularity, with some seeing it as a tool that could be used by demagogues and those who incite unrest among the masses. The question at the centre of the debate was often whether the 'people' who loved a particular individual represented the general will or the capriciousness of the unruly masses.¹⁵

The language of revolution was particularly relevant during the Uprising due to the perceived revolutionary nature of the event itself. While not all rebellions inherently possess revolutionary aims, the discourse surrounding the November Uprising was distinctly shadowed by the potential for social transformation. The initial attack on the Belweder Palace mobilized the common people of Warsaw, who helped the rebels take control of parts of the capital, including important military infrastructure. Throughout the Uprising, the 'common people', usually imagined as an elemental force of a 'crowd', 'mass' or 'mob', were a crucial political influence frequently referenced in political decision-making.¹⁶ This awareness, and sometimes a threat, of popular reaction led to comparisons with the French Revolution, which was seen, depending on one's political outlook, as a major source of inspiration or an ominous shadow over insurrectionary politics. Following the July Revolution in France and the Belgian Revolution in August, the November Uprising gained a reputation, both within Poland and abroad, of a Polish Revolution, a label that was acknowledged in Sejm's official manifesto issued on 20 December 1830.

While the term 'revolution' found swift acceptance in the discourse, with the Uprising widely viewed as a popular grassroots movement, the precise scope and direction of this revolution remained unclear.¹⁷ This ambiguity stemmed from the fact that, unlike recent revolutions in Belgium and France, the Uprising's primary objective, at least as initially taken by most people, was not a restructuring of social relations, but rather a rejection of Russian dominance. This was the intent of the conspirators behind the events of the November Night, who anticipated that the Administrative Council would align with the social currents sparked by the attempt on Konstantin's life. Nevertheless, it soon became apparent that 'fighting Russia' held different meanings for various individuals. Caught off guard by the sudden turn of events, the Administrative Council members initially hoped that the 'revolution' would amount to nothing more than a recklessness of a group of young hotheads, the potential consequences of which needed swift mitigation. As the conflict with Russia became inevitable, the conservatives reluctantly joined the fight, gradually identifying the 'revolutionary' aims of the Uprising with the struggle over Polish sovereignty. In contrast, the radicals quickly realized that the Polish Revolution could potentially entail a change in the political system. Initially hesitant to openly

express support for a 'social revolution', such as the potential republicanization of the country, eventually they embraced the slogan, particularly when the 1831 discourse began to lean towards the radical side.

These divisions created a tense political atmosphere beneath the veneer of national unity in the Polish struggle against Russian imperialism. The resulting confusion was rather characteristic of the political mentality in the era, which Polish historians sometimes explain by referring to the 'double conscience principle'. The idea refers to the way the Polish elites reacted to the conditions following the collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This often required them to align with foreign interests as long-term strategy to revive Polish statehood. Effectively, they developed a 'double conscience' that allowed them to integrate their attachment to the Polish nation with the more practical political loyalties.¹⁸ This double conscience often resulted in disputes among Poles with contradicting ideas for promoting the 'Polish cause'. In the case of the Uprising, the conservative elites put at the head of the insurrection had dedicated the last 15 years to rebuilding Poland economically and establishing its new political relevance within the Russian Empire. Legally, the Kingdom was not occupied but autonomous, and its high officials swore obedience to the Tsar as King of Poland. From their point of view, the idea of outward rebellion seemed well intentioned, but naïve, wasteful and possibly dangerous for the country.¹⁹

A big part of this danger was the possibility of the Uprising's more radical turn, which caused great concern among the conservative members of the Administrative Council. This fear manifested in public discourse as a kind of a moral panic about the threat of 'Jacobinism', 'anarchy' and 'social revolution', which were presented as hindrances to the Uprising's ultimate goal of national liberation.²⁰ The key element of the panic was the fear of demagoguery and the 'desire for popularity' that were believed to be driving basic social institutions. In particular, conservatives saw it as paramount to counteract the political ambition of the 'new men'. Soon after the November night, the envoy of the Administrative Council, Wojciech Zamoyski, made efforts to assure Grand Duke Konstantin that despite officially leading the Uprising, the Council could still be trusted to restore calm in the capital. He argued that it had been comprised of individuals with 'noble characters' who were 'reasonable as statesmen' and 'not driven by exultation', but who also commanded 'great respect in the realm'. As conveyed by Zamoyski, the public perception of the council members was of utmost importance. If their reputations were to collapse under the revolutionary stream, the Grand Duke would risk seeing the power taken over by 'people never heard of before and whose exultation would push the movement to its extreme'.²¹

To a large degree, this fixation on popularity was rooted in the idea of popular politician as an embodiment of the 'bloodthirsty masses' who sought to exert revenge on the aristocratic rulers of the country. The most symbolic figure in this regard was Kazimierz Pułaski, a priest and a sympathizer of the radical politics who made a career during the Uprising as an agitator amongst the working people. Pułaski was clearly demonized among the conservatives. He was rumoured to be a drunk and a choleric, a 'human monster, always mad with foam at the mouth'.²² One writer called him a 'bad man and a worse priest of horrible morals, a freethinker, and evidently disgustingly dirty' and proposed that 'this was perhaps why he had an appeal among similar people', explaining that 'because he was eloquent and not without some ability, some jobless

folk believed in him, or at least believed what he had told them'.²³ In this way, people such as Pułaski were morally lowered to the level of the mob and discredited as politicians, but their image also impacted the conservative imagination and symbolically linked populist adoration with the danger of bloodshed.

The pejorative connotations attached to popularity, portraying it as emblematic of a bloodthirsty mob and demagogic influences, were underpinned by memories of recent revolutionary events, such as the Kościuszko Insurrection of 1794, known for its gruesome Warsaw hangings, as well as the lingering spectre of the French Revolution. These historical upheavals left an enduring imprint on the collective consciousness, profoundly shaping perceptions of popular movements.²⁴ But another, equally pivotal issue was the manner in which the events of late November and early December contrasted bottom-up reaction with the interests of conservatives. While the 1794 Insurrection primarily targeted traitors and Russian conspirators, the November Uprising introduced new arguments that challenged the prevailing socio-cultural paradigm. The radical faction moved away from conventional political arenas, concentrating on mobilizing the populace in the streets. They embraced new nationalist slogans and ideals of individual genius inspired by Romantic literature. This departure contrasted sharply with the Classicist literary tradition and the political programme of economic development and Panslavism championed by many among the ruling aristocracy.²⁵ Moreover, the radicals accentuated that popularity encapsulated these new ideas, giving political voice to lower classes through popular individuals, rather than limiting decision-making to the elite 'political nation'.²⁶ Conservatives, in contrast, considered this notion preposterous, adhering to the traditional belief that honorific royal-given dignity, linked to office-holding and rooted in the historical context of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, was the only legitimate basis for political representation.

Throughout the Uprising, popularity would become a common trope both in the public discourse and in the more private *couloir* conversations that helped to explain and condemn the decisions of various political actors by accusing them of fighting for 'social revolution'. Sometimes, it would help explain the nature of the revolution itself. Conservatives tended to emphasize the disruptive and perverse effects of the Uprising by presenting the supposed sudden obsession with popularity as an 'evil, though natural' occurrence in 'all nations that happen to enter a revolutionary moment'.²⁷ The memoirs of the conservative sympathizers recounted contemporary stories about charlatans who tried to gain positions of power in the provinces by purporting to represent the Warsaw revolutionaries.²⁸ At other times, they blamed migration or the extension of the voting rights for creating a surplus of people who 'looked for a chance to elevate themselves in undermining the existing order and were driven by self-love more than by the good of the realm'.²⁹

Political uses of popularity

This connotation of popularity was why Lubecki had been in trouble after admitting the new members to the Administrative Council. Soon after, he had an opportunity to explain his actions to Grand Duke Konstantin, driven out to the outskirts of Warsaw in the first days of the Uprising. While Lubecki tried to present his decision as an attempt to control the angry masses, Konstantin's entourage bitterly pointed out that the new

members were 'popular' and thus 'revolutionary' and that therefore choosing them may have been taken for outward support of the rebellion.³⁰ These doubts appeared even though the persons added to the council on 30 November had undoubtedly conservative sympathies and had nothing to do with revolutionary conspiracy. The 'popular personalities' in question were Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, Count Ludwik Michał Pac and Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, all established statesmen with reputations reaching the times of the Commonwealth and the Napoleonic era. Czartoryski and Pac were names of old magnate houses. Czartoryski himself was once a foreign minister of Russia and a friend to Alexander I, after whose death in 1826 he was left out of the government and returned to his estates in Poland. Niemcewicz was a nestor of Polish politics and literature who had long been a client of the Czartoryski family.³¹ Together they represented the so-called 'liberal conservatism' that saw the late eighteenth-century reforms, in particular the 3 May Constitution of 1791, as the model of Polish politics.³²

The high status of these figures hinged on the fact that they were universally respected as symbols of past national glories. This image had far from revolutionary connotations, but the people around Konstantin were aware that perceptions did not have to align with intentions to be dangerous. They were reminded of this by a recent precedent. A month before the Uprising, the authorities thwarted another conspiracy. A group of students planning a revolt was captured and testified under torture that if successful, they would have put Niemcewicz and Czartoryski at the head of government. When asked whether they conspired with these people they said they had never talked to them, but 'relied on their reputations'.³³ This showed how a personal reputation could have power that transcended the individual and could easily be turned into a revolutionary instrument, leading conservatives to be rightly suspicious of using the people's love as a source of political legitimacy.

The admittance of 'popular personalities' to the council illustrates the negotiated character of popularity as a concept during the Uprising. Despite being seen as a questionable tool of political ambition, popularity was also used to bolster existing claims to power, often by those who were most critical of it. The Council's inclusion of new members to placate the masses was not a one-time event, but a continuous strategy employed by the subsequent administrations to keep their heads above water. The latter part of 1830 and 1831 saw numerous shifts in the composition of the Administrative Council, and of the subsequent Temporary Government, Supreme National Council and National Government.³⁴ While officially, each change was an attempt to make sure the positions are occupied by people who were 'publicly trusted', the couloir talks among conservatives more often mentioned 'popularity' and 'personal influence among the populace'.³⁵

Contemporary commenters and later accounts by council insiders generally agreed that this was a deliberate strategy developed by Lubecki as a way to create political pliancy. Initially, the inclusion of new members was meant to pacify the masses and 'protect the Council against the importunity of public opinion', but soon they were expected to 'give their mediation a political character appropriate to their popularity'. Lubecki hoped to use popular figures to control public opinion and thus wield a double-edged sword vis-à-vis the Tsar, demonstrating his own loyalty while raising the spectre of unpredictable consequences if he did not grant concessions, such as returning some of the lands the Commonwealth had lost to Russia during the

partitions.³⁶ In this way, he sought to provide both the Tsar and the revolutionaries with a mutually satisfactory resolution to the conflict. When his own position became threatened, Lubecki left the country for Petersburg, but his strategy outlived his own political life in the Uprising. For Maurycy Mochnacki, a historian and influential voice on the Left during the Uprising, this marked the beginning of the counter-revolutionary stream in Polish politics. His contemporaries may have excitedly referred to the inclusion of popular figures in the council as ‘popularizing’ or ‘revolutionizing’ it, but Mochnacki saw this popularity and revolutionary potential as superficial, giving the council ‘a new reason for its existence and new strength to continue wielding power’. Lubecki’s politics, Mochnacki lamented, strived for no substantial change of social relations: ‘the only thing that was needed were names that evoked the memory of better times and institutions’.³⁷

Despite their projected distance from popularity, conservative politicians did not shy away from cultivating their own image in the public eye, often in response to what they perceived as expressions of the general will. The distinction lay in what was considered to be such an expression. For conservatives, this notion often qualified only as the will of the ‘political nation’ that under the old ‘Noble Democracy’ system of the Commonwealth referred to nobility and the higher echelons of townspeople (bourgeoisie), and not to the ‘revolutionary masses’. For instance, in the course of the Uprising Niemcewicz encountered numerous situations where the common people’s affection for him was publicly expressed. When it came from the people encountered on the streets, groups of students or lower-class people, he tended to be very critical of it. While carried on the arms of the people at the beginning of December, he angrily noted in his diary: ‘I do not know where does this affection come from; if it were known how I hate the clamour, the drunkenness of raucous crowd, I would have been spared these honours’.³⁸ However, when the parliament voted to make him a senator despite him not meeting the legal conditions, he was sympathetic to the clamour of representatives and spectators ‘crying out’ and ‘coming out of their seats’ to pressure him to accept. ‘It would be unseemly of me’, he said in a speech, ‘to think I have a better understanding of the law than you, representatives of the people [. . .]. If you force me to do it, let it be done’.³⁹

However, the most prominent example of a conservative opponent of the revolution who utilized his popularity among the common people for political gain was Józef Chłopicki, the Uprising’s first dictator. Prior to his involvement in politics, Chłopicki was a professional soldier, known for his role as a Napoleonic officer during the Battle of Saragossa, and rose to the rank of a major general in the Polish Army under Grand Duke Konstantin. Offended after a personal argument with Konstantin, he gave up his position, ignored all apologies, and locked himself up in a ‘voluntary house arrest’ for over a year until he was relieved of his duties in 1818. This determination earned him sympathy from the people of Warsaw, which enhanced his enforced retirement and made him a guest of honour in card dens and theatres.⁴⁰ Chłopicki’s rebellious reputation made him the first choice of the people for the military leader of the Uprising. In early December, crowds gathered in the streets in front of the Council’s headquarters, calling for Chłopicki to take command of the army. However, Chłopicki was hesitant to become a revolutionary leader and initially could not be found. When he was eventually located, Chłopicki agreed to take the position only with the goal of ‘calming down the situation in the capital’.⁴¹ In spite of his reluctance, Chłopicki’s popularity made him seem

indispensable for the leaders of the Uprising as the only person commonly believed to have the 'total trust' of the people.⁴²

Chłopicki was well aware of his influence and often used it to increase his own power, frequently employing his well-known stubborn stance to manipulate public opinion. After getting frustrated with the radical opposition on 4 December, Chłopicki reportedly wanted to resign from his post and had an apoplexy attack when the members of the Council insisted that he keep it. This event caused turmoil among the general populace and resulted in threats being made against individuals suspected of causing Chłopicki's health problems. In response to this pressure, the Administrative Council ultimately agreed to Chłopicki's proposition that he would return to his position, but only if his power were extended to the level of dictatorship.⁴³ Initially, this office was to be held for two weeks only, until the session of the Sejm. But when the representatives started the session three days before the agreed date, Chłopicki had a tantrum in which he accused the Sejm of revolutionary sympathies and resigned again. In an effort to maintain the popular support he brought to the table, the representatives opened the next meeting with praise for Chłopicki and voted to renew his dictatorship, albeit with the addition of a parliamentary commission with the power to remove him from office.⁴⁴ In mid-January, when Russia offered terms to the Polish side, Chłopicki tried to use the opportunity to override the commission's influence and threatened the Council to step down if he was not given the authority to singlehandedly negotiate with the Tsar. However, this blackmail was unsuccessful and Chłopicki resigned amid scandal, rejecting not only the position of dictator, but also all other offices proposed to him in return.⁴⁵

Chłopicki did not approach his popularity only as a bargaining chip, but also as a matter of an image that he actively worked to cultivate. He had a history of purporting offence or sickness to garner public favour: during the argument with Konstantin in 1816, he used fake illness as an excuse to reject the Grand Duke's calls to reassume his post in the army and to mock his efforts publicly. This tactic seemed to have carried over to his behaviour as the dictator, although the contemporaries often diminished it as a matter of temperament or underlying mental issues.⁴⁶ Some radicals recognized his outbursts as a posture, associating Chłopicki's sudden attacks of apoplexy with the way Shakespeare's Caesar feigned seizures, and sarcastically referring to him as a 'Roman' in their publications.⁴⁷ Such criticisms occupied much of the mind of the dictator who attempted to control them by creating a 'ministry of public opinion' and, when this failed, by commissioning the Temporary Government with the task of 'straightening out the public opinion'.⁴⁸ Chłopicki carefully weighed the potential consequences of arresting the radicals' leaders, particularly Joachim Lelewel, whose capture he discussed with his associates as potentially threatening to his own public standing, before ultimately deciding to order the arrests.⁴⁹

According to conservatives, the Uprising created an environment in which a number of people 'quickly gained significance and in a few days found themselves in prominent positions'.⁵⁰ However, in reality the shifts in power during the Uprising saw relatively few radical politicians without prior claims to governance attain such positions. One notable exception was Lelewel, a renowned historian, literary figure and parliamentary representative known for his progressive views.⁵¹ Lelewel quickly emerged as a leader among the revolutionary Left and was elected the president of the Patriotic Society on its inaugural meeting attended by over 1000 people. He was also made a member of the

editorial board for the radical journal *Nowa Polska*, despite having no prior involvement with either group.⁵² Lelewel's political ambition and his perceived role as a champion of the Left led to the creation of his reputation as a 'Polish Robespierre' and a supposed instigator of the Uprising's more revolutionary elements. Conservative newspapers often blamed him for decisions made by the Administrative Council that were perceived as overly compliant with the demands of radicals. In their memoirs, sympathizers of the aristocratic faction described him as a 'villain', a 'personification of intrigue and perfidy' and, in the more literary terms, a 'Satan' who 'led the motherland to the historically most heinous suicide'.⁵³

Lelewel was able to leverage his popularity to establish himself as a voice of the people. Soon after being hailed as the leader of the Club, he was notably offered a seat on the Administrative Council on 3 December 1830, and held influential positions within subsequent national governments.⁵⁴ When in power, Lelewel often alluded to his reputation among the masses in order to exert influence on the Uprising's politics. This allowed him to interject himself into the centre of events, for instance by personally participating in negotiations with Grand Duke Konstantin.⁵⁵ Several politicians recalled instances in which Lelewel claimed to be the arbiter of who did and did not have the 'public trust' and used this to block or facilitate important political appointments.⁵⁶ Lelewel's notoriety sometimes worked to his advantage as well. According to Mochnacki, when the Sejm voted for the members of the National Government on 29 January 1831, Lelewel's reputation as a radical, or a 'horrible tribune of the plebs', put his candidacy in jeopardy. However, it was ultimately secured due to rumours among the representatives that a group of common people were constructing gallows on a nearby square. Fearing execution, parliamentarians were said to 'hope for Lelewel's protection' and ultimately vote in favour of his candidacy.⁵⁷ As the Uprising progressed, Lelewel appeared to become more invested in his political ambitions and his ability to rally the masses. This reached a climax with his involvement in the attack on the Royal Castle by the common people and the massacre of political prisoners in August, which some viewed as a planned coup d'état.⁵⁸

Nurtured this way, popularity could be used not only to advance one's career, but also to protect others by extending one's popular aura to political allies hated by revolutionary masses. This was particularly evident during the protection and rebranding of controversial military figures called to the Administrative Council in December, whose lives became threatened by the crowds gathered in front of the Council's palace. On numerous occasions, influential people such as Chłopicki and Niemcewicz intervened in the potential lynchings and saved the threatened generals by making them pledge loyalty to the cause of the Uprising.⁵⁹ It is important also to note that this awareness of the power of image manipulation was not restricted to populist figures alone. Rather, even those who operated behind the scenes, such as members of the conservative elite surrounding the dictator and the subsequent military leaders of the Uprising, were cognizant of its significance in shaping the public perception of the figures they supported. As is evident in their memoirs, they often employed various tactics to shape their public perception. For instance, as a colonel to the military leader Jan Skrzynecki, Franciszek Gawroński remembered regularly counselling him to make more public appearances and to 'let himself be more known to the public in the capital'.⁶⁰ On the other hand, there were instances where information that could potentially damage their reputation was

concealed, as seen when in one of his outbursts, Chłopicki proclaimed his desire for peace with Russia, and the government subsequently swore to keep this information from the public eye.⁶¹

The increasing attention paid by political actors from various factions to the management of their reputations speaks to a growing recognition among the political class of the significance of personality in shaping public opinion and the potential for leveraging it for political gain. In fact, their efforts to 'guess the intentions of the revolution', as Mochnacki once characterized the point of focus for the politics of the Uprising, were heavily dependent on their ability to manage their public image effectively.⁶²

Public men vs. historical names

As we see, although in the eyes of conservatives, some of them powerful cultural authorities, popularity was often looked down upon as an idea, the use of attention capital for political purposes was widespread during the Uprising. This apparent contradiction was recognized at the time and was seen as needing some kind of justification, especially among those who wanted to distance themselves from the radical interpretation of the revolution. In order to address this, a common tactic was to point to other, supposedly more legitimate sources of one's reputation that could help portray the public affection as only a side effect of an actual accomplishment. These could include literary achievements, statesmanship or military success.⁶³ One kind of fame that was easily transferable to political legitimacy was being a member of an old Polish family, especially one that had played a significant role in the nation's past, or having personally experienced momentous events from recent Polish history. People who relied on this kind of reputation were quickly given the collective moniker of 'historical names' that became important in the discourse of the Uprising.

Another socially acceptable way to achieve fame was through suffering injustice. In the 15 years before 1830, Poles felt they had been repeatedly mistreated by the Tsar through his neglect of constitutional guarantees such as freedom of speech and association, political repression and domestic espionage waged against his subjects, as well as through Grand Duke Konstantin's harsh military discipline. Many of these offences were seen as collective moral harms and gave rise to powerful stories of heroism in face of oppression.⁶⁴ The political side of this phenomenon showed in that it became possible to bolster one's reputation through a prideful protest against some kind of personal persecution. This was the case for many popular figures of the time, including Chłopicki, who initially gained popularity through his argument with Grand Duke Konstantin, and the Niemojowski brothers, liberal politicians who led the parliamentary opposition in defying a series of legal actions against alleged conspirators in the 1820s. In retaliation, the Niemojowski brothers were deprived of their parliamentary seats, temporarily placed under home arrest, and strategically blocked from other high offices. When they returned to their roles as representatives in December 1830, they were welcomed as heroes, 'carried by crowd and loved by everyone'.⁶⁵ They quickly rose to high status in the parliament, eventually gaining leadership over the Uprising in its final stages.⁶⁶

In this political climate, it was especially difficult for people who had no previous cultural capital to justify their claims to prominence, particularly among the revolutionary radicals who often complained about having no iconic names that could establish

them as a force to be reckoned with. This was why they put a lot of effort into capturing the attention of Lelewel, already famous as a scholar and a statesman and well regarded for the oppression he faced as one of the supposed conspirators in the early 1820s.⁶⁷ It was clear that the greatest advantage Lelewel brought to the table was celebrity associated with his name. In 1834, Mochnacki explained that the radicals' hopes focused on him because

who else among revolutionaries, who among the founders of the Club had such a name as he had, such a recognition in the nation, such a relationship with Lithuania, even with the scholarly circles in Moscow? In short, who of us was more known than he was?⁶⁸

Throughout the first half of 1831 the authors writing for *Nowa Polska* rejoiced in having 'undoubtedly the most popular person in Poland' on their side. In response to the suggestions of conservatives that Lelewel had bought his influence or manipulated the masses, they explained that he had 'bribed us, but not with silver; he beguiled us with the breadth of his understanding, with his deep knowledge of human victories and failures'.⁶⁹

However, much of this excitation was driven by wishful thinking. Although posturing as a revolutionary leader, Lelewel had an ambivalent attitude towards the revolution. While he sympathized with its aims, he publicly recanted his involvement in *Nowa Polska* and did not appear in any meeting of the Patriotic Club until 25 January 1831. He also did not, as some of his radical friends had hoped, take power into his own hands, instead contenting himself with secondary positions in the government.⁷⁰ In his memoir, Lelewel took further efforts to distance himself from the movement, underlining that during the Uprising he was not put in significant positions 'by the revolutionary clamour', but instead he 'owed it to [his] own merits', especially to his function as a representative.⁷¹ This incongruity on the side of their supposed leader deepened the impression that revolutionary radicals were deprived of an appropriate representation in the public eye. Mochnacki, who later became disillusioned with Lelewel, put it on his 'black legend', which created an artificially inflated persona and made him 'seem as more than he actually was'.⁷²

This inability to attract individuals with reputable standing to their cause frustrated the left since the beginning of the Uprising. The prospect of popular personalities transforming the Administrative Council into a revolutionary government was quickly dashed after the Council refused to openly acknowledge the Uprising and issued an official proclamation calling the street clashes on the November night 'unfortunate events'.⁷³ In light of these developments, the radicals eventually abandoned their pursuit of aligning with established 'historical names' and instead developed a discourse of protest that included the rejection of traditional beliefs about the importance of fame and reputation in society, specifically the notion that political legitimacy could only be derived from certain established sources, such as historical significance or aristocratic ancestry.

The first instances of this protest can be traced back to Mochnacki's speech at the meeting of the Patriotic Society on 1 December 1830. It was a key meeting when the Left started to realize that the aims of the aristocratic party crucially diverged from their own. Frustrated by the lack of progress, Mochnacki stood on the table in the middle of revolutionary crowds, and agitated:

The Administrative Council is supposedly dissolved, but the Temporary Government does not want to establish itself without its permission [...]. People with historical names who we have considered patriots disallow the capture [of Grand Duke Konstantin]. People known for liberalism have openly conspired with enemies of the country. Let us not trust the historical names! Let us not trust any appeal, not any merit!⁷⁴

At this point, Mochnacki's accusation did not gain much traction. Some listeners, whom Mochnacki believed had been sent by Lubecki, were offended at the suggestion that the 'historical names' had betrayed the national cause. Another speaker, Wojciech Wołowski, countered by suggesting Mochnacki's own desire for popularity: 'and who dares to accuse them of treason? Here is an unknown man, young, passionate, and ambitious, who only seeks to elevate himself'. This disagreement led to a disturbance that spilled into the streets and was exacerbated by increasing concerns over the dictator's health. Mochnacki received several threats to his life and withdrew from the public eye for a month.⁷⁵

Since mid-January 1831, when Chłopicki resigned from the dictatorship, the contrast between historical names and popular people was transmitted to the front pages of popular newspapers. While conservative journals such as *Polak Sumienny* advocated for maintaining trust in the government and its leading historical names, *Nowa Polska* featured vitriolic articles attacking traditional approaches to reputation.⁷⁶ One aspect of this attack involved mocking honorary titles. Although Poland had not developed its own titles of nobility such as count or prince, since the eighteenth century it had become fashionable for prominent families to acquire such titles from foreign states.⁷⁷ The radical writers used this foreign origin and the anti-egalitarian connotations of the titles to accuse their bearers of vanity and aristocratic sympathies in numerous insults.⁷⁸ In March and April, a series of articles titled 'aristocratomania' and 'titilomania' complained that 'historical names, names of wealthy people, and empty titles are all that occupies us'.⁷⁹ This struck a sensitive chord with conservatives. In his daily journal, Niemcewicz wrote irritably: 'Lelewel and his minions, the news writers, instigated some unheard-of persecution and incitement against the aristocrats [...]. They mock the honorary titles of Princes and Counts; whoever bears a historical name is the target of ridicule and calumny.'⁸⁰

Conservatives were also quick to recognize that these attacks were motivated by 'everyone wanting to immediately get to prominence, to mean something, and to become historical!'⁸¹ Indeed, by attacking historical names the radicals wanted to provide an alternative rationale for their own path to power that was to rely on popular support. *Nowa Polska* often reminded its readers that 'the most useful for the revolution are revolutionary men' and that 'in such times all popularity needs an appropriate part in power'.⁸² Its writers underlined that the Uprising would 'not be saved by any favours, any historical names, any old memories, any titles'. 'While we do respect and acknowledge the importance of historical names', one author wrote more amicably, 'we also dare to claim that we need great will and reason, thunderous actions, and great enterprises' rather than 'memories and titles'. Instead, they insisted on meritocracy, the 'spread of power by ability and passion', because 'one can possess all good qualities and features *des notabilités et supériorités sociales* and not have what is necessary to save the country'.⁸³

However, as the radicals' objections against historical names became part of a larger revolutionary effort to challenge the existing social structure developed in the first half of 1831, they sparked more in-depth reflection on the role of reputation and fame in society.

For instance, in an anonymous article published at the end of January, the author attempted to reclaim the word ‘terrorism’ often used against the radicals, but the four types of ‘terrorism’ he listed actually corresponded with various ways in which individuals exerted influence over society. The first type was the Jacobin terrorism that ‘uses bloodshed to exert its principles’, although it was quickly dismissed as ‘there has been no such terrorism in Poland’. The second type was the ‘terrorism of genius, of great spirit, that attracts everything and subjects all to itself’, which characterized figures such as Caesar and Napoleon. This ‘fame of genius’ was said to ‘dominate the imagination’ and have a ‘hypnotizing’ effect on people who gladly listen to it, believing an ‘angel has come down from heaven’. The third type of ‘terrorism’ was that of ‘ingenious writers and philosophers’, such as Schelling, Gerres and Steffens, who were described as ‘metaphysical Dantons’ and ‘transcendental Robespierres’. According to the author, these individuals had the ability to ‘attract all minds to the centre of their own reason’ through the ‘power of attraction and intellectual affinity’. The final type targeted the blindly trusting nature of Polish people towards established authority, decrying it as easily subjected to a ‘terrorism of political obscurantism and social irrationality’:

Poland, since times immemorial, was ruled and disturbed by this terrorism of a name, a terrorism of naivety, a terrorism of unmerited trust. We were and we are still marvellers, praisers, and panegyrists of supposed talents and fictitious advantages. Nothing is easier than to become famous and popular in Poland. We have great literary men who never wrote anything, great citizens who never did anything for the country, great diplomats who can barely read. Fame, reputation, and popularity is cheap commodity here. This supposed fame, this empty reputation, this false, imputed popularity is then multiplied like the sound of a loud bell throughout the atmosphere.⁸⁴

Echoing Mochnacki’s words from before, the author concluded with a nihilist call not to ‘trust or believe anyone’. But soon, building on reflections such as the above, the radicals proposed their own alternative concept of what constituted a proper public individual. In the early nineteenth-century Poland, this concept had been shifting from solely referring to individuals holding public office to encompassing any well-known person, including artists and writers. According to the emerging discourse, with the rise of modern public opinion, being responsible for one’s actions in the eyes of the public became not only a requirement for those holding public office, but also for everyone who exercised any form of authority in the public sphere. This new understanding of a public figure was still in its infancy in 1824, when some publications continued to identify a ‘public man’ solely with an ‘official’ or ‘statesman’.⁸⁵ But already in 1826, a correspondent to *Monitor Warszawski* argued that ‘when a writer’s work comes out to the public view, the writer becomes a public man, a man of the state’. This was because

he interjects himself into matters of the highest office of the realm, into teaching, scolding, and correcting, and thus the realm can require from him a guarantee that he will perform his deliberately acquired public duties with the benefit to the public.⁸⁶

The radicals argued that this form of social relationship was a more legitimate basis for political representation than the old system based on inherited honours and titles, especially since the latter often confined decision-making to salon couloirs. The new idea of a popular politician was often referred to as the ‘men’ or ‘dignitaries of opinion’ and emphasized the importance of their relationship with public opinion.⁸⁷ In an open

letter addressed to Adam Czartoryski, Władysław Ostrowski, the Speaker of the Sejm, drew attention to the differences between these two models of political culture. Ostrowski primarily aimed to garner support against the recently proposed restrictions on the freedom of the press and to challenge the notion that such restrictions were necessary due to criticisms of universally respected figures such as Czartoryski. Ostrowski acknowledged that the Prince's 'name is historical', being 'connected to the very fate of our realm', and that there was 'no reason to doubt the character, patriotism, and best intentions of Prince Adam'. However, he emphasized that as a 'citizen of a free nation', Czartoryski should 'respect the freedom of opinion even if it touches him personally'. Furthermore, contrasting the personal relationship they shared from their previous life in salons with their new roles in the era of powerful public opinion, Ostrowski added:

I beg Prince Adam to forgive me that I mention him when speaking about a public thing, about the revolution: but today, we have to forget about the domestic relationships, we have to forget about the sweet pleasantries; we are public men, constantly under the judgment of the tribunal of public opinion.⁸⁸

In this manner, the radicals aimed to reshape the very notion of political representation by highlighting a novel connection between individuals and the public.

Conclusions

The concept of popularity occupied a central role in the political discourse throughout the November Uprising. It served as both a mediator of political conflict and a conduit for the expression of novel ideas regarding political representation. Popularity, in this context, embodied democratic ideals by representing the will of previously unheard segments of the Polish population, notably the politically marginalized lower classes, especially in the capital city of Warsaw, which symbolized the urban Polish population in a larger sense. Moreover, it carried revolutionary implications, signifying the protest of the silent majority and the potential for systemic transformation, and evoking parallels with the French Revolution – a haunting spectre for the aristocratic governments of the early nineteenth century.

As demonstrated in this article, the changing perception of fame as the foundation of public individuality was the driving force that enabled popularity to assume these functions in the collective imagination. Popularity signified a break from the past, the discarding of the old notions of social distinction such as historical merits and titles, and with it the proud traditions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth upon which the ruling Polish elites had previously based their efforts to reconstruct the Polish state in 1807 and 1815. Despite initial attempts to marginalize it as a mere spectacle meant to pacify the masses, the radical discourse of the Uprising ultimately embraced the idea of popularity as a central component of their vision for a new, popularly supported political leadership. Outdated notions of honour and dignity as prerequisites for statesmanship, or aristocratic lineage as the sole qualification for the proper exercise of these traits, were gradually replaced by the idea that the public sphere served as the platform for the relationship between the individual and the public. Popularity, both feared and revered, epitomized this profound shift.

One of the most striking aspects of this transformation was the speed at which it occurred, taking less than a year during the course of the November Uprising. When compared to the longer-standing associations with the term 'popularity', the sudden shift in its interpretation becomes even more apparent. As mentioned earlier, before the insurrection, the term was not unfamiliar. For instance, Adam Czartoryski's father used it in his 'moral teachings' for the elite Warsaw School of Cadets as early as 1774, albeit in a more restricted context. Czartoryski reduced his writing about popularity to describing a proper attitude towards public applause, distinguishing between a 'patriotic' approach to popularity and one driven by self-interest. His pamphlet was only published in 1824, underlining its relevance to contemporary audiences.⁸⁹ Similarly, Niemcewicz, in recounting Nicholas I's visit to Warsaw, had no qualms about describing the Tsar as 'popular' due to his ability to mingle in the salons.⁹⁰ However, after the November Uprising, the connotations of popularity underwent a noticeable shift towards a more democratic and revolutionary association. This enduring connotation persisted into the 1830s and 1840s, as radicals continued to emphasize its significance while conservatives assigned blame for the country's misfortunes to the concept. In 1841, a conservative writer Teodor Morawski went so far as to historicize popularity as the perennial 'unhealed ulcer of every republic', portraying it as a culprit in the Commonwealth's downfall.⁹¹

This enduring revolutionary interpretation of popularity underscores the lasting legacy that the discourse of the November Uprising imprinted on the concept. In turn, this permanence stemmed from the higher significance of the concept than previously assumed. While it might be tempting to relegate 'popularity' to the status of a historical constant or to a mere reflection of early celebrity culture, the above analysis has shown otherwise. Popularity has historically evolved, and its evolution constituted a parallel rather than a by-product of the rise of celebrity. Indeed, it is more fitting to view both 'popularity' and 'celebrity' as analogous expressions of the broader socio-cultural transformation of attitudes towards fame and public individuality. What celebrity entailed in the cultural sphere, popularity did in the political one, catalysing new attitudes towards revolution and democratization.

The seemingly sudden transformation of 'popularity' into a concept brimming with these meanings during the 1830–31 insurrection was far from coincidental. Instead, the discourse of popularity signified the reawakening of latent cultural attitudes that had long been germinating, in contrast to the often-held belief about the nineteenth-century stagnation and exclusive repression of notions of the public in Poland. As the Uprising dismantled the shackles of censorship and repression, these dormant cultural forces finally found their voice, sparking a dynamic and abrupt transformation in political perspectives. In this light, the November Uprising transcends its role as a singular event in Poland's history and becomes a pivotal moment that not only reshaped the political landscape of its time, but also found its place in the broader narrative of Poland's sociocultural evolution.

Notes

1. For a comprehensive description of celebrity as a socio-cultural phenomenon between 1750 and 1850, see Lilti, *The Invention of Celebrity*. The history of celebrity is a broader field, the most recent trends of which in regard to the revolutionary era have been described in Wanko, “Celebrity Studies in the Long Eighteenth Century”; and Wesołowski, “History of Celebrity Branching Out.”
2. As per theses put forth in: Lilti, *The Invention of Celebrity*, 177–93; Bell, *Men on Horseback*; and Morgan, *Celebrities, Heroes and Champions*. For a broader discussion of the historical relationship between celebrity and democracy, see Braudy, *Frenzy of Renown*, 315–89; and Morgan, “Celebrity.”
3. This contrast was crucial in Lilti’s *The Invention of Celebrity*, esp., 4–9. In the era, the most clearly stated of such distinctions between different kinds of fame were made by William Hazlitt and Germaine de Staël, the differences between which have been well summarized in Brock’s *The Feminization of Fame, 1750–1850*, 169–93.
4. In this context, the discourse described here can be seen as complementing a recent study of the evolving parliamentary language related to political representation during the Uprising, namely Kuligowski and Marzec’s “Who May Represent a Nation in Upheaval?”
5. Here I allude to the notion of ‘prefigurative politics’, that is, modes of social organization aimed to reflect the future society sought by the group as conceptualized by Boggs in “Revolutionary Process, Political Strategy.”
6. For an overview, see Kieniewicz, Zachorski, and Zajewski, *Trzy powstania narodowe, 277–9*. To enhance accessibility for English-language readers, I will include references to works on the November Uprising in English whenever appropriate.
7. Łepkowski, “Robotnicy i plebs Warszawy w powstaniu listopadowym”; Mańkowski, “Zagadnienie istoty klasowej plebsu w okresie Powstania Listopadowego”; and Leslie, *Polish Politics and the Revolution of November 1830*. To probe the much more empirical discussion at the time, see, for instance: Zajewski, “Uwagi o celach powstania listopadowego.”
8. In a somewhat striking contrast to a strand of English-language scholarship, which has consistently underlined its powerful reception abroad and sometimes presented it as part of broader European ‘media event’. For instance, see: Wiczerzak, “The Polish Insurrection of 1830–1831”; and Schmidt-Funke, “The Revolution of 1830.”
9. Consider the novelty of discussions had during the so-called Great Sejm of 1788–92, especially under the lens of the evolving fundamental notions of the ‘public’ and the criticism of ‘aristocracy’: Butterwick, “Political Discourses of the Polish Revolution, 1788–92.”
10. On the troubled evolution of ‘aristocratic prestige’ in Poland, see: Getka-Kenig, “The Genesis of Aristocracy in Congress Poland”; and Czuby, *The Duchy of Warsaw, 1807–1815*, esp. 139–68.
11. It is challenging to pinpoint a single significant marker in assessing this development. Between 1795 and 1830, the Polish book market expanded nearly fourfold, and the number of political newspaper titles increased dramatically. During the Uprising, the number of newspaper issues in circulation suddenly surged from typically less than 1000 per title to some titles reaching as many as 8000 issues. See: Łojek, “Prasa i opinia publiczna Warszawy przed powstaniem listopadowym”; Łojek, “Polityczna rola prasy polskiej 1661–1831”; and Anculewicz, “Rozwój prenumerat gazet i czasopism w Królestwie Polskim.”
12. For the etymology of the word ‘popular’, see Williams, *Keywords*, 198–9. For French definitions in the era, see Féraud, *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française*, 208–9; and *Encyclopédie*, 87.
13. Linde, *Słownik języka polskiego*, 921.
14. See Chase, “Popular Politics.”
15. For a broader discussion of this change in meaning, see Lilti, *The Invention of Celebrity*, 177–93.

16. While this theme has not been satisfactorily explored yet, historians are generally aware of the fact. See Zajewski, *Walki wewnętrzne ugrupowań politycznych*, 41–3, 155–7.
17. The ancient notion of revolution has been significantly redefined in the early-modern era so as to signify an essential epochal transformation rather than just a rebellion. Its perception and political use have been connected to political affiliation before, particularly in regard to the English Revolution as well as the American and French Revolutions. See: Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, esp. 203–23; Rachum, “The Meaning of ‘Revolution’”; and Rachum, “*Revolution*.”
18. Czuby, *Zasada ‘dwóch sumień’*.
19. Zajewski, *Walki wewnętrzne ugrupowań politycznych*, 33–56.
20. This was one of the major themes in the conservative journals that appeared during the Uprising, such as *Polak Sumienny*. For a radical voice against the panic, see Mochnacki’s pamphlets *Co rozumieć przez rewolucję w Polsce*, esp. 9–15; and *Czy może być kontrrewolucja w Warszawie?* esp. 3 and 5.
21. Zamoyski, *Jenerał Zamoyski*, 418–19. Cf. Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego w roku 1830 i 1831*, 68.
22. Bartkowski, *Wspomnienia z powstania 1831*, 259–60.
23. Gawroński, *Pamiętnik r. 1830–31*, 193.
24. The memory of the French Revolution was revived on the eve of the Uprising within the public discussion over the recent July Revolution in Paris and the Belgian Revolution. See Łojek, “Prasa i opinia publiczna Warszawy przed powstaniem listopadowym”; Milewicz, “The Legacy of the French Revolution.”
25. Zajewski, “Ideologia i rola polityczna ‘Nowej Polski’.”
26. It effected in the rising nationalization of the lower classes during the Uprising. See Milewicz, “National Identification in Pre-Industrial Communities.”
27. Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki z 1830–1831 roku*, 134.
28. Gawroński, *Pamiętnik*, 32–4.
29. Dembowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 11–12.
30. Lelewel, *Delegowani w Wierzbnie*, 8.
31. For an account of these relationships in English, see Brykczynski, “Prince Adam Czartoryski as a Liminal Figure.”
32. See Kizwalter, *Kryzys Oświecenia a początki konserwatyzmu polskiego*.
33. Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki*, 44.
34. Zajewski, *Walki wewnętrzne ugrupowań politycznych*, 6–7.
35. For revealing comments on political insiders, see Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki*, 48; and Dembowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 34, 37, 40.
36. Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 57–60.
37. *Ibid.*, 65, 85.
38. Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki*, 49–50. After the Administrative Council met with the delegation of the Patriotic Society supposedly representing popular demands, Niemcewicz made a point in his daily journal that he ‘kept away from these people’, but taunted one of his colleagues who ‘fawned over them and flattered them, always trembling for his pension and bending under any wind’ (50–2). Similarly, on Niemcewicz and the crowds, see: Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 63.
39. Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki*, 122–3. Compare to Dembowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 115. The same event as reported by newspapers: *Nowa Polska* no. 131 (16 May 1831).
40. For the most recent biography of Chłopicki, see Szyndler, *Dyktator*.
41. Zamoyski, *Jenerał Zamoyski*, 11–13.
42. Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 76, 109; Gawroński, *Pamiętnik*, 29; and Zamoyski, *Jenerał Zamoyski*, esp. 12.
43. Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 142–50; and Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki*, 53–5. The situation was reported on a daily basis by *Polak Sumienny* in nos 5, 6 and esp. 7 (11 December 1830).
44. Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 246–53.

45. Reactions ranged from conservatives' disappointment as described in Gawroński, *Pamiętnik*, 29, to the radical's outrage, e.g. *Nowa Polska* no. 15 (January 19, 1831).
46. Compare Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 317–21; and Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki*, 78–80.
47. *Nowa Polska* no. 26 (January 30, 1831).
48. See Kraushar, *Wolność druku i dziennikarstwo warszawskie w czasach listopadowych*, esp. 4–11. While attempts by the state to control public opinion have been present throughout history, the idea of creating a specific 'ministry' dedicated to it amounts to an interesting Polish innovation.
49. Dembowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 126–8; Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki*, 71; and Zamoyski, *Jenerał Zamoyski*, 74–8.
50. Dembowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 71–5 presents a list of such popular people, including Ostrowski, Lelewel, Mochnacki, Bronikowski and Szembek.
51. For instance, in the first days of the Uprising Gawroński described Lelewel respectfully, as 'a man known from his literary works, eager, industrious, and hard-working, and to add to that he gained a great popularity among the common people, especially as a professor among the young academicians'. See Gawroński, *Pamiętnik*, 17.
52. Słomkowska, "Uwagi o dziennikarzach w 1831 roku," esp. 42–3; and Więckowska, *Joachim Lelewel*, 103–8. Within celebrity studies, there is a fairly established tradition of noting the mechanisms through which literary celebrities could transform their 'attention capital' into a political one. See the recent volume edited by Sandra Mayer and Ruth Scobie, *Authorship, Activism, and Celebrity*, which alludes to the revolutionary period in several essays.
53. See Lelewel, *Pamiętnik z roku 1830–31*, v–vi.
54. Więckowska, *Joachim Lelewel*, 110–11.
55. See Lelewel, *Delegowani w Wierzbnie*.
56. According to Dembowski, Lelewel was responsible for the dismissal of unpopular members of the council such as Fredro and Rautenztrauch and blocked his own appointment for state treasurer: Dembowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 40, 61–5, 182, 346. Similarly, Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki*, 121–2; and Gawroński, *Pamiętnik*, 215–19.
57. Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 362–4.
58. Więckowska, *Joachim Lelewel*, 125. Notably, it is an unresolved matter of Polish history whether Lelewel actually participated in the intrigue.
59. As vividly described by Dembowski, *Moje wspomnienia*, 57–8; and Zamoyski, *Jenerał Zamoyski*, 379–80 and 1–3.
60. Gawroński, *Pamiętnik*, 222–3; and Zamoyski, *Jenerał Zamoyski*, 74.
61. Zamoyski, at the time working closely with Chłopicki, provides more similar examples in *Jenerał Zamoyski*, 15–16.
62. Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 363.
63. This distinction between the appropriate and inappropriate ways of winning people's favours largely aligns with Lilti's notions on the difference between 'celebrity' and 'glory'. See Lilti, *The Invention of Celebrity*, 4–7.
64. For one, this perception resulted in the lionization of imprisoned conspirators such as Walerian Łukasiński or the Philarets. See Borowczyk, *Rekonstrukcja procesu filomatów i filaretów*.
65. Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 280–1.
66. See Bortnowski, "Kaliszanie w latach 1830–1831."
67. See Kukiel, "Lelewel, Mickiewicz and the Underground Movements."
68. Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 111–12.
69. *Nowa Polska* no. 33 (February 6, 1831).
70. Consider Mochnacki's comments on Lelewel's aims in his *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 157–9.

71. Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 159–60 quotes Lelewel in a footnote. Mochnacki used parts of Lelewel’s memoir that were not published, but only existed in the manuscript in 1834.
72. Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 355.
73. In the proclamation issued on 30 November 1830 (see “Proklamacja rządowa”).
74. Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 127–30. Cf. Dembowski’s rendition in *Moje wspomnienia*, 66–7.
75. Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 132–4. However, he did not go without some fight, publishing several notes in an attempt to explain himself in *Polak Sumienny* no. 4 and no. 18.
76. While calls for unity under the ruling government were a theme for *Polak Sumienny*, particular calls for trust in the ‘historical greatness’ of Chłopicki, Czartoryski and Niemcewicz appeared in its first issues: no. 1 (December 2, 1830), no. 2 (December 3, 1830).
77. In addition, some titles had been used symbolically by the Lithuanian magnate families claiming descendancy from Lithuania’s Grand Duke Gediminas. See the classic work by Jedlicki, *Klejnot i bariery społeczne*, 8–11.
78. For instance, *Nowa Polska* no. 13 (January 17, 1831) features a note saying: ‘Where are the counts nowadays? Since the revolution, we have seen no signatures with a “count” in the name; certainly, some sins must weigh on the title.’
79. *Nowa Polska* nos 75, 78, 84, 85.
80. Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki*, 142.
81. Gawroński, *Pamiętnik*, 30.
82. *Nowa Polska* no. 33 (February 6, 1831).
83. *Nowa Polska* no. 67 (March 12, 1831). The French wording was present in the original text.
84. *Nowa Polska* no. 26 (January 30, 1831), the article titled ‘Terroryzm nieracjonalności i politycznego obskurantyzmu.’
85. *Monitor Warszawski* no. 90 (November 20, 1824).
86. *Monitor Warszawski* no. 59 (May 15, 1826). The details of this semantic shift have been analysed by me in another, unfortunately yet unpublished paper.
87. Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego*, 88. This reflected the contemporary discussions about the notion of political representation in the revolutionary era (see: Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 224–51; and Kuligowski and Marzec, “Who May Represent a Nation in Upheaval?”); however, it added to it an important dimension connected to the public sphere.
88. *Nowa Polska* no. 12 (January 16, 1831).
89. Czartoryski, *Prawidła moralne dla Szkoły Rycerskiej*, 59–63.
90. Niemcewicz in *Pamiętniki*, 25.
91. Morawski, *Przymówienie się w Towarzystwie Literackiem Polskiem*, 3. Morawski later developed the idea in his *Rozmowy tułackie*, 14, 50–7.

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