

The Poetical Works of  
TARAS  
SHEVCHENKO

THE KOBZAR



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The river to the blue sea flows  
But flows not back again!  
The Cossack seeks his fortune too,  
But all his search is vain.  
Wide in the world the Cossack goes,  
And there the blue sea roars,—  
The Cossack's heart is boisterous too,  
This question it explores:

“Where have you gone without farewell?  
To whom has all been left—  
Of father and old mother now  
And of your maid bereft?  
These alien folk have alien hearts;  
It’s hard with them to live;  
No one is here to share one’s tears  
Or gentle words to give.”  
The Cossack haunts the farther coast,—  
And still the blue seas roar.  
He hoped to find his fortune there,  
But met with sorrow sore.  
And while the cranes in coveys seek  
The ocean’s farther bournes,  
The Cossack weeps—the beaten paths  
Are overgrown with thorns.

*St. Petersburg, 1838*

THE NIGHT OF TARAS<sup>11</sup>TO P. M. MARTOS<sup>12</sup>

A kobzar<sup>13</sup> at the crossroads sits  
 And plays to pass the hours;  
 Young men and women round him seem  
 To bloom like poppy flowers.  
 The kobzar plays and blithely sings:  
 In words the tale is taught  
 How Mongols, Poles, and Muscovites  
 Have with the Cossacks fought,  
 How early on a Sunday morn  
 A crowd has made a rally  
 To bury a young Cossack bold  
 Deep in a fair, green valley.  
 The kobzar sings so lustily  
 Misfortune seems to smile:

“There was a time when Hetmans<sup>14</sup> ruled—  
 Lost is that ancient style;  
 There was a time when we were lords,  
 But gone are all those days . . .  
 Yet Cossack glory we recall  
 In never-ending praise . . .  
 O thou Ukraine, my own Ukraine,  
 Dear mother past belief,  
 When I recall thee, native land,  
 My heart is pained with grief!  
 What happened to our Cossack realm,  
 Its leaders red of cloak?

<sup>11</sup>Hetman Taras Fedorovich, known better by the surname Triasilo which he acquired among the Cossacks. In 1630 he led his troops in rebellion against the Poles who then held sway in Ukraine and sought to Polishize the Ukrainian population by repressing the Orthodox religion and denying the people the use of their churches. These were being turned over to the Uniates (those Ukrainians who accepted the Union with the Roman Catholic Church, effected in the town of Berest, Western Ukraine, in 1596). The night in question marked the end of the battle in which the Cossacks defeated the Poles who had been besieging them in the vicinity of the town of Pereyaslav.

<sup>12</sup>A Ukrainian landlord who encouraged Shevchenko to publish his first *The Kobzar* in 1840. See Introduction, p. xiv.

<sup>13</sup>See fn. 10.

<sup>14</sup>Military commanders of Cossack troops and, later, heads of the Ukrainian Cossack State. The name is derived from the German *Hauptmann* (captain, chief).

Where are our fate and freedom now,  
 The standards of our folk?  
 Where are they all? Consumed in flames.  
 Or did the wide blue sea  
 Drown all thy mountains in its depths,  
 Thy mounds<sup>15</sup> sublimity?  
 The hills are mute; the sea roars on;  
 The mounds in sadness stand;  
 Over the Cossack's children now  
 There rules an evil band!  
 Roar then, O sea! Be mute, ye hills!  
 Blow, wind, across the plain!  
 Ye children of the Cossacks, weep!  
 Your destiny is vain!

"From Liman's<sup>16</sup> shore there lifts a cloud,<sup>17</sup>  
 Another from the plain:<sup>18</sup>  
 Ukraine is languishing in grief,  
 Her destiny is vain!  
 Like an abandoned child in woe  
 Our land must tearful lie.  
 Nobody comes to give her help . . .  
 The wearied Cossacks die;  
 The glory wanes, the land declines;  
 Where shall men turn for grace?  
 Unbaptized<sup>19</sup> up to manhood grow  
 The children of our race,  
 For out of wedlock men must live;  
 Without a priest they die;  
 Our faith to Jewry<sup>20</sup> has been sold  
 And locked our churches lie!  
 Like blackbirds covering a field,  
 The Poles and Uniates<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Burial mounds in many of which Cossacks were buried and, with them, symbolically, Ukrainian freedom. For that reason, Shevchenko considered them as sacred. In his time they were still quite numerous on the vast Ukrainian steppes.

<sup>16</sup>The estuary of the Dnieper.

<sup>17</sup>The Tartars from the south.

<sup>18</sup>The Poles from the west.

<sup>19</sup>Unbaptized, because the Poles had confiscated the Orthodox churches.

<sup>20</sup>The Poles often made Jews intendants in occupied territories, and gave them orders to prevent the Orthodox from worshipping in churches other than Uniate.

<sup>21</sup>See fn. 11.

Come swooping down—to save us all  
 No word of counsel waits.  
 Then Nalivayko<sup>22</sup> raised his voice—  
 His tailor-band soon fled!  
 Cossack Pavliuha<sup>23</sup> next was heard—  
 But he in turn was sped!  
 Taras Triasilo then spoke out  
 With tears of bitter dole:  
 ‘Alas! Alack! My poor Ukraine  
 Is trampled by the Pole!’

“Taras Triasilo wagged his tongue—  
 Our true faith made him do it;  
 The dark-blue eagle raised his voice  
 And caused the Poles to rue it!  
 And thus did Pan<sup>24</sup> Triasilo speak:  
 ‘Have done with grieving prattle!  
 Let us go forth, my trusty friends  
 And meet the Poles in battle!’

“For many a day and many a night  
 He carries on that war;  
 From Liman to Trubailo’s<sup>25</sup> bank,  
 The plain is wet with gore.  
 The Cossack brave was wearied  
 And fell in deep despair;  
 The villain Koniexpolski<sup>26</sup>  
 Rejoiced with pleasure rare;  
 He gathered all the szlachta<sup>27</sup>  
 To revel in delight!  
 But Taras called his Cossacks  
 For counsel in his plight:

<sup>22</sup>Severin Nalivayko, one of the Cossack leaders who at the close of the sixteenth century led unsuccessful rebellions against the Poles in western parts of Ukraine. His troops were called “tailor-bands” because his trade was that of a tailor before he joined the Cossacks. He was finally captured by the Poles, who, after subjecting him to savage tortures, quartered him.

<sup>23</sup>Pavlo Mikhnovich But, nicknamed Pavliuk by the Cossacks, another insurrectionist leader whose anti-Polish campaigns likewise ended unsuccessfully. He, too, was captured by the Poles and tortured to death. “Pavliuha” is an augmentative of Pavliuk.

<sup>24</sup>Generally Slavic for “lord,” “master.”

<sup>25</sup>A small tributary to the Dnieper.

<sup>26</sup>Commander of the Polish troops.

<sup>27</sup>Polish term, pronounced *shliakhta*, Polish nobility and gentry; here, by extension, Polish troops.

'Otamans<sup>28</sup> bold, my comrades,  
 Brothers-in-arms, I vow!  
 Give me your own good counsel  
 What we shall venture now.  
 The fiendish Poles are overjoyed,  
 On us confusion falls . . .'  
 'Why, let the rascals celebrate,  
 Carouse in drunken brawls!  
 Till sunset let unmeasured drink  
 Make imbecile their souls;  
 Our mother, Night, will aid us then  
 To ferret out the Poles.'

"The sun had set beyond the hill;  
 Bright stars to shine begin;  
 And like a cloud, the Cossack crowd  
 On all sides hemmed them in.  
 The moon rose in the heavens—  
 A cannon-shot roared out;  
 The noble Poles were roused from sleep  
 With no escape from rout!  
 The noble Poles were roused from sleep  
 But up they could not rise:  
 Before the dawn a slaughtered host  
 Upon the meadow lies.

"Like a red, twisting serpent,  
 The Alta bears the news,<sup>29</sup>  
 To bid the ravens of the fields  
 A feast of Poles to use.  
 Black ravens to that noble meal  
 Came flying, ranks on ranks;  
 While the assembled Cossack troops  
 Gave the Almighty thanks.  
 The ravens screamed, and plucked and ate  
 The corpses' eyeballs bright,  
 While the bold Cossacks raised a song  
 To celebrate that night,

<sup>28</sup>An equivalent to "lieutenant."

<sup>29</sup>These two lines particularly impressed Martos, and in them he recognized Shevchenko as a great poet. The Alta is a tributary to the Trubailo. The battle took place between these two streams. The red serpent was the Alta which, reddened by the blood of the Poles, bore the news of the Polish defeat to Pereyaslav.



That sombre night that dripped with blood  
 In bringing glory deep  
 To Taras and his Cossack troop,  
 While Poles were lulled to sleep.

“Along that river, in a field,  
 A darksome mound is seen;  
 Where once the Cossack life-blood flowed—  
 The grass is bright and green.<sup>30</sup>  
 A raven perches on the mound,  
 And caws from hunger’s pain . . .  
 A Cossack dreams of Hetmans’ days  
 And sheds his tears again.  
 There was a time when Cossack fame  
 And freedom reigned in state—  
 The fame still shines, but freedom’s cause  
 Has met an evil fate.  
 There was a time when we were lords,  
 But gone are all those days . . .  
 Yet Cossack glory we recall  
 In never-ending praise.”

The kobzar ceased, in sorrow plunged:  
 His hands no more can play!  
 Young men and women round him pause  
 To wipe their tears away.  
 Along the street the kobzar sad  
 Struck up a ditty strong;  
 While young lads danced a squatting dance  
 In concert with his song:

“Let all be as it is, in fact and form!  
 Stay in your ingle-nook and keep you warm!  
 I’ll seek a tavern out to soothe my life,  
 And there perhaps, in drinking, find my wife,  
 And making merry with her, at our ease,  
 We’ll scoff at last at all our enemies.”

*St. Petersburg, November 6, 1838*

<sup>30</sup>Green, not red, because in the minstrel’s (Shevchenko’s) days nobody cared to fight for Ukraine’s freedom any longer.

IVAN PIDKOVA<sup>31</sup>TO V. I. STERNBERG<sup>32</sup>

There was a time in our Ukraine  
 When cannon roared with glee,  
 A time when Zaporozhian men  
 Excelled in mastery!  
 They lived as masters—freedom's joy  
 And glory were their gain:  
 All that has passed, and what is left  
 Is grave-mounds<sup>33</sup> on the plain!  
 High are those ancient tumuli  
 In which were laid to rest  
 The Cossacks' fair white bodies  
 In silken cerements dressed.  
 High are those mounds, serene and dark  
 Like mountains they appear,  
 Their gentle whispers to the wind  
 Of freedom's fate we hear.  
 These witnesses of ancient fame  
 Hold converse with the breeze;  
 The Cossacks' grandson reaps the grass  
 And sings old memories.  
 There was a time when in Ukraine  
 Even distress would dance,  
 And sorrow in a tavern drank  
 In honeyed brandy's trance.

<sup>31</sup>A renowned Cossack leader in the latter half of the sixteenth century. He warred against the Poles in the western parts of Ukraine, and at one time, by means of conquest, briefly usurped the kingship in Moldavia. He was captured and beheaded by the Poles in 1578. It has not been historically established that he led a raid on Tsarhorod (Constantinople, the Emperor's City, now Istanbul).

<sup>32</sup>Sternberg was of German extraction. He studied with Shevchenko at the Academy of Art, and for a time shared the latter's living quarters there. It was he who introduced Shevchenko to Western literatures by taking him to literary soirées arranged by certain German families living in St. Petersburg.

<sup>33</sup>See fn. 15.

There was a time when life was good  
 In that Ukraine of ours . . .  
 Recall it then—perhaps the heart  
 May briefly bathe in flowers.

## II

A murky cloud from Liman's shore  
 Covers the sun from sight;  
 The sea is like an angry beast  
 That groans and howls with might.  
 It floods the mighty Danube's mouth.  
 "My fellows, come with me  
 Within our barks! The waves are wild.  
 Let's have a merry spree!"

The Zaporozhians rushed out;  
 The stream with ships was roiled.  
 "Roar on, O sea!" they all sang out,  
 As waves beneath them boiled.  
 Billows like mountains round them surged,  
 They saw no land, no sky.  
 Yet not a Cossack heart grew faint,  
 Their eagerness ran high.  
 A bold kingfisher flies o'erhead  
 As on they sail and sing;  
 The brave otaman<sup>34</sup> in the van  
 Leads on their mustering.  
 He strides the deck, and in his mouth  
 His pipe grows cold from thought;  
 He casts his glances here and there  
 Where exploits may be wrought.  
 He curled his long black whiskers,  
 He twirled his forelock free,  
 Then raised his cap—the vessels stopped:  
 "Death to the enemy!  
 Not to Sinope,<sup>35</sup> comrades,  
 Brave lads beyond all doubt!  
 We'll drive on full to Istanbul  
 To seek the Sultan out!"

<sup>34</sup>Chieftain.

<sup>35</sup>A Turkish coastal town on the southeastern shore of the Black Sea.

“Well spoken, our fine chieftain!”  
They roared in chorus back.  
“I thank you, lads!” He donned his cap.  
Again the seaward track  
Beneath their keels began to boil;  
And once more thoughtfully  
He paced the deck in mute content  
And gazed upon the sea.<sup>36</sup>

*St. Petersburg, 1839*

<sup>36</sup>The poem illustrates the blind obedience with which the Cossacks followed their leader wherever his whim directed him. It appears not to have been completed, and seems to be the precursor of “Hamaliya,” p. 143.

1841

THE HAYDAMAKS<sup>60</sup>TO V. I. HRIHOROVICH,<sup>61</sup> IN REMEMBRANCE OF APRIL 22, 1838

All things must ever flow and pass away . . .  
 Whence did they come and whither have they vanished?  
 Nor fool nor sage an answer can convey.  
 Things come by life, by dying they are banished.  
 For one thing blooms; one withers now forever,  
 Its yellowed leaves are scattered by the blast.  
 Suns will still rise, nor cease their vast endeavour,  
 The bright-red stars flow on as in the past;  
 And you, O silver moon, with visage shining,  
 Will rise and wander in the azure sky,  
 Peering in troughs and wells with eye designing,  
 Painting the sea with glory from on high.  
 As once you shone on Babylon of old,  
 You'll light our folk in ages yet untold.  
 Immortal Moon! . . . I often have desired  
 To speak with you as with a sister dear,  
 Singing you verses that you have inspired.  
 Advise me—for my sorrow's weight I fear.  
 Not quite alone am I, nor indigent:  
 My heart has children,<sup>62</sup> though their fate's uncertain.  
 Shall they within my soul be basely pent?  
 Relief may lie beyond the future's curtain

<sup>60</sup>A derogatory name applied to those rebel bands who attacked and pillaged the estates of the Polish landlords in Ukraine. When the economic oppression became more intense, and the persecution of the Orthodox church increased, these bands were swelled by the outraged rural population (mostly serfs) and Cossacks. In this poem Shevchenko deals with the third such insurrection, which occurred in 1768 (the other two took place in 1734 and 1750 respectively). The term "haydamak" derives from Turkish, and means robber, pillager. The cause of the rebels being just, they considered it an honour to bear that appellation.

<sup>61</sup>V. I. Hrihorovich, of Ukrainian extraction, was the secretary of the St. Petersburg Academy of Art. It was he more than any other who was instrumental in assisting Shevchenko to gain his emancipation on the date indicated. Having such an influential protector, Shevchenko here makes bold to ask him to protect his "children," the haydamaks, as they (in this poem) venture among the public.

<sup>62</sup>The haydamaks, in this poem, and his verses in general.

If someone reads these tearful words of mine  
 Which once my heart so fervently poured forth  
 In secret. Nay, to hide them I decline.  
 My soul is living and its seed has worth!  
 Like the blue skies that without bounds extend,  
 My soul has no beginning and no end.  
 Where will it thrive? Vain question, idly hurled!  
 Whoe'er you are, preserve my soul's white ember!  
 None without fame would gladly leave this world.  
 Maids of my heart, do you at least remember!  
 My soul was fond of you, my rosy flowers,  
 And of your destiny she loved to sing.  
 Then rest, my children, till the dawning's hours!  
 A proper guide<sup>63</sup> for you I'll seek to bring.

O sons of mine, O haydamaks,  
 The world is vast and free,—  
 Go forth my sons and roam about  
 To seek your destiny!  
 O sons of mine, who yet are small  
 And inarticulate!<sup>64</sup>  
 Who in this world, all motherless,  
 Will greet your sorry state?  
 O sons of mine, young eaglets all,  
 Go, fly to our Ukraine!  
 There, rather than 'neath alien skies,  
 'Twere best to bear your pain.  
 There, sympathetic souls you'll find  
 Who will not let you die;  
 But here . . . it is so hard,<sup>65</sup> my boys!  
 If as their guests you hie,  
 They will but mock you when you meet.  
 By censors this is done,  
 Enlightened all, with books in print,  
 They scold the very sun:<sup>66</sup>  
 "In the wrong quarter see it rise;  
 It shines with beams untrue;

<sup>63</sup>Hrihorovich.

<sup>64</sup>Shevchenko still is uncertain about the value of his poetic effort, and fears it may as yet be immature.

<sup>65</sup>Referring to the harsh treatment *The Kobzar* of 1840 received from the Russian critics.

<sup>66</sup>Spoken sarcastically of the "learned" critics who find fault even with the best.

It would be better if the sun . . ."  
 So what is there to do?  
 We must pay heed to them because  
 Perhaps it does not rise  
 As scientists have given rules.  
 These censors must be wise!  
 What, verses, will they say of you?  
 Your fate will make me blench!  
 For they will scoff and throw you down  
 In scorn beneath a bench.  
 "There let them lie," they'll say, "until  
 A bard comes, noble-souled,  
 To tell us in our Russian tongue  
 About these hetmans bold.  
 He is a fool who tells these tales  
 In dead Ukrainian,<sup>67</sup>  
 And brings before us in bast shoes  
 Some nondescript young man.  
 A fool is he! At school he learned  
 But little for his pain:  
 Of Cossacks and the hetman age  
 Only the mounds remain—  
 And nothing else; now even these  
 Are dug from stern to stem;  
 And he, forsooth, would have us hear  
 While beggars sing of them!  
 It is quite useless, my good friend!  
 If payment would be yours  
 Along with certain fame to boot,  
 You'll sing of court amours,  
 Of maids in love, of dogs and steeds  
 That hunt across the lea—  
 Glory lies there! But no, he sings  
 About the murmuring sea,  
 And weeps, besides; about him press  
 Rude rustics in a throng

<sup>67</sup>This and what follows is Shevchenko's answer to his detractors who advised him to write in Russian and not in a "dead" language; to bring out in his poems characters worthy of being treated in such a medium, and not common, ragged rustics such as appear in *The Haydamaks*; and to forget the Cossack "ignoble" past and deal with "courtly" themes and subjects, such as were then cultivated in Russian literature.

In homespun coats. . . ." Quite true, ye wise!  
 Your wisdom could be wrong!  
 You've given me a sheepskin coat;  
 Alas, it does not fit.  
 The garment of your own wise speech  
 Is lined with falsehood's wit.

Forgive me! Clamour as you please!  
 I'll heed you not at all,  
 And shall not even ask you in,  
 For you are wise men all  
 And I am but a fool; I'll sit  
 In my own hut alone,  
 And there I'll sing to please myself,  
 And like a small child moan.  
 I'll sing about the sea that roars  
 And of the wind that blows,  
 Of the dark steppe and of the mound  
 That tells the wind its woes.  
 And as I sing, my mind will see  
 The high mound open wide  
 And Zaporozhians flood the steppe  
 In a great human tide;  
 Otamans on their coal-black steeds  
 Before the bunchuks<sup>68</sup> rear,  
 While rapids roar among the reeds  
 Between the margins sheer  
 And groan and sing in tones of wrath  
 An anthem fierce and bleak!  
 I'll hark to them, and grieve awhile,  
 And to the ancients speak:  
 "Why are you grieving thus, O sires?"  
 —"Sad are the times, my son!  
 Dnieper is angry; our Ukraine  
 Feels tears of anguish run. . . ."  
 I, too, must weep. In proud array  
 With banners and with swords,  
 The hetmans and otamans walk,  
 The captains and the lords,

<sup>68</sup>See fn. 55.



And all in gold, with stride superb  
     My cottage they salute,  
 And as beside me there they sit  
     Their converse is not mute,  
 Of how they built the mighty Sitch<sup>69</sup>  
     And laid its footings fast,  
 And how the Cossacks in their barks  
     Across the rapids passed,  
 And how they roamed the broad, blue sea  
     And burned old Scutari;<sup>70</sup>  
 And how they lit their pipes at fires  
     Where Poland paid the fee;  
 And how they came back to Ukraine,  
     And feasting turned to rout. . . .<sup>71</sup>  
 "Come, Kobzar, play! Innkeeper, pour!"—  
     Was their incessant shout.  
 The tavernkeeper knows his job  
     And pours without a pause;  
 The Kobzar strikes a tune up—all,  
     With tumult of applause,  
 Turn to a lively hopak dance  
     That makes Khortitsia<sup>72</sup> quake;  
 The tankard makes its endless rounds,  
     They drink without a break.  
 "Dance, man, and cast your cloak aside!  
     Dance like the prairie wind!  
 Play, Kobzar, play! Innkeeper, pour,  
     Till better days we find!"  
 With arms akimbo as they squat,  
     All in the dance are set:  
 "Go to it, fellows, good for you!  
     You will be masters yet."  
 Otamans at the feasting talk  
     And gravely pace the lea  
 As if in solemn conference . . .  
     The illustrious company

<sup>69</sup>See fn. 40.

<sup>70</sup>A suburb of Istanbul, on the Asian side.

<sup>71</sup>From here on Shevchenko gives his imagination full rein.

<sup>72</sup>An island on the Dnieper where the first Cossack (Zaporozhian, meaning beyond the rapids) Sitch was located.

At last could not forbear to dance,  
 Their legs forgot their years;  
 While I cast glances, look about,  
 And smile amid my tears,—  
 I look, and smile, and wipe my tears away:  
 I am not lonely, here are hosts of friends!  
 In my low dwelling, as on prairies gay,  
 The Cossacks dance, the valley's mirth ascends;  
 In my low hut, the blue sea roars at play,  
 The mound is sad, the rustling poplar bends,  
 A maiden softly sings a love-lorn lay—  
 I am not lonely, here are hosts of friends.

There all my welfare, all my wealth,  
 And all my glory lie!

As for your counsels—many thanks  
 For reasoning so sly!

I, while I live, shall be content  
 With speech you scorn as dead;  
 In it I sing my grief and tears.

You your own ways may tread!  
 I go to see my children off  
 On travels long and hard.

Let them set out; perhaps they'll find  
 That ancient Cossack bard,  
 Who'll welcome these my children in  
 With hoary tears of joy.

In this I shall be satisfied:  
 My heart shall not be coy!

So, at my table as I sit

I ponder for their sakes:  
 Whom shall I ask? Who'll lead them on?  
 Outside the morning breaks,

The moon has set, the sun's ablaze,  
 The haydamaks have found me,  
 They've said their prayers and dressed themselves  
 And ranged themselves around me.

As sad as orphans do they stand  
 And mutely bend their heads:  
 "Ah, bless us, Father!" is their plea—  
 "Have pity on our dreads,

As into the wide world we go  
     To seek our destiny!"  
 —"Hold on! The world is not a hut,  
     And you are still but wee  
 And foolish boys. Who'll lead you on  
     To find a welcome due?  
 I am in trouble, children dear,  
     In grave distress for you!  
 I've nourished you, I've reared you up,  
     Now ready for your fate  
 Out in the world, but everyone  
     Is now so literate—  
 Forgive me if I failed to school you.  
     As for myself, though flayed,  
 The flogging brought me literacy—  
     For thus are scholars made!  
 I know my letters, but still fail  
     To place the accent right.  
 What will they say to you? Come, sons,  
     Advice we must invite!  
 I have a spiritual sire<sup>73</sup>  
     (Although my own is dead);  
 He'll tell me what to do with you.  
     He knows in his own stead  
 How hard it is for orphaned waifs  
     Forth in this world to pace;  
 Moreover, he's a kindly soul  
     And of the Cossack race.  
 He'll not disown that blessed speech  
     In which his mother mild  
 Sang to him as she swaddled him  
     When he was but a child;  
 That blessed speech he'll not disown  
     In which a sightless bard  
 Sang sadly of our own Ukraine  
     Along the hedgerows hard.  
 He loves that idiom of truth  
     That was the Cossacks' glory.  
 He loves it well! Then come, my sons,  
     To seek his counsel hoary!

<sup>73</sup>Hrihorovich.

If he had not once met with me  
     Oppressed by all my woes,  
 Men would long since have buried me  
     Beneath these alien snows;  
 They would have buried me and said:  
     “He was a ne’er-do-well!”  
 It’s hard to bear life’s heaviness  
     Where none the cause can tell.  
 Come, little ones, all that is past  
     And I am still alive.  
 If in this bitter foreign land  
     He helped me to survive,  
 You, too, he’ll welcome as his own:  
     To greet you he’ll be fain;  
 And from him, having said your prayers,  
     You’ll set out for Ukraine!”  
 Our greetings, Sire! At this your door  
     We crave your fellowship.  
 Pray bless my little offspring all  
     To speed them on their trip!

*St. Petersburg, April 7, 1841*

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Poland, the land of Gentry,<sup>74</sup> lived  
     A lady much adored,—  
 She matched her strength with Muscovites,  
     The Sultan, and the Horde,  
 The Germans, too. Thus once it was . . .  
     But all things pass away.  
 The gentry boasted of their deeds  
     And feasted night and day  
 And mocked to scorn their hapless kings—  
     It was not Stephen<sup>75</sup> then,  
 Nor yet Sobieski,<sup>76</sup> mighty Jan,—  
     These were not common men,—

<sup>74</sup>Before her third partition in 1795, Poland, although nominally a kingdom, was actually ruled by her magnates and gentry wealthy landowners (*szlachta*) who, by the power of their individual veto, considered their elective kings as mere puppets, and often sent them packing.

<sup>75</sup>Stefan Batory of Hungary, king of Poland (1576–86).

<sup>76</sup>Jan Sobieski, king of Poland (1674–99) who, with the substantial aid of the Ukrainian Cossacks, defeated the Turks at the gates of Vienna in 1673.

But others. . . Mute and cowed they reigned;  
 The insults did not cease;  
 The seyms<sup>77</sup> and petty diets roared,  
 While neighbours held their peace  
 As they beheld the wretched kings  
 Go fleeting from the realm  
 And listened to the gentry shout  
 In tones that overwhelm:  
 "Ah, veto!<sup>78</sup> veto!" With a roar  
 Resound the gentry's words,  
 While magnates burn down many a home  
 And sharpen up their swords.  
 Year after year such riot ruled  
 Until to Warsaw came  
 Bold Poniatowski<sup>79</sup> as their king  
 And sought to end the shame.

His reign began; he straightway set his mind  
 To clip the gentry's wings—alas, he failed:  
 He felt—a mother towards her children—kind,  
 Yet one great purpose in his plans prevailed.  
 Only that one word "Veto" he desired  
 From the mad gentry's use to disengage,  
 But then . . . all Poland was to frenzy fired,  
 The gentry burst out shouting in a rage:

<sup>77</sup>Legislative assemblies. In the general political confusion in the middle of the eighteenth century, there existed over fifty such petty diets in Poland, each with magnified pretensions of its own.

<sup>78</sup>All decisions in the Polish *Seym* and provincial diets were to be passed unanimously. A single veto was enough to nullify even the most vital one.

<sup>79</sup>Stanislaw August Poniatowski (1764–95), the last Polish king, who in 1766 unsuccessfully attempted to abolish the nobility's power of veto. Since he favoured closer relations with Russia, the *szlachta* rebelled against him by organizing themselves into so-called "confederations" whose chief purpose, at first, was to preserve Poland from Russia and, of course, their own rights and privileges in Poland. In the beginning there were three main confederations, two of which were led by Jozef Pulawski and Michal Patz respectively. As time went on, other groups were formed, but certainly not to the extent of one hundred as Shevchenko implies. Failing in their purpose in Poland, the rebels, lacking money and supplies, scattered through Ukraine and the neighbouring territories of Lithuania and Moldavia, and became mere predatory hordes. Hence the re-emergence of the haydamaks and the insurrection of the Ukrainian peasant and Cossack population in Ukraine, particularly in the southeastern part of the Kiev region, in 1768. It was as a result of this political havoc that the third partition of Poland between Russia, Austria, and Prussia in 1795 was made possible.

“Upon our word of honour, he’s a knave!  
 A rogue he is, and Moscow’s hireling!”  
 From Patz clear to Pulawski swept a wave  
 Of trepidation like an angry Spring—  
 A hundred fierce confederations rave.

Through Poland and Volynia  
 These factions rage amain,  
 In Litva and Moldavia  
 And on through vast Ukraine.  
 They spread abroad and quite forget  
 Man’s liberty to keep;  
 They make the usurers their pals;  
 All things away they sweep.  
 Havoc and murder are their joy;  
 Churches they burn with zest . . .  
 And meanwhile all the haydamaks  
 Have had their weapons blest.

## II. YAREMA

“D’ye hear, Yarema? You’re a villain’s son!  
 Go now, and get the mare! And when that’s done,  
 Carry my wife her slippers, soft and loose,  
 And fetch a pail of water for my use!  
 Then sweep the floor! Bring wood in, many a piece!  
 Throw grain out for the turkeys and the geese!  
 Go to the stable then, to milk the cow,  
 Quickly, you scoundrel! . . . Wait a minute, now!  
 When you have done that, to Vilshana<sup>80</sup> speed  
 And tell the priest’s wife that her help I need.”

Off went Yarema, mournful, stooping low.  
 Thus early in the morning, even so,  
 The Jew browbeat the youth, a Cossack lad,  
 Who bent his back beneath his fortunes bad  
 And did not realize his wings had grown—  
 That had he wished, he might to heaven have flown.  
 Untaught, he bent his spine.

<sup>80</sup>A village a few miles north of Kiev.

God, mercy give!

How hard is life, yet how one longs to live!  
 How sweet it is to see the sunshine pouring,  
 To hear the blue sea murmuring or roaring,  
 A bird that chirps, a vale where rustlings move,  
 Or a young beauty singing in a grove . . .  
 Dear God, how sweet it is to live and love!

Yarema is an orphan, waif bereft:  
 No sister and no brother has he left!  
 Just a Jew's drudge, the lad untended grows,  
 And yet he blames no persons for his woes.  
 Why should he blame them? Do they know, perchance,  
 Who shall be kissed or tortured in life's dance?  
 Let them make merry! Fortune is their lot,  
 And a poor waif must take the fate he's got.  
 Often in silence he to tears will take,  
 And not because he feels his bosom ache:  
 But at recalling something sweet and fair . . .  
 Then back to work: one's fortune one must bear!  
 Yet what are parents, or a manor's art,  
 Without a lass with whom to share one's heart?  
 The waif Yarema warmly rich appears  
 In someone who can share his songs and tears.

Lovely hazel eyes there are  
 That like stars are shining;  
 Dainty white arms tenderly  
 Round his neck are twining;  
 There's a maiden's lovely heart,  
 Rare it is and good,  
 Ready still to weep or smile,  
 Answering his mood;  
 Ready still to smile or weep  
 Fainting or reviving,  
 Like a holy spirit's gleam  
 All his midnights shriving.

Such was Yarema at that time,  
 A waif most fortunate.  
 And such, young maids, was I of old<sup>81</sup> . . .  
 But changed is my estate!

<sup>81</sup>Here begins Shevchenko's long autobiographical aside.

Past are those days and vanished quite  
 Till not a trace remains.  
 My heart grows faint to think of them . . .  
 What cause my grief ordains?  
 Why has my happiness not lingered on?  
 It had been easier to weep things gone.  
 Men stole my luck, to heap their own luck high:  
 "Why needs he fortune? Let it buried lie,  
 He's rich enough without it!"

Yes, in patches,  
 And in my tears—unduly dried in snatches! . . .  
 My destiny! Where is thy tide compelling?  
 Return to me, come to my lowly dwelling,  
 At least in dreams . . . tears are my sleep dispelling!

Forgive me now, good people!  
 All is not sense I say,  
 But one's accursed misery  
 Is always in one's way.  
 Perhaps we yet shall meet again  
 While down the road I trudge  
 And follow on Yarema's track,  
 And yet . . . I cannot judge.  
 Where'er one turns, misfortune lies,  
 No shelter can be found:  
 "Wherever fortune tends," they say,  
 "There one must shift one's ground"—  
 Must shift in silence, and yet smile  
 That not a soul may know it—  
 The sorrow hidden in your heart—  
 And call on you to show it.  
 Not even lucky ones may dream  
 Of sharing in their favour.  
 While orphan lads can never hope  
 To sense its slightest savour!  
 It's hard to harp on such a theme,  
 Yet mute I cannot stay.  
 So pour it out, my tearful speech:  
 To dry those tears away



The sun's not hot enough. I'll share  
     The grief that from me falls  
 Not with a brother, sister, wife,  
     But with my own mute walls  
 On alien soil.<sup>82</sup> . . . Meanwhile my step  
     To seek the tavern tends  
 And see what's happening. The Jew  
     Is trembling as he bends  
 Above a wick and counts his coins  
     Beside an ample bed.  
 And on it, in the stifling heat,  
     Her slim white arms outspread,  
 A maiden lies uncovered there;  
     A flower in a field  
 She crimsons; and a parted blouse  
     Her bosom has revealed;  
 There in the downy bed she sleeps  
     In solitude, alone;  
 No young companion has the maid,  
     Her converse to make known.  
 She only whispers to herself . . .  
     Incomparably fair  
 The daughter is—the father seems  
     The Devil's greedy heir.  
 Some filthy quilts upon the floor  
     The Jew's old wife enclose.  
 Where is Yarema? With the bag,  
     He to Vilshana goes.

## III. THE CONFEDERATES

—“Open the door, you Jewish pup,  
 Or you'll be beaten! Open up!  
 Before he comes, break down the door!”  
 —“Wait just a minute, I implore,  
 I come at once!”  
     —“Now, whip the cuss!  
 Whip him! Would you make fun of us?  
 Or what's your game?”

<sup>82</sup>End of Shevchenko's aside.

—“In no such wise,  
Nay, God forbid! Just let me rise,  
Your Graces!” (*Whispering*, “Swines’ foul kin!”)  
—“Come, Colonel, smash the door right in!”

The door collapsed; the lash fell crack  
In stripes upon the Jew’s old back.  
—“Good evening, swine! Good evening, Jew!  
Hail, devil’s son, good day to you!”  
Thus on and on the lashing went,  
While the Jew stooped, his body bent.  
—“Stop jesting with me, gentlemen!”  
—“Good night to all within this den!  
Just lash the knave some more! . . . Enough!  
Excuse our call, you evil chough!  
And where’s your pretty daughter now?”  
—“My daughter, sirs, is dead, I vow!”  
—“Judas, you lie! Whip him again!”  
The lashes fall on him like rain.  
—“Alas, my lords, my friends so dear,  
I vow to you she is not here!”  
—“Scoundrel, you lie!”

—“God punish me  
If that’s not truth!”

—“Not God, but we.”  
—“Why should I hide my daughter, sirs,  
If she yet lived? May God’s own curse  
Afflict me if I lie!”

—“Hee-hee!  
The devil intones a litany.  
Now cross yourself!”

—“How do you do it?  
I don’t know how!”

—“Watch me, beshrew it!”  
A Pole’s hand marks the Cross’s pact,  
And the Jew imitates the act.  
“Bravo!” they cry, “We’ve christened him!  
This miracle has pleased our whim;  
Let’s top it by a drink with you!  
Come, do you hear us, christened Jew?  
Give us a drink!”

—“At once, at once!”

The Poles are fierce with growls and grunts;  
They bellow loud with bestial sounds  
While the full tankard makes its rounds.  
“Poland has perished not!” they roar  
In lusty chorus. “More, Jew, more!”  
The coerced Christian limps with pain  
Down cellar steps and up again,  
And fills their glasses up perforce;  
While the confederates, of course,  
Shout: “Jew, more mead!” With steps not slow  
The man is ever on the go.

—“Where are your cymbals? False one, play!”  
In lusty dance, the floor’s a-sway;  
Krakowiaks their mood exalts,  
With the mazurka and the waltz.  
The Jew beneath his breath salutes  
All with a mutter: “Gentry brutes!”  
—“Fine, that’s enough! A song now chant!”  
—“I cannot! Nay, by God, I can’t!”  
—“Don’t swear, you dog! You’ll not evade.”  
—“What would you have? ‘The Wretched Maid?’”—

*“There once was a Handzia,  
A poor, crippled creature,  
Who swore her sore feet  
Were her body’s worst feature;  
And so to the work in the fields  
Of her lord she’d not go.  
Instead, the young men  
This most cunning of lasses  
Would follow afield  
In the tall clinging grasses,  
Most quiet, and furtive and slow.”*

—“Enough! It is an ugly song:  
Schismatics<sup>83</sup> sing it all day long.”  
—“What would you like? This one perhaps?  
But wait! My memory may lapse. . . .”  
*“Before the landlord, Theodore,  
A Jew is dancing on the floor,*

<sup>83</sup>As the Orthodox Ukrainians were called by the Poles.

*At times retreating,  
Then forward fleeting,  
Before the landlord, Theodore,  
Dancing for all he's worth. . . .*  
—"Good, that's enough! Now pay us well!"  
—"You're joking, sir! The answer tell—  
Pay you for what?"

—"For listening  
To hear an ugly fellow sing.  
I do not jest. Let's have the gold!"  
—"Where can I find it? You've been told  
I've not a groat; my only wealth  
Is in Your Graces' gracious health."  
—"You lie, you dog! You must confess!  
Come, gentles, cease from gentleness  
And use our whips!"

They swished with pain  
And Leiba's back is crossed again.  
They flogged so hard without a doubt  
That even feathers flew about . . .  
—"I've not a copeck, none, I swear!  
Though me to little bits you tear  
I could not find a coin! Help! Help!"  
—"Just wait, we'll give you aid, you whelp!"  
—"Stop! Stop! I'll tell you of a thing . . ."  
—"We're listening, we're listening,  
But do not lie! If you should croak,  
Your lying would not stay the stroke."  
—"No . . . in Vilshana . . ."

—"There's your wealth?"  
—"No, not my money, by my health!  
I tried to say, amid your mocks . . ."  
—"That in that town the Orthodox  
Into each house are forced to squeeze  
The folk of many families?  
We know it well; the game we're at  
Has cut the rascals down to that . . ."<sup>84</sup>

<sup>84</sup>A reference to the Polish pogroms of the Orthodox Ukrainians in the Kiev region in 1766.

—“Not that, ah no . . . I beg your pardon . . .  
 I pray your luck may never harden,  
 Have gold in fact and in your dreams! . . .  
 Now in Vilshana-town it seems  
 The sacristan, within the church,  
 Has a fine daughter, worth your search.  
 Oksana is a maiden rare  
 In beauty quite beyond compare.  
 And heaps of gold! Not his, of course,  
 But you need never ask its source!”  
 —“Of course the cash will please our sight!  
 Old Leiba is completely right;  
 But to make sure he speaks the truth,  
 He'll guide us on our way forsooth.  
 Get dressed.”

The Poles, in hope to thrive,  
 In ardour to Vilshana drive.  
 Only a single Polish punk  
 Lies underneath a bench, so drunk  
 He cannot rise, but mutters this  
 In ecstasies of maudlin bliss:  
 “While life by such as we is cherished,  
 Our Poland has not surely perished.”<sup>85</sup>

## IV. THE SACRISTAN

*“In a lovely grove  
 Not a breeze is pining;  
 The moon rides high  
 And the stars are shining.  
 Come out, my darling,—  
 I wait for you here—  
 Come at least for an hour  
 My precious dear!  
 Appear, my pigeon,  
 And we shall coo  
 And sorrow together:  
 Tonight from you  
 I leave on a journey.  
 My dearest heart,*

<sup>85</sup>The first two lines of the Polish national anthem.

*Come, coo with me, birdie,  
 Before we part . . .  
 How heavy and sad  
 Is my bosom's smart!"*

Thus, as he walks along the grove,  
 Our young Yarema sings  
 And seeks Oksana, but the lass  
 Seems to have taken wings.  
 The stars are sparkling in the sky,  
 The silver moon's alight;  
 The birch tree hears the nightingale  
 Beside the well of night;  
 Upon a bush beside the stream  
 It pours its song out clear  
 As if it knew the Cossack lad  
 Awaited his young dear,  
 While young Yarema, 'mid that song,  
 Can scarcely drag his feet along;  
 He does not see or hear.

"What use to me can be my handsome face  
 If I have not been blessed with fortune's grace?  
 My youthful years are lost; I am alone,  
 A blade of grass amid a field of stone,  
 Caught by the blustering wind and carried off.  
 None know my value, and the people scoff.  
 Do men reject me since I'm loved by none?  
 Nay, one heart have I held, though only one,  
 One sincere soul, and now it seems that she,  
 Even my darling, has forsaken me!"  
 He wept; then wiped the tears off with his sleeve.  
 —"Farewell, then! On my journey I must leave,  
 Either to make my fortune or beyond  
 The Dnieper find the death of which I'm fond.  
 For me you'll shed no tears, without a doubt,  
 Nor will you watch the raven pecking out  
 Those sparkling eyes, those living Cossack eyes,  
 That once you used to kiss with gentle sighs!  
 Forget my tears, forget the sorry waif,  
 Forget you swore to love me. Marry safe!

I'm not your match, a coarse, grey homespun man,  
 While you're the daughter of a sacristan!  
 Choose whom you will—such is my destiny!  
 Forget me, dear, and do not grieve for me!  
 And if you hear that in some foreign field  
 Yarema's shattered body lies concealed,  
 My soul, dear heart, in all its anguish knows  
 That you at least will pray for my repose!"  
 Propped on his staff, he wept amid his woes.

Softly he weeps . . . Then suddenly  
 A rustle seems to greet him . . .  
 Among the tree-trunks, weasel-quick,  
 Oksana steals to meet him.  
 He rushed to her; the pair embraced . . .  
 "Sweetheart!" Their hearts grow faint.  
 "Sweetheart!" they frequently repeat.  
 Then silence brings constraint.  
 "Enough, my bird!"  
 —"A little more,  
 Again, my falcon fair!  
 Draw out my soul! Once more, again . . .  
 I'm weary, I declare!"  
 —"Then rest awhile, my fairest star!  
 Heaven your course begat!"  
 He spread his jacket on the ground . . .  
 His angel smiled, and sat.  
 —"You, too, must sit beside me here!"  
 He stooped, and they embraced.  
 —"Where were you shining all this while,  
 My star, my darling chaste?"  
 —"I have been late today because  
 My father's ill, you see,  
 And all this while I've tended him."  
 —"With not a thought for me?"  
 —"Oh, what a cruel thing to say!"  
 Her bright eyes brimmed with tears.  
 —"Don't weep, dear, it was but a jest."  
 —"A jest!"

Her smile appears.

She leaned her head against his own  
 And seemed to fall asleep.  
 —“Oksana, it was but a jest  
 And you could really weep!  
 Well, no more tears, now; look at me;  
 Tomorrow I'll be gone:  
 Yes, I shall be too far away  
 For you to gaze upon!  
 Tomorrow night, in Chihirin,<sup>86</sup>  
 I'll get a blessed sword  
 To win me gold and silver bright  
 And glory all-adored;  
 I'll dress you fair, I'll shoe you fine,  
 And set you up to view;  
 Enthroned you like a hetman's spouse  
 And then admire you . . .  
 While I shall live, I'll look at you.”  
 —“Perhaps you will forget.  
 You will grow rich and with the lords  
 For Kiev off will set,  
 To find yourself a noble dame.  
 My name you'll know no more!”  
 —“Could any be more fair than you?”  
 —“There may be many a score.”  
 —“That were a sin to say, my dear,  
 For none more fair could be  
 Beyond the earth, beyond the sky,  
 Beyond the deep, blue sea;  
 No one is lovelier than you!”  
 —“What foolish things you say!  
 Come to your senses!”  
 —“Nay, it's true!”  
 And then again they sway,  
 Locked in each other's arms enlaced,  
 With sweetest nothings fed;  
 And thus they kissed and thus embraced  
 By perfect passion led;  
 And still they wept and doubly swore  
 The love that each would give.

<sup>86</sup>A provincial town, southeast of Kiev, for a time a hetman capital.



Yarema told her all his dreams  
Of how they both would live;  
How he would dress her all in gold,  
How his career he'd gain,  
And how the haydamaks would slay  
The Poles in fair Ukraine.  
He then would his own master be,  
If he from war survived.  
Surely, young women, you'd be sick  
To hear such dreams contrived:  
—"Imagine telling us such stuff!  
Disgusting!" If your mother  
Or father were to see that you  
Your spirits daily smother  
In reading nonsense such as this,  
They'd cry out at the sin!  
And then, and then . . . But don't you find  
How interesting it's been?  
In spite of all, I'd like to speak  
About a Cossack lad  
Beneath a willow, by a stream,  
Who kissed his sweetheart sad;  
While his Oksana, precious dove,  
Still coos and kisses back,  
As she inclines her head to him  
And weeps forebodings black:  
"My dearest heart! My treasured one!  
My falcon past compare! . . ."  
Even the willows bent to hear  
The words she whispered there.  
What lovely speech! Ah, beauties fair,  
I'll tell thereof no whit,  
Lest in the dark, approaching night  
You all should dream of it.  
So let the pair of lovers part  
As softly as they met,  
As gently and as lovingly,  
That none may see with fret  
The maiden's and the Cossack's tears  
Unhindered, flowing free.  
In this life they may meet again . . .  
Perhaps . . . but we shall see . . .

Now let us to the sacristan's repair.  
 The windows are ablaze. What happens there?  
 I must peer in and tell you, by that light . . .  
 Would I had never seen so foul a sight,  
 Nor that I had such horrors to relate!  
 My heart is sick at what men perpetrate.  
 See the confederates—at torture tense—  
 These men who rise in Liberty's defence!  
 How they defend it! For this task before them,  
 Curs'd be their hour of birth and she that bore them,  
 Bringing them forth to know the light of day!  
 See at the sacristan's their devils' play,  
 Children of hell! For with the flames of Doom  
 The stove-fire blazes, lighting up the room.  
 There in a corner, like a pup, is trembling  
 The cowering Jew. The Polish lords assembling,  
 Shout to the sacristan: "Do you want to live?  
 Where is your money?"

Not a word he'll give.  
 They twist his hands with rope; down to the ground  
 They smite him; but he utters not a sound,  
 No, not a word.

—"There other tortures are:  
 Bring on the glowing coals! Where's boiling tar?  
 Pour it upon him! What! Too cool for souls?  
 Then quickly christen him with white-hot coals!  
 Well? Will you tell us? Not a groan of hate!  
 My, what a stubborn brute! Well, just you wait!"  
 Into his boots the gleaming coals they shed.  
 —"Come, drive a nail into his stubborn head!"  
 The torture he no longer could endure  
 But prostrate fell, without the shriving pure  
 And blessing of the Church. Aloud he cried:  
 "Oksana, O my daughter!" And he died.  
 The hardened Poles, frustrated in their fun,  
 Stopped to bethink themselves:

—"What's to be done?  
 Come, gentlemen, let us deliberate.  
 To cover up this fellow and his fate,  
 Let's burn the church down!"

—"Help, now! Help, I pray,  
 All who believe in God!" In loud dismay,

A voice is crying, desperate and shrill.  
 —“Who utters an alarm?” The Poles grow still.  
 Oksana rushes in and screams her loss;  
 Then falls a-swoon, her outstretched arms a cross.

The Colonel motioned to his company,  
 And all the sullen Poles, like dogs, agree  
 And leave the room. The leader, somewhat bolder,  
 Bore off the swooned young woman on his shoulder.  
 Where are you now, Yarema? Look at this!  
 But he is on his journey. Full of bliss,  
 A martial song from other days he trolls,  
 How Nalivayko<sup>87</sup> fought against the Poles.

The Poles have disappeared; unconscious, too,  
 Oksana has been lost to human view.  
 Dogs in Vilshana here and there are fain  
 To raise a bark and then are still again.  
 The moon is white as silver; people sleep;  
 Likewise the sacristan, alas so deep  
 That naught can ever wake that man devout.  
 His dwelling's light still burned, at last went out  
 And as it did, a shudder shook the dead  
 As the sad darkness closed around his head.

#### V. THE FEAST IN CHIHIRIN

Hetmans, O haughty hetmans, if you were to rise again,  
 If you were to rise and look at your ancient Chihirin,  
 The town that you once erected, the seat of your former reign,  
 You would burst into bitter tears, for you would not see therein  
 The old-time Cossack glory but ruins upon the plain!  
 The squares where the troops you marshalled once flowed like a  
 mighty sea,  
 Where they blazed at the wave of the bunchuks,<sup>88</sup> red legions ripe  
 for spoil,  
 And the great chief on his jet-black steed would rise in rapture free,  
 And wave his mace to the mighty waves and the sea would begin to  
 boil,  
 To boil and overflow its ranks,  
 Over the steppes and up the banks,

<sup>87</sup>One of the early Cossack leaders. See fn. 22.

<sup>88</sup>See fn. 55.

Calamity itself felt fear . . .  
 But not a Cossack now is here.  
 Why dwell on that? Their fate is clear.  
 And when a thing has met its end,  
 Let us not now recall it, friend,  
 Perhaps the Muscovites might hear . . .  
 For what avails it to recall?  
 Your tears would patter down.  
 Yet let us glance at Chihirin,  
 That vanished Cossack town.

From past the forest, out of mist,  
 The moon floats high and fine;  
 It glows with round and ruddy face,  
 It flames but does not shine;  
 It seems to know the Cossack folk  
 Will soon not need its light,  
 That conflagration's blaze will warm  
 And make the country bright.

Then it grew dark. In Chihirin,  
 As in a coffin black,  
 'Twas very sad. (Aye, thus it was  
 Through all Ukraine, alack,  
 The Eve of good Saint Makoviy<sup>89</sup>  
 When all the swords were bless'd.)  
 No voice was heard; at times a bat  
 Across the square progressed,  
 Or on the village common  
 A lonely owl would hoot.  
 But where are all the people?  
 Where dark trees overshoot  
 Upon the Tiasmin's<sup>90</sup> margin  
 They've gathered, young and old,  
 The rich man and the poor man,  
 A mighty feast to hold.

In a dark grove, in a green wooded pass,  
 The fettered horses crop the after-grass;

<sup>89</sup>A church feast occurring on August 1.

<sup>90</sup>A tributary of the Dnieper in the Chihirin region.

Black are the steeds, already saddled there.  
Where will they go? What riders will they bear?  
Look! You will see!

Low hills the host engird.  
Mute as if dead, they utter not a word.  
These are the haydamaks . . . at the alarm  
The eagles have assembled, swift to harm  
With blood and flame their enemies so fell . . .  
They will give back to Poles their gifts of hell.

The valley's shadows now conceal  
Great waggons filled with fish of steel:<sup>91</sup>  
This gift a generous lady<sup>92</sup> gave  
Who knew the way her land to save,  
A noble lady—let her reign!<sup>93</sup>  
No need to make their purpose plain! . . .  
The waggons are so closely spanned,  
There's not a spot where one may stand:  
From Smila<sup>94</sup> and from Chihirin  
Cossacks and chiefs have ridden in . . .  
For a sure deed they gather here.  
The Cossacks and their chieftains dear  
Pace up and down in mantles black  
And softly talk of the attack.  
Their celebrations thus begin  
As all men gaze at Chihirin;<sup>95</sup>  
A kobzar blind in sad array  
Sings to them now his mournful lay:

*"Wallachians, Wallachians!  
How few of you are left!  
And you too, O Moldavians,  
Of lordship are bereft.  
The lords that once you followed  
The Tartars' yoke restrains,*

<sup>91</sup>Weapons.

<sup>92</sup>Catherine II, who was falsely believed to have sent the weapons to the haydamaks to be used against the Poles. Russia favoured any insurrection that might weaken Poland.

<sup>93</sup>Expressed ironically.

<sup>94</sup>A town in the southeastern part of Kiev province.

<sup>95</sup>A brief prose dialogue is here omitted.

*Or as the Sultan's hirelings  
 They toil in servile chains!  
 Enough, cast off your worries!  
 Offer a noble prayer,  
 And join with us, the Cossacks,  
 In fellowship so rare;  
 Call back to mind old Bohdan,<sup>96</sup>  
 The Hetman long ago!  
 With sharpened blades, beside us,  
 New mastery you'll know;  
 With blessed blades we'll win it,  
 And with our own Maksim<sup>97</sup>  
 We shall make merriment tonight  
 And smite the Poles with vim.  
 Our banquet will make mirth in hell;  
 Earth's shudders will be great;  
 The heavens will be set ablaze  
 Our feast to celebrate!"<sup>98</sup>*

The Cossacks and the haydamaks  
 Sit listening in their bivouacs,  
 And lest the host should fall asleep  
 They beg the bard his place to keep  
 And stir them with another song.  
 His mighty tones the spell prolong:

*"The eagle soars, the grey one soars;  
 The sky his ardour proves,—  
 Maksim the chieftain ranges far  
 Throughout the steppes and groves.  
 The eagle soars, the grey one soars;  
 His eaglets fly behind;  
 Maksim the chieftain ranges far;  
 Bold lads with him you'll find.  
 Those lads are Zaporozhians,<sup>99</sup>  
 His sons in freedom's right;  
 He stops to think what he should do—  
 To drink or else to fight.*

<sup>96</sup>Hetman Bohdan Khmelnitsky. See fn. 165.

<sup>97</sup>Maksim Zalizniak, one of the leaders of the haydamaks.

<sup>98</sup>Again a brief prose dialogue is omitted. Instead, the next six lines, which are not actually Shevchenko's, summarize the conversation.

<sup>99</sup>The Cossacks whose permanent encampment was beyond the Dnieper's rapids.

*Perhaps to dance, then at the tune  
 The very ground will shake;  
 He starts a song—they sing so loud  
 That fortune's smile will break.  
 Brandy and mead he quaffs with joy  
 From tankard, not from glass;  
 If he should meet an enemy,  
 He will not let him pass.  
 Such, lads, is now our otaman,  
 Our eagle grey of wing!  
 With all his might he loves to fight  
 And pay the reckoning.  
 No dwelling of his own has he,  
 No orchard, pond, or field;  
 The steppe and sea on which he roams  
 Will gold and glory yield.  
 Behave yourselves, ye knavish Poles!  
 You raging curs must mind him;  
 Maksim is on the Highway Black,  
 His haydamaks behind him.”<sup>100</sup>*

The mustered haydamaks were fain  
 To hear another kobzar strain  
 Of ancient deeds his praise might con,  
 And so the old blind bard sang on:

*“The haydamaks had passed the night  
 Within a wooded vale;  
 Their fettered horses, pastured well,  
 Were saddled for the trail.  
 The Polish lordlings passed the night  
 In mansions broad and high;  
 There they caroused and turned to sleep . . .”  
 (The sound of church bells is heard.)  
 “The bells! The bells!” they cry.  
 The arches of the leafy grove  
 Give back the solemn tone.  
 “Go, say your prayers!” the kobzar said,  
 “I’ll end my song alone.”*

<sup>100</sup>Once more a brief prose dialogue is omitted. The next four lines render its gist in verse.

The haydamaks pressed forward—  
 Such zeal the chime imparts—  
 And high upon their shoulders bore  
 The chumaks' heavy carts  
 That oxen had been wont to draw.  
 The bard resumes his tale:  
 "The haydamaks had passed the night  
 Within a wooded vale . . ."  
 He mutters as he trudges on  
 But does not sing it out.  
 —"God's beggar, tell another tale!"  
 The warriors all shout  
 As on their backs they bear the carts.  
 —"Fine, lads, here's one for you!  
 Here is a tune to move your feet—  
 Let's see what you can do!"  
 With waggons on their backs they dance  
 A lusty rigadoun.  
 The kobzar, as he wildly plays,  
 Add words to match the tune.<sup>101</sup>

—"Stop! Stop! Have all the senses left your pate?  
 What are you trying now to celebrate?  
 And you, old dog, instead of prayers to shake you,  
 Are raving drivell! May the devil take you!"  
 In anger shouts the otaman; and they halt.  
 Here stands a church. A cantor's tones exalt  
 The priests' procession where the censers swing;  
 The crowd grows silent from all uttering;  
 No tinkle sounds; amid the waggons pent,  
 The holy priests with long brush-sprinklers went;  
 Behind them came the banners, slowly led  
 As at the blessing of the Paschal bread.  
 "Pray, brothers pray!" in accents high and loud  
 The stern archpriest harangues the kneeling crowd.  
 "Around our holy Chihirin you'll see  
 Great guardians from the other world will be  
 And will not let the saint<sup>102</sup> be crucified.  
 While in Ukraine's defence your squadrons ride,

<sup>101</sup>Two songs are omitted for being so colloquial as to be virtually untranslatable.

<sup>102</sup>The town of Chihirin, made sacred by Cossack exploits in the cause of Ukraine's freedom.



Protect your Mother,<sup>103</sup> let that soul of hers  
 Not perish through her executioners!  
 From times of Konashevich<sup>104</sup> low we lie;  
 The burnings do not cease, our people die;  
 In dungeons end their days, in naked woe;  
 Our children unbaptized to manhood grow,  
 Our Cossack children; and our maidens fair,  
 The beauty of our Cossack land so rare,  
 Fade, like their mothers, in the Poles' possession,  
 While their bared braids, beneath that dire aggression,  
 Are white with streaks of shame; those lovely eyes  
 Have lost their sparkle as the future dies;  
 The Cossack's loath his sister to unchain,  
 Nay, he himself all unabashed will deign  
 To bear the Polish yoke.<sup>105</sup> Woe to our land!  
 Pray, children! The Last Judgment is at hand  
 For our Ukraine that Polish hands have rent,  
 While the dark hills give back the dark lament.  
 Recall the righteous hetmans: Can you tell  
 Where are their graves today? And where may dwell  
 The bones of Bohdan,<sup>106</sup> now his glory's done?  
 Where is the tomb, even a lowly one,  
 Of Ostrianitsia,<sup>107</sup> of his meed bereft?  
 And where is Nalivayko's?<sup>108</sup> None are left!  
 The living and the dead the Poles have burned.  
 Where is Bohùn,<sup>109</sup> who one great winter churned  
 With Polish dead the waters of Inhùl,  
 Frozen with frost for battles wonderful?  
 The Poles range far and wide. Bohdan is dead,  
 Who once could render Zhovti Vody<sup>110</sup> red

<sup>103</sup>Ukraine.

<sup>104</sup>Petro Konashevich-Sahaydachny, hetman of Ukraine (1614–22), who warred successfully against the Turks and the Muscovites.

<sup>105</sup>Some Ukrainian Uniates served in the Polish ranks.

<sup>106</sup>Polish commander Czarnecki burned and scattered Khmel'nitsky's bones in 1664 when he destroyed the Cossack church where they were buried.

<sup>107</sup>An earlier Cossack leader who campaigned against the Poles.

<sup>108</sup>See fn. 22.

<sup>109</sup>Colonel Bohun, one of Khmel'nitsky's lieutenants, who defeated the Poles on the banks of the Inhul (tributary to the Buh river) and glutted that stream with their corpses.

<sup>110</sup>A river in the Kherson region, a tributary to the Inhul; and Korsun, a town in the Kiev province, situated on the Ros River. In both these localities Khmel'nitsky inflicted severe defeats on the Polish troops.

And Ros that trims its banks with greenery.  
 The ancient Korsun lies in sad debris  
 And sees no soul that might its sorrow share.  
 The Alta<sup>111</sup> weeps: "To live is to despair!  
 I dry, dry up. . . ' Taras<sup>112</sup> is likewise gone—  
 Our ancient sire has lost his every son!  
 Yet weep not brethren: for beside us stand  
 The spirits of the saints of this our land.  
 Archangel Michael<sup>113</sup> moves with us today;  
 And judgment is at hand. Pray, brethren, pray!"  
 And pray they did, as there they knelt,  
 In simple faith serenely felt;  
 The Cossacks did not doubt their cause  
 But felt, like children, that the laws  
 Of Heaven would give them victory . . .  
 Though otherwise their fate would be—  
 Over their Cossack graves too soon  
 Were white funereal kerchiefs strewn.  
 The only glory that they found  
 Was a white kerchief on their mound.  
 Soon disappeared that mute lament  
 And with it all remembrance went. . . .<sup>114</sup>

Raising his voice, the deacon cried:  
 "Death to the foeman! Hither stride  
 And take the knives! They have been bless'd!"  
 The heart grew chill at that request.  
 The bells broke out in noisy pealing;  
 The echo through the grove went reeling:  
 "They have been bless'd!" And loud of breath:  
 "Death to the Polish gentry, death!"  
 Each took his blade; these flashed their bane  
 To the far limits of Ukraine.

<sup>111</sup>See fn. 29.

<sup>112</sup>See fn. 11.

<sup>113</sup>Patron angel of Kiev.

<sup>114</sup>The Cossack struggle against Poland resulted in failure. Being weakened, Poland was partitioned, and Ukraine, by the Treaty of Pereyaslav, fell under the Russian sway. The Cossack glory now lay buried in the mounds. See "My Friendly Epistle," p. 255, lines 13–16.

VI. THE SIGNAL<sup>115</sup>

One day of butchery was still in store  
 At the hands of raging Poles; just one day more,  
 A day on which Ukraine and Chihirin  
 Were plunged in sorrow by the alien's sin.  
 And yet it passed, St. Makoviy's own Day,  
 The great feast of Ukraine, did pass away—  
 While all their enemies, with souls of mud,  
 Made themselves drunk with brandy and with blood,  
 Cursed the schismatics, tortured them unfeeling,  
 And damned them when they found naught worth the  
 stealing.

Meanwhile the haydamaks due silence keep  
 Until the villains should be all asleep.  
 These laid them down without the least surmise  
 That on the morrow they would never rise.  
 The Poles now slept; the usurers' delight  
 Was still to count their money in the night;  
 They, too, at last lay down upon their gold  
 And slept an evil sleep, abhorred and cold!

Meanwhile the moon sailed forth to wander free  
 And view the sky, the stars, the earth, the sea,  
 And watch mankind to find the way they trod  
 And tell it in the morning all to God.  
 The bright-faced one lights up the whole Ukraine . . .  
 He shines, but does he see where she has lain,  
 Vilshana's child, Oksana, sorry waif?  
 What sort of torment does her fate vouchsafe?  
 Where is she tortured? Does she moan in fear?  
 And does Yarema know? And can he hear?  
 We shall speak later of that reckoning.  
 Of other themes I now must play and sing:  
 Woe, not young women, as my tale must stand;  
 I sing the sorrow of the Cossack land;  
 Hear, then, that you may tell it to your sons  
 And they to theirs, while deep remembrance runs,

<sup>115</sup>The signal to be given at about six o'clock in the morning, at "the third cockcrow," as the episode is entitled in the original.

How the fierce Cossacks smote the gentry down  
Because their rule brought evil of renown.

Terror moved through all Ukraine,  
Through every field it spread;  
Endlessly the blood flowed forth  
And stained the steppes with red.  
Long it flowed, then dried at last.  
Steppes once more are green;  
There above our forebears' bones  
Purple mounds are seen.  
But what avails their lofty height?  
It stirs no memory's embers;  
For no one weeps above them now,  
And no one still remembers.  
Only the wind with gentle voice  
Above their summits blows;  
Only the dews of early morn  
Upon their grass repose  
And wash it. But the sun comes up;  
It heats the grave-mound dry;  
Descendants are indifferent;  
They sow their landlords' rye!  
Of all their number, who can tell  
The place of Gonta's<sup>116</sup> tomb  
And where the blessed martyr lies  
After his day of doom?  
Where's Zalizniak,<sup>117</sup> that soul sincere?  
Where does he rest at last?  
The times are foul! The hangman reigns,  
And none recalls the past.

Terror moved through all Ukraine,  
Through every field it spread;  
Endlessly the blood flowed forth  
And stained the steppes with red.  
Loud outrage roars by day and night;  
The groaning earth gives way;  
Sad, dire it was; but memory  
Makes the heart leap today.

<sup>116</sup>See fn. 135.

<sup>117</sup>One of the chief leaders of the third haydamak insurrection.

Fair moon, behind the mountain hide your light!  
 We do not need you to make darkness bright;  
 You would be terrified at sights of woe  
 As Alta, Ros,<sup>118</sup> and Seine<sup>119</sup> now overflow  
 And feed the billows of a sea of blood.  
 What will come next? Ah, hide you from that flood,  
 Behind the mountains, lest this reign of rage  
 Doom you to weep in sorrowful old age!

Ah, sadly, sadly through the sky  
 Moves on the bright-faced moon.  
 A Cossack by the Dnieper walks,  
 Perhaps returning soon  
 From a gay party; mournfully  
 He scarce can drag his feet.  
 Perhaps his sweetheart loves him not?  
 His poverty's complete?  
 She loves him; though his garments scant  
 Show patch on patch today,  
 He's handsome too; if he survives,  
 Sure wealth will come his way.  
 Why is he then so sorrowful  
 And at the point of tears?  
 His quick premonitory heart  
 Some dark affliction fears.  
 His heart's aware, but will not tell  
 What grief he has in store.  
 Yet that will pass. . . . Meanwhile, it seems  
 None live here any more.  
 There's not a sound of cock or dog,  
 No voice of beast or fowl,  
 Save that far off, beyond the grove,  
 One hears the grey wolves howl.

Heedless of them, Yarema walks—  
 Not to his lass he goes  
 Nor to Vilshana, party-bound,  
 Rather, to meet his foes

<sup>118</sup>Alta, see fn. 29; Ros, see fn. 110.

<sup>119</sup>A reference to the Night of St. Bartholomew (1572), during which the Huguenots were slaughtered in Paris by French Catholics.

At fair Cherkassy.<sup>120</sup> There he'll hear  
 Third cockcrow<sup>121</sup> give the sign;  
 Onwards he walks and musing looks  
 On Dnieper's wave divine:

"O Dnieper, my mighty Dnieper, so vast and broad and strong,  
 Much hast thou borne, O Sire, of blood to the mighty sea,  
 Of Cossack blood, my friend, and more wilt thou bear ere long.  
 Thou hast always reddened its blue and for more it has cried to thee.  
 But at last will the sea be sated; tonight an infernal feast  
 Will roar in turbulent slaughter through the length and breadth of  
 Ukraine

And blood will flow in torrents, from the veins of our foes released,  
 The blood of the Polish gentry. And the Cossack shall rise again!  
 The hetmans will rise once more, in their garments of cloth of gold,  
 And liberty will be roused; and a Cossack chorus roar:  
 "The Poles, our oppressors, are dead!" In the Steppes of Ukraine as of  
 old  
 Pray grant, dear Lord, that the golden mace may flash to our eyes  
 once more!"

Such were the hapless fellow's thoughts  
 As in patched clothes he strode  
 And bore the blessed blade in hand  
 Down the Cherkassy road.  
 The Dnieper seemed to hear him speak;  
 In heaving ranks on ranks  
 Its great waves rose up, broad and blue,  
 Between its reedy banks.  
 It roars and groans and howls amain  
 And bends the reed-beds low;  
 The thunders rumble, lightnings flash  
 As through the clouds they go;  
 While young Yarema goes his way,  
 Oblivious to it all;  
 At times he smiles, at times he weeps;  
 Thoughts hold his heart in thrall.  
 "With my Oksana, joy is full,  
 Even in homespun dressed;

<sup>120</sup>A provincial town on the Dnieper, southeast of Kiev.

<sup>121</sup>The signal for the insurrection to begin.

But in this venture I may die,  
 The thought brings sad unrest."  
 Beyond the valley, loud and clear,  
 The cock salutes the prime!  
 "Cherkassy's far! Dear God above,  
 May I be there in time!"

## VII. THE RED BANQUET

(*Halayda*)

Throughout the length of our Ukraine  
 The church-bells raised their call;  
 The haydamaks raised up their cry:  
 "Death to the gentry!<sup>122</sup> All!  
 Death to the gentry! Let's to work,  
 And warm the very clouds!"  
 The Smila<sup>123</sup> region is aflame,  
 Wrapped in its reddened shrouds;  
 But Medvedivka is the first  
 To warm the startled sky.  
 All Smila's parish is ablaze,  
 The blood is flowing high,  
 While Korsun burns and Kaniv burns,  
 Cherkassy, Chihirin;  
 Down the Dark Highway sweeps the fire  
 As days of death begin.  
 Up to Uman the blood-stream flows;  
 Podilia bathes in fire  
 As Gonta makes a merry feast;  
 Zalizniak slakes his ire  
 Up in Cherkassy; likewise there  
 Yarema does his best;  
 One tempers thus his damask steel  
 And one his sword-blade bless'd.  
 "Good, good, my lads! Go to it now,  
 The evil foeman routing!  
 Good work, my boys!"—out in the square  
 Bold Zalizniak is shouting.

<sup>122</sup>Polish gentry.

<sup>123</sup>This and other localities mentioned here are in the southeastern part of the Kiev province, around Cherkassy, where the rebellion flared up.

A hell surrounds him as he goes;  
     In that inferno set,  
 The haydamaks all beat about;  
     Yarema in a sweat,  
 A ghastly sight, hews down the foe—  
     Three, four, he makes them fall  
 In one fell swoop.—“Good work, my son!  
     The devil take them all!  
 By this you'll gain a paradise,  
     Or reach a captain's station.  
 Just keep it up! And forward, lads!”  
     Thus they, in wild elation,  
 In garrets and in storehouse bins,  
     In cellars, everywhere,  
 Mow down the foe, and loot his nest.  
     “Stop, lads! Your bodies spare,  
 For you are weary. Take a rest!”  
     The streets and the bazaars  
 Are strewn with corpses, wet with blood:  
     “Too few are yet their scars!  
 Their punishment must vaster be,  
     That their unchristian souls  
 May rise no more to vex our land!”  
     His force the square patrols  
 And young Yarema with them goes;  
     He hears a summons due  
 From Zalizniak: “Come here, my lad!  
     I will not frighten you!”  
 —“I'm not afraid!” he doffed his cap,  
     And stood there, brave and brown.  
 —“Where are you from? And what's your name?”  
     —“I'm from Vilshana-town.”  
 —“Vilshana, where the sacristan  
     These evil dogs did slay?”  
 —“Where? Who?”  
                     —“Vilshana was the town . . .  
     His daughter, too, they say,  
 Has been abducted by the rogues.”  
     —“His daughter . . . is that clear?”  
 —“The sacristan's. You know the man?”  
     —“Oksana, O my dear!”



Yarema hardly spoke these words,  
 And swooned in sheer despair.  
 —“Aha! So that’s it . . . shabby luck!  
 Mikola, give him air!”  
 Revived, he cried: “Dear father, friend!  
 Had I a hundred hands,  
 I’d arm them all with sabres sharp  
 To cleanse our tortured lands.  
 Let me inflict revenge on them  
 That hell itself may heed!”  
 —“Good, O my son, swords will be found  
 For such a sacred deed.  
 Come with us to Lisianka now;  
 With swords we shall descend!”  
 —“Let’s go, let’s go, my otaman,  
 My father and my friend!  
 On to the very ends of earth  
 I’ll fly to set her free;  
 From hell itself I’d snatch her, Sire,  
 If hell should gape for me . . .  
 Alas, perhaps at earth’s far bounds  
 Oksana I’ll not see!”  
 —“Perhaps you will. And, by the way,  
 Your name is still unknown.”  
 —“Yarema.”  
       —“And the surname too?”  
       —“Alas, Sir, I have none!”  
 —“No surname? . . . You’re a bastard then?  
 Why, then, we shall enroll ‘ee.  
 Mikola, set the youngster down  
 And let the name be Holiy!”<sup>124</sup>  
 So write it down!”  
       —“The name is foul!”  
       —“Well, how about Bida?”<sup>124</sup>  
 —“That, too, sounds bad.”  
       —“Then let us see:  
 Pray write down Halayda!”<sup>124</sup>

<sup>124</sup>Holiy (Naked); Bida (Trouble, Misfortune); Halayda (Homeless, Wanderer).  
 It was customary among the Cossacks to assume, or be given, nicknames when they  
 joined the Sitch forces.

So it was done.—“Well, Halayda,  
 Let’s go and fight some more!  
 Perhaps you’ll find your fortune there . . .  
 On, lads, to pay the score!”  
 Then to Yarema, from the camp,  
 They give an extra steed.  
 Astride the coal-black horse, he smiled,  
 Then burst in tears indeed.  
 Beyond the town-gate, they beheld  
 Cherkassy soar in flames.  
 —“Lads, are all here?”—“Yea, Sire, we are!”  
 —“Ride on then!” he exclaims.  
 Along the Dnieper’s wooded bank  
 The Cossack troopers ride;  
 Behind them comes the kobzar old,  
 Who sways from side to side  
 As on his trotting horse he jogs  
 And sings them on to war:  
 “*O haydamaks, O haydamaks,  
 Maksim is ranging far!*”  
 So on they ride. Cherkassy’s walls  
 Are all ablaze the while.  
 But no one bothers to look back!  
 All banter, and revile  
 The haughty gentry; part converse  
 And part the kobzar hears;  
 While Zalizniak, who rides in front,  
 Is pricking up his ears.  
 As thus he rides and smokes his pipe,  
 He speaks no word at all;  
 Yarema near him gallops mute.  
 The grove with tree-tops tall,  
 The verdant vale, the mighty stream,  
 The hilltops’ bold relief,  
 Sky, stars, men, all that’s good and fair,  
 Even his savage grief—  
 All these have left his consciousness!  
 He nothing sees nor hears;  
 Our hero is profoundly sad  
 And yet he sheds no tears.

No, he weeps not: a viper fierce  
 Sucks out with greedy art  
 His tears and twines about his soul  
 And lacerates his heart.

“Ah, tears, abundant flood of tears!  
 You can wash grief away—  
 Then vanquish mine! To live is hard!  
 The ocean’s surging spray  
 And Dnieper are not vast enough  
 To wash my sorrow clear!  
 And shall I then myself destroy?  
 Oksana, O my dear!  
 Where are you now? Look hither, pray,  
 My love, my only one!  
 See your Yarema! Where are you?  
 Perhaps her hopes are done,  
 And she, too, curses evil fate  
 And as she curses, dies;  
 Perhaps she spends her days in chains  
 In dungeon agonies.  
 Perhaps she calls to mind her lad,  
 Vilshana calls to mind;  
 And speaks to me: ‘Sweetheart of mine,  
 Embrace me now, be kind!  
 Let us embrace, my falcon fair,  
 And swoon forever thus;  
 Let Polish torture do its worst,  
 We’ll be oblivious!’  
 Blows, blows the wind from Liman’s<sup>125</sup> shore;  
 It bows the poplar’s crown;  
 A maiden’s heart may likewise bend  
 When sorrow stoops her down;  
 Though for a while she broods and grieves,  
 Already she may be  
 A lady dressed in mantles rich,  
 A Pole’s mate . . . Misery!

<sup>125</sup>The Dnieper’s estuary.

Punish, O Lord, my soul with hell,  
 Pour out a sea of pain,  
 Let harshest scourges on me burst,  
 But such a grief restrain!  
 Even a stone were shattered quite  
 Beneath such torment weird!  
 Oksana, O my precious love,  
 Where have you disappeared?"  
 At that, a sudden flood of tears  
 Came gushing, warm and salt.  
 And meantime Zalizniak cries out  
 And bids his troopers halt:  
 —"Into the forest, lads! 'Tis dawn;  
 Our horses are far spent;  
 There let them graze!" And quietly  
 In the dark woods they went.

#### VIII. THE REGION OF HUPALO

The sun had set. Throughout Ukraine  
 The flames their hunger glut;  
 And everywhere the gentry quaked,  
 In lofty buildings shut.  
 On gibbets in the villages  
 Unnumbered corpses hung;  
 These were the chiefs—the common sort  
 In nameless piles were flung.  
 The dogs and crows, upon the streets  
 And crossroads where they lay,  
 Devoured their flesh, pecked out their eyes,  
 And no one said them nay . . .  
 Only the children had been left  
 In village bivouacs,—  
 The women, with their oven-forks,  
 Had joined the haydamaks.

Such was the horror that prevailed  
 Throughout the whole Ukraine!

The slaughter was far worse than hell . . .  
 Why must these folk be slain?<sup>126</sup>  
 For they are of one common stock.  
 Could they not live as brothers?  
 But no! it was against their will  
 That each should love the others!  
 They sought to shed a brother's blood,  
 They coveted his wealth;  
 Although their fields and barns were full,  
 They grudged a brother's health.  
 "Let's kill our brothers! Burn their homes!"  
 They spoke, and it was done.  
 It seemed an end! But for revenge  
 They left the orphan son,  
 Who grew to manhood full of tears  
 Until his tortured hands  
 Became unbound—and blood for blood  
 And pang for pang demands!  
 One's heart aches as these brother Slavs  
 Tear brother Slavs to bits.  
 Who is to blame for such a crime?—  
 The Polish Jesuits.<sup>127</sup>

While haydamaks were wandering  
 Through forest and ravine  
 And Halayda, amid their troop,  
 With flowing tears was seen,  
 By Voronivka's huts they passed,  
 Verbivka and Vilshana.  
 Then thought Yarema: "Should I ask  
 About my love, Oksana?  
 No, I will not, lest I reveal  
 The reason for my rue."  
 But as the haydamaks prepared  
 To leave Vilshana too,

<sup>126</sup>Shevchenko abhorred bloodshed, and longed for Ukraine's peaceful relations with her neighbours, as may be gathered from the lines that follow.

<sup>127</sup>The Polish Jesuits provoked the Orthodox Ukrainians to rise in rebellion by seeking to impose Catholicism on them. That, however, was just one reason among many why the insurrection occurred.

He asked a boy: "And is it true  
     They killed the sacristan?"  
 —"No, uncle; for my father said  
     They burned the holy man,  
 Those Poles, and bore Oksana off;  
     No one was here to save;  
 And yesterday the sacristan  
     Was buried in his grave."  
 He stayed no more . . . "On, on, my steed!"  
     Reinless he turned to ride.  
 "Would that before I knew of this  
     I yesterday had died!  
 Whereas today if I should die  
     My coffin I should leave  
 To search for you, my sweetheart dear!  
     Dying I still should grieve."  
 Pensive he grew and mute withal,  
     As he rode on apace.  
 The poor lad found it difficult  
     His sorrow to efface.  
 The company was riding past  
     The Jew's old quarters spare;  
 Tavern and barn were smouldering yet,  
     But Leiba was not there.  
 And my Yarema smiled at that,  
     A bitter smile to view:  
 "Here, only two short days ago,  
     I bent before the Jew,  
 Whereas today! . . ."  
                                     Yet grief he felt  
     At dark misfortune's load.  
 The haydamaks, above the vale,  
     Were turning from the road;  
 Up with a boy they caught at last  
     Upon that lonely track;  
 His coat was patched, his shoes were bast,  
     His shoulder bore a sack.  
 —"Hey beggar-boy! A moment wait!"  
     —"I'm not a beggar, Sir,  
 But, as you see, a haydamak."  
     —"And ugly, I aver!"

From where?"—"From Kirilivka, I."

—"Know you, from where you dwell,  
Budishcha<sup>128</sup> and the lake nearby?"

—"That lake I know full well.

To find it, follow this ravine;

You'll strike it, I declare."

—"And did you see some Poles today?"

—"None of them, anywhere!

But yesterday they ran in droves,—

Branches could not be bless'd

Because the Poles forbade the priests.

That's why we smote with zest!

Father and I used blessèd blades;

Had Mother not been ill,

She too had gone. . . ."

—"Good work, my boy!

This ducat shows good will

And recompense for what you've done!"

He took the piece of gold,

And looked at it and said his thanks.

—"Ride on, my comrades bold!

But, do you hear, permit no noise!

Come, Halayda, with me!

In this ravine there is a lake;

Woods 'neath a hill you'll see,

And in that woods a treasure lies.

When we the place attain,

Instruct our lads to hem it round:

Some rogues may yet remain

To guard the treasure-caves!" They come,

And range the woods about.

At first they cannot see a soul

Then—"What a crowd!" they shout.

"Just see what pears on oak-trees grow!

Let's knock them down, my boys!

Come, quickly, quickly! That's the way!"

And full of horrid joys,

A crop of rotten pears they reap

And slay them to the man:

<sup>128</sup>A village near Kirilivka. Shevchenko lived in Kirilivka as a child. Near it, surrounding a small lake, is the Forest of Hupalo.

They knock them down, they finish them,  
 As only Cossacks can.  
 They found the treasure; bore it off;  
 The pockets of the Poles  
 They stripped; then rode Lisianka-way  
 In search of guilty souls.

## IX. A BANQUET IN LISIANKA

*(The Ancient Building)*

It now grew dark. From Lisianka  
 Sprang up the light of fire;  
 And Zalizniak and Gonta lit  
 Their pipes in fashion dire,—  
 Grim was the way they lighted them!<sup>129</sup>  
 Even the damned in hell  
 In such a manner cannot smoke!  
 Tikich in fashion fell  
 Is reddening with alien blood  
 And high above it blaze  
 The buildings and the houses all;  
 Thus Fate inflicts its ways  
 On nobles and on poor alike.  
 Out in the public square  
 Bold Zalizniak with Gonta stands  
 And shouts: "Their doom prepare!  
 Punish the Poles and make them weep!"  
 The lads do punish them.  
 Weeping and groans burst forth; one begs,  
 One curses to condemn;  
 Another prays, confessing all  
 His errors to a mate  
 Already dead. No one is spared,—  
 The ruthless mete out fate.  
 Like death itself, they take no thought  
 Of beauty, age, or youth  
 In gentle ladies, Jewish maids—  
 Their blood's a stream, forsooth.

<sup>129</sup>The action was grim, because they lighted their pipes from the fire of the conflagration. Cf. fn. 160.



Neither the crippled nor the old  
 Nor even children small  
 Remained alive; for none escaped  
 The wretched end for all.  
 All were laid low, and strewn pell-mell  
 Till not a soul alive  
 In Lisianka was left that day.  
 Now conflagrations strive  
 In lofty tongues of leaping flame  
 To reach to heaven's crown.  
 And Halayda ceased not to shout:  
 "Strike, strike the Poles all down!"  
 Corpses he slashes, mad with rage,  
 Hangs up the dead and burns them.  
 "Give me more Poles to kill, I say,  
 For punishment concerns them!  
 Give me more Poles! To drain their blood  
 I still would persevere!  
 A sea of blood were not enough!  
 Oksana, O my dear,  
 Where are you?" As he shouts, he leaps  
 To search the flaming glare.  
 Meanwhile the haydamaks have placed  
 Stout tables in the square,  
 And brought in food that they might sup,  
 Sought food on every side  
 To banquet while the light remained.  
 "Let us begin!" they cried.  
 They feast and round about them there  
 Red hell gleams maniac;  
 Hanging from rafters in the flames  
 The corpses crackle black.  
 The rafters flicker in the blaze  
 And burn along with them.  
 —"Drink, comrades, drink! Pour out some more!  
 For such a requiem  
 May we with Polish gentry meet  
 Once more and end their reigns!"  
 And Zalizniak in one great breath  
 The mighty tankard drains.

—“To all your cursèd corpses now,  
 Your cursèd souls’ bad end,  
 Once more I drink. Drink up, my lads!  
 Drink, Gonta, my good friend!”  
 —“A moment, pray. I’m waiting now  
 To see about these Poles . . .”  
 Yarema leaped:  
     —“Where are they all?”  
     —“What zeal your heart controls!  
 Drink brandy, friend!”—“What Poles are these?  
 My brother, speak, I say!”  
 —“In yonder building, over there,  
 They’ve locked themselves away.”  
 —“Let’s blow them up!”—“The ancient hall  
 Has walls that we must spare!  
 It was, indeed, old Bohdan’s hands  
 That set the mansion there!”  
 —“Old Bohdan’s? For his handiwork  
 Our feelings should be tender.”  
 —“I sent a message to the knaves  
 To ask them to surrender.  
 And if they do, I’ll spare the lot.  
 If not, I’ll blow them up . . .  
 The subterranean mines are set” . . .  
     —“And do the Poles still sup?  
 Are they alive to count the stars?  
 Yet, friend, your plan is good!  
 Meantime, let’s drink a tumbler down!”  
     —“Drink, all the brotherhood!  
 Not to excess—our slaughterous task  
 Perhaps is not complete!”  
 —“Nay, it is not! Drink then and strike!  
 Sing, kobzar, as we meet!  
 Not of our sires—as well as they  
 We’ve paid the Poles our debt;  
 Not of misfortune, for, my lads,  
 We have not known it yet.  
 Strike up a merry tune, old man,  
 Till the ground sway like mad,  
 About a widow, young and gay,  
 And what a time she had.”

*(The kobzar plays and sings.)*

*"From village on to village  
The minstrels dance and booze:  
I've sold my eggs and chickens off  
To buy a pair of shoes!*

*From village on to village,  
I'll dance with trippings deft:  
I've sold my cow, I've sold my ox,  
Only my house is left.*

*Now to my crony will I sell  
That house of mine, I pledge,  
And buy myself or build myself  
A booth beside a hedge;*

*And there I'll trade and there I'll sell  
Good brandy by the glass;  
I'll dance and have a merry time  
With all the lads who pass.*

*Poor little doves, my children all,  
You'll have to take your chances!  
Don't worry, though; just take a look  
At how your mother dances!*

*I'll hire myself for kitchen work,  
My children send to school,  
But those red shoes I'll surely get  
To be a dancing fool!"*

*—"The song is good! Come, let us dance!  
Kobzar, a tune we'd share!"  
The kobzar plays, and squattingly  
They whirl about the square.*

*The ground's a-sway . . .*

*—"Good, Gonta, good!"*

*—"Maksim, good steps you ply!  
Let's go my friend, let's trip it up,  
Before we have to die!"*

(Gonta sings.)

"Oh, wonder not, my maidens,  
I've rags on every limb;  
My father took it easy,  
And I take after him."

—"A splendid song! How well you sing!"

—"Maksim, it's now your turn!"

—"A moment wait while I debate  
What song your praise may earn."

(Maksim Zalizniak sings.)

—"Love anybody's daughter, lad!  
I do, and so can you:  
The priest's young girl and the cantor's pearl  
And the peasant maiden too!"

All of them dance but Halayda,  
Who nothing hears or sees;  
He sits there at the table's end  
And weeps his miseries.  
And why? a cloak of richest red  
Upon his shoulders shone  
And gold he has and glory too . . .  
But his Oksana's gone!  
No one has he to share his wealth,  
No one to share his praise,  
And he in utter loneliness  
Must end his bitter days!  
As yet the poor lad does not know  
That his Oksana fair  
Is in that building with the lords  
Beyond the river there,  
Those very Poles who did to death  
Her sire, the sacristan.  
You monsters! Now behind these walls  
You've hidden, to a man.  
Look, how your brothers, wicked friends,  
Are perishing in pain!  
Oksana through the window peeps  
At where, amid the slain,

The flames of doomed Lisianka rise.  
 "Yarema, where is he?"  
 She fondly asks. She does not know  
 Of his proximity  
 In yonder town, not coarsely clad  
 But dressed in rich array:  
 Sitting alone and wondering:  
 "Where is my lass today?  
 My pretty dove whose wings are clipped,  
 Where does my darling weep?"  
 Then stealthily from the ravine  
 He sees a figure creep,  
 Dressed like a Cossack. "Who goes there?"  
 Yarema's call came straight.  
 —"I am Pan<sup>130</sup> Gonta's messenger;  
 His pleasure I'll await."  
 —"No, you will not, you Jewish dog,  
 For death has come for you!"  
 —"Good God, I am a haydamak,  
 I tell you, not a Jew!  
 Here is the Empress' copeck,  
 You'll know what that must mean!"  
 —"I know, I know!" and from his boot  
 He pulls a dagger keen.  
 —"Leiba, confess, you cursèd Jew,  
 Where my Oksana lies."  
 And stabbed at him.  
 —"She's with the lords,  
 Of yonder walls the prize . . .  
 Dressed all in gold . . ."  
 —"Then ransom her!  
 Move faster, fellow, faster!"  
 —"I will, I will . . . How stern you are,  
 Yarema, my young master!  
 I'll go at once and ransom her  
 For money breaks the wall.  
 I'll tell the Poles, instead of Patz . . ."  
 —"Yes, yes, I know it all.  
 Go quickly!"

<sup>130</sup>Master, Sir.

—“Yes, at once, at once!  
 Hold Gonta back two hours—  
 Then let him do the thing he'd do!  
 Where take her, while there lours  
 Dark death?”  
 —“To Maydanivka go,  
 That village, do you hear?”  
 —“I do, I do.”

And Halayda  
 With Gonta makes good cheer.  
 Zalizniak then the kobza takes:  
 —“Dance, kobzar! Do your share!  
 Myself I'll play.”

And squattingly  
 The blind man in the square  
 Goes stamping with his shoes of bast  
 And sings the hopak rare. . . .<sup>131</sup>  
 (*The dance continues for some time.*)  
 —“Enough, enough!” cries Gonta then.  
 The fire is almost out.  
 We need more light! . . . Where's Leiba now?  
 He should be here, past doubt.  
 Just find the swine and string him up,  
 Hang him before we go!  
 Come, children, for the fire subsides,  
 The Cossack wick<sup>132</sup> burns low!”  
 Said Halayda: “Good otaman,  
 Let's dance a little more!  
 Look, how the town is still ablaze,  
 The square's a lovely floor.  
 Still let us dance! Come, kobzar, play!”  
 —“I will no longer dance!  
 Prepare to fire! More tar, more tow!  
 Roll up the ordinance!  
 Light fuses in the underground!  
 This is no jest to flee you!”  
 The haydamaks roared back with zest:  
 “We hear you, father, hear you!”

<sup>131</sup>Here several dance songs are omitted.

<sup>132</sup>The fire they set to the town occupied by the enemy.

With joy they race across the dam,  
 With joy they sing and shout.  
 But Halayda cries: "Father, wait!  
 You'll slay me, past all doubt!  
 Just wait an hour! Don't kill my lass:  
 My dear Oksana's here!  
 Just wait an hour, my comrades all,  
 And I shall get her clear!"  
 —"On with your job!" says Zalizniak.  
 "Tell them to light the fuses!  
 She's playing with the Poles, is she?  
 Lad, love has other uses.  
 You'll find another!"

Then he turned

But Halayda was gone.  
 The hills roared out. Up to the sky  
 A flaming geysir shone,  
 Fed full with Poles. All that remained  
 A foul Inferno blazed . . .  
 —"Where's Halayda?" Maksim inquires.  
 In vain for him they gazed.  
 Meanwhile to dungeons of that pile  
 With Leiba he'd slipped in,  
 And snatched his sweetheart safe away,  
 And gone to Lebedin.

#### X. LEBEDIN

—"An orphan from Vilshana, granny,  
 An orphan sad am I!  
 The Poles my father tortured, granny,  
 Until they saw him die.  
 Just to recall it, gives me fright!  
 They carried me away.  
 Dear lady, do not bid me tell  
 My sufferings that day.  
 I prayed to them, I wept to them,  
 My soul was torn apart,  
 Until my grief was stanch'd by time  
 And petrified my heart . . .

Had I but known we'd meet again,  
And would once more embrace,  
I should have borne three times my lot  
With that one word of grace!  
Forgive me, O my darling!  
My record I may smutch,  
And Heaven now may punish me  
Because I loved too much  
My sweetheart's noble stature,  
His handsome hazel eyes;  
I only loved because my heart  
Would take no compromise.  
Not for myself, nor father,  
My captive prayers were said;  
No, granny, for my lover's fate  
My orisons I pled.  
Punish me, God! Your just rebuke  
My soul must now endure.  
Grim to admit, my hand was fain  
My own death to procure.  
Had it not been for him, perhaps  
Myself I should have slain.  
I suffered so! I thought: 'Dear Lord,  
Help me in all my pain!  
My love's alone—and who but I  
His service will attend?  
Who'll share his joys and lift his griefs  
But I, his only friend?  
Who could more tenderly embrace?  
Who keep his spirit safe?  
Who else would say a kindly word  
To such a hapless waif?'  
Yes, granny, that is what I thought.  
My heart rejoiced to tell:  
'I am an orphan, motherless  
And fatherless as well.  
My love alone in this wide world  
Adores me faithfully;  
And if he hears I've killed myself,  
He'll die because of me.'



Thus did I reason, thus did pray,  
 Thus did I yearn and moan:  
 He did not come, there was no hope,  
 And I remained alone! . . ."

She burst in tears. The agèd nun  
 Who stood in silence by  
 Grew pensive.—"Tell me, granny dear,  
 Ah, tell me, where am I?"

—"In Lebedin, my birdie sweet!  
 Don't rise, you have been ill."

—"In Lebedin? Am I here long?"  
 —"Two days. Now pray be still."

—"Two days? . . . Wait, wait! . . . I now recall . . .  
 The stream on fire I saw,  
 The Jew, the fort; a refuge sought . . .  
 And one named Halayda . . ."

—"Yarema Halayda he's called,  
 The man who brought you here."

—"Where is he, tell me, where is he?  
 Now, now, I know my dear! . . ."

—"He promised in a week to come, . . .  
 That nuptial joy might bless."

—"Then in a week I shall be his!  
 What joy, what happiness!  
 O granny dear, the time is past,  
 For all our grief and pain!  
 That Halayda my darling is,  
 Renowned throughout Ukraine.  
 Men know him well. Myself I saw  
 The villages on fire;  
 I saw the Poles, our hangmen, pale  
 At the mention of his ire.  
 They know him well, they do indeed,  
 And oft of him they're speaking,  
 And who he is, and whence he comes,  
 And who it is he's seeking.  
 For me he sought and me he found,  
 My grey-winged-eagle-love!  
 Fly down to me, my falcon, come!  
 Descend my precious dove!

How fair the world has just become!  
 To be alive, what joy!  
 Only a scant three days remain  
 Until I clasp my boy . . .  
 How wonderful it is to live!  
 Do you feel happy too?"  
 —"Indeed I am, my birdie fair,  
 To share this joy with you."  
 —"Then why do you not also sing?"  
 —"My singing days are done . . .  
 Now must I go . . . the vesper rings."  
 Oksana was alone.  
 Pensive she grew, then smiled once more  
 And on her knees she fell,  
 And childlike for Yarema prayed  
 That God might keep him well.

Within a week, at Lebedin,  
 A church's chant was heard:  
 "Rejoice, Isaiah!"<sup>133</sup> For that morn  
 Yarema pledged his word  
 With his Oksana as they wed;  
 And yet that very night,  
 As duty called him, and his chief,  
 He rode away to fight,  
 And slay the Poles. His wedding feast  
 In war he celebrates  
 Near Uman amid fires; his bride  
 Her man with hope awaits.  
 She watches for his safe return  
 By boyar friends<sup>134</sup> attended,  
 To take her to a rich new house  
 With all their warfare ended.  
 Don't worry, lass, but wait for him!  
 Commit to God your care!  
 While I to Uman turn my gaze  
 To see what happens there.

<sup>133</sup>One of the canticles in the Orthodox marriage service.

<sup>134</sup>Bridegroom's attendants.

XI. GONTA<sup>135</sup> IN UMAN

As haydamaks on Uman marched,  
 They spoke with scornful lips:  
 "Comrades, we'll tear their silken cloths  
 To make our puttee-strips!"

—*from a folksong*

The days pass on, the fearful summer days,  
 And all of our Ukraine is still ablaze.  
 In villages, the naked children weep:  
 The parents are not there their charge to keep.  
 The yellow leaves in wooded vales grow dun;  
 The clouds prevail and cover up the sun.  
 Only wild beasts upon the outskirts howl,  
 And into villages they boldly prowl,  
 Scenting the corpses. Not a man would bury  
 The Poles but let the hungry wolves make merry;  
 Till the snow covered with its silent weft  
 The tooth-scarred skeletons the wolves had left.

The winter tempests did not check  
 The slaughter's hellish ired;  
 Poles froze to death, and Cossack bands  
 Kept warm at savage fires.  
 Then spring arose, to wake again  
 The black and sleepy earth;  
 Primrose and periwinkle spread  
 A coverlet of mirth;  
 In fields, the lark soared; in the grove,  
 The nightingale would sing  
 An early morning welcome to  
 The earth adorned with spring . . .

<sup>135</sup>Ivan Gonta who was the commander of the "court" Cossacks who from 1757 served the Polish magnate Potocki. The latter trusted him so much that he sent him to the town of Uman to be at the disposition of the Polish Governor Mladanowicz there. For his services to the Poles he was given two nearby villages as usufruct. While with the Poles, Gonta married a Polish lady and by her had two sons who were baptized into Roman Catholicism. When the insurrection of the haydamaks under Maksim Zalizniak began, Gonta was ordered to suppress it. However, his patriotic feeling asserted itself, and he joined forces with Zalizniak. Both of them captured Uman by storm. After changing sides, Gonta's ferocity in battle knew no bounds, and he allowed no mercy in his dealings with the Poles and their allies.

A veritable paradise!  
 For whom? Alas, for men . . .  
 Why do they fail to glance at it?  
 Why desecrate it then?  
 That beauty must be smeared with blood,  
 And lit with flames of ill;  
 Sunlight and flowers do not suffice;  
 Clouds must be thicker still.  
 Hell does not satisfy! . . . Mankind!  
 When will you be content  
 With all the good things that you have?  
 Why so malevolent?<sup>136</sup>

Spring has not stopped the flow of blood  
 Nor turned man's wrath to joy.  
 How foul it is; yet thus it was  
 In the far days of Troy,  
 And so it will hereafter be.  
 The haydamaks bring doom;  
 Where'er they pass, the world's on fire  
 And blood befecks the gloom.  
 Maksim has got himself a son  
 Most famed through all Ukraine;  
 Yarema's not his son, of course,  
 Yet dearest of his train.  
 Maksim assails the enemy;  
 Yarema ruthless rages:  
 No mortal fight by day or night  
 His savage blade assuages.  
 Thus none he misses, none he spares,  
 No, not a single soul,—  
 To avenge the saintly sacristan  
 He hews down every Pole.  
 And for his dear Oksana's wrongs  
 He smites with heart of hate.  
 While Maksim says: "Lay on, my son!  
 Before we meet our fate,  
 Let's have a merry time!"  
 They did:  
 And still the foemen fell;

<sup>136</sup>Another aside in which Shevchenko deprecates all bloodshed.

The Polish corpses from Kiev  
 To Uman lay pell-mell.  
 In countless numbers, haydamaks  
 Ringed Uman with their ire  
 At midnight; and before the dawn  
 They'd set the place on fire.  
 They set the blaze and shouted loud:  
 "We'll smite the Poles, we swear!"  
 Again the national dragoons  
 Were mowed down in the square  
 And with them little children died,  
 Even the sick and maimed.  
 Mid shrieks and cries upon the square,  
 That in full frenzy flamed,  
 Stands Gonta in a sea of blood,  
 Maksim beside him stern;  
 Both cry: "Most royally, my lads,  
 You make them pay their turn!"  
 Then suddenly the haydamaks  
 Lead out a Jesuit  
 And two boys. "Gonta," says the priest,  
 "Your children I submit.  
 You slaughter us—then kill them too:  
 For they are Catholics!  
 Why do you pause? Why stay your hand?  
 Their years are eight and six.  
 Slay them, for they, to manhood grown,  
 Will see our debt is paid! . . ."  
 —"Kill the black dog! And these two pups  
 I'll kill with my own blade.  
 Summon assembly! Now confess!  
 What are you? Catholics?"  
 —"We are, because our mother was . . ."  
 —"God, let not mercy mix!  
 Be quiet, lads! I know, I know!"  
 The haydamaks attend.  
 —"My children—they are Catholics . . .  
 Our cause I'll not offend,  
 Lest any idle talk should say  
 That I am not your friend.

I swore, when this blest blade I took,  
 All Catholics to slay . . .  
 O sons of mine, dear sons of mine!  
 Would you were grown today!  
 Would you were slaughtering the Poles!"  
 —"Father, we will, we will!"  
 —"Alas, you may not live for that!  
 Curs'd be your mother still,  
 That woman of an alien faith,  
 My wife, who gave you birth!  
 Why did she fail to drown you both  
 Before night left the earth?  
 Less sin that were: you would have died  
 In Orthodoxy free!  
 But now, alas, my little sons,  
 You are a woe to me!  
 Kiss me, my children, kiss me!  
 Your slayer is not I  
 But my grim oath!"<sup>137</sup> He swung his sword—  
 And thus the children die!  
 Slain, to the ground they fell, and spoke:  
 "Father!" in last salute.  
 "O father, father, we're not Poles!  
 "We're . . ." And their lips were mute.  
 —"Are we to bury them?"  
 —"Not so!  
 For Catholics were they . . .  
 O sons of mine, dear sons of mine,  
 Would you were grown today!  
 Would you were slaughtering the Poles,  
 Your mother most of all,  
 That wife of mine who bore you both  
 And doomed us to this fall!

<sup>137</sup>The haydamaks took an oath to kill not only the Poles, but also those of non-Orthodox faith who were on the enemy's side. It is not certain that Gonta on that account slew his young sons and slaughtered the children in the Basilian Fathers' school, although some Polish historians, in order to present him as a monster, insist that he did so, maintaining that Governor Mladanowicz, watching from a belfry, witnessed both the gory scenes. Shevchenko to a certain extent succeeds in attenuating at least Gonta's murder of his own children by describing the immensity of the father's grief at the burial of his sons, who, he stresses, were put to death not as a result of Gonta's inhumanity but in fulfilment of his oath.

Come, friend!"

Maksim was at his side;  
 Across the square they went;  
 And both cried out: "No mercy, men!  
 To not a Pole relent!"  
 They showed no mercy: Horribly  
 That Uman region flared;  
 In not a home, in not a church  
 Were any living spared—  
 All were cut down. The hands of death  
 All reason overrule  
 In Uman in despair that day!  
 The old Basilian school<sup>138</sup>  
 Where Gonta's children had been taught  
 Great Gonta sets on fire:  
 "My children you have eaten up!"  
 He rages in his ire:  
 "You have devoured the tiny ones,  
 And taught them nothing good . . .  
 Tear down the walls!"

The haydamaks  
 Obeyed him where he stood;  
 They tore them down; they dashed the priests  
 On stones in frenzy fell;  
 And threw the schoolboys, still alive,  
 To perish down the well.

Till late at night the task of death went on  
 And not a soul remained. Now fierce and wan,  
 Gonta cried out: "Where are you, cannibals?  
 You ate my sons—the curse upon me falls!  
 How bitterly I weep, how lonely feel!  
 My precious children and my dearest weal!  
 Where from my fury do my foemen shrink?  
 Blood of the gentry I would gladly drink;

<sup>138</sup>Basilians were Uniate monks who, like the Jesuits, established schools in Ukraine for the purpose of fostering the Union with Rome among the Ukrainians. They originated in Western Ukraine, where virtually the entire Ukrainian population (about three million) accepted Catholicism, but retained the Byzantine rite, which hardly differed from that of the Orthodox denomination. Their schools were conducted in the best West European traditions and were supported by the Poles and the Uniate priests.

I want to see it redden all around,  
 To feast on it! Why can no wind be found  
 To blow me still more Poles? Weary am I,  
 And bitterly must weep! Ye stars on high,  
 Hide in the clouds! Your light I would not know!  
 I slew my children! . . . And my lot is woe!  
 Where can I now find peace?"

Thus Gonta cried  
 And rushed across the town from side to side.  
 In the square's blood, the troops their tables set,  
 And gathering such food as they could get,  
 Sat down to eat . . . Their last grim slaughter this,  
 And their last supper!

—"Lads, be full of bliss!  
 Drink while you can! Strike while you have the chance!"  
 Shouts Zalizniak: "Give us a tune to dance,  
 You madcap kobzar, that the ground may sway!  
 Thus let my Cossacks finish off the day!"  
 And so the bard struck up a tuneful lay.<sup>139</sup>

All dance. But where has Gonta gone?  
 He's left the merry throng.  
 Why does he not with Cossacks drink?  
 Why does he sing no song?  
 He is not there: at such a time,  
 He has no will to sing!  
 But who is this in mantle black  
 Through corpses rummaging?  
 He stops; he pulls a pile apart;  
 Dead Poles in tumbled rout  
 He searches; then, with sudden stoop,  
 Draws two small corpses out;  
 He takes them on his shoulders broad;  
 He steals across the square;  
 Over dead bodies, through the flames,  
 He seeks the dead to bear  
 Behind a Polish Catholic church.  
 'Tis Gonta, deep in dearth,

<sup>139</sup>Several short dance songs are here omitted on account of their utter colloquialism.



Who carries thus his little sons  
To bury them in earth,  
So that the tiny Cossack forms  
The dogs may not devour.  
Along the darkest streets he goes  
Where flames have lost their lour;  
He bore his little sons away,  
So that no soul might see  
The spot where they were laid to rest  
Or mark his misery.

He bore the bodies to the field;  
Pulls out the blessed blade,  
And with it, by the town's grim light,  
A simple pit he made.  
It shines upon his little sons;  
All clothed, they seem asleep;  
Why do they then afflict their sire  
With horror stark and deep?  
Why does he tremble like a thief  
Who steals, or hides, a treasure?  
Out of the streets of yonder town  
Comes uproar beyond measure,  
The shouting of the haydamaks—  
But these he does not hear  
While hollowing a resting-place  
For his two children dear.  
The task is done . . . He takes his boys;  
He does not watch them, rather  
Remembers as he lays them down:  
"We are not Poles, O father!"  
He lays them down; he then takes out  
A cloth of silken gloss;  
He kisses the dead children's eyes;  
He signs them with a cross;  
Above the Cossack children's heads  
The silken cloth he swept;  
Then pulled it off once more to gaze,  
And bitterly he wept:  
"O sons of mine, dear sons of mine!  
Look now on our Ukraine,

Ah, look at her! Both you and I  
 Must die for her in pain.  
 And who will bury me at last?  
 In alien fields I'll be;  
 And who will weep above my bones?  
 Alas, my destiny,  
 My miserable destiny,  
 What means your fatal ire?  
 Why have you given me these sons?  
 And why not slain their sire?  
 Then would my sons have buried me—  
 Now I must bury them.”  
 He kissed them, signed them with a cross—  
 Clods made their requiem.  
 —“Rest in your deep abode, my sons!  
 Your mother did not spread,  
 To soothe your bodies and your souls,  
 A newer, better bed.  
 Without sweet basil, without rue,  
 Rest little sons, my own,  
 And pray God that his punishment  
 May fall on me alone  
 For muddled plans and maddened sins  
 That in this world I mix!  
 Forgive me, sons, as I do you  
 For being Catholics!”  
 He smoothed the earth, replaced the turf,  
 And no one could detect  
 Where Gonta's Cossack children lay  
 And show them disrespect.  
 —“Rest, little sons, and wait for me.  
 I soon to you shall come.  
 For I have thus cut short your lives  
 And swift will be my doom!  
 I shall be slain . . . and soon, I trust!  
 Who'll bury me, I pray?  
 The haydamaks! . . . I'll join them now,  
 And plunge into the fray!”  
 Gonta was stooped; he stumbled much;  
 And walked in manner wild;

Flames lit his path; he blankly looked;  
 And horribly he smiled  
 As back he gazed upon the steppe;  
 With grief his throat did choke;  
 He wiped his tears . . . Then through the dark  
 He vanished in the smoke.

## XII. EPILOGUE

Long years ago, when I was still a child,  
 An orphan in coarse homespun, running wild,  
 Coatless, unfed, I roamed through that Ukraine  
 Where Zalizniak's and Gonta's swords had slain.  
 Long years ago, along the roads whose heat  
 The haydamaks had known, with tiny feet  
 I walked and wept and begged the folk to give  
 The simple things by which a lad might live.  
 I have recalled those times, and for a space  
 Felt that the curse had fallen from our race.  
 O sorrows of our youth! Could you return,  
 My present destiny my heart would spurn.  
 I see that woe, those steppes so vast to view,  
 My father and my ancient grandsire too . . .  
 The old one is still hale;<sup>140</sup> but father's dead.  
 Often on Sunday, when of saints they'd read,  
 And with a neighbour sipped some brandy straight,  
 My father would ask grandpa to relate  
 The story of that time of slaughterous tolls  
 When Zalizniak and Gonta paid the Poles . . .  
 Those ancient eyes of his would shine like stars  
 As word on word poured forth; we heard of wars  
 In which the Poles were smitten; Smila burned;  
 And neighbours were by fear to dumbness turned.  
 I, as a little child, would weep to scan  
 The torture-murder of the sacristan.  
 None marked the child who in the corner wept.  
 Thank you, grandfather, that so well you kept  
 In that grey head of yours the Cossack glory:  
 And now I've passed along the deathless story!

<sup>140</sup>Grandfather Ivan, who fired young Taras' imagination with those accounts, may himself have taken part in the haydamak insurrection, although no records to that effect have as yet been discovered.

Forgive me, my good people,  
 That I this Cossack fame  
 Have told so much at random  
 Nor rank a scholar's name.  
 Thus once my grandsire told it—  
 Long may his health prevail!—  
 I followed him . . . He did not know  
 That this same simple tale  
 Would now be read by learned men.  
 Grandfather, pray forgive,—  
 Let them upbraid us if they will!  
 Back to my narrative  
 I shall return, and end my tale.  
 Then shall I take a rest,  
 And in my fancy roam Ukraine,  
 The land I love the best,  
 Those places where the haydamaks  
 With blessed blades would meet,  
 The highways that I measured out  
 With my own little feet.

The haydamaks bestirred themselves;  
 Their fortunes were in flood;  
 For yet another year they drenched  
 Ukraine with gentry's blood  
 And then subsided: to the full  
 They'd notched each holy blade.  
 Gonta is gone: no cross or mound  
 For Gonta has been made.  
 Pale ashes is that haydamak;  
 Afar the tempests flail him;  
 And there is none to pray for him  
 And no one to bewail him!  
 Only Maksim, fraternal soul,  
 Remained of all the revel;  
 And when he heard how horribly  
 The children of the devil  
 Had quartered Gonta at the last,  
 Zalizniak burst out crying;  
 His heart was broken; tears unstaunched;  
 Because he now lay dying.

The loneliness had stifled him  
     Far in a foreign state;  
 They buried him in alien soil:  
     Such was the warrior's fate!  
 With sorrow then that iron man  
     Was laid within the ground;  
 Above his head the haydamaks  
     Reared up a mighty mound;  
 They mourned for him, then slipped away,  
     Each on his own behalf.  
 Only Yarema lingered still,  
     And leaned upon his staff,  
 And murmured: "Here, my father, rest!  
     Here in this foreign land!  
 At home there is no place for you,  
     For freedom has been banned . . .  
 Sleep, Cossack, blessèd spirit sleep!  
     Your love will bless my years."

As down the steppe he sadly went,  
     He wiped away his tears.  
 Ever he paused to look again  
     And give a pensive groan.  
 Then the black mound upon the steppe  
     Remained at last alone.

The haydamaks had sown their rye<sup>141</sup>  
     In their Ukrainian fields,  
 And yet the harvest was not theirs:  
     An alien takes the yields.  
 The crop of justice is not ripe;  
     And evil chokes the grain;  
 The haydamaks must all disperse  
     And separate with pain:  
 Some to their homes, to forests some,  
     A knife in every legging;  
 Even today they have a name  
     For slashing more than begging.

<sup>141</sup>Their deeds.

Meanwhile, the ancient Sitch was doomed;  
     Some fled to the Kuban,<sup>142</sup>  
 And some across the Danube fled;  
     All that was left to scan  
 Was Dnieper's rapids 'mid the steppe  
     That roar, as on they dart:  
 "Our sons they've buried; now they seek  
     To break us all apart!"  
 On, on they roar—but men have failed  
     Their memories to keep;  
 And our Ukraine in slumber lies,  
     Forever fall'n asleep.

Since those far days in our Ukraine  
     The rye grows fresh and green;  
 No weeping's heard; no cannon roar;  
     Only the wind so keen  
 Bends down the willows in the grove,  
     The grasses on the plain.  
 All has been silenced. So, be mute:  
     For so must God ordain!  
 Only at times, on Dnieper's banks,  
     Through groves of early spring,  
 Old haydamaks at evening pass  
     And on their way they sing:  
 "*Our famous captain, Halayda,*  
     *Dwells in a noble house!*  
*Roar loud, O Sea! Good luck to you,*  
     *And to your gentle spouse!"*

#### PREFACE

A preface *after* my story? I could easily do without it. But this is what I have in mind: everything that I have seen in print (I only saw it, and read very little of it) was preceded by a preface, and my tale is not. If I were not having my "Haydamaks" printed, a preface would not be necessary; but since I am now publishing it, I must do the job properly, so that people will not treat me as an ignoramus,

<sup>142</sup>A former Cossack province extending from the Sea of Azov eastward and southward to the Caucasus Mountains.

saying: "What a strange fellow he is! Does he think that our predecessors were more ignorant than he, since they didn't publish even a primer without a preface?" Quite right, forgive me! A preface is necessary. But how am I to compose it so that there will be no offence, or even truth, in it, as is the case with all prefaces today? Even if you were to kill me, I wouldn't know how to do it. I would have to praise the whole book, but I am ashamed to do that; and yet I am loath to censure it.

Let us, then, begin our preface thus: It is a pleasant experience to see a blind old kobzar sitting with his boy-guide by the hedge, and pleasant to hear him sing a *duma* about things that happened long ago, about how the Poles fought with the Cossacks. It is pleasant, and yet one might say: "Thank God, all that is past!" The more so if we recall that we are children of the same mother, that we are all Slavs. Even if one's heart aches, the story must be told: let the children and the grandchildren see that their fathers were mistaken, let them again make friends with their enemies, and let the land of the Slavs, covered with wheat and rye as with gold, remain undivided from sea to sea forever!<sup>148</sup>

What happened in our Ukraine in 1768 I relate just as I heard it from old people: I have not read anything that is in print about it, nor any criticism concerning it, for, it appears, nothing of the sort is available. Halayda is half-invented, but the death of the Vilshana sacristan is true, for there are people still living who knew him. Gonta and Zalizniak, the leaders of that bloody action, are not, perhaps, presented in my narrative as they actually were—I cannot vouch for that. My grandfather (may he enjoy good health!), whenever he begins to relate something that he himself did not see, but only heard, says at the very outset: "If the older people lie, I lie with them."

St. Petersburg, 1841

\* \* \* \*

Life's fearful for a beggar-lad,  
 An orphan without kin;  
 If he's no fool, he'll find a pool  
 And tumble headlong in!

<sup>148</sup>See fns. 126, 136, 213.

The wise young waif will drown himself  
 And spurn life's tedious itch;  
 It were less hard thus to discard  
 Existence in a ditch.  
 Another's fortune walks the fields  
 And reaps him ears of wheat;  
 Mine is a drone who loafs alone  
 Where far-off breakers beat.  
 Life's easy for the well-to-do:  
 Men know and greet him kindly;  
 But me, alas, they coldly pass  
 And gaze upon me blindly.  
 A maiden favours all the rich,  
 Even the ugly toffs,  
 But at my suit, quite destitute,  
 She only laughs and scoffs.  
 "But am I not a handsome lad,  
 As fair in face as you?  
 Did not my love most faithful prove  
 And ever gently woo?  
 Love as you wish, my sweetheart, then!  
 Love at your own sweet will!  
 But do not laugh and call me calf  
 If you recall me still!  
 Off to the world's far ends I go,  
 Off to a foreign land;  
 One there I'll woo more fair than you  
 Or die upon the strand."

The Cossack rode away in grief,  
 By no one missed at all;  
 Good fortune's nod he sought abroad,  
 But there in death did fall.  
 And as he dies he turns his eyes  
 To where the sun's rays pour . . .  
 With drooping eye 'tis hard to die  
 Far on a foreign shore!

*St. Petersburg, end of 1841*



1842

HAMALIYA<sup>150</sup>

*"Not a breath of air is felt, no wind or wave,<sup>151</sup>  
 Comes from our dear Ukraine!  
 Do men take counsel there to rout the Turk?—  
 We listen here in vain.*

<sup>150</sup>History does not record a Hamaliya who attacked Istanbul's Asian suburb of Scutari in order to liberate Cossack captives from its dungeon. This particular event is therefore Shevchenko's own product of fiction. However, it is a faithful depiction of Cossack raids against the Turkish coastal towns that actually occurred and in similar circumstances. The poem seems to be an elaboration of "Ivan Pidkova," p. 40. It is quite dramatic in its narrative and abounding in highly poetic personifications of natural sights and phenomena. It was written during Shevchenko's trip across the Baltic to Stockholm. See Introduction, p. xvii.

<sup>151</sup>These four quatrains express the lamentations of the Cossack captives who await their liberation in the Turkish dungeon.

*"Blow, blow, O wind, across the vast sea blow,  
 Across the mighty Plain!<sup>152</sup>  
 Dry all our tears, drown out the fetters' clank  
 And put to flight our pain!*

*"Roar, roar, O azure sea, as on you roll  
 Beneath those sturdy ships  
 That each bright Cossack caps and warriors bears  
 As towards our shore it dips!*

*"O Lord, our God! They may not reach us here,  
 But bring them none the less:  
 In their exploits we'll hear the Cossack fame  
 And die without distress!"*

O, thus in Scutari the Cossacks were singing,  
 The wretched ones sang with their tears running down,  
 And tears to their sorrow new torment were bringing.  
 Old Bosphorus shook with a wondering frown,  
 For new to his ears was the Cossack lamenting,  
 He groaned like a grey ox and shook his broad hide;  
 He roared and from rocky ribs fiercely commenting  
 Sent waves far away to the sea's farther side.  
 And back roared the sea in the Bosphorus' chanting  
 And drove it along to the Liman's<sup>153</sup> last reach,  
 While Liman in turn, in its wave's mournful ranting,  
 Passed on to the Dnieper that sorrowful speech.

Our mighty oldster<sup>154</sup> bellowed out  
 Till foam dripped from his whiskered snout:  
 "O brother Meadow,<sup>155</sup> do you sleep?  
 Sister Khortitsia,<sup>156</sup> hear and leap!"  
 And back the Isle and Meadow roared:  
 "We hear! We hear!" With one accord,

<sup>152</sup>The Great Meadow, a vast swampy and reedy plain surrounding the Sitch encampment along the lower reaches of the Dnieper.

<sup>153</sup>Dnieper's estuary.

<sup>154</sup>The Dnieper is here compared to a bewiskered old man, just as previously the Bosphorus is pictured as a grey ox, both fine comparisons.

<sup>155</sup>See fn. 152.

<sup>156</sup>An island on the Dnieper, beyond its rapids, on which the first Cossack encampment was established, perhaps by Dmitro Bayda-Vishnevetsky who built a fortress there in 1552.

Bold barks upon the Dnieper throng  
And Cossacks burst into a song:<sup>157</sup>

*"In the land of the Turk, on the further side,  
A rich house stands in its lordly pride.*

*Heigh-ho! Roar, O sea,  
Roar and batter the cliffs for me!  
For we're off on a visiting spree!*

*"In the land of the Turk we could surely find  
Thalers and ducats to sate the mind.*

*Heigh-ho! But not for loot  
We go, but to slash the infidel brute  
And to free all our brothers to boot!*

*"In the land of the Turk there are guards that crouch  
While the pasha sleeps on a silken couch.*

*Heigh-ho! At the paynim foe  
With never a moment's pause we go,  
And ours is the freedom and fame, we know!"*

While thus they sail, in song's assize,  
The sea feels stormy winds arise.<sup>158</sup>  
But Hamaliya, at their head,<sup>159</sup>  
Directs his bark devoid of dread.

"Hamaliya! Our hearts grow faint!  
The sea is wild!"—

"Feel no constraint!"

He cries, and in safety they sink and pass  
Through the troughs of the mountainous sea's morass.

In its harem, its Eden, Byzantium drowns;  
While Scutari slumbers, the Strait gurgles loud;  
It howls in its fury to warn all the houses,  
To rouse to its peril Byzantium proud.

"Come, wake it not, Bosphorus, or you will rue it!  
I'll cover your white ribs with silt and with sand!"

<sup>157</sup>The sequence is very finely executed: The Bosphorus hears the Cossacks' lament, sends their longing on its rocky ribs to the Black Sea, which bears the message upon its waves to Liman, which transmits it to the Dnieper, which bellows it out to the Cossacks in the Great Meadow and on the Khortitsia, thus informing them of the plight of their fellow-countrymen.

<sup>158</sup>The Cossacks invariably raided the Turkish coastal towns in stormy weather, for then they were least expected to do so, and thus could take the Turks by surprise.

<sup>159</sup>At their head, because he is leading them. Compare their return (fn. 161).

(The blue sea roars out.) You're forbidden to do it—  
 Great guests for the sultan I bring to your strand."  
 And thus did the sea keep the narrows from leaping.  
 (It loved the staunch Slavs with their forelocks so bold.)  
 The Bosphorus paused and the Turks went on sleeping;  
 The sultan the silks of his harem enfold.  
 But deep in their dungeon the Cossacks were waking.  
 What might they expect in the chains that they bore?  
 And yet in their fashion a prayer they were making  
 That passed on the waves to the far distant shore:

"Beloved God of far Ukraine,  
 Let not free Cossacks thus remain  
 To perish in a foreign land!  
 What shame on earth for this our band  
 And shame on Doomsday to arise  
 And show our shackles in the skies  
 When to thy Judgment-seat we come  
 And bear the chains of earthly doom  
 For all to see it!"—

"Slash and fell!  
 Cut down the Muslim infidel!"—  
 The cry is heard behind a wall.  
 Who could have uttered such a call?

"Hamaliya! Our hearts grow faint!  
 Scutari rages!"—

"Without restraint  
 Slash and strike!" Hamaliya cries,  
 And stands on the rampart before all eyes.

Scutari loud with its cannon roars;  
 The angry foe from his barracks pours.  
 The Cossacks press in a fierce attack  
 And roll the janissaries back.

In Scutari Hamaliya rushes  
 As if in a hell where fire gushes;  
 The dungeon portal himself he rends  
 And looses the chains of his captive friends.  
 "Fly out, grey falcons, to the mart,  
 And of the booty take your part!"

The Cossacks started in surprise,  
 For Christian speech in such a guise

For many a year they had not heard.  
 Night, too, was startled at that word,  
 For the old mother ne'er had seen  
 The Cossacks' fierce revenge, I ween.  
 Be not affrighted, see at least  
 The fervour of a Cossack feast!  
 At midnight it was bright as day  
 To watch the feast get under way!  
 These are not sneak-thieves, wan and shaken,  
 Who without mutton eat their bacon.

"Let's light the scene for all to see!"  
 And to the clouds in ardour free  
 The masted ships flame-torches raise  
 And set all Scutari ablaze.  
 Byzantium at last arouses  
 And opes the eyes of all its houses;  
 Gnashing its teeth, in rage arrayed,  
 It swims across to offer aid.

Byzantium is full of ire.  
 It seeks to grip the shore of fire  
 But screams and rises up and dies  
 As sharp blades silence all her cries.

Like hell, Scutari flaming goes;  
 The market-place with bloodshed flows  
 And swells the waters of the Strait.  
 Like blackbirds in a grove irate,  
 The daring Cossacks dart with clangour.  
 No mortal may escape their anger!  
 At flames the Cossack warriors scoff.  
 They tear down walls and carry off  
 Capfuls of silver and of gold  
 To stow within their vessels' hold.  
 Scutari burns; their task is done;  
 Now gathers round each dauntless one  
 To light his pipe at the burning fire;<sup>160</sup>  
 Then they mount their ships at their hearts' desire  
 And cleave the waves as the seas roll higher.

<sup>160</sup>It was the Cossack custom, when their work was done, to light their pipes with the fire of the conflagration they had set, as a flaunting gesture of their victory.

They sail with the greatest of nonchalance,  
 As if on an outing of careless chance;  
 And then, as the Zaporozhians do,  
 Strike up a song for the gallant crew:

*"Hamaliya, our leader fine  
 Is a dauntless leader across the brine;  
 He gathered his boys and roamed the main  
 The glory of Cossack arms to gain  
 By setting our hapless brothers free  
 Out of their Turkish captivity.  
 When Hamaliya journeyed down  
 To the very heart of Scutari town,  
 He found the captives in foul pollution  
 Waiting in chains for their execution.  
 Oh, what a shout our leader raised:  
 'Brothers, we'll live, may God be praised!  
 In rich red wine our woes we'll drown  
 And strike the janissaries down,  
 And with costly rugs and satin shawls  
 We'll cover our peasant cottage walls!  
 On the field of battle the Cossacks strain,  
 Out on the field to harvest the grain;  
 The grain of battle they reaped and stooked,  
 And cried together as round they looked:  
 'Hamaliya, we give you glory!  
 All of the world will prize your story,  
 And all the fair Ukrainian land  
 Because you saved our captive Band  
 From dying on a foreign strand.'"*

They sail and sing to this bold idea;  
 Behind them sails dauntless Hamaliya,<sup>161</sup>  
 Like an eagle watching its brood with care.  
 A wind from the Dardanelles follows there  
 To warn if Byzantium tries pursuit—  
 But she is afraid of the monk's<sup>162</sup> repete

<sup>161</sup>He is now at the rear, to protect them from the enemy's pursuit. See fn. 158.

<sup>162</sup>Hetman Petro Konashevich-Sahaydachny who likewise led raids against the Turkish coastal towns, among them Galata, another suburb of Istanbul, which he razed. It is supposed that he became a monk when his warring days were over. See also fn. 104.

Who set old Galata once ablaze,  
Or she fears lest Ivan Pidkova<sup>168</sup> raise  
His roistering comrades of other days.  
So on they sail. . . .

From behind the hills  
The sun on the waves its redness spills;  
Before them spreads the inviting sea,  
Gurgling and humming pleasantly.

Hamaliya! The wind is blowing! . . .  
Into the sea we are boldly rowing! . . .  
And they dipped and were hidden behind the waves,  
The rosy crests of the billowy caves.

*St. Petersburg, 1842*

1844

CHIHIRIN<sup>169</sup>TO M. S. SHCHEPKIN<sup>170</sup>

Chihirín, O Chihirín!  
 All things to Time are prey;  
 Even your sacred glory  
 Like dust is borne away  
 By the cold winds and in the clouds  
 Must vanish overhead.  
 The years pass on; the Dnieper dries  
 Within its mighty bed;  
 The tumuli are crumbling down,  
 Those mounds of highest span  
 That are your glory—and of you,  
 O hoary, weak, old man,  
 None will recall a single word,  
 And none will even state  
 Where once you stood, and why you stood . . .  
 O site most desolate!  
 No one will ever more recall  
 Why with the Poles we fought,

<sup>169</sup>See fn. 86.<sup>170</sup>A Russian actor and Shevchenko's close friend. The poem "The Neophytes" was also dedicated to him.



Why from the Horde most bloodily  
     A victory we sought,  
 And why we harrowed with our spears  
     The ribs of Muscovites . . .  
 And sowed their bodies in our field  
     In ancient days and nights,  
 And watered it with ruddy blood  
     And ploughed it with the sword.  
 And what has grown upon that field?  
     Rue, only rue abhorred,  
 Plant poisonous to liberty.  
     And I a foolish swain  
 Upon your ruins sadly stand  
     And waste my tears in vain.  
 Ukraine, alas, has fall'n asleep,  
     Is overgrown with weeds  
 And covered deep with slimy mould;  
     It fails from noble deeds.  
 Its heart decays in filthy mire  
     And vipers are allowed  
 Into its hollows cool to creep;  
     To children once so proud  
 She has bequeathed a feeble hope  
     Out on the steppe to stay—  
 The wind has tossed it round the field,  
     The rivers borne away.  
 Then let the wind strew everything,  
     Its wing the whole earth spurn!  
 Then let my heart in sorrow pray  
     That Justice may return!

Chihirín, O Chihirín!  
     My true friend! While you slept  
 You've lost your steppes and forests broad  
     And the whole land inept!  
 Sleep on, by alien folk begirt,  
     Until the sun shall rise  
 Until our childish-minded chiefs  
     Attain to wisdom's prize!  
 I, after prayer, would fall asleep,  
     But thought's accursèd art

Is striving to inflame my soul  
 And break my simple heart.  
 Ah, do not break it, nor inflame!  
 Perhaps I shall regain  
 My gentle speech where Justice ruled  
 And soothed our mortal pain;  
 Perhaps I yet shall forge from it  
 To fit the ancient plough  
 A ploughshare new, a coulter too,  
 And then, with sweating brow,  
 I yet may plough my fallow ground  
 And in that fallow sow  
 My faithful tears, my fervent tears,  
 If aught from them might grow.  
 From them may sprout two-edged blades  
 That with a surgeon's art  
 May open up my country's bad  
 Decayed and bloated heart,  
 And draining out its sugary stuff,  
 Pour in a living tide  
 Of ruddy, pulsing, Cossack blood,  
 Sacred and purified.  
 Perhaps, perhaps . . . among those blades  
 The gentle rue may spread,  
 And periwinkle buds may sprout,  
 And there my words long dead—  
 My gentle, timid, mournful speech—  
 Revived, may live again,  
 And there a maiden's timorous heart,  
 Caught by my verses' strain,  
 May startle like a frightened fish . . .  
 This tribute she'll accord me . . .  
 O words and tears of mine, what joy  
 Your worth may yet afford me!  
 Sleep, Chihirín! Let foemen's sons  
 Down to defeat be hurled!  
 O Hetman,<sup>171</sup> sleep, till Justice rise  
 To rule our sorry world!

*Moscow, February 19, 1844*

<sup>171</sup>Bohdan Khmel'nitsky (1593–1657).

TO N. V. HOHOL<sup>205</sup>

Thought follows thought, off in a swarm each flits:  
One mauls the soul, one tears it all to bits,  
A third weeps gently, softly, deep concealed:  
Perhaps to God Himself it's not revealed.

To whom shall I unfold it?  
By whom will it be heard—  
This speech of mine, who will divine  
The import of my Word?

<sup>205</sup>In Russian, Nikolai Gogol (1809–52), a famous Russian-Ukrainian writer whose first stories, written in Russian, and in a humorous vein, dealt with the Ukrainian locale and the manners and customs of his countrymen.

All deaf and all indifferent,  
    In chains our people bend! . . .  
You laugh full deep while I must weep,  
    My great and mighty friend!  
What harvest yields my weeping?  
    Weeds it perchance may be!  
No cannon roar now in Ukraine  
    With voice of Liberty;  
Nor will the father slay his son,  
    His own dear child, with pain,  
For honour, glory, brotherhood,  
    The freedom of Ukraine.  
He'll rather rear him up to sell  
    To Moscow's slaughterhouse. . . .  
This is our tribute to "the throne"  
    (Our honour though they dowse),  
Our offering to "the fatherland,"  
    A gift that Germans reap . . .  
So let it be, my friend, while we  
    Still fiercely laugh and weep.

*St. Petersburg, December 30, 1844*

THE BLIND MAN

A POEM

Thoughts of my youth, my children fair  
But pale and sad of brow,  
You, too, have now forsaken me! . . .  
And there is no one now

To warm my empty dwelling-place . . .  
 One only does not cease—  
 You still remain, O youthful one,  
 My paradise, my peace,  
 My morning star,<sup>239</sup> my only hope,  
 My refuge from despair,  
 O faultless one! You linger on  
 As once a goddess fair  
 Lingered with Numa<sup>240</sup> long ago;  
 Likewise may you, my star,  
 Shine smilingly above my head,  
 I'll hear you, where you are.  
 Then I look up; naught do I see;  
 I wake—my heart is weeping;  
 Thank you, dear star, I say with tears,  
 For the kind watch you're keeping!

My gloomy day then passes by;  
 Again the sky grows dark;  
 And the strange mower above my head  
 Again emerges stark,  
 Bearing his dull, old scythe along . . .  
 Soon silently he'll mow me—  
 Winds will erase my slightest trace,  
 With nothing left to show me.  
 Thus all things pass! . . . O youthful one,  
 Perhaps you still recall  
 My verses, watered with my tears,  
 And in your soft, sweet drawl  
 May say: "I loved him in this life;  
 Though now he's lost in night,  
 I'll love him even among the dead!"  
 Thus, O my soft delight,  
 My evening star, by you I'll stay  
 And all my time employ  
 The blessed Lord above to pray  
 That he may give you joy! . . .

<sup>239</sup>It is not known whether Shevchenko had any particular woman in mind here.

<sup>240</sup>Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, who flourished in the seventh century B.C. It is said that under the influence of the nymph Egeria he gave Romans their laws.

## I

One man may roam beyond the seas,  
 Traverse the entire earth,  
 Seeking his precious fortune there,  
 Yet nothing find but dearth.  
 Another strives with all his power  
 For fortune rich and brave . . .  
 He almost reaches it and—thump!  
 He tumbles in his grave!  
 And still another, sorry wight,  
 Has neither hut nor field—  
 Only a beggar's bag, from which  
 Good fortune, half-concealed,  
 Peeps like a child; he curses it,  
 Upbraids and trades away  
 Just for a pint of brandy straight—  
 And still his luck will stay!  
 Like some stout burr good fortune clings  
 To his patched garment's flaps,  
 And gathers ears of grain for him  
 From fields of other chaps;  
 The wretch seemed rich in corn and hay,  
 In palaces as well  
 In which he lorded it as if  
 He there did truly dwell.  
 Such are the ways of Fortune then—  
 You might as well not seek her!  
 He whom she loves, she'll surely find:  
 A cradle can bespeak her.

Once on a time, upon Ukraine's broad lea,  
 The villages stood happy, proud and free;  
 In one of them there lived in blessedness  
 A Cossack with two children to caress.  
 Long, long ago my story is sustained,  
 In that far epoch when the hetmans reigned.  
 There on a Sunday and at noon, in fact  
 On Pentecost if one must be exact,  
 Beside his house and in a white shirt clad,  
 Holding an old bandura<sup>241</sup> that he had,

<sup>241</sup>A Ukrainian many-stringed musical instrument with a rounded bottom. It was of Turkish origin.

The old man sat.

“Should I, or should I not?”

(Debate within his mind was running hot.)

It must be done, and yet I surely rue it!

It can't be helped; two or three years will do it—

Thus let him roam the world<sup>242</sup> with ardent mind

And his own fortune try, himself, to find,

As I once did. . . —Yarina!” then he cried,

“Where is Stepan?”—“There, by the hedge,” she sighed.

“Standing as still as if he were a post!”

—“I hadn't marked him, I was so engrossed!

But both of you, my children, hasten here . . .

Let's see you dance this ballad for my cheer!”

He starts a lively tune to please the ear.

The old man plays, his children both

Dance out the measure sweet;

The old man plays, he sings along

And keeps time with his feet.

—“Come now,” he scolds, “let me do this!”

And so the old man rose;

With arms akimbo, singing loud,

Into a whirl he goes!

—“No, it's no use,” he said, fatigued,

“My former strength is gone.

I'm all puffed out. It was you two

Who lured the old man on.

You are to blame! And age, of course!

I can no longer trip it . . .

My dancing days are done! But go,

A lunch will help me skip it;

You must eat bread, it's often said,

If you would hope to dance.

Go, daughter!—And to you, my son,

I'll tell some circumstance.

Sit down!

Your father Ivan died

In Poland long ago,

<sup>242</sup>It was the custom among Cossack families to send their sons to the Zaporozhian Sitch, as to a school, to acquire there practical education and a knowledge of the ways of life. Having served in the Cossack forces and endured the hard campaigns they waged, such “students” would return home wiser, more disciplined, and often fairly literate.



When you, Stepan, were but a babe,  
 Hardly begun to grow,  
 Not crawling yet!"—"I'm not your son?  
 Your own true son?" he cried.  
 —"Oh, you're my son! But listen now!  
 Then your mother died;  
 And to my wife I straightway said—  
 To my Marina mild,  
 Who now is dead—"What do you think?  
 Shall we adopt the child?"  
 It's you I meant, son. . . . 'Very well,'  
 My late Marina said,  
 'Let's take him.' And indeed we did.  
 That you some day should wed  
 Our own Yarina was our thought . . .  
 This sequel I'd secure—  
 At least I hope: You are of age,  
 Yarina is mature:  
 Betrothal now is my concern,  
 A wish most dear to me.  
 What do you say?"

—"I do not know . . .

Because I thought that she . . ."

—"Was your own sister? Well, the facts,  
 It seems, are different.  
 It's simple now: just fall in love,  
 Your purpose clearly meant,  
 And if God wills it, you shall wed!  
 Before that happens, though,  
 You need a glimpse of other lands  
 And you abroad must go,  
 To see how other people live,  
 Whether like us they plough  
 Or sow their seed on land untilled  
 And reap it anyhow.<sup>243</sup>  
 'Tis right that you should know all that,  
 And so, my friend, you see  
 You'll go away a year or two,  
 With other people be,  
 And work for them a little space:  
 The sequel must be good,

<sup>243</sup>A manner of saying: you will learn the practical things of life.

For he who does not know the way  
 To earn his livelihood  
 Can scarcely live a useful life.  
 What do you think my lad? . . .  
 Don't stop to think! And if you'd learn  
 To cope with misery sad,  
 Seek out the Sitch.<sup>244</sup> With God's good help,  
 You'll eat all kinds of bread;  
 That's where I got experience  
 That stood me in good stead.  
 A longing fills me for those times  
 When I afar did roam!  
 All of the wealth that you may gain  
 You'll bring back proudly home;  
 If naught you win, inheritance  
 Of all that's mine is yours!  
 And Cossack customs you will learn,  
 And how the world endures.  
 The kind of training you will get  
 You could not find in college;  
 A solid education laid  
 In fundamental knowledge  
 Among the Cossack brotherhood  
 You'll find in manly pose;  
 And you will learn to pray to God,  
 Not mumbling in your nose  
 In monkish fashion. So, my son,  
 Tomorrow we shall pray,  
 Then saddle up the grey-brown horse  
 And speed you on your way!  
 Let us go in and have our meal.  
 Yarina, have you done  
 With the preparing of our food?  
 And that is that, my son! . . ."  
 "It's ready, Father!" from the house  
 Yarina's soft words run.

## II

He cannot eat or drink; his heart-beat's dumb;  
 His eyes see nothing and his head is numb,

<sup>244</sup>See fn. 40.

As he were not himself, indeed as dead—  
 He reaches for a cup, when seeking bread.  
 Yarina looks at him with quiet blink:  
 “What can be wrong? He does not eat or drink,  
 Or care for aught! Perhaps he’s ill, I vow.  
 Stepan, my brother dear, what ails you now?”  
 To all of this, the old man pays no heed,  
 As if his ears could to no sound accede.  
 “Whether we reap or not, we still must sow!”  
 Thus, as to his own heart, he whispered low.  
 “Now, let us rise, and I shall trudge along  
 To seek the village church for evensong.  
 Stepan, you must to bed. Because, of course,  
 Tomorrow morning you’ll be off by horse.”

—“Stepan, my darling, tell me true,  
 Why do you weep tonight?  
 Smile, look at me! For don’t you see  
 My eyes with tears are bright.  
 Stepan is angry at me now,  
 Stung by some unknown care;  
 He doesn’t even want to talk.  
 I’ll run away, I swear,  
 And in the grasses hide myself . . .  
 Stepan, I’m listening yet:  
 Perhaps you’ve really fallen ill?  
 Then healing herbs I’ll get,  
 Or to the sorceress I’ll run . . .  
 Is this the evil eye?”  
 —Ah, no, Yarina, dearest heart,  
 Sweet blossom, do not cry! . . .  
 Your own true brother I am not!  
 Tomorrow I must part  
 From you and father—far abroad  
 Death will destroy my heart;  
 And you will not remember me;  
 You will forget me then,  
 Forget your brother!”

—“Come, be sane!

That evil eye again!  
 I’m not your sister? Who am I?  
 Dear Lord, what troubles brew!

Father's away, the boy is ill,  
 And what am I to do?  
 Sure he may die, and what is more,  
 No care he now will con,  
 But seems to laugh. Stepan, my dear,  
 Be sure, if you were gone,  
 That without you and father dear  
 I just would not live on."

—"Yarina, I'll not go from you  
 Forever in my pain.

A little space . . . and in a year  
 I shall rush home again  
 With wedding messengers to seek  
 Embroidered towels from you.  
 You'll give them, won't you?"

—"Stop this farce

Of messengers who'll woo!  
 You must be jesting! . . ."

—"Nay, I'm not!

Yarina, pray believe me,  
 I do not joke!"

—"Then is it true

You must tomorrow leave me  
 And father too? You do not jest?  
 Tell me the truth, Stepan!  
 Am I indeed no kin of yours?"

—"On marriage there's no ban,  
 No sister you!"

—"Dear God above!

Why had the knowledge missed me?  
 I had not loved you, dear, so much,  
 Nor would you so have kissed me . . .  
 Ah, what a shame! Now go away!  
 Stop holding me! I see  
 You were not honest! Let me go,  
 Or I'll weep bitterly . . ."

Yarina like a little child

Wept loudly in her woe,  
 And through her tears her voice uprears:

"Alas, he'll go! he'll go!"

Like maple trees above a stream  
 Stepan in grief inclined;

His honest, open Cossack thoughts  
 Are boiling in his mind  
 Like oil in hell. Yarina pleads,  
     Then curses her sad lot,  
 Then mutely gazes up at him  
     And wails in anguish hot.  
 They did not mark the darkness fall;  
     And when the father came,  
 He found them in each other's arms  
     As tears their love proclaim.

When came the dawn, Yarina wept;  
     She cannot sleep perforce.  
 Stepan already sought the well  
     To water his good horse.  
 And she with buckets hurried out  
     As to draw water too;  
 Meanwhile from out of storeroom depths  
     The old man brought to view  
 His ancient Zaporozhian<sup>245</sup> arms;  
     He gazes on the gear;  
 And as he tries it on himself,  
     Seems younger, many a year . . .  
 Weeping, he cried: "O armour mine,  
     My armour rich in gold!  
 O years of youth and youthful strength,  
     How has your tale been told!  
 Then give good service, weapons good,  
     To one who is young;  
 Serve him as well as you served me  
     In lands and years far-flung!"

The youngsters from the well returned;  
     A saddle they bespoke  
 To fit his horse, his comrade dear;  
     Stepan then dons a cloak.  
 Yarina handed him the gear  
     As at the door she stood;  
 He put the armour on himself;  
     Both wept, as well they would.

<sup>245</sup>Cossack's (from beyond the Dnieper's rapids).

The mighty sword is like a snake;  
 The spear is vast and long;  
 A seven-foot rifle's on his back  
 Suspended by a thong.  
 The girl grew faint to see him armed;  
 The old man fell to tears  
 To see this stalwart, mounted youth  
 Go riding without fears.

Yarina by the halter leads  
 The horse, and softly cries;  
 The father walks beside them there  
 And gives the son advice:  
 How to behave himself in arms,  
 Show officers respect,  
 Revere the Cossack brotherhood  
 And meet the foe erect.  
 "May God protect you!" Thus the sire,  
 Spoke at the village gate—  
 And as all three together stood,  
 They wept at human fate.

Then, with a shout, Stepan set out;  
 Dust rose above the road.  
 "Don't be too long, dear son! Come back  
 Soon to your own abode!"  
 The old man spoke. Yarina stood,  
 A fir-tree dark and numb  
 That in a silent valley stooped:  
 Yarina too stood dumb,  
 And mutely wiped her tears away,  
 And watched the road in pain;  
 Above the dust saw something dark  
 That disappeared again;  
 A cap seemed rolling down the field,  
 A fly it seemed, a gnat  
 She scarce descried as miles divide—  
 At last, not even that.

A long, long time Yarina stood  
 And still she lingered near,

Waiting to see if that black gnat  
 Perhaps would reappear  
 From the dust cloud. But nothing came;  
 Afar her love must roam.  
 Again she let her tears flow down  
 As she turned sadly home.

## III

Days pass, and summer; yellowed leaves  
 Of autumn likewise come.  
 The old man by the cottage sits,  
 As in a stupor dumb.  
 His only daughter now is ill;  
 Yarina wants to leave;  
 And who will share his hoary years  
 And help his age to grieve?  
 He called to memory young Stepan,  
 Recalled his happy years;  
 And as he did, the lonely man  
 Let fall his bitter tears:  
 "All things on earth are in Thy hands  
 And by Thy will must be!  
 Let everything be as Thou wilt—  
 Such is my destiny!"  
 Thus with low voice the ancient man  
 With God above did talk;  
 Then to the garden he withdrew  
 To take a quiet walk.  
 With rue and periwinkle fair  
 And primroses, the Spring  
 Adorns the earth like some sweet maid  
 Through green groves wandering;  
 Amid high heaven the glowing sun  
 All glorious might abide,  
 To gaze in ardour at the earth,  
 A bridegroom at his bride.  
 Yarina from the cottage came  
 To view God's radiant world—  
 Slowly she faltered; yet she smiled  
 To see Spring's leaves unfurled;

So pleasant was it, full of peace,  
 She felt that she might claim  
 She had been born but yesterday . . .  
 But fierce misfortune came  
 To stir the anguish in her heart,  
 In flame the world around,  
 And like a sickled blade of grass  
 She drooped, sank to the ground;  
 Like dewdrops from a morning flower,  
 Her tears began to flow.  
 The father, who beside her stood,  
 Stooped, like an oak-tree, low.

Yarina's health at last returned.  
 Then she with pilgrims went  
 To Kiev and Pochaiv too  
 With suppliant's intent.  
 In the great city of Kiev,  
 She sought all saints' advice;  
 Within the church at Mezhihirsk,<sup>246</sup>  
 She took Communion thrice;  
 And at Pochaiv's<sup>247</sup> holy shrines  
 All tearfully she prayed  
 That she might have her dear Stepan,  
 At least in dreams, surveyed.  
 To no avail! And home she came.  
 Then the white covering  
 Of Winter settled; then it passed;  
 Then came God's verdant Spring.  
 Now from the cottage she emerged  
 To gaze at earth's green plain,  
 But this time did not pray to God  
 For pity in her pain;  
 Instead, she sought a sorceress,  
 To ask about her swain.

The sorceress then uttered spells  
 Against the evil eye;

<sup>246</sup>The Cossack church of the Blessed Saviour in that locality whose literal meaning is "between the hills (mountains)."

<sup>247</sup>Another place of pilgrimage in Ukraine. Its church possessed what was believed to be a miraculous image (icon) of the Virgin the Protectress.



And, pouring wax on water, said  
 A wedding she could spy.  
 —“There, do you see? A Cossack’s horse,  
 All saddled, has appeared;  
 And yonder walks an ancient man  
 Who wears a knee-long beard.  
 That will mean money! To be sure,  
 The Cossack must decide  
 To scare the old man. . . . There, he does! . . .  
 And see the fellow hide  
 Behind the mound to count the cash . . .  
 And there the Cossack goes,  
 Clad like a beggar—out of fear,  
 In case he meets with foes,  
 With Poles or Tartars who might take  
 His fatted purse away.”  
 And homeward turns Yarina then,  
 Her heart serene and gay.

## IV

A third year and a fourth year passed,  
 A fifth is dragging on—  
 An endless, lingering space of time . . .  
 And still Stepan is gone!  
 Across the valley and the hill,  
 The way she once would pass  
 With anxious and impatient feet  
 Is overgrown with grass.  
 No sign of him! The hapless maid  
 Plans to become a nun,  
 And to that end unplaits her braids.  
 “Let one more year be done,”  
 Her father begs upon his knees,  
 “Pray wait till Peter’s Day,<sup>248</sup>  
 Or wait at least till Pentecost . . .  
 And now with green array  
 They deck their home at Pentecost,  
 And clad in garments white

<sup>248</sup>The Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, on July 12.

They sit down by the cottage there  
 Like orphans in their plight.  
 Thus they surrender to their grief  
 When suddenly they hear  
 Out in the street a kobzar play  
 And sing in accents clear:

DUMA<sup>249</sup>

*"On Sunday morning, just at dawn,  
 Loud roared the deep blue sea:  
 The Cossack brotherhood convened  
 And made their chief a plea:  
 'Now give us leave, O Otaman,<sup>250</sup>  
 To launch our baydaks<sup>251</sup> straight,  
 And roam awhile past Tender's Isle<sup>252</sup>  
 To give the Turk debate.'*

*Their vessels, launched upon the wave,  
 With cannon they equipped;  
 And by the hour of pitch-black night  
 From the vast gorge of Dnieper's bight  
 To open sea they shipped.*

*Beyond the Isle of Tender  
 They dipped among the waves;  
 Now out of sight a bark would go,  
 One rises up and one dips low  
 As each the tempest braves.*

*And to their brother Cossacks  
 In yonder vessel's breast,  
 Those on the peak of billows proud  
 Would wave their hands and shout aloud:  
 'God speed you in your quest!'*

<sup>249</sup>A historical song dealing with Cossacks' exploits. These songs flourished in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, and may be considered as epics of the Hetman period. In this one, Shevchenko successfully imitated the mood and manner in which they were written.

<sup>250</sup>Captain.

<sup>251</sup>Cossack deep boats.

<sup>252</sup>An island on the Black Sea.

Ship after ship, as down they dip,  
 Sinks in the billows' rut . . .  
 But three stout barks (may God be praised!),  
 Those of the otaman amazed,  
 The waif Stepan, all young and dazed,  
 The sea did not englut.

He to the paynim land was borne,  
 His rudder swept away;  
 There the poor derelict Stepan,  
 Sworn Cossack and young otaman,  
 The Turkish janissaries scan  
 And take in sudden fray.

Amid the booming of their guns,  
 They fetter him with chains  
 And place him in captivity . . .  
 O Saviour, God, I pray to Thee,  
 Preserve our fiercest enemy  
 From suffering those pains!

There ball and chain weigh three puds;<sup>253</sup>  
 Such are these Cossacks' clogs . . .  
 The light of day no more is known;  
 Deep underground they break the stone;  
 No shrift consoles their dying moan—  
 They perish like the dogs.

They disappear forever there;  
 And poor Stepan is left  
 To dream of his far-off Ukraine,  
 His crow-black steed upon the plain,  
 His father who so long did feign,  
 Yarina, too, bereft . . .

He weeps, he wails, he prays to God,  
 He breaks his chains asunder,  
 He seeks the steppe-land, vast and free,  
 Far, far away, when suddenly  
 Upon his fleeting liberty  
 The Turks break in like thunder.

<sup>253</sup>About 120 pounds.

*They tied the poor lad to a post  
 And burned his eyeballs out;  
 A red-hot rod burned out his eyes;  
 Fettered with heavy chains he lies;  
 Deep in a dungeon-cell's assize  
 They walled him all about. . . ."*

## ▼

Thus on the street, beside the hedge,  
 The kobzar stood, still young;  
 About a sorry captive's fate  
 His song he thus had sung.  
 Yarina from behind the hedge  
 Rushed out in grief and joy;  
 Before the song could reach its end  
 She clasped the sightless boy:  
 "O my Stepan, Stepan my dear!"  
 With many a sob she shook.  
 "Why have you stayed away so long?  
 O father, come and look!"  
 The old man came, and closely gazed,  
 But could not recognize  
 His own Stepan—so great a change  
 Captivity supplies!  
 —"Alas, my son, my hapless son!  
 Alas, my dearest child!  
 Where in the world have you been maimed  
 With cruelty so wild?"

The old man sorrows and laments;  
 And likewise blind Stepan  
 Sheds tears of joy as if with sight  
 Their faces he could scan.  
 They take him by the wasted arms;  
 Into the house they go;  
 Yarina with a sister's care  
 A welcome warm did show.  
 She washed his head; she washed his feet;  
 She brought, this maiden able,  
 A thin white shirt to put on him;  
 She placed him at the table;

She gave him food; she gave him drink;  
 She put the lad to bed;  
 Then, with her father, from the room  
 She went with quiet tread.

After a week, no escorts by,  
 The old man would betroth  
 His daughter fair to young Stepan—  
 And she was nothing loath.  
 But from Stepan remonstrance came:  
 "I cannot hope to wed.  
 Take heed, you two! This will not do!  
 I'm just as good as dead!  
 Why should you waste your youthful years  
 On one who has no sight? . . .  
 Yarina! . . . Folk will scoff at you;  
 Life will have no delight.  
 And even God will punish you  
 And, to misfortune sealed,  
 This happy home will see good luck  
 Fly to an alien field.  
 Yarina, no! God will not leave you,  
 But help you find another mate;  
 And I shall go to Zaporozhe<sup>254</sup>—  
 They'll tend me in my sorry state."  
 —"Why no, Stepan, my dearest lad!  
 Your Maker will desert you  
 If you should ever go from us.  
 Here nothing ill can hurt you!  
 If you don't want to marry me,  
 Together we shall live,  
 Brother and sister with their sire.  
 This blessing you must give.  
 Darling Stepan, don't go away,  
 Don't let our souls be pained!  
 You will not go? . . ."  
 —"Yarina, no!"  
 And so Stepan remained.

<sup>254</sup>Zaporozhian Cossack encampment.

The old man, joyful as a child,  
 Took up his kobza bright;  
 He then was fain a whirling dance  
 To play with all his might,  
 But he desisted . . .

By their cot  
 The three of them sat down.  
 —“Tell us the story, dear Stepan,  
 How fortune still did frown;  
 For I, too, suffered long ago  
 As captive of the Turk.”  
 —“It happened that, already blind,  
 I ceased from dungeon work;  
 With all my comrades free I went.  
 They headed for the Sitch;  
 Their sightless friend they did not leave  
 To perish in a ditch.  
 Across the Balkan heights we took  
 The short road to Ukraine.  
 Our legs were free, they felt no more  
 The torment of the chain.  
 Upon the placid Danube’s bank  
 We Zaporozhians found  
 Who taught our feet to find the Sitch  
 Pitched on its new camp-ground<sup>255</sup>. . .  
 And tearfully they told the fate  
 Of the Sitch’s ancient perch,  
 And how the Muscovites despoiled  
 Our own Pokrova’s<sup>256</sup> church  
 Of silver, gold, and altar-lights,  
 And how by night we fled  
 And set up on the Danube’s bank  
 A new retreat instead;  
 The Empress with her friend bewigged<sup>257</sup>  
 Passed through Kiev divine,<sup>258</sup>

<sup>255</sup>After the annihilation of the Zaporozhian Sitch by Catherine II, the Cossacks established a new encampment on the Danube River (near the present Rumanian city of Dobrudja), where they lived under the Turks.

<sup>256</sup>The Cossack church of the Virgin the Protectress.

<sup>257</sup>Prince Potemkin, Catherine’s favourite, who wore a wig.

<sup>258</sup>Catherine’s triumphal passage down the Dnieper in a palatial galley.

In Mezhihirs<sup>259</sup> at dead of night  
 They fired the Saviour's shrine,  
 Then slowly down the Dnieper stream  
 Sailed in her golden galley;  
 And as they gaze upon that blaze  
 She smiles most cynically;<sup>260</sup>  
 Then on the Zaporozhian steppes  
 She shares the boundless turf  
 Amongst her bastards and her rakes<sup>261</sup>—  
 Each native now a serf;<sup>262</sup>  
 Kirilo<sup>263</sup> and his sycophants  
 Put powder on their hair  
 And daily licked the Empress' shoes  
 Like the poor dogs they were.  
 Thus was it, father. Fortunate  
 Am I to have no eyes  
 To see and know the fearful woe  
 That on our country lies . . .  
 First came the Pole—our goods he stole  
 And tapped our dearest veins;  
 But Muscovites, still greater blights,  
 Have put the world in chains."<sup>264</sup>  
 —“And so it was! One's lot is hard,  
 Here in one's native land,  
 To beg the ugly infidel  
 For space upon his strand!  
 In Slobodiya<sup>265</sup> now, they say,  
 Our remnants gather round  
 Bold Holowáty<sup>266</sup> who exhorts  
 A stand on Kuban ground . . .

<sup>259</sup>See fn. 246.

<sup>260</sup>Catherine may have ordered the church to be burned.

<sup>261</sup>Catherine divided the Cossack lands among her favourites and had them settled with German immigrants.

<sup>262</sup>Serfdom was officially established in Ukraine in 1783.

<sup>263</sup>Kirilo Rozumovsky, the last hetman of Ukraine (1750–64), who neglected his duties there and lived mostly at Catherine's court.

<sup>264</sup>Apparently, in Shevchenko's estimation, the Russian rule in Ukraine proved more oppressive than that of the Poles.

<sup>265</sup>Some of the Cossacks who escaped the final destruction of the Sitch established themselves in Slobodiya, in the province of Kherson, then under the Turkish rule.

<sup>266</sup>The leader of those Cossacks who, at Potemkin's instigation, were organized by him in 1787 to help Russia in her war with Turkey, on the promise that some

God help him in that brave attempt!  
 But will no guile betray?  
 God only knows! We soon shall hear  
 What all the people say."

Thus every single day they sit—  
 One answers as one asks,  
 Till midnight, while Yarina goes  
 About her household tasks,  
 And prays to all the saints for help . . .  
 Those prayers to heaven were carried:  
 The Sunday after Meatless Week<sup>267</sup>  
 Was fair Yarina married  
 To her blind man . . .

And that is what

Once happened in this world,  
 My dearest maidens, rosy blooms  
 With morning dew impearled!  
 That is what happened after all,  
 My two young folks were wed.  
 Perhaps it should not happen so;  
 Yet nothing have I said  
 But what in fact has taken place.  
 A year has passed since then;  
 Another starts; and with her man  
 Yarina walks again  
 About the yard. Her ancient sire  
 Sits with a happy smile  
 And has a grandson, small and plump,  
 Salute in Cossack style. . . .

#### EPILOGUE

And that is my entire tale . . .  
 Let not amazement spurn!  
 That which has been is now no more  
 And never will return!

---

of the lands they conquered from the Turks would be given to them. Instead, they were sent to the province of Kuban (east of the Sea of Azov) where they formed the nucleus of the Russian Kuban forces, with Holowaty as their chief.

<sup>267</sup>The week after Lent, Easter Week.



My tears already have been shed;  
 My lacerated heart  
 No longer sorrows, and my eyes  
 See not, by any art,  
 The tranquil cottage in that land  
 That history has forgot,  
 The peaceful valley and the grove's  
 Serene and shadowy spot,  
 Nor yet the young maid of my tale  
 Nor yet her tiny son,  
 Whose life will none too happy prove:  
 All weeps, and all is done!  
 I'd like to hide myself away,  
 But where?—I've not decided.  
 Where'er I turn, injustice reigns  
 And justice is derided.  
 My spirit withers and dries up,  
 My tears are chilled and freeze . . .  
 Along the highway, still alone,  
 I faint in agonies.  
 Ay, so it is! Pray marvel not  
 That like a crow I croak:  
 A cloud has overcast the sun  
 And still its light must cloak.  
 Barely at midnight can my heart  
 Through darkness penetrate  
 And send my feeble *duma* forth  
 Into the world so great—  
 That it may find a healing stream,  
 Water that life endows;  
 It finds it, too, and brings it back  
 To sprinkle on my house;  
 It lights it up with purest flame;  
 To sad and quiet ears  
 It starts with talk of happy things  
 But soon it turns to tears. . . .

Now inspiration fain would help  
 To end the tale of woe  
 About the poor, blind derelict,  
 But this it does not know.

For never since the dawn of time  
    Could it example find  
Of a young woman's happiness,  
    Her husband being blind!  
Yet this amazing thing took place!  
    A second year goes by  
Since they were wed; again they walk  
    Under a sunny sky  
About the yard. Her ancient sire  
    Helps with a happy smile  
A second grandson, small and plump,  
    Salute in Cossack style.

*Mariyinske, October 16, 1845*

## SUBOTIV

In the village of Subotiv,  
Upon a lofty hill  
There stands the coffin<sup>316</sup> of Ukraine—  
A crypt both wide and still:

<sup>316</sup>The church in Subotiv, the coffin of Ukraine because it was the burial place of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, who, Shevchenko insisted, sold Ukraine's freedom to Russia by his Treaty of Pereyaslav.

It is the church of great Bohdan,  
 Where once he used to pray  
 That Muscovite and Cossack might  
 Share good and ill alway.  
 May peace be to your soul, Bohdan!  
 Their gain has been our loss:  
 The Muscovites have snatched away  
 All that they came across;  
 And now they rend the burial mounds  
 In search of further loot;  
 Their hand assaults your hidden vaults;  
 They curse your soul to boot  
 Because they've nothing for their pains...  
 That's how it is, Bohdan!  
 You've ruined derelict Ukraine  
 By your most friendly plan!  
 And this must be the gratitude  
 Now falling to your share...  
 The church that once had cofined you  
 No neighbour will repair!  
 That same Ukraine where long ago  
 You broke the Polish threat  
 The bastards of Great Catherine  
 Like locusts have beset.  
 And thus it is, Zenobius,<sup>317</sup>  
 Alexey's,<sup>318</sup> faithful friend,  
 You gave them all; but gratefulness  
 Is plainly at an end!  
 They say, you know, that all Ukraine  
 Was always really theirs,  
 And that we only farmed it out  
 To all the Tartars' heirs  
 And to the Poles. . . . Appears it so?  
 Suppose it is the truth!  
 But on that score the neighbours' tongues  
 Deride us without ruth . . .  
 Yet do not laugh, ye foreign folk!  
 That church beneath the skies

<sup>317</sup>Another baptismal name of Bohdan Khmel'nitsky.

<sup>318</sup>Tsar Alexey (1645–76), with whom Khmel'nitsky signed the Treaty of Pereyaslav.

\* \* \* \*

There once were wars and military feuds,  
 Kisils and Halahans were in their prime  
 And Kochubey-Nohays<sup>694</sup>—of such a breed  
 Our country then was cursed with quite a few!  
 But all that passed and vanished. There remain  
 Only the worms who gnaw, devour, and rot  
 The poor old oak.<sup>695</sup> Yet from the root new stems  
 Are growing up; gently and soft they grow.  
 When they attain full growth, without an axe  
 And with great din, the Cossack, now unhoused,  
 Will swoop exultant down, shatter the throne,  
 Tear purple robes to tatters, and will crush  
 Your idol into bits, ye human worms—  
 Nay, nursemaids, cronies, of an alien throne!  
 When once your sacred idol is no more,  
 You, too, will disappear! Nettles and weeds,  
 And nothing else, will grow above your corpses!

<sup>694</sup>Traitors to Ukraine's cause: Adam Kisil who would not join Khmelnitsky against the Poles, and in fact served them against him; Halahan who betrayed the Cossacks by directing the Muscovite troops to the Sitch which was destroyed shortly before the battle of Poltava; Vassil Kochubey (nicknamed Nohay) who kept Peter I informed as to the secret negotiations between Mazeppa and Charles XII of Sweden.

<sup>695</sup>Decrepit Ukraine.

Pile heaped on carrion pile, you will decay  
To stench and foul manure—and then to dust  
That gradually the wind will blow away.

And those of us who are not rich or poor  
Will raise a prayer of gratitude to God.

*St. Petersburg, November 26, 1860*