

The Poetical Works of
TARAS
SHEVCHENKO

THE KOBZAR



Translated from the Ukrainian by
C. H. ANDRUSYSHEN

M.A., PH.D.

Professor in the University of Saskatchewan

and

WATSON KIRKCONNELL

M.A., PH.D., LITT.D., D.LITT.,

L.H.D., D. ÈS L., D.P.EC., LL.D.

President of Acadia University

Published for the Ukrainian Canadian Committee by
University of Toronto Press

© UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS 1964
Toronto and Buffalo
Printed in Canada
Reprinted 1977

1841

THE HAYDAMAKS⁶⁰TO V. I. HRIHOROVICH,⁶¹ 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,⁶² though their fate's uncertain.
 Shall they within my soul be basely pent?
 Relief may lie beyond the future's curtain

⁶⁰A 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.

⁶¹V. 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.

⁶²The 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 guide⁶³ 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!⁶⁴
 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,⁶⁵ 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:⁶⁶
 "In the wrong quarter see it rise;
 It shines with beams untrue;

⁶³Hrihorovich.

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

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

⁶⁶Spoken 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,⁶⁷
 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

⁶⁷This 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 bunchuks⁶⁸ 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,

⁶⁸See 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 Sitch⁶⁹
 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;⁷⁰
 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. . . .⁷¹
 "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 Khortitsia⁷² 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

⁶⁹See fn. 40.

⁷⁰A suburb of Istanbul, on the Asian side.

⁷¹From here on Shevchenko gives his imagination full rein.

⁷²An 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 sire⁷³
 (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!

⁷³Hrihorovich.

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,⁷⁴ 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 Stephen⁷⁵ then,
 Nor yet Sobieski,⁷⁶ mighty Jan,—
 These were not common men,—

⁷⁴Before 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.

⁷⁵Stefan Batory of Hungary, king of Poland (1576–86).

⁷⁶Jan 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 seyms⁷⁷ 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!⁷⁸ 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 Poniatowski⁷⁹ 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:

⁷⁷Legislative 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.

⁷⁸All 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.

⁷⁹Stanislaw 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 Vilshana⁸⁰ 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.

⁸⁰A 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 old⁸¹ . . .
 But changed is my estate!

⁸¹Here 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.⁸² . . . 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?”

⁸²End 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:
Schismatics⁸³ 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,*

⁸³As 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 . . ."⁸⁴

⁸⁴A 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.”⁸⁵

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,*

⁸⁵The 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,⁸⁶
 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.

⁸⁶A 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 Nalivayko⁸⁷ 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,⁸⁸ 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,

⁸⁷One of the early Cossack leaders. See fn. 22.

⁸⁸See 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 Makoviy⁸⁹
 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's⁹⁰ 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;

⁸⁹A church feast occurring on August 1.

⁹⁰A 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:⁹¹
This gift a generous lady⁹² gave
Who knew the way her land to save,
A noble lady—let her reign!⁹³
No need to make their purpose plain! . . .
The waggons are so closely spanned,
There's not a spot where one may stand:
From Smila⁹⁴ 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;⁹⁵
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,*

⁹¹Weapons.

⁹²Catherine 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.

⁹³Expressed ironically.

⁹⁴A town in the southeastern part of Kiev province.

⁹⁵A 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,⁹⁶
 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 Maksim⁹⁷
 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!"⁹⁸*

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,⁹⁹
 His sons in freedom's right;
 He stops to think what he should do—
 To drink or else to fight.*

⁹⁶Hetman Bohdan Khmelnitsky. See fn. 165.

⁹⁷Maksim Zalizniak, one of the leaders of the haydamaks.

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

⁹⁹The 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.”¹⁰⁰*

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.”*

¹⁰⁰Once 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 rigadon.
 The kobzar, as he wildly plays,
 Add words to match the tune.¹⁰¹

—"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 saint¹⁰² be crucified.
 While in Ukraine's defence your squadrons ride,

¹⁰¹Two songs are omitted for being so colloquial as to be virtually untranslatable.

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

Protect your Mother,¹⁰³ let that soul of hers
 Not perish through her executioners!
 From times of Konashevich¹⁰⁴ 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.¹⁰⁵ 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,¹⁰⁶ now his glory's done?
 Where is the tomb, even a lowly one,
 Of Ostrianitsia,¹⁰⁷ of his meed bereft?
 And where is Nalivayko's?¹⁰⁸ None are left!
 The living and the dead the Poles have burned.
 Where is Bohùn,¹⁰⁹ 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 Vody¹¹⁰ red

¹⁰³Ukraine.

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

¹⁰⁵Some Ukrainian Uniates served in the Polish ranks.

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

¹⁰⁷An earlier Cossack leader who campaigned against the Poles.

¹⁰⁸See fn. 22.

¹⁰⁹Colonel 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.

¹¹⁰A 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 Alta¹¹¹ weeps: "To live is to despair!
 I dry, dry up. . . ." Taras¹¹² 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 Michael¹¹³ 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. . . .¹¹⁴

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.

¹¹¹See fn. 29.

¹¹²See fn. 11.

¹¹³Patron angel of Kiev.

¹¹⁴The 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 SIGNAL¹¹⁵

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,

¹¹⁵The 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's¹¹⁶ tomb
And where the blessed martyr lies
After his day of doom?
Where's Zalizniak,¹¹⁷ 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.

¹¹⁶See fn. 135.

¹¹⁷One 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,¹¹⁸ and Seine¹¹⁹ 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

¹¹⁸Alta, see fn. 29; Ros, see fn. 110.

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

At fair Cherkassy.¹²⁰ There he'll hear
 Third cockcrow¹²¹ 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;

¹²⁰A provincial town on the Dnieper, southeast of Kiev.

¹²¹The 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!¹²² All!
 Death to the gentry! Let's to work,
 And warm the very clouds!"
 The Smila¹²³ 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.

¹²²Polish gentry.

¹²³This 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!”¹²⁴
 So write it down!”
 —“The name is foul!”
 —“Well, how about Bida?”¹²⁴
 —“That, too, sounds bad.”
 —“Then let us see:
 Pray write down Halayda!”¹²⁴

¹²⁴Holiy (Naked); Bida (Trouble, Misfortune); Halayda (Homeless, Wanderer). It was customary among the Cossacks to assume, or be given, nicknames when they joined the Sich 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’s¹²⁵ 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!

¹²⁵The 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?¹²⁶
 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.¹²⁷

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,

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

¹²⁷The 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,
Budishcha¹²⁸ 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:

¹²⁸A 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!¹²⁹
 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.

¹²⁹The 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 Pan¹³⁰ 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!"

¹³⁰Master, 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. . . .¹³¹
 (*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 wick¹³² 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!”

¹³¹Here several dance songs are omitted.

¹³²The 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!"¹³³ 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 friends¹³⁴ 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.

¹³³One of the canticles in the Orthodox marriage service.

¹³⁴Bridegroom's attendants.

XI. GONTA¹³⁵ 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 . . .

¹³⁵Ivan 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?¹³⁶

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;

¹³⁶Another 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!"¹³⁷ 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!

¹³⁷The 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 school¹³⁸
 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;

¹³⁸Basilians 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.¹³⁹

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,

¹³⁹Several 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;¹⁴⁰ 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!

¹⁴⁰Grandfather 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 rye¹⁴¹
 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.

¹⁴¹Their deeds.

Meanwhile, the ancient Sitch was doomed;
 Some fled to the Kuban,¹⁴²
 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,

¹⁴²A 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!¹⁴⁸

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!

¹⁴⁸See 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