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THE UKRAINIAN POETS

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1189-1962



Selected and Translated into English Verse

by

C. H. ANDRUSYSHEN

M.A., PH.D.

Professor in the University of Saskatchewan

and

WATSON KIRKCONNELL

P.H.D., D.LITT., L.H.D., D.P.ED., LL.D., D.ÈS L.

President of Acadia University

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Preface

THE UKRAINIANS form a nation larger than that of the French and occupy a territory somewhat more extensive than France. Within its boundaries are concentrated the heavy industry and the heavy agriculture of the Soviet Union and some of Eastern Europe's most ancient cultural monuments. Although Ukrainian history goes back as far as that of France, the Ukrainians have, like the Irish, spent most of the past thousand years under the domination of other peoples, especially the Poles and the Russians. Their identity is formally recognized by the USSR and the UN and their national representatives are found at all meetings of the United Nations. Recognition has come more slowly for their truly great national literature; and no comprehensive survey of their poetry has hitherto existed in English.

The present annotated anthology was first planned by me in 1928 as one of a series of twenty-four 200-page "North American Books of European Verse" that were to be prepared by myself and published, two a year for twelve years, by Messrs. Carrier and Ives of Montreal. The publishers went bankrupt in 1930 and only three volumes—Icelandic, Hungarian, and Polish—were completed and struggled into print. Three decades and thirty books later, in 1960, when I had just finished an English verse translation of the Polish epic *Pan Tadeusz*, a wiser and ampler plan for a Ukrainian anthology came to me. I would appeal to an old Winnipeg pupil of mine, Dr. C. H. Andrusyshen, now head of the department of Slavic studies in the University of Saskatchewan and author of a massive Ukrainian-English dictionary, to collaborate with me in a really definitive volume of Ukrainian poetry. To my great delight, he agreed to join with me in this large enterprise.

The partnership has been one in the fullest sense, with each of us invaluable to the other. Dr. Andrusyshen has chosen the selections, provided me with a close and exact interpretation of the basic texts, and furnished the book with notes and an introduction. I have had absolute confidence in his competence and my admiration for his scholarship has grown steadily in the course of our enterprise. It has been my task, on the other hand, with the Ukrainian and the literal English versions before me, to transmute these into English verse in identical or effectively equivalent metres. Forty years of prosodic experience and some four thousand pages of published poetry, mostly translation, have at least made me aware of the problems involved in recreating poetry in another idiom. The technical difficulties presented by Ukrainian poetry of all periods and all styles have been a fascinating challenge, to say the least. Each of us, moreover, has had to work at the volume in the tired

margin of a full-time job—he as a professor and I as a professor turned administrator. Our wives and our friends have gone on short rations of sociability. We are grateful for their patient forbearance.

Since all Ukrainian names are originally in the Cyrillic alphabet, a modified expansion of the Greek, the problem of English transliteration is a vexatious one. With the general reader rather than the specialist in view, we have sought renderings as close as possible to the English equivalents, with the further proviso that we use, where known, the English spelling that the poet himself has adopted. This latter rule will occasionally give rise to inconsistencies between names that are parallel in form in the original Cyrillic. The following normal equivalents in sound may be noted: *ia* like *ya* in *yard*; terminal *y* like *ee* in *glee*; *i*, short as in *hit*; *kh* like Scottish *ch* in *loch*; *zh* as the *z* in *azure*; *s*, always soft.

The general note prefixed to the extracts from each poet seeks to give concentrated but balanced information regarding his life and work. It does not necessarily follow that all of this information is fully illustrated by the selections chosen. In order to achieve this, the present large volume would need to be trebled in size.

Special thanks are due to the Ukrainian Canadian Committee for its generosity in underwriting the publication of this work by the University of Toronto Press. We are also grateful to Professor V. O. Buyniak, of the University of Saskatchewan, for helpful advice, to Mr. Bohdan Krawciw for bibliographical information, and to Mr. Sviatoslav Hordynsky for reading through the entire manuscript and making invaluable suggestions, especially in the text of *The Tale of Ihor's Campaign*. Mr. W. Kochan, executive director of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee, has been unfailing in his courtesies. Thanks are also due to those numerous poets who have graciously consented to sanction our inclusion of their poems in the volume.

WATSON KIRKCONNELL

*Acadia University
Wolfville, Nova Scotia*

Introduction

THE PRESENT ANTHOLOGY of Ukrainian verse begins with the translation in its entirety of *The Tale of Ihor's Campaign*, an epic poem written in the twelfth century. This, however, should not be taken to indicate that no poetic literature whatever had existed previously in the territory now called Ukraine. Unless science, as it now rashly promises, will one day succeed in making the very stones speak of the past, scholars may never discover any forms of literary endeavour in the Cimmerian Age, or even in the Scythian period that followed in the ninth and eighth centuries B.C. Greek sources reveal the presence of autochthonous races in the northern coastal Black Sea areas, but furnish no inkling as to any traditional folklore, written or oral, emanating from them. It can only be surmised that some sort of feeble literary attempts may have taken place even then in the guise of wild chants meant to incite these barbaric tribes to battle, or magic incantations and thaumaturgic spells to give force and adornment to the aboriginal cults of that prehistoric period. However, when one reaches the pagan age directly preceding the beginnings of the Christian era, the mist becomes thinner and at least something hazily substantial can be discerned through it. Although no distinct specimens of the pagan literary folklore have as yet been discovered, its traces become evident in the oldest Christian canticles of Kievan Rus which, despite its conversion, in or about 988, to the faith of Byzantium, was loath for some time yet to be cut off entirely from its old gods and, even though under constraint to abandon them, succeeded in incorporating certain salient pagan elements into the new religious and secular songs. In early Byzantine sources are to be found a few allusions to the existence of certain Slavic songs. Among others, the *Chronicle of Theophilus* under the year A.D. 583 records that the Greeks had captured some musicians of the Antes race (ancestors of Ukrainians) who sang songs to the accompaniment of lutes and zitherns.

With the appearance of liturgical, homiletic, and devotional books, hymn canons, and parts of the Bible translated into Church Slavonic (a dialect employed in the region of Salonica), the religious chants began to come into their own. Perhaps the most poetic of them were those contained in the *Mineon* (known to have existed in the eleventh century), a collection of ceremonial material (including motets, antiphons, and anthems) for each day of the month, extended to comprise the whole year. An apocryphal biblical literature, complete with its legendary lore, especially that involving eschatological concepts, also appeared and exerted marked influence on later

lyrical poetry. The highly poetic *Wanderings of the Mother of God among the Sufferings* was of special significance in that respect. The *Lives of the Saints* and the *Psalms* supplied further foundations for church chants and, later, for versified mysteries, miracles, moralities, and other dramatic types. Among the Church Fathers, St. Chrysostom's "golden-tongued," moralistic poetized writings were most popular, as well as the *Shestohlav* or "Hexameron" of St. Basil the Great, which was a literary narrative of the six days of the creation of the world, with an "encyclopaedic" attempt to explain the nature of water, earth, stars, animals, plants, and other natural phenomena. Of like interest was also the anonymous *Phisioloh*, a bestiary dealing with real and imaginary animals and their attributes, intended for the moral edification of Christian neophytes. It may be assumed that much of the lyrical descriptiveness of nature that appeared in subsequent original works, whether prose or verse, stemmed from the last two mentioned compilations. With but meagre exceptions, these and other works, to be sure, were of Byzantine origin, and were either translated, paraphrased, or imitated from the Greek archetypes, but they formed a part of the early Ukrainian (Rus) literature as a fertile field for the future underived varieties of poetic proliferation. Significantly enough, they were also well known in the England of Chaucer, who refers to "Phisiologus" as an authority.

The homilies of the three Metropolitans of Kiev, Hilarion (eleventh century), Kirilo Turivsky, and Klim Smoliatich (of the twelfth), though not versified, are highly poetic works symbolically paraphrasing the stories of the Bible, abounding in lyricism, dramatic effects, and glowing descriptions of nature. Though in the form of prose, theirs was the genuine poetry of the period, solemn in tone, rich in imagery, metaphors, parallelisms, antitheses, apostrophes, allegories, appealing more to the imagination and feeling than to reason and will. As in the West, the monasteries and ecclesiastical establishments in Rus-Ukraine were centres of learning and of the development of both prose and poetic literature.

During the age of the Princes, besides the religious lyricism expressed in the canon chants written anonymously by churchmen, there emerged a group of secular poets, usually court retainers who composed verses to extol the heroic deeds of their warrior chiefs. Among them were the minstrels Boyan and Dobrinia in the eleventh century and the singer Mitussa in the thirteenth. None of their works are extant and only traces of them have been preserved in various chronicles of later periods.

The greatest of these minstrels, it appears, was Boyan, excerpts from whose poetry are meagrely recorded also in *The Tale of Ihor's Campaign*. His poetic gifts must have been exceptional if in that epic he is likened to a nightingale and acclaimed as the grandson of Veles, god of wealth. Boyan's

flights of imagination and phantasy (compared to a nimble squirrel and a wide-ranging wolf) were the main trait of his poetry, the other being his notable facility for intertwining the past with the present, which also meant that he frequently mingled pagan elements with Christian. That was precisely what the author of *The Tale* did as he followed in Boyan's footsteps.

The Ukrainian epos, besides being heroic in tone and content, was distinguished by its national idealism centring around the Kievan State, and continued in that vein until about 1240 when the Tartars razed the city of Kiev, thus putting an end to further cultural development in the Principality. The poetry of the court retainers, however, had begun to show signs of decline many decades before that event, as it gradually lapsed into *biliny* (narrative poems regarding warlike events that may or may not have happened). Most of the *biliny* appeared and were preserved in northern Muscovy, but their origins are Kievan, having been written by Ukrainian men of letters who moved north in order to escape the Tartar yoke. Many of the heroic motifs prevalent during the Kievan period had been preserved in the Ukrainian ritualistic poetry, such as Christmas (*koliadki*) and Epiphany (*shchedrivki*) canticles, as well as in nuptial songs, many of which were interspersed with descriptions of military campaigns against Tsarhorod (Byzantium), sieges and sacks of towns and cities, abductions of princesses and their ransoms, and so forth—all these events taking place in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Other remnants of the older epos were saved either by being incorporated in the various chronicles or by being reduced to versified folk tales in which the exploits of heroes were exaggerated beyond measure. These latter were, as often as not, infused with satirical elements and were usually composed and sung both at courts and at public gatherings by the *skomorokhi* (strolling minstrels, dancers, and acrobats) who on festive occasions entertained the populace with their performances, the more gifted of them singing of the olden days and interspersing the accounts of heroic deeds with humorous anecdotes and sallies. These entertainments were actually the beginnings of the Ukrainian “medieval” drama, particularly comedy.

After 1240 Ukrainian literary culture moved from Kiev to the political centres of Muscovy, there to influence the budding Russian literature. It also moved westward, to the centres of Galicia and Volynia, to be somewhat influenced by the West with its prevalent Gothic forms and medieval mysticism—but not significantly, for the Byzantine hold on this literary culture was as yet too strong and continued to bog it down with the sententiousness and rhetoricity of its exaggerated style.

In the thirteenth century, despite the Mongol devastations of Ukrainian territory, literature continued to thrive in Western Ukraine, where it was

enlivened by the Galician-Volynian Chronicle, written about 1255. The importance of this work lies in the fact that it possesses great dramatic qualities and a fine poetic style rich in metaphoric and aphoristic resources. It is quite evident that it and other gnomic works of the time owe much to *The Tale of Ihor's Campaign*, as does the contemporary religious poem, *Adam's Discourse with Lazarus in Limbo*, derived from the episode in the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus where the pristine Father of the human race pleads with the about to be resurrected man to intercede with Christ for his entire progeny.

The latter half of the fourteenth century was marked by the annexation of the Ukrainian lands west of the Dnieper to the Lithuanian Principality and, later, through a turn of political events involving a union of the Lithuanian and Polish states, by the beginnings of Polish sway over those territories. Under the rule of the former, the Ukrainian language appeared to prosper, having been to a certain extent accepted at the royal court on a basis of tolerant equality, and even the dispensation of justice for both the races continued to be derived from the Codex compiled in the times of Yaroslav the Wise. No such latitude, however, was experienced under the direct rule of Poland.

With certain reservations, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are to be considered as the "dark ages" of Ukrainian literature. What prevented it from falling into total eclipse was the religious poetry which, as it supplanted the epic, continued its sporadic progress and acted as a magnetic force in keeping the Ukrainian national consciousness from disintegration. In addition, the spirit of the Reformation made a powerful impact on the minds of the church and lay leaders of the time, and influenced both the polemic literature and the Cossack epos in which the struggle of the Orthodoxy against the Latinizing efforts of Poland (led by the Jesuits) was intensely reflected.

With the sixteenth century there began to be felt the ever increasing stir of a cultural revival. Its first impressive manifestation occurred in the town of Ostrih, in Volynia, which, under the benevolent rule of Prince Constantine Ivanovich Ostrozsky, became the cradle of Ukrainian learning and the bastion of the Orthodoxy against the Polish attempts to assimilate the Ukrainian element politically by Romanizing it religiously. The scholars who taught at the Collegium of Ostrih, and those who graduated from it, proved most influential in that raging struggle, and highly instrumental in preserving the Ukrainian speech from oblivion. Other similar hearths of culture sprang up in various Western Ukrainian towns and cities where the wealthy burghers founded philanthropic brotherhoods which established Ukrainian elementary schools (non-existent till then) and fostered the advancement of learning, both spiritual and secular. Under the Stavropigian Brotherhood, Lviv

became one of the most potent of such centres in the sixteenth century; and in the seventeenth Kiev followed suit with its greatest educational and cultural activity concentrated around the *Pecherska Lavra* (The Monastery of the Caves). Its famed Kiev Academy, founded by the Metropolitan Petro Mohyla in 1632, produced noted scholars, many of whom, while expending their energies as polemists against the Union with the Church of Rome, reinvigorated the Ukrainian language with their animated disputes. The same may be said of those who, in Western Ukraine, argued in favour of the Union (which came about in 1598).

The European Renaissance hardly touched Ukrainian literature, mostly because even at that late date it remained under the influence of ecclesiastics who stressed the importance of religious and biblical themes in preference to the ancient classics, thus making it difficult for secular ingredients to penetrate into the domain of letters. As yet no universities of the European type existed in Ukraine to work in favour of secular literature. With the establishment of the Kiev Academy, however, this restrictive situation began to ease. In competition with the Jesuit schools in Ukraine, the Academy found it expedient, for cultural progress, to attach a greater importance to the study of Latin and to the Western curricula of education which made the schools of the Jesuits so attractive. Once that breach in the rigid Ukrainian mentality had been made, the influence of Western ideas began to be felt in all aspects of Ukraine's cultural life. One of the most powerful agencies in that respect was the Baroque art that began to infiltrate Ukrainian literature in the early part of the seventeenth century and prevailed till the end of the eighteenth. Polemic writings, too, became tinged with its traits. Uncompromisingly Orthodox as he was, even Ivan Vishensky who spent many years as an ascetic on Mount Athos, where he died in 1625, did not escape its influence; and his thundering treatises against the Latinizers, as well as his epistles to his own brethren in the faith, bear the imprint of that ornate style's intricate rhetoricity, euphuistic antitheses, grandiose apostrophes, and florid sententiousness. It was the Baroque element in his prose that created its poetry and made for his literary greatness as a defender of his faith and his potency as a spokesman for the rights of the common man.

Baroque invaded almost all types of Ukrainian poetry and prose of the period, and resulted in flamboyant glorifications of Christ and the Virgin, emotional panegyrics to the Saints, stylistic didactic poems on religious themes; inflated encomiums of the Ukrainian military and ecclesiastical leaders, and elaborate heraldic, "escutcheon" poems in exaggerated praise of the noble houses, often with nationalist and political connotations; impassioned love lyrics, stressing the physical rather than the spiritual features of the beloved; quasi-epic poems dealing expansively with the Cossack

exploits and lesser heroic events of the day; manneristic threnodies in which the theme of death and the disintegration of all living things was ornamented to such a degree as to create an appealing vogue in what was otherwise a morbid subject; embellished parodies and epigrammatic verses; a welter of emblems (cross, egg, pyramid, crescent, and other forms), acrostics, versified games, cabalistic riddles (where letters assumed numerical meanings), "crabs" (i.e., palindromes, reading the same from right to left and *vice versa*), and other verse manias that surpassed even the rococo over-ornamentation. Baroque supplied a diversity to suit every occasion, and by the end of the eighteenth century there existed in Ukraine some two hundred forms and strophes, mostly syllabic verse with feminine rhymes, with Skovoroda doing his best to introduce masculine ones.

Among those outstanding in this period were: Kassian Sakovich (b. 1580), author of the famous *Verses on the Occasion of the Death of the Illustrious Hetman Petro Konashevich-Sahaydachny* (1622) and other heraldic poems; Ivan Velichkovsky (d. 1726) an epigrammatist and escutcheon limner; and Meletiy Smotritsky (1578–1633) whose *Threnos* (a lament over the Orthodox Church personified by a widow bewailing her children's lot) is a poem in rhythmic prose, similar in style to the *dumy*.

Being of Western European origin, Baroque brought into Ukrainian poetry many Latinisms, thus enriching its verbal resources and making it more captivating to people of all walks of life. Its grandiloquent style influenced the Ukrainian writers of the nineteenth century and had a distinct bearing on the cultural revival of Ukraine. Deriving much from Ukrainian Baroque were the Southern Slavic literatures, and even to a greater extent the Russian literature of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries.

As in Western Europe, the early drama in Ukraine was of ecclesiastical origin and served as a secular adjunct to liturgical services and homilies. The first attempts were merely descriptive and lyrical recitations based on salient New Testament episodes and the Sorrows of the Virgin. The most notable were the Christmas verses of Pamva Berinda (early seventeenth century). These monologues developed into dialogues, but still with little dramatic effect, the action being described in the narratives. The beginning of the seventeenth century, however, witnessed their expansion into fully dramatized mysteries (Christmas, Passion, Resurrection), miracle plays (lives of the Virgin and the Saints), moralities (personified virtues and abstract concepts for the edification of the laity), and "academic" plays with philosophic and theological content, used mostly by the Jesuit schools in Ukraine for the purpose of confirming their students in virtue and righteous life. Many of them served as a medium for the disputes between the Orthodox and the

Latinizing camps. The chief dramatists of that century were St. Dimitriy Tuptalo (1651–1709), Georgiy Konisky (1718–95), and Theophan Prokopovich (1681–1736), all highly placed ecclesiastics. It was not long before the historical drama resulted from these types, retaining, however, an extensive religious element. The most representative plays of the new category were Prokopovich's *Vladimir*, dramatizing the conversion to Christianity of Kievan Rus, and an anonymous drama, *The Grace of God* (1728), which dealt with the times of Bohdan Khmelnitsky.

The comedy in Ukraine likewise evolved in the European manner, beginning with short interludes within serious dramas. These humorous skits occasionally assumed political significance, but in the main their content was satirical, often lapsing into the ludicrous, for the purpose of lessening the tension produced by the tragic events presented by the plays in which they were interpolated. Occasionally humour crept into the solemn compositions themselves, as is evidenced, for example, by such a grave work as *The Harrowing of Hell* (written in pure vernacular). The interlude later developed an independence of its own and became the *Vertep*, a semi-religious Christmas presentation of the *commedia dell'arte* sort, in which rustic types were mingled with the chief characters of the Nativity scene, as in the Wakefield *Second Shepherds' Play*.

Dramas were generally written in syllabic verse, usually thirteen syllables to the line, with a caesura dividing it into two parts, at times into three. This method, however, was ill suited to the Ukrainian language, whose movable syllabic stresses were not patterned enough for that kind of measure. For this reason, in many of the plays tonic verse, and even rhythmic prose with verbal rhymes, replaced the syllabic verse.

The lyrical passages in the dramatic works (e.g., the Virgin's laments and the apostrophes to the Saints) exerted a somewhat Baroque influence on future Ukrainian poetry, and to a certain extent on the simultaneously prevalent *dumy* which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries actually became the Cossack epic. The early *dumy* may have been of Serbian origin, for the Southern Slavic minstrels often visited Ukraine to sing of their own lands being subjugated by the Turks. This was precisely the mournful theme of their Ukrainian counterparts, who sang elegiacally of the Cossack warlike reality, particularly when treating the sorry lot of the Christian folk in Turkish captivity. These tearful, exclamatory "captive" *dumy* (of which only seven are now extant) in time gave way to more heroic songs of deeds of derring-do, ranging from the early Cossack struggle with the Poles, through the Khmelnitsky period, up to the final destruction by the Russians of the Zaporozhian Sitch towards the end of the eighteenth century. Other types of *dumy* reflect the social conditions of the times, and certain ones bear

moralizing and didactic messages in connection with the events related. Technically these poetic historical narratives were compositions of unequal lines manipulated *ad libitum* by the wandering bards who sang them, occasionally *ex tempore*, to the accompaniment of the kobza, originally a Tartar instrument which developed into the South Slavic *pandora* and the Ukrainian *bandura*.

Of great importance later in this period was the poetic endeavour of Hrihoriy Skovoroda who appears to have served as a literary link between the flourish of the school drama and Baroque art and the age of Kotliarevsky that was about to begin.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, Ukrainian poetry suffered a decline in quality. It continued, however, to be maintained after a fashion by the strolling *diaki* (church cantors), impoverished students, and mendicant, often blind, lute-players and kobzars who entertained the communities they visited on feast days and public celebrations with their own or traditional versions of church chants, psalms, Christmas carols and Easter canticles. In time the religious content of these songs became adulterated with worldly, even burlesque ingredients. In that respect, the rugged and ragged students were the chief culprits, for it was they who, against the background of religious themes, supplied extraneous love affairs, often scabrous, and inserted into the edifying lives of the saints the accounts of their own wretched lives, applying to their performances a comical relief in which the satirical element often predominated over the serious—all this simply to brighten the gloomy existence of the peasants with laughter and their own with a better prospect of monetary gain. Thus it happened that rustic dancing sprees invaded even the sacred precincts of heaven, with the saints taking a lusty part in the common revelry, the general picture resulting in caricature. The cantors, as well as the priests, were not averse to interspersing sacred songs with episodes dealing with the miserable lot of the humble folk, especially that of orphans, illegitimate children, and mothers out of wedlock. Parodies of serious subjects became, towards the end of the century, the preponderant feature of Ukrainian poetic literature, and even the Greek Muses were travestied as peasant wenches in homespun, with uncouth speech and manners.

It was this particular period of literary decline that gave the enemies of Ukraine occasion to belittle its literature as a vehicle too vulgar to express noble thoughts and lofty ideals, and fit only for the intercourse of peasants. The chief calumniators in this respect were the Russian critics of the nineteenth century, who did not spare even Shevchenko with their sarcasm and cynicism. They of course neglected to modify their sweeping judgment by mentioning that during Russia's Mongolian period, and after the Treaty of

Pereyaslav, it was Ukrainian men of letters who, in several separate waves, moved to Muscovy to become the cultural leaders of that incipient State. It is common knowledge that Peter I, in Europeanizing his country, appointed Ukrainian scholars to high posts, civil and ecclesiastical, to assist him in his reforms, and that the Russian schools in the first half of the eighteenth century stemmed directly from the Kiev Academy, whose men of learning did much to bring about the rise of Russian literature by their translations, encyclopedic publications, and lexicographical compilations, as well as to supply it with poetry and drama.

Although it is true that a stagnation occurred in Ukrainian poetic literature and its higher forms—ode, epic, tragedy—suffered a marked decline, the same did not apply to Ukrainian folksongs, which in their variety of forms and subjects continued to serve the spiritual needs of the people. It was they that kept the national spirit buoyant and alive, and in the early part of the nineteenth century, under young, inspired writers and poets, contributed towards the revival of literary enthusiasm in all parts of Ukraine. The turning point came in 1798, when Ivan Kotliarevsky, well equipped with a knowledge of Ukrainian ethnography, even while using the expedients of travesty and a mock-heroic tone with regard to Vergil's *Aeneid*, gave the lie to all hostile critics by raising the Ukrainian speech to a position from which it could easily be taken up by Shevchenko and other romanticists and refined into an instrument of eloquence.

Like Baroque, Romanticism came belatedly to Ukraine. However, it found there a fertile soil saturated with healthy folklore and historical songs, themselves already romanticized in their idealization of the Ukrainian past. In the second and third decades of the nineteenth century the movement was given impetus by the powerful current of Enlightenment then sweeping the entire Slavic world and arousing in each people intense interest in its respective folkways and ethnography. In Ukraine, Romanticism was intimately related to archaeological and ethnographical research that fostered in her people the sense of their historical identity and a consciousness of their nationhood. It is significant that the chief members of the short-lived Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius, such as Kostomariv and Kulish, were historians and ethnographers, romanticists who drew their inspiration not solely from legendary traditions but also from facts historically based. To such a high pitch of enthusiasm were the Ukrainian adepts of Romanticism roused that they firmly believed that Ukraine would eventually become the cornerstone of the Slavic world, as biblically prophesied by Kostomariv in his *Kniha Bitiya Ukrainskoho Narodu* (The Book of the Genesis of the Ukrainian People). Organized into the cultural-political Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius, the early romanticists took the

ideal of Ukrainian nationhood to heart and, even though they supported the project of a federation of all Slavic peoples, it was on the basis of brotherhood, liberty, and equality that they favoured it, with Ukraine finding in that family of nations her distinct position. However secretly conducted, the activity of the Brotherhood was exposed, and the tsarist régime put an end to its existence by exiling its members to the far corners of the Russian Empire. The spark struck by the Brotherhood, however, continued to blaze, fanned by the romantic genius of Taras Shevchenko.

Having paid his emotional tribute to the Ukrainian historical past, Shevchenko turned to his present as a realist idealistically inclined. The chief passion of his life was to create a vision of Ukraine for his people of all ages to contemplate as a source of perpetual vigour. In striving for liberty and justice for his own land, and in summoning his own and the future generations of Ukrainians to rise, shatter their chains, and seal their freedom with their blood, he was not merely nationalistic; for his clarion call is to be heard by all men who struggle to free themselves from social and political fetters. Everywhere in his poetic creation, but particularly in the poems *The Dream*, *The Caucasus*, and *The Neophytes* do these universal ideals find expression. Of lowly origin, Shevchenko rose to become a seer who, as he appealed to his people's feelings, strengthened in them the will to be. As such, he remains the pivot of his nation.

It was with Romanticism also that a literary revival began in Western Ukraine, where the movement was led by Markian Shashkevich shortly before Shevchenko's work began to sway the land. Together with his collaborators, he worked for the general enlightenment of the Ukrainian population in Galicia, then under the rule of Austria but dominated by Polish influences. Their chief accomplishment was *Russalka Dnistrovaya* (The Dniester's Nymph), a collection which contained their literary endeavours in prose and poetry. In it their output was meagre and, by European standards, primitive; yet when one considers the persecution and suppression of the Ukrainian language by Polish authorities in that province, the "Nymph" was one of the greatest achievements in the history of Ukrainian literature, for it was instrumental in contributing to the establishment of the right of the Ukrainian speech to exist as an entity among other Slavic languages.

The revival of Ukrainian culture in Galicia was duplicated a generation later in Bukovina, another province under Austrian rule. There Shashkevich's counterpart was Ossip Yuriy Fedkovich, whose poetic zeal effected a miraculous reawakening of his fellow-countrymen, who, having lived for many generations under the Turkish and Rumanian yokes, had been threatened with complete denationalization until Bukovina, in 1775, was claimed by Austria and united with Galicia.

The poets who followed in Shevchenko's wake continued to cultivate the Romantic Muse in a dreamy, elegiac manner; yet they were not totally devoted to her, for being also realists, of the earth earthy, they could not be blind to the stark circumstances besetting them at every turn. Realism in Ukrainian literature, it must be understood, was not, as in Western Europe, a reaction against Romanticism; it was inherent in the folksongs, the *dumy*, the drama, even in Baroque, and forms a greater or lesser constituent element even in certain modernistic literary specimens of the present century. It may even be said that Romanticism in Ukraine was a reaction against the monotony of Realism prevailing throughout the course of its literary history, and a means of a temporary escape from the harsh realities of life.

Following the tyranny of Tsar Nicholas I in Ukraine (as typified by the martyrdom of Shevchenko), it was hoped that the emancipation of the serfs (1861) would marshal in an age in which the poet's ideals would flourish and crown his strivings for at least social reforms. This was not to be, however, for in addition to continued political oppression, the freed serfs confronted the growing monster of industrial exploitation and material conditions altogether adverse to their spiritual development. The latter half of the nineteenth century was the age of disillusionment and political decadence. Shchoholiv's "An Abandoned Manor," better than any other poetic document of the period, accentuates the dreariness of those decades. The time had come when poets had to turn into social workers and propagandists in order to rouse the people from apathy to positive action. Hence came the populist activity of such men as O. Konisky, M. Staritsky, B. Hrinchenko, V. Samiylenko, and the early Franko. Much of their poetic work is not genuinely Parnassian but earthly concrete and utilitarian, resounding with slogans to the peasant masses, and to the intelligentsia that issued out of them, to work, at the sacrifice of their lives, for the material and spiritual betterment of their descendants. This, however, is not to imply that the work of those altruistic poets was totally lacking in inspiration and lyric beauty, but in the main their rôle was a social one.

Towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, the influence of the West on Ukrainian literature, although evident, was not strong; and the poets continued to reproduce, seemingly *ad infinitum*, the antiquated old forms and genres in which regional themes predominated. But even in this restricted sphere, one of the healthier traits of Ukrainian literature was its close connection with the soil and rural life, a strong foundation on which to build later a sturdy and refined monument to Apollo. As a result, the urbanization of Ukrainian poetry, when it did come, was not as modernistic as that of the West, and even in its impressionistic and expressionistic phases did not reveal the elements of decadence to the degree manifested elsewhere.

The two greatest figures bestriding the period 1885–1915 were Ivan Franko and Lesia Ukrainka. Having expressed themselves as mentors and stentors of the Ukrainian populist cause, both produced lyricism rooted in a subjectivism unparalleled by any of their contemporary fellow-craftsmen. Their subjects were drawn from universal historical sources, but they evolved them into works whose intrinsic values might appeal to humanity as a whole no less than to their own people. In initiating a trend towards a Europeanization of Ukrainian poetry, they served as guides for lesser lights who followed in that direction. With them Ukrainian poetry ceased to be merely the expression of a regional, nationalistic ideology, and expanded into a vehicle bearing a deeper philosophic import. In fine, they accepted the Western (and Eastern) influences, transmuted them into the originality of their own concepts, and caused Ukrainian literature to become a tributary to the main stream of European culture.

Before that actually happened, Ukrainian literature was to undergo a series of ordeals but for which it would not have lagged by at least half a century behind the rest of Europe. Both in the Ukrainian territory under tsarist Russia, and in that under the Austrian (virtually Polish) rule, Ukrainian literature, for political reasons, was under severe control, each régime being on the alert to forestall the least move among its subject populations towards self-determination. Censorship prevailed in the most rigid sense. Persecution and repression were particularly fierce in the Dnieper region of Ukraine.

And so it was that the enthusiasm aroused by Shevchenko was suddenly dampened by Count Pyotr Valuyev, a minister in the tsarist government, who categorically maintained that the Ukrainian language as such “never existed, does not exist now, nor can ever exist,” and that that which was called the Ukrainian (in his denomination—Little Russian) language was simply a Russian dialect corrupted by Polish linguistic influences. (The Poles, on the other hand, contended that the Ukrainian language was in reality Polish contaminated by Russian dialecticisms.) On that false premise, in 1863 Valuyev signed an ukase which prohibited books in the Ukrainian language (except fine literature) to be printed in, or imported to, any part of the tsarist Russia. To make this stringency the more telling, several leaders of the Ukrainian cultural and educational movements were exiled. This repression lasted till the middle seventies, when Ukrainian literature began to revive under the influence of extensive ethnographic and linguistic researches undertaken by Ukrainian scholars.

The new spurt of literary activity was again cut short in 1876 when a new and stricter ukase was issued. Based on the report of one M. Yuzefovich, who presented the Ukrainian speech in all its cultural proliferations as dangerous to the unity of the Russian Empire, Alexander II, on the advice

of his ministers, signed at Ems, Germany (where he was then taking a cure), a directive which forbade the printing of *all* Ukrainian books, regardless of subject, within the confines of Imperial Russia, as well as the importation of such books from abroad. Translations of them were permitted only into Russian, and even that under censorship. The few books that were allowed were to be printed in Russian orthography. This sweeping interdiction applied likewise to public lectures in Ukrainian and to the singing of folksongs in the vernacular.

It would be difficult to find in the history of the world another instance of such a violation of the human rights as that perpetrated by the “Valuyev” and “Ems” ukases. By those edicts, the very soul of the people was doomed to extinction. Never before has it been known that any civilized government condemned to death even a dialect, let alone a language whose vitality had been so manifestly revealed as was that of Ukrainian in the Shevchenko period.

As a result of that atrocity, several Ukrainian scholars, among them Mikhaylo Drahomaniv, were forced to emigrate and seek the centres of their activities elsewhere. Other Ukrainian authors, restricted at home, solved their problem by having their works published in Lviv (some in Geneva) where the Shevchenko Literary-Scientific Society gave them refuge and literary and scholarly scope. Under the more liberal Austrian régime, this learned journal became highly instrumental in preserving the Ukrainian language and literature from an eclipse with which all cultural activity was threatened in the Dnieper region of Ukraine.

In 1918 Ukraine achieved her temporary statehood, and the Ukrainian language became the official medium of expression in the government, Academy of Sciences, universities, law courts, and other state institutions. If, for example, in 1880, under the tsarist régime, not a single book (not even a pamphlet) in the Ukrainian language appeared, and later only sporadic publications saw the light of day, in that first year of Ukraine’s independence, regardless of the fact that Kiev was captured and recaptured by the Bolsheviks several times, there were some eleven hundred various Ukrainian publications issued with their cumulative editions amounting to at least three hundred thousand volumes.

No hindrances, however categorical, were powerful enough to stop the current of Ukrainian poetry throughout the nineteenth century. Sprung powerfully from Kotliarevsky’s source, it gained impetus from Shevchenko’s irrepressible power and, strengthened by Franko’s auxiliary stream, swept relentlessly on through all obstacles. After World War I it increased to a velocity and expansive creativity such as were never before witnessed in the history of Ukrainian literature. From 1917 to 1934, a span of not quite two

decades, the vigour of Ukraine's poetic expression became phenomenal, silencing all prejudicial opinion with regard to the efficacy of the Ukrainian language as a bearer of aesthetic and moral values. Even the Soviet régime, in which the Russian element was preponderant, reluctantly admitted its incontrovertible identity and allowed its development in all phases of Ukraine's cultural life.

Given that licence, Ukrainian literature began to expand and progress by leaps and bounds, seemingly as if to make up for the time lost in the previous centuries. It was a heyday of creativity. Yet there was no sudden severance from the past or from the West. All forms were tried. Nothing was neglected. But although they passed through the impressionistic, expressionistic, and surrealistic phases of Western European literature, the Ukrainian poets of the twentieth century infused into all those movements the spirituality emanating from the heart of a reborn nation and developed an originality unmistakably their own. Out of the folklorist, regional, even nationalistic traditions, Ukrainian poetry evolved into a cultural vehicle of universal values. In the hands of such artists as Tichina, Rilsky, Zerov, Bazhan, and others it was fashioned into such a composite work of art that it could easily measure up to general European standards and, at times, even challenge them in intellectual and aesthetic range.

At first glance it would appear anomalous that the Soviet régime allowed this expansion to continue, even so briefly. What is to be understood here is that it had, first of all, to consolidate its rule in Ukraine, and had hoped thereafter that in time all that array of Ukrainian writers would assist it in maintaining its authority by strictly adhering to the principles of Socialist Realism as enunciated by Maksim Gorky at the first Congress of Soviet Writers in 1924. In it that Russian author made it plain that Soviet literature in all the Republics was to be quite distinct from the literary ideologies of the past in that it must mirror exclusively the aspects of the new society and cater solely to the needs and demands of the Communist proletariat. Relying solely on Marxist dialectical materialism, its writers were to be, first and foremost, "engineers of the soul" and not creators of art either for its own sake or for the sake of "bourgeois" intellectual, transcendental, or even moral concepts. To many Soviet writers this dictate meant, on the one hand, an end to originality, experimentation, and the cult of beauty, and on the other, a life within a restricted orbit in which they were to suffer the compulsion of producing a literature patterned out for them.

Up to that juncture the freedom of poetic speech in post-revolutionary Ukraine, although always precarious, was manifest in every category into which its art was divided and subdivided: impressionism, symbolism, expressionism (with its proliferations of imagism and idealistic dynamism),

pan-futurism (seeking to destroy the past and contemporary art and to synthesize poetry, painting, sculpture and architecture into an abstract entity), surrealism (aiming at revealing the subconscious and supra-sensory "reality"), neo-romanticism (activistic and vitaistic), and neo-classicism (characterized chiefly by high intellectualism and refined culture, and by its tendency to be connected with the West and the past). The greatest enemies of the Soviet régime appeared to be those who belonged to the neo-classical group whose chief representative Mikola Zerov (if one were to except Maksim Rilsky, then prolific as a creator but relatively unvocal in its defence) was the one most active in directing the movement to the sources of universal culture. For that reason the neo-classicists were viewed by the Soviet régime as futile idealists, bookish idlers, and were condemned as escapists from the realities of life. The futurist group was considered as the most faithful to the ideology of Sovietdom, and its adherents were used extensively by the Moscow Central Soviet and its subsidiary in Kiev in a ruthless attack on all those who were not willing to dissolve their relations with the West and conform wholly to "socialist realism" of the Marxist type.

The leader of the Westernizing trend was Mikola Khvilovy, who, in seeking to establish the independence of Ukrainian literature, organized the influential VAPLITE (*Vilna Akademiya Proletarskoyi Literatury*—Free Academy of Proletarian Literature) and raised the cry—"Away from Moscow!" In his expressionistic novelistic études, as well as in his later polemic pamphlets, Khvilovy in no uncertain terms sought to expose the bankruptcy of the Revolution as a spiritual force, combatted the psychological subjugation of Ukraine by Muscovy, and pointed towards Western Europe as the way out for Ukrainian literature. To destroy the idealistic and nationalistic tendencies of the VAPLITE, the All-Ukrainian Proletarian Association of Writers was established in 1927 and, after not quite two years of turbulent existence, the former was liquidated. Khvilovy was driven to self-incrimination and was tolerated until 1933 when, under political pressure resulting in mental depression, he committed suicide.

It must be borne in mind that most of the Ukrainian literary groups were willing to continue to create within the framework of Communist ideology, but independently of the centralizing authority of Moscow. Among the factors that roused in the Ukrainian writers a hostility to that authority was the enforced collectivization of the Ukrainian peasantry (which began in 1929) and the death of several million Ukrainians as a result of the famine (1933) which Stalin deliberately imposed on Ukraine in order to compel the population to accept that economic stringency.

In 1934 the first purge of Ukrainian writers began. Its first victims were those actively connected with the VAPLITE and other literary groups,

including some who were unattached to any organization suspected of diversionist tendencies. The terror reached raging and indiscriminate proportions in 1937–38 when even those who had assisted the Soviet régime in battling the dissenters were not spared, and many who had previously been sent to the northern concentration camps for limited terms were summarily shot. At least fifty leading Ukrainian men of letters suffered banishment; certain others, such as Vlizko, Falkivsky, Kosinka, and Chuprinka, were executed immediately upon conviction. Among the few poets who escaped either fate were P. Tichina, M. Rilsky, M. Bazhan, and V. Sosiura, all of whom, owing to their tremendous popularity in Ukraine and abroad, the Soviet régime considered too important to be expendable. That exemption, however, was obtained at the price of their strict subservience to the Party.

After Stalin's disappearance from the scene, the plight of the Ukrainian poets and writers eased somewhat. But everything they produce is still being weighed by the censor, and occasionally, if any trace of deviationism is detected in their writings, they are forced to appear before the Writers' Congress and beat their breasts in self-condemnation. Yet despite the fact that they are required to serve the Soviet Muse, it must be admitted that often they produce first-rate poetry. Among much triteness, poetic items of sterling worth continue to be added to their works by Tichina, Sosiura, Bazhan, and particularly by Rilsky who, as his poem-vision "Thirst" bears ample evidence, is perhaps the greatest master of them all.

During the revolutionary period and at the beginning of Stalin's tyranny, many Ukrainian poets and writers fled abroad to settle in Poland (particularly in Galicia), Czechoslovakia (where they formed a strong Prague group), and other parts of Europe. Together with the poets native to Western Ukraine, they continued to manifest themselves strongly as ideologists in a politically national sense. Those who were not so inclined, turned to sheer intellectualism, drawing their inspiration from the modernistic West and, in turn, contributing to the proliferation of its ideas with their own specific talents. After World War II, quite a number of them emigrated to all parts of the world, mostly to the United States, where they are engaged generally in journalism, and only occasionally, as material circumstances permit, in *belles-lettres*.

Today the creative effort of Ukrainian poets has by no means petered out. In Ukraine and beyond its confines there is evidence of some, often desperate, activity. Literature in the world today is everywhere given over to a chaotic experimentation in which poetry is often bogged down in a morass of obscurity. Contemporary Ukrainian poets of the younger generation likewise experiment with new techniques and principles, but the worth of their product is still uncertain.

C. H. ANDRUSYSHEN

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THE UKRAINIAN POETS

The Tale of Ihor's Campaign

The author of this epic remains unknown. From the tenor of the poem, however, it can be gathered that he was a mature, experienced man, perhaps a Kievan serving in one of the princely retinues, well versed in the manners and customs of his day, a bookish person conversant with the poetic resources then prevailing in the literature of Kievan Rus, a Christian who nevertheless did not spurn any pagan element that might intensify his poetic vein. Above all, he was a fervent patriot.

The subject of the epic is the disastrous campaign of Prince Ihor of Novhorod Siverskiy (not to be confused with the Novgorod on the Volkhov River by Lake Ilmen). The battle, as recorded by the Hypatian Chronicle, took place in 1185.

A work of art of the first order in world literature, its poetry is heightened by the solemnity of its tone, its personifications of natural phenomena, its psychological insight into the moods of the warriors, its colourful negative parallelisms, its wealth of vivid metaphors, its masterful contrasts of the real and the fantastic, and its faithful reflection of the heroic spirit of the times. It is a presentation of an historical event through the prism of a sensitive soul and, as such, the greatest literary achievement of Kievan Rus.

The poem was included in a collection entitled *The Khronegraph* which Count Alexey Mussin-Pushkin purchased in 1795 from Archimandrite Yoil (Joel) of the Spasso-Yaroslav Monastery, where it had apparently found refuge shortly after the beginning, in 1240, of the Tartar incursions into Ukraine. After being deciphered, the manuscript was published in 1800 in St. Petersburg. In 1812 it disappeared, however, and is believed to have perished in the burning of Moscow, together with the entire library of Mussin-Pushkin. Its loss renders the task of adequate research on the epic somewhat difficult.

On the basis of scholarly findings, it has been well established that, in the main, the language used by the poet was Ukrainian as spoken in the twelfth century. Linguistically it was closely related both to the vernacular and to Church Slavonic, and it is of particular interest that many of its words and phrases have been preserved in various Ukrainian dialects that have not undergone as rapid an evolutionary change as has the literary language finally established by I. Kotliarevsky in his *Aeneid*.

It must be borne in mind that Mussin-Pushkin, in having the only extant copy of the epic recopied, ordered his editors and emendators to render it into the "dialect now in use" (i.e., Russian), the result being that the copy was to a large extent Russified. That process likewise contributed to many of its passages being omitted, misplaced, and otherwise confused. The fact that the "original" copy, dating from the fifteenth century, was entirely unpunctuated and full of Bulgarisms (prevalent in the orthography of that period) makes any scholarly attempt at elucidation doubly onerous.

Rarely has a work of art had such a number of investigators, annotators, and translators as *The Tale of Ihor's Campaign*; and an immense accumulation of critical and exploratory literature concerning it bears witness to the intrinsic worth of this heroic song. Most of the scholars who have delved into it have treated it purely and simply as a "Russian epic," but with only rare exceptions they have failed to explain the various passages in the poem that are based indisputably on Ukrainian folklore.

THE TALE OF THE CAMPAIGN OF IHOR, SON OF SVIATOSLAV.
GRANDSON OF OLEH

Now might it not be meet, my brethren,
To enter on the tale of Ihor's foray,
Which Sviatoslav's heroic son conducted,
In ancient accents of a martial lay?
Then let this Song begin in the current fashion,
And not in the manner that Boyan¹ once favoured.

For when Boyan felt an inspiration
To summon forth a song in someone's honour,
He scurried over treetops in his fancy,
Like a grey wolf he dashed about the prairie,
Or soared, cloud-piercing, like a blue-grey eagle,
For, as he vowed, he called to mind the broils of ancient times.

Then his ten falcons he would loose upon a flock of swans,
And each, when overtaken, raised a song,
Praising the venerable Yaroslav,²
Mstislav,³ the Brave, who in sight of Kassoh cohorts
Slew their Prince, Rededia;
Likewise Roman Sviatoslavich,⁴ the Fair, was lauded.
Boyan, however, loosed no falcons on a swan-flock,
But let inspired fingers fall upon the living lute-strings
And they themselves rang out the praise of Princes!

So let us then, my brethren, launch this epic
Out of the times of ancient Volodimir,⁵

¹A poet-minstrel who glorified the martial deeds of the early Kievan princes. Nothing is known of his personal life, except that he was an inspired bard who possessed great, almost miraculous gifts of imagination and fantasy and, in comparative manner, was able to present the contemporary exploits of the princes against the background of ancient times. *The Tale of Ihor's Campaign* is one of the few testimonies to his existence. So affluent was his poetry in artistic resources that he was praised as the son of Veles, the Slavic god of cattle, hence of wealth.

²Yaroslav the Wise, son of Volodimir the Great, was a Prince of the Kievan Rus (1019-54), under whose reign Ukrainian laws were codified.

³Mstislav, Prince of Tmutorokan, son of Volodimir the Great by Rohnida. At first he fought against Yaroslav to gain more Rus territory for himself, but later became reconciled with him, satisfied with his own conquests on the left bank of the Dnieper.

⁴Roman Sviatoslavich, Prince of Tmutorokan, grandson of Yaroslav the Wise, slain by the Polovtsians in 1079.

⁵Volodimir the Great (in Old Slavic—Vladimir), son of Sviatoslav and Prince of the Kievan Rus (978-1015), who united the ancient Rus tribes into a powerful state. During his reign, Christianity was officially established in his domains (988 or 989).

And bring it to the present and to Ihor⁶
 Whose soul was rendered taut by earnest purpose
 And keen-edged with the courage of his heart.
 Filling his spirit thus with martial vigour,
 He led his valorous troops
 Against the hostile land of the Polovtsians⁷
 In the defence of the land of Rus.⁸

Then Ihor glanced up at the shining sun
 And saw a darkness cover all his warriors.
 And thus spake Ihor to his train: "Brothers, retainers,
 Much better were it to be hewn down than to be captured!
 Let us then, brothers-in-arms, mount our swift steeds,
 Win to the Don and visit its blue flood."
 That ardent passion dulled the Prince's prudence,
 And eagerness to taste the mighty Don
 Eclipsed for him the sense of evil omen.
 "It is my will," he said, "to try my spear
 On the far limits of Polovtsian plains,
 And with you, Sons of Rus, from out our helmets
 Either to drink the Don or else to perish!"

Boyan, thou nightingale of days of yore,
 Would thou couldst trill of this campaign,
 Warbling, O songster, in the tree of fancy's branches,
 With thine invention soaring beneath the clouds,
 Weaving, sweet melodist, the songs of glory around these times
 And, rushing down the pathway of Troyan,⁹
 Across fields to the hills should be the song for Ihor:
 "It was no storm that swept the falcons over the vast plains.
 It was the daws that dashed in flocks toward the Mighty Don."
 Or shouldest thou have sung, Boyan, grandson of Veles:¹⁰

"Beyond the Sula neigh the steeds;
 Resoundingly in Kiev glory reigns
 And trumpets blare in Novhorod.

⁶Ihor, son of Sviatoslav II (Olhovich), was born in 1151, began to reign in Novhorod Siverskiy in 1179, and died in 1202. He is the hero of this epic.

⁷A nomadic tribe, ranging south of the Kievan Rus, along the Black Sea coast, and eastward to the Volga.

⁸Rus, a conglomerate name of all the tribes that comprised the Principality of Kiev and the surrounding territories.

⁹Probably a legendary prince of Rus.

¹⁰In Ukrainian mythology, a sun-god, protector of cattle, hence a supplier of wealth.

At Putivl the standards flutter in the wind,
 Ihor awaits his dear brother Vsevolod.
 And the Aurochs, Vsevolod, says to him:
 "One brother, one bright light art thou, O Ihor,
 We are both the sons of Sviatoslav.
 Saddle thy fleet steeds, my brother.
 In Kursk are my own already saddled.
 My men of Kursk are dauntless warriors,
 Swaddled under the blare of trumpets,
 Cradled under helmets,
 Nursed at the point of a spear . . .
 With every trail they are familiar
 And no ravine to them is secret . . .
 Taut are their bows, their quivers open,
 Their sabres have keen edges.
 Like grey wolves they themselves rush through the plains
 In search of honour for themselves
 And for their Prince renown and glory."
 Prince Ihor in the golden stirrup set his foot
 And rode across the vast expanse.
 The sun obscured the way for him with darkness;
 The storm-loud night aroused the strident birds,
 The howling of the beasts massed them in clamorous flocks. . . .
 Sinister Div¹¹ down from the treetops calls to warn the alien lands;
 Regions of Volga and Sula and Surozh and Korsun and Coastal Slopes,
 And thou, O idol of Tmutorokan,¹²
 Take heed!

At random down unbeaten roads Polovtsians flee
 To the Great Don;
 Carts screech at midnight like awakened swans.
 Ihor leads his forces to the Don.
 Sensing his coming fate, the birds of rapine
 Perch in the oak-trees to await their time;
 The wolves, foreboding tempests, grimly howl;
 The eagles, shrieking harshly, summon all the beasts
 To the carrion bones;
 The foxes bark at scarlet bucklers.
 O land of Rus, already beyond the hills art thou.

¹¹A mythical forest demon in the guise of a ravenous bird, favourable to the Polovtsians, inimical to the people of Rus; here, personification of evil.

¹²A town on the northeastern coast of the Sea of Azov (Azov), where princes driven out of their territories usually found temporary refuge.

The darkness of the night-time long prevailed
 Until at last the dawn burst forth
 While yet the mists were covering the fields . . .
 Hushed are the trillings of the nightingales;
 But roused the clamour of the daws . . .
 With scarlet shields the sons of Rus have barred the vasty Plain,
 In search of honour for themselves
 And glory for their Prince.

On Friday's early morn they trampled down the infidels
 And scattering like arrows o'er the Plain,
 They carried fair Polovtsian maidens off,
 And with them seized the gold and silken stuff and precious samite,
 And many costly mantles, cloaks and furs.
 With these and every fashion of Polovtsian luxuries
 They bridged the marshes and the quagmires.
 A scarlet standard, a white banner, a silver lance,
 The red bunchuk¹³—all fell to the booty
 Of Sviatoslav's intrepid son.

In the Plain now slumbers Oleh's valiant brood:
 Far into hostile regions have they flown!
 Born were they not to be abused by hawk or falcon,
 Neither by thee, black raven, infidel Polovtsian!
 Like a grey wolf speeds Hza;¹⁴
 In headlong rush Konchak¹⁵ guides him to the Don . . .

Early, most early on the morrow, blood-red gleams of dawn
 Announce the approaching day . . .
 Out of the sea, black clouds draw nigh,
 Keen to eclipse the four suns,¹⁶
 And in them bluish lightnings flicker eerily.
 There is to be great thunder!
 Rain is to come in arrows from the mighty Don!
 Here shall the spears be shattered,
 Blunted the sabres on Polovtsian helmets

¹³Bunchuk, an item of military regalia: a rod usually six or seven feet in length, topped by a ball or an arrow point below which was fastened a "orse's (sometimes aurochs') mane or tail.

¹⁴The chief of the Don Polovtsian horde, and an ally of Konchak.

¹⁵The Polovtsian Khan.

¹⁶The four princes taking part in the campaign: Ihor, Vsevolod, Sviatoslav (son of Oleh), and Volodimir (son of Ihor).

Beside Kayala stream,
And by the Great Don's mighty surge.
O land of Rus, far beyond the hills art thou!

The blustering winds now blow, offsprings of Striboh,¹⁷
Showering with arrows the brave hosts of Ihor.
The earth rumbles,
Streams flow turbidly,
Dust covers the plains . . .
The banners flutter,
The Polovtsians
Advance from the Don and from the sea.
From all sides they beset the warriors of Rus.
With fearsome cries the Devil's children barred the plains,
While the brave men of Rus barred them with their scarlet shields.

“Vsevolod, fierce Aurochs! You stand in battle
Spurting at the foe with arrows,
With swords of steel you strike clangorous blows
Against the helmets of the enemy!
Where'er you spring into the battle, Aurochs,
Your golden casque ablaze,
There lie the paynim heads of the Polovtsians,
And Avar helms are cleft with tempered sabres
By you, Vsevolod, impetuous Bull!”
For what are wounds to him, dear brethren,
Who has forgotten wealth and honours,
And Chernihiv town, his Sire's golden throne,
And the affection and caresses of his beloved,
Hlib's lovely daughter?

The age of Troyan is no more,
The times of Yaroslav have passed away,
Only a memory now are the campaigns of Oleh,¹⁸
Oleh, son of Sviatoslav,
Who with his sword once forged dissensions
And sowed arrows over the land.

¹⁷Slavic god of the winds, a destructive power.

¹⁸Oleh, son of Sviatoslav II (son of Yaroslav) and Prince of Kiev (1073–76), grandfather of the present Ihor. This not being a historical presentation, it has been thought best not to burden the reader with too much historical data, lest we confuse him. Suffice it to say that the princes mentioned here were related to each other by blood and, being warlike in spirit, were only too eager to create dissensions among themselves in order to gain more territories at each other's expense.

In the town of Tmutorokan
 Into the golden stirrup, lo! he sets his foot.
 That ringing sound was heard in olden days by ancient Yaroslav;
 And Vsevolod's son, Volodimir,
 In Chernihiv each morn would stop his ears,
 While vainglory brought God's judgement
 On Boris, son of Viacheslav,
 And on the bank of Kanin spread a green pall for him
 For the offence he did to Oleh, young intrepid Prince.
 And from a like river of tears,
 Cradling his father between Magyar pacers,
 Sviatopolk had him conveyed to Kiev
 To rest in Saint Sophia's vaults.

'Twas in the days of Oleh, offspring of distress and woe,
 That dissensions grew and spread,
 The wealth and substance of Dazhbog's¹⁹ descendant dwindled,
 And in the feuds between the Princes
 The span of human life was shortened.
 Rarely in those times the ploughmen called to one another
 Throughout the land of Rus,
 But often did the ravens croak
 As among themselves they shared the corpses,
 And the jackdaws, in their jargon jabbering,
 Were always craving to take wing to that repast.

Thus was it in those frays and expeditions,
 But such a battle as this was yet unheard of.
 From early morn till eve, from eve till dawn,
 The tempered arrows fly,
 The sabres harshly clang against the helmets,
 The spears of steel meet with the sound of rending
 In the far-off plains unknown, amid the Polovtsian land.
 Black earth beneath the hooves
 Was sown with bones and soaked with blood,
 Both sprouting sorrow through the land of Rus.

What is the din, the ringing sound I hear
 So distantly, before the break of dawn?
 It is from Ihor, turning back upon the foemen,

¹⁹A pre-Christian Slavic sun-god, the giver of life. Rus princes were often called "Dazhbog's offspring" (descendants).

Anxious in pity to relieve the plight
 Of his beloved brother, Vsevolod.
 One day they fought, and yet another,
 And toward midday on the third
 Fell Ihor's standards.
 Here on the swift Kayala's bank
 The brothers parted,
 For the wine of blood ran dry . . .
 The wedding feast was there brought to an end
 By the dauntless sons of Rus
 Who with their blood did sate the guests
 And for the land of Rus laid down their lives.
 The grass droops in sorrow,
 The trees in grief are bending to the ground.

A tide of woe already has set in, my brothers,
 The wilderness has spread its pall over the fallen warriors.
 Among the troops of Dazhboh's offspring reigns adversity.
 Like a maiden it had entered into Troyan's land,
 Fluttering its swanlike pinions on the blue sea by the Don
 And, plashing in its waters, frightened away prosperous times.

Forgotten was the Princes' warfare with the infidel;
 For brother said to brother now:
 "This belongs to me, and that is mine!"
 And the Princes ventured to think petty matters great
 And to forge dissension, each against the other,
 While the pagans came with conquests
 Into the land of Rus.

For far into the field, down to the very sea,
 The falcon had roamed to smite the ugly birds!
 But Ihor's valiant hosts will never rise again.
 Karna²⁰ upon their traces shrieks her wailings,
 And Zhla²⁰ in lamentations leaped about the land of Rus,
 Scattering upon the multitudes the embers
 From a flaming horn.

Ruthenian wives burst forth in lamentation:
 "No longer can we even in our thoughts imagine,
 Nor fashion in our minds,
 Nor with our eyes behold

²⁰Lamenting personifications of sorrow.

Our precious husbands;
And never more shall we adorn ourselves
With gold and silver pendants.

Kiev, my brothers, groaned with sorrow,
And Chernihiv in deep adversity.
A flood of sadness swept the land of Rus,
Distress in mighty spate flowed everywhere . . .
And while the Princes forged their mutual quarrels,
The infidels made raids into the land of Rus
And wrung from every stricken home a squirrel-fur tribute.

Thus those two fearless sons of Sviatoslav,
Ihor and Vsevolod, had roused again that hostile spirit
Which their forebear, dread Sviatoslav the Great of Kiev,
Had suppressed with terror,
With his mighty cohorts and tempered swords
He set his foot upon the Polovtsian land,
Trod hard upon its hills and steep ravines,
Churned to turbidity its lakes and rivers,
Drained off its streams and bogs,
And like a whirlwind snatched away the heathen Kobiak
From off the sea-gulf's arc,
Out of the mighty, steel-armed hosts of the Polovtsians.
And Kobiak²¹ fell
In the city of Kiev
In Sviatoslav's Hall of the Guards.

Now the Germans and the Venetians,
Now the Greeks and the Moravians
Extol the glory of Sviatoslav,²²
And reproach Prince Ihor
Who let his wealth sink down to the Kayala's bottom
And glutted with the gold of Rus
The Polovtsian streams.
And Ihor, the Prince, dismounted from his golden saddle
To mount the saddle of a captive.
And the bastions of the cities mourned
And joy faded.

²¹The Polovtsian Khan, defeated by the princes of Rus in 1184, the year before Ihor's Campaign took place. Ihor did not participate in that battle.

²²Sviatoslav III (son of Vsevolod), Prince of Kiev (1176–94), called father here, but in reality Ihor's cousin.

And Sviatoslav dreamed a disquieting dream
 In Kiev upon the hills.
 "All night since evening," he said,
 "As I lay on a couch of yew,
 I was being clothed in a black shroud,
 Blue wine with venom mixed was poured for me;
 Out of the empty quivers of the pagan nomads
 They spilled large pearls upon my chest,
 Caressed and fondled me . . .
 The gold-decked roof of my abode
 Was left without a rafter.²³
 All night since evening have hell's ravens croaked,
 And in the lowlands of Plisnesk
 In the thickets there were vipers crawling
 And moving towards the blue sea."

And to the Prince the boyars spoke out thus:
 "Grief, O my Prince, has firmly gripped thy mind,
 For hence already have two falcons²⁴ flown
 From their paternal throne of gold,
 Seeking to win to Tmutorokan town
 Or with their helmets at least drink the Don . . .
 Already have their wings been clipped
 By the sabres of the infidel,
 And they themselves made fast in iron fetters.
 For on that third day, darkness fell;
 Two suns²⁴ became eclipsed,
 Two scarlet pillars²⁴ lost their sheen,
 And with them, Oleh and Sviatoslav, two young moons,
 With obscurity were veiled
 And sank into the sea.
 "On the banks of the Kayala palls the light:
 Over the land of Rus the Polovtsians have scattered
 Like a brood of leopards,
 Inspiring with audacity the Hunnish tribes.
 Now infamy has risen over glory,
 Freedom is smitten by disaster,
 And Div already has swooped down upon the land . . .

²³Omens of death of someone closely related. Other omens mentioned here also forebode disaster.

²⁴Ihor and Vsevolod.

Lo! comely Gothic maidens
 On the shore of the blue sea have raised their voices in a song
 And, jingling the gold of Rus,
 They glorify the evil times of Bous²⁵
 And extol the vengeance for Sharokan.²⁶
 While we, thy followers, are downcast
 And yearn for gladness."

Then the great Sviatoslav let fall a golden word,
 Mingled with tears, and said:
 "Alas, my nephews, Ihor and Vsevolod!
 Too early you began to lash with swords
 The land of the Polovtsians
 In quest of your own glory.
 Without honour have you slain your adversaries
 For dishonourably have you shed their pagan blood!
 Your stalwart hearts had been well steeled
 And tempered hard with daring.
 Why have you done this to my silvery hair?
 No longer do I see the puissance of brother Yaroslav,
 Opulent and mighty, rich in cohorts,
 With the nobility of Chernihov in attendance,
 With the Mohuts, Tatrans and Shelbirs,
 Topchaks, Revuhs and Olbers,²⁷
 Those who without bucklers,
 Merely with daggers in the leggings of their boots,
 With war-cries quell the hostile troops,
 Spreading resoundingly the glory of their forebears.
 But you said: Let us be brave on our own,
 And we will grasp the glory that lies before us,
 And that which is past—we will share among ourselves."
 Would it not be a wonder, brothers, that an ancient should seek
 to act like a youth?
 When a falcon has moulted, he soars high to smite the birds,
 And will let no harm befall his aerie.
 But here's the rub: no aid from the princes do I receive.
 The times are turned awry.
 At Rim²⁸ the people's cries are heard

²⁵Prince of the ancient Slav tribes called Antes.

²⁶Dynastic name of the Polovtsian khans who waged wars with Rus.

²⁷Slavic tribes in alliance with the Kievan Rus.

²⁸A town near Pereyaslav, plundered by the Polovtsians.

Under the Polovtsian sabres,
And Volodimir is covered with wounds.
Grief and sorrow are the portion of the sons of Hlib!²⁹

“O Vsevolod, great Prince, thou hast no thought
To come flying here from afar to lend protection
To the throne of thy ancestors!
For with thy oars thou art able to sprinkle the Volga out
And drain the Don with helmets.
If thou wert present here,
A female slave would for a mite be sold
And a bondsman for a farthing.
For over the dry land thou canst launch thy living missiles—
The dauntless sons of Hlib.

“And you, O fierce Rurik³⁰ and David!³¹
Was it not your warriors' gilded helmets that floated in blood?
Were not your valiant retainers bellowing like bulls
Wounded by tempered steel on fields unknown?
Set your feet in the golden stirrups, my lords,
To take your vengeance for the injuries done in our time,
For the land of Rus,
For the wounds of Ihor,
The intrepid son of Sviatoslav!

“O eight-sensed Yaroslav of Halich,³²
High thou sittest on thy gold-wrought throne,
Bracing the Magyar mountains with thy steely hosts,
Barring the road before the King's advance,
Locking tight the Danube's gates,
Flinging thy ponderous shafts above the clouds,
Making thy judgements prevail as far as the Danube.
Across the land thy dread streams like a flood;

²⁹Hlib, son of Rostislav, grandson of Yaroslav the Wise, and Prince of Riazan. In the Ukrainian Chronicle under the year 1187, in connection with Volodimir, one of his five sons, the name “Ukraine” comes into history for the first time—“Ukraine groaned greatly after him.”

³⁰Rurik, son of Rostislav, ruled in Bilhorod. A great adventurer of his time, he conquered and lost Kiev seven times between 1172 and 1210.

³¹David, brother of Rurik. Apparently the allusion is to the campaign against the Polovtsians in 1177 which was unsuccessful on account of the dissensions between the two brothers.

³²Yaroslav of Halich (1153-87) of the Rostislav dynasty. He was called the Eight-Sensed on account of his excellent statesmanship and organizational talent, as a result of which the Halich Principality attained great power. His domains extended from the Carpathians to the mouth of the Danube, comprising more or less the present Western Ukraine, with Lviv as its later centre. He was greatly dreaded by the Polovtsians and the Hunnish tribes.

Thou openest the gates of Kiev;
 From the golden throne of thy forebears
 Thou shootest at sultans beyond thy territories.
 Shoot, then, O lord, at Konchak, the infidel slave,
 For the land of Rus,
 For the wounds of Ihor,
 The intrepid son of Sviatoslav!

“And thou, Roman, and thou, Mstislav, ye turbulent ones!
 Your resolute thought inspires your mind to action.
 High do ye sail in courage,
 Like falcons soaring in the winds,
 Eager to outdo the birds in impetuosity.
 Both those steel breastplates, below your Latin helmets,
 Have made the earth quake, causing many realms to tremble:
 The Huns, the Lithuanians, the Yatvingians, the Deremels and the
 Polovtsians,
 Have all dropped their spears and bowed their heads
 Under those hard, tempered blades . . .
 But, O Princes, the sun has already dimmed for Ihor,
 And the tree, not from well-being, has shed its leaves.
 Along the Ros and the Sula our foes now share the cities,
 But Ihor's hosts will never rise again!
 The Don calls out to you, O Princes,
 And summons you to victory!
 “The valiant princes are ripe for battle,
 Ingvar and Vsevolod, the sons of Oleh, and, of no mean brood,
 The three sons of Mstislav, six-winged all.
 Was it not by fortunate chance that you seized your princedoms?
 Where now are your golden casques,
 Your Polish spears, your bucklers?
 Block up the gates to the plain with your keen arrows
 To avenge the land of Rus,
 The wounds of Ihor,
 The intrepid son of Sviatoslav!”
 No longer for the weal of Pereyaslav
 Does the Sula flow in silvery streams,
 While the Dvina, to the harsh cries of the pagans,
 Flows turbidly to reach the redoubtable townsmen of Polotsk.
 Iz'yaslav alone, the son of Vasilko,
 With ringing sounds struck his sharp blades

On Lithuanian helmets,
Shattered the glory of Vseslav, his sire,
And himself was cut down by Lithuanian sabres
And, under scarlet bucklers, fell upon the bloody sward
As if upon a couch where his beloved lay.
And Boyan said: "O Prince,
Birds of prey have covered thy retinue with their wings
And ravenous beasts have licked their blood."
Thy brother Briacheslav was absent,
As was thy other brother, Vsevolod;
And thou wert all alone when from thy valiant body
Thou didst drop thy soul, a precious pearl,
Through thy golden neckpiece.
The voices sound despondently,
All revelry has ceased,
The trumpets of Horodno blare.
Yaroslav, and all ye grandsons of Vseslav,
Lower your banners,
Sheathe your dented swords,
Because you have already swerved
From the glory of your ancestors.
For by your intrigues you began to draw
The infidel upon the land of Rus,
Upon Vseslav's possessions.
For it was through your dissensions
That from the land of the Polovtsians violence came.

In the seventh age of Troyan,
Vseslav cast lots for a maiden dear to him.
Summoning his wiles, he sprang upon a horse,
Galloped to the city of Kiev,
And with his spear-shaft touched
The Kievan throne of gold.
Like a wild beast he rushed from Bilhorod
At midnight from his foes,
And vanished into the bluish mist.
And on the morrow with his battering rams
He opened the gates of Novhorod,
Shattered the glory of Yaroslav,
And like a wolf dashed from the town of Dudutki to the Nemiha
stream.

On the Nemihā they strew heads like sheaves,
 Thresh them with steely flails,
 On the barn floor set down lives
 And winnow soul from body.
 No good was sown on the Nemihā's bloody banks,
 For with the bones of the sons of Rus
 Were they sown.

Vseslav, the Prince, to all his people meted justice,
 And rules the cities with a princely sway;
 But as a wolf he leaped at night
 From Kiev, till cock-crow, he would run
 All the way to Tmutorokan,
 And as a wolf he crossed the path of the great Khors.³³
 Early in the morning, in Polotsk,
 The bells in Saint Sophia pealed for him;
 And in Kiev he heard those matin bells.
 Though in his other body he harboured a foreseeing soul
 Yet often did he suffer grievously.
 For of him was it that the prophetic Boyan
 In times gone by said sagely in a lay:
 "Neither a cunning nor a nimble-witted man
 Nor a bird of ever so fleet a wing
 Can escape the judgement of the Lord God."

Ah, fated is the land of Rus to moan
 As it recalls the olden times
 And the princes of the days gone by!
 The ancient Volodimir could not be nailed fast
 To the hills of Kiev.
 His standards have now passed to Rurik,
 Some of them also to David;
 But the horse-hair on their maces
 Flutters contrarily, in strife,
 And the spears sing as they clash.

On the Danube early in the morning, like a cuckoo,
 Yaroslavna's voice is heard,
 As in her solitude she wails:
 "Far down the Danube will I like a cuckoo fly;
 I will dip my beaver sleeve in the Kayala stream

³³One of the Ukrainian pagan sun-gods.

And will wipe the Prince's bleeding wounds
That rankle on his lusty body."

Early in the morning Yaroslavna weeps
On the ramparts of Putivl, lamenting:
"Wind, O sweeping wind,
Why dost thou Sire, so adversely blow?
Why dost thou carry hostile arrows on thy steady wings
At the warriors of my beloved?
Art thou not content enough to blow on high,
Under the clouds, and to rock ships on the blue sea?
Why, lord, hast thou dispersed my joy
Upon the feather-grasses?"

Early in the morning Yaroslavna weeps
On the ramparts of Putivl, lamenting:
"O Dnieper, Slovuta's son,
Thou hast pierced rocky mountains
Through the land of the Polovtsians;
Upon thee thou hast borne the barks of Sviatoslav
Down to Kobiak's encampment,
Let thy waters lightly bear to me my loved one
That I may not so early in the morning send to him
My tears down to the sea."

Early in the morning Yaroslavna weeps
On the ramparts of Putivl, lamenting:
"O bright, yea thrice-bright Sun,
To all art thou warm and splendid.
Why, lord, hast thou spread thy searing rays
Upon the warriors of my beloved
Who lie upon the waterless plain?
Why hast thou contracted their bows with thirst
And locked their quivers with grief?"

At midnight the sea was roused into a splashing turbulence . . .
The water-spouts, enveloped in mist, advance . . .
God points to Ihor the way out of the Polovtsian land
To the land of Rus, to the golden throne of his forebears.
The sunset's glow has dimmed . . .
Does Ihor sleep? Nay, Ihor keeps vigil . . .
Ihor in his thought is measuring the steppe
From the Great Don to the Little Donets . . .

A horse! At midnight Ovlur³⁴ whistled
 From the stream's other bank,
 Signalling the Prince to understand
 That no longer was Prince Ihor to remain enslaved.
 He shouted . . . the earth rumbled . . . the grasses rustled . . .
 The Polovtsian tents began to stir . . .

Like an ermine did Prince Ihor spring towards the reeds,
 And like a white duck leaped upon the stream . . .
 Upon a swift steed then he sprang
 And bounded down to dash like a white-footed wolf
 Towards the meadows of the Donets,
 And like a falcon flew beneath the mists,
 Killing swans and geese
 For his morning, midday and evening meals.
 And when Ihor flew like a falcon,
 Ovlur like a wolf pressed headlong,
 Shaking off the chilly dew . . .
 For their speedy horses were way-worn.

Says the Donets: "O Prince Ihor,
 Not mean shall be thy glory,
 To Konchak mighty the vexation,
 And to the land of Rus—exceeding joy!"
 Ihor rejoined: "O Donets,
 Not mean shall be thy glory,
 For thou hast borne the Prince upon thy waters,
 Hast spread green grass upon thy silvery banks,
 Mantled him with tepid mists
 In the shades of thy verdant forest.
 Thy wild ducks on the waters watched him,
 Thy seagulls on the waves, thy crested drakes high in the winds!
 Such was not, he says, the river Stuhna:
 Shallow in its current, it devoured its brooks and streams,
 And, widening at thy mouth, it overflowed the bushes on its banks,
 Drew the young prince Rostislav to them
 And locked him at the bottom of the spate.
 On its darkful bank his mother weeps,
 Bewailing the fate of the youth, Prince Rostislav.
 The flowers have drooped in sorrow
 And the trees are bowed down to the earth in grief."

³⁴A Polovtsian who helped Ihor to escape. His mother was a Christian.

It was not magpies that raised the chattering . . .
 Konchak and Hza are in pursuit,
 Hot on the trail of Ihor.
 The crows then did not croak, the daws were silent,
 The magpies ceased their clamour.
 Only the woodpeckers, climbing in the willows,
 With their tappings point the course towards the river,
 While nightingales with gladsome songs
 Announce the dawning day.

To Konchak says Hza:
 "Since the falcon³⁵ to his nest is flying,
 We will smite the young falcon
 With our gilded arrows."

To Hza answers Konchak:
 "Since the falcon to his nest is flying,
 With the snares of a fair maiden
 We will enmesh the young falcon."

And Hza in reply to Konchak speaks:
 "If we enmesh him with a lovely maiden,
 We shall have neither the fair maid nor the young falcon;
 And all the falcon's brood will rise to smite us
 On our own Polovtsian Plain."

Said Boyan, the song-creator of Sviatoslav's campaigns,
 The bard of the times of Yaroslav, of Oleh, and of the early princes:
 "If hard it is for thee, O head, to be without the shoulders,
 It is likewise bad for thee, O body to be without the head."
 Thus is it for the land of Rus—bereft of Ihor.

The sun shines in the heavens,
 Ihor, the Prince, is in the land of Rus.
 The maidens sing along the Danube,³⁶
 Their voices weave themselves across the sea to Kiev,
 Ihor rides along the slope of Borichiv
 To the Blessed Mother of God of Pirhotissa³⁷ . . .
 The realms are happy, the cities rejoice!

³⁵Ihor.

³⁶Danube does not necessarily apply to the river of that name. It may, as here or elsewhere, particularly in folk-poetry, denote any flowing body of water.

³⁷Church of the Lady of the Tower, Protectress of the city, established between 1131 and 1135 by Mstislav I, son of Monomakh, in Borichiv, one of the suburbs of Kiev.

As formerly we have extolled in song
 The glory of the ancient princes,
 The time now comes to celebrate the young,
 And sing their praises:
 Glory to Ihor, son of Sviatoslav!
 To Vsevolod, the fierce Aurochs!
 To Volodimir, son of Ihor!
 Hail to the princes and their suites
 Who fight for Christendom against the pagan hosts!
 Glory to the princes, honour to their retinues! Amen!

Dumy

The origins of the *dumy* are to be found in the early Ukrainian epos. As the power of Kievan Rus declined, they emerged as quasi-heroic songs which in the span between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries assumed folklorist characteristics reflecting the mentality of the people in all its moods and aspects—warlike, patriotic, didactic, moralistic, religious, social, political. Likewise they mirrored the vicissitudes of the people under the Tartar, Turkish, and Polish dominations, served in the struggle for the preservation of the Orthodox faith (against the Latinizing efforts of Poland), and acted as a palliative during the oppressive period of serfdom which ended officially in 1861. They were composed anonymously by lute-players and kobzars (humble, indigent, often blind, troubadours) who on solemn and festive occasions entertained the common folk with them. In poetry, the *dumy* and folksongs link the long period between *The Tale of Ihor's Campaign* and Kotliarevsky. Their greatest flowering occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, during the Cossack Age. In fact, they are to be considered as being predominantly the Cossack epos.

Among their chief attributes is the highly moralistic tone attached to the events related by the kobzars and, in the later ones, the spirit of protest against the social and political oppression of the invaders. The intensity of feeling expressed in them is often so poignant that they, particularly those of the earlier period, lapse into doleful oh's and ah's, sighings and lamentations. Their constant burden is that truth and justice will eventually prevail over injustice and oppression if people will only hold fast to and defend the Orthodox faith of their fathers. They were a powerful clarion call to all the dejected and downtrodden, exhorting them to cling to life, however bitter it was, in the hope that better times were still to come.

Of even greater importance were the folksongs, many of which had existed on the territory of Ukraine since pagan times (*koliadki*—Christmas carols, *shchedrivki*—Epiphany canticles, *vesnianki*—spring songs, *obzhinki*—harvest pastorals, and tunes and airs for all manner of occasions). Together with the *dumy*, which they gradually assimilated, these popular songs, rising anonymously out of the very heart of the

people, proved a magnetic force that held them together as an entity, and even exerted a strong influence on the development of the folklore of other Slavic countries. Actually it was the *dumy* and the historical folksongs that preserved the consciousness of Ukrainian nationhood during the centuries of decay and eclipse—a rare phenomenon in world history. The great awakening occurred when Shevchenko, inspired by this composite witness of the vitality of his people, began his own Song of Freedom in the middle of the nineteenth century.

CAPTIVES ON A GALLEY

(16th to 17th centuries)

Alas, on a Sunday, on Holy Sunday,
 Early, at dawning, on that one day,
 No dark blue eagles were raising a cry
 But pitiful slaves in a galley-stye,
 In dread Turkish servitude wailing, Alas! . . .
 And they raised up to heaven their fetters of brass,
 Clanking on hands in that slavery crass.
 And they sought and implored the merciful Lord
 That thick rain from heaven might on them be poured,
 And a boisterous wind from the Cossack Lea
 And a shattering wave on the grim Black Sea:
 —“May it tear off the anchors that moor this vessel!
 For our torment is savage beyond redressal,
 For the chains and shackles so deep have grown
 In the firm white flesh that we once had known
 That it rubs right into the yellow bone!”
 Then the Turkish pasha in rage awoke,
 That infidel foe of the Christian folk,
 And out on the deck he took his station
 And listened in wrath to their lamentation.
 To his janissaries, his Turkish guard,
 He calls aloud with a purpose hard:
 “Hear what I say,
 Ye guards, this day!
 And see well to it
 Or ye shall rue it!
 Twist three thick branches of spiky thorn
 With four sharp blades from the steppe-grass torn,
 Then grip the scourge with a stout hand, so,
 And walk by the galley-slaves, row after row,

And thrice on each slave-back let fall the blow!"
 Ah, well did those overseers do their task.
 No second time did he need to ask—
 So well they took heed
 In the bloody deed.
 They twisted three branches of spiky thorn
 With four sharp blades from the steppe-grass torn,
 Then gripped the scourge with a stout hand, so,
 And walked by the galley-slaves, row by row,
 And thrice on each back let fall the blow,
 And the innocent Christian blood let flow!
 Ah, when those gallant Cossacks saw
 The Christian blood on their backs all raw,
 The land of the Turk
 And his infidel work
 They double-cursed to a hell of murk.
 "Ah, land," they cried, "thou Turkish land,
 Thou infidel faith at the Fiend's command,
 O grievous disrupter of Christian kin,
 Many by thee have parted been,
 Brother from sister, husband from wife,
 A friend from a friend whom he loved as life!
 Free us, O Lord! On Thee we call!
 Free us, pitiful captives all,
 Free from the infidel Turkish thrall!
 To still streams let us fly,
 Under bright stars on high,
 To our land ever-prized,
 Among people baptized,
 In a Christian abode
 Where no devil shall goad;
 In our families' heart
 Let us dwell there apart
 All the rest of our lives beyond sorrow and smart!"

(*Kobzar's envoi*)

To the Lord God above I make reverence first,
 The otaman, our captain, I next have rehearsed,
 To our brotherhood next is my reverent plea,
 And to all who have come here to listen to me.
 May good fortune befall,
 Through the years, to you all!

MARUSIA OF BOHUSLAV

(16th to 17th centuries)

On a bright white rock in the Black Sea's flood
A dungeon of stone once darkly stood,
Seven hundred Cossacks there were found,
All wretched slaves in the underground.
Bondage for thirty long years they had done,
With never a sight of God's blessed sun.
Then one morning a captive guest they have—
Marusia, priest's daughter from Bohuslav.
Her voice down into the dark is heard;
She utters to them a sudden word:
“Ah, Cossack folk,
Wretched beneath a captive's yoke,
Can you remember at my demand
What day is today in our far Christian land?”
The wretched captives heard thus unafraid
The captive maid,
And knew by her words the priest's daughter
And raised up their voice and besought her:
“Ah, captive lass,
Marusia, daughter of the priest, alas
How can we understand
What day is today in our Christian land?
For thirty long years we have lain in thrall
And God's blessed sun have not seen at all.
How then can we say
What day in our Christian land is today?”
When their sad words ceased,
Marusia, daughter of Bohuslav's priest,
Answered thus to the Cossacks then:
“Ah, Cossack men,
Ye pitiful captives, pray understand
Holy Saturday reigns in our Christian land
And tomorrow will wipe out our dark dejection
In the blessed feast of the Resurrection!”
When this gloomy fact the Cossack-folk found,
They bent their white faces to seek the dank ground,
In cursing, and doubled their cursing,
At the captive maid sadly conversing:

“Marusia, priest’s daughter, while life endures
May fortune and happiness never be yours
For telling, while each of us lies like a beast,
Of the glorious Resurrection’s feast!”
When the captive maid,
Marusia, priest’s daughter, pale and staid,
Their cursing heard,
She uttered this word:
“Ah, Cossack folk,
Wretched beneath a captive’s yoke,
Do not reproach me so.
When our Turkish lord soon to his mosque will go,
In the hands of me, his captive maid,
The keys of your prison will then be laid.
I shall straightway return to your dungeon dark
To unlock the door where you lie so stark
And shall set you free out of deep dejection.”
Thus on the Day of the Resurrection
The Turkish lord sought the mosque’s arcade
But into the hand of the captive maid
The keys of the dungeon dark he laid.
Then the captive maid was true
To the deed she had promised to do;
To the dungeon walls she came
And unlocked the door of the same;
Thus with the pasha’s key
She set the captives free
And with these words she spoke:
“Ah, Cossack folk,
Wretched beneath a captive’s yoke!
Pay heed to what I say,
Fly to your Christian homes away.
Only one boon I seek: to Bohuslav pray take a course oblique
And to my parents of their daughter speak.
Then tell my father that he would do well
Not to acquire more land, his wealth to swell,
Nor let great treasure in reserve be laid
In hope to ransom hence the captive maid,
To bring across the water
Marusia, priest of Bohuslav’s daughter.
I have become a Turk, an infidel,

For Turkish luxury has pleased me well
And sinful greed has brought me down to hell!"

(*Envoi*)

Free us, pitiful captives, Lord,
Free from bondage of fetter and cord,
Free from an infidel faith abhorred!
To still streams let us fly
Under bright stars on high,
To our land ever prized
Among people baptized!
Listen, O Lord, to the ululation
Of pitiful slaves in their captive station—
And lend an ear to our supplication!

BAYDA¹

(17th century)

In the market-square in Istanbul
Bayda sits and his glass is full;
Not one day he drinks, he drinks not two,
Not for one hour but all night through;
And he gazes about, as their time they spend,
With a meaningful glance to his battle-friend:
“Young battle-companion, my friend in need,
Will you always be faithful to me in deed?”
The Turkish sultan with words of savour
Summons Bayda and seeks his favour:
“O Bayda, warrior bold in fight,
Join me and be my faithful knight.
Marry my daughter and share my reign
And I'll make you lord of the whole Ukraine!”—
“Your faith, O Sultan, is curst and untrue,
And the princess, your daughter, is ugly too!”

¹It has not yet been established whether or not the Bayda of this ballad-duma is identical with Dmitro Vishnevetsky, also known by the nickname Bayda, who about 1555 built a Cossack fortress on the island of Khortitsia on the Dnieper, south of its rapids, and thus founded the Zaporozhian Sitch. This fortress served as a military point from which the Cossacks could check the inroads of the Turks and Tartars. During one of his campaigns Vishnevetsky was captured by the Turks and cruelly put to death. Perhaps he is here glorified as the representative of the many Cossacks who suffered a like fate at the hands of the Mongols.

Loud called the tsar² to his hayduks then:
 “Take Bayda in hand, my trusty men,
 Seize him and bind him, ankles and crup;
 Hooked by the ribs then hang him up.”
 Not one day he hangs, he hangs not two,
 Not for one hour but all night through:
 Thus hangs Bayda, brooding and thinking
 And at his battle-companion winking,
 His trusty young friend in time of need
 And the raven-black hair of his faithful steed:
 “O my young boon friend whom I’ve trusted so,
 Hand me a tightly corded bow,
 Raise up that sturdy bow of mine
 And a quiver of arrows sharp and fine!
 For I see three doves fly over the water
 And I fain would kill them to please his daughter.
 Wherever I aim, I hit the mark!
 Wherever I strike, my blow is stark!”
 The first swift shaft in the tsar pierced keen,
 The second stuck in the neck of the queen,
 In the daughter’s head the third sank far.
 “Such is my vengeance, O paynim Tsar,
 For torture you gave me, my flesh to mar!
 You should have known better: too far you went
 In giving Bayda such punishment!
 Better it were to have chopped off my head
 And buried in earth my body dead.
 For only thus had you ridden my steed
 And gained the good will of this friend indeed.”

MOROZ¹*(mid-17th century)*

O Moroz, gallant warrior,
 Great Cossack of renown,
 The whole Ukraine, brave hero,
 Laments as you go down.

²Tsar is used here in the sense of king, emperor.

* * * *

¹Perhaps Nestor Morozenko, a captain who won renown in the Cossack wars against the Poles, particularly at the siege of the town of Zbarazh (1648-49). He also took part in the raids against the Turks.

Not only Ukrayina weeps,
The noble army grieves,
How bitterly his mother wails
As for the town she leaves.

How bitterly his mother wails,
How painful is her woe,
As she sees her young son Ivan
In a Cossack squadron go.

“Nay, Mother, do not weep and strike
Your head upon the ground;
Come rather, and with Cossack lads
Let grief in drink be drowned.”

“In no mood am I now, dear friends,
To join in brandy work,
When at this moment I recall
My young son fights the Turk!

“See, friends, above the courtyard there
A dark-blue eagle hover—
Perhaps it means my valiant son
I never shall recover!”

Before the sun had risen yet
On early Sunday morn,
His mother at the window sat
And wept in grief forlorn.

“Ah, much too early in the year
The poppy starts to bloom—
Perhaps this very hour my son
Has met a captive’s doom.”

From a steep hill the regiment
In martial pride appears;
Young Moroz in the foremost rank
A prancing steed uprears.

But scarcely had the Cossack brave
Mounted his prancing horse,
When suddenly the Turkish troops
Surrounded him in force.

In vain the Zaporozhian ranks
Against their foemen fought,
For early on the Sunday morn
Young Moroz had been caught.

How true the poppy omen stood
That far too soon did bloom,
For Moroz, gallant Cossack-lad,
Has met a captive's doom.

The valiant one was driven down
Into a valley vast
And by the red cloak that he wore
His foemen held him fast.

"We'll not lop off your hands and feet,
My lad, nor floggings give;
Our only fun will be to slice
Your heart out while you live."

They laid our youthful Cossack out
On a white sheet apart,
And from his breast they tore away
His bloody, dripping heart.

Then from the Cossack's twitching corpse
They cut red strips of skin;
Red streams of blood are found in flood
Where'er his flesh has been.

His comrades dug for Moroz bold
A grave both wide and deep;
Beneath a lofty mound of earth
They left the lad to sleep.

Homewards a cuckoo flying came,
And moaned, and grieving said:
"Mother of Moroz, come you out—
Your hero-son is dead."

Homewards a cuckoo flying came
And perched upon her gate:
"Mother of Moroz, come you out,
In your red boots come straight."

Homewards a cuckoo flying came
 And on the roof perched low:
 The mother in the doorway stands,
 Her hands all white with dough.

Then the old mother went and knelt
 In weeping willows' shade;
 Her tears, like them, flowed softly down
 And streams of sorrow made.

O Moroz, Moroz, brave in fight,
 Great Cossack of renown,
 Since you are slain, the whole Ukraine
 Lets bitter tears drop down!

BALLAD OF THE COOPER'S DAUGHTER

(18th century)

Up in the town of Bohuslav,
 Kaniovsky's¹ proud domain,
 There danced the cooper's daughter fair,
 Like a young peahen vain.

Ah, in the town of Bohuslav
 Sit maidens fit for love;
 With them the cooper's daughter sits
 As charming as a dove.

Then Pan² Kaniovsky came to them,
 And doffed his cap, did he,
 Embraced the cooper's daughter straight
 And kissed her tenderly.

“Away, Kaniovsky!” was her cry.
 “Such kisses I refuse!
 Such lords as you are only fit
 To clean my dirty shoes!”

¹The event recorded here actually took place. Kaniovsky (derived from the name of his landed property) was the Polish Count, Mikola Potocki, known for his brutal treatment of the serfs.

²Pan, Polish and Ukrainian for “lord.”

Then in the cooper's daughter's ear
Good people whispered low:
"Fly from the evil that must come!"
Nay, tarry not, but go!"

Across the high bridge of the town
The cooper's daughter fled.
How beautiful she was of form!
How exquisite of head!

Between the village's low huts
The cooper's daughter flew;
Two soldiers who behind her ran
Their gleaming sabres drew.

Upon the cooper's hapless child
Appeared dark streaks of red,
And bloody streams she left behind
Wherever she was led.

Upon the cooper's hapless child
The skirt grew red with blood;
A bloody pool she left behind
In every spot she stood.

The cooper's hapless child is led
Along the narrow streets;
And with his silver musket aimed,
Kaniovsky there she meets.

"O cooper's daughter, do you wish
To yield me love and mirth?"—
"O Pan Kaniovsky, I prefer
To moulder in damp earth!"

"O Pan Kaniovsky, I prefer
In earth to moulder deep
Rather than live with you by force
And share your lustful sleep!"

And when the cooper's daughter spoke
These words that still repel,
Then Pan Kaniovsky shot at her
And to the ground she fell.

“Now seek the cooper out in haste
 And let the old man know
 That in the grave his daughter dear
 He straightway must bestow.”

Kaniovsky on the table-laid
 A keg of thalers bright:
 “This wealth to you, old man, is due,
 Your daughter's wrong to right.

“Behold for you, old cooper,
 This keg of thalers fine;
 Your daughter's grace they may replace
 To right this deed of mine.”

In dark despair the cooper struck
 His head against the wall:
 “My daughter, O my darling child,
 With you my life must fall!”

They laid the cooper's daughter out
 Upon a yew-wood bench
 Till Pan Kaniovsky bade men dig
 For her a graveyard trench.

She lay, the cooper's daughter there,
 A day, a night, and more,
 Till Pan Kaniovsky bade men make
 A coffin rich in store.

Loud rang the bells in all the town
 And music filled the air,
 When in her grave for aye they laid
 The cooper's daughter fair.

Hrihoriy Skovoroda

(1722-1794)

This outstanding philosopher was born into an old Cossack landed family in the region of Poltava. After studying theology in the Kiev Academy, he journeyed for three years, on foot, in central Europe in order to acquaint himself with the cultural achieve-

ments of the West. On his return, he lectured in poetics at the Pereyaslav and Kharkiv Collegia respectively. In the meantime he wrote philosophic and moralistic treatises in which his general outlook was revealed as being scholastic. In his personal struggle between materialism and idealism, Skovoroda was an adherent of the theory of monism, maintaining that the essence of all phenomena is a single central beginning, a divine nucleus from which all that is takes rise.

His chief philosophical works, ponderous in style and content, and written in Latin or a strange, macaronic language, deal mostly with idealistic, spiritual, ethical themes. The point of departure of all his philosophic thought was the Socratic principle—"Know thyself!" Not in wealth, beauty, or power, he taught, was true happiness to be found, but in the individual's harmony with himself and the world. Once that inner equilibrium is established, all else is superfluous; and to achieve that equanimity, he insisted, man must effect a return to the simplicity of natural, pastoral life. Skovoroda was also one of the first of his age to protest against serfdom as an institution which insulted the dignity of the human being. He strove hard but was bogged down in his attempt to reconcile the authority of the Scriptures with pure reason, and abstract ideas with life's realities.

Spurning all attractions to settle down to academic work in any of the Ukrainian centres of learning, Skovoroda chose the life of a wanderer. Clad in coarse homespun, with a flute stuck in his corded belt, this Ukrainian Socrates, a walking academy, as he came to be known, moved *per pedes apostolorum* from village to village and town to town, entered the peasants' hovels as well as the houses and even palaces of the rich to teach by word of mouth all and sundry how to lead a simple and just life, and to inculcate in them the virtues of love, charity, and brotherhood as the only means of attaining inner peace. Succinctly, the philosophy of this peripatetic followed this ethical sequence: man's greatest good is spiritual happiness, happiness is in the heart of man, man's heart thrives in love, and love dwells in the law of God. Thus having many times crossed and recrossed Slobozhanschina, the Ukrainian region east of the Dnieper, he finally stopped at the estate of one of his numerous friends and there, having dug his own grave, died at the age of seventy-two.

Skovoroda's poetic output is mostly didactic in tone, but this did not prevent certain of his verses and lyrics from becoming folksongs. His moralistic prose fables, which enjoyed great vogue in his lifetime, still continue to be of interest today.

From THE GARDEN OF DIVINE SONGS

SONG X

Each city has its customs and its laws,
 Each head its own innate intelligence,
 Each heart seeks loving for its own sweet cause,
 Each palate savours through its own fine sense.

Within my mind reigns but a single thought
 That never will depart or come to naught.

Peter, to rise in rank, haunts Caesar's door,
 Fedko, the merchant, gives dishonest measure,
 One builds in styles that were not known before,
 And one makes usury a source of treasure.

Within my mind reigns but a single thought
 That never will depart or come to naught.

One man makes buying land an endless race,
 And one buys foreign bulls in avid quests,
 Some homes train hunting dogs to suit the chase,
 And some, like taverns, always swarm with guests.

Within my mind reigns but a single thought
 That never will depart or come to naught.

The judge expounds the law as suits his quirk,
 The student's head is split with argument,
 The minds of some are racked by Venus' work,
 And every brain with foolish thoughts is rent.

Within my mind a single thought intense
 Seeks how to live, and die, in innocence.

One weaves a panegyric full of lies,
 Physicians lay their corpses row on row,
 One would with portly bigwigs fraternize,—
 To lawsuits and to weddings he must go.

Within my mind a single thought intense
 Seeks how to live, and die, in innocence.

O fearful Death! Thou Scythe that slits all life!
 Even the heads of kings thou sparest not,
 Alike to tsar and peasant comes thy knife,
 Devouring all, like straw in blazes hot.

Only that man her sharp steel need not fear
 Whose conscience, at his death, is crystal clear.

SONG XIII

Ah, grainfields soft in vernal greens
 And meadows pied with flowers rare!
 Ye valleys and ye deep ravines,
 Ye vaulted mounds and hillocks bare!
 Ye streams of water running clear!
 Ye grassy banks that softly lie!
 Ye leafy branches rising sheer
 From forests underneath the sky!

Above the fields the lark will sing,
In orchards chants the nightingale;
The one flies warbling on the wing,
One mid the branches tells her tale.

When daylight dawns, the birds confer:
All feathery sprites are full of songs;
The air with music is astir,
And every copse the notes prolongs.

And when the sun begins to rise
The shepherd takes his sheep to graze;
A trembling trill in ancient wise
Upon his pipe of reeds he plays.

Begone, all travail of the head,
And teeming cities, loud and hot!
With but a humble crust of bread
I'll gladly die in such a spot.

SONG XVIII

Beware, O yellow-breasted bird,
Build not your nest too high aloft!
Let grassy meadows be preferred
And pastures where the sward is soft.
Look, where a hawk above you hovers!
Eager to clutch, he closer draws!
He in your blood his food discovers,
And sharpens for your flesh his claws!

The maple stands upon the hill
And nods its lofty forehead still,
But tempests come, with loud alarms,
And break the mighty maple's arms.
While far below, the willows shake,
Lulling me into gentle slumber:
A nearby streamlet threads the brake,
So clear, its pebbles you may number.

My mother bore me in a village—
Why should that thought my comfort pillage?
Let those their origins despise
Who seek above their rank to rise!

So shall I in calm peacefulness
 Live out my life's delightful span,
 So shall I shun all dark distress,
 Down through the years a happy man.

Ivan Kotliarevsky

(1769-1838)

Born in Poltava, Kotliarevsky studied at the local seminary, after which he became a private tutor of the children of the affluent landowners in the vicinity. In that occupation he acquired familiarity with the manners and customs of the Ukrainian peasants, a fund of knowledge which later came of use to him in his literary work. For a time he was employed, as was his father, in the civil service, but left it to embark upon a military career. As an officer he took an active part in the campaigns against the Turks in Moldavia in 1806 and 1807. After his retirement as major, Kotliarevsky became the supervisor of a school for the children of impoverished landlords, but in 1812 returned temporarily to military life in order to organize a Cossack regiment against Napoleon. All his leisure moments Kotliarevsky spent collecting ethnographic material relative to the Poltava region, and in that pursuit was recognized as an authority by the St. Petersburg Commission dealing with that type of research in the Russian Empire.

The year 1798 was an epoch-creating one in the history of Ukrainian literature, for in it were published the first three parts of Kotliarevsky's travesty of Vergil's *Aeneid*. Written in pure vernacular, such as was then spoken in the Poltava region, it began a new, modern era in the realm of Ukrainian fine letters. Other parts of this extraordinarily significant parody (six in all) followed in due course. The whole exerted such an awakening impact on the minds of the Ukrainian people as could be compared only with that of Dante's *Divina Commedia* when rendered in the Florentine "dialect" in the early decades of the Quattrocento.

Although Kotliarevsky appropriated his subject matter from the Roman poem, he made his work original in that he applied its plot and action entirely to the life of his countrymen and to the prevailing social conditions. The Trojans in fact became the Ukrainian Cossacks, and the Olympian gods the powerful, ruthless landlords. The travesty, which at times lapsed into burlesque, thus presented a fairly faithful picture of Ukrainian life at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. To be sure, Kotliarevsky did not in so many words protest against the harsh social order obtaining in his day, but by exposing it in a comical vein he brought to the attention of his contemporaries the injustice and wrongs suffered by the peasantry under the harsh conditions of serfdom.

Kotliarevsky likewise laid the foundation for the modern Ukrainian theatre by

writing and producing, in 1819, *Natalka-Poltavka*, a melodramatic piece of the operetta type. However naive its plot, its sentimental appeal is felt even today.

Kotliarevsky's work reveals him as an idealistic realist, sympathetically attuned to the plight of his people. As such, he wielded great influence on the Ukrainian Romantic poets who followed in his wake, especially on the early Shevchenko.

From the Travestied AENEID

I

Aeneas was a lively fellow,
Lusty as any Cossack blade,
In every kind of mischief mellow,
The staunchest tramp to ply his trade.
But when the Greeks, with all their trouble,
Had burned down Troy and left it rubble,
Taking a knapsack, off he wheels,
Together with some reckless puffins—
Singed lads, who looked like ragamuffins—
And to old Troy he showed his heels.

He built in haste a few big dories
And launched them on the dark blue sea.
Filled to the brim with Trojan tories,
And sailed off blind and hastily.
But wicked Juno, spiteful hussy,
Came cackling like a pullet fussy:
Dark hatred smouldered in her mind!
For some time now her wish most evil
Had been to send him to the devil
Till not a smell was left behind.

She loathed Aeneas like a leper,
He irked her like unpleasant flavours,
More bitter than a dose of pepper
Because he never sought her favours.
But most of all the man she hated
Because his birth from Troy he dated,
And claimed fair Venus as his ma,
And since his Uncle Paris, judging
Divinest beauty, gave ungrudging
The apple to fair Venus' paw.

From heaven fair Juno looked in dudgeon
 At Pan¹ Aeneas and his crew—
 From Hebe, whispering curmudgeon,
 Had come the word, and fear she knew.
 She hitched a peacock to her sleigh,
 Under her kerchief hid away
 The braids of her untidy hair;
 Put on her skirt and corset straight;
 Set bread and salt² upon a plate;
 And buzzed to Aeolus through the air.

“Hello, dear kinsman, God of Breezes!”—
 She enters and disturbs his rest.—
 “How are you doing, lad?” she wheezes.
 “Are you expecting any guest?”
 She sets the bread and salt before
 Old Aeolus, so grim and hoar,
 And seats herself upon a bench.
 “Old friend of mine, do me a favour,”
 She teases with a plaintive quaver,
 “And make that dog Aeneas blench!

“His name as knave could not be stronger,
 As madcap and as cutthroat too,
 If he is left in freedom longer,
 His deeds mankind are sure to rue.
 Heap on him then some great disaster,
 And let the rogues who call him master
 Be drowned with him in death assured.
 A dark-eyed beauty, sweet and active,
 Delicious, shapely and attractive,
 Is your reward, I pledge my word!”

“My gracious! Had I known this sooner!”
 Said Aeolus, and starts to grieve.
 “For beauty I’m an eager swooner,
 But all my winds are now on leave:
 For Boreas a drunk is shedding,
 Notus has gone to see a wedding,

¹See p. 30, fn. 2.

²Bread and salt, symbols of hospitality and good-will.

While Zephyrus, the seasoned rake,
Is dallying with some fair maiden;
Eurus with common toil is laden;
What can I do, for heaven's sake?

"But since it is for you, I vow
To slap Aeneas down to hell;
I shall delay no longer now
But knock him for a fare-you-well.
Good-bye, old girl, and mindful be
Of your almighty vow to me.
If you forget, don't come again!
You needn't hope to lie or wheedle
Or give this poor old guy the needle—
You'll get the bum's rush for your pain."

Now Dido was in such great sorrow
All day she neither drank nor ate,
No peace at all she sought to borrow
But wept and bellowed at her fate.
She beat about like one possessed,
Or stood with panic in her breast
And bit her dainty finger-nails.
At last she sank down in constraint
For the poor lady feels so faint
That every sorry muscle fails.

She called her sister to console her
And told her of her passion's smart
Through foul Aeneas, quick to roll her,
And somewhat thus relieved her heart.
"Annie, my dear, my precious darling,
Save me from passions that come snarling!
My hapless life must end its span!
For by Aeneas I'm forsaken
Like any wretch some rake has taken . . .
He is a serpent, not a man.

"My heart is utterly unable
To cause me to forget our love.
Where can I flee this life unstable?
Only the grave my peace can prove.

For him I've lost my heart and station,
Neglected friends and reputation,
Ye gods! for him forgotten you!
Where can I find a drowsy potion
To rid my soul of its emotion
And for a while its woes undo?

"On earth no voice of peace is hearkened,
Yet from my eyes no teardrops flow;
For me the sun's fair light is darkened;
Apart from him no light I know.
Ah, Cupid, impish brat of anguish,
Take pleasure now to see me languish—
Would you had died and saved these aches!
Take heed, all housewives trim and smart,
All wenches have Aeneas' heart—
The devil seize all perjured rakes!"

Thus Dido, racked with pain uncanny,
Poured out her grief and cursed her fate
And all the aid of Sister Annie
Could not her suffering abate,
Though with Queen Dido grieved her sister
And patted her and gently kissed her
And to a storm of sobs gave vent.
Then Dido hushed, and to deceive her
Asked Annie suddenly to leave her
To sorrow to her heart's content.

Long did she grieve, then sought her palace,
Lay on her bed and sighed full sore;
Then in a mood beyond all malice
She leaped down nimbly to the floor.
Picking up flints from by the stove
And wads of tow, she softly strove
Into her garden plot to creep.
That season of the night she found
When it was peaceful all around
And all good Christians were asleep.

A pile of reeds for winter kindling
Was heaped up near the garden wall,—
Why were they hoarded there, undwindling?
The steppe-lands had no wood at all.

The reed-pile met her eye discerning,
All powder-dry and ripe for burning,
For it was meant to start the fire.
With steel and flint and tow she set
A spark beneath, its flame to whet
And spread into a blazing pyre.

She stripped herself of all her clothing
(When she had thus achieved her aims);
Then pitched them in the blaze with loathing
And stretched herself amid the flames.
The conflagration blazed around her
And in the ash no inquest found her—
She vanished into fumes and smoke.
She loved Aeneas so, that she
Could die in flaming agony;
Her soul in Limbo's shades awoke.

III

And now Aeneas marched to Hell
And entered quite a different world;
All bleached and pale those regions dwell;
The rays of moon and stars were furled . . .
There far and wide the mist spread paling,
And shrieks were heard of woeful wailing,
The pangs of sinners were immense.
Aeneas and the Sibyl, gazing
Upon their torments, found amazing
The range of hellish truculence.

The pitch in that Inferno bubbled;
In gurgling cauldrons loud and hot,
Oil, resin, brimstone ever troubled
The roaring flames that seared the spot.
In molten tar the sinners sat
And crackled loud like frying fat,
Each suffering his just desert . . .
No mortal pen could hope to picture
In fiction beyond utter stricture
The torments that each soul begirt.

The lords of earth were tortured there
And roasted on all sides because
For poor folk they had shown no care
Nor treated them by kindly laws.

Therefore for wood they had to tramp
And reap the reed-beds in the swamp
And carry them to hell for fuel.

The fiends kept watch on all these sods
And goaded them with iron rods
When lagging in their labour cruel.

The devils slashed with burning scourges
The backs and breasts of those whose hands
Had slain themselves through fearful urges
To see no more earth's friendly lands.

Hot grease on them was poured, all smoking,
And sharp knives in their sides kept poking,
For having dared their lives to take.

Still other tricks engage these quarters—
Like crushing hands in mighty mortars
For venturing life's span to break.

Into the mouths of stingy misers
White molten silver poured from cans;
While lying friends and false advisers
Were forced to lick hot frying-pans.
Those who wed not their children's mothers
But lived as parasites on others
Were left to dangle on a hook
Fixed firmly in that erring member
In which had flamed lust's fiery ember
That Satan now had brought to book.

All false officials, high and low,
Peers, lordlings, and their mercenaries,
Were flogged in hell with many a blow
Like cats that pilfer in the dairies.
One finds here all unfaithful pastors,
Both aldermen and burgomasters,
Judges and jurymen and clerks,
Who with stark justice mix no honey
But plunder the accused of money,
Dark favours for still darker works.

But wise philosophers here crawl,
Who learned on earth to play the fox;
The monks and clerics, great and small,
Who did not care to teach their flocks,
But only sought for gold and houses
And had a good time with their spouses,
Neglecting duties that impel;
Priests who go whinnying for wenches,
Astrologers whom graft intrenches,
These throng the lowest pit of Hell.

Some did not keep their wives in check
But gave them liberty to stray
Regardless of their virtue's wreck
At parties, feasts and weddings gay,
Dancing till midnight to rehearse
Foul ribaldry and things far worse,—
These husbands caps of folly bore
With many a large and twisted horn;
Their eyes were sealed, they crouched forlorn
In pots where blazing brimstones roar.

Parents who did not train their sons
But petted them and spoiled them badly,
And humoured every pampered dunce,
In vats of oil now simmer sadly.
Through such neglect their lads became
Bold rogues and knaves and sons of shame,
And later beat their silly sires,
And wished the old folks soon would die
And leave them all the property
To sate their infamous desires.

Now hell was also full of lechers
Who crept into young women's graces,
Softly up ladders came these stretchers
At evening to their sleeping-places;
False vows to marry them they used,
They flattered them, deceived, seduced,
And worked on them their wicked will;
Until the maidens, swollen great,
Came to the church in such a state
That their disgrace was black and ill.

Slick merchants, too, made loud their wails;
They had frequented all the fairs
And with their false, deceitful scales
Had duped the women with their wares.
Here, too, sly swindlers had been slung,
And smart contrivers, glib of tongue;
Cheats, taverners and trading Jews
Who selling worthless gauds would stand
Or carted kegs of contrabrand,
The devils boiled in bubbling stews.

All infidels, some Christians too,
Landlord and peasant had their place,
Nobles and burghers one might view,
The young and aged of the race;
The poor, the wealthy likewise came,
The straight of body and the lame,
The blind man and the clear of sight,
The soldier and the potentate
Serfs of the lords and of the state,
Laymen and priests, were there by right.

Heigh-ho! The truth may not be hid,
A lie will surely cause more harm:
Scribblers of verse had there been bid,
Bad poets in a tasteless swarm;
Each bard in torment might be found,
His right hand had been tightly bound
As if a Tartar captor treed him.
Such is the fate of each poor wretch
Who writes so slovenly a sketch
That even devils cannot read him.

. . . .

They hastened to the palace gate
That graced the subterranean Tsar.
No straw, no dust befouled its state
As pure as radiance from a star;
Upholstered walls with studs were bright,
The frames and sills were meerschaum light;

The halls with gilded steel were floored,
Hangings of copper sparkled free
And every room showed lavishly—
It seemed the mansion of a lord.

Aeneas, with the Sibyl, gazed
At all those marvels of surprise;
At every sight they stood amazed
And stared about with bulging eyes;
At times a mutual glance they bent
And smiled in sheer astonishment,
Aeneas clicked his tongue and whistled.
Those who on earth lived righteously
In such a place rejoiced to be;
With perfect saintliness it bristled.

These souls sat here, untouched by gripes,
And basked in endless holiday.
Lying at ease, they smoked their pipes
Or sipped their brandy bowl for aye,
Which with no taint of froth was filled,
Thrice purified and well distilled,
Infused with herbs surpassing sweet
Spiced admirably and to their need
With galingale and aniseed
And saffron's tinge, for heaven meet.

They spent their time in eating cates,
Sweetmeats and all confections rare;
White wheaten dumplings filled their plates
And puffy rolls with caviare;
Garlic and borsch and sauerkraut,
Mushrooms and berries joined the rout,
Hard eggs with tasty kvass were here,
And a delicious omelet
By foreign chefs one's zest to whet,
And all this food they drowned in beer.

Here ease and freedom were the lot
Of him whose life was just and pure,
(Just as the sinner and the sot
Eternal torment must endure).

Whatever each of them desired
He now enjoyed till he perspired,
A round of pleasure without labour:
Rest, sleep or eat or drink or prance,
Shout, or be still, or sing or dance.
You'd like a fight?—Why, here's a sabre!

They made no boast, they sought no praise,
And no man here philosophized,
Nay, God forbid! Why should one raise
A laugh of scorn at one despised?
They showed no wrath, took no offense,
Nor beat each other void of sense
But lived together full of peace,
And he who wants to fall in love
Coos freely like a turtle-dove,
The joys of heaven never cease.

Here cold and hot days never come;
But right ones, like a woollen suit,
Pleasant and never wearisome,
Like Easter Sunday's absolute;
Each thing desired in that place
Came promptly, as a heavenly grace,
Thus did the good know great content.
Aeneas marvelled at the sight,
And asked the Sibyl erudite
What blessed souls had here been sent.

“Think not they were officials bold,”
The ancient Sibyl answered pat,
“Nor those whose chests were full of gold,
Nor those who flaunted bellies fat,
Nor those who donned rich crimson suits
And coloured cloaks and fancy boots,
Nor yet your idle, bookish clowns,
Not knights nor highwaymen here perch,
Not hypocrites who chant in church,
Nor those who wear their golden crowns.

“Nay, these were beggars, simple-minded,
Considered fools in life on earth,
Decrepit, lame, from childhood blinded,
Whom people scorned at in their mirth;

Who roamed unfed by paths and sedges,
 And starving lay beside the hedges,
 On whom men's ruthless dogs were set;
 These always begged for food in vain;
 And driven from all doors in pain,
 With blood their hapless backs were wet.

"These were the widows, poor and potless,
 Shut out from shelter in the dirt;
 These were the virgins, upright, spotless,
 Who even lacked a decent skirt;
 These were the babes of homes bereft
 And destitute as orphans left,
 Who therefore died of some disease;
 These though but poor, in humble den,
 Were glad to help their fellowmen,
 And skinned no back with usuries.

"Some honest lords are also there—
 For there are always lords and lords;
 That prodigy is somewhat rare,
 For little good their trade affords;
 Soldiers and ensigns here you'll find,
 Mace-bearers, captains just and kind,
 Whō led a life of righteousness;
 Men of all sorts and all conditions,
 Who upright lived and scorned ambitions
 Have gained this bliss and heaven bless."

Songs from opera NATALKA-POLTAVKA

I

Winds are blowing, winds are blowing, low the trees are bending,
 How my bosom aches and sorrows, yet no tears I'm lending!
 Years I waste in grief and longing, yet no hope I borrow,
 Only then feel gentle healing when alone I sorrow.

But if tears may bring no pleasure, hearts may pause from sadness:
 He who once has tasted rapture, can't forget that gladness.
 There are folk who think me lucky, deem my covert splendid.
 Can a blade of grass be happy, growing unattended?

Solitary in the desert, sun-scorched thus I wither—
 On my native field I perish, if no love comes hither.
 Where are you, my handsome darling? Where, O where? Behold me,
 How I pass my days in anguish, if no arms enfold me.

I would fly to you, my darling, but I have no feathers.
 You would see how thin I've grown, caught in Love's soft tethers . . .
 Whom shall I for comfort conjure? Who will fondly press me?
 For the one who loves me dearly is not here to bless me . . .

II

Sunlight is failing,
 Evening is paling—
 I hie to meet you,
 I fly to greet you,
 Love all prevailing!

Once you'd endeavour
 To love me ever,
 Would shun all others
 Avoid their smothers,
 Turn from me never!

Dreaming, my passion
 Calls back the fashion
 When life was lovelike
 In faith, and dovelike
 Blessed compassion.

Now you have left me,
 Love has bereft me;
 My locks I'm tearing
 In sheer despairing,
 Death's hand has cleft me.

III

Oh, my neighbour's house is snow-white
 And my neighbour's wife is pretty,
 While I have no hut, no fortune,
 And no helpmeet, that's a pity.

Pretty housewives press around him,
Comely widows woo with labour,
Shapely maidens eye him fondly,
All the women love my neighbour.

All his fields are planted early,
In the spring their green is showing
While I have not ploughed my acres
Nor have bothered with my sowing.

He is praised by all and sundry
With respect their plaudits droning;
While I waste my hours idly
My sad loneliness bemoaning¹ . . .

Petro Hulak-Artemovsky (1790-1865)

Born into a priest's family in the region of Cherkassy, Hulak-Artemovsky received a thorough academic education which he completed at the Kiev Academy. For eight years he lectured at the Kharkiv College, where he professed Slavic history and geography, and then became its rector, which post he held till 1849. After a brief spurt of literary activity under Kotliarevsky's influence, in the thirties his enthusiasm for Ukrainian letters suddenly ceased.

Hulak-Artemovsky's meagre output is characterized by two styles—parodic and romantic. As a romanticist he, as often as not, imitated and even paraphrased contemporary poets of other countries. ("The Fisherman," for example, he derived from Goethe through Mickiewicz.) These borrowings, particularly the ballads, however, were redeemed to originality by his ability to render them replete with Ukrainian folklorist elements. Like Kotliarevsky, though to a lesser degree, Hulak-Artemovsky transformed his foreign subjects by means of the national garb, local colour, and unmistakable Ukrainian individuality.

His greatest work is "The Lord and His Dog," a realistic, didactic, psychological, satirical fable in which the dog Riabko (our Spotty) is portrayed in a vividly plastic characterization. The satire is a powerful indictment of the harshness to which the serfs, whose composite and long-suffering representative Riabko is, were subjected by their lawless and often capricious landlords. This protest against the wrongs perpetrated on the landless peasant masses bereft of all freedom created a strong impression

¹These three selections may be sung to the tunes of the original lyrics—*Viyut vitri*, *Sontse nizerenko*, and *U susida khata bila*.

upon the minds of the budding social reformers and gave a powerful impetus to the humanitarian movement that was then beginning to raise its still, small voice.

Despite his comic vein, Hulak-Artemovsky was by nature a skeptic, as is evidenced in his "Ode to Parkhom" (a travesty of Horace's famous "Ode to Delius"), and in the gloomy depths of his *carpe diem* mentality he lost all sense of proportion, reducing everything to a "graveyard" philosophy in which the worm is the end of all, both good and evil. Hence—what's the use!

Hulak-Artemovsky was lost to Ukrainian literature when he lapsed into an adulating panegyrist of the powers that then held sway, thus consciously or unconsciously assuming the rôle of his own Riabko, but in a manner much more servile.

THE FISHERMAN

The water murmurs! . . . the water flies!

A youthful fisherman sits a-sprawl,

Looks at the floating bob and cries:

"Bite, you fish, bite, both big and small!"

Each nibble he feels makes his bosom throb

With a wild foreboding of something strange.

Rides grief, fear, love, on the plunging bob?

In apprehension his musings range.

Immersed in sadness, he hears the sea

Give an ominous roar as its waves recede

And a maiden emerges quite suddenly;

She combs her hair and she winks indeed! . . .

She winks and sings with a pleading look:

"Young fisherman, cease from your cruel lure

Of the pike and eel to your treacherous hook! . . .

Would you make my dear kinfolk grow fewer and fewer?

"If you only knew what joy you'd keep

To live with us in the sea apart,

You would plunge to us in the gentle deep

And give to our care your lonely heart.

"Can you not see—this you'll not deny—

How the golden sun and the silver moon

Will splash to us from the radiant sky

And rise refreshed to the surface soon?

"Have you not seen on a darksome night
The little stars dance on our rippling waves?
Abandon your rod, to our arms take flight,
I'll snuggle you close in our ocean caves!"

"Cast but a glance! Is this water's charm?
Nay, tis a mirror to show you your face! . . .
Surely I came not to cause you harm,
Or stir you to acts that are rash or base!"

The water murmurs, the water flows . . .
And up to the ankles it covers his feet! . . .
Farther and farther the fisherman goes,
Deeper and deeper the maid to meet! . . .

And she keeps on winking and sings her song . . .
Then the spray flies up where the lad had been! . . .
While she dives in his wake with a fin-stroke strong,
And never again is the fisherman seen.

FATHER AND SON

"Work, Teddy! Learn! This is no time for play!"
A father scolded thus his offspring slack.
"Be diligent, or with a rod some day
I'll print the alphabet upon your back!"
But Teddy did not work, and as a sequel
His back the birch-rod torment entertains;
Again he idled and in strife unequal
He boldly smashed his father's windowpanes;
And not to feel again his father's rod,
He threw it on the fire and in a corner
He hid himself away—from whence rough-shod
His father seized his hair and dragged the scorner;
Then, since the rod was missing, with a bludgeon
He dusted off the culprit thoroughly;
And Teddy, through his tears and in some dudgeon,
Made to his angry sire this plaintive plea:
"If I had known that bludgeons hurt so much
Then, woe is me, with different desire,
I would have saved the birch-rod for your clutch
And thrown your oaken cudgel on the fire!"

TO PARKHOM

*Aequam memento rebus in arduis
Servare mentem; non secus in bonis . . .*

(Horace, Odes, II.3)

If you are lucky, hush your tone!
If you are grieved, breathe soft your breath!
Seek others' counsel; keep your own!
No human toil can vanquish death!

Whether you pass your days in woe
Or drown it deep in brandy warm
Where strains of flutes and cymbals flow
That in a tavern bar perform;

Whether in drunken sleep you've been
Beneath a hedge, or homewards crawl
And beat your wife with a rolling-pin,
Or thrash yourself to vent your gall;

Whether you plough and plant your fields
And all your mighty meadows mow
And gather money from your yields,
Yet, in the end, to Death you'll go!

The wheat and haycocks you employ
And all the good things that you save
A greedy heir will soon enjoy;
You, for your pains, will get a grave!

Your father may as reeve be found
Or work the fields, a common serf,—
Death levels all below the ground,
Her rage brings all beneath the turf!

She plays a game of "Heads or tails?"
You cry out "Heads!"—"You're wrong!" The hag
From her dark corner never fails
You from your ingle-nook to drag!

IDLE CURIOSITY AND SHREWD SILENCE

A curious chap once asked a silent friend:
“Why does the belfry-bell resound so loud?”—
“Because, since you are fogged in Ignorance’ cloud,
It, like yourself, is hollow, I contend!”

TWO POETASTERS

One rhymester, Doggerel, in age delights,
And as his seniors bid, his folly writes.
Pompous or trivial the draft appears—
He hides it in his box for nine long years;
In the tenth year, he takes it out to read
And sees, himself, the rubbish of his screed,
And throws it in the fire without ado! . . .
His brother, Drivel, has this weakness too,
But rushes to the press his bardic brew!
Indifference cloaks them both in equal smother:
Men do not know the one, or read the other.
Which of them, tell me, is the greater fool?
Well, both of them are dolts, by any rule;
But one of them finds profit, past all sneers,
And gives himself some heat, once each nine years;
But while the other shivers, frozen elf,
His books, five fathoms deep, adorn the shelf.

THE LORD AND HIS DOG

The night is spread abroad. No sound is heard,
Except, at times, a dreaming chirp of bird.
Pitch darkness reigns, to straining eyes forbidden.
The moon has settled down, the stars are hidden,
Only a tiny one, from cloud-banks thin,
Peeps like a mouse behind a granary-bin.
All is at rest, and all concealed from sight
Behind the dusky apron of the night.
“Spotty” alone, alone, is not asleep
And for his master faithful watch must keep;

Our Spotty scorned to feed on unearned bread:
He ate for five, but earned it, every shred.
All night he sleeps not in his master's yard
And all the village knows he stands on guard.
Even a wayward wick his eye can number;
Men are asleep, and snore in noisy slumber.
The priest, kept late by a baptismal party,
Saunters to church to sing his matins hearty;
But poor old Spotty did not dream of sleeping,
But hustled round, in every corner peeping,
Now in the hencoop, now in pig-stye stares,
To guard lest one should wander unawares;
At turkeys, goslings, ducks and chicks he'd peep
And then he rushes straight to check the sheep;
Then to the barn, the granary, the stable,
Then breathless back, as fast as he is able,
To watch lest soldiers, quartered in the village,
Should seek the storehouse with intent to pillage.
Spotty barks threateningly, most wide awake,
So loudly that our smitten eardrums ache.
His only thought is how to please his lord
And with no greedy eye to a reward.
He barked and barked all night until the dawn;
Then fell asleep, in kennel-depths withdrawn.
Why should he not? What torment should he rue?
He sank to sleep as all good people do,
Who righteous guard the welfare of their master.
Then in the yard woke tumult of disaster:
"Here, Spotty, come!" The roar rose devilish.
"Why here I am, my friends! What do you wish?"
Spotty jumps up and down, and wags his tail
As if it were a duster or a flail,
And bares his foolish teeth in half a grin,
And licks his chops to hear the sudden din.
"Why, to be sure," he thought, "no hint of
scorning
Has brought these folk, so early in the morning,
Into the yard to treat me handsomely.
Perhaps the Lord himself will offer me
The dinner scraps, my appetite to bless
And recompense me for my wakefulness

And barking loud to keep the thieves away.”
“I’ve got you, Spotty!” came one villain’s bray.
They seized the startled watchdog by the ears.
Then the fierce Master on the scene appears.
“Flay him!” he cried. “Lash Spotty! Here’s the whip!”
“What for?” asked Spotty. Quoth his mastership:
“Flay him! Flay Spotty!” Said the dog, “Ki-yi”—
“Pay no attention to his silly cry!”—
“What have I done? Why punish me so sore?”—
“Don’t listen,” shouts the lord. “Lay on some more!”
The dog was lashed so hard that feathers flew,
The noise brought all the servants round to view:
“Why? What? How? Wherefore this?—But no one knew.
“Let me go!” Spotty cries, “For I’ll be damned
If I can suffer more to be so lammed!”
He begged in vain. Instead of well-earned thanks,
Yavtukh lets lashings rain on Spotty’s flanks.
“Now let him go,” arose the Master’s shout,
And from the house the poor dog darted out.
“Let Spotty go!” they cried. “The dog is quitted.”—
“Good people all, what crime have I committed?
Why am I scorned?” the hurt beast made reply.
“Why am I thus tormented? Why? Oh why!”
As on his flanks he felt the stripes of woe,
He let his bitter tears in torrents flow.
“This,” said a hireling, “has served you right
Because you kept your lords awake all night;
And furthermore . . . but let us elsewhere pace.
One can’t speak openly in such a place,
Let’s leave the yard.” They left. “Twas not for naught,”
Continued Yavtukh, “that such blows you caught
So roundly on the rump. It served you right—
My lord and lady did not sleep all night.”—
“Am I to blame for that? You must be mad!”—
“Nay,” answered Yavtukh, “it is you, bedad!
You are to blame for barking all night through.
For yesterday at cards, you surely knew,
Our lord lost heavily, at mighty cost.
You can be sure that when a man has lost,
He will be ready to raise up the devil
Or stake and lose his father in the revel.

Spotty, you knew he'd find it hard to sleep.
Why did you then such noisy vigil keep?
You should have let him growl, while you took care
To rest on cornstalks, sleeping soundly there.
The crotches of your flogging you may gauge—
He vented on your rump a prior rage
At having lost so roundly yesterday;
His lady, stung by thought-fleas, all night lay.
He raves that if he'd slept the night before
He would have played no cards and lost no score.
You vexed him, Spotty, barking like—a dog.
Therefore he gave command to beat and flog.
This is the way his fury you supplied;
And this the cause why he has tanned your hide.
You see then, Spotty? Do not bark or bustle!
Lie still, be dumb, and let your master hustle!
Why should you bark? Our master all alone
Is able, without dogs, to hold his own.”
Spotty heard Yavtukh with attention free:
“May bad luck take him! It's all one to me.
I never heard before of one who flogs
The good intentions of his honest dogs.
If all my efforts give no satisfaction,
So much the better for my future action.
If the old dame gets off the waggon full,
The mare will have a lighter load to pull.”
Concluding thus, poor Spotty, shaggy wight,
Caught up on sleep, all day long and all night.
The cornstalks tremble at his snores extreme;
Not even in a nightmare does he dream
That thieving soldiers bustle everywhere
In yard and storehouse as if masters there,
That skunks have grabbed the chicks, the wolf a lamb,
And so on, till the dawn. Then, once more—wham!
“Come, Spotty, come!” All rush out from their huts.
“Come, Spotty, come!” cry out the startled scuts.
Our Spotty does not deign to stir or leap;
Unheeding, he pretends to be asleep.
“My master has slept well,” averred the pup,
“Because I gave no bark to wake him up.
Now, to be sure, he'll show me gratitude;
He has no reason for a flogging rude.

Let them keep calling! Not an inch I'll hunch
Until they bring me here my well-earned lunch;
And even then, some manners they must boast
Before I condescend to eat the roast."

"Come, doggy, come!" Yavtukh to Spotty croaked.
"Here, here!" he breathed, as though his throat were choked.
"Come, Spotty!"—"What? Go where? Don't be too hasty,
But bring me here yourself my luncheon tasty."—
"Come!"—"I will not!"—"You must, at Master's beck!"
With that, he slipped a noose around his neck
And cried out, "Flog him!" Then a dozen men
Lashed him a hundred times, and lashed again.
"Flay Spotty!" roared the Master, mad with passion,
And Spotty scarce survived in any fashion.
Six times he swooned; six times cold water waked him;
And once again a rain of lashings raked him.
At last the torment ceased. And Spotty tried
To ask the reason, but his tongue was tied,
And senselessly, as if his speech were noosed,
He gabbled like a turkey on a roost.
"Don't go away," said Yavtukh, "and don't worry.
I'll tell the whole truth to your senses sorry.
With zeal you must your master's storehouse guard,
Awake all night, and sleep not in the yard,
Must drive off thieves and bark at ugly brutes.
You failed to bark last night. Our lord salutes
Your error with his favour. Thus he chose
To have us plaster you with countless blows."—
"The devil take your dad," poor Spotty roared,
"Your aunt, your uncle and your lousy lord!
A favour is it? Let a pock-marked devil
Serve the old fiend henceforth in fashion evil!
A fool is he who serves the senseless gentry;
A greater fool, who to their whims stands sentry!
Spotty did all he could their thanks to earn,
And what has he been given in return?
For all his trouble he was fiercely whipped
And stripes for service from his hide were ripped.
For whether Spotty barks or sleeps at night,
They always find some cause his rump to smite.
All that I do is wrong—one way, too high;
The other way too deep, is their reply.

Turn to one side, the service is too hot;
 Turn to the other, it is cold, God wot!
 Were I to bring him thalers in a sack,
 The rogue would bang them all upon my back.
 No matter what you do, a knave in scorn
 Will make you sorry you were ever born."

Evhen Hrebinka

(1812-1848)

Hrebinka was a native of the Poltava region. His chief fame rests on his twenty-seven fables (also called Adages) which he wrote before he moved to St. Petersburg. There, imitating Mikola Hohol (Gogol), he tried his fortune in Russian literature by writing, in Russian, a number of novels and short stories on Ukrainian themes. For these he now hardly merits a footnote. The few lyrics he wrote are permeated with melancholy, but his fables, masterfully styled and versified, are full of cheerfulness and sparkling humour. Although their subject matter is mostly borrowed, the local colour with which they are infused renders them quite original. Their worth is further increased by the purity and suppleness of the language employed, the vividness in the descriptions of the Ukrainian landscape, and the psychological insight into the types portrayed. In that respect Hrebinka by far outpaced Hulak-Artemovsky. More than merely didactic, his fables mirrored the Ukrainian social conditions of the day and strongly intimated that a reform was long overdue.

Although Hrebinka wrote predominantly in Russian, he was occasionally drawn to the Ukrainian speech, and in 1841, in collaboration with several of his compatriots, he published a collection of various literary items in this language under the title *Lastivka* (The Swallow). Perhaps aware that he was but a vagrant in both literatures, in his poem "My Bark" he expressed a keen sense of having lost his moorings.

MY BARK

The blue sea is starting to stagger and roar,
 The boisterous winds are a-toss on its foam;
 The billows are rising in mountains before
 That, one on another, incessantly roam;
 Like darkening midnights, the thunderclouds glower
 And rumble out trumpets of judgement and power
 Unceasing from heaven's high dome.

The blue sea continues to seethe and to bellow;
 Some soul has let loose a small bark on that sea;
 It tilts with the waves in a careless duello
 And drifts ever farther away to the lea.
 Not even an oar keeps the poor thing from tossing.
 My heart feels a pang for the bark in that crossing—
 Ah, why towards the storm must it flee?

The sea has subsided, the billows have settled;
 The sea-nymphs are gambolling glad in the spray;
 Again on the deep move the vessels high-mettled,
 A hundred white sails show in gallant array.
 But what of my bark? Is my darling afloat?
 Alas, in the distance my glances can note
 Its whitening wreckage astray.

As the sea to the bark is the world to my spirit:
 Since childhood it frights me with perils unknown.
 But where to escape? I am forced to come near it,
 Nor live out my life in a desert alone.
 Farewell, O my peace, I embark on a sea,
 It may be, of fate and misfortune for me,
 Wherever my bark may be blown.

ON TOP OF THE BELFRY

The stairs up a belfry my uncle once scales
 And cries in contempt: "What a comical sight!
 The folk down below are no bigger than quails,
 No taller indeed than a nit or a mite!
 Ha, ha! From this vantage-point, lofty and far,
 I know them at last for the things that they are!"
 While a man on the ground marked his figure with glee,
 And asked of me: "What can that thing up there be?
 It looks like a rat or a sparrow to me."

THE SUN AND THE CLOUD

The sun has risen, shines and warms us all;
 The whole world blossoms like a poppy flower;
 Far in the blue a cloudbank flaunts its pall
 And hums a sulky song of peevish power:

"Not in the least does that old sun delight me!
Why does it keep on gladdening the earth?
If I should frown, it smiles as if to spite me.
I will fly boldly up and drown its mirth!"
Lo, half the sky the clouds with darkness fill
And cover up the sun as with a night . . .
But now the peerless sun mounts higher still
And gilds the cloudbanks with immortal light.

THE SWAN AND THE GEESE

Upon a pond, a swan was floating proudly;
Grey geese beside him swam and gabbed loudly.
"Has this white bird turned all your heads, forsooth?"
One goose cried out, in sibilance uncouth.
"Why do you stare at him with bulging sight
When we are grey and he alone is white?
If with one mind we act, in filthy fuss,
We can smear up this dude to look like us."
To this appeal the goose-flock all respond;
There rose a mighty hubbub in the pond;
Up from the depths they drag the slime and clay
And smear the swan to make its feathers grey.
The deed was done; the gabbling tongues grew slow;
Then the swan dived—and rose as white as snow.

URSINE JUSTICE

This charge was laid in lawcourt by the Fox:
With his own eyes he'd seen the old grey Ox,
In a lord's farmyard, in a thievish fault,
Gulp vineyard mash and hay and oats and salt.
The Bear was judge; Wolves took the jurors' place;
And in their own sweet style they tried the case.
Almost a day and night the courtroom sat:
"How could one do a deed as bad as that!
It had been natural, I must repeat,
If this delinquent Ox had eaten meat,"

The Bear-Judge thundered in a mighty growl,
“But he ate hay!” The Wolves began to howl.
When the Ox sought to speak in his defence,
The angry court forbade him to commence.
He was well fed. And hence the sentence ran,
Recorded by the court for all to scan:
“Whereas the old grey Ox has here confessed
To eating hay, salt, oats and all the rest,
He shall be quartered and his flesh in fury
Allotted to the hungry judge and jury;
As for the horny hooves on which he walks,
Let these be given to the plaintiff Fox.”

THE WOLF AND THE FIRE

Deep in the forest someone made a fire.
This happened in the fall, when days expire;
Stark cold it was; winds raved through thickets brown;
The paths were icy, and the snow came down;
Some man had made it then, its comfort earning,
And when he moved along had left it burning.
Then somehow—I’m not certain, I’ll be bound—
An old grey wolf the friendly fire found.
Chilled to the bone, all famished and bespattered,
Like a wet polecat—how his poor teeth chattered!—
He to the fire now ran, with thought to explore it,
Glanced timidly around and sat before it
(In all his life, the like he had not seen):
He sits and feels with joy its fervour keen.
Like summer suns it warms his hairy skin,
He thaws and gladly steams from tail to chin.
The icicles that clinked upon his hide
Had long since fallen off on every side.
His muzzle to the fire he’d bring more nigh,
Or gingerly put out his paw to dry,
Or shake his shaggy tail beside the flame.
Its terrors to his mind had now grown tame.
For the beast thinks: “Why should I fearful be?
The thing is like a bosom friend to me.”

But the night fled; dawn brightened in the skies;
 It seemed as if the sun once more would rise.
 "It's time to go," the wolf thought with a sigh,
 "But first I ought to kiss this friend goodbye!"
 So to the raging flame he put his snout
 And burned it to the bone, beyond a doubt.

Such was my father's counsel: "Live with lords,
 If God this favour to your soul affords,
 And let their food and drink delight you much—
 But God preserve you from a closer touch!"

Levko Borovikovsky

(1806-1889)

As one of the stronger representatives of the Poltava literary group, Borovikovsky is considered to be the initiator of the Romantic movement in Ukraine. Like some of his fellow-romanticists, he was not averse to adopting his subjects from his counterparts in Western Europe, but however extraneous the contents of the ballads he appropriated for his use, he was an adept in transposing them into the Ukrainian *milieu* and instilling into them the spirit of his people. And so his "Marusia," for example, borrowed from Bürger's "Lenore" (through Zhukovsky's "Svetlana"), presents a typically Ukrainian peasant girl in love with her suitor's enlivened corpse, who is an average Ukrainian young man governed by the conventional Ukrainian sensibility. In employing this transforming process, Borovikovsky influenced other Ukrainian romanticists to do likewise.

It is to be noted that with the advent of the Romantic movement, Ukrainian literature, for the first time in many centuries, established a firm connection with Western literary trends and, even as its poets imitated certain foreign specimens, they adapted them to conform to the native manner of life.

Borovikovsky was also a brilliant fabulist and anecdoteist, using his wit both to instruct and to entertain.

PARTING

A raven is cawing—a storm is its mission;
 And the cossack's heart has a premonition.
 The cossack saddles his raven-black horse;
 To a foreign land he would take his course;

In the open field he would find his fate,
 For the urge of his heart is surpassing great
 His kin and his goods he is glad to leave,
 But to part from a lass he must surely grieve.
 The morning-star follows the moon as it sets;
 The cossack his steed from the farmyard gets;
 He causes his pony to caracole;
 The maiden appears and unbosoms her soul:
 "O cossack, my lover, how early you start!
 Whither so early would you depart?
 Do you ride to the meadow to greet the sun?
 Or into the steppe till your sadness is done?

COSACK

Dear maiden, the moment for parting has come . . .
 My heart is a-weary, I stifle at home.
 Out into the steppe lies the pathway for me
 Till my fiery horse cools its soul in the sea,
 And my spirit at last wanders gallant and free.

MAIDEN

O sun of my soul, you are riding too far.
 My heart is a-tremble with portents of war.
 The horse you have mounted is pensive with gloom:
 Your raven-black steed feels the coming of doom.

COSACK

Dear maiden, your innocent heart cannot state
 The spot where the cossack will meet with his fate.
 My raven-black steed is dejected, not gay,
 Because he has not yet been watered today.

MAIDEN

My dear, when afar from our land you have wheeled,
 Who'll make your white bed on the green, open field?
 In whom, in an alien land, will you trust?
 To whom will you turn when your fate is unjust?

COSACK

My dainty Marusia, the storms and the snow
 Will deck out my bed in the fields where I go;

And the boisterous winds I shall conjure to speak
When my spirit is lonely and pale is my cheek.

MAIDEN

My dove of delight! O my cossack so dear!
Will kisses be yours on the steppes wide and drear?
Who'll cover you gently when evening is grey?
Who'll rouse you from sleep at the dawn of the day?

COSACK

Some valley will lull me to rest in my roaming
And thick mists shall cover my form in the gloaming;
The winds and wild woods will awake me with grace;
In the dew of the fields I shall rinse off my face.

MAIDEN

O cossack, my darling! In regions apart
Will you be forgetting your constant sweetheart?
Send news of your fortunes, I ask as a boon . . .
The wish of my heart is: Pray come again soon!

COSACK

My letters with tears shall be written, I swear,
And sent to my love on the wings of the air . . .
Wherever on earth this poor cossack may roam,
How could he forget you, my darling at home?!
Two stars that shine bright in the dark of the skies
Will always remind me of your hazel eyes;
The raven's black wings will recall your dark hair
That kindled my love into ecstasy rare;
A cranberry bush hints your cheek's crimson rose,
A fir-tree, the grace of my lass as she goes!

MAIDEN

Your heart to no other give truly, my lad!
And come again soon, that my soul may be glad!

COSACK

Then only will I such returnings approve
When garpike's affection shall fall on the dove,

When the Dnieper shall swallow the sea in its force
And flow back again to its high mountain source . . .
With seafaring Cossacks my sword I must wield
Before I lie down on the wide open field.

MAIDEN

What hand will then close your dead eyes as they stare?
Who deck your white body for burial there?
And who will chant dirges above your dear bones,
Dig a pit for your grave and lament you with moans?

COSACK

The wings of a raven will close my dead eyes;
The rainstorms will wash my white flesh where it lies;
My steed with his hooves will dig duly my pit;
Wild beasts at my graveside lamenting will sit;
Instead of church bells, they crow's cawing may hear;
White willows will weep for me year after year.

. . . .

The steed rushes forward, its flying mane leaps;
At the gate stands the maiden, and sorely she weeps;
The cossack has vanished in mists of the dawn;
The tears drench her sleeve as she sees he is gone.
The cossack is roaming with spirit on fire:
More binding than chains is his ardent desire.
Three years have gone by and a raven comes laden
With a little white bone as a gift to the maiden;
That bone in her cossack had once been imbedded,
But three years have passed since another she wedded.

TO MY PRINTER

Printer! Don't drowse! Put periods where needed,
So that the wicked critics may be heeded;
For some, if they find sense, are mute and grave;
But if they miss a period—they rave!

HUNGRY CLEM

Once Clem was asked: which bird the prize should clinch,
 A nightingale, a swallow or a finch;
 Which was the prettiest. He did not flinch;
 But plaintively the hungry Clem replied:
 A sausage is the prettiest, I decide!"
 You see, when man's not fed,
 He only thinks of bread!

THE WINGS OF THE WINDMILL

The wings of the windmill once gabbed in pride
 That all of the bread for the town they supplied;
 The millstone, and other wheels, silent abide.
 They say that the one that keeps peace as he labours
 Is much more important than chattering neighbours.

THE VILLAGE REEVE

Once Peter's cow to Ivan's barnyard strayed.
 He to his stable drove her, unafraid,
 There killed and skinned her; with the ample hide
 The village Reeve a present he supplied.
 Peter a summons upon Ivan served.
 The Reeve scratched pate and thus, as judge, observed:
 Let Peter, if another cow he got,
 Keep her from trampling upon Ivan's lot,
 And pay the standard fee to Ivan now
 For all his toil in skinning Peter's cow

Amvrosiy Metlinsky

(1814-1870)

Metlinsky was an intense romanticist who found himself in his element in the Cossack past, which he idealized and enveloped with an aura of glory. Much of the melancholy emanating from his verses derived from his contemplation of the grave-mounds which

abounded on the Ukrainian steppe and in which the freedom-loving Cossacks were buried. As the poet of the Cossack age, his influence is quite evident in Shevchenko's earliest poems.

Metlinsky was born in the region of Hadiach, and studied in Kharkiv, at whose university he became a professor. He was also noted as an ethnographer and a compiler of voluminous Ukrainian folklore material.

A GOBLET

My friends, upon our shelf a goblet stands,
An antiquated, silver drinking-cup.
Of old our grandsires held it in their hands
And from it urged the Cossack troops to sup.
The well-filled goblet Cossack lips would drain
And choose our sires as hetmans of their train.
Their voices rose, in volume grew indeed,
Then each man mounted on his coal-black steed . . .
And galloped with a fateful frown
To beat the hordes of foemen down!
The goblet at the table made its rounds
And as it passed there rose exultant sounds.
But now the house is of those guests bereft
And only the old-fashioned cup is left.
Even the drawing-room is past and gone;
Only the silver goblet still shines on!
In all that place oppressive silence reigns;
Only the heady liquor still remains.
Only one Cossack's left; his heart grows faint
As if a heavy mist brought raw restraint!
When messmates old his memories limn,
He fills the goblet to the brim
And for the whole host drinks with vim.
He dreams, and drinks, as thought proposes;
Again he drinks; again he dozes;
And thus his long life slowly closes.

A STORM

The savage tempest howls and whines;
In clouds the livid lightning flashes;
A mighty uproar rends the pines
As once again the thunder crashes;
But now, coal-black the midnight stood,
And now it reddens, fierce as blood.

The Dnieper wails amid these shocks
And shakes its mane, a mass of grey;
It roars, and leaps upon the rocks,
And gnaws the crumbling stone away . . .
The thunder smites with fierceness dire
And from the forest bursts a fire.

The sky now blazes, now is black;
The tempest's uproar cries out shrill;
The rain comes down in fierce attack
Across dark forest, field and hill.
As, thundering down, the cloudburst pours,
Between its banks the Dnieper roars.

A BEGGAR

A damp, chilly wind blows, the winter foretelling,
And rustles the oak-leaves yellow and sere.
A grey-haired old beggar draws nigh to our dwelling;
His feet crunch the pale leaves as still he draws near.

A time was (he whispers) when Mother and Father
Had cottage and orchard as fine as you please . . .
At this very season we'd harvest and gather;
We'd hayfields and cattle and garden and bees.

They died: then the cottage and cattle were taken,
And I, a poor beggar, was turned out to roam!
I bend down my head like a grass-blade forsaken
And all drive me off, like a stranger, from home.

I stray through the country, I sleep under hedges,
In alien hamlets I beg with vain breath;
Some day I may die on the steppe's windy sedges;
No clang of a church-bell will tell of my death.

On Sunday, my village I seek, to be sure,
 To taste my one joy at my Saviour's kind hand—
 God's house, that is dear to the hearts of His poor!
 The bell sounds, and lo, on the threshold I stand.
 The damp, chilly wind blows, the winter foretelling,
 And rustles the oak-leaves so yellow and dry;
 The bell sounds its call, the old beggar compelling;
 Exhausted he falls, ever lifeless to lie.

Mikola Kostomariv

(1817-1885)

Although he considered his poems and two historical dramas as "sins of his youth," Kostomariv nevertheless gained for himself a respectable niche on the roster of Ukrainian poetic literature. As a professor of history in the universities of Kiev and St. Petersburg, he established himself as one of the foremost Slavic scholars. His historical novels, written chiefly in Russian, were the artistic result of his professional pursuits. Under the influence of Hohol's "Ukrainian" stories and Maksimovich's folklore collections, he became converted to the Ukrainian language and sought Ukrainian themes for his literary productions. Compared to his prose works, his verse is of minor significance, yet important enough to reveal him as an articulate poet of freedom.

A staunch Slavophil, Kostomariv was the founder and one of the most influential members of the Ukrainian political and cultural Saints Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood which fostered the Slavic movement of Enlightenment and supported the idea of a federation of all the Slavic peoples with equal and complete freedom in it for all the nations, including Ukraine. For his activity in that organization he was arrested (together with Shevchenko, Kulish, and others) and sentenced to several years of exile in Saratov.

His "Hellas," though referring to ancient times, has certain undertones relating to tsarist Russia, and bears a general message applying to his day and age. To a certain extent it likewise reveals the essence of his historical thought.

SORROW

O grove, my wooded grove, so fresh and green!
 O wind, my streaming wind, so swift and keen!
 In the thick woods the leaves are growing yellow;
 The wind sways not the boughs and does not bellow.

That which was once resplendent in the spring
And made my heart in jocund gladness sing
Has now grown cold and silent, lean and null—
Gone is that season's rapture, once so full.

There, in a bush, a dove was cooing low;
Jests in my thought were flitting to and fro.
But the dove's gentle voice no more is heard—
My boyish thoughts have vanished like that bird.

The moon is full, the stream with light inlaid,
And you are fair as ever, dearest maid,—
But summer's hopes in autumn I abhor,
And earthly beauty moves my heart no more.

STARS

I climb the barrow in the night,
The graves are dark and great;
I raise my eyes and see the stars
Stand bright in heaven's estate.

In measured movement, filled with life
And an eternal grace,
They flow unceasing in the height,
Unnumbered in their place.

An ordered choir, the stars march on
Down skyways infinite;
But we, the children of the dust,
Exult not at the sight!

For servitude, our destiny,
Has ushered us to birth,
Teased us with freedom for a time
But tethered us to earth.

The stars shine now; they shone of old;
And they will shine for aye;
But we, when we have gazed our fill,
Will moulder in the clay.

HELLAS

(Hexameters)

Loudly the world has resounded the praise of thy marvellous glory,
 Even the schoolboy from childhood grows used to give laud to thy heroes,
 Over thy ruins the tears of the nations are shed in lamenting,
 Kneeling in silence, the world gazed in throes of bewitched adoration.

Vain was thy glory, however, thrice lovely, thrice beautiful country!
 Vainly thy Parthenon rose, and in vain were thy theatres crowded.
 Vain were the statutes of Solon and vain were Demosthenes' speeches,
 Even in vain was Timoleon's spirit, so lofty in action!

Nay, thou didst tame not thy children, who tore at each other like tigers;
 Freedom was ever thy aim, while remaining a slave to old Mammon!
 Glory thou gavest to war between brothers; in Sparta accursed,
 Pan, for his pleasure, set ravening dog-packs to rend the sad helots!

Thou has taught people to flee from their freedom and fall into slavehood;
 Thou has corrupted the greatest of gifts that the East had bequeathed thee;
 Dreams of thy posthumous glory have dazzled us all with illusion;
 Gazing bemused on thy face, we were blind to ourselves and our natures.

Oleksander Afanasiev-Chuzhbinsky

(1817-1875)

Born in the Poltava region, Afanasiev-Chuzhbinsky studied at the Gymnasium of Nizhin, after which he pursued a brief military career. Upon retirement from the army, he served as an editor in several publishing establishments, but devoted most of his efforts to ethnographical research. Towards the end of his life, he was appointed custodian of the Museum of the Saints Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg.

In poetry, he was a fine versifier, representing in the main the sentimental trend in Ukrainian literature. A few of his poems were so similar in spirit to Shevchenko's earlier ones that they were mistakenly included in one of the editions of the latter's *Kobzar*.

TO HREBINKA

Come, tell me now the truth, my fine young lad,
 What shall a heart do, when it starts to ache
 And bursts in bitter tears and moanings sad,
 And throbbing pain as if it sure would break,

When grief, a thorn, has scratched the entire soul,
 When all abandon you, without relief,
 And you, dry tumble-weed, are fain to roll,
 Borne willy-nilly on a wind of grief?

Not so, you gently say? A plant is mowed;
 You water its dry stalk, but all in vain.
 An orphan on whom love was once bestowed
 Will never see her parents come again.

For thus it is in life: Who early hears
 The voice of sorrow, early learns dismay . . .
 For destiny will mock him through the years,—
 Still lure him on, and ever fly away.

How can you bear it all, when the bright sun
 Shines on the world with morning beams aslope
 And through your window sees your day begun?
 It blinds your eyes, and yet you gaze with hope.

THE STEPPE OF UKRAINE

(*From THE FATHERLESS*)

Steppe of Ukraine, far-spreading prairie,
 Thy harvests bring thee far renown,
 But glory yet more legendary
 In memories of the past comes down,
 The deeds thy Cossack sons once wrought
 Who worshipped liberty and thee
 And sprinkled with their blood so free
 Thy vales and gullies where they fought.
 The Poles and Turks, rapacious hordes,
 Invaded thee in greedy strength,
 Trampling thy fields in breadth and length,
 Yet vanished are their alien swords.

Thy sons, the sons of fair Ukraine,
Upon their shoulders boldly took
The evil of those hours of pain
And staunchly for thy sake they struck.
Their blood in rivers poured for thee,
Their blood was sodden in thy sand.
Thou livest yet, my glorious Land,
But not those sons of liberty!
To no avail their strength was spent;
Unmarked they moulder, without prize;
Only the lofty barrows rise,
Their glory's gloomy monument.

Cloudlike they passed, and are no more!
No warlike cries now vex the slain;
The years to silent peace restore
The mighty prairies of Ukraine.
They sleep, in silence absolute,
For other times now bless their soil;
The humble peasant's peaceful toil
Will not disturb an age grown mute.
He ploughs in safety as he sings;
His part in war is at an end.
All he beseeches Heaven to send
Is sunshine and good harvestings.

So peacefully, in ordered ranks,
Our streams flow gently to the sea,
Murmuring softly to their banks,
And push their waves on merrily.
From this clear peace you would not dream
Their waters once with blood were red
Here in the heat of battle shed
To stain the margin of the stream.
And is this not the sad refrain
Their waves keep lisping evermore?
Is not the burden of the shore
The eternal glory of Ukraine?

Mikhaylo Petrenko

(1817- ?)

Petrenko was a writer of somewhat light, popular verse. A few of his lyrics were set to music and are still in the folk repertory. His total poetic legacy comprised a mere fourteen lyrics written in elegiac, sentimental strains often burdened with notes of despair. Petrenko was born in Kharkiv and studied at the local university. The year of his death has not as yet been established.

THE SKY

I gaze at the sky and I ponder in thought:
 Why am I no bird, who to fly has been taught?
 Why hast thou, O Lord, not appointed me wings?
 I'd flee from the earth as the saddest of things!

For far from the earth and the clouds I would borrow
 A happier lot and a respite from sorrow;
 From the stars and the sun I would plead for relief,
 And seek in their bright light to bury my grief.

Since childhood, by Fortune my life is unloved;
 To her but a hireling or urchin I've proved,
 A stranger to her and to others unblest . . .
 Can babes without kindred be ever caressed?

Inured to misfortune, unhealed is my strife;
 In wanhope and heartache I live out my life,
 And find in my sorrow that only far skies
 Give hope to my heart and relief to my eyes.

Thus cruel is life: and the harsher it grows
 The more I look skyward for help from my woes,
 And find all my loneliness slowly expire
 As ever my thought soars up higher and higher.

O had I but wings, a bold eagle's strong pinions,
 I'd leave this old earth and to other dominions
 I swiftly would fly in my ardent endeavour
 And sink in the cloud-depths for ever and ever.

Viktor Zabila
(1808-1869)

Zabila's sensitive lyricism reflects the pain he felt as a result of an unfortunate love affair that shattered him for life. No Ukrainian romanticist of his day poured out his personal sorrow in more tearful verses or wore his heart on his sleeve more than did Zabila. After a short military career, he left the service with the rank of major and settled on his father's estate at Borzna where he lived out his unhappy life.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE

Twitter not, nightingale, close to my casement;
Twitter not, tiny one, early at dawn!
For, when thou trillest in treble begracement,
Pangs in my breast from thy music are drawn.

When thou art piping, first shrilly, then gently,
Grief chills my soul and my spirit grows faint;
Even thy echo still sounds on intently,
Whether at dusk or at dawn comes thy plaint.

Lovely thy song is, thou singest sublimely;
Thou hast a mate and a nest for thy joy;
Poor am I, mateless and homeless, untimely;
Constant misfortunes my gladness destroy.

Weary at sunrise, I weep at its setting;
She whom I loved has been lost to my sight.
News of my darling no longer I'm getting;
Tears are my portion by day and by night.

Twitter not, nightingale, gaily at morning;
Twitter not, tiny one, glad in the gloom!
Seek out blest souls, to whom grief has no warning;
Birdsong to them has no accent of doom.

Torn is my soul by thy exquisite fluting;
Throbs in my heart set me gasping for breath.
Owls were more welcome, not singing but hooting—
Here let them hoot and foretell of my death!

THE WIND

The wind across the fields is loud,
It roars and tears the woods apart;
A poor, young Cossack weeps and blames
The fortune that has cursed his heart.

The wind across the fields is loud,
It roars and tears the woods apart;
The Cossack wearies of the world
And knows not where his course to chart.

The wind across the fields is loud,
It roars and tears the woods apart;
The Cossack sighs, that wretched man,
And muses thus within his heart:

“Thou roarest, wind, but dost not weep,
No bitter griefs thy spirit goad;
Thou hast not suffered from the world,
And hast not borne a heavy load.

“Thou carest not if stricken fields
Or shattered woods know thy reproofs,
If waves thou drivest on the sea
Or tearrest off our houses’ roofs;

“All things thou meetest shattered fly,
Roofs humbly thatched or iron-clad,
Men thou surprisest in the fields
Are smothered under snowdrifts mad.

“Then tear the sorrow from my heart!
Scatter it now across the plain!
That I no more in misery
May mourn my hapless fate in vain.

“Or if thou wilt not grant me this,
Then cast me headlong in the sea,
That my fierce sorrow may be drowned,
Deep in the billows there with me.”

Markian Shashkevich

(1811-1843)

Son of a priest, and himself a priest, Shashkevich was born in the county of Zolochiv in Galicia, a Ukrainian province forming part of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and at that time under the domination of the Polish element whom the government at Vienna favoured. While still in the seminary, Shashkevich was inspired by the Slavic revival then sweeping the central, eastern and southeastern parts of Europe, and began himself, and exhorted others, to write in the vernacular of the Ukrainian peasant masses. The Ukrainian language at that time being forbidden in church (Polish was enforced, except in the liturgical services which were chanted in Church Slavonic), Shashkevich created a sensation by preaching a sermon in Ukrainian in St. George's Cathedral at Lviv, the capital of Galicia. A number of other young priests followed his lead in other churches there.

Together with Ivan Vahilevich and Yakiv Holovatsky, Shashkevich formed a collaborative group which came to be known as the "Ukrainian trinity" and served as a vanguard for a literary and cultural restoration in Western Ukraine (Galicia, Bukovina, and Volynia). The three also pioneered a democratic national movement, thus paving the way for Ivan Franko's political and social activity some two generations later.

Their fervent endeavours to reanimate the national spirit of Western Ukraine culminated in the compilation of Ukrainian verse and prose items under the title of *Russalka Dnistrovaya* (The Dniester's Nymph), which, forbidden by Polish authorities in Galicia, was published in 1837 in Budapest. Up to that time Shashkevich's own writings and those of his collaborators had been current only in manuscript form. The entire edition of the *Russalka* was seized by the censors in Vienna, but some one hundred copies of it surreptitiously found their way to Galicia and were circulated there by stealth. Meagre as was the number of the copies, the collection achieved its purpose, which was to rouse the Ukrainian element in that part of Europe to a consciousness of their specific identity. The importance of that brief volume was similar to the influence exerted in the Dnieper region of Ukraine by Kotliarevsky's *Aeneid* some forty years earlier.

Persecution by civilian and police authorities, as well as the extreme poverty he endured, undermined Shashkevich's frail health and caused his premature death, preventing his poetic talent from developing into maturity. Embryonic as were the beginnings he initiated, the impact of his literary and social work, however, effected a miraculous transformation in the mentality and general outlook of his people, and gained him the distinction of the "progenitor of the national renascence in Western Ukraine."

His poetry, minor in tone and lyrical in scope, after almost a century and a half, sounds naively simple. Shashkevich belonged to that category of poets who, for lack of physical and spiritual liberty, fancifully desired to become placidly flowing brooks or birds free to soar in the limitless skies; but even in that puerile yearning a powerful

voice of freedom began to be heard, presaging the time of a rebirth after centuries of suppression.

The lyric "To a Primrose" is symbolic of the attempt to preserve the precarious blossoming of the new spirit of Enlightenment, and vocal with the fears of the oncoming storms threatening to cut short its existence. But for Ivan Franko, that "primrose" might have perished.

TO A PRIMROSE

A tiny flower
 Begged of her mother,
 The early Springtime:
 "Mother, my dear one,
 Grant my petition,
 Give me good fortune,
 Let me embellish
 All of the meadow,
 That I may shine there
 Bright as the sunlight,
 Lovely as starlight
 Making the whole world
 Gaze at my beauty!"
 "Darling, my daughter,
 How I lament you,
 Beautiful creature!
 Gusts will come fiercely,
 Frosts will bite keenly,
 Tempests will bellow,
 Your beauty will wither,
 Your face will grow dark then,
 Drooping your forehead,
 Shed all your petals—
 Breaking my heart, dear!"

BITTER THOUGHTS

The moon moved on across the sky
 To seek the evening star;
 Across the field a young lad sped
 To seek his lass afar.

At times the bright and hastening moon
In some dark cloud was caught;
At times the young lad's eager soul
Was plunged in somber thought.

"Alas, thou sad and painful thought,
Why dost thou plague me so?
Why dost thou poison all my life
With attributes of woe?"

"Away, thou foster-mother black,
Fly with the wind away!
Be thou like footprints on the sea,
As fleeting be as they!"

"May joy find entrance in my heart
And hope make music there,
And merriment a singing bird
To trill in rapture rare!"

ON THE BANKS OF THE BUH

Oh, thou bright and rushing streamlet,
Prithee pause and see
How I weep in all my sorrow!
Share my grief with me!

In thy gaily flowing waters
Pretty fishes sport;
While my heart in grief is shipwrecked,
Far from any port.

Grass, upon thy banks inclining,
Kisses thee anon;
See the wave returns its kisses,
Then is swiftly gone.

But my heart in destitution
Far from gladness steers;
Only loneliness it suffers,
Knows but bitter tears.

Every morn I rise up weeping,
 Sorrow every night;
 Will some happier lot hereafter
 Dawn upon my sight?

Sorrow, thou supreme disrupter,
 Vanish from my skies!
 Hopeful star of bright good fortune,
 When wilt thou arise?

Oh, thou bright and rushing streamlet,
 Prithee pause and see
 How I weep in all my sorrow!
 Share my grief with me!

TO A FRIEND

ON SENDING HIM A COLLECTION OF UKRAINIAN SONGS

So, Nikolai, these eaglets of Ukraine
 Both warm the heart and cheer the patriot soul;
 So, Nikolai, these falcons of our plain
 Sing loud, then soft, their mother to condole.
 So pleasant is the song in native art
 That the breast leaps for joy to hear it sung,
 Twining itself in grace about the heart
 Like some fair lass who, full of love, has clung
 Within her lover's arms and held him tight.

She gives him fond caresses;
 Her kiss his features blesses;
 His ardour to inform
 Her honeyed breath is warm.

You fain would cease through excess of delight,
 When suddenly a gale begins to blow
 That bears another gift, with vocal sounds:
 This night across the steppes I sought to go,
 In weariness I lay upon the mounds,
 As if to rest but really sought to hear
 The old past talking to the present year:
 The years that are old
 And the times long since past

When glory resounded
Through all the wide world,
The fame of our forebears,
Our boyars and princes,
Our Cossacks and hetmans.

It tells of those events like charming dreams
So softly and so solemnly, it seems
Its fortune like a seaside flower blooms;
Then in loud notes of grief the song's voice booms,
As if its lamentation's bitter sounds
Would call our forebears from their funeral mounds

To ask for the story
Of spear and of sword
That faced in dread glory
The enemy horde

That lurked to glut upon Ukrainian flesh
And of Ukrainian blood to drink afresh;
And how our sword had faced the foe with zest
And with its crooked tusk explored his breast;
How to the enemy a bed it gave
And everlasting sleep within the grave.
Again the wind sounds softly, sings so fair
As if it drowsed amid the shadows there;
And then lets loose an echo down the valley
As if across the oak-groves it would sally
And would a tale to unseen listeners render
How future days would burst forth in their splendour:

How near the Black Sea shores
It steeps its breath in flowers,
And wafts itself in joy
Across the steppe's expanse;
How, in the Dnieper's waves,
It washes and is cleansed,
Then flies on soaring wings
To seek the Dniester's banks
And on that gentle stream
Takes temporary rest.
It plashes with its pinions
And shakes them flutteringly
Before once more it rises
Into the sky's abyss

And seeks the sun itself
 To gain its heavenly light.
 There soaring high it will remain
 And in a song of mirth
 Proclaim the glory of Ukraine
 Throughout the whole, wide earth!

Mikola Ustyanovich

(1811-1885)

As one closely related to the “Ukrainian trinity,” Ustyanovich took a major part in the movement of Enlightenment initiated by M. Shashkevich; and being a priest, he, like many other clergymen in Western Ukraine, had great influence on the cultural and political events then taking place in the province of Galicia. In 1848, the revolutionary year in Austria-Hungary, profiting by the new constitution, he was one of the organizers of the convention of Ukrainian scholars and men of letters, which led to the establishment of the “Ukrainian Matrix,” a learned body whose purpose was to foster culture as a prerequisite to political recognition of the Ukrainian element in the Austrian Empire. In 1861 he was elected a member of the Galician Soym (legislature).

Being a lover of the Ukrainian highland nature, in addition to the lyrics in which he vividly described it, he wrote several long short stories whose actions take place in mountainous settings. Of these, *The Thursday of Passion Week* was the most noteworthy. It still preserves a certain appeal as a regional narrative full of interesting local colour.

AUTUMN

Sad and waste appears the valley,
 Flowers have darkened with the times,
 Leaves upon the trees grow yellow,
 Birds have flown to other climes.

From the west a cold, grey cloudbank
 All the earth in vapour binds;
 Like the phantoms of the midnight,
 Woods are talking with the winds.

On the hill a cranberry plantlet
Bowed in bitter grief appears;
On the Dniester's banks a maiden
Wets her cheeks with welling tears.

“Why, O cranberry, art thou grieving,
With thy head in sorrow set?
Why in sorrow, precious maiden,
Are thy cheeks with weeping wet?

“Has good fortune left thy portals?
Art thou motherless, perchance?
Has thy priceless beauty withered?
Do thy critics gaze askance?”

“Nay, good fortune has not left me:
Living is my mother still;
Fresh is yet my maiden beauty;
People do not speak me ill.

“Here I mourn the springtime's passing
And the flowers that depart:
All is drear, my soul is heavy:
Gone is he who holds my heart!”

THE HIGHLANDS

O highlands, your slopes are our world;
How pleasant among you to live!
Time flows like a fountain at play;
Joy, freedom and clamour you give.

Lighthearted from crest on to crest
And carefree from copse on to copse
With musket and hatchet arrayed,
A young blood exultantly hops.

What use are the lowlands to us
Whom less than plateaux would annoy?
A forest of firs is our steppe;
The roar of a beast is our joy!

Unmoved by allurements of gain,
A gun and its charge are our needs,
With space and our comrades' esteem,
Our sheep and a flute of thin reeds.

When cataracts lift up their crests,
When a bear the frail thicket bemocks,
When the south wind salutes the green hills
And the Cheremosh roars at the rocks—

All this is our joy and our song!
My lad, you're the freest of men!
Just wash off the must from your sheep
And away to the mountains again.

All summer, by day and by night,
Our shepherds go wandering wide;
Their water and kindling suffice;
All needs the great mountains provide.

No landlord may limit their fields;
No foemen their eyries subdue;
Their earth in rich garments is clad
And nourished by songs of the dew.

The trembita tenderly sounds,
The reed-pipe breathes gentle applause;
When a beast's howl in discord is heard,
The musket spits death at its jaws.

Kornilo Ustiyanovich

(1839-1903)

Mikola's son, Kornilo Ustiyanovich, was a fine painter and an author of several historical dramas which reveal him as a pseudo-classicist. Although hailed in his time as the "Ukrainian Shakespeare," his dramas are of the inflationary, declamatory type. Today he is remembered only for a few of his shorter poems.

THE SHATTERED ZITHERN

Covered with fallen oak-leaves,
 There lay an ancient lute;
 Its sounding-board was shattered,
 Its ailing strings were mute.

“Ah,” cries the springing verdure,
 “Awake, the songbirds sing!”
 But earth has left it weary,
 Frost chokes its murmuring.

“Ah,” cries the voice of Vengeance,
 “To battle raise your strain!
 Your people toil in bondage!”—
 The zithern groaned in pain.

Then Love came down and moistened
 The zithern with his blood;
 Its chords revived with power—
 Its songs flowed forth in flood.

Yakiv Holovatsky

(1814-1888)

Holovatsky was the son of a priest and a priest himself, but, as one of the “Ukrainian trinity,” took a greater interest in collecting ethnographical material than in his pastoral duties. For that purpose he undertook extensive excursions in eastern Galicia, Trans-Carpathian Ukraine, and Bukovina where he painstakingly recorded Ukrainian folklore and studied the manners and customs of the peasant folk. His findings were published in 1878 in four bulky volumes. From 1848 to 1867 he was a professor at the Lviv University. Then he moved to Russia and was appointed the regional head of the State Archaeological Commission with its centre at Vilno, the capital of Lithuania. His poetry developed from his particular researches and is strictly folkloristic.

HOMESICKNESS

In foreign lands I waste away
 And roam without relief;
 In longing for my native land
 I pine in hopeless grief.

Strange is this alien land to me,
Its folk to me are strange;
They are not mean and yet my heart
No love can interchange.

Though they be men of sterling worth.
They still are not my kin;
My heart is sundered from their hearts
And cannot take them in.

Across the vineyards of my life
I wander thus distraught
And send from exile to my home
My melancholy thought.

O far, dear land where I was born,
Do you remember me?
O region of my boyhood home,
What might your fortunes be?

O accents of my own dear tongue,
I long to hear you yet!
Your music in my inmost heart
I never can forget!

This pain has gnawed my heart today
As yesterday it gnawed:
He cannot know true sorrow's pangs
Who has not lived abroad!

VILLAGE STREAMLET

O streamlet by our village small,
Why flowest thou so slowly?
Why spilkest thou no waters forth
To soothe our cornfields lowly?

In loneliness thou long hast flowed.
Abandon now thy sorrow!
Roar loudly with thy swelling tide,
Let earth thy accents borrow!

“How can I hope, my own dear son,
 To overflow at will?
 My grassy banks are steep and high,
 The fields are broad to fill.

“I’d gladly send my waves in flood,
 But have too little water;
 My face is smooth and mirror-clear
 Like Beauty’s gentle daughter.

“There was a time when tempests roared
 And fell in torrents spury;
 Yet these but undermined my banks
 And made my waters dirty.

“Thus it is best to flow in peace
 But at a steady pace,
 To pass the rocks and islets by,
 Leave sandbars in their place.

“Thus flow I soft and humbly on;
 No roars of grief for me!
 Unwearied, with my mirror-face,
 I yet shall reach the sea!”

Taras Shevchenko

(1814-1861)

This foremost poet of Ukraine was born a serf in the region of Kiev. Completely orphaned at an early age, he served in the household (manor) of his lord as a menial, later accompanied him in his travels in eastern Europe, and finally settled with him in St. Petersburg. There he met certain fellow-countrymen of his who befriended him and helped him gain his freedom in the following manner: the Russian painter Briullov (of “The Last Days of Pompeii” fame) was prevailed upon to paint a portrait of the Russian poet Zhukovsky, the canvas was sold at an auction, and the proceeds (2,500 rubles) supplied the sum that his master, Engelhardt, had demanded for Shevchenko’s emancipation. He was then enabled to study at the St. Petersburg Academy of Art where he specialized in painting and, later, in engraving. In his literary studies, he was self-taught.

The first short collection of his poems appeared in 1840 under the title *Kobzar* (Folk Minstrel) and caused a heretofore unheard-of sensation in Ukraine. In idealizing

and glorifying the Cossack past of Ukraine in a truly romantic vein, Shevchenko was at once recognized as a powerful spokesman of Ukrainian nationhood. As such he was acclaimed when in 1844 he visited Ukraine. The triumph, however, was marred by what he saw in his native land. At the sight of utter poverty, ignorance, and oppression glaring at him wherever he went, his rebellious spirit was roused not only against the wicked tsarist régime, but likewise against his own countrymen, the landlords, who did precious little to better the sorry lot of the peasantry subjected to them. That vigorous protest against the prevailing injustice was voiced in the shorter and longer poems he wrote during that period. Strict censorship prevented these poems, comprising the collection *The Three Years* (1843-45), from being published, and they circulated throughout Ukraine in manuscript.

While in Ukraine, Shevchenko became interested in and sympathized with the members of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood. (These Brothers were Greek scholars who in the latter half of the ninth century preached Christianity among the Slavs of central Europe; Cyril developed a Slavic alphabet, the *kirilitsia*, based on the Greek uncials to enable them to translate portions of the Bible and ecclesiastical books into Slavic.) The aim of the Brotherhood was to foster a federation of all Slavic peoples, in which, however, each nation would retain its political, religious, economic, educational, and literary independence (a sort of Slavic United Nations, not unlike the British Commonwealth). The activity of its members was exposed, and they were arrested in 1847 by the tsarist police as a subversive element. Although Shevchenko was not actually a member, he was none the less detained and, with the others, underwent a trial. They were given light sentences of exile, but Shevchenko, owing to his poems *The Dream* (in which he mercilessly ridiculed the family of Tsar Nicolas I) and *The Caucasus* (where he condemned Russian aggression against the Caucasian peoples), was meted out the harshest punishment: he was exiled for ten years of military penal servitude in a remote part of the Russian Empire (the regions of the Aral and Caspian Seas). To that sentence the Tsar personally added a note that Shevchenko was to be strictly forbidden to write and to paint.

For almost four years the poet evaded that interdiction by writing clandestinely, concealing whatever he composed in the leggings of his boots. Four such "bootleg" manuscripts had been thus saved. In 1850, however, he was detected and, as a punishment, sent to the fortress of Novopetrovsk on the Asian coast of the Caspian Sea. The six years that followed were the bitterest and most sterile of his life, with not a single line of verse being penned by him. In 1857 he was amnestied by Nicholas' successor Alexander II and, after much tergiversation on the part of the authorities, returned to St. Petersburg where he completed his studies in engraving and was given the title of academician at the Imperial Academy of Art.

After several unsuccessful attempts at marriage, he died at the age of forty-seven and was buried in the Russian capital. A few months later his remains were transported by his countrymen to the *Chernecha Hora* (Monk's Hill) at Kaniv on the Dnieper. His burial-mound immediately became, and remains to this day, a place of pilgrimage for Ukrainians from all over the world.

Shevchenko began as a sentimental lyricist, balladeer, and romanticist. As his Muse matured, he shed, to some extent, the trammels of sensibility and became the national

bard of his nation—not only the minstrel of its past, but a fulminating prophet, castigating his people for their past and present errors, and exhorting them to rise and face with determination their future struggle for freedom.

Although his work appeals, in the first place, to his own people, in it clearly flame universal ideals that apply to any people on earth who strive for liberty and justice. He is unique among world poets in that he restored single-handed a submerged folk's consciousness of its separate identity and roused it to assert itself supremely as a nation.

His great poem, *The Neophytes*, one of the pearls of world literature, is the compendium of his entire life's mission and reveals him as a Christian seer proclaiming the eventual triumph of truth, goodness, justice, and fraternity over the forces of evil, and the emergence of humanity above tyranny and bestiality. As in the Old Testament one may read the entire history of the Hebrews, so in Shevchenko's *Kobzar* are to be gathered the essentials of Ukraine's vicissitudes in her thousand years of history.

Selections from Shevchenko's autobiographical verse¹

The heart grows warm to see it plain,
 That village in our own Ukraine—
 As gay as any Easter egg:
 Bright groves of green its borders peg;
 The orchards bloom, the cots are white,
 The landlord's halls the hill delight,
 A house of wonder; all around
 The broad-leaved poplar-trees are found;
 Then endless fields and woods o'erspread
 Blue hills beyond the Dnieper's bed;
 God hovers here—one might have said.²

* * * *

In alien realms my youth was told;
 In alien realms I now grow old;
 So in my loneliness I dreamed
 That naught on earth more lovely seemed,
 Under God's rule, than Dnieper's strand
 And vistas of our famous land.

¹This compilation ends with page 103. It deals with the salient episodes of the poet's life, in which are reflected his personal moods and feelings. These verses were written at various times, mostly during his exile.

²An excerpt from the poem *Kniazhna* (The Princess). It may well represent the village of Morintsi where Shevchenko was born.

Yet truth then dawned: things are but good
Where we are not.

I lately stood
In evil season, full of pain,
On visit in our sad Ukraine,
In that fair village where, when wee,
My mother used to swaddle me,
And toiled with fervour half the night
To earn a holy candle's light,
Then bowing, as the priest had taught her,
To the Immaculate, besought her
To be her child's strong citadel.
Alas, my mother, it is well
That early in your life you died
Or you had cursed the gift supplied—
My poetry.

The place is foul,
This village where dark sorrows prowl:
For blacker than the grim, black earth
Are those who roam the place in dearth;
The orchards, once so green, have shrunk;
The dwellings have decayed and sunk;
The ponds are overgrown with weeds,
And ruin in the village breeds,—
Its very people witless grow
As dumbly to the fields they go
To do forced labour for their lord,
Babies at back, a hungry horde . . .
I mourned their lot with heart that yearned;
Then to my alien home returned.

* * * *

If you but knew, young gentlemen,¹
The heartbreak of that sorry den,
You would not paint an idyll there
And make a mock of our despair,
Singing God's praises all in vain.
I cannot understand, in pain,

¹Addressed to those young Ukrainian authors who in their writings idealized village life, presenting its bright and happy outward appearance and neglecting to expose its grim interior.

Why such a hut, in fiction's guise,
They call a peaceful paradise.
Once in that cot I writhed in dread
And there my bitter tears were shed,
My first sad tears! I do not know
A fiercer evil here below
Than in that sordid cottage lies—
And yet men call it paradise!

No sort of paradise I call
In that dark grove that cottage small
Beside the village's clear pond:
There I can see my mother fond
Who swaddled me and sang a tune
That utter sorrow would commune
With her sad child, and in that grove
That paradisal cot, I'd prove
The depths of hell; bondage was there
And toil that gave no time for prayer.
There my kind mother, young but wan,
Exhausted to her grave had gone,
Worn out with penury and stress;
And there my father's hopelessness
With us, his naked little waifs,
In vain at bitter fortune chafes;
He died a slave; and we, fate-curs'd,
Were now in other homes dispersed
Like tiny mice. I went to school,
A flunkey under rich boys' rule;
While all my brothers bore the yoke
Of serfdom to the "gentlefolk,"
Until, by army service pressed,
Their heads were shaved with all the rest.
As for my sisters—you alas,
My precious doves, to sorrow pass!
Who cares if you exist on earth?
In serfdom you are lost in dearth;
In serfdom will your braids turn grey;
In serfdom you will end your day.

* * * *

I was some thirteen years of age
And pastured lambs, without a wage.
Whether the bright sun shone to win me
Or some deep impulse stirred within me,
In such amazing joy I trod
As if in truth I walked with God . . .
I let the lunch-time summons pass
And lingered in the tall, soft grass,
Praying to God; I know not how
My little heart o'erflowed, I vow,
As in my orisons I knelt.
The sky and thorp my rapture felt;
The lambs, it seemed, rejoiced in turn;
The sun was warm and did not burn.
But not for long that blessing stayed,
And not for long I knelt and prayed.
The savage sun, in reddening shine,
Burned up that paradise of mine.
As if from sleep I woke, and lo,
The village had grown dark with woe;
The dove-blue heaven of God above
Had wasted like a faded glove.
Upon the lambs I cast a glance—
They were not mine, by any chance.
Upon the crofts my gaze was thrown—
No dwelling could I call my own.
God gave me nothing, south or north!
And so my bitter tears gushed forth.
A maiden by the highway-side
Near where my dream of rapture died
Was reaping hemp; she heard me weep
And came to lull my pangs to sleep;
She wiped my tears to comfort me,
And kissed my forehead tenderly.
Once more the sun appeared to shine
And everything on earth seemed mine,
The meadows, groves and orchards green;
And merrily, with hearts serene,
We drove to water 'mid the flowers
The little lambs that were not ours.

TO N. I. KOSTOMARIV¹

WRITTEN IN PRISON SHORTLY BEFORE THE SENTENCE OF EXILE

The joyful sun passed in and out
Of vernal clouds that danced about;
The prisoners were served, like me
With thin, distasteful mugs of tea;
While all around the trampling ranged
Of blue-clad warders being changed.
To the great door, the key's shrill jars,
And to the heavy window-bars
I had grown used, and felt no more
Deep anguish for the days of yore,
The buried and forgotten years
And all the torment of my tears.
Them in abundance have I shed
Upon this desert, waste and dead,
Where not a plant salutes the view,
Not even one dry stalk of rue.
My native thorp I called to mind:
But who were those I'd left behind?
My parents both lay buried deep . . .
And rankling griefs my senses sweep
That no one there remembers me.
Your mother then, dear friend, I see,
Who, black as earth, walks weak with loss
As if she just had left her cross . . .
My thanks to God were boundless then
As the most fortunate of men
In having no one thus to share
My shackles and my gaol's despair.

* * * *

¹See the preface to M. Kostomariv. This poem was one of the thirteen written in the prison at St. Petersburg where Shevchenko awaited trial with the other members of the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius. It is a reminiscence of Kostomariv's mother whom Shevchenko saw through his barred window, as she, a figure of sorrow, approached the prison to visit her son.

I count my exiled nights and days¹
 And lose the tally in amaze.
 O Lord! How languidly and wan
 These heavy days creep on and on!
 The years flow after them in flight
 And stream in silence down the night,
 Bearing with them in traffic still
 Their endless freight of good and ill.
 All things they bear, and bear for ever;
 Nothing returns—they come back never.
 To pray to God were fruitless cost,
 For all petitions will be lost.
 By muddy roads of darkened time
 And weedy tracts of age and slime
 Three years of mine have passed away;
 Much have they taken, day by day,
 From my dark storehouse as debris
 And borne it, silent, to the sea;
 And silently those waves now hold
 No whit of silver and of gold
 But years of youth, my greatest good,
 As well as griefs and pains withheld,
 Those tablets in the hearts of men
 Inscribed on by no mortal pen.

And now the fourth sad year is going,
 Softly it passes, slowly flowing—
 In a fourth booklet I begin
 Exile's embroidery to win,
 Embroidering it across the years
 With trembling threads of blood and tears,
 For never can the path I've run
 In pain be told to anyone
 With words alone; ah, never, never
 In all the world can man's endeavour
 Fine words to match my exile's fate;
 For words, and tears, and all I wait.
 Yes, even God Almighty's grace
 Is sought in vain in such a place!
 Things worth my sight in vain I seek;
 No one is here with whom to speak!

¹With this poem begins Shevchenko's fourth "bootleg" volume.

Life that is past all bearing dreary
One must endure, however weary!
Why must I then? Why keep control?
Is it that I must save my soul?
My soul I find not worth the care!
The reason why I must forbear
And live my life out here and grope
My way in fetters is the hope
That days may come when once again
I may behold my own Ukraine,—
Days when once more I yet shall stand
With teardrops in my fatherland
And share my words with groves of green
And shadowy meadows in between.
No kindred have I left at all
Who might come smiling at my call,
And yet Ukrainian folk are not
The same as those in this far plot.
Along the Dnieper would I roam
Through cheery villages of home—
A strain I'd sing that there belongs:
My gentle, melancholy songs.
Oh, let me see the day, good Lord,
When I may look on fields adored,
On verdant meadows, softly spread,
And on those barrows of the dead!
And if thou wilt not grant my prayer,
Yet send, O God, my teardrops there
To fall upon the land I cherish—
It is for her that here I perish!
In some far grave it yet may be
I shall lie down more peacefully
If in Ukraine, among my kind,
My songs shall still be called to mind!
Let them, dear Lord, yet reach Ukraine
Or grant this hope amid my pain
That some day they may go! For naught
Comes gladly in my witless thought
To help me face a world of ill.
And thus my heart grows sad and chill
When in my mind the black thoughts creep
That I may here be buried deep

In alien soil, and all my verse
 Be buried with me, under curse,—
 And in Ukraine, as I foresee,
 No person will remember me!
 And yet perhaps, with gliding years,
 My poetry, adorned with tears,
 May some day reach Ukraine and fall
 Like blessed dew upon them all,
 Descending with its melting art
 Upon some gentle, youthful heart.
 That youth will bow his head in sorrow
 And from my grief new grief will borrow,
 And may perchance remember me,
 Dear Lord, in his approach to thee!

But let things happen as they will,
 I'll swim through life or ford it still!
 Even if I were crucified,
 I would continue till I died
 To shape the verses of my pride.

TO A. Y. KOZACHKOVSKY¹

Along the ramparts like a thief I strain
 Stealthy, on Sunday morning, to the plain;
 Across the sand-dunes, Ural's bank I see
 And then the steppe, as vast as liberty;
 And then my bruised and aching heart
 To leap in sudden joy will start
 As from the stream a salmon leaps;
 In secrecy a smile it keeps
 And flies up like a happy dove
 To soar the alien fields above,—
 At such a time I feel the grace
 Of freedom in the open space . . .
 Up to the hilltop then I prance
 To gaze across the vast expanse

¹Shevchenko's friend, Andriy Yossipovich Kozachkovsky, served as a physician in the theological seminary of Pereyaslav. In 1846 Kozachkovsky treated Shevchenko who had fallen ill in that town while with the Archaeological Commission that was investigating historical sites in Ukraine.

And there to think of my Ukraine—
 And yet I brood on it with pain . . .
 Though steppes to either land are lent,
 Yet they, alas, are different.
 Here they are ruddy-red to view,
 While there they lie, a heavenly blue,
 And verdant green the steppe-land yields
 As if embroidered bright with fields,
 High barrows of the ancient dead
 And shadowy meadows softly spread.
 But weeds are here and wastes of sand;
 No tiniest mounds our thoughts command
 To call to mind the tribes of yore—
 No one, it seems, lived here before!

From time's past record to this day
 This wilderness was hid away,
 And yet we found it in the end;
 Forts we have built, this to defend,
 And soon, no doubt, will barrows spread
 To bury deep a host of dead!

O hapless destiny! O native land!
 When shall I ever leave this barren strand?
 Mayhap (though God forbid!), here ends my track
 And as I die these red fields will grow black?²

“Back to your barracks! To your cell again!”
 A sudden voice cries out to give me pain,
 And I awake. Around the hillock's flank,
 I slip in stealth along the Ural's bank,
 Behind the walls. And so I celebrate
 My holy Sunday in this place of hate!
 And Monday? My dear friend! With black intent
 The night invades the stinking tenement;
 Dark thoughts besiege me and would storm my heart,
 To countless fragments blast my hopes apart;
 And all the faith I labour to express
 They scatter far in dusty worthlessness;
 They halt the night: the hours like year-spans, nay
 Like ages, slowly ooze themselves away,

²“grow black,” i.e., in his grave.

And many a time with tears of bitter blight
I've wet my pillow through the endless night.

I pray to God to make the dawn appear,
As if it were my freedom shining clear.
The cricket ceases; the Reveille sounds;
And then I pray that night may make its rounds!
For they will take this old fool out to drill
And of his folly make a mockery still,
To teach him how to value freedom's ways
And know that fools are beaten to a daze.

And so my days and weeks pass on
And thus, perhaps, will soon be gone
The last years of this life of stress!
But as for God, I do confess
I suffer here for justice sake
And at my lot no cavil make!
I only can beseech the Lord:
“Let me not here, in wastes abhorred
Die exiled, by all men ignored!”

My youthful years are passing on;
Gone is my freedom, starkly gone;
And hope resumes its wicked task
Of mocking me in all I ask,
And adding sorrow to my soul:
But if I shall outlive this dole
And drink again on Dnieper's shore,
And see you too, my friend, once more,
Perhaps within your peaceful dwelling
I'll sit with you, old torment telling.
Can this come true? Alas, I fear
Even to dream of such good cheer.
Can I return to those I love?
Or must I but from Heaven above
Look down upon my fair Ukraine
And gaze at you, my friend, again?
But there are seasons that I dread
When not a tear is left to shed;
At such times I would pray to die
Did not Ukraine with dove-blue sky

And Dnieper with high, grassy bank
And you my precious friend so frank
Forbid me with my failing breath
To pray to God to send me death.

* * * *

The roads that lead to my Ukraine—
Are overgrown with thorns profane—
It may be I have left her shore
Forever and forever more!
Perhaps I shall not live to see
The home that was so dear to me;
Here I may stay, unwept, unknown,
And read these verses all alone.
Merciful God, how punitive
And bitter is the life I live!
A vast heart beats within my breast,
But none have I to share my quest.
Thou hast not granted me one favour,
One unspoiled hour of youthful savour;
Nay, never hast Thou yielded me
One holy hour of ecstasy,
Never a young heart, rapture-laden,
To share in love with some dear maiden.
My evil days and evil nights
Have slipped away without delights;
Untouched by joy and youthful zest,
They pass in dullness manifest
In exile. No one can I find
To sympathize with me in mind;
I suffer thus the lack, you see,
Of all congenial company.
How hard it is for me, dear Lord,
To carry in my heart the hoard
Of these my verses, still unshared
And lost in silence, undeclared,
To speak to none their sacred word,
Enriching with joys yet unheard
Impoverished souls with holy spell,
Or put to shame some son of hell,

And die in silence . . . O my God,
 Before I lie beneath the sod,
 Let me my humble people see
 In my Ukraine, so dear to me!
 Let me not perish here, I pray,
 On alien soil so far away!

A COTTAGE

Perhaps my mother prayerless trod
 Nor knelt on my behalf to God,
 But reared me up to what I am
 As simply as a little lamb,
 Just murmuring: "Let him grow at length
 To manhood, full of health and strength!"
 I have, thank God, grown up indeed,
 But little value can I plead.
 'Twere better I had not been born,
 Or had been drowned, a thing of scorn,
 That I should not, 'mid alien nations,
 Offend God with my imprecations.
 A tiny cottage in a grove
 With two tall poplars arched above;
 And by me that unhappy maid,
 My own Oksana,¹ sweet and staid,
 That we from hilltops might look down
 On the broad Dnieper, gullies brown,
 And on the fields of golden wheat
 And the high mounds of old defeat,—
 To gaze on them, and muse, and sigh:
 "When were those barrows reared so high?
 And who lies buried there so long?"
 Together we would start a song,
 A mournful, ancient elegy
 About that hetman, brave and free,
 Whom Poles once roasted in a fire.²
 Then from the hill we would retire

¹See "I was some thirteen years of age," p. 92.

²Pavlo Kravchenko-Nalivayko whose Cossack troops waged war against the Polish occupants of Ukraine. In one of the battles he was captured by the Poles and roasted alive in a "copper bull."

And in a grove beside the stream
Would wander till the day's last gleam,
Till all God's creatures slumber soon,
Till both the evening star and moon
Above the hilltop coexist
And o'er the meadows drive the mist.
Upon that sight we'd gaze with prayer
And cheerfully conversing there
Turn to the food our cot affords.
O God, Thou givest to our lords
Rich orchards in Thy paradise
And palaces to please their eyes,
But in the greed their hearts uplift
They spit upon Thy gracious gift
And would compel my soul to grovel
If I should watch them from my hovel.

A cottage in that paradise
Was all I begged, and still would prize,
And near the Dnieper's bank to rest
On one low hill without a crest.

* * * *

My years of youth have passed away . . .
And from the West, where hope should stay,
I feel a cold and wintry blast!
In your cold dwelling sit at last
With not a soul for conversation
And not a shred of consolation
For which in loneliness to grope!
Sit thus alone until faint hope,
Poor fool, will mock at you once more
And couch your eyes with frost-ice hoar
And scatter all your visions airy
Like snowflakes down the empty prairie . . .
In your dark corner sit alone
And nevermore for springtime moan!
It will not come again for you
To bless your orchard with its dew
And bless the hopes for which you yearn,
Yes, nevermore will it return

To free your thoughts. Sit, past recall,
And look for naught, for naught, at all! . . .

* * * *

My humble neighbour, comrade dear,¹
Should we not now abandon here
The framing of these trifling verses
And set about to deck our hearses,
Our waggons for that trip ahead,
That every soul must take when dead?
For to the other world, my friend,
We'll amble off and make an end . . .
Though we are tired, of vigour drained,
Some worldly wisdom we have gained:
Let that suffice! Let's go to bed,
Into our narrow hut we'll tread,
A cheerful cot, when all is said!

Nay, let us not retire yet,—
Too soon it is to pay that debt!
Here let us stroll or sit together
And watch this world where man must tether.
My good friend, let us view it still,
How vast it is, from hill to hill,
How radiant and how profound!
Then let us roam these fields around,
Ascend this hillock to its crest
And on its summit pause to rest . . .
Meanwhile across the gulf of night
The stars, your sisters, shed their light;
Eternal in the firmament
They float and shine with bright intent . . .
O Muse, my precious advocate
And sister, let us therefore wait,
And with unsullied lips of prayer
Petitions due to God prepare;
Then in good time we shall set out
On our long trip in mood devout.

¹Shevchenko's last poem, written when he was on his death-bed, yet in a humorous vein. The "humble neighbour" of course is his Muse.

On turbid Lethe's weedy bank
And unplumbed depths, obscure and dank,
Impart to me the blessing, friend,
Of sacred fame without an end!

But while we await that happy day,
Let us directly make our way
To ask old Aesculapius
To outwit Charon's ire for us
And Fate the Spinner. Then while he
Wisely devised a plan for me,
We would recline and bring to birth
An epic high above the earth,
Weaving hexameters unending
Which we would presently be rending
In garrets for the mice to eat . . .
This we would then in prose repeat,
Yet sing them, too, I must aver,
My saintly fellow-traveller!
Nay, ere the fires of fancy fall,
Let us on Charon pay a call!

O'er turbid Lethe's unplumbed deep
Our uncomplaining course we'll keep
And sailing, bear within our boat
Death's bright and hallowed antidote,
My everlasting, youthful fame . . .
Or else, may the deuce take that same!
I well can do without renown.
And if with vigour I go down,
Along the banks of Phlegethon
Or by the Styx, in heaven anon,
As if by Dnieper's shore sublime
In groves of immemorial time
I'll build a hut and plant around it
A belt of orchard-trees to bound it,
To whose cool shade you'll fly unseen
And I shall crown you as my queen;
We'll talk of Dnieper and Ukraine
And the glad thorps that dot her plain,
And grassy mounds in endless spring,
And then a merry song we'll sing . . .

THE DAYS PASS BY

The days pass by, nights flit away,
The summer's gone, pale leaves a-heap
Are rustling; dreams my eyelids sway,
My thoughts and heart are both asleep.
All things around me sleep—I know not
Whether I live or drowse the while.

By any plan my hours flow not,
No longer do I weep or smile . . .

Where art thou, Destiny, ah where?

My soul is stirred by none!

If Thou begrudgeth me fair fate,

Lord, send a ruthless one!

Let me not sleep when I should wake;

Do not permit my heart to lie

A rotten log that men forsake

And leave in fetid infamy;

But on me let fierce fervour fall

To love all people all my days,

Or let me cast a curse on all

And set the torpid world ablaze!

Dreadful it is to lie in chains

And die in slavery at last,

Yet worse it is when sleep retains

The free man's spirit overcast,

For all eternity to slumber

And leave behind no sign or trace,

As if his days had borne no number

And there was nothing to efface . . .

Where art Thou, Destiny, ah where?

My soul is stirred by none!

If Thou begrudgeth me fair fate,

Lord, send a ruthless one!

AN EVENING¹

A cherry grove beside the cottage stands,
 The beetles hum above the cherry-trees,
 The ploughmen homeward plod to take their ease,
 Young women likewise come in singing bands,
 Mothers await them all, with food to please.

The family beside the cottage eats;
 The evening star is rising in the sky;
 The daughter helps the supper tasks to ply;
 Words of advice the mother's mind repeats
 But songs of nightingales her words outvie.

Her little folks beside the cottage small
 The mother puts to rest in slumber deep,
 And she herself beside them falls asleep.
 Peace now prevails. But the young women all
 And the sweet nightingale no silence keep.

* * * *

It is indifferent to me, if I
 Live in Ukraine or live there not at all,
 Whether or not men let my memory die;
 Here in an alien land, mid snows piled high
 It will not matter that such things befall.

In serfdom, among strangers was I reared,
 And unlamented wholly by my own
 In exile I shall die, in grief uncheered,
 And to my nameless grave shall pass alone.
 No trace of me, alas, will then remain
 To see in all our glorious Ukraine,
 In all that land of ours that is not ours.
 No father will command me to his son,
 To pray for me to God, source of all powers:
 "Pray then, my boy! For us his course was run.
 He died to save Ukraine, whom Fate devours."

¹This short poem describing a summer evening in a Ukrainian village is one of the most pictorial Shevchenko ever wrote. Almost every line evokes a picture. It has been said that if Shevchenko had written nothing else, it would have made his fame.

It is indifferent to me, I say,
 Whether or not that son for me should pray . . .
 But while I live I cannot bear to see
 A wicked people come with crafty threat,
 To lull Ukraine yet strip her ruthlessly
 And waken her amid the flames they set—
 Sure, no indifference in me these wrongs beget!¹¹

* * * *

The sun is setting and the hills grow dim,
 All bird-song ceases, and the fields are quiet,
 And man is glad because rest comes for him.
 But I look wakeful round; my spirit's fiat
 Sets me to fly to orchards of Ukraine;
 On, on I flit, deep in the gulfs of thought
 And thus my heart can find relief from pain.
 Fields, groves and hills are now in darkness caught
 And in the deep, blue sky a star appears.
 "O evening star," I question it in tears,
 "Hast thou now risen also in Ukraine?
 Are hazel eyes now seeking thee tonight
 In the blue sky? Have they forgotten quite?"
 If they have lost all memory of me,
 Then let them sleep, nor know my destiny!

THE PROPHET

Loving his people well, the Lord
 For righteous children planned reward
 And sent a prophet down to earth
 To tell his love's surpassing worth,
 And teach them well in wisdom's ways
 Through all the course of earthly days.
 As broad as Dnieper's flood his words
 Flowed freely forth, like singing birds
 They penetrated every breast,
 Like fire they stirred to warm unrest

¹¹Here Shevchenko compares the despoliation of Ukraine by her enemies to a robbery perpetrated by thieves who, having pillaged a house, set it afire and, after wakening the owner, pretend to assist him in putting out the flames, thereby seeking to draw public attention away from themselves.

Cold souls of men. The people took
Their prophet to their hearts and shook
In tearful prayers of gratitude.
And then? . . . O wretched race and rude!
The sacred glory of the Lord
They mocked . . . To foreign gods abhorred
They sacrificed as scoundrels can
And then, alas, that holy man
They stoned to death amid the corn
And laughed his piety to scorn,
With joy in shedding holy blood.
Then God's just wrath burst forth in flood—
He bade that fetters should be forged
To chain you, fierce and overgorged,
And dungeons built to be your place!—
And, —O deceptive, cruel race!—
The prophet's rule surpassing far,
He called on you to choose a tsar!

* * * *

On Easter Day among the straw
Out in the sun the children played
With Easter eggs in colours braw
And each of them loud boasting made
Of gifts received. One, for the feast,
Was given a shirt with sleeves of white;
One with a ribbon had been pleased,
One with a garment, laced and tight;
This boy was given a lambskin cap,
That one a pair or horsehide boots,
And one a jacket to unwrap.
Only one child among their bruits,
An orphan, has no gift of bliss;
Her hands are hidden in her sleeves.
She hears: "My mother bought me this . . .
"My father got me that." (She grieves.)
"My good godmother made a blouse
Embroidered gay with dainty thread."
At last the little orphan said:
"The priest has fed me at his house."

DESTINY

Never hast thou proved false my path to tend
 For like a brother, sister or a friend
 Thou'st succoured my poor self; when I was young
 My little hand to thy strong fingers clung—
 Thou'st taken me to school and didst beseech me,
 There where a drunken sexton was to teach me:
 “Study and learn, my dear,” thou saidst. “Some day
 We will amount to something if we stay.”
 And I took heed and studied, hard and long,
 And learned indeed. But thou, alas, wert wrong!
 For what do we amount to? . . . But enough!
 We two have never left our pathway rough,
 Have gone straight forward, and no man can find
 One grain of falsehood that we've left behind . . .
 Let us then still go on, my destiny,
 Thou humble, unpretentious friend to me;
 Let us proceed: for there the glory lies,
 And glory is my all-consuming prize.

From THE HAYDAMAKS¹

Hetmans,² O haughty hetmans, if you were to rise again,
 If you were to rise and look at your ancient Chihirin,³
 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!

¹These two excerpts are taken from Shevchenko's longest poem, "The Haydamaks," in which he semi-fictionally describes the bloody insurrection of the Cossacks and Ukrainian peasantry against the Polish landlords who held sway in Ukraine in the eighteenth century. With the aid of the latter, the Polish government sought to strengthen its economic and political power there by forcing the Orthodox to turn to the Latin rite in order to Polonize them, as they had the Ukrainian gentry in Western Ukraine. The rebellions, although political and social, likewise bore a religious stamp. There were several such insurrections in that century, the severest of them occurring in 1768. The term "haydamak" is of Turkish origin, meaning "robber," "pillager." It was contemptuously applied by the Poles to the rebels, but was accepted by the latter as a mark of honour.

²Hetmans were Cossack military chiefs, elected to that position by Cossack general assemblies. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries many of them were heads of the Ukrainian Cossack State. Derivation: German *Hauptmann*, chief, captain.

³A town north of Kiev, for a time a flourishing capital of the Cossack State.

The squares where the troops you marshalled once flowed like a mighty sea,
 Where they blazed at the wave of the bunchuks,⁴ as red as the prairie soil,
 And the great chief on his jet-black steed would rise in rapture free,
 And sway his mace at the mighty waves and the sea would begin to boil,
 To boil and overflow its ranks,
 Over the steppes and up the banks,
 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.

. . .

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!

PRETTY KATIE

A BALLAD

To pretty Katerina's house,
 That stands so rich and stately,
 From all the Zaporozhian realm
 Three wooers came but lately.
 And one was Semen Bossey named;
 The second, Ivan Holey;
 Young Ivan Yaroshenko, third,
 Was a Cossack far from lowly.

⁴Together with the mace (*bulava*), the *bunchuk* was a hetman's symbol of office and power. See p. 7, fn. 13.

"We've been through all of Poland's towns
(They said) and all Ukraine,
But no such beauty have we seen
As Katie, we maintain!"

The first one said: "If I were rich,
My brothers, I aver,
I'd give the whole of all my gold
For one brief hour with her."

The second said: "If I were strong,
My comrades, I aver,
I'd give at length my utter strength
For one brief hour with her."

The third man said: "No thing on earth,
My fellows, I aver,
Would I eschew to give or do
For one brief hour with her."

Thoughtful grew Katerina then,
And to the third says she:
"An only brother do I mourn
In dread captivity.

"In far Crimea he must lie.
Who brings him to my house,
That man, O Zaporozhians brave,
Will then become my spouse!"

They all rose up together straight
And saddled their three steeds
And rode in haste to liberate
Her brother by their deeds.

And one the Dnieper's flood did drown,
The Poles impaled another,
But one from Bakchisaray town
Brought back the captive brother.

Full early at the lordly house
Knocks at the door entreat:
"Wake up, wake up, my maiden fair,
Your brother come to greet!"

Then Katie glanced upon the pair,
 And Katie smiled and cried:
 "This is no brother, but my love—
 My sweetheart—for I lied."

"You lied to me!" His sabre flashed,
 And Katie's pretty head
 Fell down and rolled upon the floor.
 Then to his mate he said:

"Out of this wicked house, my friend,
 Let us make haste to go!"
 The Zaporozhians rode off
 Swift as the winds that blow.

The black-browed Katerina's corpse
 Men buried on the plain;
 And on the steppe the Cossack lads
 Were reconciled again.

IMITATION OF ISAIAH¹

CHAPTER XXXV

Rejoice, unwatered field of grain!
 Rejoice, as yet unplanted plain,
 With flowery herbs! Be flooded now,
 With crimson roses on thy brow!
 For thou shalt blossom and grow green
 Like Jordan's holy banks serene.
 Its verdant meadows and the side
 Of Carmel in its lofty pride.
 The glory of high Lebanon
 Shall cover thee with robes anon,
 Woven and sewn with gold most free
 And lined with truth and liberty.
 And humble folk, with one accord,
 Shall see the wonders of the Lord.

¹Almost all his imitations of the Prophets and Psalms Shevchenko made apply to Ukraine, her contemporary condition and future destiny.

The weariness of captive hands
Shall find their labour past,
And knees enveloped long in chains
Shall earn a rest at last.
Rejoice, then, all ye meek in heart,
Fear not his benisons!
For God himself, the Judge on high,
Sets free the suffering ones,
Prompt all the destitute to bless
And curse the sons of wickedness.

For when, O Lord, the Truth, our friend,
Upon the nations shall descend,
To tarry for at least a while—
Then shall the blind man see, and smile,
The lame shall leap forth like a hart,
Words from the dumb man's lips shall start,
Like gushing water from his tongue;
So shall in desert tracts be sung
The song of healing streams that flow
And happy rivers. Lakes shall grow
The woodland that their waters girds,
Filled with the melody of birds.

The steppes and pools shall all revive
And sacred roads be trod,
Not marked with mileposts on their course
But holy, free and broad.
These highways spreading south and north
From masters shall be hidden
While slaves unvexed by hue and cry
Shall walk the roads unhidden;
The captives shall assemble here
In merriment and rest,
And happy hamlets everywhere
Shall make the desert blest.

THE PSALMS OF DAVID¹

PSALM CXXXII

What could be worthier in the world
 Than living side by side
 With one's good neighbour and all wealth
 To share, and not divide?
 Such concord is like sacred myrrh
 Upon the blessed head
 And beard of Aaron flowing down,
 Its redolence to shed;
 Upon his garment's broidered skirts
 The holy fragrance spills;
 Such concord is like Hermon's dews
 Or Zion's holy hills,
 Such dews come down and bless with good
 All things that live on earth;
 And so his pious people God
 Will not destroy with dearth.
 He will begin His reign, and send
 Their peaceful habitation
 Good things for their vast family
 In endless approbation.

PSALM XLIII

With our own ears, Almighty God,
 Thy glory we have heard
 And grandsires tell us of the past,
 And faithful is their word,
 About the bloody years of old
 When with thy mighty hand
 Thou hast set free our arms from chains
 And buried in the land
 Our foemen's corpses. Thus thy power
 Was faithfully extolled
 By all thy people who in peace
 Find rest within thy fold,
 Praising the Lord. But now, alas,

¹See p. 111, fn. 1.

It doth thy spirit please
 To cast thy people into shame
 And raise new enemies
 Who spoil and feed on us like sheep;
 Without reward or price
 To dread foes thou hast given us,
 A living sacrifice;
 A laughing-stock of every race,
 The scorn of all our neighbors,
 Thou hast abandoned us, and lo,
 Unfruitful are our labours.
 And laughingly they shake their heads
 Above us as they jeer;
 And every day we see our shame
 Before us bold and clear.
 Despoiled, tormented, full of grief,
 We perish in our chains,
 And lift no prayer to alien gods—
 No God but Thee remains.
 Assist us, liberate us, Lord,
 From this our foemen's scorn!
 Thou hast redeemed our fathers' lot
 Redeem us, all forlorn,
 In fiercer trouble. Rise, O God,
 Why is Thy hand forborne?

PSALM CXXXVII

On the banks of Babylon's rivers,
 Under a willow-tree,
 In meadows sat we down and wept
 In our captivity.
 And on the willow-boughs we hung
 Our harps that could not sing;
 And there the wicked Edomites
 Began their snickering:
 "Come let us hear your song; perhaps,
 'Twill make us weep with you;
 Or sing a song of Babylon
 As captive slaves must do!"
 What sort of song are we to sing

In alien fields, we pray?
 A happy song we cannot sing
 In exile far away.
 If ever I forget thy walls,
 O fair Jerusalem,
 Let me be lost, forgotten·quite,
 A slave whom all condemn!
 And let my tongue be withered up
 And speech no more employ
 If I should not remember thee,
 My glory and my joy!
 But God shall still remember you,
 Children of Edom stern,
 For shouting: "Wreck Jerusalem!
 Destroy, destroy and burn!"
 Daughter of Babylon accurs'd,
 Most blessed shall he be
 Who shall requite thee for the chains
 Of our captivity!
 Twice blessed be an evil fate
 By which thou art o'erthrown,
 That beats thy children's brains to bits
 Against an icy stone!

TO OSNOVIANENKO¹

The rapids rage; the moon appears,
 As once it rose before . . .
 The Sitch² is gone, and gone is he
 Who led them all of yore.
 The Sitch is gone! The reed-beds ask

¹Hrihorii Kvitka-Osnovianenko (1778–1843), a Ukrainian landlord in the locality of Osnova. He was a Ukrainian writer whose long short stories dealt sentimentally with the life of the peasants. Several decades before Ivan Turgenev in Russia, and George Sand in France, Kvitka introduced the peasant type into European literature. He is considered as the “father of the Ukrainian novel,” his *Marusia* being the first of that genre in Ukraine. The fact that Kvitka, despite bitter Russian criticism, wrote in Ukrainian and not in Russian endeared him to Shevchenko, who likewise suffered fierce derision from the Russian critics for using the Ukrainian vernacular. In that respect Shevchenko considers Kvitka his “captain.”

²The Sitch was the Cossack main encampment on the Island of Khortitsia, beyond the Dnieper's rapids, and in the region surrounding it. Here Shevchenko bemoans the destruction of the Sitch by the Empress Catherine II, who, after the Cossacks had been driven out, settled the region with German farmers. The term “Sitch” derives probably from the word *sikty*, to hew; or *zasika*, palisade, barricade. †

The Dnieper and its foam:
 "Oh, where have all our children³ gone?
 What country do they roam?"
 The sea-mew, on the wing, laments,
 As weeping for her brood;
 The warm sun and the blowing wind
 Are timeless in their mood.

Across the steppe the grassy mounds
 Still stand and mourn the past;
 They question of the boisterous sea:
 "Where are our dear ones cast?
 Where do they rule and revel now?
 Where are your steps bestead?
 Return! Return! The oats bend low
 Where once your horses fed,
 Where feather-grass once rustled soft,
 Where blood of Tartar fell,
 Where Polish blood once flowed in flood.
 Return, and break the spell!"
 "They never will return at all,"
 The blue sea roared reply,
 "Though hearts may yearn, they'll not return;
 Forever still they lie!"
 Right art thou, sea; right, azure one:
 Such must their dark doom be!
 Those we most long for will not come,
 Here comes not liberty;
 Old Cossackdom will not return,
 Nor hetmans rise again,
 Their scarlet mantles nevermore
 Will cover our Ukraine.

In tatters, like an orphan waif,
 She weeps by streams of night,
 Sorely oppressed in loneliness
 With none to see her plight,
 Except the enemy who mocks.
 Laugh, then, ferocious foe,
 But not too loudly, for our fame
 Will never be laid low.
 It will not perish, but proclaim

³Children, i.e., the Cossacks.

The annals of our age,
 What is our justice, what our wrong,
 And what our parentage.
 Our epic and our ancient song
 For ever shall remain,
 And that is where our glory lies,
 The glory of Ukraine.
 Most chaste, with jewels unadorned,
 Without embellished speech,
 Yet it is deep-toned and precise,
 A tongue that God might teach.⁴

Am I not right, my captain, friend?
 Is it the truth I sing?
 If I but could . . . But what's the use!
 'Tis past my reckoning.
 Besides, I live in Muscovy
 And aliens surround me.
 "Pay them no heed!" you say perhaps;
 But mocking would confound me.
 This psalm of mine I chant with tears
 They'll jeer at as a joke,
 They'll scorn it! And how hard it is
 To live with hostile folk!
 Perhaps I'd grapple with my foes
 If I but had the strength;
 I once could boast a ringing voice
 But it grew mute at length.

Such is my grievous lot today,
 My chieftain and my friend!
 I roam in grief, and softly sing
 As meadow-grasses bend.
 Weak is my song, while you, O Sire,
 As you yourself well know,
 Command the reverence of all,
 Your voice can strongly flow.
 Then sing the Sitch to them, dear man,
 And of the barrows⁵ bare,

⁴Here Shevchenko rises to the defence of the Ukrainian speech which the Russian critics derided as a "peasant idiom," unfit to express lofty thoughts and ideals.

⁵Barrows were burial mounds that once dotted the vast Ukrainian steppe. In many of them the Cossacks lay buried and with them, symbolically, Ukrainian freedom. For that reason Shevchenko often speaks of them tenderly.

Sing of the time when each was raised,
 And who lies buried there;
 Sing to them all of olden times,
 The marvel that is past,
 Strike up so loud a tune, O Sire,
 That all may hear at last
 What happened in Ukraine of old,
 Why she in bondage lay,
 And how the Cossack fame was born
 And through the world made way!
 Strike up the tune, grey eagle, now!
 I'd weep to hear your song,
 And see Ukraine revive again
 In accents deep and strong;
 In your great song I'd hear again
 The roaring of the sea,
 Or a maiden sing of fruitless love
 Beneath a willow tree.
 So let my heart again rejoice
 In this far, foreign land
 Till coffin'd close in alien wood
 I lie in alien sand.

HAMALIYA¹

“Not a breath of air is felt, no wind nor wave
 Comes from our own Ukraine!
 Do men take counsel there to rout the Turk?—
 We listen here in vain.

“Blow, blow, O wind, across the vast sea blow,
 Across the mighty plain!
 Dry all our tears, drown out the fetters’ clank
 And put to flight our pain!

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

¹Hamaliya here is not a historical figure but a representative of those Cossack chieftains who, in the early seventeenth century, made sporadic attacks against the cities on the Turkish Black Sea coast, not only to liberate captive Christians but likewise to pillage for gain and glory. The poem is very effective dramatically and noteworthy for its excellent personifications of the natural sights (viz., Bosphorus—an ox, the Dnieper—a bewhiskered oldster).

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

Oh, thus in Scutari² the Cossacks were singing,
 The wretched ones sang with their tears running down,
 And tears to their sorrow new torment were bringing.
 Old Bosphorus shook with a wondering frown,
 For new to his ears was the Cossack lamenting.
 He groaned like a grey ox and shook his broad hide;
 He roared and from rocky ribs fiercely commenting
 Sent waves far away to the sea's farther side.
 And back roared the sea in the Bosphorus' chanting
 And drove it along to the Liman's³ last reach,
 While Liman in turn, in its wave's mournful ranting,
 Passed on to the Dnieper that sorrowful speech.

Our mighty oldster bellowed out
 Till foam dripped from his whiskered snout:
 "O Brother Meadow,⁴ do you sleep?
 Sister Khortitsia,⁵ hear and leap!"
 And back the Isle and Meadow roared:
 "We hear! We hear!" With one accord,
 Bold barks upon the Dnieper throng
 And Cossacks burst into a song:

"In the land of the Turk, on the further side,
 A rich house stands in its lordly pride.
 Heigh-ho! Roar, O sea,
 Roar and batter the cliffs for me!
 For we're off on a visiting spree!

"In the land of the Turk we could surely find
 Thalers and ducats to sate the mind.
 Heigh-ho! But not for loot
 We go, but to slash the infidel brute
 And to free all our brothers to boot!

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

²A suburb of Byzantium (Constantinople) on the Asian side.

³Liman, the Black Sea bay at the Dnieper's mouth.

⁴The Great Meadow between the Dnieper's mouth and the Sitch.

⁵An island in the Dnieper, the site of the earliest Sitch.

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

While thus they sail, in song's assize,
 The sea feels stormy winds arise.
 But Hamaliya, at their head,⁶
 Directs his bark devoid of dread.

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

"Feel no constraint!"

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

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

"Come, wake it not, Bosphorus, or you will rue it!
 I'll cover your white ribs with silt and with sand,
 (The blue sea roars out) You're forbidden to do it—
 Great guests for the sultan I bring to your strand."
 And thus did the sea keep the narrows from leaping.
 (It loved the staunch Slavs with their forelocks so bold.)
 The Bosphorus paused and the Turks went on sleeping;
 The sultan the silks of his harem enfold.

But deep in their dungeon the Cossacks were waking.
 What might they expect in the chains that they bore?
 And yet in their fashion a prayer they were making
 That passed on the waves to the far distant shore:

"Beloved God of far Ukraine,
 Let not free Cossacks thus remain
 To perish in a foreign land!
 What shame on earth for this our band
 And shame on Doomsday to arise
 And show our shackles in the skies
 When to thy Judgement-seat we come
 And bear the chains of earthly doom
 For all to see them!"⁷—

⁶Hamaliya here leads, and is at the head of the expedition. Compare this passage with the one on p. 123 where he is behind, guarding the Cossacks' rear as they return to the Sitch.

⁷In this moving prayer is revealed the chief Cossack characteristic—their love of freedom, the loss of which makes them more ashamed before God than before man.

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

“Hamaliya! Our hearts grow faint!
Scutari rages!”—
“Without restraint
Slash and strike!” Hamaliya cries,
And stands on the rampart before all eyes.

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

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

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

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

Byzantium is full of ire.
 It seeks to grip the shore of fire
 But screams and rises up and dies
 As sharp blades silence all her cries.
 Like hell, Scutari flaming goes;
 The market-place with bloodshed flows
 And swells the waters of the Strait.
 Like blackbirds in a grove irate,
 The daring Cossacks dart with clangour.
 No mortal may escape their anger!
 At flames the Cossack warriors scoff.
 They tear down walls and carry off
 Capfuls of silver and of gold
 To stow within their vessels' hold.
 Scutari burns; their task is done;
 Now gathers round each dauntless one
 To light his pipe at the burning fire;⁸
 Then they mount their ships at their hearts' desire
 And cleave the waves as the seas roll higher.

They sail with the greatest of nonchalance,
 As if on an outing of careless chance;
 And then, as the Zaporozhians⁹ do,
 Strike up a song for the gallant crew:

“Hamaliya, our leader fine
 Is a dauntless leader across the brine;
 He gathered his boys and roamed the main
 The glory of Cossack arms to gain
 By setting our hapless brothers free
 Out of their Turkish captivity.
 When Hamaliya journeyed down
 To the very heart of Scutari town,
 He found the captives in foul pollution
 Waiting in chains for their execution.
 Oh, what a shout our leader raised:
 ‘Brothers, we’ll live, may God be praised!

⁸One of the Cossack customs was to light their pipes with the fire of the conflagration which they had set, this gesture being symbolic of the success of their expedition or campaign. A pipe was usually considered an “indispensable” part of the Cossack accoutrement.

⁹Cossacks whose camp was “beyond the Rapids” of the Dnieper.

In rich red wine our woes we'll drown
 And strike the janissaries down,
 And with costly rugs and satin shawls
 We'll cover our country dwellings' walls!'
 On the field of battle the Cossacks strain,
 Out on the field to harvest the grain;
 The grain of battle they reaped and stooked,
 And cried together as round they looked:
 'Hamaliya, we give you glory!
 All of the world will prize your story,
 And all the fair Ukrainian land
 Because you saved our captive Band
 From dying on a foreign strand.' "

They sail and sing to this bold idea;
 Behind them sails dauntless Hamaliya,¹⁰
 Like an eagle watching its brood with care.
 A wind from the Dardanelles follows there
 To warn if Byzantium tries pursuit—
 But she is afraid of the Monk's¹¹ repute
 Who set old Galata once ablaze;
 Or she fears lest Ivan Pidkova¹² raise
 His roistering comrades of other days.
 So on they sail . . .

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

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

¹⁰See p. 120, fn. 6.

¹¹Monk, Hetman Petro Konashevich-Sahaydachny (1614-22), one of the earlier Cossack commanders who from time to time ravaged the Turkish coast up to Tsarhorod (Constantinople itself, whose suburb Halata (Galata) he once razed. He was buried in a monastery; but Shevchenko errs in calling him a monk. However, certain hetmans and Cossack military chiefs did become monks when their warring days were over.

¹²Ivan Pidkova, a Cossack leader in the latter half of the seventeenth century, who likewise, as Shevchenko implies here, terrorized the Turkish coast, although this has not been established. He campaigned in Moldavia and, for a brief period, attained its throne. In one of his battles with the Poles, he was finally captured and beheaded.

From THE DREAM¹

“Farewell, O world! Farewell, O earth,
 Thou dismal, dreary land!
 I'll hide my torments, fierce and keen,
 Within a cloud-bank bland.
 Then to thyself, my own Ukraine,
 A widow sad and weak,
 I shall come flying from the clouds
 And with thee shall I speak;
 From our communion, soft and low
 My heart shall gain some cheer;
 At midnight shall my soul come down
 In dewdrops cool and clear.
 We shall take counsel in our grief
 Until the dawn we see,
 And till thy children grow enough
 To rout the enemy.
 And so, farewell, my mother dear,
 Widow unfortunate!
 Remember, justice lives with God
 To make thy children great!”

I fly . . . Then look and see the dawn
 That sets the heavens on fire;
 In shadowy groves the nightingale
 Salutes it in desire.
 The wind blows gently, and the steppes
 And meads are dimly seen;
 Between the rifts, above the ponds,
 The willow-trees are green;
 Luxuriant orchards lowly bend,
 The poplars here and there
 Stand out like guards across the fields
 And whisper debonair.
 And all of this, the entire land,
 In beauty's robes to view

¹A poem which, along with “The Caucasus,” contributed more than his activity in the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius to his being exiled. The passages in which Shevchenko ridiculed Tsar Nicholas I are not given here. The Empress he called a “dried up mushroom,” and a “strutting heron,” and the Tsar he presented ludicrously as a boorish creature who was strong only when he had the backing of his underlings, but weak as a kitten once he found himself alone.

And verdant draperies of spring,
Is washed with early dew;
And thus adorned and thus made clean,
It meets the rising sun—
Its rapture from no limit starts,
Its grace is never done.

That loveliness could find no charm
To add or take away,
All is so perfect . . .

But, my soul

Why art thou sad this day?
My soul, in anguish of distress,
Why dost thou weep, forsooth?
What is the cause of all thy grief?
Dost thou not see the truth?

For canst thou not hear there the sound of men's cry?
Then glance down, and look! For a while I will fly
High, high beyond clouds in the infinite blue:
No gendarmes are there and no penalties due,
No laughter is heard and no wail as men grieve.
But see! In that Eden thou seekest to leave,
Patched garments are torn from the backs of the lame
Along with their hides,—sure the lord needs the same
To shoe his young offspring. And see, farther back,
A widow for headtax is put to the rack,
While the son of her love, her one hope for survival,
Is pressed for the army, nor waits her arrival.
The lord fears his spirit. And there, by the hedge,
A child with swell'n belly its pangs to allege
Is dying of hunger—its mother ignored
Is doing forced labour in fields of the lord.

But yonder, see? O eyes, my eyes!
Can you no other sights devise?
Would you had dimmed, all view to dout,
Or with my tears had trickled out!
An unwed mother past the farms
Walks with a bastard in her arms;
Her parents both have cast her off,
And everyone will only scoff.
Even the churls . . . The lord's young son
Forgets what he to her has done,

And, with his twentieth woman, drinks
The souls of serfs down, full of winks.

Does God behind the clouds behold
Our tears and anguish from of old?
Perhaps He does, but helps our ills
As little as those timeless hills
That saw it all and marked the flood,
Along their slopes, of human blood! . . .
Alas, my soul, in dark distress
How dreadful is thy hopelessness!
After our fill of poisonous sights,
Let us see rest in icy nights,
And send our ponderous thought to God
To ask how long He stays his rod,
And when the hangmen, black of hand,
Will cease to lord it in our land.

Then fly, my fierce thought, that my torment now doubles,
And carry away all my ills and my troubles,
Thy constant companions! With them thou has grown,
And them thou wert fond of; their hard hands, well-known,
Once swaddled thy childhood. Then take them and fly
And spread all their hordes down the length of the sky!

Let them blacken the welkin, and redder,
And blow with their flames till they deaden!
Let the fiery spew of the dragon
Pour corpses like wine from a flagon!
And I in some spot shall keep hidden
My heart, by thy warnings unchidden,—
And seek, by the angels impeared
A nest at the ends of the world.

III

Again I fly. The earth is dark.
My mind's a-drowse, my heart grows faint.
Dwellings along the roads I mark—
Towns with a church to every saint.
Inside the town, like herons stout,
Unnumbered soldiers swarm about:
Well-fed, well-shod, in costume thrilling,
And all of them in chains are drilling.

Further I look: As in a pit,
 A quagmire vale, there seems to sit
 A city² underneath a cloud
 That cloaks it like a murky shroud.
 Nearer I fly—it spreads immense.
 Have Turks or Germans built it hence?
 Perhaps the town is Muscovite!
 Churches and palaces stand bright,
 Here lords of noble port are found,
 With not one cottage seen around!

IV

Sight-seeing through the town I stray.
 In it the night is like the day.
 Nothing but palaces I see
 Along the gentle stream's levee,
 Indeed the entire bank is shown
 As lined with mighty towers of stone.
 I marvel till my brains perspire
 How such a swamp of utter mire
 Was to this prodigy transformed.³
 With human blood the soil was warmed,
 Even without the sword's keen blade,
 When all this miracle was made!
 To face it stands a fortress tall,⁴
 A belfry rises like an awl,
 So thin and sharp. Upon the towers
 Great clocks ring out the changing hours.
 I turn and am surprised to see
 A horse come flying straight at me⁵
 And strike a boulder with its strides.
 Now on the bare-backed horse there rides
 One in a cloak that is no cloak,
 While on his brow are leaves of oak.

²St. Petersburg, now Leningrad.

³St. Petersburg was built on marshy ground at great expense in the lives of the Cossacks who were sent there to erect it by forced labour.

⁴The Fortress of Saints Peter and Paul on the other side of the Neva.

⁵The statue of Peter I mounted on a rearing horse, erected in his honour by Catherine II.

The horse rears up, and it would seem
 He yearns to leap across the stream;
 The horseman stretches out his hand
 As if to seize on every land.
 Who is it? And to make this known,
 I read the engraving on the stone:
 "The SECOND reared this to the FIRST"⁶—
 A sight to all who view accurst.
 Ah, now the mystery is clear,
 The FIRST one racked my country dear;⁷
 The SECOND gave the final blow⁸
 That brought my land to utter woe.
 Ah, hangmen both, voracious beasts!
 Upon our folk have been your feasts,
 To the last shred. What token fond
 Went with you to the world beyond?
 Such heaviness oppressed my head
 As if in those two words I read
 All history in our Ukraine.
 I stood there in a daze of pain;
 Then suddenly I seemed to hear
 A mournful plaint⁹ that caught my ear:
 "From Hlukhiv,¹⁰ many a regiment
 With shovels and with spades was sent;
 And with the Cossacks did I go
 To seek that Capital of Woe
 As acting hetman of the troops.
 Merciful Lord, my spirit droops!
 O greedy and voracious Tsar!
 O wicked ruler that you are,

⁶The actual inscription, "To the First the Second"; meaning, to the first Peter this monument was erected by the second Catherine.

⁷Particularly after the battle of Poltava (1708) did Peter I make his oppression keenly felt in Ukraine. In 1709 occurred the first destruction of the Zaporozhian Sitch.

⁸Catherine completely destroyed the revived Cossack Sitch in 1775, divided the Cossack lands among her favourites, and settled them with German immigrants. During her reign, serfdom was established as an official institution.

⁹The plaint of the spirit of Pavlo Polubotok who was acting hetman of Ukraine between 1722 and 1724. For seeking to relieve the hardships of the Cossacks and peasants, he was summoned to St. Petersburg and there put in the Fortress of Saints Peter and Paul, where he died before his trial. It was said that Peter wanted to come to an understanding with him, and even visited him in prison, but Polubotok refused to agree to any compromise.

¹⁰The Russian-appointed capital of Ukraine, which was more convenient than any other Ukrainian city or town for the tsar to keep a closer watch on the political and military movements of the Cossacks.

O serpent that all earth should shun,
 What have you to my Cossacks done?
 For you have glutted all these swamps
 With noble bones!¹¹ To feed your pomps,
 You reared your shining capital
 On tortured corpses of them all,
 And in a gloomy dungeon cell,
 Me, their free hetman, by a hell
 Of utter hunger you have slain,
 A martyr to our sad Ukraine!
 Not even God, O Tsar, I vow,
 Can part my spirit from you now.
 Bound by my chains, we cannot sever
 In endless penalties forever.
 How difficult it is for me
 Above the Neva here to be!
 Perhaps my country is no more,
 And I would fain her place explore
 And all the truth about her know,
 But God forbids me hence to go.
 Moscow, perhaps, without a quiver,
 Has burned our towns and drained our river
 Into the blue sea's ancient bounds,
 Then dug away the lofty mounds,
 Our glorious past. O God adored,
 Take pity on her, loving Lord!"
 The voice grew mute. Again I gazed:
 And saw a great, white cloudbank raised
 Across the sky; and from that cloud
 A wild beast's howling issued loud.
 No cloud it was, but birds¹² a-swarm
 Descending like a feathered storm;
 About that black, bronze tsar they went
 And raised a frenzy of lament:
 "We, too, your soul can ne'er forsake,
 Rapacious beast, accursed snake!
 For when the Judgement Day shall rise,
 We'll cover your ferocious eyes
 From seeing God, because with pain
 You drove us forth from our Ukraine.

¹¹It is estimated that about 25,000 Cossacks died from the cruelty of the terrain, weather, and Russian overseers during the building of the capital and the digging of canals in the Ladoga and Volga regions.

¹²The spirits of those who died in forced labour for Peter.

Naked and famished, we were banned
 To snowfields in a foreign land.
 You slaughtered us, stripped off our skins,
 From which you tailored, in your sins,
 A mantle scarlet with our blood.
 Your city shining in the mud
 Is your new garment. In its fold
 Churches and palaces behold!
 Rejoice to see it! Slake your rages,
 Curst by all men and for all ages!

. . .

THE CAUCASUS¹TO YAKIV DE BALMEN²

Oh that my head were waters,
 and mine eyes a fountain of tears,
 that I might weep day and night
 for those who were slain.

Jeremiah ix, 1

Mountains on endless mountains rise, clouds veil their peaks,
 A mighty highland cloaked in woe, with blood it reeks;
 And there Prometheus,³ for no hint of crime,
 An eagle tortures since the dawn of time;
 Day after day, its black beak tears his breast;
 Day after day, his torn heart knows no rest;
 Torn it may be, but never shall its blood
 Be wholly drained away in fatal flood.
 For, ever and anon, it stirs again
 And feels new gladness in its mortal pain.
 So likewise shall our spirit never die
 Nor our dear freedom wholly vanquished lie.
 Sooner may foemen hope to plough with glee
 A meadow at the bottom of the sea

¹This poem is the poet's indictment of tsarist imperialism, and a mighty protest against the bloody subjugation of the Caucasian peoples in the war that ended in 1859 after lasting some fifty years.

²Yakiv de Balmen (or Balmain), a Ukrainianized Frenchman, Shevchenko's friend, who died in a battle against the Circassians in this war of conquest.

³A mythical titan-god who was chained by Zeus to a Caucasian boulder for bringing to men the civilizing gift of fire (enlightenment and freedom).

As chain the living soul with force uncouth
 Or choke to death the vital word of Truth.
 The glory of our God may not be rent,
 The glory of the Lord Omnipotent.

“Tis not for us to rise and strive with Thee,
 Nor judge Thy doings through eternity:
 It is our lot to weep, and weep, and weep,
 To knead our daily bread, our vigil keep
 With agonizing tears and bloody sweat.
 Our torturers abuse us harshly yet
 While Justice slumbers in a drunken trance!

When will it rouse, perchance?
 When wilt Thou, weary God,
 Rest and lay down Thy rod
 And grant our spirits peace?
 Our faith can never cease
 In Thy strong, living word:
 Justice and Liberty
 Will rise, and unto Thee
 All tribes on earth shall bend
 For ages without end.
 But in the meantime rivers flow,
 Rivers of blood no ceasing know! . . .

Mountains on endless mountains rise, clouds veil their peaks,
 A mighty highland cloaked in woe, with blood it reeks;
 And we, Our Gracious Highness,⁴ there have found
 This wretched thing called freedom running round,
 And in its nakedness and famished state
 Have set our dogs upon it . . .

Many a fate

Has left a soldier’s bones upon those hills.
 And what of tears and blood? Their brimming rills
 Would drown all emperors and all their sons
 And all grandchildren, such a torrent runs
 From eyes of widows, and of maidens bright
 Shed silently across the dead of night.
 And what of burning tears by mothers shed,
 And streams by tears of hoary fathers fed?
 Not rivers but a sea of them would flow

⁴Nicholas I.

To form a fiery deep! . . .

Let glory go

To hounds and harriers⁵ and those who train them,
And our beloved tsars, may glory stain them!

Glory likewise to you, ye mountains blue,
Couched in your snow and ice beyond our view;
And you, ye mighty warriors of the sword,
Still unforgotten by the eternal Lord!

Struggle, and ye shall overcome the foe:
For God shall succour you in battle's thro'e;
His strength is on your side, and freedom stands
With justice on the threshold of your lands!

A hovel and oatmeal—all this is yours⁶—
Not asked for and not given, this endures—
No one will seek to take away this lot
Or fetter you for owning such a cot.

Then have no fear amid your bitter pain . . .
We have not read the Word of God in vain,
From the deep dungeon to the lofty throne,
All of us shine with gold and have not known
That we are naked in our slavery.

Turn to us then for guidance. Such as we,
Who have the banners of the earth unfurled,
Can teach the ways and manners of the world . . .
We are not heathens (comes that Russian voice)—
We are the genuine Christians: we rejoice

In temples and in icons without number—
Yes, God Himself among us loves to slumber!

Only your highland sheiling plagues our view:
Why does it stand, not doled by us to you?
And all your oatmeal we would wish to own
And cast it to you, as to dogs a bone.

And why, we wonder, are you not compelled
To pay us for all sunshine you've beheld!

⁵Those who harry the freedom-loving people as if with dogs.

⁶What follows is bitterly and ironically expressed. Shevchenko speaks sarcastically of the tsar's hypocritical purpose in subjugating the Caucasus under the pretense of offering to its peoples the light of Christianity. The sarcasm is the more mordant in that, as Shevchenko emphasizes, the Russians themselves possessed no freedom under the tsars; they were "naked" in their slavery, and so could not confer freedom on anyone. Christianity was but a cloak to veil their cynicism and guile.

And that is all! So little would we ask!
 And in return we'd crave the holy task
 Of granting you the joy our friendship brings,
 And we would teach you much, of many things:
 Thus, we have boundless space! As you may guess,
 Siberia itself is limitless!

We teem with tribes and prisons, past all counting,
 Moldavia and the Finnish lakes surmounting—
 And each, in his own language, holds his tongue,⁷
 Since our benevolence his speech has wrung.

With us, some holy monk his Bible reads
 And teaches how some tsar, of evil deeds,
 A former swineherd, fond of ways inhuman,
 Took for his own foul use a married woman,
 And killed his friend, her husband—for that sin,
 He dwells in heaven!⁸ Now you can begin
 To see what sort of folk by us are sent
 To live aloft! This you perhaps resent,
 No fine, enlightened point of dogma clasping!
 Come, learn from us, for we believe in grasping.—

Extorting is our sport beneath all skies
 And it is thus we gain our paradise,
 Even if all your kin should have to go!
 Here, among us, there's nothing we don't know:
 We'll count the stars, sow buckwheat in a trench,
 Play greasy politics to trick the French,⁹
 Sell human souls or stake them at our euchre—
 Not negroes, but true men, we treat as lucre,
 The Christian souls that common serfdom gave us.
 We are not Spaniards, no! And may God save us
 From buying men from some grim pirate's paw,
 Like infidels: we live within the law

Do you, by the apostles' law,
 Love your neighbour, in God's awe?
 Hypocrites, impostors vile,
 Curs'd by God for all your guile!
 'Tis your neighbour's hide you love,
 Not his soul, which soars above;

⁷A significant and forceful line: all subjected peoples in Russia are compelled to hold silence, each in its own tongue.

⁸King David of the Hebrews.

⁹A boast of how the Russians are prolific and expert in the sciences of astronomy and agriculture, and particularly in politics where they can outwit even the French.

Hence, you may flay this human goat
To give your daughter a fur coat,
A wedding present for your bastard,
And shoes your wife may wear beplastered,
While you yourself may buy some vice
Too foul to tell in words precise!
For whom hast Thou been crucified,
Christ, Son of God, who long since died?
For all bad Christians, or perchance
To make the word of Truth advance,
Or that we might make mock of Thee
As we have done, men must agree?
We offer, as a holy joke,
Our candles and our incense-smoke
And to Thy icons make oblations
With lots of tireless prostrations,
Praying for help in theft and war
And shedding brothers' blood, yea more,
We bring Thee from some foray's smothers
An altar-cloth we stole from others . . .

Thus do the years our spirits brighten
And we would other men enlighten
And show the sun of Truth most pure
To lesser peoples, to be sure.
All this to you we shall reveal
If you to us as slaves will kneel:
We'll teach you how to fashion gaols,
To forge your fetters and your flails,
How to wear chains your limbs about
And how to twist the knotted knout—
We'll teach you everything, I say,
But let us take your hills away—
Your last domain. Already we
Have stolen all your plains and sea!

• • •

You also had been driven there, my dearest friend,
Beloved Yakiv! For Ukraine was not your end;
But for her executioner your fortunes shed
Your sound, unsullied blood; it was your fate most dread
To taste the Russian poison from the Russian cup.
Your memory, my true friend, shall ne'er be given up!

Still let your soul stay hovering above Ukraine
 With Cossacks' souls that soar above its shore and plain,¹⁰
 Watch over, weep above each excavated mound—
 When I at last soar free, you'll meet me, I'll be bound!

And in the meantime, I shall sow
 The verses of my burning woe:
 Here let them spring up, unchagrined,
 And hold their converse with the wind . . .
 And gentle breezes from Ukraine,
 Dewy, will carry their refrain
 To you, my friend of other years;
 You'll welcome them with friendly tears;
 Mounds, steppe and mountains then you'll see,
 And then you will remember me.

From THE EPISTLE¹

Day dawns, then comes the twilight grey.
 The limit of the live-long day;
 For weary people sleep seems best
 And all God's creatures go to rest.
 I, only, grieve like one accursed,
 Through all the hours, both last and first,
 Sad at the crossroads, day and night,
 With no one there to see my plight;
 No one can see me, no one knows me;
 All men are deaf, no ears disclose me;
 Men stand and trade their mutual chains
 And barter truth for filthy gains,
 Committing shame against the Lord
 By harnessing for Black reward
 People in yokes and sowing evil
 In fields commissioned by the Devil . . .

¹⁰Many Ukrainian Cossacks, particularly those of the province of Kuban, died in the battle with the Circassians.



¹These three excerpts are from the poem in which the poet severely castigates his fellow-Ukrainians, the landlords, for neglecting, through ignorance and indifference, their duty to better their people's lot. Here he exhorts them to free themselves from foreign servility and live in brotherly love, even with the humblest of their countrymen, for the good of the entire land. The poem was the result of Shevchenko's visit to Ukraine shortly after his emancipation from serfdom; he was painfully distressed to see the sorry spiritual and material state of his people.

And what will sprout? You soon will see
What kind of harvest there will be!
Come to your senses, ruthless ones,
O stupid children, folly's sons!
And bring that peaceful paradise,
Your own Ukraine, before your eyes;
Then let your heart, in love sincere,
Embrace her mighty ruin here!
Break then your chains, in love unite,
Nor seek in foreign lands the sight
Of things not even found above,
Still less in lands that strangers love . . .
Then in your dwellings you will see
True justice, strength and liberty!

. . .

Gain knowledge, brothers! Think and read,
And to your neighbours' gifts pay heed,—
Yet do not thus neglect your own:
For he who is forgetful shown
Of his own mother, graceless elf,
Is punished by our God Himself.
Strangers will turn from such as he
And grudge him hospitality—
Nay, his own children grow estranged;
Though one so evil may have ranged
The whole wide earth, he shall not find
A home to give him peace of mind.

. . .

Then, O my brothers, as a start,
Come, clasp your brothers to your heart,—
So let your mother smile with joy
And dry her tears without annoy!
Blest be your children in these lands
By touch of your toil-hardened hands,
And, duly washed, kissed let them be
With lips that speak of liberty!
Then all the shame of days of old,
Forgotten, shall no more be told;
Then shall our day of hope arrive,
Ukrainian glory shall revive,

No twilight but the dawn shall render
 And break forth into novel splendour. . . .
 Brothers, embrace! Your hopes possess,
 I beg you in all earnestness!

THE NEOPHYTES¹DEDICATION (TO SHCHEPKIN²)

Thus said the Lord, keep ye
 judgement and do justice; for my
 salvation is near to come, and my
 righteousness to be revealed.

Isaiah lvi. 1

Belov'd of every Muse and Grace,
 I wait you, weeping, in my place;
 And echoes of my mournful fit
 Into your soul I would transmit.
 With all the kindness of your nature
 Welcome my offspring, lonely creature,
 O you, our mighty thaumaturge
 And dearest friend, I humbly urge!
 For if you welcome thus my thought,
 Poor, timid thing, with you it ought
 To cross the Lethe of the years
 And some day fall like burning tears
 Upon the earth, nay, shall become
 A parable to devildom—
 To every hangman blood's aspirant,
 And every future savage tyrant.

¹Perhaps Shevchenko's greatest work, a masterpiece revealing the universality of his genius as a spokesman of freedom, charity, brotherhood, and the Christian ideal of forgiveness. The poem was written in a matter of about a week, when the poet, on his journey from exile, was stopped and detained at Nizhni Novgorod and held there under police surveillance for six months (September 30, 1857, to March 1, 1858), awaiting further orders from St. Petersburg as to where he was to go. The poem appears to be a concentrated outburst (after a poetic dearth of almost seven years) of Shevchenko's pent-up feelings which the harsh exile and suppression damped down but could not extinguish. "Neophytes" means "the newly-converted (-baptized)" to Christianity. The action in the poem is supposed to take place in Nero's Rome, but it must be understood that here Shevchenko uses the expedient of a camouflage: Rome is Russia, Nero is Nicholas I, and the Neophytes are the Ukrainian people.

²Mikhaylo S. Shchepkin, a famous Ukrainian actor, Shevchenko's friend, who came from Moscow to visit him in Nizhni Novgorod. Shevchenko thought so highly of his skill that he called him a "thaumaturge" (miracle-worker).

PROLOGUE

For some time now, a prisoner³ I stay
 Like some dark thief in exile hid away;
 At highroad and at fields my glance I toss
 And at a raven perched upon a cross
 In a graveyard yonder,—nothing else enranked
 Shows from my prison window; God be thanked
 For what I see! 'Tis certain to my eye
 That fellow-Christians live and pray and die
 As once they did.

A lofty crucifix
 Stands in the graveyard and an artist's tricks
 Have painted it bright gold. (One may surmise
 No humble person underneath it lies! . . .)
 Depicted on it is the Son of God
 Who for our sins the road to Calvary trod.
 We should be grateful to the wealthy waifs
 Whose pride this splendour to our gaze vouchsafes.
 While I, amid the sorrow of my days,
 Just sit and from my prison window gaze
 Unceasing on that cross so tall and bright . . .
 I stare, and stare, and pray both morn and night,
 And as I pray, my pangs of bitter dread,
 Like some small child whose hunger has been fed,
 Some respite feels; this place where I must rest
 Seems to grow less confined; my throbbing breast
 Both sings and weeps; in strength it seems to bask
 In rising to Thy throne, O Lord, to ask
 Thee and Thy blessed saints, what has He done,
 That righteous Nazarene, that only Son
 Of God-appointed Mary? By what plan
 Has He been dealing with the sons of man?
 And why did they the Holy One torment,
 In fetters binding Him with foul assent?
 Why did they crown His blessed head with thorns
 And lead him out with thieves and human scorns
 Upon the summit of Golgotha's hill
 And hang him with them on that peak of ill?

³In Nizhni Novgorod, Shevchenko was not actually in prison, but under house arrest for some time. The graveyard cross which he used to see from his window evoked in him this bitter, ironic meditation.

Why? But no answer does our ears salute:
Even our High Creator still is mute;
Confessors, too, and saints forbear to speak,
Those dumb *castrati* from an age antique.
Can this be so because in our own times
(I ask myself) we punish kindred crimes
By gaoling men for sins as salutary
As those committed by the Son of Mary?
Of course, we may no longer crucify—
Like those fierce Pharisees in days gone by—
A living, righteous man; we pray, you know,
To God, and high upon His churches show
His blessed cross in effigies of gold;
We supplicate Him in due adoration
And offer Him our diligent prostration.
Ferocious pharaohs were those men of old,
Caesars, barbarians of hellish cast,
Fierce, godless pagans with presumptions vast,
In short, draconic beasts! Yet have we seen
That men like these the gentle Nazarene
Addressed as His own brothers—that is why
They nailed Him to a cross and had Him die
Like the worst criminal . . .

I cannot know

Why we, in truth, upon this world below,
Should read His holy edicts and should drink
His sacred blood and of it no more think
Than of a glass of mead in a tavern revel . . .
O hypocrites, ye children of the Devil,
Not for the Jews but for us reprobates
And for our wicked children there awaits
The judgement of that Blood! Ye sons of night,
Insensate dogs, deprived in truth of sight,
You cannot see at all! Flat on the ground
Your greasy, praying carcasses are found;
Behind a cross from devils you would hide,
And then beneath your breath a prayer of pride
Asks God to send the worst adversity
And every kind of plague in high degree
Upon your fellow-Christians, deemed your foes . . .
May God appoint your condign overthrows,

All you new pharaohs with your hearts of clay,
Rapacious Caesars of this later day!

I will transport myself to that far time
When Rome obscene, with Nero in his prime,
In filthy orgies neared its sorry end,
And a new day already did ascend
Out of bleak misery and its light let fall
On Coliseum and on Capitol.
And fiery-tongued apostles wandered forth
From land to land, to east, west, south and north;
Already they had spread the sacred word,
And sons of arrogance, when these they heard,
Found new humility as earth seemed loss
Before the glory of His holy cross.
Turn, O my soul, to seek that long ago
And the grim groaning of its bells of woe;
Then with a trumpet's utterance thunder out
From a dark dungeon's walls your theme devout!

O blessed amongst women past all others,
Most holy and most virtuous of Mothers,
We hail thee by thy holy Son on earth!
Let us not die in slavery and dearth,
Let us not waste our fleeting years in vain,
O joy of the afflicted! Pray, ordain
And send to me a sacred word of thine,
The new voice of the holy Truth divine;
Revive, illuminate the Word, that I
May sense its blessed wisdom from on high.
Then shall I show the world a mother's woe
That in a river of sad tears did go
A veritable sea of bitter tears,
Like thine of old, and how, across the years
Into her living soul she caught the light
That from thy Son, the Crucified, shines bright.
Mother of God on earth, blest maidenhead,
A human mother's tears thyself hast shed
To the last drop. Out of my depths I cry,
And crying, pray: Send help to such as I;
Into my meagre soul the power inspire
To speak with tongues of purifying fire,

So that the Word may blaze with holy arts
 To warm men's souls and melt their stubborn hearts,
 To spread across Ukraine a healing tide
 And in Ukrainian fields be sanctified;
 Yea, let that Word breathe praise to God again,
 The incense of all Truth! Amen, amen!

I

Not in our country, which God loves from far,
 Nor in the days of hetman and of tsar
 But in the idol-loving land of Rome
 The lawlessness I tell of made its home.
 Perhaps it was in Decius' bloody reign,
 Perhaps when Master Nero ruled profane—
 I cannot tell for certain; let us say
 That this my tale took place in Nero's day!¹⁴
 At that time Russia had not come to be
 When in the pleasant land of Italy
 A little girl grew up in peace demure
 And holy beauty like a lily pure.
 Her mother gazed upon her and in sooth
 Beheld in her the charm of her own youth;
 Then sought out suitors for her lovely daughter
 And found a bridegroom whose fine bearing caught her,
 And, having prayed to Hymen, was her guide
 To other pleasant chambers as a bride.
 Now presently that lovely maiden bore
 A man-child; and did gratefully adore
 Her own Penates and at heavy price
 Made on the Capitol her sacrifice,
 Nay, there prevailed upon the priests to bless
 Her child at pagan altars—for largesse.
 Then day and night before her household gods
 The sacred fire burns. In joy she nods
 To see her son a young Alcides grow.
 For his young love, the gay hetaerae glow,
 While to an idol where fair Venus yearns
 A golden censer daily smokes and burns.

¹⁴Shevchenko pretends he is not certain of the locale of the events he is about to relate; but by this very subterfuge he emphasizes that he has the Russian Empire, particularly Ukraine, in mind.

II

That was the time when over Bethlehem
A star was rising like a diadem,
The Word of holy Truth and Love arisen,
The universal star that to earth's prison
Brought peace and joy to all. But Pharisees
And all Judea's loathsome perfidies
Began to stir and hiss as loud in hate
As snakes that in a swamp vituperate.
The incarnate Son of God their malice leaves
Hung on Golgotha's hill between two thieves.
And then the murderers in deep slumber fell,
Drunken with blood and draughts of hate from hell.
They drank Thy blood! Thou from the grave didst rise,
Thy Word of Truth had mounted to the skies,
And through the captive world was swiftly borne
By Thy Apostles, to Thy Godhead sworn.

III

One day her brave young son, with wanton plans,
In company with some young courtesans
And a Silenus-oldster, drunk as they,
Walked tipsily along the Appian Way.
There in a grove they stripped to fornicate
And drank themselves into a merrier state
To worship mad Priapus. Suddenly
They saw Saint Peter drawing near their spree,
Marching to Rome to tell the gospel story.
He sought the grove to wet his throttle hoary
With a cooling drink. "Peace be to you!" he said,
That tired Apostle with the sad, grey head.
He blessed the wanton revellers, all and each,
And in a gentle, kind and gracious speech
He told them of the pure new Word he bore,
Of Love and Justice, Goodness in large store,
And, as the greatest grace in all the world,
The brotherhood of men. The oily-curled
Old drunk and naked Faun in awe bowed low,
Your son Alcides and the girls, I trow,

All, all fell humbly down upon the ground
Before the Saint, then led the man they'd found,
The great Apostle whom his words reveal,
Back to their thermae for an evening meal.

IV

Men in the thermae, too, their orgies hold.
The chambers blaze with purple and with gold,
Smoke rises from the amphorae: young wenches
Stand almost naked by the marble benches
Before the Cyprian goddess; with one voice
They sing a hymn of love. And all rejoice
Because the feast is ready and the guests
Lie on their couches, with the roar of jests!
Another guest the young hetaerae bring,
Grey-bearded he . . . and at the words that spring
In sweet communion from the Apostle's lips,
That like a precious ointment's fragrance drips,
The orgy ceased. The priestess of that fane
Of Cyprian Venus, queen of passion's reign,
Bowed down her joyful head before his feet,
And rose, and all uprose, and through the street,
Past all the pillared shrines and massy domes,
Followed Saint Peter to the catacombs.
Your son Alcides felt the same constraint
And walked a follower of the holy Saint,
That great new Teacher of the Christian way.
You meanwhile gladly from your dwelling stray
Along the highroad waiting for that swain,
Your own Alcides . . . But alas, in vain!
The darkness falls, at last the dawn draws near,
But still the missing son does not appear.
Nor will he ever come! And you alone
Your prayers to your Penates will intone;
Alone you will sit down at home to sup,
Nay, not to eat but to drink sorrows up,
And cursing both yourself and evil fate,
Grow old in imprecations. Desolate,
You'll die at last in utter loneliness,
Like a curst leper whom no hand may bless.

V

Head down, upon a cross, Saint Peter died;
 He, like his Lord before, hung crucified.
 The Neophytes to Syracuse⁵ were taken
 In chains to the grim dungeons, God-forsaken,
 Dark, subterranean. And there your son,
 Alcides, your own child, your dearest one,
 Is rotting now in slavery and chains.
 For you, O suffering one, no news remains
 In all your anguish, day by passing day,
 Of where he languishes and pines away!
 You seek him in Siberia, nay, pardon,
 I should say Scythia,⁶ that barren garden.
 And is your plight unique? Mother of God,
 Preserve us all from strokes of such a rod!
 There's not a home or family but knows
 Like loss, for every brother has these woes,
 Each sister's in like lamentable state;
 For captives pale in savage dungeons wait;
 In hapless misery they sit or stand,
 Or do forced labour in a distant land,
 Or serve in British or in Gallic legions.⁷ . . .
 O ruthless Nero! From those darkened regions
 God's sudden, righteous judgement will surprise you
 And on the open highway agonize you⁸ . . .
 From every clime there'll answer to the call
 The holy martyrs, children, one and all,
 Of sacred liberty. They'll sail, they'll fly,
 And round your dirty deathbed as you die
 They will appear in chains and . . . will forgive you:⁹
 For they are Christian brothers who outlive you,
 While you're a vicious cur, a ravening beast,
 A raving despot at the human feast!

⁵A Sicilian city where Roman convicts used to be sent to work in the silver mines. Here, understand. Siberia, northern sub-Arctic Russia.

⁶Here again note Shevchenko's overt pretense. Scythia, southern part of Ukraine, north of the Black Sea coast, known by that name in ancient times.

⁷To be understood here. Siberia and other places of exile and forced labour where criminals and political prisoners were sent by tsarist authorities.

⁸Nero died a sudden death by assassination; Nicholas I also died suddenly, though not violently.

⁹Shevchenko here expresses the Christian ideal of forgiveness even to one's worst enemies and persecutors.

VI

The slaves in Syracuse swarm ever thicker
 In vaults and dungeons, while, made dull with liquor,
 Medusa¹⁰ sleeps with beggars at an inn.
 At any moment now she may begin
 To revel once again in blood and sweat.
 The mother sought her son in patience yet,
 She sailed to Syracuse and, it befell,
 Found him in fetters in a dungeon-cell.
 Even to visit him she was forbidden;
 So she sat patiently where he was hidden
 Within a fortress vast, and there would wait
 To see if heaven's grace would delegate
 Her son in chains to sweep the boulevards.
 Meanwhile in Rome the populace regards
 The preparations for a mighty feast.
 For governors march in from West and East;
 Pretorians and priests and senators
 And lictors stand around Jove's mighty doors
 And sing their hymns in chorus as each offers
 The smoke of incense from his richest coffers.
 Surrounded by his council, Caesar comes;
 Before him, to the tune of flutes and drums,
 A statue cast in bronze is proudly borne,
 Great Caesar's image that bright flowers adorn.

VII

And now a most unusual celebration
 Was dreamed up by the nobles of the nation
 And by the sapient senate and its knights.
 For all had praised great Caesar to such heights
 In every way, that they grew sick and tired
 Of having such a bum so much admired,
 And so, to roll all plaudits into one,
 In council was a deed of frenzy done:
 A title for great Caesar they defend
 As Jupiter himself—and there an end!¹¹

¹⁰In Greek mythology, a fierce goddess with snakes for hair, and with eyes dealing death to those who but looked at her. Here she represents the cruelly persecuted and oppressed slaves whose plight is so horrible as to be "deadly" to those who view it.

¹¹Nero had himself been deified by the Roman Senate. Note the bitter sarcasm Shevchenko employs.

And so to all the governors they wrote
 Throughout the empire: As an oat's an oat,
 Caesar's a god, more than a god is he.
 And so they hired a sculptor for a fee,
 To cast this god in bronze: 'mid orders many,
 They added as a sort of *nota bene*
 That this bronze Caesar, in response to prayer,
 Would grant requests. And wretched folk repair,
 Like birds to warmer climes; in coveys flew
 On pilgrimage to Rome. This woman, too,
 Hapless set sail from Syracuse by sea
 To pray to Caesar, this new deity.
 Was she the only one? Good Lord! In bands,
 Thousands arrived like her from distant lands.
 But woe to you! Whom do you now entreat?
 You bring your tears, but to what creature's feet?
 You bring your hopes, but woe to you blind slaves!
 Is he, O humble ones, a god that saves?
 Can marble grant you mercy? Pray alone
 To God and Truth! Deaf are the ears of stone.
 Bow down to none but God, whom Heaven adores!
 All else are false, both priests and emperors!

VIII

Before the throne of Nero, that new Jove,
 The senators prayed yesterday, and throve;
 Likewise did all patricians—their reward
 From this god's grace was in profusion poured.
 Some with official rank or cash were warmed;
 And some had Palestine for taxing farmed;
 Another gained, for merit still more great,
 The god's own concubine to be his mate,
 Somewhat the worse for wear, if truth were said—
 The point was that she came from Caesar's bed.
 From one he kindly deigned to take a sister
 Into his harem—but of course none missed her.
 Such intercourse is what a god is for!
 And we in turn must serve the emperor
 Not only with our sisters but ourselves,
 For nothing stays exempt upon our shelves.

Then the pretorians invoke his grace
 And for his guard he issued a ukase:¹²
 They on the city's folk might take their fling,
 And we must still forgive them everything.
 And you plebeians all, a wretched crew,
 Offered the god your prayers, but such as you
 Have gained no favour nor redress for hurts—
 No one is conscious that you have deserts.

IX

On the third day, folk reach the palace garden
 To pray the god to grant the Christians pardon.
 You, too, poor woman, came with all the rest
 And the kind idol, at your meek request,
 Ordered the Christians to be brought to Rome
 In chains from Syracuse across the foam.
 In pleasure and in joy, again you pray;
 But that new Jupiter has naught to say.
 Just wait and see what feast he will provide
 In the Coliseum! As the time you bide,
 Go forth to meet your son, but check your joy
 Poor woman, at the coming of your boy:
 As yet you do not know the horrid art
 Your god of mercy carries in his heart.

X

And so, together with a host of mothers,
 Alcides' mother, joyful like the others,
 Went forth to welcome him and all the saints
 Upon the Tiber bank. No more complaints
 But joy you utter, verging upon song,
 In praises that to Caesar-god belong:
 "O what a Jupiter at last is ours!
 A Jupiter indeed! What wasted powers
 I spent on travel far beyond my ken
 To pray to Jove . . . How foolish I have been!"
 So silently she offered prayer devout
 To Caesar deified; then ventured out

¹²Ukase, a Russian word, meaning tsarist order or directive.

Upon the muddy bank and there gazed down
 Upon the Tiber. With a puzzled frown
 You see a mighty galley swiftly run
 And on the galley there you see your son
 Like all the neophytes in chains held fast
 And even double-chained against the mast.
 No longer a mere neophyte is he
 But an apostle in the first degree
 Of Christ's own Living Word. Behold him now!
 Can you not hear the triumph of his vow?
 Your martyr sings in fetters unabhorred:
 "A new psalm¹³ we shall utter to our Lord
 And a new glory chant in exultation
 With guileless heart in a blest congregation!
 With psaltery and timbrel we shall praise
 The goodness of our God, who checks the ways
 Of wicked men and gives the righteous aid.
 The blessed in their glory unafraid
 And on soft couches shall rejoice and nod
 Their praises to the holy name of God.
 For two-edged swords He in their hands will place
 To avenge the injustice of the pagan race
 And stun the gentile nations in their wars.
 Then they shall fetter all the greedy tsars
 With iron shackles, and the great ones' hands
 Shall be in manacles at their commands.
 Then shall the wicked feel our Lord's constraints
 Beneath the righteous judgement of the saints;
 And for eternity shall God make known
 The blessed glory of the good alone!"

xi

While on the bank you stood, in dark assent,
 You neither listened nor made loud lament
 But like the other mothers raised sonorous
 Your Halleluyahs to the Christian chorus.
 Upon the Neophytes the chains resound
 With notes like tinkling bells; and at that sound

¹³This psalm had been paraphrased by Shevchenko before, in his brief collection, *The Psalms of David*.

Your only son, the apostle, did rejoice,
 And crossed himself and lifted up his voice:
 "Pray, brothers, pray, for Caesar fierce and grim!
 In all your prayers to Heaven remember him;
 But do not bow your heads in adoration
 Before his pride! For we are God's creation
 And pray to Him alone! Let Caesar rage
 Through all the nations in this present age;
 To slay the prophets let his anger fall,
 Yea, let him scream and crucify us all!
 The twins¹⁴ already are conceived, we know,
 Who into manhood will hereafter grow:
 Not as avengers—be that thought sufficed—
 But as the holy champions of Christ!
 Then without fire or sword or flaming skies
 These warriors of the Saviour will arise,
 And countless pagans through a vast expanse
 Will flee before their brotherly advance!
 Pray, brothers, pray!"

And there before the cross
 The fettered Neophytes forgot all loss
 And prayed with joy. O blessed be your story,
 Young warriors of God in ages hoary!
 For ever and for ever be your glory!

XII

To Rome the galley came. A week passed by.
 The drunken Caesar, with a boozy eye,
 Had himself tonsured¹⁵ to a sort of Zeus
 And planned a revel for that colleague's use.
 All Rome rejoices. For the idol's skin,
 Incense and myrrh are brought by cartloads in.
 Into the Coliseum now they herd
 Great hordes of Christians to be massacred . . .
 As in a slaughter-house their life-blood flows,
 And Rome rejoices, and the torment grows.

¹⁴Actually, the Christians.

¹⁵The reference is to the ritual of tonsure during the consecration of a monk. In this instance it is, of course, an anachronism.

The gladiator and patrician both
 Are drunk with blood and smoke; and, nothing loath,
 Rome drinks away the ruins of her fame
 And eats a wake-feast in the Scipios' name.¹⁶
 Fierce, loathsome grandam, wrought of greedy fiber,
 Come, revel in thy harems by the Tiber!
 For from beyond the sea, a holy Star
 Rises in radiance in the skies afar.
 Not with a just and sacred thunderbolt
 Shalt thou be slain; but dull blades of revolt
 Shall butcher thee or, as for some foul dog,
 A club shall batter thee an epilogue!¹⁷

XIII

Now, for the second day, the arena roars.
 On golden Lydian sands deep purple pours,
 Kneaded in violence to a bloody mire.
 But still no Syracusan saints expire
 In that vast carnage for the Roman lords.
 On the third day, the guards, with naked swords,
 Brought them in throngs, as meek as any mouse
 And fettered, to that mighty slaughter-house.
 The arena roared out like a beast of prey
 As forth your son stepped, with a psalm, that day;
 And drunken Caesar, as in sudden rage,
 Bellowed in laughter at that reeking stage.
 Then from the underground a leopard sprang,
 Paced forth, and cast a glance at him who sang.
 His sacred blood from the cat's muzzle flows . . .
 Throughout the Coliseum there arose
 A thunderous roar, that died away again . . .
 Where were you, wretched woman, hidden then,
 Why did you not, ere grief thus grew complete,
 Cast yourself down at Caesar's holy feet?
 Because your Zeus was under heavy guard:
 Three rows of lictors every passage barred,

¹⁶The Scipios, two famous commanders whose exploits were performed in the days when Rome was a republic, and who contributed to its genuine glory, which now, under the drunken Caesars, is dead. The wake-feast refers to the inhuman spectacles in the Coliseum.

¹⁷The implication is that Rome's downfall will not be sudden, but slow and painful, after it has been devastated by the continual attacks upon it by the barbarian hordes from the north.

And beyond that your meek approach was blocked
By iron portals, closed and double-locked.
Thus you remained alone, alone outside.
What could you do when your Alcides died?—
“O fierce, intolerable destiny!
Without my son, what can my future be?
To whom shall I incline?” she wailing said.
Then on the dark stone wall she struck her head
And like a heavy corpse fell desolate
Before the very threshold of the gate.

XIV

At evening, from the spectacle returning
Came holy Caesar, all the people spurning
And in the thermae, with his lictors, hid.
Over the Coliseum twilight slid;
By all abandoned, it appeared to weep;
And croaking ravens there a watch did keep.
High, like a mountain from the plain, it rose,
A mass of black above the Town’s repose.
From beyond Tiber and the Alban Hills
A gentle wind its requiem instills.
Above the Coliseum’s dark design,
As from a smoky mist, new beams now shine,—
The full-faced moon sails forth in radiance bright
And earth now rests upon the lap of night.
We only, Adam, your poor, sinful sons,
Rest not until the grave our soul outruns;
Like dogs we bicker for some cause unknown
Or bite each other for a rotten bone,
And blame you for all ills and all disgrace,
O far, ignoble Forebear of our race!

XV

The mother lay unconscious for a while
Until night’s bracing airs her brains beguile
To face the world again. Then up she stood,
And as she passed the portal, from her hood
She whispered something in that place of shame.
Was it a curse at holy Caesar’s name?

Perhaps . . . Then softly to the gates she stole,
 And listened, smiled, and once again her soul
 Breathed in a whisper forth . . . Then still as dew
 She sat down by the gate and pensive grew.
 Soon the great portals opened. Forth there came
 Waggons and chariots from that pit of shame,
 Carting the holy bodies to the river
 That corpses of the saints they might deliver
 As food to fatten fish for Caesar's table.
 The mother then arose, though scarcely able,
 Glanced all around, while with her hands she pressed
 Her battered head, and softly she addressed
 Her steps to follow like a shadowy ghost
 The carts that rumbled to the Tiber coast.
 The grey-eyed Scythian drivers, slaves of slaves,
 Thought she was kin to demons from the graves
 Or some dark deity from Hades come
 To lead the Romans to a hellish home.
 Then into Tiber's pools they pitched the dead
 And with their carts drove back to barn, and bed.

You only stayed there gazing on the bank
 At the wide circles on the waters dank
 Above the body of your blessed son;
 You saw those ripples lessen, one by one,
 Till not a trace was left for you to see;
 And only then did you smile bitterly
 And in fierce lamentations loudly cried,
 And Him who for our sakes was crucified
 For the first time you sought in earnest prayer.
 And Mary's suffering Son redeemed you there;
 His gospel touched your soul to heal and bless;
 And to the public squares and palaces
 Bearing the Word of Truth, the streets you trod
 To praise the veritable, living God!¹⁸

¹⁸Here, as in his poem *Mary*, Shevchenko makes the Mother the bearer of the new tidings of Truth and Justice on earth as she continues the mission of her martyred son.

MY LEGACY¹

When I shall die, pray let my bones
 High on a mound remain
 Amid the steppeland's vast expanse
 In my belov'd Ukraine:
 That I may gaze on mighty fields,
 On Dnieper and his shore,
 And echoed by his craggy banks
 May hear the Great One roar!

When from Ukraine that stream shall bear
 Over the sea's blue sills
 Our foemen's blood, at last shall I
 Forsake the fields and hills
 And soar up to commune with God
 In His eternal hall.
 But till that Day of Liberty—
 I know no God at all!²

Bury me thus I pray, and rise!
 From fetters set you free!
 And with your foes' unholy blood
 Baptize your liberty!
 And when in freedom, 'mid your kin,
 From battle you ungird,
 Forget not to remember me
 With a kind, gentle word!

Panteleimon Kulish

(1819-1897)

In the nineteenth century, Panteleimon Kulish was considered second only to Shevchenko in literary importance. He was born into an old family long established in the region of Voronizh. Under the influence of his mother and Maksimovich's

¹This poem was written in 1845 in Pereyaslav, where Shevchenko, during his first visit to Ukraine after his emancipation, fell desperately ill. It came to be considered as his Last Testament, in which his final message to his people is expressed.

²Often by the word "God" Shevchenko means Truth, Justice, Brotherhood, Righteousness, and other virtues which go to make a nation physically and spiritually strong.

ethnographical works, he became familiar and imbued with the Ukrainian historical past and, as a thorough romanticist, revealed it idealistically in his verses.

Being one of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood, he was arrested in 1847 and sentenced to two and a half years of exile in the Russian town of Tula. The conviction, however, was more as a result of his writings, in which he attacked serfdom and gave vent to his enthusiasm for the Cossacks' martial deeds. In Tula he studied European languages and improved his knowledge of Western literatures.

On his return he resumed his literary activity at a feverish pace and further enhanced his popularity as a poet, novelist, dramatist, ethnographic historian, and translator. His greatest achievement in prose was the novel *Chorna Rada* (The Dark Council), written under the influence of Sir Walter Scott.

Later in his career Kulish deteriorated somewhat, his ideology lost much of its glitter, and he lapsed into a mere publicist and versifier. Being of an impulsive nature, he often went against the grain of the nationalist conceptions of his contemporaries (including Shevchenko) and even contradicted his own positive ideas expressed in his former writings relative to the Cossack movement. These discrepancies leave him Janus-like and difficult to evaluate precisely, but do not detract too greatly from his importance as a gigantic figure in the post-Shevchenko period of Ukrainian literature.

Kulish worked not only in Kiev, but in St. Petersburg, Prague, Warsaw, and Vienna. In the Austrian capital he collaborated with S. Puliuy in translating the Bible into the Ukrainian vernacular, for which he had some years previously invented a new phonetic orthography that came to be known as "Kulishivka." In his own printing press which he established in 1861, he printed the influential periodical *Osnova* in which his literary, historical, and scholarly works and those of his contemporaries were published. As a translator he is noted for his excellent renditions of a goodly number of Byron's poems and certain of Shakespeare's plays.

TO MY KOBZA¹

Hail, O my Kobza, impeccable joy!
 Why art thou silent? Thy music employ!
 Ring out the voice of the holiest truth,
 Bringing to mind our oppression and ruth!

 Haply that sound, to a heart not debased,
 Makes it leap up in a sympathy chaste,
 Chord after chord making eloquent haste.

¹Kobza, an instrument of Turkish origin ("kobiz"), used mostly by Ukrainian folk bards for musical accompaniments to their recitative songs. Its form is that of a broad lute with longer strings (usually six) wound around the pegs of a short hand-piece, and six shorter ones tightened by the pegs in the upper deck of the instrument. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the kobza was replaced by the bandura, its further development. The terms are now often confused.

He who with deeds is inept to respond,
Mayhap with tears shows a heart that is fond;
Still let thy string its strong utterance keep—
Leave not the souls of our brothers asleep.

Now let the recreants turn into stone,
Numb be thy foes as their lot they bemoan!
Gather thy people and rally thine own!

Ye who are filled with a longing sublime,
Meet in our homes and be still at this time,
Sit on bare benches and, bowing the head,
Grieve at the fate of our brothers so dread.

Out in the darkness, no dawnlight is showing;
Down from the north a cold tempest is blowing;
Wolves in the fallow fields noisy are growing.

Thou, O my Kobza, art sole consolation
Till our Ukraine rises up as a nation;
So, till her spring comes in living delight,
Ring our the tale of our terrible plight!

Cease not to rouse up the weary of heart,
One in our ardour, no longer apart,
Chord greeting chord in its eloquent art.

THE STEPPE

The dove-blue sky, spread like an arching sea,
Appears a lonely, deep abyss to me.
Beneath the sun, wild cossack-steppes extend,
A tide of light and colour without end.

The torrid wind unceasingly blows round
And bends the swaying grasses to the ground;
Transparent gilded mists expand and shrink,
And in them prairie vistas seem to sink.

Above the grassy sward the heat-waves move,
Transfuse the sky and softly float above;
The dazzling atmospheres now melt and rise,
Making me gasp for breath and close my eyes.

I look around: not hues, but flames, mount higher;
The brightly sparkling picture is afire;
Above it mount the heavens, all sublime
And filled with music like a silver chime.

It is the lark, whose solitary art
Soars in a height congenial to its heart,
And thrills the vast, crude earth with notes that sing
Of endless freedom and the prairie spring.

The steppe is still: to freedom's discontent
That timeless infant sleeps indifferent:
A drowsy destiny remains his fate
In his long, giant life without debate.

He muffles up himself in robes of green
And sniffs the fragrant flowers with silent mien;
Above him, on the wind, great butterflies,
As light as phantoms, flutter down the skies.

A PRAYER

Almighty, to Thy throne I pray,
In Thy great frame an atom small,
In vain I strive to know Thy way
But never plumb Thy deeps at all!

In ages, Science will not know
All Thou hast fashioned by Thy steven;
In vain our swift thoughts leaping go
To seek the limits of Thy heaven.

Exhausted then our brain falls back
On that dim speck we call the earth
And which in our brief hour we wrack
To build our empires, void of worth.

Throughout Thy boundless universe
Thy mind, All-Knowing, reigns divine . . .
On high and low things we rehearse,
The glories of Thy presence shine.

I pray Thee, let me not despair
 Nor cease Thy gift of thought to praise!
 Dim not the light of Science fair
 In Thy great splendour's dazzling rays.

Nor let my soul in this low vale
 Demean itself to ape the beast;
 Nay, let Thy blessed will prevail—
 I would be holy at Thy feast.

PRELUDE

I rose at dawn, while still the world was dark;
 Lights here and there wink in the huts apart;
 Each flickers as in skies a star's bright spark . . .
 I marvel and rejoice, and ask my heart:

“Tell me, prophetic heart, will dawn soon break?”
 “Yes, light will soon appear; our folk will wake,
 The sun to every window joy will take!”

I rouse at once to strike the living chord:
 “Awake and rise, all men, to your reward!”
 My soul a novel intuition knows,
 And native speech my heart's rim overflows.

* * * *

Of orchards green, of flowers sweet and fair,
 We often, to the Kobza, sang in spring,
 But now our voice is mute, as if we slept;
 We in our sorrow have no urge to sing.

And if at times you chance to hear our lay,
 Within that song a horror is concealed,
 Like owls who hoot within a ruined shrine,
 Strange notes of evil omen are revealed.

For mutual hate, the wrong to others done,
 All this our Kobza tells with searching tongue;
 The foeman's footstep, perils that approach,
 It feels and sings—with pain the heart is wrung.

There yet will come a time when Truth will speak
And smash our evil edifice of woes;
Till then, sound loudly, Kobza, in our land,
And nearer bring God's Doomsday on our foes!

THREE POETS

When on a summer morn the clouds endow
The rising sun with glory as they soar,
And an old lord, with spectacles on brow,
Distributes rations from his farmhouse store,
Though moon-rays linger on the orchard bough,—

Then all the tiny beasties clack and squeak,
Cackle and gabble as their food appears;
Near by comes clamour where the women speak;
And children's shouting dins into our ears,
And riles the youth who slumber still would seek.

Amid that hubbub, jabbering of birds,
Barking of dogs and children's shouted words,
The godlike poets pay no heed at all
But sing their sable songs with which to enthrall.

One garden bard, 'mid dewy flowers released,
Sings of clear waters in the flaming east,
Of mists that on the breeze come trailing down
And fragrant buckwheat fields beyond the town.

Another poet seeks a well-curb wet,
For he cool water in his pail would get;
He sings of wedding wreaths and nuptial kisses
And stirs men's hearts as if with heavenly blisses.

The third bard sends his thoughts beyond the sea,
He sings of wars and present perfidy . . .
His soul's a-boil, his chords give threat of dearth
And dart their levin at the gods of earth.

Yakiv Shchoholiv

(1824-1898)

Shchoholiv is considered to be the greatest representative of the Kharkiv school of poets in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Son of a petty landowner, he completed his university studies in that city and was a civil servant there for the rest of his life. His first verses appeared in 1843 and were fiercely dealt with by the Russian critic Belinsky, who treated the budding modern Ukrainian literature with relentless hostility and was especially harsh on Shevchenko's first *Kobzar* (1840). That bitter attack silenced Shchoholiv for a while, but later he resumed his creative work in a desultory manner. His first collection of verse, *Vorsklo*, appeared in 1883, and the second, *Slobozhanshchina*, in 1898, the year of his death.

Shchoholiv's early lyrics, with their idyllic depiction of nature in Ukraine, are romantic in temper. In the process of time he developed into a hard realist with a strong but restrained power of observation. In pithy poetic phrases, as with thick brush strokes upon a canvas, he presented unrelieved human misery, infusing his sombre descriptions with deep elegiac tones full of longing for a tranquil bucolic life free from oppression and physical harshness. Living apart from the general social activity of his day, this solitary poet, by coolly recording his observations of the hard life around him, nevertheless contributed to the amelioration of the material conditions of his people in the later decades of the nineteenth century.

CHORDS

A boisterous wind across the sea—
 Such is my fleeting life;
 For I am poor in fortune's gold
 But rich in grief and strife.

From bound to bound throughout my world
 I let my glances fall:
 In all the circuit of my days
 What is there to recall?

Lamenting down the vale has rushed
 The torrent of my years
 And washed the banks throughout its course
 With warm and bitter tears.

I've seen the mighty trample Truth
 With fierce and angry tread;
 I've seen the rich snatch from the poor
 Their last, hard crust of bread;

I've seen a poor dame by the hedge
 Pass slowly, stooped and bent;
 Her toil, and forehead's bloody sweat,
 Upon the clods were spent;

I've watched a mother, comfortless,
 Who in coarse linen dressed
 The body of her ailing child
 And clutched it to her breast;

I've seen a maiden full of grace
 Gnawed on by penury
 Until her young and charming form
 Was desolate to see.

All this I've watched; and at the sight
 My aching heart was torn,—
 My melancholy speech was fain
 To write its words of scorn.

But not for you, dear sir, who stand
 Well-fed and gay and fine
 Do I intend to print this frank
 And loud complaint of mine.

For you to understand my theme
 And feel your neighbour's lack,
 You'd need to be reborn and find
 No shirt upon your back.

Bear this in mind: my song concerns
 Earth's hapless ones alone,
 Sad mothers inconsolable,
 Girls who deserted groan.

My chords are full of energy;
 Not all men own their sway;
 Yet those I love warm rapture prove
 And welcome what I say.

AUTUMN

The great blue sky is hanging low,
 But not with summer's blue;
 The golden sun still shines on high
 But does not warm you through.

Shorn by the sickle and the scythe
 The endless field is bare;
 No drop of dew could find a stalk
 To form on anywhere.

The dark and wooded valley lies
 Silent, without a sound;
 The yellowed leaves from off the trees
 Are fluttering to the ground.

No solitary lingering flower
 Can anywhere be spied;
 Only the rowan's clustered fruit
 A darkened red is dyed.

Far off, as in the sky's high vault
 To warmer climes they stray,
 The cranes in vast cuneiform
 Pursue their clamorous way.

Now withers all that has been green
 In dim opprobrium;
 It perishes without a trace
 Because its time has come!

The flowers at least enjoy July
 Before they meet November,
 But many a man whom autumn slays
 No summer can remember.

I grieve not for the man whom years
 In ebbing tides engage,
 Who in due season knows at last
 Debility and age;

But for that life which, strong and young,
 And beautiful to view,
 Is broken like a blade of grass
 And dried up like the dew!

THE KINLESS

Saddle your own black horse, my lusty lad!
 No human soul will at your death be sad
 But Mother Freedom, and this gun that kissed her,
 The horse my brother, and the sword my sister.

But should my pocket jingle coins of gold,
 A horde of friends and comrades you'd behold.
 The Turks may slay me in the open plain—
 Only the sun to me a glance would deign.
 A cuckoo at the dawn will grieve for me
 And grey wolves come to howl an elegy
 Alas, my fate, how hard is human breath!
 Yet one is loath to fold one's hands in death.
 But mists may lift, the sun come peering hot,
 Bleak days may pass and fortune be my lot.

KHORTITSIA¹

THE COSSACK ENCAMPMENT

Dull roars the Dnieper to its cliffs
 And sobs against the stones:
 “Children,² where are you?” still it asks,
 “Where are you, hapless ones?”

Dull roars the Dnieper from its falls
 As towards the Isle it rushes:
 “Where, Bayda,³ is your fortress now?
 Where glow your standard’s blushes?

“Where is the Sitch⁴ that, like the sea,
 Here boiled in ardours fell,
 The freedom that across the plain
 Flowed seething, fierce as hell?”

The battlements have crumbled down,
 The moats lie overgrown,
 On ditch and counterscarp alike
 Thick grasses have been sown.

Within the boundaries of the Sitch
 The plains, stone-scattered, sleep;
 The earth that once knew glory’s pride
 Is trampled now by sheep.

¹An island in the Dnieper River, beyond its rapids, where the first Cossack (Zaporozhian) Sitch was established in the first half of the sixteenth century.

²The Cossacks.

³See p. 26, fn. 1.

⁴See p. 115, fn. 2.

Where Cossacks lived in opulence
 The German builds his house;⁵
 The sacred soil he rends and tears,
 And furrows it with ploughs.

Now Liberty's beset with chains
 And lies among the reeds;
 And only Glory roams the earth
 To stir man's blood to deeds.

While Dnieper rushes to the sea
 And still his question runs:
 "Where is that Sitch? That Bayda, where?
 Where are his flags and guns?"

NOVEMBER

The summer waned; day after day
 It flitted silent by;
 And August gave what it could give,
 September left the sky.

From regions chill a frosty wind
 The groves and forests cleaves
 And mercilessly tears away
 Their red and yellow leaves.

In such a season, heavy skies
 Hang like a leaden roof,
 And drops of dew, like teardrops cold,
 On branches cling aloof.

Your own dark autumn you have reached
 And still have not known rest;
 Have you preserved a single leaf
 To soothe a heart distressed?

Have some few drops of your warm tears
 Remained for you from spring
 That you, as autumn forests weep,
 May mourn your tarrying?

⁵The Cossack regions beyond the Dnieper's rapids had been settled by German immigrants during and after the reign of Catherine II.

AN ABANDONED MANOR¹

There stands the manor, in a valley low,
Which once when I was little, long ago,
I knew well. At that time the shadowy wood
Beyond the farmland still primeval stood.
The courtyard stretched, like carpet, to the hall,
And flowering borders smiled around it all.
No end to all the cornfields could be seen
And yellow harvests patched the broad demesne.
Farther afield, like clouds beyond a cloud,
White flocks of countless sheep moved in a crowd;
A cool pond teemed with fish along a creek;
A windmill on its margin seemed to speak;
The hum of unseen bees was everywhere;
Above the pasture-lands, birds thronged the air;
The barns beside the mansion formed a street;
In them, the sound of pouring grain was sweet . . .
While over all an azure sky was spread
From which the sun its smiling radiance shed.
One felt that only Eden's paradise
Had ever matched its wealth to human eyes.

But years flowed onward like a stream in spate
That carries everything to one dark fate;
And on its waves all creatures, foul or fair,
Keep floating ceaselessly, no one knows where.
Old landlords, who had built their herds to worth,
Had long since died and slept beneath the earth;
And younger landlords had their sails unfurled,
And left the farm, and scattered through the world.
Then a new power seized the manor's crown:
First, greedy axes hewed the forest down;
Then rosy flowers, neglected, died away,
And weeds and thistles choked the courtyard clay;
Then all the countless herds were driv'n apace
Down from the steppe and to the marketplace;
For lack of care, the pond was clogged with silt;
The mill grew rotten and was not rebuilt;

¹One of the best poems in Ukrainian literature. It reflects the melancholy mood of the times in which Shchoholiv lived.

Into the forest flew the bees at last;
 No bird upon the pasture perched or passed;
 And on the barns that once were filled with stores
 There are no roofs, no windows and no doors . . .
 While still the sky hangs low, serene and warm,
 And the high sun still smiles upon the farm.

Volodimir Aleksandriu
 (1825-1893)

Born into a priest's family in the region of Kharkiv, Aleksandriv at first studied in a theological seminary, but transferred to medicine (without completing it) at the University of Kharkiv. He wrote verses and plays, and collected Ukrainian folklore. Being a composer of note, he set many popular lyrics to music and supplied musical scores to several Ukrainian operettas.

MY GRAVE

Farewell, my darling and my only dear!
 'Twill not be long ere to my rest I pass;
 Only a year or two—my silent grave
 Will thickly grow with contemplative grass;

Out in the open field my grave will be;
 A plough will carve its trench above my head;
 Above me, will two lovely poplars grow;
 Later, perhaps, a meadow there will spread.

And when among the thick-leaved poplar boughs
 An evening wind will rustle in its play,
 In joyful spring, a woman young and fair
 Will hither with her lover quickly stray.

Embracing there, they sit in poplar shade;
 My heart, though dead, their ecstasy perceives;
 And by their joy in love and in the spring,
 They understand the rustling of the leaves.

Leonid Hlibiv

(1827-1893)

His father was a steward on the estate of a wealthy Ukrainian landlord in the region of Poltava. There Leonid Hlibiv was born and received his elementary education from his mother and the local parish priest. This he supplemented by extensive reading in his master's excellent library. Later he attended the Gymnasium of Poltava, obtained a licentiate, and embarked on a teaching career at the Gymnasium of Chernihiv, where he gave instruction in history and geography. That post he lost on account of his Ukrainian nationalistic tendencies expressed in the weekly *Chernihivsky Listok* (The Chernihiv Sheet) which he established in 1861 and edited till its suppression by Russian censorship two years later. He lived a life of penury until 1867, when he was appointed manager of the State Printing Press in Chernihiv, a position he retained for the rest of his life.

Hlibiv entered the literary arena at the age of fifteen and remained productive all his life. Primarily he is the greatest Ukrainian fabulist. Like other European writers cultivating this genre, he derived his subjects from ancient sources, but invested them with his native atmosphere and local colour. In addition to being wrought in excellent artistic form, his fables, in their didacticism, bear a moralistic, humanitarian message that applied to the social conditions of his times. Human nature, generally speaking, being immutable, much of that message retains a permanent value.

In another aspect of his poetic endeavour, Hlibiv is a fine lyricist, imbuing his verses with tender melancholy that stemmed from his unhappy life (illness, death of his young wife, persecution). Time and again, however, this depressive vein is relieved by genuine flashes of humour, such as are so abundantly evident in his fables. Hlibiv also wrote poetry for children, and is considered as the chief pioneer of juvenile literature in Slavic Europe.

THE WOLF AND THE CAT

Into a village ran a Wolf, hard pressed . . .
 Don't think, dear friends, he came there as a guest!
 No wolf could hope to gain a host's kind grace;
 He rushed, in fact, to find a hiding-place:
 Curs'd men and hounds pursued him with their hate;
 And though he longed to leap through any gate,
 He had no luck! For everywhere he turned,
 The harried Wolf no hiding-place discerned—
 It was enough to make one sit and weep!
 For all the gates around were closed and steep,
 And yet the Wolf was very loath to die
 (Because, you see, he still felt hale and spry!)

And, to dodge death, dared face man's habitat.
 Then suddenly he spies a dozing Cat,
 Who on a fence sat purring in the sun.
 Swiftly he hails the puss, his fate to shun:
 "Kitty, my friend, pray tell me quickly, dear,
 Who is the kindest of the masters here?
 I'd like to ask him, in this moment fell,
 To hide me safely. I'd repay him well! . . .
 Hark to that hue and cry! They're on my trail!
 Puss, my dear friend, what shelter could avail?"
 "Run and ask Stephen for a saving plan,"—
 The Cat made answer. "He's a kindly man."—
 "Not so, for I have stolen Stephen's sheep."—
 "Well then, seek Demian, if you would not weep."—
 "Demian I also fear, for, by my soul,
 He will recall the sucking pig I stole."—
 "Then hurry to the place where Trofim lives!"—
 "Alas, I doubt if Trofim yet forgives
 My fault in picking up a lamb last spring!"—
 "That's bad! . . . But would Klim grant you sheltering?"—
 "Ah, friend! I once deprived him of a calf!"
 "It seems that all are vexed on your behalf,"
 The Cat said to the Wolf. "It's mighty queer
 Why in the first place you have ventured here.
 Our lusty lads have not so lost their wits
 As to keep safe a Wolf whom none acquits.
 The fault, dear chap, is utterly your own:
 Now you must reap whatever you have sown!"

THE RUSTLING LEAVES

Down in a vale beneath a hill
 A tall, green maple stood in pride;
 Upon a bank, by waters still,
 It spread its leafy branches wide.
 Its gay leaves whispered to the breeze:
 "Come, our dear friend, breathe yet again!
 Mark for yourself our melodies!
 We are the Rustlers of the glen.

“And if we did not rustle so,
Who would transport this vale with joy?
Whom would you play with as you flow?
Whom would your happy breath employ?

“What would remain if we were gone?
What beauty? Naught but weeds and sedge.
It were a wilderness anon,
But now behold its privilege!

“The cuckoo’s songs our voice salute,
He pays his call with vocal glee;
A boyish shepherd plays his flute
Beneath our shady maple tree.

“The nightingale’s soft notes entrance,
And in the night when all is still
The dryads ply their merry dance
And lead in moonlight their quadrille.”—

“You would not rustle, but for us,”
The roots spoke low beneath the ground;
“If we did not sustain you thus,
You would not make that pleasant sound.”

“Why should you roots have aught to say?”
The leaves replied in rustling riot;
“Your boasts your muddy thoughts betray.
You would do better to lie quiet!”

“Hush, you delight in foolishness!”
The roots made answer to this chaff;
“You and the boasting you profess
Must make a man of reason laugh.

“Like ignorant babes you babble rot,
And sin in grudging us our due!
Though life in loam has been our lot,
Yet we have always cared for you.

“This lordly maple could not stand
(May words of praise be given place!),
Were we not rooted in the land
To hold aloft its strength and grace.

“Warm summer passes, as God wills,
And we shall fall asleep till spring;
But yellowed by the autumn’s chills,
You’ll die, for all your fluttering.

“Then other leaves will deck the trees
And other blossoms shall befall;
But cuckoo, nightingale and breeze
Will not remember you at all.”

Light human boasters, too, prevail,
Like the tall maple’s rustling friskers;
Let such men hearken to my tale
And twirl its moral on their whiskers.

THE ROOSTER AND THE PEARL

Along a hedgerow, near a peasant’s hut,
A rooster idly scratched a refuse-pile,
And pecked and chattered with a boastful strut,
Expecting little, in his wonted style.

There in the rubbish suddenly he found
A lovely, shining, iridescent pearl;
And took the precious jewel from the ground
And underneath the hedge his gem did hurl.

“I do not care for such a petty thing,”
Said he, “Such gewgaws are not good to eat!
For handfuls of such worthless glittering
I would not give a single grain of wheat.

“Let the dull turkey swallow them forsooth.”
Thus does a stupid simpleton indict
Life’s treasures when he cannot know the truth
And obstinately thinks that he is right.

SORROW

Yonder a lofty hillock stands,
A grove below it lies,
So leafy and so green a nook
It seems a paradise.

Along the grove a streamlet winds;
Like glass its waves have shone;
And down the verdant valley there
It rushes on and on.

In a calm spot beside the bank
A few small boats are moored,
While three green willows there bend low
As if to grief inured,

Sorrow that summer soon will pass,
That chilling winds will blow,
And foliage fall and on the waves
Be carried as they flow.

I, too, am grieving on the bank . . .
The rushing streamlet grieves
While my poor miserable heart
Pines with the sorrowing leaves.

O rushing rill! O precious brook!
The summer of my day
Once sparkled like your gleaming waves
But now must pass away . . .

But while to you, my charming stream,
The months will Spring restore,
My youth can never come again,
No never, never more!

Yonder the lofty hillock stands,
The green grove lisps in play,
The birds are singing forth their joy,
The rivulet is gay.

What sheer delight it is to live
In such a radiant world!
And why then is my aching heart
To deep dejection hurled?

It aches and sorrows at the thought
That months will Spring restore,
But youth can never come again,
No never, never more!

POET, DO NOT WEEP

Weep not, O poet! Although life is hard,—
 Weep not, your tears will only be in vain;
 Your plaintive verses people now discard
 And find their pleasure in another's pain.

A happier life is in the midst of laughter,
 For grief is too abundant everywhere,
 And even gold will bring its grieving after,—
 Why should your fellow man your sorrow share?

Poet, weep not! Let none your anguish borrow;
 Carry your griefs to your sepulchral cell.
 "He," they will say, "plagues no one with his sorrow,
 And by that deed has earned his laurels well!"

Stepan Rudansky
 (1833-1873)

Born in the Podilia region, near the town of Vinnitsia, Rudansky was the son of a priest. He studied for the priesthood himself, but turned to medical studies, which he completed in St. Petersburg. Rudansky struggled with poverty all his life, and his difficult medical practice in Yalta, Crimea, further undermined his precarious health. In spite of the stumbling-blocks the tsarist censorship placed in his way and the fact that his father forbade him to write in Ukrainian and virtually disowned him for abandoning theology, Rudansky continued to use the vernacular to express his tender poetic feelings. It is to be noted that quite a few Ukrainian authors of the time wrote their works in Russian as a matter of political and mercenary expediency.

Rudansky's relatively extensive literary output consists of lyrical and narrative (historical) verses, translations from foreign poets (particularly from Homer's *Iliad* and Vergil's *Aeneid*), and a body of humorous folklorist quatrain anecdotes, known as *Spivomovki* (Light Ditties). It is anomalous that despite his tragic life, ill health and repressions suffered from Russian censorship (he saw but a few of his poems actually in print), Rudansky often managed to be comically buoyant to the extent of becoming known as the one who "laughed hardest" in all Ukrainian literature. However, it is as a lyricist that he established himself among the foremost Ukrainian poets. His life and work are symbolic of the entire Ukrainian race which, in spite of centuries of hardship and oppression, never lost the joy of life and the gift of laughter.

* * * *

Blow forth, O wind, to my Ukraine,
Where for a maid my heart is fain;
A dark-eyed beauty claims my youth . . .
Blow forth, O wind, from out the south.

A valley there will greet your sight,
A cottage in it, sparkling white;
And in that cot my darling dwells
For whom my heart in rapture swells.

Blow, as the young sun shows his edge,
And reach at dawn her window-ledge.
Within, a white bed you'll surprise,
And in that bed my darling lies.

Blow then, O wind, with silent grace,
Over her white and rosy face;
Above her eyes your vigil keep;
See if my sweetheart is asleep.

And if no waking she has proved,
Whisper to her of one she loved
So deeply, when we came to sever,
She swore she would be mine forever.

Then if her heart begins to beat
And heavy sighs its faith repeat,
And those dark eyes are filled with tears,
Return, O wind, to bless my ears!

If I'm forgotten and her charms
Are clasped within another's arms,
Then lose yourself across the plain
And come not back from my Ukraine . . .

The south wind blows, and blows, and blows,
My pining heart no respite knows;
The south wind blows with cloudy wrack
But from Ukraine it comes not back.

KHMELNITSKY'S¹ SONG

Hey, brother Cossacks, come saddle our horses!
And quaff off some wine that our courage endorses!

Gird on our sabres, the reins let us feel,
And steady our feet in our stirrups of steel!

We are not fated to bend our brave necks
Under a yoke with which aliens vex.

We are not destined the vile smoke to smell
That reeks from our land through the kindling of hell!

Have we not strength like the strength of our sires?
Have we not sabres as keen in their ire?

Have we no longer swift steeds at our shout?
Who dares to say that our pipes have gone out?²

Lead forth our steeds in the grass and the heather,
There let them charge and neigh fiercely together!

So let our comrades, young cossacks of might,
Gallop afield and be first in the fight!

There let us clash with our well-tempered brands,
Grasped in the iron-strong grip of our hands!

Again let the bones of our enemies lie
Heaped on our steppes and be bare to the sky!

Ne'er let our pipes without fire be found!
Burn every fort of our foes to the ground!

Still let our foemen remember with pain
He must pay dear who molests our Ukraine!

¹Zenobius Bohdan Khmelnitsky, born probably in 1595, became the commander of the Cossack troops in 1648, and ruled as hetman till his death in 1657. He distinguished himself as a great military leader in the Cossack wars against Poland. His statesmanship revived the claim of Ukraine to an independent status, but the political vicissitudes of the times led him to sign with tsarist Russia the Treaty of Pereyaslav (1654) which, contrary to his expectations, put an end to Ukraine's hopes of achieving the freedom he desired.

²See p. 122, fn. 8.

OXEN! OXEN!

Oxen, my oxen! O why have you halted?
What! have the weeds choked our field¹ to the full?
Tell me if rust has corroded the ploughshare.
Or has the coulter grown useless and dull?
Onward, my oxen! The grainstalks are dry now,
Easily, too, will the weeds all give way,
Coulter and ploughshare are shining and ready . . .
Oxen, my oxen! O why do you stay?

Oxen, my oxen! Break down all the stubble,
Trample the festering weeds into dust;
Root that bad growth from the fields of our fathers!
It has no place in the land of the just!
Here on my left is the conquering coulter,
Here on my right the stout ploughshare is propped,
Ready to hack out the foul infestation—
Oxen, my oxen, pray why have you stopped?

Oxen, my oxen! The field we shall furrow,
Plant here the wheat of our jubilant spring;
Quickening rains will soon fall on our sowing,
Life in the earth to our seedgrain to bring.
Seeds will awaken, and sprout, and see daylight,
Then like the wreaths that our maidens exalt,
Fields will grow green with the magic of springtime—
Oxen, my oxen, pray why do you halt?

Oxen, my oxen, the grainstalks will ripen,
Flooding our fields with a harvest of gold;
See, once again in our holy land flowing
Honey and milk as was promised of old.
All that was bitter will pass into darkness,
Years will sail forward, with Glory as cockswain.
Why have you stopped then, my resolute comrades?
Now is the season! March on, mighty oxen!

¹The field here is symbolic of the national, economic, political fields of endeavour. Oxen denote the common labour of all the people for their common good.

TO THE OAK TREE

The reed may sway, the reed may bend,
In wayward winds so free;
The reed is sure of no concern
To you nor yet to me.

It may be that the reed is sick,
Its back may ache with pain,
But to tear off its tiny roots
The storm will tug in vain;

It grows upon the muddy bank
And utterly is weak;
It bends because it has no strength
And in the muck is meek;

Continually it bows and bends,
And so its life must pass;
And without glory, in the marsh,
It will decay like grass.

Like bulrush stalks or grass, the reed
Will in the marsh decay;
Only a faint mosquito's song
Will hymn its dying day.

Let the reed bend, while you, O Oak,
Increase in sinews great,
And ever high and higher grow
With massive trunk and straight;

Plunge your strong, penetrating roots
Deep down in solid earth,
Lift up your foliage to the sky,
Spread out your branches' girth!

Reach boldly down to hell itself
And gaze at devil's brew,
Reach up to touch the very clouds
And stare at heaven too;

Cast your stout glance around the world
At every tree and tribe,

And whatsoever good you find,
 Into yourself imbibe.

In soundness and in iron strength
 Still harden like a rock;
 And like an omnipresent god
 Stand guard 'mid every shock;

And birds to you from far and near
 Will sing in joyous phrase
 And many a poet will take time
 To sing you worthy praise . . .

And when at last a wicked storm
 Will some day lay you low,
 Or when a towering thunder-cloud
 Will slay you with one blow—

The world will hear about your death,
 The startled air will quake,
 The forests will lamenting roar
 And earth itself will shake;

And if the birds come flying past,
 They will remember you;
 And if a poet passes by,
 He will remember too.

ONE MUST HAVE FRIENDS EVERYWHERE

THE OLD WOMAN IN THE CHURCH

A grandam came to church and bought
 A fair supply of candles;
 To each old icon round the church
 A taper's light she handles.

There still remained a pair of them . . .
 Where should these lights be stuck?
 “Perhaps,” she says, “I'll find that saint,
 Mikita, with some luck!”

At last she found his icon out—
 The Saint was thrashing Satan!

One light before the Saint she set,
One for the Fiend did straighten. . . .

The people saw, and scolded her
With looks that could dishevel:
“Why, granny, can’t you see,” they said,
“You’ve placed it for the Devil?”

But granny turned and said: “My friends,
Don’t speak with hasty breath!
A person never can be sure
Where he will go at death—
“Whether to heaven or to hell
His ghostly path he’ll fare.
You see, good people, it is well
To have friends everywhere.”

THE VILLAGE REEVE

The village reeve had driven like mad
And met misfortune dank;
The thin ice cracked upon the pond
And to the depths he sank.

The beadles and policemen come,
A band that for him gropes;
They gather round the icy crack
With hooks and nets and ropes.

A humble Jew, with side-curls dark,
Then happened to appear.
“What is your task?” he paused to ask.
“Pray what has happened here?”

“The village reeve has drowned—may God
Have mercy on his soul!
Come quickly here and knot a noose
To lower in this hole!”

“Nay, why should we take silly risks?
The reeve was fond of pelf;
Just show the stiff a piece of gold—
He’ll climb out by himself!”

Sydir Vorobkevich
pseud. Danilo Mlaka (1836-1903)

Born in Chernivtsi, the capital of the then Austrian province of Bukovina, Vorobkevich completed his theological studies there and was ordained a priest. In 1875, when the first university was established in that city, he was appointed professor of theology there. Vorobkevich was one of the precursors of the Ukrainian literary revival in Bukovina, where he is considered second only to Fedkovich in poetic stature. His lyrics are light in subject and manner, most of them being of folk-song nature. He was likewise a composer of church hymns and popular songs, and set to music several of his own lyrics. Ivan Franko thought so highly of his talents that he had a collection of his verses published in Lviv in 1900 under the title of *On the Banks of the Pruth*.

THE CARPATHIANS

Know you those mountains, my friend, that we see
 In the joy of the morn
 Or when evening is born
 By sunbeams made golden and free?
 For the sun loves them well,
 Her affectionate spell
 Shows motherly grace, you'll agree.
 My answer your unspoken question fulfils:
 Our lovely, our lofty Carpathian hills!

Know you those mountains, my friend, there uprearing,
 Where into the sky
 Blue and shining on high
 The firs and the pine-trees are peering?
 Where down the white crags
 Past the forest's dark snags
 The falcon and eagle are sheering?
 My answer your unspoken question fulfils:
 Our lovely, our lofty Carpathian hills!

Know you those mountains, my friend, in the spring
 Where in a green grove
 A white torrent above
 The nightingales tunefully sing,
 And deep in a pool
 Ever sparkling and cool

The trout and his mates have their fling?
 My answer your unspoken question fulfils:
 Our lovely, our lofty Carpathian hills!

Know you those mountains, my friend, where in brume
 The black clouds grow lords
 Like the Tartars in hordes
 And frighten mankind with their gloom?
 Where thunder's dark zeal
 Like a funeral peal
 Resounds in the accents of doom?
 My answer your unspoken question fulfils:
 Our lovely, our lofty Carpathian hills!

Know you those mountains, my friend, where of old
 With axes arrayed
 In the red fir-tree's shade
 Went dancing our haydamaks¹ bold?
 And where safely guided
 They gladly divided
 Their booty in coins of bright gold?
 My answer your unspoken question fulfils:
 Our lovely, our lofty Carpathian hills!

Know you, my friend, where to flee when the frost
 Of evil would chill you
 And foes' swords would kill you
 And all hope is utterly lost?
 In the mountains is found
 Your freedom's own ground,
 Good fortune once more you'll accost!
 Flee, brother, high up to Carpathian hills!
 There only you'll find the defeat of all ills!

EVENING

The sun has hid behind the mountains high;
 Meadow and vale and wood are all asleep;
 A bell sounds faint; the moon is in the sky;
 A tiny nightingale her watch would keep.

¹See p. 108, fn. 1.

All gently sounds the streamlet's low carousing;
 The stars glow brightly in the vault of night;
 The firs are fast asleep, the birches drowsing;
 The shepherd on his flute seeks sad delight.

The earth is like God's temple, calm and still . . .
 Mankind is resting from the toil of day;
 The moon mounts guard above the western hill,
 With joy at all disquiet soothed away.

ON THE BANKS OF THE PRUTH

On the banks of the Pruth in a meadow's low bower
 There lives a young woman as fair as a flower:
 Her eyes like the stars of the midnight have shone—
 You look in them once, and, my lad, you are gone!

On the banks of the Pruth, it's no moon walks the grass;
 A young man has stolen to visit his lass;
 Their lips' conversation is pleasant to con,
 While the drowsy old Pruth still flows placidly on.

On the banks of the Pruth maids are plucking the myrtle,
 And green wreaths are woven to grace a bride's kirtle;
 The fiddles and bass in the hut loudly play,
 And the guests are all singing: "Let joy reign today!"

Pavlo Chubinsky

(1839-1884)

Chubinsky's painstaking efforts as a geographer and ethnographer resulted in a monumental compilation, in seven volumes, of the Works of the Ethnographic and Statistical Expedition (1872-77), published in St. Petersburg under the care of M. Kostomariv. Research into the folklore and archeology of Ukraine began, at that time, to be considered of prime importance by Ukrainian scholars who, following Chubinsky's lead, undertook to investigate the wealth of historical relics, remnants of Ukrainian antiquity, traditional manners and customs in all parts of Ukraine, particularly in her southwestern territory. Their discoveries evoked such a revival of Ukrainian scholarship and enthusiasm among the population that to Russian authori-

ties it all smacked of separatism. As a result the Commission which directed that research from Kiev was dissolved, and Chubinsky and several of his fellow-workers were exiled. It was in answer to that reaction on the part of the tsarist authorities that he wrote the following lyric which was in due course accepted as the national anthem of Ukraine.

SONG

Ukrajina has not perished
 Nor freedom nor glory;
 Brothers young, our better fortune
 Yet will tell her story!

All our enemies will vanish
 Like dew in the morning;
 Brothers, we shall soon be masters,
 Our own land adorning.

Soul and body we will offer
 For freedom, revealing
 We are sons of Cossack sires,
 Thus our future sealing.

(To match musical accompaniment.)

Ossip Yuriy Fedkovich
 (1834-1888)

Of gentry stock, Fedkovich was born in the town of Vizhnitsia, Bukovina. His elementary education he received from his mother, and his higher studies he completed in Chernivtsi, the provincial capital. When in 1848 his mother and brother took part in the revolt against the oppressive local authorities, the family dispersed, and Fedkovich found himself in Moldavia where, under the influence of his friend, the painter Rotkell, he became interested in Western literatures, particularly Spanish and German. His first verses were written in German.

As an officer in the Austrian army, Fedkovich in 1863 took part in the campaign against Italy, and remained in military service till his retirement in 1867. The harsh life of a recruit in those days is painfully revealed in many of the lyrics that form the core of his poetic output. They are also replete with the sentimentalism prevailing in Eastern Europe in that period, a "borrowing" from Western Europe's previous age. Even Ivan Turgenev admired them.

Fedkovich's first collection of Ukrainian verse, published in 1861, gained him recognition as the chief spokesman for Bukovina and placed him in the vanguard of literary and cultural enlightenment in Western Ukraine. He also wrote short stories dealing mostly with the life of the Carpathian highlanders and abounding in local colour, which is likewise one of the chief characteristics of his poetry. As a poet, he remained sound until, imbued with ideas of self-importance, he began to pose as the Shevchenko of Bukovina and Galicia, and to imitate him rather slavishly.

IMMACULATE VIRGIN!

Immaculate Virgin, O Mary, all hail!
 Into the blue sea the bright sun is sinking,
 Blood-red its light in the sunset is blinking,

Touching to crimson a landscape all pale—
 Somewhere a cuckoo is heard in the grove,
 Tinklings of bells in the village approve,

Winds rustle low in the leaves of the vale:
 Immaculate Virgin, O Mary, all hail!

Immaculate Virgin, O Mary, all hail!
 See, a young soldier lies yonder all muddy,
 Cold is his face and his garments are bloody.

Shot down today, though he did not assail . . .
 Dark is the hole that his comrades have dug him,
 There to his rest with rough fingers they tug him,

No more at vespers his prayer will avail:
 Immaculate Virgin, O Mary, all hail!

Immaculate Virgin, O Mary, all hail!
 There by a hedge a sad widow is sitting,
 Close to her breast her poor baby committing;

Bitter she weeps and her features grow pale;
 Then she grows still in her tearful lament;
 Never to rise, her faint forehead is bent;

Only the stars weep, the vesper-bells fail . . .
 Immaculate Virgin, O Mary, all hail!

Immaculate Virgin, O Mary, all hail!
 Worn out with weeping, an orphan strays yonder;
 Fatherless, motherless, starved she must wander;
 Anguished with hunger, she utters her wail.—

Faint at a door she knocks humbly for bread;
 Dogs, at man's bidding, attack her instead:
 Down she falls, shrieking; her blood tells the tale . . .
 Immaculate Virgin, O Mary, all hail!
 Immaculate Virgin, O Mary, all hail!
 Cut to the heart, I can bear this no longer,
 Yet I must mark how earth's evil grows stronger,
 See how the powers of darkness prevail!
 Thus till my body is laid in the mould
 Where it is narrow and murky and cold,
 Where the night weeps not, my cry will not fail:
 Immaculate Virgin, O Mary, all hail!

THE RECRUIT

Within the Emperor's¹ courtyard
 He stood as sentinel;
 Like water off a goose's back
 The streaming teardrops fell.
 His face was washed with bitter tears,
 But no one heard him weep;
 He leaned against his bayonet,
 And briefly fell asleep.

Within the Emperor's courtyard
 So sleeps the soldier new;
 He dreams that he is wandering
 Upon a mountain blue;
 And there he combs his burly head,
 And there he curls his hair . . .
 Why has my mother failed to write?
 Is she still living there?

A letter to my darling son
 My fingers would devise,
 But they have laid me in my grave
 And so I cannot rise.
 I cannot write, my falcon dear;
 Deep in the earth I stay;
 They've covered all my fingers up
 With damp and mouldy clay.

¹Austrian Emperor's.

There in the Emperor's courtyard
 He still in sleep would swim,
 But bell-notes from St. Stephen's tower²
 Have now awakened him.
 He wipes the tears from off his cheeks,
 He wipes his rifle red—
 Blood trickles down the paving-stones,
 The soldier tumbles dead.

THE DESERTER

He at the table sat him down
 And mused by candle-light;
 Gazing upon the letter's page
 His mother's hand did write.
 The writing was both fine and neat,
 The paper white as snow;
 And on the table's corner hard
 He bent his forehead low.
 My aged mother writes to me
 The same thing as of old:
 The winter there is bad this year
 And always she is cold;
 No one is left to cut her wood,
 No one at all, I vow,
 Because her son, her only one,
 Is in the army now.
 Then up he leapt as fierce as flame
 And like a bird he flew,
 And like the wind he sped along—
 Her words had pierced him through.
 And thus to his old mother's hearth
 He hastes across the storm
 To split some kindling-wood for her
 And make her cottage warm.

²In Vienna.

BROTHER AND SISTER

No cuckoo was it, mourning in the shadows,
No bird, that started wailing in the meadows—
It was a sister, who with tender hand
Wrote to her brother in a foreign land,
And tearfully her written page she scanned:

“My dearest brother, precious falcon flown,
You’ve left your little sister all alone,
And now I wander, calling you once more,
Like some sad cuckoo in a forest hoar:
Come back to greet me from that far-off shore!”—

“My dearest sister, O my darling flower!
How can I come to you through skies that lower,
Across dark thickets and through forests airy,
By rapid river and wide estuary,
Across the level leagues of boundless prairie?”—

“Through woods, a leaf; through rivers, like a swan;
Past the vast prairies like an ermine wan;
And greet my doorstep in a hour blest
Like a swift falcon swooping to its nest,
Or like a dove descending to my breast!”—

So, without ceasing, on and on I fly,
And seek my sister, swooping from the sky;
Down, down, I come, and call her, loud and clear,
But look in vain to see her face appear,—
Perhaps my sister is no longer here!

“Sister, O sister dear, sweet lily white!
Where have you vanished in the silent night?”—
“My brother, in the grove a grave is new;
There, in the tomb, a sister’s love is true;
There I continually think of you.”

THE Sentry

Who is subjected to so bleak a fate
As that young soldier of the heartless State

Who in thin tunic and in boots most neat
Walks on the paving-stones his sentry-beat,
Stamps on cold stones to keep his poor feet warm,
And shivers in a scanty uniform?

He walks on sentry duty, sorely racked
By cold so bitter that the stones are cracked;
The flagstones crack, the soldier whistles low
And holds his rifle tightly in the snow . . .
Then rubs his hands and breathes on them so hard
That his heart falters as he stands on guard.
O my cold, flinty heart, made hard in vain,
Why do you not, like flagstones, break in twain?

The moon surrounded by the stars appears;
The soldier's eyes are filled with sudden tears;
From his blue eyes they flow down without stint
While the snow crunches on the cobbled flint.

Time and again the soldier lifts his feet
From the cold stones and seeks the moon to greet:
“O moon, celestial sentry, waning late,
May God preserve you from my bitter fate!”

BIVOUAC

Stars throughout the heavenly city,
One by one in squadrons pretty,
Start to shine with radiance blest
Where the soldiers come to rest.

But when stars have slipped away,
Vanished in the light of day,
Who will tell us, ere the fight,
Where our heads will rest tonight?

God has willed where each will sleep;
Fields are wide, our clay to keep;
When at last I rest in mine,
Stars will still unchanging shine.

A REFLECTION

My head, alas, is sorely aching!
But why—I do not know.
I'd wrap a silken scarf around it
But none have I to show.

I cast my silken scarf away
Upon the sea, the sea:
Float to the hills, the hills, my scarf,
And take a tale from me.

My mother will draw water there,
Will snatch you up, and grieve,
And she will ask you eagerly:
“What country did you leave?”

Pray, tell her then, O silken One,
“I am your son's own gift!”
Then she again may ask in pain:
“What bloodstains do I lift?”

Tell her, my silken kerchief:
“It is the Emperor's glory
That stains our silken scarves with red,
The blood of our sad story.”

WHERE IS DESTINY?

At home, you have been grinding pease
While I set out, dear friend,
To find my destiny abroad
At some far country's end.
I scaled bright Tyrolean peaks,
I soared, but knew no ease;
While all the time my destiny
Slept here among the pease.

I NEVER LEARNED

The kobza¹ I have never learned to play;
 A foreign school I never did attend;
 I never learned from books to frame a lay;
 Nor sought abroad far marvels to attend . . .
 Of the Black Mountains² I am ignorant.
 To wield an axe my calloused hand was fit;
 To pluck the lute my skill was ever scant;
 Not to Parnassus, but some forest pit,
 Be off, they said, you son of bandit lust!
 Go, ply your trade, a rifle in your hand,
 Until at last, shot dead, you bite the dust,
 And your close comrade, kneeling in the sand,
 Shall take the bloody weapon from your clutch
 And lay it in the tomb for you to touch!
 For Freedom was your dam, a gun your sire,
 The green grove was your school, your shelter too,
 And the sole poetry that stirred your fire
 Was the dark forest's litany for you.

DOBUSH¹

Ah, have you heard of him, good folk,
 To whom beasts cower and whine,
 For whom the pretty maidens sigh
 And even housewives pine?
 It is our Highland captain,
 This Dobush we adore,
 As handsome sure as any prince,
 This lad of twenty-four.

Thousands of brave lads serve him—
 Proud beauty, bend your head!
 The foreigners have used much steel
 To forge his broad-axe dread;

¹See p. 154, fn. 1.

²A short mountain range of the Carpathians in Bukovina.



¹A Ukrainian brigand who robbed the rich in order to help the poor. He and his band ranged in the Ukrainian highlands of the Carpathians. Like the English Robin Hood, Dobush became a legendary hero.

Much gold-leaf have the Magyars beat
 To deck his powder-horn;
 His leather belt has twice the worth
 A Kingdom might have borne.

Night's on the Chornohora²;
 The silver moon is bright;
 The captain sad walks to and fro;
 His heart is far from light!
 No longer does he nurse his axe,
 His joy in guns is naught;
 He only walks the valley floor,
 His head bent low in thought.

"Ho, captain, our dear master,
 Grief is an evil thing!
 I am a famous highland bard,
 And will you have me sing?
 For many a mournful song I know
 With which your grief to share;
 Or would you have me wake your lads
 Who now lie slumbering there?"

Yonder in countless numbers
 Along the slope they lie . . .
 How brisk and boisterous they are,
 How keen their sparkling eye,
 For water they have never drunk
 But only blood and wine;
 They are not nourished on white bread—
 On fatted beef they dine.

The captain pulls his pistol out:
 Its voice the hills repeat:
 Crash! And a thousand bandit lads
 Have leapt upon their feet:
 "What will you bid us, captain?
 Shall we go slash or burn,
 Or from some monarch's shoulders carve
 His head to serve your turn?"

²See p. 188, fn. 2.

"The foeman's head can wait if ours
 Into no error err.
Nay, lovely Dzvinka bids me come
 This night to visit her.
And you shall come along with me."—
 "We'll follow you through fire!
On the Chornohora, you're our chief;
 We'll pledge your least desire."

Night's on the Chornohora,
 The moon and stars are bright,
And with unnumbered lusty lads
 Comes Dobush from the height.
An owl gives forth a fearful cry;
 It makes the stout heart swoon;
But peaceful on the mountain shines
 The bright and placid moon.

"Captain, turn back, my captain!
 The bird foretells a death."—
"Who dares say that," fierce Dobush cries,
 "Has drawn his latest breath!"
He seized his pistol. "Here I stand,
 My master and my friend.
Once more I tell you, turn you back!
 And now—pray make an end."

So Ivan spoke, his dearest friend.
 Perhaps of him you've heard?
Next to our captain, most of all
 His merits we averred!
The captain loves him dearly,
 More than his great, steel axe,
And when he heard his friend's brave word
 He paused from his attacks.

"Are you not shamed, my Dobush?
 Well are your eyes cast low!
Would you, for that lewd woman,
 Kill the best friend you know?
What, can you find, poor fellow,
 Love in that evil bitch?
Dzvinka loves only presents!
 Death's in the wicked witch!"

"If you should give me gold enough
To fill this valley wide;
Yes, if you gave me twice as much,
I would not turn aside.
And if you will not come with me,
Then you are free to go,
Together with all friends of mine;
But as for Dobush—no!"

"What, did you think I would desert
My comrade like a rat?
No one will live to see the day
When I'm accused of that.—
Forward, my fellow haydamaks!
Where Dobush leads, we go.
Give me your hand, dear brother,
We shall not quarrel so."

.

"Good evening, lovely Dzvinka!
Pray, open wide your door!
For many a lad is here with me
To share our banquet store.
We've brought you gold and silver,
And mead to make us gay;
We'll eat and drink with merry hearts.
Open the door, I say!"

"Is that you, famous Dobush?
(You'd drink with merry heart!
I have prepared a feast for you
At which the world will start!)
Forgive me, precious darling.
I cannot let you in;
My husband, Stefan, is at hand,
And he would flog my sin."

"Fear nothing from your husband!—
For Stefan shall not lay
His little finger on your back.
Open, without delay!"—

"I tell you, famous Dobush,
Today I'll keep you out!"
"Then I will step upon the porch
And force the portals stout."

"My door is made of hard yew-wood,
No thief can break it through!"—
"What do you say, you viper?!"
And thus his anger grew.

He seized the doorposts with both hands;
He tore the frame like straw;
The door fell in; then came a shot
That touched our ears with awe.

Oh, bullet treacherous and foul,
With loud and crashing sound!
The captain's bosom flows with blood;
He topples to the ground.
He falls, and gasps upon the sward;
His blood the grass bedews;
He calls his mates and as he dies
A pleading speech ensues:

"Dear comrades, lift me, when I'm dead,
Upon your broad-axe blades
And bear me to that loveliest land,
The mountains and their shades;
There seek a spot unknown to man,
Even by birds unfound,
And then, beyond all enemies,
Commit me to the ground.

"My gilded hand-axe cast away
In some deep river's pool,
And then let all my people know,
And all the young at school,
That he who trusts a woman's faith
Will in disaster smother,
Like Dobush, like your foolish chief . . .
Forgive me, Holy Mother!"

The sun on the Black Mountain dawns,
Its beams at eve depart,
And in some rocky cleft an owl
Hoots from a mournful heart.

But Dobush hears its voice no more;
 To him alike are mute
 The song that tells of Dobush' deeds
 And dirges on the flute.

Oleksander Konisky

(1836-1900)

A native of the region of Chernihiv, Konisky studied at the Gymnasium of Nizhin and, after taking part in the Crimean War, practised law. He belonged to the newly emerged group of so-called "populist" writers, whose aim, during the tsarist repression of the Ukrainian language and its literature, was to encourage the common people to study and by all means at their disposal to broaden their mental horizon in order to be able themselves to teach their children their native speech and impart to them at least a rudimentary knowledge of things Ukrainian. Hence came the patriotic verses by which he summoned his countrymen to greater efforts in the cause of Enlightenment. Being of a hortatory character, these writings suffer, in the main, in artistic value and lack genuine poetic inspiration. Konisky was much greater as a novelist, a short story writer, and a dramatist. In his prose works are to be found fully elaborated contemporary social themes and a thorough characterization of a new type in Ukrainian society—the intelligentsia (educated people issuing from the peasant stock).

For his public activity in seeking to increase the spiritual and material welfare of his people (especially for attempting to establish Sunday schools for the elementary education of children and adults), Konisky was exiled from Ukraine. On his return in 1867, he moved to Lviv, Galicia, where till 1872, under more tolerable conditions, he continued to strive for the social, political, and educational betterment of his country's lot. There he was one of those instrumental in founding the Shevchenko Scientific (Literary) Society which, until World War I, published the most influential learned journal in Ukraine. From Lviv, Konisky returned to Kiev, where he continued to be active in the populist movement till his death. He distinguished himself also for his translations from Western literatures, as well as for the first full biography of Taras Shevchenko.

* * * *

He is not destitute whose kin reject him,
 Who has no kine, no cottage to protect him;
 Nor he whose horny skin rough homespun scratches,
 Whose garments have been vamped with countless patches . . .

While he has sturdy hands, a brain discerning,
Love for his folk, for freedom and for learning,

He is not destitute, and naught shall shame him:
He is his country's child, its folk acclaim him.

* * * *

Prison and hangman fright me not;
I can their agony withstand!

A greater horror is begot
By slavery in our native land.

Chains shame me not if I must bear them
To win my brothers' liberty,
But gilded cloaks shame those who wear them
With gaolers for a hireling's fee.

Let torture and the rack afflict us—
The word of truth shall never die!
Still let the bloody oafs convict us—
Their time will come, in dust they'll lie.

For what is prison but our glory!
A common prison share we all!
All drink the cup of our sad story,
A draught of martyrdom and gall.

He who is fed by faith and hope
On him this evil cup will seize;
With it he will have strength to cope
And drink it to the very lees.

He whom the visioned future warms
Feels no dismay at present ill;
It will give hope a firmer form
And bravely forge his iron will.

* * * *

Take not the name of God in vain,
Nor treat the name of Christ as dross;
Nor, with your filthy mouth, profane
The holy and life-giving Cross!

For Christ taught men to love their neighbours,
 And for men's sake at length He died,
 While you despoil them by your labours
 Of all their Maker would provide.

Christ wore for man a crown of thorns,
 He shed for man His sacred blood,
 And by His holy death the bournes
 Of death are breached by freedom's flood.

But you have slavery bestowed;
 Your brothers you have sold for cash;
 Have led them down a thorny road;
 Their sweat and blood you treat as trash.

Like Judas, with a traitor's gloss
 You kiss the holy crucifix,
 Yet every day a heavy cross
 Upon our people's backs you fix.

Nay, Judas died in dark recoil,
 While you on filthy lucre thrive,
 Filched from your humbler brother's toil,
 Whom you compel in pain to strive.

Take not the name of God in vain,
 Nor treat the name of Christ as dross;
 Nor, with your filthy mouth, profane
 The holy and life-giving Cross!

Mikhaylo Staritsky

(1840-1904)

Born near Poltava, Staritsky attended the Gymnasium in that centre, after which he completed his education at the universities of Kharkiv and Kiev. His great achievement was the founding of the "modern" Ukrainian theatre, for whose repertory he wrote some thirty plays, most of which were adaptations of the works of others and deal chiefly with the rustic manners and customs of the peasantry. With but few exceptions, they are of scant artistic worth.

As a poet, Staritsky is of far greater significance. Much of his verse, like Konisky's, is of the "message" type, somewhat desiccated by its rhetorical tone and rationalizing ideology. Yet these verses are revelatory of the social, economic, and political conditions prevailing in his day, and in them he speaks as an enlightened representative

of the intelligentsia to others of this class. Not all his poetry, however, is characterized by populist traits. A goodly number of his lyrics sound genuinely inspired and are quite akin to those produced by the spirit of Romanticism in Western Europe.

Under that foreign influence, Staritsky rebelled against the prevailing sway in Ukrainian literature of the ballad and folksong metre, and sought to broaden the scope of prosody by adapting a great variety of Western measures. In that respect he was in strict opposition to those who seemingly never tired of imitating even Shevchenko's metric monotony. Perhaps his greatest contribution to Ukrainian literature was his coining of neologisms, thereby causing Ukrainian poetry to expand its diapason and respond to the stylistic, aesthetic, and linguistic exigencies of European standards. By translating Byron, Heine, Mickiewicz, Lermontov, and other romantics, Staritsky did much to broaden the scope of his people's cultural outlook. To the end of his life he remained an untiring worker for the social welfare of his countrymen, continually summoning them to self-sacrifice for their common spiritual and material good.

* * * *

Ukraine, my love to thee its homage yields,
To thy green meadows and thy boundless plain,
The roaring Dnieper with its tawny mane,
The golden billows of thy tasseled fields!

How have I loved thy groves of cherry trees,
Thy white-washed cottages like kerchiefs spread,
The solemn discourse by our grandsires led,
And children's laughter as they dance at ease.

How, on a warm spring night, I loved to hear
An owl's soft hooting, clamour that rejoices
From young men, and the lilt of maiden voices,
And chorused song beyond the meadows clear!

How, in the autumn, I have loved to see
The grain in stooks, and in the mornings grey
The sound of bustling toil from peasants gay,
And flail-strokes near the echoing granary.

How, in the winter, I have loved to borrow,
By candle-light, joy from the whirring loom
And from the spinning songs that filled the gloom
With pleasure and the sob of woman's sorrow.

How joylessly I love you, folk of mine,
Oppressed by poverty and black mischance
And shrouded in the night of ignorance,
Even from self-respect you now decline;
Your ancient strength has vanished from your bounds,
Yet how I love your melancholy mounds!
I love you past all knowing, folk of mine!

TEARS

Can you remember yet aright
How we two parted late that night?
Above the water, in the sky
The evening star had risen high;
Across the silent, wooded vale,
Some bird had flown, a shadow pale;
Far in the east, a cloud hung black,
While like a phantom you, alack,
With tresses on your brow in strands,
Stood there and wrung your dainty hands
In silent grief—while my prostration
Could offer you no consolation . . .
A moment passed, the time has come—
And, from some inner torment numb,
Fierce lightnings in your glances passed;
And then your weary arms you cast
Around my neck, love's harvest keeping,
And burst out into bitter weeping . . .
My precious star! And could you know
Those tears of yours had burned me so?
Though years have passed, and youth is lost,
And age has touched my brow with frost,
My head still droops, my lovely star,
To hear your sobs from days afar,
And even yet, in misery,
Your bitter tears are burning me!

Ivan Manzhura
(1851-1893)

Manzhura was born at Kharkiv, at whose Gymnasium he began but did not complete his studies. From the local Veterinary Institute, where he was employed, he was expelled for his nationalistic tendencies. In 1875 he took part in the war against Turkey, after which he led the life of a wanderer exposed to utter poverty, as is revealed in his lyrics. During his peregrinations he collected a vast store of ethnographic material, practically all of which as yet remains unpublished. Manzhura is a poet of the Ukrainian steppe, of rural manners and customs, and of the peasantry depressed by both man and nature into a hardly tolerable state of existence, such as was his own.

THE FIRST SNOW

The sun but yesterday was warm, serene;
The shepherd wandered idly with his flock;
The winter wheat was sprouting, brightly green;
The bushes rustled in their leafy frock.

Today the entire steppe is covered deep
As if with silvery velvet, soft and bright;
The plaintive winds above it coldly weep;
The sun is shining with an altered light.

The entire world is white, where'er you look;
My eyes are dimmed, as in a misty glow;
And only here and there, beside the brook,
The weeds and grass peer out beneath the snow.

Thus is my very heart completely veiled
As if a snowy cover lay upon it . . .
And yet, at times, new brightness it has hailed
As little hints of hope and love have won it.

Boris Hrinchenko
(1863-1910)

Born near Kharkiv, where he studied and taught school, Hrinchenko later served as a teacher in the Kherson region and finally, as a civil servant, he settled in Kiev to pursue, whenever he could, work for the social, economic, and cultural amelioration of his

people. His lyrical verse expressed his personal longing for the tranquil joys of life and amatory bliss, but in due course this self-centred attitude gave way to the urgency of "serious and more important action" on behalf of his countrymen. In this altruistic rôle, like Konisky and Staritsky, Hrinchenko had to employ more prosaic means of expression at the expense of those qualities that make for genuinely inspired poetry. But so demanding of just such an endeavour were the difficult times in which he lived that Hrinchenko made the sacrifice and wrote both verse and prose to meet the material needs of the period.

To work for that cause became for him a passion, and he continuously kept his sensitive touch on his people's pulse. As a guardian of their rights and privileges, Hrinchenko was one of the first to rise in the defence of the emerging industrial workers, his aim being to do away with unjust exploitation, to make the means of education the prerogative of all, and, regardless of their varied social status, to unite all Ukrainians into the class of "people-brothers." In fine, Hrinchenko strove to elevate the Ukrainian toiling masses from the low level of mere creatures to the dignity of human beings.

Amid his feverish populist activity Hrinchenko found time to collect and publish a vast amount of ethnographical material, and to compile what was for his day the greatest dictionary of the Ukrainian language (published in 1907). This further established the validity of the Ukrainian speech and its right to enjoy a separate identity among the Slavic languages. He was also a dramatist of note.

He died in the town of Ospedaletti while on a visit to Italy, but was buried in Kiev.

THE TILLER OF THE SOIL

Poor was I born; and when there comes the day
 That I from paths of life must pass away,
 Only my weary hands and anxious brain
 And my exhausted heart burned out with pain
 Men in an oaken coffin low will lay.

The field I've tilled was little, I'll allow,
 But I have never loafed behind the plough;
 All that I wrought, I toiled at to the end,
 And all the strength I had, I would expend
 In ceaseless labour with a sweating brow.

Stone outcrop in that field was far from rare
 And wicked weeds beset it everywhere;
 My plough was often stuck, yet though unfriended,
 I never left it lying unattended
 But sharpened still its coulter and its share.

Though weather might be bad, I did not shirk:
My hands could not take respite from their work!
Even when rain, through all my rags and tatters,
Upon my toil-bent back inclement spatters,
I took no rest nor let the hardship irk.

How prodigal the sweat that there I shed!
How utterly my strength was there bested!
I do not grudge it! For the well ploughed field
Has always given us abundant yield:
I did not toil in vain to garner bread.

Full many a time, such harvests I've amassed
But now for me these times, I fear, have passed.
With this last summer, the duration stops
In which I gaze on you, my golden crops,
My fertile meadows and my grainfields vast.

My children in their turn will reap the grain . . .
All to their certain end at last must wane.
The end has come for me: the graveyard's guest.
I, in a tomb, eternally shall rest,—
My children in their turn will reap the grain.

My children,—yea, my daughters and my sons—
Gathered together with their little ones,
Will sit down at a table none condemn
And break the bread that I have earned for them,
And I, though dead, shall hear their benisons.

And since I have been able, by my toil,
To rear them up upon their native soil,
My memory among them will not perish;
Though I am dead, my name they still will cherish,
Nor shall the years my heritage despoil.

Yes, I was poor at birth, but on that day
When I from paths of life must pass away,
I shall not be ashamed when hands and brain
And my exhausted heart burned out with pain
Men in an oaken coffin low will lay!

SHE SINGS

She sings—and every impulse of her heart
She pours into those notes that she prolongs,
And all the burning diction of her songs
Flames with the fire of passion and of art.

She sings—and youthful eyes with ardent zeal
Under her brows shine forth, than stars more bright . . .
How much of dauntless hope is in their light,
How many dreams of rapture they reveal!

Then let her sing, and let her songs beguile,
And let those eyes of hers both flash and smile,
And let the fire of love within them blaze!

Yea, let her sing! Since for no second time
The golden spring will blossom thus sublime
And from her soul burst forth in vocal praise!

IN THE FIELDS

The scythes have ceased flashing, the swaths have been shaven,
The sheaves have been laid out all neatly in rows;
And sorely oppressed, in the blistering sunlight,
All toil in the fields without pause or repose.

One hears not a song, not a word of discoursing,
All effort is saved for the task that is set;
From faces, like tears, on the swaths of the harvest
There trickle the streamlets of sweltering sweat.

The sun is declining and evening draws closer—
The hands that are weary may cease from their moil;
Come gently, O darkness, descend on this hardship,
And shroud the poor bosom exhausted with toil!

The night is approaching, and, shining like silver,
The moon floats on high in the clouds' airy sweep . . .
The work's at an end . . . And forgetting their anguish,
The parents and daughter have fallen asleep.

The stars, like God's eyes, in the deep night are shining,
From heaven on high is their pity inclined,
How silently, gently, they gaze down eternal
On bodies outworn and the plight of mankind . . .

TO THE CONTEMPORARY MUSE

O Muse of concord, love and peace,
Songs we no more desire.
Beyond the mountains yonder, see,
All is consumed by fire.
Blood covers all our native land
Where once your song made prattle . . .
Freedom in chains, in market squares,
Cries valiantly: "To battle!"
In times of tumult one must think
How to avenge our wrongs;
Merely to make our bosoms glad
Is now no task for songs.
But if to fame you would aspire,
Go forth and join the fight!
Forge muskets out of living words
And use them for the right.
Smite all injustice, Muse, with them,
Whoe'er the sinner—strike!
Yet sow soft peace in human hearts
And root out all dislike;
Establish love and amity,
Let freedom follow after;
Strike off all chains and let there be
An age of joyous laughter!
Then, only then, will praise be yours;
It will be understood
That song can be for liberty,
Love, and the common good!

Ivan Franko

(1856-1916)

In Ukrainian literature, Ivan Franko is secondary in importance only to Taras Shevchenko, and as a universal man of letters he is even greater. He was a poet, dramatist, novelist, short story writer, translator, editor, linguist, critic, scholar, journalist, philosopher, sociologist, ethnographer, politician; in fine, Franko was interested in all that made for a complete humanist.

He was born in the county of Drohobich in Galicia, completed his studies at the Gymnasium there, and then proceeded to the University of Lviv. Immediately on his arrival at that provincial capital, he plunged into a political (rather radical) activity which, in the course of his public career, earned him three prison sentences, the first chiefly for his correspondence with M. Drahomaniv (then living in self-imposed exile in Switzerland), whose Westernizing socialistic ideas went against the grain not only of the repressive tsarist régime but also of the more liberal policies prevailing in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Franko's attempt to get himself elected to the Austrian Parliament as a member of the Radical Party of Galicia (of which he was one of the founders) proved unsuccessful, as well as his later attempt to enter the Galician Soym (legislature). Owing to his extremist views, he likewise failed, after obtaining a doctorate from the University of Vienna, to secure an appointment to the chair of Ukrainian literature at the University of Lviv. With his fellow-countrymen he was continually at variance for political as well as religious reasons (he was an agnostic), and was therefore unable to obtain employment in any of their institutions. As a result, for several years he was forced to work as an editor of a Polish socialist newspaper. For the greater part of his life, Franko eked out but a miserable livelihood.

His literary profession began at the age of fifteen, and before he reached twenty he had already published a goodly amount of verse and a historical novel of the Romantic type. But his chief concern was populist literature dedicated to the material betterment of the entire Ukrainian element in Western Ukraine. Despite its being heavily laden with social, materialistic content, his early poetry is by no means devoid of truly inspired moods. His short stories and novels deal mostly with the hard lot of the peasants and workers (particularly in his native, oil-producing region of Drohobich). Several of his novels are *romans à thèse*, with keen psychological inquiries into the characters involved.

Franko's later lyrical and philosophic poetry raised him to an eminence attained by no other Ukrainian poet of his generation. Especially significant are the three fascicles (*zhmutki*) entitled *Ziviale Listia* (The Withered Leaves). Written in consequence of an unsuccessful love affair which promised to be illicit, this collection of verse contains lyrics ranging from the simply amatory to the fiercely erotic. In them is revealed the tortured soul of the poet who reaches a point in life where, in order to attain his end, he is eager to become a Faust and, when that fails, yearns for Nirvana and contemplates suicide.

This later period was crowned by two great poems, peaks in Ukrainian literature. In *Ivan Vishensky*, the poet revealed himself in the guise of that man of action turned ascetic who, even after he had renounced all worldly cares in order to live in utter seclusion on Athos, finally could not resist the temptation to resume the struggle for his people's cause, concluding that their freedom was more important to him than the salvation of his soul. In the other, *Moses*, Franko presented himself as a dedicated leader who, battling the prejudices and enmity of the mob he led, was destined to sink into despair and die, yet not without the glimmer of hope that the ungrateful people, "with the seal of his spirit upon them," would eventually reach the goal to which he personally was unable to bring them.

After some twenty-five years of public and literary activity, Franko saw the Ukrainian element in Galicia become reconciled to him and accept him as their Moses leading them to the promised land of freedom envisaged and prophesied by Shevchenko. Henceforth his material conditions improved somewhat and for the next fifteen years he was free enough from pecuniary worries to pursue his literary and scholarly tasks without too much distress to hamper his creative mind. His final years, however, were dimmed by ill health which partially incapacitated him, and his end was further hastened by World War I, whose ravages in Galicia his shattered frame could no longer endure.

THE HIRELING¹

A dirge upon his lips and ploughshafts in his hands—
 I thus behold him now:
 Hard labour, hunger, and sheer effort on these lands
 Have furrowed his broad brow.
 In soul he is a child, although his head is bent
 As he were weak and old,
 For from the cradle until now his life is spent
 In drudgery untold.
 Wherever his plough passes and the prairies yield
 New acres to recruit,
 There soon the swaying rye will cover all the field
 And earth will bear its fruit.
 Why then is he but covered with a homespun shirt?
 Why do his garments cling
 Upon him like a tattered beggar's, rags-begirt?—
 He is a hireling.
 A servant was he born, although proclaimed as free
 By masters and by lords,
 In suffering scorn, and pain, and hopeless misery
 He toils without rewards.

¹This poem and the two that follow appear to form a whole in presenting the social evolution of the Ukrainian people. In "The Hireling," the process is begun by the ploughman who, although he does not till his own field, is nevertheless buoyed up in spirit by the love of his native soil whose song refreshes him and affords him the hope that he is working for the good of future generations. In "The Highway-Builders," a like spirit of hope prevails: the hireling is now a constructor, one of the "slaves of liberty," who crushes the rock in order to level the ground and lay a highway for his descendants to take as they move towards a brighter future. Self-sacrifice is the key to that end. The spirit of progress is triumphant in the "Hymn" in which that hope has become a reality which no physical power can arrest in its course.

Merely to live at all, his freedom and his strength
 He barters for a crust,
Although that bread's too scant to empower him at length
 To stand erect, robust.
Dumbly he grieves, and with a doleful song he ploughs,
 Yet does not plough his own;
That song is like a brother, courage to arouse
 When hope has almost flown.
That song is like the dew that, in the sun, restores
 The almost withered flower;
That song is like the thunder that still far off roars,
 Yet rumbles towards its hour.
But till the time when storms will strike he bends his head
 And sadly spends his days,
And, as his mother, loves the soil that bears his tread,
 In love and silent praise.
As yet he is not irked that for another's good
 He sheds his bloody sweat;
He cares not that his works, their rights misunderstood,
 His master's wealth beget,
So long as from the earth his muscles tend and till
 New harvests take their place,
So long as from his toil to others' comfort still
 Descends this heavenly grace.

That hireling is our people, whose vast sweat is poured
 Upon an alien field.
In spirit ever young, his lofty thoughts have soared
 Though he to fate has kneeled.
For better times he waits throughout the centuries;
 As yet he waits in vain,
Through years of ruin, and the Tartars' miseries,
 And serfdom's yoke and pain.
But in his heart, as in the cold and frozen north,
 Hope's flowers the glacier mock,
And often you may see a living spring gush forth
 From under some great rock.
Only in fairy tales, as in a wondrous vision,
 He sees hope far away,
And so, in sullen strength to pull his load's derision,
 He drags it day by day.

In centuries of wrong, the only power that saved him
 Was love of native soil;
 Though countless children died through masters who enslaved him
 He still endured his toil.
 Strong in that love, he stands there like some ancient giant,
 A dauntless son of earth,
 Who, though brought low, in his own strength arose reliant
 To battle against dearth.
 So, as he sings, he does not care for whom he ploughs
 The fertile field and vast;
 Although he suffers hardship in a lowly house
 And joy goes all to caste.

Plough on, and sing, O Titan, in foul fetters led,
 Of poverty and ache!
 Darkness will pass away, your fetters you will shed,
 And every yoke will break!
 For not in vain have you, though held in foemen's grips,
 Sung forth your mighty soul;
 And not in vain do fairy tales' enchanted lips
 Your victory unroll.
 That day will come, and prejudice will bow to toil;
 And as your just reward,
 You'll plough again as master of your own free soil,
 Your own land's rightful lord!

THE HIGHWAY-BUILDERS

Strange was my dream. Before me lay a plain,
 A boundless waste beneath a leaden sky,
 While I stood there, fast in an iron chain,
 Before a granite mountain's vast domain
 With other countless thousands such as I.

On each man's brow his grief deep furrows makes,
 In each man's eyes the flame of love has glowed,
 And each man's hands the chains entwine like snakes,
 And each man's back to earth obeisance makes,
 For all are burdened with the same dread load.

There each man's hands a heavy hammer hold,
And from the peak a voice bursts forth like thunder:
"Shatter this rock! Let neither heat nor cold
Arrest you! Bear your torments manifold!
It is your task to crush this mountain under!"

Then, as one man, we raised our hands aloft;
Thousands of hammers crashed against the stone;
The battered fragments lashed at us as oft
We smote the mountain; at despair we scoffed;
And broke that stony brow's primeval bone.

Like a loud cataract, like battle's din,
Our sledges' blows incessantly resound:
And foot by foot a further space we win,
And splinters gashed at many a cheek and chin—
But nothing stayed us in our ceaseless round.

Each of us knew no fame would crown his head,
No grateful thought from men salute his toil;
That no one on this highway broad would tread
Till we had crushed the rock, the ballast spread,
And laid our bones to rest beneath the soil.

But we have never longed for people's praise;
We are no heroes, and no warriors we.
A voluntary serfdom crowns our days:
As builders of this highway that we raise,
We have become the slaves of liberty.

We all believed, with these hands of our own
We'd crush the granite and the rock down-hurled;
That, having sacrificed our blood and bone,
We'd lay a solid highway floored with stone—
New life, new weal, would come into the world.

We knew that somewhere, in a tract afar
That we had left to endure this toil in chains,
Tears hail us where our wives and mothers are
And friends and foes in jealous anger jar
And curse our high resolve and noble pains.

We knew all that; release from pain we'd ask;
Our hearts were broken and our nerves on edge;
But grief and sorrow played in vain their masque,
No imprecations drew us from our task;
Not one of us let fall his battering sledge.

Thus we go on, chained in a single mind
By holy faith, with hammers in our hands.
Let us be cursed, forgotten by mankind—
A mountain-road to justice we will find
That, though we die, will bless our sacred lands.

HYMN

THE SPIRIT OF PROGRESS

The revolutionary Soul,
The force that stirs man up to stress,
To liberty and happiness,
Is living and still plays his role.
For neither racks of priestly courts,
Nor tsarist dungeons' dark resorts,
Nor soldiers trained to crush revolt
With cannons' deadly thunderbolt,
Nor spy's device can overthrow
And lay the Soul of progress low.

He is not dead! He lives at length!
Though born a thousand years away
And but unswaddled yesterday,
He marches on with his own strength.
He stands erect, he gathers power,
And hastens towards the dawning hour . . .
With voice as loud as trumpets' pride,
He summons millions to his side.—
And millions join him, and rejoice
To hear the mighty spirit's voice.

The spirit's voice our nation hears
In the poor peasant's smoky cot,
In busy shop, in factory hot,
And in dark haunts of grief and tears.
And everywhere its tones resound
No tears and sorrow more are found.
Strength is reborn, and resolution
To battle against persecution,
At least to give one's children's life
A brighter future by the strife.

The revolutionary Soul
In science and in freedom lives;
No ground to ignorance it gives;
It grants to fetters no control.
Down tumbles Error's ancient keep,
An avalanche begins to sweep,—
And where on earth is found a force
To stop that fury in its course
And quench the sun's restless ray
That brightens to a perfect day?

O EARTH!

O Earth, all-fertile mother of all might,
Grant me the force that in thy depths must live,
Only a drop to strengthen me to fight—
That favour give!

Grant me the warmth that sets the breast extending,
Makes pure the feelings and renews the blood,
And wakens for mankind a love unending
In boundless flood!

Grant me a thunderous power to shake men's souls
And fill my utterance in a fiery fashion,
To burn injustice with the truth's white coals—
Grant me that passion!

Grant my hands strength to break the chains of men;
Make my thoughts keen to smite with justice' sabre;
Let me keep endlessly at work, and then
Die at my labour!

MY SONG IS ALIVE

Each song that I sing
Is a day of my life;
Its sufferings torture
My heart full of strife.

Each one of its lines
Is a part of my brain;
Its thoughts are my nerves,
Its pangs are my pain.

Its soul-stirring dirge
As my sorrow appears;
The pathos that glistens,
My crystalline tears.

For my spirit is taut
Like a lute-string's high moan;
And to each human soul
It responds with its tone.

If out of it flow
Strains both evil and good,
'Tis an echo of life
By my heart understood.

NATIONAL HYMN¹

It is time, it is time, it is time
To refuse to serve Russian and Pole!
For an end is at hand to the past and its crime;
Our Ukraine claims your life and your soul.

It is time, it is time, it is time
All our alien bonds to disprove,
And to cast off the tsar, a despoiler in crime.
Our Ukraine lives alone in our love.

It is time, it is time, it is time
To reject all our quarrels profane.
Let the phantoms of strife perish now in our prime!
Let us join 'neath the flag of Ukraine!

For the time that has come now is grand:
In a fight of the fiercest degree;
We will die for thee gladly, our dear native land,
Winning freedom and honour for thee!

¹Together with Chubinsky's "Ukrayina has not perished," p. 181, this poem is accepted on a par as the Ukrainian national anthem. As versified here, it matches the musical accompaniment.

From LANDLORD'S MOCKERIES¹

Today is Easter! O great God, our Lord,
 Since earth began there surely has not been
 An Easter Day like this that now is here!
 Like one huge ant-hill have the people poured
 From early dawn upon the village green
 With bustle, clamour, turmoil most severe.
 All seek the church. And when the blessed phrase,
 "Christ is Arisen," first was loudly chanted,
 All burst, like children, into tears unscanted,
 And weeping shook the church. To our amaze . . .
 It seemed we had been waiting ages long,
 But now, as we proclaimed that holy song,
 The Lord had really risen, to our praise.

And we within our spirits felt relief,
 Such lightness and tranquillity at last,
 It seemed that every one of us was ready
 To cry to earth and sky our glad belief
 And sing out: "All our misery is past!"
 Inveterate enemies forgave each other
 And each embraced and kissed like any brother—
 While still the bells rang out unceasingly!
 As in their cups, the young folk rush about
 And into every corner loudly shout:
 "The landlord now is gone, and we are free!"—
 "We all are free, free, free!" the village gloats.
 And little children, copying the old,
 Went shouting, screaming, full of joy untold,
 Like little chicks of quails among the oats.

And when the service of thanksgiving ended,
 Into the churchyard all went pouring forth;
 As many as some hundreds were we all—
 There in a mighty group our knees we bended

¹An excerpt from a lengthy poem in which Franko presents a vast canvas of the peasants' intolerable conditions under serfdom in Galicia. The "mockeries" refer to the "tricks" the Polish landlord plays on the peasantry: making them, and their priest, work in the forest on Christmas Day, after having locked the church in which they were about to celebrate the Feast; preventing the parish pastor from establishing schools for their children; and even casting an Austrian official, who pleaded their cause before the authorities, into a kennel of famished hounds. The passage here is representative of the general jubilation that took place throughout Galicia on Easter Day 1848, when the peasants heard that the new Austrian Constitution freed them from *panshchina* (forced labour, serfdom) to which the landlords had been subjecting them for centuries.

And, faces to the ground, on God we call,
Singing that glorious, solemn hymn of praise:
"Thee, O Lord God, we honour and extol!"
Like thunder on the morning air we raise
That lofty utterance all-jubilant—
But the conclusion of the sacred chant
Was drowned in mighty sabbings of amaze.

Today my grown-up children try in vain,
Even in snatches, to relate once more
What on that glorious day with my own eyes
I saw beyond all doubting, clear and plain.
People go mad, in joy not known before:
For greybeards leap like children in disguise . . .
A man is seen to kiss his team of horses—
As if they are his brothers he discourses,
Caresses them and with affection speaks.
Young peasant women group together there
And having plucked the ribbons from their hair,
Before an icon bow their rosy cheeks
And offer all their head-dress to the saint.
Each hails the other in a greeting loud:
"Christ is arisen! And the Devil himself
Has carried serfdom off!" There a hoary man,
The oldest greybeard in the village crowd,
Against an ancient grave you'd hardly scan
Presses his breast and hugs the grassy mound
And wildly shouts: "O father, we are free!
Freedom has come! O father, speak to me!
Almost a hundred years your neck was found
Beneath the yoke. You did not want to die
Before our freedom came. Behold me cry:
At last we're free! Poor man, you could not wait
For long enough to see our glorious state!
Now your son's sons no longer will be driven,
As I was, by the lord, to make his pelf!
And now, O father, take me to yourself!
Your son, his own free man, may pass to Heaven!"

MY DESPAIR¹

If at night, by your window, you happen to hear
A voice that is sobbing and weeping,
Do not glance in alarm at the casement, my dear,
But turn once again to your sleeping!

For it is not an orphan, who motherless strays;
And it is not a beggar who's spying;
It is just my despair that laments all its days,
And my love inconsolably crying.

I AM DEAD

All interest for me has fled
In all your arrows and your slings,
Your petty brawls and bickerings,
The fame of which my people sings—
In these, my interest has fled:
For I am dead.

Though all the world should topple down,
And brother were to murder brother,
It would not cause me smile or frown
Or any dolour for another,
A sharp knife in my heart plays clown—
So all my soul's last words are said,
And I am dead!

Although in victory is your trust
And hope your wings may still avail,
My own sad hopes are in the dust;
A ship without a mast or sail,
I joyless lie because I must.
With life my covenant is fled—
And I am dead!

¹This and the next three selections are from *The Withered Leaves*.

O MY MOTHER

O my mother, my mother, most precious and dear,
At a time inauspicious, an hour most drear,
Did you bring me to birth in the dark of the year?

Was my body conceived in a terrible sin?
Was I cursed in your womb ere my days had yet been?
Or is destiny mocking me now with a grin?

For you gave me no comeliness sweet to allure,
You gave me no strength that my deeds might endure,
You gave me no lineage noble and sure.

But you left me to wander the world like a waif,
With three great misfortunes my spirit to chafe,
By three manifest woes rendered ever unsafe.

The first of my woes was a heart over-tender,
The heart of a poet too gentle and slender,
Too ready to Beauty and Good to surrender.

The next of my woes was the fault of my birth,
For a peasant was I, and derided in worth,
With black bread, and nameless my grave in the earth.

The third of my woes was a spirit too proud,
That shut itself off from the credulous crowd,
And fed on itself like a flame in a cloud.

O my mother, my mother, most precious and dear,
Mourn not for your son when his deed you shall hear,
And curse not in grief his defeated career!

Nay, grieve not at having to live on alone,
To be borne to your grave without me to make moan
Or comforting words at your death to intone!

Nay, curse not your child, who was weak in the strife,
For I pushed, while I could, this crass barrow of life,
But now I am broken and yield to the knife!

I cannot arrest that implacable form
That gathers its murk like a clot in a swarm,
The thundering mass of a murdering storm!

For no person on earth I'd molest in the least;
I refuse to go mad and become a mere beast;
It were best that I fell into darkness, and ceased!

'TIS VAIN, MY SONG!

'Tis vain, my song! Your charm is dead
That could my grief condole!
The sun stays hidden overhead . . .
The rapture of my spring has fled!
And mould is on my soul.

'Tis vain, my song! Restrain your art!
Pour no mōre torment round!
Even without your painful part,
The pangs of grief oppress my heart
And match your mournful sound.

'Tis vain, my song! In sweet duet
My pains I cannot brook.
And mutely, as in all my fret,
I now shall seek without regret
Nirvana's shadowy nook.

CONQUISTADORES

Across the wide and boisterous sea
Where stormy billows roar,
Our fleet moves on in stubborn straits
To reach an unknown shore.
The oars all splash, the foremast sways . . .
At last we're safely harboured!
Veer to the tide! Slip side by side!
The tiller hold to larboard!
Cast anchors all! On gangways broad
March out to yonder banks!
But not a sound! 'Tis scarcely dawn . . .
No soul stirs . . . Form your ranks!
The dreaming city is asleep . . .
We'll seize it ere it wakes . . .
The first shout is our battle cry;
The next in triumph breaks.
But ere we venture on this path,
Our vessels we must burn,
That we may know that for us all
There can be no return.

The smoke bursts out! The waters plash . . .
 The timbers' groans are heard . . .
 Sails flutter like the flaming wings
 Upon a mighty bird.
 The masts bend down, the sparks pour out
 A fiery stream that scorches . . .
 The hulk groans loud . . . the lofty masts
 Are flaring like tall torches.
 Whatever we have left behind
 Be covered by life's ashes!
 "Forward, to death or victory!"—
 Our battle-cry outcrashes.
 The world is given to the bold.
 Fear to the Fiend be banned!
 Here blood and toil will build anew
 A better fatherland!

A CONTEMPORARY ANECDOTE¹

Have you of this adventure heard?
 One spring, when rivers swell,
 Into the swirling, raging flood
 A hapless fellow fell.
 He struggles in the vortex deep,
 And being about to drown,
 He to his crony on the bridge
 Cries: "Help! I'm going down!"

With elbows propped upon the rail,
 The friend did gravely think
 And wonder with judicious air:
 "Will he stay up, or sink?"
 At length he judged the case was lost
 And answered with a frown:
 "Don't waste your effort, my good friend.
 You might as well go down."

¹This anecdote and the following, "The Guildsman Kuperian," may reflect the poet's own ironical feelings as regards the Ukrainian community's indifference and inimical attitude towards him.

Heigh-ho! Such friends, not one or two,
Not three, but many a man
We meet at every step in life,
In every moment's span.
You struggle in your misery
Like fish caught in a net;
You push the barrow up the path
With efforts greater yet;
And when black doubting tortures you
And pain in grave degree,
All that he does is criticize:
“Ah, that is bad!” says he.
The only help that he can give
Is counsel with a frown:
“Don’t waste your effort, my good friend.
You might as well go down!”

Our people likewise struggle thus
In torrents that condemn;
The waves are fierce to cover soon
The last, least trace of them.
And meanwhile, on the solid bridge,
False brothers in a row
Just stand and wait with elbows propped.
Will they give help? Ah, no!
They stand and wait to see if waves
Will swallow up their friend.
They reckon: “This time he will rise.
The next will be the end.”
To all his pleadings and his cries
They answer with a frown:
“Don’t waste your effort, my good friend.
You might as well go down!”

But what occurs? He does not sink.
He tries the bank to seize
And does not listen to the voice
Of wheedling enemies.
At last he feels beneath his feet
The solid, firmer ground,
While those upon the bridge cry out:
“We’re cheated, I’ll be bound!”

Beneath their feet, the bridge now sways,
The water tears the piers,
And on the bridge the cry is raised:
“Help, save us from our fears!
Save the lord’s meadows and estate!
Preserve his fields immense!
Come, save the altar and the throne!
Come all, to the defence!”

And what if holy Nemesis
Will some day mock their souls
By deigning in a fashion fair
To interchange the roles?
Then will the common people stand
Upon their own firm soil,
And billows of adversity
Their enemies will foil.
And those who in the vortex deep
With such “help” us beset
Will now in person have a taste
Of getting good and wet.
While common people, at their plea,
Will answer with a frown:
“Don’t waste your efforts, my good friends.
You might as well go down!”

THE GUILDSMAN KUPERIAN

The Poles a city once besieged
In days of long ago;
They smote with hate each wall and gate
And mined them deep below.

Cossacks were bold in their defence,
Nor did the burghers sleep;
By day and night from cannon throats
Came roars of anger deep.

Kuperian, the guildsman good,
Was staunchest of them all;
And to his fellow guildsmen
He gave this secret call:

"Fellows, for long enough we've sat
Like owls on parapets;
Let's show that we, the burghers,
Are not a hare's begets.

"We'll strike by night against their camp
Out of that steep ravine!
Let's either die or crush those Poles
To shreds of snuff unclean!"

His plan was turned to action,
And luck was on their side;
They smashed the forces of the foe
And off the remnants ride.

Then shouts of victory resound!
All seek the city square,—
Cobblers and tailors, guildsmen all,
In countless numbers there.

They welcome bold Kuperian
With his victorious powers;
He is a hero: all his path
They gladly strew with flowers.

And in the square the Council grave
Began in sombre thought
To plan Kuperian's reward
As they most truly ought.

Some say: "He has a guildsman been!
He should be something vaster.
Now, for his service to us all,
Let's make him burgomaster!"

But others say: "Why make him mayor?
We will not vote for that.
Our fire brigade a captain needs
And this would suit him pat."

Still others say: "No, gentlemen!
Your plans we're thunderstruck at!
Let every household in the town
Give him a golden ducat!"

"Oh, no! no! no!" the indignant crowd
Cries out in angry chorus.
"Dull cash for high heroic deeds
Would shame him here before us!"

A hubbub rises, discord reigns
As projects they contest;
And every plan that some approve
Is scoffed at by the rest.

Then the pot-bellied burgomaster
Leaped on a bench, and stood,
And cried: "Long live our matchless friend,
Kuperian the Good!"

"God has Himself this hero sent
Our foemen to destroy;
But has not given us the wits
Fit honour to employ.

"To give him cash is rude and rash;
Besides, we all are poor;
And yet, to give him some great post
Envy could not endure.

"So long as he remains alive,
His case will vex the town,—
And so, my fellow citizens,
Set my opinion down:

"Yes, let us kill him with despatch,
And nicely here impale him!
After his death, we'll all lament
And as a saint we'll hail him.

"And high above his holy grave
A tumulus we'll rear;
And for him chant memorial prayers
Twice each returning year!"

"How marvellous! A counsel wise!"
All shouted in devotion;
But failed to ask the saint-elect
To second the Great Motion.

BLESSED IS HE

Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly . . .

Psalm 1

Blessed is he who braves the wicked's wits
And in their councils lifts a voice for truth,
Who in the assemblies of the hypocrites
Shakes their dull conscience to a sense of ruth.

Blessed is he who in decadent days,
When even tender souls grow atrophied,
Wakens the townsfolk with a shout, to raise
Truth and sincerity as hopes indeed.

Blessed is he who amid stress and strife
Stands like a sturdy oak that fronts a storm,
And will not sign a contract false to life,
Nor yield to evil friends in any form.

Blessed is he who is reviled for this,
Cursed at, and ostracized, and stoned at last;
His persecutors shape the edifice
Of their defeat and down themselves are cast.

Blessed are all who never count the cost
Or choke the voice of justice in the mind:
Although of them remembrance may be lost,
Their blood will yet ennable all mankind.

I BOW TO YOU

I bow to you once more, my withered flower,
My charming, ever-present dream of art,
Accept my last salute!
Seldom in life you came, my soul to dower,
Yet your remembrance always warms my heart,
Even when pain's acute.

I bow to you because you wooed me not
But in my breast extinguished the wild fire
Young love would hail as real;
And in my lonely, melancholy lot
Engraved upon my heart a high desire,
A feminine ideal.

And now, though vales and mountains part us twain,
 Whene'er from fearful nightmares I retreat,
 I seek you for relief—
 Then to your breast my soul to cling is fain,
 And throws down all its burden at your feet,
 And your voice calms my grief.

Whenever in my dreams I see you still,
 I seem to lose my ire and bitterness
 As serpents shed their skin;
 And, as my treasure, guard with all my will
 Not love, not hope, not faith, but soothing all distress,
 Your fair form feminine.

SPRING ELEGY

Spring! You are torturing me! In the sunshine of April you scatter,
 Wafting caresses so warm, luring to spaces of blue;
 Far through the sky you are casting the woolly white cloudlets in spirals,
 Spinning, like fibres of silk, silvery rain from their coils.
 Into the dove-blue heavens, you fling up a grey lump of meadow,
 Forth from that lump, in a trice, scatters the trill of a lark.
 Then, in the cranes' high formations, you bring back unbearable sorrow,
 Dreams out of spaces afar, visions of days that are gone.
 Soon with the pinions of swans you are cleaving the crystalline waters;
 Plashings, in rivulets blue, even in sleep I can hear.
 So I behold you, a sea-mew, go skimming the waves of the ocean,
 Bent like a reed to the stream, fair on the Dniester's broad bank.

Spring! You are torturing me! With your millions of colours and tinctures,
 Lines and designs you declare: Freedom and motion and life!
 Deep in your current you carry my soul like a blade of weak herbage;
 Wake, to sensations anew, arteries withered yet strong.
 Hopes that can never be answered you rouse, and make bright my depletion:
 So may the tenantless nest tenderly sway on the branch.
 Bowing your head, you will blow into fervour the fire in the ingle:
 Calling me into the grove, like a young comrade you pipe.
 Nay, not for me in that grove to go roaming, my friend and companion;
 Nay, not for me, like a hare, deep in that fragrance to plunge!

Still throbs the beat of my heart, and the blood in my breast pulses fiercely;
 Yet would the years now oppress; grave are the burdens of life.
 Dreams like a horde of mad horses come trampling the field of remembrance;
 Fluttering manes in the wind, neighing and stamping their hooves.
 Those are but fancies light-winged, and the colorful children of feeling—
 Heavy the hand that controls, heavy the rein that restrains!
 Then comes a crack of the whip, and the merciless “No more, forever!”
 Toil and its charm are all past! Spring, you are torturing me!

AT A FORTUNE-TELLER'S

Tell me my fortune, gipsy,
 Tsora, so dark of brow!
 Shall I see days yet happy?
 Shall I have wealth enow?

Slowly the gipsy answers;
 Deep in his hand she peers:
 “You will be poor, dear fellow,
 Seven distressful years.”

“Seven? I could endure it.
 But what will then befall?”—
 “Nothing but habit, brother,
 Helping you bear it all.”

From MOSES¹

PROLOGUE

My people, tortured thus by blows and stabs,
 A paralytic at the crossroads lying,
 Covered with human scorn as if with scabs,
 I mark thy future out with fears and sighing,
 The baseness that thy distant children blots
 Destroys my slumber with its mortifying!

¹In this his greatest poem, Franko represents himself as the Moses of Ukraine, facing the indifferent and rebellious mass of the people he had led for forty years through the wilderness of a life full of spiritual and physical oppression. The passages given here are about two-thirds of the entire poem.

Is it some iron tablet that allots
 Thy fate to be the refuse of the nations,
 A draught beast harnessed to their chariots?

Yes, can it be thy silent imprecations
 Are sentenced to a feigned humility
 In presence of those men whose depredations
 Have chained thee thus, and forced assent from thee?
 Art thou alone not marked for some campaign
 That might reveal thy power, full and free?

And have so many hearts all burned in vain
 With the most sacred love for thee they bore,
 Offering soul and body in thy train?

Has thy dear land in vain flowed deep with gore
 Of thy defenders? And will none take pride
 In freedom, wealth and beauty as thy store?

Is it in vain that in thy speech abide
 The power, tenderness, despatch and wit
 By means of which thy soul can skyward stride?

Is it in vain thy song alike can fit
 Regret and laughter and the pangs of passion,
 Bright tracts of hope, and joy most exquisite?

Ah, no! Not sighs and tears from eyelids ashen
 Are thy sole fate! My faith is in thy power
 And in thy rising in triumphant fashion.

Oh, that my word had force in some glad hour,
 Potent in that blest point of time to heal,
 And potent to break forth in flaming dower!

Oh, that my song could make the millions feel
 Fate's inspiration, give them wings of might,
 And lead them to our glorious commonweal!

If only! . . . but for us whom sorrows blight,
 Shattered by doubts, by shame made timorous—
 'Tis not for us to lead thee to the fight!

Thy time will come, and thou, transcendent thus,
 Set in the circle of free lands wilt shine,
 Girt with Carpathians and Caucasus!²

²The breadth of Ukraine from west to east.

Thy song will roll across the Black Sea's brine
And, like a steadfast master, thou shalt glance
Upon thy boundless realm with look benign.

Accept this song I sing, most sad perchance,
Yet hopeful; although harsh, a winning story;
It is my tearful pledge to thy advance,
My humble nuptial gift to future glory.

I

Moses for forty years had strayed
Across Arabian sand,
And now, with all his folk, approached
The Palestinian land.

The sands here stretch as red as rust
Through Moab's rocky passes;
Beyond them lies the Jordan blue,
The forests and the grasses.

In Moab's valleys destitute
Stands nomad Israël;
To pass those naked mountain peaks
They feel no wish compel.

Within the tattered tents they sleep,
The idle, drifting horde;
Their asses and their oxen gnaw
Such weeds as men ignored.

That a bewitching promised land
With jewels to receive
Is gleaming just beyond that ridge—
They simply won't believe.

For forty years has Moses told
A high and solemn tale
About that promised fatherland—
But all to no avail.

For forty years the sapphire stream
With gardens round about
Has drawn them, ever hopeful, on,
A bright mirage of doubt.

But people lost all heart and said:
 "Our leaders sure have lied!
In deserts we are doomed to live!
 How long till we have died?"

They lost all patience, all desire;
 No urge their spirits fills
To send out scouts and press ahead
 Beyond the rusty hills.

Day after day, in stifling heat,
 And with no other housing
Than those old ragged tents of theirs,
 All Israel is drowsing. . . .

II

One only in that tented throng
 The calm of sleep abhors,
And on the wings of thought and grief
 Beyond the hills he soars.

Moses it is, their seer forgotten,
 An old man, worn and weak,
Who, without kin or flocks or wives,
 Must soon for burial seek.

All that he had, a sacrifice
 For his ideal has been;
He burned and suffered, flamed and toiled,
 To bring that vision in.

Out of Egyptian slavery
 He snatched his tribes away
And brought the slaves from narrow walls
 Into broad freedom's day.

And many a time in days gone by,
 The soul of Israel's nation,
He rose to rapt celestial heights
 Of ardent inspiration.

On waves of their tempestuous souls,
 In trial and confusion,
He oft, with them, plumbed the abyss
 Of bitter disillusion.

And now his inspiration fails;
His voice no more is heard;
The younger folk no more desire
To heed his holy word.

His talk about the promised land
Now seems an empty tale;
Only their goat-meat and their cheese
Among their thoughts prevail.

From far-off Egypt had their sires
Begun the march of old,—
That this had been a foolish sin
YOUTH'S dark opinions hold.

Now Dathan and Abiram stand
As leaders of the younger;
Their answer to the seer's high words
Is just: "Our goats feel hunger!"

This to his call to march ahead:
"Our horses are not shod."
This to his pledge of victory:
"Fierce foemen mock our God."

This to the lure of brave, new lands:
"To stay here we were liever."
This to the talk of God's commands:
"Be silent, O deceiver!"

But when the prophet threatened them
With fierce Jehovah's wrath,
Abiram bade him to be still
Or face an aftermath.

And having honoured Baal's name
And offered God derision,
The loud-mouthed Dathan forced the tribes
To carry this decision:

"Whoever claims to be a seer
But shows of wit no trace,
And offers to the ignorant
Jehovah's wrath or grace,—

“Who dares exhort the tribes to rise
 Against the things that be
 And lures them out beyond the hills
 To their catastrophe,—

“Yea, such a one, so wild of brain,
 For his offense atoning,
 Shall straight be spat upon by all
 And put to death by stoning.”

III

Evening drew nigh. The heat of day
 Grew less in its prostration;
 Above the hill, the sky’s edge blazed
 Like a far conflagration.

A golden rain of cool delight
 The landscape then imbibes;
 And from the tents begins the stir
 Of the nomadic tribes. . . .

Within the camp a noise bursts forth
 With bustle and with shout;
 Leaving their tents, both young and old,
 The people all rush out.

What is it? Does some foe approach?
 Are beasts caught in the snare?
 No, it is Moses! From his tent
 He now emerges there.

Although the years, with griefs and cares,
 Have his tall figure bowed,
 Yet in his eyes a flame still burns
 Like lightning in a cloud.

Although his hair is white as snow
 And age is on him now,
 The proud, high curls adorn him yet
 Like horns upon his brow.

He seeks the common where the tent
 Of worship stands unfurled,
 Stretching four horns to designate
 Four corners of the world.

In it a heavy chest is placed,
All couched with copper lines;
And in it God's commandments lie,
And victory's own signs.

But no one now, for many a year,
Has dared that tent to enter;
Dread guards the place both night and day—
A watchdog at its centre.

But near the tent and towards the east
A mighty boulder lies,
On which, to hail the folk with speech,
An orator would rise.

Moses ascends that boulder now—
The people shake with fright;
Will he indulge in prophecy,
The general will to spite?

Will they be forced to trample down
Like some old rotten log,
The man their fathers honoured so,
His people's mystagogue.

In the front rank, Abiram's face
Is reddening with rage,
While Dathan, demon of the mob,
In whispers did engage.

IV

"But yesterday, my children weak,
You foolish counsel took;
Of this I speak to you today;
No vagueness will I brook.

"You have seen fit to place a seal
Upon my tongue and spirit;
I therefore shall speak out my mind—
Yes, and you all shall hear it.

"Know and remember, all of you,
O children blind and weak,
That if you gag the living soul,
The very stones will speak.

“But yesterday you vowed to stop
Your ears against my speeches—
Not mine indeed: Jehovah’s self
Through my poor lips outreaches.

“Take heed, for He will speak to you
In anger and in haste;
More terrible His speech will be
Than thunder in the waste.

“The mountains tremble at His words,
The earth itself is tossed;
Your hearts, like leaves in fire’s flame,
Will crackle and be lost.

“You’ve laid a curse on all revolt—
Yet each of you, poor hellion,
Has cursed in vain, for your own hearts
Are still in foul rebellion.

“For in your hearts Jehovah placed
A leaven, as in dough,—
Creative powers that drive you on
To where you have to go.

“But yesterday, a sluggish peace
Was most by you adored;
But has your counsel turned to Him
Who is our God and Lord?

“Was it for peace He summoned forth
From Harran and from Ur
Old Abraham and all his seed,
And Canaan did prefer?

“Was it for peace on Jordan’s banks
He stayed them for a while,
Yet by a famine drove them on
To see the far-off Nile?

“Had He desired to give you peace
Like corpses in a crypt,
You would stand yet like oxen grey,
By Pharaoh’s sergeants whipped.

“Therefore I speak to you today,
 Obedient to His nod,
 That you may know it is unwise
 To fight against your God.

“Because Jehovah’s bow is stretched,
 Its string is taut and true,
 His arrow is already set—
 His arrow, men, is you.

“His arrow is already aimed,
 And sharpened for the fray;
 And is it fit that it should speak:
 ‘I want but peace today?’ . . .

x

The sun had touched the mountains,
 All ruddy and immense;
 It seemed a sinking swimmer,
 Exhausted though intense.

A sable melancholy sank
 Down through the cloudless sky;
 As piercing as a painful wound
 Arose the jackals’ cry.

A tender, human shudder smote
 The prophet’s heart that night;
 And lofty visions of his soul
 Stooped lower in their flight.

Must he forever herald doom
 And cause his people dread?
 A sobbing like a famished child
 Within his bosom pled:

“O Israël, if you but knew /
 How this my heart is filled
 With love for you beyond all words,
 Beyond all thought distilled!

“You are my kin, my only child,³
 My honour and my glory;
 In you my soul its future finds,
 Our nation’s future story.

³This and the next quatrain are eloquent of Franko’s zeal for his people’s brighter future.

"I've given you my life, my toil,—
 I have been keen to con it;
 Your journey through the centuries
 Will bear my seal upon it.

"Not only for my own intent
 Has this my love been true;
 All that I own of first and best
 I consecrate to you.

"O Israël, remember not
 My utterance so odd:
 That I have loved you even more
 Than does Jehovah God.

"For millions are His children dear;
 He warms and soothes them all;
 While I am pledged to you alone
 And for no others call.

"And if, from out the millions, He
 Has chosen you to serve Him,
 I, by my love, your servant am
 And, maybe, thus deserve Him.

"If he requires for Himself
 Your powers and your toil,
 I, Israël, desire of you
 Sheer nothing as my spoil.

"If he asks incense from your hand
 And worship's holy vision,
 From you I'll take ingratitude,
 Injustice and derision.

"Your merits not alone I love
 And with all pleasure hail them,
 But also all your faults and spite,
 Although I must bewail them.

"I love you for your blind self-will,⁴
 Your spirit's stubborn pride,
 Which, having turned to folly's path,
 Will shoulder God aside.

⁴Like Moses, Franko loved his people blindly, in spite of their errors and vices.

"I love you for your lying tongue
 That conscience overshoots,
 Which clings to all its earthly goods
 As with tenacious roots.

"I love you for your daughters' lust,
 The rein they give their passion,
 For wicked speech and customs dark
 And sin in mocking fashion.

"O, Israël, my own dear child,
 May Shaddai^b retrieve you!
 So much past measure is my love,
 And yet I now must leave you.

"Already now my time draws near,
 That last mysterious hour;
 But Canaan's frontier I must reach
 Before I feel its power.

"How I have longed to enter it
 Amid the trumpets' thunder;
 But God has chastened me, and lo,
 I from afar must wonder.

"Though I should drop in sudden death
 Upon the Jordan's banks,
 That refuge for my weary bones
 Would win my dying thanks.

"There I shall lie on Moab's peaks
 And still gaze longingly,
 Till as a child its mother seeks,
 You all come back for me.

"And I shall send my longing on
 To pull your garments' front
 As when a dog his master's coat
 Tugs when he fain would hunt.

"I know that you will all stride on
 Like some great flood in Spring;
 But, in that glorious onward march,
 Stay for no questioning.

^bIn the Old Testament, one of the Deity's three appellatives, the others being Jehovah and Elohim. Its root "shad" denotes the idea of sufficiency, and the entire name means restraint.

"Like swiftly flowing waters then
 March on in stern endeavour!
 O Israel, my own dear child,
 I say good-by forever!" . . .

XII

"Around me presses loneliness
 Like some unbounded sea;
 My spirit, like a swelling sail,
 Drives on in dignity. . . .

"In the mysterious abyss
 I fly, a wayward planet—
 And still upon me feel God's touch,
 His finger that began it.

"In perfect calm my lips are stilled,
 My utterance is sealed;
 Only Thy voice, Jehovah, speaks
 And by it I am healed.

"Only for Thee my heart would seek;
 Yearnings my spirit fill;
 Speak to me, God, as once Thou didst
 In fire on Horeb's hill!

"Lo, I have run my race, which then
 Thou gavest me for winning;
 Once more I stand before Thy face
 As then at the beginning.

"For forty years I toiled and wrought,⁶
 Wholly in Thee immersed,
 To make a nation of these slaves
 As Thou hadst once rehearsed.

"For forty years, Thy smith, I forged
 Their consciences and hearts,
 And now amid their stones and scorn
 My foot from them departs.

⁶This quatrain and the next establish Franko as the Moses of his people. He is often designated as the great "smith" of the Ukrainian nation.

"And this, just when at last we stand
 Within our own due state!—
 Omniscient God, didst Thou foreknow
 That this would be my fate?

"Into my heart there comes a doubt:
 Am I to blame for this?
 Have I not wrought the given task
 With nothing done amiss?

"Remember how I prayed in tears:
 'My speech is weak, absurd!
 Lord, to another give the dread
 Of Thy majestic word!'

"A doubt this very moment thrusts
 Its sting into my soul:
 Almighty, speak, art Thou content
 With my poor human rôle?"

Thus on his path did Moses pray,
 Oppressed by grief malign—
 But all the wilderness was mute,
 The bright stars gave no sign . . .

xiii

Low laughter suddenly was heard
 Close to his aged side
 As if some person near him walked
 Although he heard no stride.

And to his ears came whispered words
 That seemed a viper's hiss:
 "The rose of lawless will but yields
 Harsh prickles such as this." . . .

(*The voice of Azazel, demon of the wilderness*)
 "In boundless pride you thrust away
 Your people from their bent
 And cast them in your image ill.
 Would you, too late, repent? . . .

“Perhaps the fire on Horeb’s height
 Did not burn there at all
 But only in your stubborn heart,
 Your will so prone to fall?

“Perhaps the voice that set you off
 On this ill-fated march
 Came from no burning bush but sprang
 From inner urgings arch?

“Passion can blind the human sight,
 One’s wish can cast a spell
 And raise up a mirage of gods,—
 The desert does it well.

“Yes, mere desire, with jackal voice
 That in your heart was howling
 Created you their general,
 Make you a prophet prowling.” . . .

XIV

Dark was it. From the silent vault
 The stars sent down their fire;
 By starlight Moses made his way
 Up summits, higher, higher.

There was no path. Across the night
 Strange voices led him on:
 Hyenas’ whining in the gulch,
 Snakes’ rustling then anon.

He, like a hero, never stopped
 But sought his final fight,
 And meanwhile sought in his own breast
 To range his thoughts aright.

“Your hope,” a voice within him cried,
 “Was born of shame and pain.
 Was it a burning bush that bade
 My people’s great campaign?

“Was it the flame of my desire,
 An inward power’s prod,
 That formed within me God’s command
 And even formed my God? . . .

“How dangerous to thwart the course
Of nature’s normal quest!

How easy to present one’s whim
As God’s divine behest!

“What if for forty years I’ve gone
In faculties distraught
And my own plans, instead of God’s,
Have to my people taught?

“If they in Egypt had remained
And still increased in strength,
They might have grown into a power
And seized the land at length!

“Since from that soil I led them off
Into the wilderness,
Have I perhaps committed wrong
And wrought their black distress?

“Does freedom suit this landless herd?
Are they but led to slaughter?
Is this not tearing up an oak
To cast it in the water? . . .

“Speak out, Jehovah! Tell me plain!
Have I performed Thy will,
Or been the plaything of my brain,
A blind fanatic still?

“Speak out, Jehovah! Can it be
That Thou art understood
But in our passion, in our dreams,
The tumult of our blood?”

Jehovah answered not a word.
But evil’s voice went on:
Hyenas’ whining in the gulch,
Snakes’ rustling then anon.

xv

The sun rose high above the plain,
A round and scarlet mark,
And with its rays, like arrows flung,
It pierced and stung the dark.

Caught by those rays, great Nebo's Mount,
A queen in purple dressed,
Raises its sombre cliffs aloft
Above each neighbouring crest.

Upon the mountain's highest peak,
Above all ridges vast,
Someone stands motionless, and like
A Titan from the past.

There high above the feuds of earth,
Above its din, he stands;
And stretches out, invoking heaven,
His venerating hands.

In the declining light of even,
The sunset's purple rays
Show his colossal silhouette
Far through the desert ways.

And from the Hebrew tents aloft
Men cast their anxious sight
Like couriers to that mighty form
Upon the sunlit height.

“Tis Moses!” As from one pale lip,
The timid phrases start.
Men cannot breathe the anxious thought
That throbs within their heart.

Moses it is who stands in prayer;
His plea to God is borne;
His prayer is butting hard at heaven
As with a flaming horn.

Although his lips are tightly pressed
And naught of speech is heard,
His heart yet shouts aloud to God
Its trumpet-pealing word.

Again comes sunrise, and its flame
Floods all of heaven's vault;
And Moses yet stands fixed in prayer
As quarried from basalt.

The midday demon on the plain
Now sends exhaustion dire,
While unseen hands upon the height
Raise Moses ever higher.

And slowly now the sun declines
To rest on Pisgah's peak;
Its giant shadow is spread out
From crests to lowlands meek.

For the last time the shadow vast
Of Moses downward fell
Upon the Hebrews' huddled camp,
A father's last farewell.

And through that camp a panic spread:
"Pray God that at this hour
The prophet may not curse, for now
A curse would have great power!"

"From such a prayer as his is now
Would earth's foundations groan,
The cliffs would melt like wax, and shake
Jehovah's ancient throne.

"If he should curse the people now,
When daylight leaves this place
All of us here and all this plain
Will sink without a trace."

xvi

But Moses struggled on in prayer
With strivings most profound;
And when the nightfall came, he sank
Exhausted to the ground.

The rock beneath him swayed and shook,
The mighty summit shocked him,
But there he lay in senseless peace
As if his mother rocked him. . . .

XVII

(*The voice of Azazel*)

“Lo, I again shall tear apart
Your thinking’s petty dam:
Behold the land that God once gave
To patriarch Abraham!”

Then all the West flashed out in flame
And to his eyes below
The country at one glance was seen,
Spread in a vast tableau.

His unseen comrade then went on;
His tones were softer, tauter:
“That shadowed mirror can you see?
It is the Dead Sea’s water.

“And on that side, where lofty cliffs
Push up sharp peaks in rows
Into the sky, old Carmel’s heights
Their masses interpose.

“Look northward where on Zion’s hills
Rove nomad Jebusites;
Here lift your voice and you will rouse
The warlike Amorites.

“That wandering streak is Jordan’s stream;
The Dead Sea is its fate;
And near its mouth stands Jericho
That now is desolate.

“Only one valley stretches north;
Its narrow banks are flat;
The Amorites crowd in on this,
The Canaanites on that.

“Steep mountains and broad tablelands
Rise in the west to ken;
Up in the north a low lake lies,
Then mountains soar again.

“And that is Palestine—a land
For barley-crops and sheep;
From Kadesh up to Carmel’s top
One fist the whole could keep.

"There is no highroad in the land,
 No access to the seas!
Where can your people live and grow,
 Develop and increase?"

But Moses answered: "He who gave
 Fresh water from the stone
Will make this land a paradise
 To benefit His own!"

xviii

"Faith may move mountains!" Came again
 The sound of quiet laughter.

"But look upon these pictured scenes
 Of what must come hereafter!

"Look how your tribe comes pressing on
 Through Jordan like a flood,
And captures Jericho, and wades
 In hideous streams of blood.

"For centuries this patch of earth
 Will see incessant fights:
With Philistines and Amorites,
 Hittites, Amalekites.

"The Hebrew Kingdom comes in blood!
 What grief its future mocks!
And to the world's great eyes it seems
 A fly upon an ox.

"And hardly will it blossom forth
 Before it falls in pieces,
And mighty neighbours will devour
 Each fragment as it ceases.

"Damascus and Chaldea send
 Their rushing clouds of war;
Assyria comes and brings the land
 Worse ruin than before.

"Corpses on corpses everywhere
 In blood the country drown,
For dreadful Babylon has risen
 To batter Judah down.

"Jehovah's temple is in flames . . .
 Like insects pale to see,
 Thousands of captives trudge in chains
 To far captivity.

"Do you hear that sobbing? Yonder weeps
 One who alone is wise,
 Who urged submission to the foe—
 Resisting, one but dies.⁷ . . .

"Do you hear that sound? Those legions fierce
 Come marching, iron-paced,
 To trample the Judean plain
 And made the fields a waste . . .

"Once more Jehovah's temple burns,
 Destroyed it shall remain,
 For what the hand of Rome tears down
 Will never rise again.

"Once more the remnants flow like streams;
 In alien fields they yearn;
 This is no more their fatherland,
 And they shall not return.

"The star of Israel is quenched;
 It nevermore will shine;
 But hatred, in the Temple bred,
 Will roam the world malign.

"How can you doubt it? Pray believe!
 You will believe, I know!
 This paradise awaits your tribe
 In promised lands below.

"Speak! Have you laboured but for this?
 And was it worth your while?
 Perhaps you yet will pray again
 To speed that future vile?"

And Moses bowed his head: "Alas!
 Hopeless is my endeavour!
 And shall my people find their fate
 In captive bonds forever?"

⁷Jeremiah.

Upon the ground he grovelled prone:
 "God has our ruin meant!"
 Demonic laughter echoed back
 The words of his lament.

XIX

Then thunder rolled. And of the hills
 The deep foundations shook;
 Peal follows after thunder-peal
 As if for God they look.

Up rose a black cloud like a wall
 And reached for Heaven's gate,
 And like the mother of all nights
 It frowned with face of hate. . . .

The sound was hushed. Like gurgling streams,
 A voice sobbed on in sorrow;
 And gentle breezes fragrance warm
 From almond blossoms borrow.

In that warm breeze, soft speech was heard,
 Mysterious and choice,
 And Moses felt within his heart
 It was Jehovah's voice. . . .

"Here, on this lean and wretched field,
 Like thorns upon coarse sand,
 Grow strong and sturdy through the years
 Until the time I've planned. . . .

"And having torn yourselves away
 And broken all your pleasures,
 You'll scatter to subdue the world,
 Its savours and its treasures.

"But I shall lay a bitter curse
 On all that you will gain;
 It snakelike on your wealth will lie
 And sorrow will remain.

"He who will gain all gold on earth
 - And place it first in merit
 Will soon become the slave of wealth
 And lose the gold of spirit. . . .

"Though on a sea of gold you sail,
 Your throat will parch with thirst:
 The bread of gold will feed you not
 But leave your mouth accurst.

"To me you shall be witnesses
 On earth from pole to pole
 That only those I choose as mine
 Who feed the human soul.

"Who feeds mankind with earthly bread
 Shall end, like it, in clay;
 But he who feeds the living soul
 Shall mix with me today.

"This, your immortal promised land,
 Is radiant and wide;
 You led my people to its bounds
 But were their purblind guide.

"This is your shining fatherland,
 A paradise divine!
 A trivial pledge of it from me
 Is this poor Palestine. . . .

"But since you doubted for an hour
 My purpose for your kin,
 You only glimpse that fatherland
 But shall not enter in.

"And here your bones shall moulder on,
 Example's fearful wraith
 To those who strive to gain a goal
 But fall from lack of faith!"

xx

Grief wanders on a mountain bare,
 Like mist in desert wastes;
 Through the vast land with sombre thoughts
 Its dark desire hastens.

It scatters withered flowers and leaves,
 Yellowed and destitute;
 And in the soul evokes the sound
 Of voices long since mute.

Whatever yesterday was scorned,
Today is well beloved;
That on which men once stamped and spat
Is now most holy proved.

That night throughout the Hebrew camp
Was passed in anxious care;
At dawn their gaze sought out the peak
To look for Moses there.

No, he is gone! That fateful word,
Like death's cold chill of terror,
Was felt by all; for, with that "gone,"
Life seemed some vast, dark error.

Something unseen, intangible,
Had always with them burned,
That gave a meaning to their lives,
A lesson that they learned.

And on their hardened consciences
Their grief lay like a pall;
The entire camp, as if bewitched,
Grew faint about it all.

And one another's pallid cheeks
Incessantly they scan,
Like murderers who in their sleep
Had slain their worthiest man.

Tramping is heard. Is this a storm?
A prophecy come true?
Joshua, prince of stable-grooms,
Comes with a bold, young crew.

They drive their flocks; they rush ahead,
Not stirred by foemen's prod
But driven by a nameless fear,
The unseen hand of God,

By the soul's dread of loneliness,
The abyss and all its harms . . .
While Joshua still loudly calls:
"Let us march on! To arms!"

Up like an eagle soared that shout
 Above those human cattle,
 And rolled an echo to the hills:
 "Let us march on! To battle!"

A moment more—all will be roused
 From stupor deep and dense,
 And none will know what suddenly
 Has seized his every sense.

A moment more—and Joshua's cry
 Bursts from a thousand throats;
 The lazy nomads are transformed—
 A tribe for valour votes.

The desert they will knead to mud
 With feet that fiercely rang;
 Abiram they will stone to death
 And Dathan they will hang.

Like birds they'll fly across the hills;
 The Jordan will be passed;
 The walls of Jericho like ice
 Will melt at trumpet-blast.

Into an age unknown they march,
 To brave grief and dismay,
 Make straight a highway for the soul,
 And die on Zion's way.

Volodimir Samiylenko

(1864-1925)

Native of the region of Poltava, where he completed his gymnasium studies, Samiylenko specialized in history and philology at the University of Kiev, after which he gained his livelihood both as a civil servant and as editor of various publications, periodical and otherwise. His first verses appeared in 1886, and his "complete" poetical works were published in 1906 in Lviv under the editorship of Ivan Franko who declared him to be a refined and cultured poet whose language was "as clear as the heavens' azure."

Humour that often assumes the keen edge of irony and satire is the distinguishing

feature of his work. Especially does he lash out at the "patriotism" of certain of his indolent, timorous contemporaries who limited themselves to high-sounding phrases without attempting to transform them into deeds. Enemy of the base and the commonplace, Samiylenko was a determined, philosophically-minded seeker after the meaning of life; and as he compared the lofty ideals of truth and justice with man's petty strivings for material gains, his sarcasm grew merciless. Samiylenko's complaint was that, in his headlong rush for worldly goods, man had lost his heart and soul; and it was towards the restoration of that loss that he struggled with all the power of his lyrical talent. As a translator, he is noted for his fine renderings from Homer, Dante, and Molière.

THE UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE

TO T. H. SHEVCHENKO, IN MEMORIAM

A precious diamond on the road was cast,—
And divers persons down that highway passed,
Yet no one on that gem due value put;
All stamped along and tramped it under foot.
But one day came a man, keen-eyed and just,
Who marked that precious jewel in the dust.
The diamond rare at once he recognized,
And brought it home, and carefully devised
To cut the tiny stone, refine it down,
And then enchain it in a costly crown.
A marvel happened then: the stone blazed forth
And startled all the people by its worth.
With glowing fire in many a hue it shone
And dazzled every eye that gazed thereon.
Our language in the dust thus lay inert
Until a master picked it from the dirt,
Lovingly laboured with fine workmanship
Its qualities of beauty to equip,
And set it in a crown before the crowds,
And raised it like a star above the clouds.
Thence, to our foemen's rage, its rays descended
Like a fine jewel or a planet splendid;
There, while the sun remains, its light shall tease
And dazzle all our wicked enemies.
Thus, though our foes grow speechless in their rage,
Our language shines more bright on every page.

This, as our highest good, we guard and save;
Taras, himself, must marvel in his grave,
And, glancing startled at his own creation,
Must say: "Whence came this beauty to our nation?"

THE MOST PRECIOUS PEARL

I have seen many kinds of pearls
And many jewels large and small;
But there's one pearl among the rest
That is the fairest of them all.

Much money cannot buy the gem
Nor barter sate the seeker's itch,
It bides more often with the poor
Than in the coffers of the rich..

From caves of earth you gain it not
Not yet from ocean's caverns borrow;
He only finds that precious pearl
Whose heart is sensitive to sorrow.

No hungry power can avail
To snatch that precious pearl away—
That jewel is the sacred tear
Shed for our hapless folk today.

THE POET'S WOE

Worthy people! Pray take pity
On a wretched poet's fears,
Who from sorrow and derision
Cannot see the world for tears.
I shall tell you all my story:
Yesterday I sought a shop,
Looking for a tallow candle
Evening's darkness to estop.

And the loathsome, ugly grocer
(What on earth is known as worse?)
Wrapped me up that tallow candle
In a page of my own verse!
For that insult and vexation
All that night I could not sleep.
Heaven's! From my own great poem
See a tallow candle peep!

Verse by verse I'd wrought that poem,
Careful in its prosody,
Counting all its lovely trochees,
Measuring them with toil and glee;
Many a chilly night I wrote it,
Hair dishevelled, kerchief-capped,
Yet in such a wondrous poem
See, a tallow candle wrapped!

When that masterpiece was finished,
I sought out the censor's roof;
To a bookshop then I sold it;
I myself corrected proof.
Printers paid me for the volume,
Paid a kopeck for each line,—
And in pages from that epic
See a candle, tied with twine!

No, I can endure no longer
Such injustice done on earth!
Therefore death must hide me duly
Far from man's annoying mirth!
When I finish my last verses,
In the stream I shall be lapped . . .
Just to think! In my great poem
Was a tallow candle wrapped!

In my testament I'll write it:
Bury me upon the plain;
Raise a lofty cross above me,
Visible to man's disdain.
On the cross, for men's remembrance,
Let a copper plate be clapped,
Saying: "In his mighty poem
Was a tallow candle wrapped!"

MY LAURA

Though I'm not Petrarch, you're another Laura,
 Perhaps more lovely than that far-off maid,
 For on your beauty are more graces laid
 Enhancing thus the charms of Nature's aura.

Into whatever home you chance to stray,
 The sombre shadow fades from every brow;
 Dejected souls their gloom will disallow
 As all besieging sorrows fly away.

Thus when the sun, after the clouds depart,
 Casts its bright rays upon the earth below,
 All men and beasts in new rejoicing start

And all the flowers in new colours glow.
 You are my sun! Shine always in my heart
 And with me, down life's path, forever go.

HUMANITY

In better times I trust, but grieve in pain!
 How at this moment, in this glorious age,
 I long to rise and meet in joy humane
 Some who in human semblance tread life's stage!

Heroes are past,—we'll have to do without them!
 But can no spark of virtue yet be found?
 Though pompous phrase and petty impulse flout them,
 Have we no men of stature, pure and sound?

We hail our progress, and with ardour keen
 Hasten from every land for exhibitions.
 Will the time come when, more than the machine,
 We'll laud the lofty soul and disposition?

Is that time near? Earth is already old;
 And we have grown exhausted by our travel.
 Why do we not to truth and goodness hold,
 At which, in prose and verse, so many cavil?

In knowledge we have strength, and thus have order,
And should be swift to enlighten the benighted,—
So, to support all progress as its warder
Our cannon should be charged, our beacons lighted.

Knowledge is now our god! Through all these years
We've mastered it, with joy in our control;
But cast upon the highway amid sneers
The better portion of the human soul.

We have no heart. We once cared for each other
And left all theory upon the shelf;
Now we have plans galore but not a brother,
Think only of machines and of oneself.

Our finest impulse, our most fervent feeling,
We've trimmed off with the knife of calculation,
And fashioned for ourselves a life congealing
To ice all depth of thought, all jubilation.

Creative force is gone; no poet pants;
Philosophy is scorned amid earth's Reals.
What use is genius to a swarm of ants?
The factories will forge us our ideals.

Our times are sad to think of; yes, with sadness
We brood on times that seemed to bring success,
And wish that some new dawn would break in gladness
And bring the heart its meed of happiness!

POETRY SHALL NOT DIE

Poetry shall not die, creative spirits
Shall live while earth will live, and men here dwell,
So long as man will hark to nature's merits
And cares of commerce will not ring their knell.

Poetry shall not die, while men desire
To peer into those lands no eye can reach
And long beyond the earthly to aspire
And let the heavenly their spirits teach.

Poetry shall not die, though all the race
 Shall lust for food, forsaking heavenly streams;
 For loftier hopes at last will show their face
 And in the soul evoke forgotten dreams.

Immortal voices from beyond the grave
 Will speak to men who their affections hid;
 And these will gain new strength to serve and save
 And live with hearts entire, as once they did.

As long as one sole tear remains on earth,
 The poet will transmit it down the years;
 As long as innocence can smile in mirth,
 The poet will record the word that cheers.

If fate has destined for humanity
 A last and certain end for its demise,
 Then the last grave upon our earth will be
 That of the final poet, when he dies.

TO A POET

DEDICATED TO ALL HUNGRY POETS

Poet, boast not of being fed nor grieve for hunger:
 Are things like that concerns of ours?
 Your only duty is to be our dittymonger
 And not to guard your body's powers.

We shall not ask you if you ate or if you fasted—
 Would we for that feel bad or good?
 Perhaps a song profounder would have been forthcasted
 If you had used St. Tony's food!

If you're a satirist, your hunger will avail you
 To sharpen your satiric edge;
 If you're a lyrist, know that empty bellies sail you
 Aloft with lighter privilege.

If you are hungry all day long, and find no pities,
 You're sure to strengthen up your soul
 And then strike up so sharp a tune that at your ditties
 We'll stop our ears to keep them whole,

And say: "Since pessimism in mankind's portrayal
Has taken him past any friend,
Though he was once a poet, yet this sad bewrayal
Brings him to nothing at the end.

And we'll be sorry for you, for we all are kindly;
Kindness, indeed, is our sure fault;
Sometimes, when of your woes we hear, we're ready blindly
To give you lunch of bread and salt.

But you don't care for bread,—of human scorn a hater,
Eating is crass you surely feel;
You are our source of songs, of poems the creator,
Not just a man who needs a meal.

Then swallow your ambrosia, taste poetic nectar,
Sing, but not sadly we advise,
For, in our age of progress, grieving is a spectre;
It is not practical, or wise.

But if you grow exhausted and at last shall perish,
Then we shall face a task that irks:
To frame a fitting epitaph, your songs to cherish,
And publish your unfinished works.

Then argument will rage to prove what men stood closer
To you when you were yet alive;
And we at your untimely death will grow moroser
And mourn that you do not survive.

And every single word your gifted lips have uttered
Will stir our hearts with sorrow's plea;
After a year of grief, your candle will have guttered—
We'll tire of your memory.

GOD'S COMMAND

"Work, Ivan, work!" The landlord said.
"Forget fatigue a bit.
This order comes from God Himself.
It's found in Holy Writ.

"Why, God Himself for six days toiled
 In finishing His work,
 And rested on the seventh day
 From all His toil and irk."

Then Ivan by a furrow paused:
 "Your Grace, this point allow:
 It's one thing, with a Word to work;
 And one—to push a plough.

"I none the less will here obey
 Our God's command, un vexed;
 But tell me, what did God do then—
 The eighth day, and the next?"

Lesia Ukrainska, pseud.

Larissa Kosach-Kvitka (1871-1913)

One of the chief Ukrainian poets, Lesia Ukrainska was likewise one of the most cultured women of her time, well-versed in the literatures of the world and master of eight European languages. She was born in the province of Volynia into a literary family: her mother "Olena Pchilka" (pseudonym) was a poet of note, and her uncle, Mikhaylo Drahomaniv, a well-known political figure, radical, educator, and Westernizer. Their influence, the beauty of nature amid which she grew, as well as the impact of foreign literatures contributed to the versatility and originality of form and content of her lyrics, poems, and dramas. Lesia Ukrainska began to write verses when she was nine, and by the time she was twelve, saw some of them in print. Her first collection of lyrics, *On Wings of Songs*, appeared in Lviv in 1893. A stream of others followed. It was her feverish creative activity that undermined her already precarious health and caused her early death from tuberculosis. She died in the Caucasus, where her husband served as a judge, but she was buried in Kiev.

Lesia Ukrainska's greatest literary achievement was her historical, allegorical, exotic dramas whose themes she based on foreign subjects—Babylonian, Hebrew, Greek, Roman, Spanish, French. They were not meant for the stage. In them she developed and sought to resolve complex philosophical, moral, psychological universal problems that could be applied also to the spiritual and material needs of her own generation and age. Dynamism, dialectical power, depth of thought, and the forceful delineation of her heroes are the chief characteristics of her dramas, which established her as one of the most original of European writers. These qualities are also to be found in much of her poetry, especially her longer poems. Titles of some of her

dramas are: *Cassandra*, *In the Wilderness*, *In the Catacombs*, *Babylonian Captivity*, *The Stone Guest* (Don Juan), *The Orgy*.

Her lyrical creativeness may be divided into two categories—feminine and masculine. The former stemmed partly from the doom of her incurable disease and resolved itself into elements of melancholy and despair; the latter revealed her as emerging from those depths, hoping against hope, and striving to convert her words into “tempered steel” with which to prick and prod her people (whom she did not spare in castigating as “pariahs” and “fellahs”) to heroic deeds worthy of a Robert Bruce, a Spartacus, or a Prometheus. For that reason Ivan Franko described her as “the greatest masculine writer in the entire Ukraine.”

CONTRA SPEM SPERO¹

Away, ye gloomy thoughts, ye autumn clouds!
 Today about me is a golden spring!
 And shall my youth be wrapped in sorrow’s shrouds
 And fly away on lamentation’s wing?

No, I would smile, though even through my tears,
 And sing my songs amid my dark distress,
 And cherish hope, when not one hope appears.
 I want to live! Avaunt, my hopelessness!

Upon my poor and melancholy fallow
 I shall sow harvests of resplendent flowers,
 Sow even amid frosts, and gently hallow
 With dew of tears their unaccomplished powers.

And from the burning tears I there let fall
 The solid, icy crust will surely melt.
 Perhaps the buds will blossom after all
 And breezes of a happy spring be felt.

Up the steep pathway on the flinty hill,
 I’ll bear my rocky burden all day long,
 And though I carry such a load, I still
 Shall keep my heart and sing a happy song.

In the obscurity of pitch-black night,
 I shall not for one moment close my eyes,
 But seek my guiding star’s unfailing light,
 That radiant mistress of the nightly skies.

¹“I hope against hope.”

I will not let my heart fall slumbering,
 Even if dark and grief around prevail,
 For I shall find my spirit numbering
 The deadly steps of death upon my trail.

Mortality will then press hard upon me;
 A deadly mist will cover up the stars;
 My heart beats harder: death will not outrun me,
 Nor pen my eager pulse behind his bars.

Yes, I would smile, though even through my tears,
 And sing my songs amid my dark distress,
 And cherish hope, when not one hope appears.
 I want to live! Avaunt, my hopelessness!

MY HEART IS ABLAZE

My heart is ablaze; it was set all aflame
 By the spark of a grief that is dire.
 Why, then, don't I weep and make use of my tears
 To flood out my terrible fire?

My soul is in tears and would fain seek relief,
 Yet my tears in a stream will not fleet;
 They reach not my eyes for the flame of my grief
 Dries them up with its vehement heat.

I wish I could go to a field that is open
 And fall with my face to the ground,
 And wail so that stars' ears might hear my lament
 And men shudder deep at the sound.

And ever my thought flies in sorrow to you,
 My land that is hapless and wasted!
 Whene'er I recall you, the heart in my breast
 Grows faint with the sorrow I've tasted.

These eyes have seen much of oppression and grief
 But greater than yours they have seen not.
 Your lot they'd bewail but feel shame at the tears
 When qualms of the soul intervene not.

Such tears have already been shed in profusion,
 To turn the whole land into mud . . .
 But enough of their shedding,—what use are our tears
 When our cause cries out hoarsely for blood!

RHYTHMS

I

O where have you gone, my vociferous words
 Without which my sorrow is numb?
 Like waters in spring to the gullies and glades,
 You've dispersed and your voice is turned dumb.
 Why do you not rise, like the waves of the sea,
 And shout to the sky as you roll,
 Make deaf with your surges my sorrow of heart
 And raising a tempest to tear it apart
 Come shattering the grief of my soul?
 I have nurtured your spirits, O words of my verse,
 And fed you with blood from my veins,
 But not that you flow like a trickle of venom
 Or rust out men's souls with your pains.
 On boisterous billows and radiant beams
 Swift sparks and bright stars as they fall,
 On fiery lightnings and scimitars keen
 I'd breed you up bravest of all!—
 To waken the mountains to echoes, not groans,
 To pierce, and not poison, the heart into moans,
 Not a whine but a song you must be.
 Strike hard and cut deep, even ruthlessly slay,
 No shower of autumn that drips half a day . . .
 Flame and burn in the fiercest degree!

VI

If all my blood had from my flesh been drained
 As these my words have bled! And if my spirit
 Were imperceptibly to fade away
 As fades the evening light! . . . Who here has placed me
 A sentry amid ruins and in sorrow?
 Who has imposed on me the fateful duty
 To rouse the dead and incarnate the living

With the kaleidoscope of joys and griefs?
 Who has placed dauntless pride within my heart?
 Who thrust into my hand the two-edged sword?
 Who bade me grasp the sacred oriflamme
 Of songs and dreams, and of rebellious thoughts?
 Who has commanded me: hold fast your arms,
 Do not retreat, or stumble, or grow weak?
 Why must I heed the imperious command?
 Why do I dare not flee the field of honour
 Or fall in suicide upon my sword?
 What does not suffer me to speak this word:
 "Thou, Fate, art stronger, and I must submit!"
 Why, at the thought of these submissive words,
 Does my hand firmly grasp an unseen weapon
 While warlike shouts re-echo in my heart? . . .

THE FORGOTTEN SHADOW

I see stern Dante,¹ fugitive from Florence,
 Rise from the dimness of the Middle Ages.
 As dark as were those times, so were his songs.
 He found them in the mystic, gloomy forest
 Amid the anarchy of monstrous phantoms.
 Whose spirit would have dared to wander with him
 If fair eternal flowers had not blossomed
 Among the thorns within that wooded valley?
 With his artistic hand the singer gathered
 Those flowers fair and wove them in a wreath,
 And sprinkled it with a celestial dew
 And placed this tribute to untimely death
 On Beatrice Portinari's grave.
 She once had smiled at him; a second time,
 She passed him by without a single glance;
 When a third time he saw the gentle maid,
 She in her coffin lay and was no more.

¹Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), a Florentine poet, author of the *Divine Comedy*, in which is described his progress through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Into Paradise he was led by Beatrice (Portinari) who, on earth, had inspired him with transcendental love. "Beatrice" here is pronounced in four syllables, as in Italian.

To him she seemed to be the sun itself,
Which radiates light and happiness and life
And does not know to whom it grants those gifts.
And though that all-resplendent sun had set,
Dante forgot it not in gloomy darkness
Nor by the inviting blaze upon his hearth.
Neither on earth, in Hell or Paradise,
Could he forget his Beatrice's face.
She alone ruled the kingdom of his verse
For in that country where his soul abode
He found no other consort all his life.
Her he adorned with such a crown of glory
As graced no other's head in all our world.

Immortal couple—he and Beatrice,
The very hand of death had failed to part them.
Why then, Chimera, Phantasy, dost thou
Reveal to me a vague and lowly figure
Who stands between them like a trembling shadow,
Faint as a swooning dreamer's lapsing vision?
Her forehead bears no wreath, no aureole—
Her countenance is covered with a veil
As with thick mist. What person can she be?
No poet ever glorified her story;
No painter has portrayed that hidden face.
Somewhere, deep down, beneath known history,
There lies a lost remembrance. Who is she?
Great Dante's wife. No other appellation
Has lingered on, as if through all her life
This shadowy woman had no proper name.
She for the poet was no guiding star;
But was a faithful shadow at his side
Who was the leader of "poor Italy."
She shared with him the crusted bread of exile;
For him she fanned the fire upon the hearth
Within an alien home. And many a time,
His failing hand, when it would seek support,
Leaned, for new strength, upon her steady shoulder.
Her pathway was the glory of his songs;
Yet for herself she never stretched a hand
To clutch a single ray of light from them.
And when at last his poet's eyes were spent,
She closed them for the grave with pious hand.

A faithful shadow, yes! But her own life—
Where is her destiny, her joy, her sorrow?
Clio is mute. But in my thought I see
How many a day of grieving loneliness
Was spent in anxious waiting, many a night
Was sleepless in the direst distress
And long as misery . . . And tears I see . . .
And on those tears, as if on pearly dew,
The soul of Beatrice has passed to Heaven.

WHY ART THOU NOT LIKE TEMPERED STEEL?

Why art thou not like tempered steel, my word,
That flashes brightly where the battle smoulders?
Why art thou not a keen remorseless sword
That slashes foemen's heads from off their shoulders?

Thou art my candid and fierce-tempered speech,
And I would gladly draw thee from thy scabbard;
But thou my own heart's veins wouldest surely breach
And wouldest not with my foeman's gore be slabbered.

My shining weapon I will whet and hone,
And use it while I've energy and skill;
Then on the wall will hang it up alone—
An act for others' joy, to me for ill.

Thou art my only blade; I have no others.
When I shall die, thou must not perish too!
Perhaps, when wielded by my unknown brothers,
Thou at our hangmen's heads wilt better hew.

Thy edge will clash against the steel of fetters
And fling its echo to the tyrant's keep,
And clash with other swords, but not its betters,
Its voice be not the voice of them that weep.

Doughty avengers will receive my blade,
And in the conflict it will flash and shine . . .
And may its exploits in their hands be made
Better than in these feeble hands of mine!

JEREMIAH

Jeremiah, thou prophet of ill in an epoch of iron,
 Sure the Lord must have given thee heart-strings of crystalline rock:
 Thou hast seen that thy people would rot in a captive's environ—
 Yet thy heart was not shattered by grief in that horrible shock!

How couldst thou survive to behold that thy word had come true?
 When the arrows of enemies rained on the city of God,
 Thou must surely have tempered thy heart with a sorcery new
 Upon which even arrows of foemen were shattered, ill-shod.

After battle thou lingeredst lone in a city of rubble;
 And thy passionate tears on the desolate cobbles were spent;
 And the sorrowful ruins re-echoed the voice of thy trouble
 So that distant posterity heard in their time thy lament.

Jeremiah, thy patience in sorrow surpasses all hint:
 How was it thy heart was not shattered by grief and its shock?
 For a boiling hot spring will mine under a mountain of flint.
 Yes, thy heart must indeed have been fashioned of crystalline rock.

Ossip Makovey
 (1867-1925)

A poet, short story writer, and critic, Makovey was one of the more eminent writers of Western Ukraine where he was born (near Lviv) and where, after a university course, he engaged in life-long literary and pedagogical work. In poetry, he was an innovator who, following the contemporary European trends in literary criticism, sought to beat out new paths for Ukrainian literature. In that process he outpaced by far most of his fellow-poets in Ukraine. As a prose writer, Makovey is distinguished for the light humour that he instilled in his well-developed long short stories, as well as for the clarity and vitality of his expression. To his critical talent we owe, among other items, a fine monograph on O. Y. Fedkovich.

AN ELEGY

When we are dead and overgrown with flowers,
 Our memories will stir as we lie thus
 Till by our bones are laid all friends of ours—
 All those in life who once remembered us.

And that indeed our final death will prove.
The wind throughout the world our dust will spread,
New springs will come, new seasons for man's love,
But no one will recall the vanished dead.
Yet one day will a lonely maiden come,
On a bright morn, to silent woods a-dream:
And suddenly her heart will start to thrum
And sight will darken as her teardrops stream.
It is our spirits she will hear and see
Like an imagined tale from olden times,
And she will close her eyes in sympathy
And hear the forest's dreams in wistful chimes.

THE STONE AGE

One day I read a learned book
About the Old Stone Age,
And saw my distant forbear tramp
Through thickets, full of rage.
Upon his back he bears a stag;
The sweat drips freely down;
The sun, though sinking towards the woods,
Still burns with blazing frown.
He calls his wife from out their cave
To gaze upon his prey:
“Give me a roast for dinner, wife!
Now drag the beast away!”
To him our ancient mother says:
“Today I cannot cook.
But there is some good raw meat left—
I've brought it for you. Look!”
At this our fierce forefather shouts:
“A roast is what I said!
Out of my cave and sight, you wench,
Or else I'll strike you dead!
I drag myself through forests dark,
My strength in the hunt I scupper;
And now this slut would offer me
Raw venison for my supper!”
My pristine mother then grew scared;
“The fire is out, and dark!

I've rubbed and twirled with sticks for hours
 But cannot raise a spark!"
 He seized a knife of flint, and cried:
 "Out of my sight, you squaw!"
 Then from the stag he cut a ham,
 And ate it, even raw.
 The woman covers up her face
 And forth her sobs break:
 "He asks me for a roast each day,
 But fires are hard to make!"
 O do not weep, my ancient dear!
 Your battle is half won!—
 Just learn the way to make a fire
 And all your cares are done!
 Your modern children find things worse
 In spite of all their gear:
 Electric stoves they all may have
 But eat roast once a year.

NATURE

Fierce nature, cunning foster-mother thou,
 Insatiable and swift to slay, I vow,
 Can man a song of praise to thee allow?
 Why dost thou lure us on with lying breath
 And, in life's war, embitter us to death,
 Teacher of hate—whate'er the preacher saith?
 And must we sing thy praise for torments rare,
 For blood, for death, for outcries of despair,
 Model of savage science, and its heir?
 For struggles we have waged since childhood's vision,
 For all our envenomed moments of decision,
 Accept my haughty laughter and derision!

A REFLECTION

To me it seems that I had not yet lived,
 But only was preparing for my life,
 Seeking for something as I vainly sieved,
 Wanting to help the world while hopes were rife,

When suddenly I found my youth was past,
Fallen asleep, its dreams all overcast.

As that day comes upon me, like a slush,
I celebrate a lengthy requiem:
Farewell, my youthful years, my springtime lush!
I do not praise you, nor do I condemn:
Faced by the grave, I cannot call you back;
My youth has gone forever on its track.

But in my very grief I seem to see
My youth is only drowsy, and not dead;
The time of grief has not yet come for me,
And lays of death are prematurely said!
Some life is left! All grief let us disown,
And search with longing after things unknown!

THE CRUCIFIX¹

Another crucifix, on hills of loss—
Where'er one looks, God's nailed upon a cross!

No knowledge here, but an abyss of faith
On countless servile gibbets trails its wraith.

All earth resounds with songs of resurrections,
And men are waiting for divine refections.

They sully nature's holy countenance
With the foul final sign of Christ's mishance,

While they themselves in devilish wise behave,
Beasts that they are, from cradle to the grave!

O Christ, look down! Each Judas and each Pilate
Expecta a heavenly gift! They're not a shy lot.

For with Thy cross their conscience stills its moan,
While every hand is like these crosses—stone.

At home, Thy cross they worship and implore,
While Thou art uninvited, at the door . . .

¹Referring to roadside calvaries.

DEATH

Above the stars the moon is all aglow;
Cloud shadows now to mountain pastures go;
While in the drowsy vale the night-mists flow.

On a steep cliff, below the moonlit crest,
A fir-tree lies sepulchred in its nest,
Felled by the lightning to its endless rest.

Its sisters rustle o'er its grassy cowl;
And on the broken stump, a silent fowl,
There dozes, deep in thought, a puffed-up owl.

A METEOR

A meteor flashed, and vanished, swift as thought:
So flies life's happiness, a thing of naught;

And on the universal graveyard's breast
The fragments of a star lie down to rest.

Thus do the wandering worlds disintegrate—
They fleet and perish in unmeaning fate.

To one vast cemetery all have passed,
For their creator digs their grave at last.

And always, when vain joys have swiftly flown,
He plies his business in the grim unknown.

Pavlo Hrabovsky
(1864-1902)

Hrabovsky's literary and publicist career began in the region of Kharkiv where he was born and, as the son of a sexton, completed his seminarian studies. From the age of eighteen on, he was in constant collision with the tsarist authorities on account of his outspoken ideas regarding the sorry social state of the peasantry. For this reason, as well as for his nationalistic tendencies, he was arrested several times and, in 1885, sent to Tashkent. From there, three years later, he was further exiled to the region of Irkutsk where he died after some twenty years of persecution and fourteen years of Siberian misery.

Most of his literary work coincides with the latter period of his life, and from that painful experience stem his lyrics full of sympathy for the downtrodden and grimly vocal in their indictment of the oppressors. One must not seek in Hrabovsky's poetry "art for art's sake," for he rejected outright all "pure" poetry, and even sacrificed universal ideals for the practical needs of the people for whose welfare he suffered a lifetime of tribulation. No Parnassian he, but a rustic Jeremiah bewailing the wretched lot of his countrymen.

Hrabovsky made valuable translations from French, German, and English poetry. His was the first Ukrainian translation (1897) of Poe's "The Raven."

TO PARNASSIANS¹

By heavenly azure have your eyes been charmed,
Which, as it prettifies and gilds your verse,
Dazzles your eyes and leaves your vision harmed
And cloaks your faults with counterfeit still worse.

You dream unceasingly of fragrant flowers,
You dream of love as pure as asphodel,
Pearls in the mire you're finding at all hours,
And show us happy souls content with hell.

Life seems to you a feast, an incarnation
Of high, harmonious progress—far remote . . .
Come, fellows, leave your proud Parnassian station,
And don a simple peasant's homespun coat!

The nightingale is singing in the branches,—
Such melodies as hers do not invoke,
But point the way to Freedom's avalanches
With simple language of the common folk!

* * * *

I am no singer of enchanting nature
With all its lure of cold indifference;
My mind keeps brooding on the hapless people—
My heart is theirs, my sympathy intense.
Amid the shine of sunlight's golden spaces
I see mankind without a crust of bread . . .

¹Parnassus, a peak in Greece; in mythology, considered as the abode of Apollo and the Muses. Parnassians are creators of "pure" poetry.

The blue sky and the songbirds' choruses
Stab through a peasant's groans with knife of dread.
Though joy and intellect around me rule,
They have no power to possess my brain;
For wrongs and misery are everywhere
And brothers gnaw each other in disdain.
Let poets whom exalted thoughts inspire
Sing to enchant us in a thousand tones
About the bowers and dreams of paradise—
All beauty dies when I hear human groans!
Let such as they in nature's lap rejoice
And seek forgetfulness of pain and care,
They cannot thus be lulled: within the heart
The whole world's anguish will cry out in prayer!

A DREAM

A green grove and a pleasant field
I dreamed of in my prison cell,—
And a vast meadow that revealed,
Sea-like, a melancholy swell.

I saw a garden by a cot
In summer joy . . . and there, within,
My mother, wearied, worn and hot,
My sister, wasted with chagrin.

Her face had paled, her eyes were dimmed,
Her form was stooped, her dreams were smoke . . .
At midnight there my eyes were brimmed,
And, weeping sadly, I awoke.

THE KOBZAR

I played at men's weddings, I played over coffins,
Both under thatched roofs and in palaces high;
I entertained all, but at night after labour
No shelter I had of my own where I'd lie.
To please all, I poured out my songs in profusion;
No kindred or home for my solace I bring;

I make the girls weep and I cause the lads laughter:
 I find the task hard, yet I cannot but sing.
 But now I have trudged to the end of the highway,
 My strength is worn out and my hair turning white;
 The world has such grief and so little of gladness . . .
 No handclasp is mine in warm friendship's delight.
 A mist fills my eyes and my legs don't obey me,
 A light kobza's¹ weight makes my poor body bend;
 Long since I have lost all the intimate pathways
 And know not at all where my journey will end.
 Thus lonely, I wander, and homeless shall perish,
 And all unlamented be laid in the earth.
 I only would ask: lay my kobza beside me,
 The one joy I've known since the day of my birth.

* * * *

Let the horizons grow dim,
 Thunders more terrors engender,—
 I from my path shall not swerve,
 Never to Darkness surrender.

I shall preserve my bright faith,
 Hopes that are sacred presenting,
 Nor shall I sway with the wind
 Hither and thither consenting.

For I know that the ugly will perish,
 That evil will yield to the good;
 Mankind will rise up to guard truth,
 Although for the false it has stood.

Uliana Kravchenko, pseud.
 (1860-1947)

She was born Julia Schneider in the county of Zhidachiv, Galicia, and taught school for most of her life. Although she began as a romantic idealist, under the political pressure of her times she turned into a populist poet of the budding feminist move-

¹See p. 154, fn. 1.

ment, and filled her verses with clarion calls to her countrywomen to work not only for their own but for the general emancipation of the nation through enlightenment and physical force. Her earlier lyrics are inspired by love and nature; in her later ones, she used natural phenomena in their more turbulent aspects to symbolize her nationalist feelings. Uliana Kravchenko was also a noted writer of children's verse.

AT THE FALLS OF THE PRUT

Thou fiest on and on, thy cascades roar!
Thou hast not sought on beaten paths to rest.
Hast thou then felt the power in thy breast
To win new ways? And dost thou peace deplore?

Like flowers thou pluckest pines along thy shore
And the firm portal of the rocky crest
Is torn apart by billows in their zest
That gurgle proudly as they onward pour.

They've cast away their chains! Up yonder lie
Only high pasture and a patch of sky
And a light breeze that lulls the mountain stream.

How many souls would seek the lowlands' mire
Did not the soaring wings of high desire
Lift them aloft to hills and skies of dream!

* * * *

Along the bright sky the white clouds in their flocks
Move quietly hour by hour;
In the deep, silent azure, the sunlight unlocks
Their path with its radiant power.

O clouds, will you, following dewfall at night,
Flow down on the flowers and trees,
Or will you fly up with the wind in its flight
And thundering swoop on the leas?

O thoughts, fleeting clouds, as you float through the spheres,
What fate on light wings will you reach?
Will you pour yourselves out in the silence of tears
Or shake all the world with your speech?

Agathangel Krimsky

(1871-1941)

Krimsky was born in the town of Volodimir-Volynsky. Being of a linguistic bent, he specialized in Oriental languages at the Lazarevsky Institute in Moscow, and in philology at the University of Moscow. After spending two years in Syria in advanced studies, Krimsky returned to become professor of Arabic at the Institute, and of Oriental philology at the University.

Prolific as a scholar, but lonely as a man, Krimsky burdened his reflective, melancholy lyricism with a philosophic, pantheistic and exotic content, seeking in Nature some distant, unattainable sublimity to satisfy his inner cravings. Like Diogenes, he was endlessly seeking a human being who might conform to his ideals and at least partly lessen his loneliness, going so far as to identify God himself with the human object of his search. Krimsky is perhaps the greatest subjective poet in Ukrainian literature. Subjectivism is likewise the chief characteristic of his stories and novels. Being an Orientalist and a poet, it is understandable why his translations from the Eastern poets, particularly Firdausi, are of such excellence.

Besides writing some five hundred learned articles on Oriental topics in German, Russian, and Ukrainian periodicals and encyclopedias, Krimsky did deep research in Old Slavic and Ukrainian philology and folklore, and investigated many dialects of Eastern Europe. He was also the author of a historical Ukrainian grammar (published in 1908). His entire scholarly output comprises some one thousand learned items.

His death occurred at the beginning of the Soviet-Nazi War, amid obscure circumstances as yet unclarified.

* * * *

I climbed the crest. Below, the clouds were moving.
 I looked far off: at Beirut, at the sea.
 Here, glacial ice; there, magic all-approving . . .
 A paradisal nook of sorcery.

See Beirut shine! A tropical, bright orchard,
 Where palms are on a rug of lilies spread!
 And sense with pungent scent is sweetly tortured
 Where tuberose and orchid brim the bed . . .

I look at Lebanon. There coolness breathes
 From a green meadow, moist with fragrant dew.
 And mighty nature in the forest sheathes
 The grace of Spring and all her retinue!

While here among the clouds, where I am hidden,
 The snow and ice are deep; yet from this crust
 A pale-blue cowslip has come forth unbidden
 And gently smiles to me in silent trust.

More mighty than the cedars is this floret:
 It braves the winter in this icy nest.
 Such is my love: for silent powers restore it,
 And, with its flame, make glow the entire breast.

From ANTE MORTEM MELODIES

I stand in a grove in the spring
 With sweet violets round in a ring . . .

I am frightened to tramp
 On these violets damp,
 While joy stops my breath with its sting.

At times I have hope that I may
 Revive in new ardour today . . .

But vain are my dreams
 And extinguished their gleams,
 And life is all smouldered away!

Like yesteryear's leaves do I lie,
 Still warmed by the sun in the sky;
 They may smile in the sun,
 But their life-span is done,
 And they're rotting as surely as I.

Vassil Shchurat

(1872-1948)

Native of the Podilia region of Galicia, Shchurat completed his university studies in Lviv and Vienna and, later, as doctor in philology, he became a gymnasium professor. Most of his literary and scholarly work centred around the Shevchenko Scientific Society of which he, for a period, was president. During the Polish régime in Galicia (between the Wars) he was arrested for political activity and spent some time in prison.

As a poet, Shchurat was a fine craftsman of artistic form, a penetrating observer of

life, and a keen analyst of its moods. Somewhat depressed in his outlook, he envisioned human existence (and that of his people) as enveloped in a darkness only occasionally pierced by lightning, symbolic of vivifying flashes of positive thought; and Nature (Ukraine) as a placid, vegetative domain in which only the elemental forces were of any consequence.

Being a linguist, Shchurat rendered many European literary masterpieces including *The Song of Roland* into Ukrainian, and was the compiler of the first French grammar for Ukrainian students.

A CLOUDLET FLOATED

A cloudlet floated in the sky
And paused above a copse;
It noticed there a withered leaf
And down it fell in drops.

The tiny cloud became transformed
To little pearls of grief
That sparkled like a diadem
Upon the yellow leaf.

At night, the frigid wind blew hard;
The jewelled tears congealed
In hoary frost upon the leaf,
As if by Death's hand sealed.

Upon the tiny leaf thus died
Tears from the little cloud,
And, in their dying, wove for it
A mortuary shroud.

The stars were burning, taper-like;
The winds tolled out the knell;
And to its fresh grave, from the tree,
The little leaf-corpses fell.

There melancholy's breath was felt;
The leaves were piled like plunder;
All tread in sorrow as they tramp
The yellow corpses under.

* * * *

The mountains once covered with snow,
The valleys by frost beaten low,
Thou hast decked out in green, far more bright than all other,
O Spring, like a mother;

The rivers salute thy arrival;
To all thou hast given revival;
Thou hast cradled all things and hast warmed them each hour
To the best of thy power.

To thee all the blossoms are bending
And larks' throats their ringing songs sending;
All worship the spring and thy power thereunder,
O Spirit of Wonder.

To all, Spring, thou givest new life
And peace from the winter wind's strife;
To peasants thy bounty, as earth now grows younger,
Is turned into hunger.

EVENTIDE

The gloaming brings its spell anon:
The rosy light from heaven has gone.
And the mysterious dusk has sealed
The front of forest, hill and field.

The final wain, sheaf-laden, creaks;
A song of maids from orchards speaks;
On lonely fields, in shadowy smarting,
It scatters forth the pain of parting.

At last all songs to silence creep;
The toiling day has gone to sleep;
But in the sky, as still as dew,
Still lovelier stars their course pursue.

In such a starry quietude
Peace has my silent heart endued!
And thus, forsaking earth unblest,
I'll seek some day my heavenly rest!

Ludmilla Staritska-Cherniakhivska
 (1868-1941)

Staritska-Cherniakhivska was the daughter of the poet and dramatist, M. Staritsky, with whom she collaborated in a number of historical novels. Born in Kiev, she completed her higher studies there, after which she engaged in a literary and publicist career that ended in 1929 when she was arrested by the Soviet authorities (together with the historian of Ukrainian literature, S. Yefremov, and several others) for her activity in the Association for the Liberation of Ukraine. As a result, she was exiled for life to the Solovetski Islands in the White Sea.

Whether in novels, dramas or verse, Staritska-Cherniakhivska's idealization of historical figures and events classifies her as a neo-romantic. As a critic, she dealt in a highly penetrating manner with many Ukrainian writers, particularly with Lesia Ukrainka.

PRELUDE

Awake, rise up, attendants fine!
 Our camp needs lavishment!
 Singers, your brave banduras¹ bring
 And gather in my tent!

Saddle your horses, heralds bold,
 Your swift and faithful steeds,
 And bear across your cuirassed breasts
 The trumpets that man heeds.

Ride down the roads without delay,
 By noonday and by night;
 Above the forests and the steppes
 Sound the great call aright!

And here in my luxurious tent
 Be you, proud guests, increased
 In joy as on my princely floor
 We hold a noisy feast.

The ancient chords are with us yet,
 Left by our grandsires frank;
 Our bowls indeed will brim with mead
 That our old princes drank.

¹See p. 154, fn. 1.

Our buckets must be heavy ones,
 They must be truly great,
 To be as vast as our renown
 And mighty as our fate.

Our brows we shall adorn with flowers,
 And freedom's song we'll cry;
 A cup that's running o'er with mead
 We'll all raise up on high.

Our first libation to Peroun,²
 God of dark clouds, we'll pour;
 Play on more loudly, mighty chords,
 To praise his godhead more!

The next libation hails Dazhböh,³
 The deity of light,
 Who passes down the azure path
 While all adore the sight.

A third to gracious Lada⁴ goes,
 Goddess of joy and spring;
 In her dominion dwell our loves,
 To her our carols ring.

And now, my lords and masters all,
 Let's heavè a heavy sigh,
 And to our own unwonted fame
 We'll drink the beaker dry . . .

Of requiem we have no need—
 We'll chant our own loud wake,
 And on the doors of heaven above
 Our clamorous songs will break.

And in those hoary strains will rise
 Our glorious dead of old;
 In them they will no more be vexed
 By monks with beards of mould!

²In Ukrainian mythology, the god of thunder.

³In Ukrainian mythology, god, the “giver” of light and fire; later he became, by extension, the god of the crops and plenty.

⁴In Ukrainian mythology, the goddess of Spring; in Ukrainian wedding songs she was also extolled as the deity of love and abundance.

Summon our faithful vassals all;
 Fill to the rim the cup;
 Our glory past all measure vast
 Death cannot swallow up.

HYMN TO APHRODITE

O Aphrodite, goddess all-immortal!
 I fall in my petition at thy feet:
 Hark to my song, enveloped in my tears,
 And mark the sigh of my virginity!

Mother of love! To thee, in gold resplendent,
 Did I devote my lyre, my speech and hymn.
 From heaven thou hast often fluttered down
 To hearken, in a rainbow, to my songs.

With right hand thou hast also touched my heart
 And spoken to my soul, Eternal One:
 “Daughter of mine! I shall raise Sappho up
 Above all women in the world of Hellas!

“Thy heart I shall set flowing with my spells
 That even make the gods themselves ecstatic;
 I’ll grant it power to call forth love’s endearments
 And kindle in thy eyes an ardent yearning.”

Why then is Phaon’s heart not yet afame
 From that enticement that was granted me?
 Mother of love, great goddess all-immortal,
 Come to my aid and set his heart on fire!

Vassil Pachovsky

(1878-1942)

Pachovsky was born in the county of Zolochiv, Galicia. At the University of Lviv, he was one of some seven hundred Ukrainian students who rebelled against its authorities and, with many, left it to study elsewhere when their efforts to have Ukrainian (instead of the official German and Polish) made the language of instruction proved of no avail. His university studies were completed in Vienna, after which he returned to Lviv to teach at a gymnasium. Pachovsky was active as a poet during World War I,

and, following the fall of the short-lived Ukrainian Republic in 1921, he settled in Uzhhorod, the capital of the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine. He died in Lviv under the Soviet régime.

His first collection of verse, *Scattered Pearls*, published in 1902, won him general critical approval for its refined versification and reserved, philosophically-tinctured erotic element; not so, however, his later erotic lyrics in which intense passion predominates, to all appearances unrelieved by any deeper import. (None of these are included in the present selection.) On the whole, Pachovsky was a virtuoso in tonal effects and aesthetic craftsmanship. His historical dramas, although of high artistic calibre, are heavily burdened with symbolism and laboured pathos, and for that reason have as yet failed to be staged.

A LARK

A young and happy bird am I
And fly like wind across the sky;
Down from my song sweet laughter falls,
A merry spring-song upon all!
Let the storm roar—I laugh to see,
And raise a brave new melody,
While in my wake the world revives
And spring in all its blossoms thrives!
Weep not in those you have begot,
For they will see, if we do not,
The season when the sun's warm arms
Will spread abroad its golden charms!
After the storm, bright days will follow
And seed will sprout in every hollow;
And rainbows in their arch will bring
The promise of another spring.
The sun will shine an end to weeping,
Grain from the sower's hand go leaping—
The field will brighten like an ocean
And mists will vanish in devotion.
Within my heart I feel and know
My song at last its truth will show.
The path before me has not erred:
I am the Lord's prophetic bird.
I fly and sing both day and night,
With laughter in my song's delight,
And one sure chord rings like a bell:
The spring, sweet spring, I must foretell!

AFTER THE STORM

Turbulent bellows the valley, and turbulent crashes the forest,
 And turbulence sways the trees on the mountain slopes;
 Deep in the valley the river is groaning and roars like a devil,
 Rolling the shattered stones from the hill's high copes.
 Clouds are a-march on the crests, and far off the howls are resounding
 As herds of wild beasts re-echo the sound of the storm;
 High on the peaks of the hills, the sun's rays already are falling,
 Gilding the sullen mists with a glory serene and warm.
 Gone is the hurricane's passion, and peace now at last is returning,
 Only the broken oak, laid low on the river's banks,
 Groans, in defeat and shame, as he lies in the turbid water:
 "Everything stands, I, alone, have fallen in battle's ranks!"

Mikola Cherniavsky

(1867-1937)

Born into a priest's family in the region of Katerinoslav, Cherniavsky completed his studies at the local theological seminary, after which he taught in a *bursa* (semi-theological boarding college) in the town of Bakhmut. For several years he was a civil servant in Chernihiv and later in Kherson, where he again turned to teaching.

Cherniavsky was a poet of sensitive temperament with a proneness to melancholy musings and a longing for an idyllic life. As long as he remained a brother amid placid nature, his Muse served him well; but no sooner did he seek to become a "poet of revenge" battling the commonplace of sheer existence, than his own verse became commonplace, mere versified and rhymed prose.

As a prose writer, Cherniavsky is a fine stylist, second only to M. Kotsiubinsky, with whom he collaborated on a few almanacs in which he sought to organize the younger writers. His longer prose works are fine stylistically, but rather shallow in the delineation of character and the development of plot.

HARVEST TIME

Upon the plain I wander free,
 And gaze as far as I can see—
 On fertile fields and meadows rare
 That lie luxuriant everywhere.

Here spiky ear to spiky ear
Will wave and sing its song of cheer,
Tuned to the humming of the bee,
That tiny tiller of the lea.

Ever so lightly seems to sway
The golden, hard-grained wheat today;
While the thick barley, pliant-necked,
Too lazy seems to stand erect.

The hairy oats, all silver-finned,
Play on and rustle in the wind;
The cornflower spreads out underneath
And sparkles with its tiny wreath.

The clamorous quail among the grain,
The insect with its golden mane,
The beetle, butterfly and I
Are in the field one family.

Upon us here the sunbeams fall;
Steppes welcome and enfold us all
The bright expanse our lives invests
For all of us are here its guests . . .

Above the steppe the wind is blowing;
The sun shines down, its warmth bestowing;
Strong in their roots, here sway and beat
The shining waves of golden wheat.

Here spiky ear to spiky ear
Will wave, and sing its song of cheer,
Tuned to the humming of the bee,
That tiny tiller of the lea.

THE SEA

Beneath the deep sea's surface we can mark
Where pensive orchards rise in sombre trees;
There cliffs rise up, their foreheads jutting dark,
Unfathomed in their powers and mysteries.

Sea-wonders lurk, grim octopuses green
Sit in their caverns waiting for their prey;
There Neptune's crystal chambers can be seen
And gardens of the Sirens, false and gay.

And there, in droves, the natives of the deep
Move and enjoy their kingdom, dim and still! . . .
Like those mysterious depths, we learn from sleep
The soul of man has gulfs of good and ill.

AN ENDLESS STEPPE

An endless steppe, unlimited
Until it reaches to the sea,
Quite without rivers, lakes and groves
But strewn with hayricks' soft debris.
No single copse or thicket shows;
All earth around appears but waste;
No streamlet in the willow shade
Is heard to murmur, silver-paced.
And when at times, with thundering voice,
The clouds come rushing from the deep,
Criss-cross the steppe with lightnings fierce
And would arouse it from its sleep,
It startles and awakens then
And to the thunder bares its breast;
The entire earth becomes a voice
And laughs to greet the sky with zest.
The steppe is dead. It can be roused
With lightning-flash and thunder-peal . . .
Therefore, above the vast expanse
Let wished-for thunder crash like steel!

Mikola Filiansky
(1873-1937)

Filiansky was a native of the Poltava region, where his father was a priest. At the University of Moscow he first studied mathematics, but later took a course in architecture and engraving, after which he was employed by the tsarist Ministry of the Interior as an architect. Following a brief sojourn in Paris, Filiansky spent some time in the Urals, doing research in construction materials. As a well-rounded scientist, he directed for a period a school of agronomy in the district of Poltava, and then worked at the Scientific Institute of Kharkiv, where he investigated certain problems

in applied geology. In 1937, during the Stalinist Purge, he was arrested and sent to one of the concentration camps in the Arctic north.

As a poet, Filiansky is a subjectivist, with a marked tendency to self-analysis and pessimistic philosophic broodings. A fine master of sounds, he manipulates them as the impressionist Renoir does his colours. His collection of lyrics entitled *Calendarium* reveals him as an elegiac lover of Nature in her melancholy moods, twilight hues, and passive aspects, amid which he seemed to enjoy ruminating on the reminiscences she inspired in him.

* * * *

Alone again. Again alone.
No one will ever ask me why,
No one will ever ask me why,
And none into my soul will pry—
I am again alone.

Soft with my heart the wavelets dance,
The silent distance lures my glance,
In the fair valley joy is known
In that glad hour when I'm alone.

A random memory makes me whole,
Its ringing music fills my soul,
Like some fair ruin, gracious grown,
In that glad hour when I'm alone.

Night music with its magic art
Would pluck an answer from my heart!
Enticing are the shadows thrown
In that glad hour when I'm alone.

And that high voice my soul discovers
That like an Alpine echo hovers—
How in my heart its joys intone
In that glad hour when I'm alone!

* * * *

Again, again the spring returns. Again the evening flowers
At midnight make a gentle sound, in chorus with the stars;
Again the maples in the vale are playing soft guitars,
With dew on all their bowers.

And now the voice of bygone years I hear in tone sedate,
As into my familiar grove I go alone to dream,
And there among the musing flowers, above the musing stream,
I listen and I wait.

I know my days will flit away, and vanish far from me,
And in departing they will leave an evening echo's sound,
While I still sadly wait and call, from out their ancient round,
The springs that used to be.

Often, above the musing stream, I'll seek the evening star
To rise above the darkling grove and, as my dreams converge,
I'll keep on waiting for success, until with earth I merge
Where all the past things are.

* * * *

With this last of the thoughts
That my Sabbath can bring,
I shall fly to your bosom,
O days of my spring,

To some place beyond woods
Where the distance is blue,
Where the laurels are found
Dressed in sorrow's own hue.

For my journey mysterious
In silence before me,
Celestial horizons
Will lead and restore me,

Where all starry midnights
Are merged into one,
Where roads are yet virgin
For wanderings begun.

There the dreams I shall find
That I dreamt in my youth,
The raiment and gold
That my land dreamt as sooth,

The spike I once plucked
 In the grainfield of old,
 And the wreath that I twined
 As the evening bell tolled.

For all that I prayed for
 I'll take with me there;
 And to all I was born with
 At death I'll be heir.

Ivan Steshenko

(1873-1918)

Born in Poltava, Steshenko studied at the University of Kiev, taught literature at the School of Commerce there and, later, at the Lysenko School of Music and Drama. He was a noted translator (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), critic (monographs on Ukrainian authors), and literary historian (history of Ukrainian drama). As a poet, he is of secondary importance, but he made a sizeable contribution to Ukrainian literature nevertheless, particularly at a time when Ukrainian letters were being severely repressed by the tsarist régime. He died tragically, being shot by a criminal.

TO HOMER'S STATUE

Our glorious Sire, O immemorial Bard!
 As through the ethereal haze I see thy gold
 Resplendent image in the world's regard
 Wreathed on with glory from the days of old,
 Thy keen eye sparkles with all inspiration,
 Thy spirit, crammed with fancies, is aflame . . .
 A simple lyre in thy hand's oration
 Seems apt the notes of heaven to proclaim.
 Thou strik'st it gently; then the sounds increase;
 All things grow bright—the sun, the world, the day,
 All tears have disappeared, all sorrows cease,
 All that was evil shuns thy living lay.
 This splendid world and all within it listen
 To all the theme thy ringing song engages;
 We, too, enchanted hear, with eyes that glisten,
 Across an eon of tormented ages.

Oleksander Kozlovsky
(1876-1898)

Kozlovsky was born in the county of Drohobich, Galicia, into a priest's family. His gymnasium course completed, he entered the Polytechnical School at Lviv, but died at the age of twenty-two of tuberculosis after a poetic career of only four years. In the year of his death a number of his lyrics appeared in the *Literary-Scientific Journal* of the Shevchenko Society under the heading "From the Verses of One Condemned to Die." Ivan Franko thought so highly of him that in 1905 he published all Kozlovsky's available verse in a collection entitled *Myrtles and Cypresses*, and in the preface termed him as "the most talented of the younger generation of poets." Kozlovsky was indeed a sensitive, melodious singer whose appeal lies precisely in the melancholy strains of his Muse nipped in the very bud.

* * * *

The trumpets blare, the loud-mouthed cannon roar,
And mad men to the slaughter now advance;
Fierce bombs make music for the dreadful dance;
Through smoke, the sky and earth are seen no more.

It darkens. Silence comes. Blood streamlets flow.
Corpses grow cold. The sun has veiled its eyes.
The shadows fall. Men come, beneath night's skies,
To drag to pits the corpses to and fro.

Above that bloody field, an angel traces
His slow flight, peering into livid faces;
Wherever he hears groans, his grace reposes

And with soft hand the victim's eyes he closes,
And stills the heart . . . as Death's sleep over-rules.
Only the angel weeps, and says: "Poor fools!"

A DARK THOUGHT

The world is black, the sky is black,
All things their common blackness keep . . .
I await the time when I'll be caught
By her who brings eternal sleep.

Where Lethe gently flows along
 And Acheron its voice imparts,
 I may forget my misery,—
 For peace is there to soothe all hearts.
 Perhaps in waves of Phlegethon
 I'll wash away my bitter pain,
 And through the gates of Slumber steal
 With gentle Silence in my train.

A KOZACHOK¹

A skeleton rides closer still
 To me upon her phthisic mare;
 The crony waves her scythe at me . . .
 Farewell, dear friends! But don't despair!
 No loss of hope may frighten us!
 Sister, strike up a kozachók!
 Perhaps the tuneful Cherubim
 Know but Italian baroque
 And will play stately hymns for me
 Till even in heaven I run amok
 And scamper out of paradise.
 Sister, strike up a kozachók!

Spiridon Cherkasenko
 (1876-1940)

Cherkasenko was a native of the Kherson region, where he attended a teachers' college. After a brief period of pedagogy, he worked for the railroad and in the mines in the area of Katerinoslav, now Dnipropetrovsk. Hence came his stories and certain lyrics that deal with the life of the miners. In that respect Cherkasenko was a realist who observed and recorded life even in its stark details and energetically called for a more democratic spirit, more humaneness, and better living conditions for the tillers of the soil and the delvers of the earth. His verse dramas are of greater literary import. In them he mingled realism with symbolic and, at times, fantastical elements as he attempted in some of them (e.g., *The Tale of the Old Mill*) to present the struggle between the old, placid order of things and the new, boisterous trends of the encroaching future.

¹A lively Ukrainian dance.

THE BARK

The billows surge, the waves are loud;
The frail bark there is floating fast.
The wind is blowing, free and proud,
Driving a bank of murky cloud
That thunders o'er the eddy vast.

The grey waves in their mighty courses
Go rioting like hippogriffs;
They riot on like white-maned horses,
And in the tempest's raging forces
Leap up and crash against the cliffs.

The vessel tosses on the sea
Without a rudder or a sail:
As if it leaped in ecstasy
And scorned the breakers in its glee
It dips into the watery vale.

A wave has snatched the little bark—
It is the end! All hope is gone!
It seemed as if some power dark
Had gathered all its forces stark
And smashed the boat to fragments wan.

At least for one brief, glorious hour
It had the strength to roam the main:
How wonderful the deeps to scour
And not in captive care to cower—
A dog that's fettered by a chain!

MINERS

Down at the bottom of a pit
The dark is damp and still.
The walls are dripping silently
On wet and dirty spill.

In thickly clustered beads the sweat
Is blinding to the eyes;
The lit wick of the stinking lamp
A flickering light supplies.

It is so close . . . there is no air . . .
 The teardrops gather thick.
 Here utter silence reigns around,
 And one must pick and pick!

Loudly against the breast of Earth
 Our mattocks hack and moil,—
 And stubbornly we bend our necks
 Into the yoke of toil!

Here sparkles every piece of coal,
 Its gleam is cold and cruel:
 It seems that countless miners' bones
 Are flaming in that fuel!

Stepan Charnetsky

(1881-1944)

Charnetsky was born in Galicia. In its capital, Lviv, he pursued polytechnical studies, but abandoned an engineering career for the theatre (as director), journalism, and literature. In prose he is now remembered mostly for his humorous *feuilletons*, often saturated with sarcasm, on daily actualities. In poetry, Charnetsky is somewhat complex, belonging to no definite school, ranging far afield between ancient romantic themes and modern realistic occurrences, between peaceful, rustic surroundings and the clamour of urban traffic. Only when his verse was inspired by Nature to a melancholy mood did it acquire a truly poetic quality.

* * * *

Above the turbid waterfall
 I stand in pensive thought,
 And all my soul, it seems to me,
 Is in these roarings caught.

The dull waves splash against the bank
 And shatter on the stone;
 Along those waves there seems to beat
 One thought's dull monotone.

Melodious river, in thy voice
 Are countless groans of pain!
 How many soft, soul-gripping notes
 Within thy song remain!

Thou rushest downwards from the hills,
 Swiftly, without restraint;
 For neither heat nor cold can stay
 Thy course nor make thee faint.

Upon thy eddies through the storm
 The lofty firs are whirled;
 Thy swift waves bear them on thy back
 Into the far, wide world.

And sometimes in thy placid dreams
 The high blue mountains shine,
 The lofty walls of Dobush¹ proud,
 His gloomy woods of pine.

While by thy turbid waterfall
 I stand in pensive thought,
 It seems to me my very soul
 Is in thy roarings caught . . .

And all my destiny is thine:
 For all my happiness
 Has gone like driftwood down the stream
 In days of storm and stress.

* * * *

Branded with silent torment are we born,
 And on our brows are withered blossoms worn;
 In crowns of burned-out stars we fade anon
 And sadly we move on . . .

Bleak autumn shadows once our birth-day mocked,
 The gloom of starless nights our cradle rocked.
 In fate's tight hoop we place our temples wan—
 And sadly we move on . . .

¹See p. 188, fn. 1.

The trumpet of fierce days blares not for us,
 Warm suns come not, nor thunders clamorous;
 Our torbans¹ we, some day, no more will con,
 And sadly we'll move on.

Petro Karmansky

(1878-1956)

Born in Galicia, Karmansky completed his studies at the Gymnasium of Peremishl and entered the University of Lviv, which he left a year later to study theology in Rome. There he remained for four years, and then returned to Lviv to resume his interrupted course in the Faculty of Philosophy. Here, in the students' struggle for the establishment of a Ukrainian university, he underwent a futile hunger strike. For some time he was a gymnasium professor. During World War I he fled to Vienna, served in the Austrian army (mostly in prison camps), from which he was transferred by the Western Ukrainian government to diplomatic service, and later went on secret missions to Rome and the United States. For several years he lived in Brandon, Manitoba, and then moved to Brazil, where he farmed on a coffee plantation and edited a newspaper in Prudentopolis. Before World War II, he returned to Galicia, where he lived through the hostilities and, under the Soviets, became a lecturer at the University of Lviv.

Being of an unpredictable and belligerent nature, Karmansky complicated his life with discrepancies that often led him to clashes with the Ukrainian element on both sides of the Atlantic. As a poet he began, and for some time continued, seemingly to cultivate moods of gloom and despair that even lapsed into whimpers. On the other hand, he enriched Ukrainian poetry with innovations in form and expression that elevate him to a level far above the average. A rebel against what he considered the philistinism of his day, his attacks were so bitterly ironic that he antagonized even those favourably disposed to him. For all that, he remained harmonious in his artistry and original in his resources. Together with Maksim Rilsky, he translated Dante's *Inferno* into excellent Ukrainian.

IN ROME

On vanished Caesars' cypresses
 Imperial silence hung;
 Across the dusk, a nightingale
 From whispering cedars sung—
 But sorrow claimed us for its own.

¹A Ukrainian musical instrument of the bandura type. See p. 154, fn. 1.

Deep lapsed in evening twilight,
The Coliseum lay,
And Hadrian's mausoleum
Stood clothed in quiet gray—
But sorrow claimed us for its own.

With loud and liquid laughter
The leaping fountain played,
And graceful shadowy branches
Upon the night air swayed—
But sorrow claimed us for its own.

On Tiber's tawny billows
A morning song rose high;
St. Peter's dome burned golden
Against a sapphire sky—
But sorrow claimed us for its own.

Proud citizens took umbrage
Because of our unrest,
But sorrow like a glacier
Lay heavy on our breast—
We knew our grief, and still were mute.

* * * *

A dreadful emptiness pervades my heart;
As in a monk's cold cell I linger on;
Like a wrecked wayside shrine I stand apart,
An ancient temple whence the priest has gone.

The altars of the ancient gods are shaken
And lost is every charm of ornament;
Even the priceless icons have been taken,
The fire that fed the lamps has long been spent.

Around me in the shrine I gaze aghast,
Seeking some god, my spirit to make strong,
While the bleak days flow tediously past
And in my bosom strives a mournful song.

* * * *

O hush-a-by, my sorrow, pale chimera!
The alder whispers as the osier hears;
My melancholy moans, its silken eyelids
Are silvered with bright diamonds of tears.

O hush-a-by, my sorrow, dreaming vision!
The sun has long since dipped into the grove;
The flowers have gone to sleep, and, mint-enswaddled,
The pearl-bright brook is murmuring of love.

O hush-a-by, my sorrow, grief mysterious!
The breeze has wearied and the alders sleep;
The silver stars are peering in the heavens,
The shadows prowl . . . Hush, then, your silence keep!

O hush-a-by, my sorrow, evil omen!
The willows sigh, the meadow-grasses roll;
Along the fields walks sombre Melancholy,
And a close mist has cloaked my ailing soul.

THE MOTHER

Work, endless work! My back is numb,
My hands have lost all feeling.
My God! And shall I never rest
From torments past revealing?
Wait, with the night comes healing . . .

The night has come, all go to rest,
All sink in slumber mild;
But still the exhausted mother wakes
To soothe an ailing child.

Work, endless work! My back is numb,
My hands have lost all feeling.
My God! And shall I never rest
From torments past revealing?
Wait, Sabbaths can bring healing . . .

The holy Sabbath has arrived
And all in languor drowse,
While Mother, in a stubble field,
Has gone to tend the cows.

Work, endless work! My back is numb,
 My hands have lost all feeling.
 My God! And shall I never rest
 From torments past revealing?
 Wait, winter can bring healing.

The winter comes. In bed at night
 Through sleep all sorrows dwindle.
 Only the mother cannot rest
 From toiling at the spindle.
 Work, endless work! My back is numb,
 My hands have lost all feeling.
 My God! And shall I never rest
 From torments past revealing?
 Yes, for the grave brings healing!

The mother died. And thus went out
 The whole home's cheering fire.
 The orphans weep: Who now will tend
 Our clamorous desire?

Hrihoriy Chuprinka (1879-1921)

Born into an old Cossack land-tilling family near Chernihiv, Chuprinka was expelled from the county gymnasium for his outspokenness against the tsarist régime and, as a result, failed to acquire a systematic education. However informally, he achieved much of it by personal efforts. His relentless struggle for his country's freedom was finally curtailed by the Bolsheviks, who shot him in an underground prison.

As in life, so in his verse, Chuprinka was full of the Cossack zest. His variable tonal effects, whirling rhythms, and wealth of rapid rhymes made his lyrics appear veritable kaleidoscopic diversions, sheer eddies of musical verbiage. The joy of life, derived from the beauty of Ukrainian nature and from his innate ebulliency, is associated in his verses with such poetic virtuosity as to seem like sorcery born of an elemental force. However, Chuprinka was also a serious-minded poet, and his exuberance often subsided to express the ideal of liberty, for which he strove heroically all his life, in solemn, forceful tones that are poles apart from his other, extravagant and extrovert vein.

His first collection of poems appeared in Kiev in 1909, under the title *Fiery Blooms*. His *Poetical Works*, in three volumes, came in 1918.

FROM MY WINDOW

A WINTER ETUDE

Like tender specks, wee puffs of down,
On buildings and on roof-tops brown
The tiny snowflakes gently fall,
So softly striking, light and small,
So mixed in interwoven ways
In all that snowy, milky haze
As if they wished to cuddle close,
As if they feared to touch the gross
And carrion corpse of frozen ground—
There where the flowers once were found,
Where lilies, orchids, once profuse,
Enamelled earth with vivid hues,
Tenderly, proudly, budding forth
In blooms of ostentatious worth
Beneath my open window's sill—
This now the tender snowflakes fill
And spread about the twigs complete
Their woven, silver winding-sheet.

AT DAWN

A plain. And like sheer blindness on the sight
Is wrapped the silken kerchief of the night.
Over the flowers the sea-mews, white of breast,
Their grief protest.

Light! . . . And across the heaven gently pours
A song transcendent from a lark that soars.
And there afar, in splendour that surprises,
The sun arises.

THE NIGHT

Both clouds and billows wander grim
Along the north horizon's rim;
And dark clouds' untransparent bars
Have blocked from sight the gleaming stars;
In haze have all things fall'n asleep,
Night's reign on earth is dark and deep.

Dark clouds prevail—and darker dreams!
 And even hope unwakened seems;
 The bonds of sleep my will encumber,
 But still my anguish will not slumber!
 Come, sable Night, and wrest control
 From all these pangs within my soul!

TING-A-LING-LING

A POETIC JEST

A bright and ethereal sprite we evoke
 By a verse that is light as the fleece on a joke,
 Or a mother's sweet smile when she comforts our grief,
 A diminutive verse that is tiny and brief,
 A verse without thought and a verse without weight,
 A verse without love and a verse without hate;
 And the heart feels as light as a breeze in the height
 For sorrow is driven clear out of our sight
 By the ting-a-ling-lings of my verse's delight.

They flow, and they curl into smiles made of pearl,
 Those ting-a-ling-lings that my fancies unfurl,
 In tones quite canary, in tinklings that vary,
 These flimflamming darlings from lips of the fairy,
 My gewgaws, gay-tinselled, life's fancy spins airy.

THE CURTAIN OF DEATH

Nay, wait awhile—give not untimely thus
 Your body to the grim sarcophagus!
 The man who Courage knows and peerless Beauty,
 The way to these must be his path of duty.

No tomb of granite hewn will serve to guard
 The body of that warrior or bard
 Who lets a crown of thorns his brow commend
 And boldly wears it to the very end.

Your grave should be the raiment of the sky,
The boundless prairie and the forest high,
Where only recently, by Phoebus' grace,
Your noble moans have overflowed the place—

Your noble moans and bitter imprecations,
Your cruel wrath and piercing cacinations,
Inspired sounds, as clear as any bell,
And words of sacred peace, your joy to tell.

Die like a fading star at dawning then,
Or like a mighty mage, unknown to men—
Else they will take your corpse, with pompous fuss,
And hide it in a great sarcophagus.

EARLY SPRING

Now clamour, endless clamour, fills the thorp:
Songs, shouts and wrangling make confusion high;
Warm exhalations from the ploughlands warp
And spread in sinuous cloudbanks in the sky.

The blacksmith smites his anvil lustily,
Mending the harrows and the hookèd ploughs;
Now clamour, endless clamour, echoes free,
While ploughlands, still untilled, expectant drowse.

Soon, very soon, out of the harrowed field,
The grain-crop will gush upward, as with gold;
With struggle, endless struggle unconcealed,
The village copes with hunger as of old.

Aloft, the cranes fly onward past the tillage;
The silvery cloudlets wreaths of vapour fling;
And clamour, endless clamour, in the village
Awakens the enchantment of the spring.

Mikola Vorony

(1871-1942)

A native of the Katerinoslav region, Vorony studied in Kharkiv, but could not proceed to the university there because he was under police surveillance for three years for allegedly subversive activities. That period (which he spent as a bank clerk) ended, he moved to Vienna, then to Lviv, and in the universities of those cities completed his academic education. In Galicia he engaged simultaneously in journalism and in the directorship of provincial theatrical groups. Later, he joined the theatrical troupes of Tobilevich and Saksahansky in Kiev, but after his marriage, abandoned them for a settled life as a civil servant in Chernihiv. That position he also relinquished and, after spending some time in the province of Kuban and then in Warsaw, he went back to Lviv, where he continued his theatrical, journalistic, and literary pursuits. In 1926, Vorony returned to the Dnieper region of Ukraine and, in 1935, during the Communist Purge of Ukrainian writers, was exiled, together with his son, who was also a writer, to a punitive camp in the Russian north.

His poetic beginnings were romanticist, but as he developed, he became a realist with a populist outlook. Progressing further, Vorony gradually assumed a "Europeanized" stance and followed the Western trends in poetic literature, burdening his lyrics perhaps overmuch with philosophic import and impressionistic reflections.

In 1901 Vorony issued a manifesto with which he initiated the modernistic movement in Ukrainian poetry, thus paving the way for such poets as Tichina, Zerov, Pluzhnik, and others who came a generation later. This new tendency was confirmed in 1903 when Vorony published his Almanac, *From Above the Clouds and Valleys*, in which new forms of verse and novel propensities were clearly demonstrated.

Branded, for that reason, as a "decadent," Vorony none the less is now recognized as a "priest of Beauty," a master of form, and a purist in language. The music of his verse redeems even its occasional banalities. A goodly number of his lyrics deal with love, broken or unfulfilled, and with a longing for unattainable ideals which he sought in vain to materialize in the intensity of his cogitation.

TO THE SEA

To thee goes my salute, O vast, blue sea!
 Unplumbed, unmeasured in immensity,
 To thee, vast power, I make salaam!
 My humble gaze at thee can never tire,
 And awed by thee, my prayers must still aspire
 I'll sing thee a majestic psalm.
 Potent and matchless, not by cloud nor thunder
 Canst thou be daunted or be rent asunder.

Thou art thyself thy own high law.
Enticing and luxurious thou dost prove;
In thee are found the dreams and joys of love
And slumberings in pleasant awe.

I came to thee, exhausted and far spent,
Yet not a stranger but a friend I went,
Akin to thee and glad in this.
And now my spirit merges in thy own,
In azure space I rock on waves unknown
And gently sink in thy abyss.

As thou art vast, unstaid, mysterious,
Alluring yet a rebel boisterous,
So must the poet's soul contend.
Therefore that soul to thee a friend remains;
Unable to be held by bonds and chains
It leaps like thee in freedom without end.

A PALIMPSEST

When paper from the abbey cell was stripped,
The monks would scour off some manuscript
To write an anthem or a chant's assertion,
And labelled "palimpsest" the newer version.
And strange! Time passed—and from the works of John
Old Aristophanes appeared anon.
Darling, my soul is like that palimpsest.
Three years have passed by since your image blest
And gentle smile and voice that you employ
Were written on my soul with moving joy.
Though time has rudely traced its script above,
Your face once more emerges—and my love!

A LEGEND

A lad fell in love with a maiden, did he,
And nothing on earth was more precious than she.
Alas! Was more precious than she.

He swore and he vowed that he loved her more dearly
Than sunlight and moonlight and stars shining clearly.
Alas! Than the stars shining clearly.

“You only I love. I will die at your sign . . .
For you I will give that old mother of mine! . . .
Alas! That old mother of mine!”

But his sweetheart was sinful, her soul was unclean,
Her mind was a snake’s, full of malice and mean.
Alas! Full of malice and mean.

Then slyly she smiled, and she spoke to deceive:
“That you love me, my lad, I must fail to believe.
Alas! I must fail to believe.

“If truly you love, if good faith is your part,
Then bring me, I pray, your dear mother’s live heart.
Alas! Your dear mother’s live heart.”

The youth was confused: for three nights and three days
He ate not nor slept but went round in a craze.
Alas! He went round in a craze.

At midnight there happened a crime all unblest:
A son plucked his mother’s live heart from her breast.
Alas! Her live heart from her breast.

To his darling he rushed with that heart through the night,
Impelled in his craze by a horrible fright.
Alas! By a horrible fright.

Scarce feeling his legs, he went racing pell-mell,
Then suddenly tripped, on the threshold he fell.
Alas! On the threshold he fell.

And the mother’s poor heart, all bedabbled with blood,
Then uttered these words in a pitiful mood.
Alas! In a pitiful mood.

For the last time, that moment, these words did it blurt:
“My dear one, you’ve fallen . . . and are you not hurt?
Alas, dear! And are you not hurt?”

Marko Antiokh, pseud.

(1904-193?)

Son of Mikola Vorony, Marko Antiokh was born in the Dnieper region of Ukraine. His early verses, written before 1925 under the influence of his father, were printed in the *Literary-Scientific Journal* in Lviv. His later lyrics were published in various Soviet periodicals. In 1935, together with his father, he was exiled by the régime probably to the Solovetski Islands, where he disappeared without a trace.

LAND! LAND!

The loud-resounding sail relaxes,
 The wind is resting from its wrath,
 A gentle sun at last is gilding
 The circle of their stormy path.

Behold a starry Eldorado
 Up from a deadly dawn will start;
 The sabre of a senseless vision
 Has stabbed your courage to the heart.

Only one choice is left Columbus:
 A pistol to his mouth he pressed,
 Thus, with a compass-point unchanging,
 To check his voyage to the west.

Then on the black unmeaning water
 The ship would rock, unsteered, unmanned . . .
 But suddenly, and life-restoring,
 There came a cry: The land! The land!

Thus in my own life, as I travel,
 Though lost the compass that I use,
 I still say: Do not turn back homewards!
 Do not give up the deathless cruise!

Bend to the oar and break the water,
 See, where the billows seem to end,
 A crystal peak on the horizon,
 The land to which our ship must tend!

Through bloody reefs you then must struggle
 Until your keel shall strike the sand,
 And in the splendour of new glory
 You set your foot upon the land.

Volodimir Svidzinsky

(1885-1941)

Svidzinsky was a native of the Podilia region, where he studied at a theological college. Later he attended the seminary at Kamianetz-Podilsky and the Kiev School of Commerce, after which he worked in the editorial offices of various publishing establishments. In World War II, he perished in a fire set by agents of the Communist NKVD to barracks into which he and many other Ukrainians had been driven.

Svidzinsky's poetry belongs to the symbolist school, and is of the first order. He specialized in brief, even miniaturish forms of verse which he adorned with polished impressionistic phrases and vivid imagery. As a brilliant innovator, he used rare words to give novelty and freshness to his poetry. His power is manifest in *Lyrical Poetry* (1922), *September* (1927), *Poetry* (1940), and "The Gathering of Honey" (as yet unpublished). He was also a fine translator of ancient Greek poetry (including Aristophanes' comedies) and an accomplished writer of verses for children.

COOL SILENCE REIGNS

Cool silence reigns. O pale moon, notched and broken,
 Remain with me and sanctify my sorrow.
 Like snow upon the branches, it grows calm;
 Like snow upon the branches, down it flutters.
 Three joys I have that naught can take away:
 Solitude, toil and silence. Evil grief
 Haunts me no more. O pale moon, notched and broken,
 I bear into the night renewal's grapes.
 On the dead meadow I will stop to pray
 And stars will fall around me where I kneel.

THE VALLEY FADED

The valley faded in the evening gloaming;
 The hoar-frost cloaked the gardens in the dale;
 Down from the well, along the steep path coming,
 You walked and brought fresh water in a pail.

I spoke to you with tender words of greeting.
Your glance was dark and silent as the night.
Only with shattered rays, to grace our meeting,
The young moon in your bucket glittered bright.

* * * *

Bread, and the fragrance of milk, and a portion of gold-coloured butter;
Light on the edge of the glance—on the ceiling its struggling reflection
Flashes and wrinkles like clusters of grapes. From the chamber adjacent,
Dull as if heavy with sleep, comes your voice with a touch of disquiet.
Loveliest goddess of home, you will presently enter the kitchen,
Round your trim waist tie your apron and bring your dear hands to the
table,
Hands most belovèd that grant me caresses and radiant comfort.

TREACHERY

Swift is the horse I ride by secret ways
Through the night's ashes and the flaming days;
Only a song behind my saddle hums,
After me comes
A band of friends, eleven young and bold,
Eleven moons they seemed, with miens of gold.

A lofty rock its watch is keeping.
Beneath the rock the earth is sleeping.
And in that earth a tiny chamber lies
And there a lizard lives in woe
Who once had been a princess long ago.

—“Come, lads, and let us fight like lords!
Out from their scabbards draw your swords!
The captive princess let us free
From the dark spell of sorcery!”

The lads all stopped without ado,
And from the sheath their swords they drew.
The captive princess they set free
From the dark spell of sorcery.
She came forth like a flower, fair and white,
But timorous, most timorous with fright.

She asks me: "Do you love me?"—"Yes, I do."
—"Give me your joy, to show your love is true."
I gave it to her.

"And do you love me even now?"—"I do."
—"Give me your strength, to show your love is true."
I gave it to her.

Once more: "Do you still love me?"—"Yes, I do."
—"Give me your courage; show your love is true."
I gave it to her.

She lifted up her eyes
That shone with peace profound;
She pointed to herself;
Slowly I looked around,—
And my eleven friends were lost to sight;
Amid the shadows of the deepening night
Eleven little pillars stood in woe,
Some of them crooked, others putrefied;
Upon each was a tiny cap of snow.

The mysterious princess mounted then my horse:
—"Why do your eyes cold tears of sorrow strew?
Will it not be most wearisome for you:
Day after day,
Year after year,
Ever and aye,
To pace by these small pillars here;
Will you not sing sad songs
That you are stripped of what to you belongs
And never can forget your wrongs,
And still your anger cannot fail to die
Under so blue a sky!"

She showed her teeth: like fearful fangs they shone.
She laughed at me, and whistled, and was gone.

Bohdan Lepky (1872-1941)

Born in the region of Podilia, Galicia, into a priest's family, Lepky completed his gymnasium course in the town of Berezhany (where he later taught), and pursued university studies in Vienna, Lviv, and Cracow. As an Austrian officer, Lepky spent the years of World War I in various concentration camps giving academic lecture courses to Ukrainian prisoners of war from the Russian armies. After the armistice, he settled for a time in Berlin, where he devoted himself to literature and journalism and then moved to Poland to become professor of Ukrainian literature at the University of Cracow.

Influenced by the natural beauty of his native Podilia, Lepky wrote his early lyrics in a mood reflecting its rural peace amid a clear atmosphere, sun-bathed fields, dreamy woods, and the pleasing rusticity of the manners and customs of its people. In his later poetry, his worship of Nature continued, but in a minor, elegiac key. As a result of the ravages of war, her aspects, to his view, became gloomy and tragic, inspiring him to voice a painful longing for the peaceful past and raise a lament for his own and his people's lost hopes and aspirations. As a whole, Lepky's verses seem to sound like a prolonged dirge of yellowed leaves, a melancholy feature which he appears to have enjoyed cultivating. The struggle for the liberation of Ukraine and the preservation of her independence (1917-21) evoked in him a surge of patriotic feeling which he poured out in songs and lyrics that are truly inspired.

As a writer of fiction Lepky was prolific in regional novels and novelettes, full of local colour and interesting ethnographic details. His tetralogy *Mazepa*, a monumental work in which he fictionalized the history of the times of that great Hetman, established him as one of the more significant Ukrainian prose writers of recent decades.

THE TRAVELLER

A stupor dull and spiritless
Surprised the earth. The flowers die.
The fields await the snow's reply.
Clouds hang in stony gloominess.

At times, the wind comes rushing past
And blows grey mist across the lands;
The village like an idol stands
And in a drunken dream is cast.

The light goes out. Against the cold
 The door is closed. The faithful hound
 Up to the ears in straw is found,
 And only ghosts the field enfold.

But down the path along the hedge
 Moves Hunger, here an annual guest:
 A bone is in his hands unblest
 And threatenings dire his looks allege.

* * * *

The village comes from days long lost
 And in a vision greets me plain.
 The cots are there, with pines embossed,
 And flowers magnificent the frost
 Has sketched upon the window-pane.

There, through the flowers, my eyes restore
 A table white . . . a family sitting . . .
 A sheaf is bending near the door;
 Straw of a *didukh*¹ strews the floor;
 Men raise a song the times befitting.

An ancient song! Of frays indeed
 In lands unknown and bygone times,
 Of furs and gold and heady mead,
 And quests for glory one must heed
 To eastward or in southern climes.

An ancient song! It seems a bell
 From some forgotten cemetery.
 And hark! What rides its echoes tell,
 And forays that the Don² compel
 And sword-blades swift and sanguinary.

Laughter of joy, and scorn of fate,
 And boisterous hopes are heard within it—
 Do you not hear the swords' debate,
 Echoes of immemorial hate,
 And broken dreams that could not win it?

¹A sheaf of straw brought into the house on Christmas Eve and placed in a corner to symbolize the souls of the departed.

²A river in eastern Ukraine.

All of the visions that were strown
 In our proud dreams of martial glory
 But vanished in the dark unknown
 And were forgotten, lying prone—
 The song recaptures all the story.

That mighty song of days of yore
 Is like a bell-peal from the grave;
 It echoes swords our grandsires wore;
 In it their moans and shouts outpour:
 “Summon your hoarded strength, we crave!

“Summon your strength! God only knows
 How near or distant is the day
 When judgement will of wrongs dispose
 And wicked men will sink in woes
 And justice will our cause display.”

The village comes from days long lost
 And in a vision greets me plain.
 The cots are there, with pines embossed,
 And flowers magnificent the frost
 Has sketched upon the window-pane.

THE CRANES¹

Do you behold, my brother bold,
 My comrade dear, I pray,
 In a grey string to warmer climes
 The crane-flock flies away.

One hears them calling: caw! caw! caw!
 Abroad I'll die, past doubt.
 Before I cross the ocean wide,
 I'll wear my pinions out.

Still faintly glimmering in my eyes
 Their endless path remains;
 Smaller and smaller in the clouds
 Are traced the migrant cranes.

¹A song in which the cranes symbolize the Ukrainian volunteers going out to defend the freedom of their land. It was given further popularity by the composer M. Hayvoronsky, who set its words to music.

* * * *

Hark, someone calls me from my cozy home;¹
Someone would urge me out, afar to roam.

From the still cottage, in my own despite,
I'm driven to strange fields, in murky night.

Someone keeps whispering: "Yonder lies the wood!
Where is your sabre, where your musket good?"

Upon the ancestral sabre rust-stains dwell;
The grandson takes it to the town to sell.

His musket only serves the crows to chide,
While enemies press in from every side.

Shrieks are already heard; the knouts appear:
"And are you here? Are you still lagging here?"

Hark, someone calls me from my cozy home;
Someone would urge me out, afar to roam.

Who you may be, and whence, I do not know;
But I must go, I certainly must go.

EVENING IN THE HOUSE

All things around me into slumber lapse
And heavy calm;
Only the night wind at my casement flaps
Its mournful psalm.

Now through the window-panes are vaguely heard,
Now here, now there,
The raindrops falling like quicksilver-curd,
Heavy and rare.

And at the door a gentle tap resounds
In soft demands—
Mysterious yet most familiar sounds
Of unseen hands.

¹The irrepressible call a Ukrainian youth hears, bidding him to go to fight for Ukraine.

"Who goes there?" is the question I profess.
 "Tis I, 'tis I,
 Even your old companion, Weariness,
 Comes with a sigh."

TO THE "359"

TO THOSE EXECUTED AT BAZAR¹

Sleep, my lads, sleep! Yea, lads, forever sleep,
 And let your dreams the theme of freedom keep,
 Of liberty to grace your fatherland—
 Can any fairer dream on earth be scanned?

You for your homeland and its sacred soil
 Have sacrificed your years of youthful toil;
 Your youthful visions have been spent in strife,
 The cherry blossoms of the Spring of life.

Like winds you rushed to battle, amid cheers.
 Neither your mothers' nor your sisters' tears
 Could stop you for a moment in that rush:
 "Be silent, Mother! Little sister, hush!"

"The call of God has summoned us to fight;
 To strive in your defense, and for the right.
 The fairest of all visions we exalt
 In Freedom, as we join in the assault . . . "

And so you went, devoid of hesitation,
 And fought like lions for your own dear nation.
 Heedless of bullets and of bayonets crude,
 For you were gallant youths, staunch Cossack brood!

And so you went . . . Good fortune as you fare!
 Onward you pass, no more our life to share . . .
 The bloody bayonet stained the path you took
 And now your graves the meadow overlook.

A day will come, that day to us belongs,
 A day of triumph and a day of songs;

¹A locality near Zhitomir where in November of 1921 a battle was fought between the Ukrainian troops under Y. Tiutiunnik and the Red forces. Some 500 Ukrainian soldiers were taken prisoners by the Reds, and 359 of them were executed.

And at the peal of Liberty's great bell
We'll seek your graves again to say farewell.

And where the grave-mounds keep your bones as guests,
We'll press the greensward with our warm, free breasts,
And on the silent hillocks where you lie
We'll let our freedom's banners proudly fly.

Sleep, my lads, sleep! Yea, lads, forever sleep.
And let your dreams the theme of freedom keep,
Of liberty to grace your fatherland—
Can any fairer dream on earth be scanned?

Oles Babiy

(1897-)

Babiy was born in Galicia, where he took part in the Ukrainian-Russian War and later in the political movement whose aim was to free his native province from Polish rule. As a result, he was arrested by the authorities and sentenced to four years in prison. Babiy began his literary activity as an adherent of the symbolist school, but remains at his best as a conventional poet of love and its vicissitudes and as a singer of the beauty of the Hutsulian (Carpathian) highlands. The armed struggle of the Ukrainian people for freedom (1917-21), and especially their reaction to Polish repression in Galicia, found a loud poetic echo in his lyrics, particularly in such longer poems as "The Hutsulian Battalion," in which his talent appears to be concentrated. No less is Babiy noted as a writer of fiction and children's verses. He is likewise prolific in expository articles on world literature. Since World War II, he has lived in Chicago.

NIETZSCHE¹

On all earth's paths I ever am alone;
A draught of hemlock greets me every day;
Yet never from my lips will murmurs stray;
My burning wounds will ne'er to you be shown.

¹A German philosopher who in the latter half of the nineteenth century elaborated the idea of the "superman."

I'll accept life as warriors give no groan,
 But enter, with a song, the savage fray,
 And on through troops and trenches win their way,
 Till by our law the foe is overthrown.

What use have I for love, for joys in sleep?
 Why speak of peace? I cherish only war,
 And even death becomes a childish game.

Although all pangs of life I've drunk full deep—
 Another cup of strife I'll not abhor
 Till a new Race shall crown creation's aim.

A MYSTERY

Reveal to none that Vishnu¹ has appeared,
 And hide away the gem of our desire.
 The sons of earth will cast into the mire
 The sacred, sinless rose our love has reared.

Trust not that men give love their candid praise.
 It thrives in songs, in books of vain deceit.
 In life, men only fall at Mammon's feet
 And desecrate true love in wanton ways.

For love is but a frail-wing'd butterfly:
 Just touch it and wee pinions lose their dust,
 And so the insect meets a death unjust—
 Crushed and exhausted it will surely die.

Even your brother robs you at the altar
 And trades your treasure for a trifling toy;
 He will confound the dream that gives you joy
 And make your sounding harp-strings break and falter.

Warble the mob one last phrase of farewell
 And fly to blessed climes and sunny spaces
 Where you and I shall stand with shining faces—
 For love blooms only where our secrets dwell.

¹In Hindu mythology, the sun-god, protector of man, and a personification of the beneficent aspect of Nature.

Oleksander Oles, pseud. O. Kandiba (1878-1944)

Oles was born in the region of Kharkiv where he studied agriculture and veterinary science. These he later practised in Kiev. His literary career was launched in 1907 when the first collection of his verse appeared under the title *Sorrow and Joy Embrace*. This title is descriptive of Oles' poetic double mentality, in which bright and sombre hues alternate. His lyric, "Asters," is quite representative of that contradictory trait of his psyche derived from his contemplation of the variability of Nature's moods.

The revolution of 1905 in Russia roused in Oles the anger of a titan and made him a poet of almost prophetic stature, fulminating, Shevchenko-like, against man's inhumanity to man and summoning his down-trodden countrymen to awake and work for the rebirth of their nation. It was in the general upheaval of a people, in man's supreme effort to overcome the material encumbrances chaining him to misery, and in the elemental turbulence of life that Oles found the greatest beauty. Though his lyrics are heavily laden with disillusionment, gloom, wrath, and feelings of shame, he irradiated them with flashes of hope in which the murky atmosphere is suddenly, if but for a moment, dispelled to reveal the beauty of his nation's resurrection.

It was particularly during the heroic but futile struggle for the preservation of the newly acquired Ukrainian nationhood at the close of World War I that Oles reached the apogee of his poetic potency. Beyond any other poet of that period, he appeared as the very embodiment of the Ukrainian spirit, with all its hopes and despairs, happiness and tragedy, laughter and tears. All these contrasts find a vivid expression in his verse, where the entire soul of his nation seems to vibrate with vital potentiality.

Amid the peripeteia of his agitated mind, Oles, to be sure, was capable of subduing his restless moods into a dreamy melancholy, soft musical vocality, elegiac pensiveness, pantheistic yearning to merge with Nature, and even a pianissimo of lyrical virtuosity. Generally, but particularly in his dramatic poems and études, Oles is to be considered a symbolist, but not of the obscure type. He was also capable of relieving the depressive effect of much of his poetry by humorous, ironic, and satirical nuances. But on the whole his work is a jeremiad presented in refined metrical and stylistic techniques.

Oles died a lonely man in Prague without producing anything of great importance during that later period of his self-imposed exile.

ASTERS

At midnight, in the garden, asters brown
 Each washed herself in dew, put on her crown,
 And waited for the rosy morn to break
 And spread out rainbow raiment for her sake.

The asters in their drowsiness were dreaming
Of silken grasses and of sunshine gleaming,—
A fairy region would their fancies bring
Of fadeless flowers in eternal spring.

Thus in the garden did the asters stay
And their September dreaming longed for May . . .
But cold rain every morning on them swept
And there behind a bush a chill wind wept . . .

Around them, a vast prison, spread the plain,
They saw their hopes to live were all in vain;
They bound their heads and died . . . As if to flout,
The sun above their corpses then blazed out!

SORROW AND JOY

Sorrow and joy have kissed each other . . .
Laughter and tears are strung like pearls.
Morning and night together smother—
In vain my hand their folds unfurls.

My joy and sorrow still embrace;
One seeks to fly, and one says No . . .
Their struggle never shifts its base,
Which is prevailing does not show.

TWO TINY CLOUDS

Two tiny clouds together strayed
One morning at the dawn;
They met, and stopped, and clasped their hands
Above the thirsty lawn.

There they would gladly have remained
And passed their lives together
But wicked winds already laughed
And sought to change the weather.

The two bright cloudlets silently
Began to weep and frown,
And from aloft their silvery tears
Forthwith fell thickly down.

The grasses gladly caught them up
Amid the misty shrouds
And played as if with shiny stones
With tears of tiny clouds.

From CRIMEAN TABLEAUX

Somewhere below the dark abyss
The pine shows black against the granite;
No living creature knows of it,
It knows no creature on this planet.

Somewhere, above, the springtime blooms;
There flowers embrace and kiss each other;
The golden sun is full of joy,
And streamlets merge with one another.

The pine is sad and lonely, too,
Appearing black against the granite;
No living creature knows of it,
It knows no creature on this planet.

Only at times the winds in crowds
Come thronging where the cliffs decline
And from the height begin to howl
And execrate the Lonesome Pine.

IN SAINT STEPHEN'S CHURCH¹

Oh, how I loved to haunt Saint Stephen's Church!
Sad-hearted, in the morning, was my search,
When there were still no people in the shrine
And peace still hovered in the hush divine.

Up in the vaults my gaze I would address
And sought God in that holy emptiness . . .
But did not find Him; while within my heart
My God hung crucified and wailed apart.

¹St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna.

* * * *

Drunken with blood, intensely and with joy,
The foeman arrogantly sleeps at night . . .
Quietly drag your ploughshares from the sheds
And in the gullies forge them into swords!

Your brothers groan in cursed dungeon-deeps
And seek in vain to break their iron bars . . .
Quietly drag your ploughshares from the sheds
And in the gullies forge them into swords!

Mothers deprived of sons, and wives of husbands,
Are weeping now and cursing bitterly . . .
Quietly drag your ploughshares from the sheds
And in the gullies forge them into swords!

Our standards flutter, youth is in the fray,
And streams of foemen's blood are shed in battle . . .
Openly drag your ploughshares from the sheds
And with all boldness forge them into swords!

* * * *

How glorious: to see a reborn nation!
But yesterday the tears of serfdom fell,
Icons were silent in our ruins' ashes
And the old steeple tolled a funeral knell.

When suddenly a zealous might emerging
Snatched up all life and filled it full of power—
Lo, in men's hands are sudden banners waving;
We raise a hymn of triumph in that hour.

So sleeps an eagle—when his swift eye opens,
He sees the light and beauty of the sky.
Then in the golden morn, in boundless freedom,
He spurns the cliff and, screaming, soars on high.

Thus does the sea at times dream through the night,
Then beats its waves like wings on shoreland's shelf,
And strangely plays with pearls and coloured shells
And draws creation's glances to itself.

It rolls along, it swells in agitation,
 It shines and trembles in the sun's embrace,
 It feels its whole life happy at that moment,
 All things on earth a symphony of grace.

When came those snowy billows on its surface?
 Who taught the waves to bluster and to roar?
 From what bright lands have flown the shining sea-mews
 That tenderly lament along the shore?

O sea-mews, sea-mews! Weeping is not needed
 When liberty and life are almost won,
 When in the clouds I see a strange reflection—
 The bold returning of the longed-for sun!

* * * *

Within my soul, suns do not rise
 Nor on my life their radiance shed . . .
 Its sky is blanketed with clouds
 And all the fires of earth are dead.

Within it, torments howl like wolves
 And wounds like screech-owls hoot, alas!
 Within it only shadows rove
 And sadly weep as on they pass.

My native land within my soul
 In haze and smoke of ruins now
 Lies prostrate with a shattered heart,
 A crown of thorns upon its brow.

Pavlo Tichina

(1891—)

Tichina was born in the Chernihiv region. In that historic town he received his preparatory schooling at the local seminary, after which he studied in the Faculty of Commerce at the University of Kiev. His basic education was to a large extent religious, and that element is quite evident in his earlier lyrics.

The havoc that arose in Ukraine towards the end of World War I produced a

powerful effect on his poetic mind. During that period he saw the emergence of an independent Ukraine and felt keenly its dissolution amid the ravages caused by the Russian Revolution. The lyrics contained in his earlier collections of verses reflect the pathos of the times, which appears to be concentrated in *The Sorrowful Mother* (written under his painful impressions of the battle of Kruty) in which the sufferings of Ukraine are personified by the Mother of Christ wandering distraught across the devastated fields of the violated land. Otherwise his lyricism was of a buoyant, exuberant nature, such as had never been heard in Ukraine.

To what exact literary denomination Tichina's poetry of that period belongs, it is difficult to assess. It is variously designated as symbolic, impressionistic, and even surrealistic. But Tichina is so unique in Ukrainian, as well as world poetry, that he appears to be above all these restrictive categories, although certain traits of various schools do appear to classify him as an exponent of this or that modernistic tendency. The main characteristics of his verse are visual and aural whimsicalness, "golden," sunny sounds, clear, clarinet-like melodies, euphonic elisions, joyful, irised nuances, irradiated optimism—all of which reveal him as a bold innovator, supreme master of his craft, "prince of Ukrainian poetry," as he was called, and a poet of the first magnitude. In his *Sunny Clarinets* and *The Golden Sound* (both 1918) these features are in evidence.

Natural phenomena in their least and greatest manifestations always engrossed Tichina to the extent that he invested them with philosophic and metaphysical import. To all concrete objects, even those seemingly inanimate, he imparted a vibrant soul. *In the Cosmic Orchestra* illustrates his ever-expanding diapason. There he ventures beyond the confines of his country, beyond the earth's globe itself, and becomes truly cosmic in his concepts, applying to them novel rhythmic and vocal resources, reproducing by means of new-fledged sounds and images the gigantic whirl of the universal elements, and reducing the apparent chaos of the worlds to his own stellar harmony. In that poem Tichina appears as if he were a titan-priest serving the prime-mover of the eternal motion.

Once the Communist régime was established in Ukraine, Tichina ended by conforming to its literary "socialist realism." Despite the paeans that he was forced to write extolling Stalin's dictatorship in servile encomiums, he none the less remained a master of artistic form, and, between poems and lyrics "made to order," flashes of genius appeared here and there in his languishing creative work. The dividing line between his "nationalist" and "Soviet" periods is represented by his collection of verse entitled *Pluh* (The Plough, 1920) in which it became apparent that revolutionary ideas had begun to take possession of him. Particularly significant in that respect was his *A Psalm to Iron*, in which he greeted the new era as a renascence of the "spirit" of steel and concrete which annihilates the past values of the mind and marshals in a new age of industrial and materialistic power.

Between 1923 and 1936, Tichina lived mostly in Kharkiv, then the capital of the Ukrainian SSR, and there edited the journal *Chervony Shliakh* (The Red Highroad). In it appeared many of his post-Revolution lyrics and poems which as yet attested a somewhat independent state of his Muse. In that journal he still felt free to co-operate with his fellow-poets grouped in various literary organizations, such as HART

(Tempering) and VAPLITE (*Vilna Akademija Proletarskoyi Literaturi*—The Free Academy of Proletarian Literature), which, while working within the framework of Communism, nevertheless fostered the prerogative of the Ukrainian language and its literature to develop independently of Russian. The central government in Moscow, however, though tolerant at first, began to view this attitude with alarm, as threatening to rupture the Soviet Union. In the middle thirties that apprehension generated a wave of terror such as no other national literature in history had ever experienced. Scores of Ukrainian writers and journalists were either executed or exiled to the grim Solovetski Islands in the sub-Arctic north where, but with a few exceptions, they perished amid intolerable conditions.

Although attacked fiercely time and again, Tichina managed to survive that national ordeal, owing, perhaps, to the great reputation he enjoyed within the Soviet Union and abroad, but at the price of servile paeans to Stalin. Besides turning out the literary propaganda that was his forced labour, he served the Party as a member of the Supreme Soviet, as Minister of Education, and, for a period, as the Head of the Central Council of the Ukrainian SSR. Yet only in rare instances in his Soviet career did he achieve the heights of his early “national” period, when his voice was that of a nation resurrected to a life of freedom and self-determination.

SUNNY CLARINETS

Not Zeus, nor Pan, nor Spirit-Dove
Am I, but sunny clarinets.

Within the dance's rhythm I move,
In music that each Sphere begets.

A shifting dream my fancies mark.
About me are sweet notes' demands,
The chiton of the pregnant dark,
The pressure of good tidings' hands.

I wake—and I am you anon:
Above and under me, I dream
Worlds are ablaze and worlds rush on
In Melody's unceasing stream.

I watch, and springtime fills my path:
Each planet-sphere its chord begets.
I recognize you are not Wrath
But just the sunny clarinets.

* * * *

The clouds grow cirrus far across the azure deeps.
O dear companion—ailing yet again—
O brother dear—and crucified—
My sickly heart is wailing like a swan.
The clouds grow cirrus . . .

The winds come rushing by like boisterous bulls!
The poplars bend their harps . . .

From my heart—like lilies fair—
There grow in loveliness all pure and white—
Sorrows and griefs like flowers in my soul.

The winds come rushing by like boisterous bulls!

The sun's mood is reflected in the lakes. Smoke weaves old
dreams . . .

I wish to be—and how shall I forget?
Again I wish—is it the dark-browed woman?
I would be always young, unchangeable!
The sun's mood is reflected in the lakes.
The laughter and the bells and the warm joys. The rainbow
of my thoughts is blooming . . .
Sorrow assails my heart:—O sun! O song!—
Within my soul I place you!—I extol you!
Within my soul I place the sunbeam, with my sorrow.
The laughter and the bells and the warm joys.

* * * *

The groves are rustling—
And I listen.
The clouds rush onward—
And I feel delight.
I feel delight—and wonder
Why my spirit knows
Such happiness.

The tolling of the bell—
Is heard far off.
It sweeps my thoughts—
Above the fields.
Above the fields—in ebb and tide
Bathing me
Like a swallow.

I walk and walk—
In deep emotion.
Waiting for someone—
As I sing.
As I sing—and as I love
Under the gentle whispers of the grasses
Caressing me.

The grove dreams fancies—
Above the stream.
The horizon's edge—
Appears like gold.
Like gold of rolling sheen
The river is ablaze and trembles
Like a melody.

* * * *

Out of my love I wept in misery.
(Above the woods, the clouds are like a wall!)
That weeping stood and parted her and me—
(As with a marble wall . . .)

And all my entreaties up to heaven falter.
(And then return with ringing laughter!)
The leaves flit slowly down upon the altar—
(With curly-burly laughter . . .)

Somewhere the heavy snowfall has been spattered.
(Above the woods, the clouds are like a wall!)
The tender enemies have all been shattered—
(As with a marble wall . . .)

Lonely am I, and lonely sure are you.
(The Spring!—the dawn!—the cherry!)
Your tender soul has shed its petals too—
(An early tree of cherry . . .)

THE SORROWFUL MOTHER

I

She passed adown the dreary fields
Along the balks and boundaries.
And flashing blades of swords of pain
Stabbed through her heart in vortices.

She glanced—and silence reigned around.
A corpse is blackening in the rye . . .
The tiny spikes speak in their sleep:
Rejoice, O Mary, maid most high!

The tiny spikes speak in their sleep:
Tarry among us! Stay our fears!
God's Mother halted in her walk
And burst out into welling tears.

The moon and stars—were they alight?
Even the dawn scarce brought the day.
How frightful! . . . For the human heart
Has in a desert lost its way.

II

She passed adown the dreary fields—
The growing crops showed fresh and green:
Her Son's disciples greeted her:
Rejoice, O Mary, Heaven's queen!

Rejoice, O Mary, Heaven's queen:
We seek for Jesus, full of grace.
How can we reach Emmaus now,
For there we gather is his place?

But Mary raised her arms aloft,
Bloodless as lily-flowers to see:
Not to Judea lies your road,
And turn you back from Galilee.

But go you rather to Ukraine,
Enter each home and seek its loss,
And there you surely will be shown
At least the shadow of His cross.

III

She passed adown the dreary fields.
The fields in grassy mounds arose—
Christ is arisen, Mary! cries
The wind that meets her as it blows.

Christ risen? That I have not heard,
Nor know it, nor can understand.
There never shall be Paradise
Throughout this sad and bloody land.

Christ has arisen! cried the flowers.
The blooms of beastly carnage, we
Out of the blood spring up in crowds
Upon these battle-fields you see.

The distant villages are still.
In grassy mounds the fields arise.
And tearfully the flowers pray:
Have pity, Mary, on our cries!

IV

She passed adown the dreary fields . . .
—And shall this country also die?—
Where He was born a second time,—
For which His love with death would vie?

Silence lay round her everywhere.
The wild oats rankly choked the plain.
—Ah, why have You been crucified?
Ah, why have You been darkly slain?

She could not bear to sorrow thus,
She could not bear the bitter loss,—
She fell upon the windrow bare
And spread her arms to form a cross.

Above her head the tiny spikes
Kept softly whispering: “O hail!”
Angels in heaven heard it not
And did not reckon of the tale.

TICHINA: THE GOLDEN SOUND

From A PSALM TO IRON

III

The Gothic and Baroque alike have passed
As when a blissful dream at waking flies.
And now arrives a cast-iron renaissance,
Indifferently screwing up its eyes.

It is the same to us, if it be God
Or a black Devil—both are generals!—
For iron-souled assemblies arch their brows
And many a city block in fragments falls.

Up from the city moans and wailings rise
Like feathers flying from a bed of down . . .
The cold, green twilight fainted and cried out
And fled in anguish from the flaming town.

Yonder, what burns: an archive? a museum?—
Pile on more wood to feed the fire's rage!
For here mankind is lifting up with cursing
A new psalm to the Iron of our Age.

THE GOLDEN SOUND¹

Above Kiev—there is a golden sound,
And doves, and sunlight!
And underneath—
The Dnieper strikes the strings . . .

The ancestors.
The ancestors have risen from their graves
And gone down through the city.
The ancestors are sacrificing to the Sun—
Hence comes the golden sound.
And ah, that sound! . . .
Because of it, one cannot hear the voice of one's own friend,
Because of it, the storms that fly above the city weep—
For no one heeds them.

¹Written under the impression of the turbulent times following World War I.

The golden sound!

At night

When the great Galaxy spreads out its silver cloud of dust,
Open your window wide, and listen.

Listen:

For somewhere in the heavens rivers flow,
The mighty streams of Lavra's² and Sophia's³ bells! . . .

And golden ships

From hoary, grey antiquity approach the shore.

The golden ships.

. . . Bearing the cross,

All radiant,

And wounded in the heart by God's own grace,
St. Andrew⁴ disembarks, first-called disciple.

He climbs the mountains:

Blessed be you, O hills, and you, O turbid river!

And the hills laughed

And turned to green again . . .

The turbid river filled with sunlight and with azure—

It touched the strings . . .

At night

When the great Galaxy spreads out its silver cloud of dust
Above the Dnieper's banks!

Above the Grey-bewiskered Stream, along celestial fields,
God passes, and God sows.

Down fall

The grains

Of crystal harmony.

Out of the deeps of all Eternity the grains fall softly
Into one's soul.

And there, in the soul's temple,

Above which, in the boundless heights, soar dove-like prayers,
There,

In the resounding temple they bloom forth in chords,
Inspired, like the eyes of ancestors!

²Pecherska Lavra, the Monastery of the Caves.

³St. Sophia, the cathedral of Kiev.

⁴The first-called Apostle; in a legend, he is said to have visited Ukraine and blessed the site of the future Kiev from one of the Kievan hills.

It seemed some priest, by prayer intoxicated—
 Our own Kiev,
 Kiev most beautiful,
 Who lifted prayers for the entire Ukraine.
 —A storm!

Spontaneously it opened up its eyes—
 And all men smile like wine . . .

—A flash!
 —Then horror!

Having unfurled its shining pennons
 (As all men smile like wine)
 Into creative sudden eminence
 Kiev burst into flame!

: Greetings! Ah, greetings!—flashes from the eyes.
 Thousands of eyes . . .
 There comes a sudden silence: someone speaks.
 : Glory!—comes bursting from a thousand breasts.
 And there above it all, in sunlight, are the doves.
 : Glory!—comes bursting from a thousand breasts.
 The doves.

It was Ukraine, for all her years of shame,
 That with the cross he blessed,
 Even the shining one,
 Once wounded in the heart by God's own grace,
 Andrew, the first disciple to be called.
 And the hills laughed,
 And turned to green again . . .

But two black biers there are,
 And one all bright.
 And all around
 Are cripples.
 They crawl, they whine petitions, stretch their hands
 (And ah, how crooked are their fingers!)—
 Give to them, give!
 Give food—lest in their hearts a beast arise—
 Give.
 They crawl, they whine petitions, curse the sun,
 The sun and Christ!

And they all pass:
The poor, the rich, the proud, the young, those who are
 passionate for clouds and music—
All of them pass.

A black bird—and its eyes are sharp as claws!—
A black bird, from decayed recesses of the soul
And from the battlefield, has now come flying.
It caws.
Amid the golden sound above Kiev
And above all Ukraine—
It caws.
O bird most merciless!
Was it not you who pecked the crucifixion of man's soul
For centuries?
For centuries you pecked?
For centuries.
Have you not pecked the eyeballs of the living out,
And faith from out their hearts?
The faith from out their hearts.
And now what do you want
In these our hours of laughter and of joy?
What do you want now, ruthless bird? Pray, speak!
With your black wings to cover up the doves and sun—
With your black wings.

—Brothers of mine, do you recall the days
Of utter springtime at the dawn of freedom?
How we embraced, and walked fraternal paths,
And praised the sun!
Meanwhile the tears of all were smiling,
Even upon the tiny blades of grass . . .

—I don't remember. Leave me . . .

—My dear one, why not laugh, why not rejoice?
For it is I, your brother, who address you
In our own native tongue—have you not known me?
—Stand off! Or I shall kill you!

The bird of black,
The black bird caws.
And all around
There are the cripples.

In these our hours of laughter and of joy,
Who put them on their knees?
Who told them to stretch out their crooked hands?
What senseless god—in the hours of joy and laughter?
The ancestors have turned away in horror.
But we shall grow!—the poplars said.
We shall burst forth in singing!—said the flowers.
And we shall overflow!—declared the Dnieper.
The poplars, and the flowers, and the Dnieper.

The sound resounds, resounds, resounds,
And passes into lingering harmonies . . .
—Do not sweet springs of gold gush forth beneath the ground?
The sound caresses, wafts itself in gentleness,
And trembles like a dream . . .
—Are these not precious gems that grow within the
mountains' depths?
We shall grow up!—they said.
And we shall overflow!—the Dnieper answers.

Upon a starry morning, lay you down and place your listening
ear upon the ground—
They come,
It seems they seek Kiev from thorps and hamlets—
Down highways and by paths they skirt the hills.
To their hearts' pulse they beat the glad words out
—they come, they come!
They chant as to a measure of the sun
—they come, they come!
Down highways and by paths, skirting the hills,
They come indeed!
And all like wine are laughing:
And all like wine are singing:
I am a mighty people,
I am young!
Lo, I have listened to your golden sound—
And I have heard.
Into your eyes I gazed—
And I have seen.
Mountains of rock once piled upon my chest
I have cast off as easily as down . . .
I am the fair, unconquerable Fire,

The Eternal Spirit.

Then greet us with your sunlight and your doves.
I am a mighty people—with your sun, your doves.
Welcomer us gladly with your native songs!

For I am young!

Am young!

MADONNA MINE

Madonna mine, Mary Immaculate,
Through all the countless ages glorified!
Above our lonely altars, to deride,
Blow only winds of ominous debate.

Pass your protective mantle softly o'er us,
Above our village utter a lament:—
No canticle to you shall we present,
Or sing a psalm in our unruly chorus.

A daring woman to our portal goes,
A sinful virgin to our home draws nigh.
Naked—no dress or jewels can we spy—
She is bewitching as a full-blown rose.

Incline, Madonna, in our village, please,
To the last gable that the last hut yields.
Smile, and withdraw along the harvest fields,
Waving off bullets as you would the bees.

II

Already they extol and glorify
a novel name.

(Hail, Mary,
My cranberry!)

She walks along and laughs:
incarnate life and flowers!
The bright sun plays the fiddle,
And all the clouds are dancing.

Upon her haunches, as on harpstrings laid,
her hands are lying.

Greetings to you, young woman—
Who are you?

I'll tell you—but not wholly:
 I am for all, for you . . .
(Hail, Mary,
My cranberry!)

III

Madonna mine, Mother most pure,
 My Flower of heavenly blue!
The soul of purity now moves
 Into an era new.

Instead of lilies, now my lips
 Kiss roses wet with dew.
And yet, as Peter did from Christ,
 I cannot turn from you.

With whom now, in what gracious hour,
 Will youth renewal prove?
May I perhaps ne'er pray again
 For comrades and my love?

Steel clashes. Year goes after year.
 And silent are the stones.
Hum in my heart, O golden Dream,
 In many golden tones . . .

IV

Nor stone nor marble speaks to me
 As iron speaks anon.
—O tender, daring damosel,
 Where is your chiton gone?

Where are your gown of golden weave
 And sad eyes to be found?
Strings play hosanna, and the tone
 Is walnut-small in sound.

In fields, as in a temple court,
 We'll toil till late at night.
In unison with ripening rye
 We'll grow in our delight.

Madonnas will with kisses warm
And songs our meetings seal.
The dream above your swelling breast,
Belated, is of steel . . .

WAR

I lay me down to sleep.
Above my bed three holy angels stand.
One angel—who sees everything.
A second angel—who hears everything.
A third angel—who knows everything.

And I dreamed of a son.

And lo, that son against our foes did rise.
They on his breast slashed all death's agonies.
(One angel from the sight then veiled his eyes.)

Then lo, the fields were flat, yea, flat and green.
“Farewell, my mother!” breathed a death-song keen.
(My second angel brought a cross, I ween.)

And the wind said: “Grieve not, he knows not death
Who for Ukraine his life relinquisheth!”
(Thus my third angel cheers by what he saith.)

And I dreamed
Of a son.

II

To the right—the sun.
To the left—the moon.
And then—the star.

—I bless you, my dear son, against the enemy.
And he replied: My darling mother!
There is no enemy
And never has been one.
The only enemy we have
Is our own heart.
Bless me then, mother, to seek the blessed herb,
To seek an herb for man's insanity.

I raised my hand then to the cross—
But there is no one near me.
All is at peace, except the crow's caw! caw!

To the right—the sun.
To the left—the moon.
And then—the star.

BE TRUE

Be true—but show not all men your desire.
Be brave—but to strict facts attention lend.
Play never with ideas as with fire:
After decision, press on to the end.

If you a soldier, worker, poet be,—
Act the volcano in your spirit's rage.
You have but one immutability:
Make your heart pinions from the present age!

That is not power, which knows no discipline.
That is not purity, which melts like snow.
Strike fire with flint! Defence from far begin,
Lest you in sleep be taken by your foe.

If you forget your land, your root will dry.
Repress your heart, and stunted is your state.
If you sit still, creative force will die;
Only in struggle will your soul grow great.

Whose soul is young, does not grow grey with pain.
Where lightnings fall, the rainbow's arc will soar.
The river, down its course to meet the main,
Is clear, though seeming turbid from the shore.

Be true—but show not all men your desire.
Be brave—but to strict facts attention lend.
Play never with ideas as with fire:
After decision, press on to the end.

IN THE COSMIC ORCHESTRA

Blessed then be
the matter and the space, the number and the measure!
blessed be the colours and the timbres and the fire,
the fire and tonality of all the world,
 the fire and the flow, the fire and the flow!

Spirit, who all matter permeates,
 Who are you?
Are we to call you peace? Or wind?
Blind power of blind machines?
The cadence of the atoms, play of motes?
Before the entire world you have spread out your arms
 as at a reading-desk,
its background—

 Suddenly, as with a sound of propellers,
 Chaos is swirling in dances,
 somewhere in bottomless corridors come the
 re-echo of trombones . . .

Countless hosts of bodies, unsoldered parts, rumbled independently:
 Quickly, more quickly,
 one after the other,
 orbitally and dextrously let us fall,
 quickly!

Millions of solar systems
vibrate, stir impetuously and loudly bellow!
Comets neigh and speed impulsively,
and oceans upon oceans roar.
Countless hosts of bodies, unsoldered parts
are spiralling downwards, sideways, into the ceilings . . .
 Fires! O Fires!

And far off rays of light both weep and sing
 Like violoncellos.
Spirit that has permeated all,
 Who are you?

I am the spirit, the spirit of eternity, of matter, the
 muscles of primordial dawn.
I am the spirit of time, the spirit of measure and
 space, the spirit of number.

Aerolitic streams rush on
from a single stroke of my oar . . .
I am the motor-spirit, the beat of tanks, the choruses
of automobiles.

My courtyard-garage vibrates with motors.
and as lightly as children to the beach
I lead titans into space.

Layers on layers upon the waters
I distribute the systems,
instil their youthful thoughts,
give them their themes to con.

Already they fly,
across the currents they sail.
Until they all shall sink
I shall not rise, I never shall withdraw.

Fly, fly, steer yourselves to the suns,
steer yourselves to the dome above!
Summon all and federate them,
disseminate watchwords throughout the worlds!

Attach no meaning to the rings of Saturn—
it is enough to live soundly for oneself!
To all the planets, to all the suns—
liberty, equality and fraternity!

And already they fly,
across the currents they sail.
Until they all shall sink
I shall not rise, I never shall withdraw.

I am the spirit, the spirit of eternity, of matter, the
muscles of primordial dawn.
I am the spirit of time, the spirit of measure and
space, the spirit of number.
Aerolitic streams rush on
from a single stroke of my oar . . .

III

In the cosmic orchestra
everything is subject to a single hand.

There are no limits . . . and where are the ends
that might appoint semesters to the suns
in the azure milk?

The ether floats, the wind streams,
the springs of new poems gush forth,
constellations rise in the forms of letters
surrounded by shining fire.

And what is time there? What is an Age there?
What is the meaning of "in the daytime"? "In the morning"?
A red outcry, a bloody outcry,
protuberances of red suns!

There is no sorrow there, no grief at oppression,
egoism is foreign to the systems.
Everyone there knows his own orbit;
as for law, it is the law of socialism.

There everyone knows his own variations:
A fellow-traveller is a friend, a comrade is a brother.
And every world is an aerostat
that comes out to meet you every moment.

One falls—another begins to sparkle,
and so on endlessly, beyond all measure . . .
And neither the planets nor the sun
have any right to stop.

In the cosmic orchestra
everything is subject to a single hand.
There are no limits . . . and where are the ends
that might appoint semesters to the suns
in the azure milk?

IV

What are our tears and moans and outcries?
What are all earth's dramas in the tragedy of the Cosmos?

Eternally new, primordial and savage,
the Creator is crucified upon his own creation—
it is He who, in fathomless depths, is raging in
boundless violence!
His lungs inhale the tempest!

His heart would embrace the least atom!
His brain rends thought with the power of dynamite!

A senseless ship, breasted with sails,
an anchor that, in a song above the abyss, cannot cast itself—
this it is that in Promethean fashion goes lamenting into the future
and nevermore returns.

Tears gush forth,
waters gush forth in oceanic volume and shatter themselves
against eternity.

Spray leaps about, spills down!
Spray like the sparks from flint and steel!
Spray destined for distant worlds!

Tell me: what are the solar systems if not spray?
Tell me: what is the earth if not a dot?
And all humanity, is it not infusoria
(devour, devour yourself in a drop of water)?
Under the parasol of its own atmosphere,
under the clouds of madness and falsity
the earth rears umbelliferous souls
that will never come to understand the map of the Cosmos.
Their brain can hardly stir a furrow manured by ages.
A century of the next illusion will only lightly cover
the trench of superstitions,
and then again will arise exhalations and mists,
and then again will arise wars and prisons.
And the countless requiems under the roof of a parasol—like
mosquitoes above a swamp . . .

O humanity! O scrupulous pride!
Have you ever looked through the telescope of eternity? .

V

On the shores of eternity the sun is moving,
the sun is moving in harness straps.
It pulls at the waggon—
and all the planets go into ecstasies!
Men, do not go sour under the hedges,
do not weep at petty insults.
On the shores of eternity the sun is moving,
the sun is moving in harness straps.

Men, love the earth!
 Poets, lead them into the Cosmos!
 When the barricades are on the planets—
 the whole universe is in pain.
 On the shores of eternity the sun is moving,
 the sun is moving in harness straps.

Every planet is made gravid by the sun.
 Each planet is made equal and friendly to the rest
 by the sun.
 The orbit of each and its flight are according to its power
 (the inert ones are being extinguished, the weak ones grow dim)—
 Upwards and downwards, upwards and downwards!

And the echoes reverberate,
 and all the systems are like communes
 that have taken the motto of the Cosmos-federation—
 upwards—downwards . . .

Men, love the earth!
 Poets, lead them into the Cosmos!
 To the Cosmos lies the way—
 to life!
 On the shores of eternity the sun is moving,
 the sun is moving in harness straps.

. . .

VII

The anemic planet was wasting away around the sun
 and contaminating the spaces of the worlds.
 The sun was pouring handfuls of fire into the arteries
 of the earth—
 that is where blood came from.
 Oh, always blood, in different doses,
 and each struggle resembles its age—
 the Last Supper,
 the Guillotine Days.
 Continue to aeroplane, to aeroplane, my soul,
 lower not your flight, fall not.
 Are you the only one to be incensed by the man-beast, with
 his cruelty and falsehood?
 Are not the hearts of all shot down by bullets?

And the thousands buried alive in the ground—is it
not they who every night crucify the soul
with their outcries:
Oh, for revenge, for revenge! Blood for blood!
Who is to be punished? The sun that is pouring handfuls
of fire into the arteries of the earth?
The earth that cannot bear without manure?
Christ was not the first among us: Robespierre not the last,
and blood is always with us in different doses,
and every struggle resembles its age.

VIII

Humanity speaks out
through the three trumpets of its fanfares:
Shevchenko—Whitman—Verhaeren.
Like cables from nation to nation:
revolutions powerfully dictate on earth:
Shevchenko—Whitman—Verhaeren.

Connect yourselves, O wires,
Approach, O poets, conscience of Democracy,
tidings of Democracy.
Let the blind minstrels turn from the Cossack forelock and
baggy trousers and on their lyres shape “The Last
Judgement.”

Our Doomsday has arrived.
(Above us is the shadow of the cherubim,
blessed be the journey—
what inconceivable music—
the propellers roar . . .)
Our Doomsday has arrived.
This it was that cast a furrow that one cannot plough
over even in a lifetime.
This it was that spat into the Dnieper
and severed us in twain.
(Above us is the shadow of the cherubim,
blessed be the journey—
what inconceivable music—
the propellers roar . . .)
The cannon discharge and all the ends of the earth
detonate.

Continents split, kingdoms topple down in ruins,
tempests in the graveyard of nations sound like battle-bugles.
O nasal oboes, geniuses of the caves, ye rustic poets,
add your voice to the voice of the battle-bugles.
Humanity speaks out
through the three trumpets of its fanfares:
Shevchenko—Whitman—Verhaeren.

IX

Once there bloomed the gardens of Semiramis,
and from the Nile there ran one hundred and twenty channels
offering water to the fields and hills,
while, for the Empress, weary with tedium, rain was made.
And that with the hands of slaves.
With the hands of slaves . . .
Why then cannot we, the accursed generation,
why then cannot we, all of us, get together,
why cannot we set to work
and renew the earth?

(Serry your ranks, O strong of spirit,
under a single standard.)

Can it be that the yoke will always weigh us down?
Can tsars and dungeons and oppression still be with us?
Can weakness and humility remain our lot,
these, and the brand of a prisoner?

Who, who burst into laughter in Europe,
who burst out into weeping,
because we are dying here of starvation
and yet will not give in to our enemy?

(Serry your ranks, O strong of spirit,
under a single standard.)

Yes, yes we are swollen for lack of bread.
Our hope—our children—are dying.
But hunger is the tongue of the revolution.
And what if you shall be smitten from the rear
by the universal worker?
Who, who burst into laughter in Europe,
who burst out into weeping,
because we are dying here of starvation
and yet will not give in to our enemy?

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF KRUTY

IN MEMORY OF THE THIRTY

Deep in the Mound of Askold¹
 Their bodies have been laid—
 Thirty staunch Ukrainians,
 Young, glorious, unafraid . . .

Here in the Mound of Askold
 The bloom of the Ukraine!—
 Our fate it was by bloody paths
 This destiny to gain.

Whom did a treacherous hand assail
 Upon these pleasant shores?
 The sun's in flower—the wind is loud—
 The Dnieper River roars . . .

Against whom was the warrior bent?
 God strike the villain down!
 Above all else they loved their land,
 Their country of renown.

They died in glory like the saints,
 Like martyrs unafraid.
 Deep in the Mound of Askold
 Their bodies have been laid.

Maksim Rilsky

(1895-)

Born in Kiev, where he attended the local university, Rilsky began to study medicine, but turned to philology. The chaos during and following World War I, however, prevented his graduation. His father, Thaddeus, a landlord of middle rank, is well known in Ukrainian social history as one of the leaders of the movement derogatively called "peasant-mania," whose purpose was to persuade the Polonized Ukrainian gentry to return to Ukrainian ideals and work for the welfare of the rural masses. The home atmosphere in the village of Romanivka was such that young Maksim

¹A half-legendary prince of Kiev, over which he is said to have ruled with his brother Dir. In the earliest Ukrainian chronicle it is recorded that he campaigned against Byzantium. They were slain by the first Oleh (882) and buried on a hill near Kiev. "Askold's Mound" is still one of the historical sights of the Ukrainian capital.

could not but grow enamoured of Ukrainian traditions and folklore. At a very tender age, he began to write verses. His first collection, *On the White Islands*, appeared when he was but fifteen.

During the most turbulent post-Revolution years (1919-21), Rilsky lived in the country, leading a tranquil existence, angling, musing dreamily, his eyes plunged into the "blue distances" where he envisioned the peace of the "tuneful Languedoc" of the troubadours and evoked images of a past as distant as antiquity to while away his time—certainly not in inane idleness, but in a solitude rich with creativity. That static existence is quite palpably reproduced in his lyric "The Old House Drowses," in which time seems to be suspended in its course and the poet is merged with the infinite.

In his flight from the present, Rilsky was certainly an escapist from the stark realities of the contemporary scene. Even when, in 1921, he returned to Kiev, he would not relinquish his posture of Olympian detachment from the crass events of the day or the independence of his Parnassian heights where, far from the madding crowd, he desired to be free (here we paraphrase a few lines of one of his lyrics) to worship the goddess born of the sea foam that, to him, was more tangible and powerful than granite itself. It was precisely for his aloofness from "socialist realism" that he was attacked by the Soviet régime, which mercilessly deprecated his hedonism, epicureanism, and lack of revolutionary spirit. For that matter, Rilsky at that time did not reveal any nationalist dynamism either, and that was perhaps what saved him from the tragic end of his fellow-craftsmen during the Purge of the middle thirties. As intimated in Khrushchev's memorable speech in which he destroyed the cult of Stalin, the grim dictator constantly held a menacing eye on Rilsky who, but for the protection of the present Party chief, would have been annihilated by the Terror. As long as Stalin lived, Rilsky was never certain of his fate.

Against those attacks, he defended himself with all the boldness he could muster, protesting that it was inherent in him to be what he was, and that if he were to write any poetry at all, he would have to recreate the past in the garb of the present. "I cannot write in any other manner," he maintained. His strong will, however, was broken in 1931, when he was arrested and imprisoned. From that experience he returned a changed man. For almost a decade his earlier works were banished, while he was given an opportunity to ingratiate himself into the favour of the Party. That he succeeded is attested by the two Stalin prizes for literature he received in due course. His capitulation, however, does not detract from the fact that he still is the greatest master of the Ukrainian language who ever lived and one of the greatest contemporary lyricists in any literature. His fame rests especially on *Under the Autumn Star* (1918), *The Blue Distance* (1922), *Through Storm and Snow* (1925), and *The Thirteenth Spring* (1926).

Rilsky began as a minor Symbolist, but until his conversion to Communism his category was that of a neo-classicist who cultivated rich imagery, sparkling metaphor, beauty of refined expression, equilibrated logic, classical clarity, aesthetic simplicity, and all this amid a wealth of strophes and measures that he advanced not merely for art's sake but in order to convey the more tellingly the philosophy that, in spite of its harsh realities, life is good and well worth experiencing.

If one were to seek the essence of his literary genius, it is to be found in his poem-vision "Thirst," written under the tension of the German invasion of Ukraine. There, folklorist, pastoral, symbolist, classical, romantic, and realistic elements merge into a marvellous whole. There, too, the dynamism which he was accused of lacking appears with the force of an entire aroused people execrating the despoiler of their native soil. The poem is a visual, aural, and verbal phenomenon pulsating with the vitality of the nation's soul.

Rilsky's translations from foreign literatures were no less masterful than his original verse. His transmutation into Ukrainian of Shakespeare, Molière, Voltaire, the French classicists of the seventeenth century, the Parnassians of the late nineteenth, and particularly his Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*, in 1928, were hailed not only for their faithful renditions, but as clear demonstrations of what a harvest of linguistic resources the Ukrainian speech has produced in the course of the centuries and what lofty heights it can reach by its powers of expression.

* * * *

The old house drowses. Round it, sultry summer
Stands like a lake within its sky-blue shores.
Under the porch-step lies a pensive dog
And with its ear flicks off molesting flies.

While the flies buzz, and swarm in darkening masses,
It seems to me that time no longer moves;
Has stopped and faded; and for endless ages
Green summer daylight spreads along the ground.

And always in the sky will hover thus
The lonely kite, beneath the shadowy trees
The dreaming hens will stray. Eternity
Has come and placed its hand upon my forehead.

RED WINE

In golden light the elm trees bend
And yellow-fair transparence borrow . . .
Though you have not found fortune, friend,
Why do you long for it in sorrow?

Behold the red and heady wine
That twinkles in this crystal glass . . .
The rustling trees your mood divine:
"All that will have an end, and pass."

"And what once seemed reality
Is but a shade, a puff of smoke,
And what in dreams we longed to see
Is commonplace, a tedious joke.

"Steer to tranquillity's still lake
Your youthful quest, held slack, not tauter,
And all that lingers in your wake
Is but an oar-trace on the water.

"The summer fades, its days grow dim—
Why yearn for them with heart unsteady?
Fill up the chalice to the brim
With wine that is both red and heady!"

* * * *

All of Arabia's perfumes cannot quell
the tune I hummed so early in my life,
that bloomed at last as music in my soul . . .
Cold wind, assail the frosted window panes,
whine, poplars, whine again, and weep, wet willows—
I sail in fancy on an azure stream,
while high above, a regiment of swans
drums with its wings and sails across the sky.

AT NOON

A hairy bee is sucking out the honey
from the red weeds. How tastily and fully
the violoncello of the radiant noon
has spread its melody across the land!
Rest, now! And leaning on your faithful spade,
listen and look, and marvel not at all.
It is yourself who melts into green branches
and spreads along the ground in teeming gourds;
yourself who hums in swarms of tawny bees
busily settled on the ash-tree branches;
yourself who flits in pollen through the rye
to fertilize the ardent female spikes—

you who create, with others and for others,
new cities; who are building vaulted arches
above the mountain passes, high and blue!
The waters, and their barks, are now asleep;
the beehives hang, like fragrant grapes in clusters;
even the sun itself, like some ripe fruit,
seems motionless . . .

And only you are proof
against the enchantments of the noon and peace,
for, like a sister, over you inclines
your tireless consort—Creativity.

* * * *

Some build gods' temples, mansions for the rich
With marble, where the sculptured pediment
Show high relief or pillars' lines are leant
Austerity to meet taste's highest pitch—

I, under beech-trees where the highways meet,
Have now made glad simplicity my scheme,
Daubed a clay hut—and like a lingering dream
My life flows on in indigence complete.

Yet no guest from my hut unwelcomed goes:
All that upon my land well-tended grows
Is planted early and is watered well.

Here I have even goats. I vow with pride:
Nowhere are tastier cheeses laid aside,
And friendly greetings that can wealth excel.

* * * *

When the dark brigantines will glide away
On the wave's foaming crest,
A youth will let a faithless maiden stay
Abandoned here, unblest.

The sails will flutter and a bird will shriek
Low in the lurid sky;
Her sleeve is silvered, and her pallid cheek,
With teardrops from her eye.

But there are other lands, and other lawns,
And other blossoms fair.
And he will bring, at other summer dawns,
His happy greetings there.

Another maid will place upon his brow
A wreath in some far land,
When his dark brigantine shall push its prow
High on another strand.

BEFORE SPRING

Have you heard the news? The larks have just arrived!
The crumbling snow still lies in dirty drifts . . .

To tell the truth, the larks are not here yet,
but I have thought of them, and much besides,
recalling that I, too, have wet my feet
as I went trudging through the heavy snow
that soon was doomed to die, and hurried on
to hear the harbingers of wakening life,
the silly larks. What fancies held my heart,
what hopes arose, what pleasure but to breathe
with earth, with beasts, and with the unopened buds!
There was no falsehood in those youthful dreams,
there is none now—though winter lies around,
and all who only think of Réaumur
and of the calendar—must surely freeze,
carp at the cold, and go to buy more fuel—
while I, in truth, though likewise somewhat blue,
cry out to all, in spite of everything:
“Have you heard the news? The larks have just arrived!”

RECIPROCAL GIFTS

The gurgling water flows along the bough
And generously soaks the dried-out ground
Which the harsh sunlight, in its ruthless round,
Had burned up with the ardour of its brow.

The hose-jets sparkle, and in silvery blue
 The rainbow, sign of peace, is fair to see
 Embroidering morn's grey tranquillity
 And radiating joy in many a hue.

How good it is such draughts of life to give
 To flowers, trees and grasses! How they live
 To drink it down, in ecstasy bedewed!

They will repay the boon. Each tender spray
 That you so generously help today
 Will bend with autumn gifts of gratitude.

TOIL

Love then your vineyard and your noisy spade.
 Nations and realms may die, as change is made;
 Where shepherds used to slumber after toil,
 Cities will rise, and bloody wars will boil,
 And mortal men in endless conflict rage!
 But know that only here, where toil each age
 Tends the dull earth and wounds her fertile womb,
 Berries will ripen and man's joys will come.

* * * *

Somewhere on earth lies tuneful Languedoc,¹
 And happy France grows blossoms in Champagne,
 Where sunbeams every tiny plot belock
 And villages make vineyards their domain.

Marseilles lies somewhere, and the sea's sweet scent,
 And Paris, home of genius and of jest;
 Somewhere lived Daudet,² warm and eloquent,
 And Tartarin pursued the hunter's quest.

¹Once the name of a province in southern France, where "oc" was used for "oui" (yes); hence *langue d'oc*. It was the land of the Provençal troubadours.

²Alphonse Daudet (1840-97), a French writer born in southern France, creator of the satirical adventures of *Tartarin de Tarascon*.

Somewhere lived Shakespeare and made bright an island
Where Dickens through the fog with glad face shone;
A wild beast howls in some Siberian highland,
In the Sahara, caravans sail on.

O world of mine! Far world of fair young maids
Who pluck grape-clusters merrily and well!
Blest be the vineyards and their teeming shades,
Autumnal fruitage of spring's pungent smell!

* * * *

Our nuptial bed was decked with fragrant roses.
The Cyprian's image blessed it from a niche.
We give the goddess figs as sweet as honey,
Dark, potent grapes and passionate young doves.

The sun will set, the roses' scent will madden,
Hands will seek hands and greedy lips seek lips . . .
Grant, goddess, strength to make our passion fertile
And from this night conceive a clever son.

* * * *

At least in dreams arise, Venetian waters,
The marble of the pillar and the stair,
The radiant beauty of old Venice' daughters,
The gloomy gold of a Madonna's hair!

There white-robed Desdemona gazes down
From a high staircase landing, fair and far;
Upon her brow is set a queenly crown,
Decked with the roses of the evening star.

The watery lanes that plash below her feet
Reflect the golden fires of the sun;
Saint Mark's white pigeons in the noonday heat
Lie sleeping in blue stillness, every one.

You have stretched out your hands, O lily maid.
A sable warrior sails to you today
Who fills your soul's white dreams with accolade
Of flaming glory that will last for aye . . .

At least in dreams let far-off journeys rise,
Without impediments to cause derision,
And let the sorrowful yet joyful eyes,
Of white-robed Desdemonas bless our vision!

TO A SATIRIST

You flay debauchery, untruth, and vice,
And would to piety our hearts entice;
Why then by lantern light do you, old boy,
Come stealthily to see that house of joy?
Rising on tiptoe, stretching out your neck,
Why, Jeremiah, do you fiercely reck
Of youthful Lydia, whose wanton dance
Wins hearts and dollars by her flaming glance,
As her eye flashes in a merry joke?
Cover your grim face with your mighty cloak
And run—from sin and merchandised delight!
One minute more—and you are lost tonight.

FALSTAFF

When young Prince Hal succeeded to the throne,
He, as the custom was from times unknown,
Greeted his subjects with a solemn speech.
Suddenly, through the crowd a man made breach,
A hulking oldster. His resplendent nose
Grew on his greasy visage like a rose,
And under hanging brows shone cunning eyes.
Cried he: "My Prince! At last we've gained the prize!
Then tossing high his hat, "A holiday!
'Tis I, your friend, the pal of all your play!
I greet you well from sherry and the wenches!"
But that hoarse, drunken speech Prince Henry quenches;
It shatters on his voice as on a shield.
Unwilling any countenance to yield
To frenzied shouts and outcries, he replied:
"Depart from me, old man, old tun of pride,
I know you not! Although my youthful eye
Once vaguely dreamed you in the days gone by.

Thus does my youth, a blot of errant slips,
 Appear and cry to me with shameless lips:
 "Tis I, your faithful friend!" But such a greeting
 Strikes on my daily tasks, its shame defeating,
 And to those hoarse and frenzied cries I say,
 In voice severe: 'Depart now! Go away!
 I know you not! Far off your features seem,
 Limned in a heavy, long-forgotten dream!' "

* * * *

Again I turned to *Pan Tadeusz*¹' pages,
 Opened the book and drew the curtain tight,
 And once again the gentry speak before me,
 The Count goes mantled in Romanticism,
 And once again the hunting horn resounds
 And casts its call through forests to the sky.

Again I marvel how that master could,
 With such a certain hand, take the mad gentry
 And lead them thus. Again his mighty words,
 Like the bronze horn, resounded in the calm.

But now my fingers impotently drop
 The goose-quill—for before my sight there rises
 A woman's figure, like a film of ice . . .
 Her two thin arms, like faded angel-wings,
 Are lifted in a hesitant attempt,
 And in her braids the first, feared silver hair
 Reminds her of the autumn and of sadness.

ATROCITY

Gazelles on the high plains my hunting sniffed.
 And now—the cruel goddess' hissing gift—
 The slender arrow on the string sits poised.
 A moment more—its snake-hiss will be noised
 Across the morning peace. Warm blood to drink,
 Fiercely and avidly its point will sink.

¹Poland's greatest epic, created by Adam Mickiewicz, her foremost poet. It was translated by M. Rilsky into impeccable Ukrainian.

A POET

Nor lively marts nor orgies can allure him,
And liquid music's notes he cannot hear,
Far off and sweet. For between walls austere
A silent speaker's austere words immure him.

Soon will the beauteous queen be stol'n by cunning,
And warriors, as one man, will heed the call
With cries like eagles—in the ruins fall
Dead bodies from the victors' overrunning.

The chiefs in Agamemnon's gilded tent
Will gather. And their hoary heads are bent
In righteous wrath, like gods, at his demands.

Who then at last will raise the fated bow
Against him who, 'mid roses all a-glow,
Now drinks the wine from Helen's rosy hands?

* * * *

All day the labour did not cease,
The wind blew on, the hot sun burned,—
Then the mute twilight came in peace,
A dear guest through the gates returned.

Damp dung was scattered from the wain;
Our hands and pitchforks stink of dung;
Our legs grow numb and faint with pain;
Like steel our heavy heads are hung.

Like a dull annalist again,
Whose heart long since is cold and dry,
The moon transcribes the dreams of men
On the vast canvas of the sky.

BEETHOVEN

When the deaf genius of all music's realm,
Beyond man's shouts, felt silence overwhelm,
And knew mute turbulence in rebel fashion
And from it in exuberance of passion

Composed the harmonies he could not hear,
Death came upon him. Famous and austere,
Forgotten and derided, lay a king
And yet a slave, near death. Long cloud-scrolls cling
Across the sky. The distances grew dim.
A storm neared. And thoughts seemed like rooks to him
That flew in panic circles round the sun.
Then, with a quenchless thirst for work not done,
He started, like an eagle not yet slain.
He heard, he heard! Ah, could he but attain
To crush and mould the earth, new joys to mark
For sons of earth!—He heard the thunder dark
Roll in loud tumult down the silent vault.
He feels the tremblings of new hopes exalt—
Though death already had his forehead kissed,
He lifted to the sky his proud, clenched fist.
That gesture of your shrivelled hand for me
Inspires more awe than any symphony!

From THE RAINY TRILOGY

The rain subsides.
From the wet branches—
When the cold wind shakes at them—
The drops still fall,—
While in the sky
Through haze the azure lakes are shining clear.
O lakes of azure!
O lakes of azure!
I love you
Like maidens' glances,
Like the warm pressure of a friendly hand,
Like a call to battle,
Like a song of love!

I gaze at you
And think of creativity:
Of that far savage who had once invented
A marvel, strange, unheard of—
A sharpened hook—with which to scrape the earth,
And so to sow the earth and garner bread;

Or of that savage who with pointed pebble
Incised upon the wall of some dark cave
A mammoth or a bear
To all men's fascination;
Of him who once devised a coat of fur,
Or first sewed boots,
Or of the sage who fashioned once a flail,
The master who steps back to view with joy
His own creation—as the morning sun
Enjoys the dawning world it has created;
Of all those whose intelligence and hands
Gave life to vast machines,
Built tall and slender buildings;
Of those whose symphonies and poetry,
Treatises, formulae, sketches and ciphers,
Canvases, dramas, statues and great verse
Through all the nights and ages shine for us
With dazzling—nay!—life-giving splendour!—
Oh, pleasant lakes! Glory and gratitude to them!

* * * *

Water and air, the lightning and the thunder
The earth's crust and its subterranean labour—
All will become an edifice of wonder
To pierce the clouds of darkness like a sabre.

The echoing cliffs will be reduced to dust,
Water be harnessed like a pliant creature,
Man at his feet in glad, obedient trust,
Will one day see the figure of proud Nature.

MY LITTLE TAD

My son, a little tad on two thin legs,
This morning for the first time went to school.
His bag, his pen-box and his light-blue pants—
All were unique and unrepeatable,
Just like the first, half-conscious utterance “ma” . . .

Amid the tide of dark and fair young heads
He entered through the door—both hesitant
And with assurance. Then the door was closed
And left me in the hall. A tiny bell
Rang out and ceased. I lit a cigarette,
Yet feared a scolding from the janitor,
And felt myself, in truth, to be as small,
And yet as happy, as my little tad.
Study! Breathe in the voice of centuries!
Grow and increase in wisdom! Gaze ahead,
Still farther on, with ever-brightening eyes,
At this our earth which, with abundant sweat,
We are transforming to a better place,
And at our heavens, where our pilots soar
Higher and higher on aspiring wings!
My little boy! How gladly would I sit
Beside you at your desk and open wide
The small blue scribbler, nudge my nearest neighbour
In ribs or back (time-honoured forms of mischief
To which—I am sure—a tribute once was paid
By small Descartes, by Goethe and by Horace)
And I would listen . . . But it's far too late!
For you it is not late, my little monkey!
Grow, live—and come to know that human thought,
The mind creating, is the greatest torment
And greatest happiness on this our planet,
The best of all the planets, I am sure!

A SHELF

A yellow shelf I dreamed of, set above
The kitchen in the old home of my birth,
As distant and as tender as the love
I've carried in my roamings round the earth.

And unmistakably do I recall
The graining of the wood, the figured blots,
And on its doors, infallible though small,
Over to leftward were two varnished knots.

One of those knots was very like a bird;
 For many a year it wanted to fall out,
 And yet was caught there: for it must have heard
 Its neighbour's strong encouragement, no doubt.

This nearby knot was like an ancient man:
 The nose, the curling whiskers and the beard
 To me were something that the world might scan,
 No word of argument was even feared.

And from the shelf came whiffs of cinnamon,
 Of lemon, coffee and antiquity,
 The mysteries of Java and Ceylon
 Out of unfathomed depths to speak to me.

All things and everything, it seemed, were there:
 Preserves, my childhood dreams, the samovar,
 I sitting in an antique easy-chair
 With tattered volumes of Gustave Aimard.

Behind the window-pane two poplars stood,
 Which Antonovich once had planted deep;
 And there were home-made pistols, formed of wood,
 Yasko, my friend, had given me to keep.

And Mother's chidings threatened me with woes
 Rendered unlikely by her kindly face . . .
 All that to me was ordinary prose
 More precious than all poems of the race.

* * * *

My wholly plundered home I see again,¹
 Paying a visit as a silent guest,
 And bow my humble head to human pain
 And the dear graves of those I loved the best.

O flowery Kiev, my affections go
 To you in living and my love's true breath!
 I knew you could not lie forever low,
 That in your dying you have conquered death.

¹This poem was written upon his return to Kiev after the Germans had evacuated it.

Forget then quickly all your nightmare dreaming!
 Turn to the future, with its promise true!
 Shine like a diamond, in your meadows gleaming!
 To all your slayers, death—and life to you!

THIRST

A POEM-VISION

Thee¹—from that dawn our birth discover
 Till my last mortal day shall go,
 Not like a child, not like a lover,
 Not even like a mother—no!—

Thee, like the wind that captive sings,
 Thee, like the sun within a grave,
 Like my own joys and sufferings,
 Like my own griefs and manhood brave,

Like heartaches at the time of parting,
 Like weariness of tired feet
 That after leagues of exiled smarting
 At last the father's threshold greet,

Like murmurs from a child that's ailing,
 Like blueness of a far-off goal,
 Like some dark shade that comes unfailing
 Till none escape from its control,

Like tiny flames in pitch-dark night,
 Like throbs of joy at spring's levee,
 Like women's tears of pure delight
 'Mid blessings of tranquillity,

Thee do I bear in my dark breast
 And in my ever-wakeful brain,
 Of all my earthly dreams the best,
 My thirst and love that ever reign.

A kindly heaven, an iron thunder,
 Thou wert, thou wilt be, and thou art!
 To thee, my fatherland of wonder,
 These voices ring out in my heart.

¹"Thee," the subject that is repeated in the first and second lines of the second quatrain and, after a long interval, is resumed in the sixth quatrain.

FIRST VOICE

To the great, clear and flowing stream
That vivifies, refreshes, sates,
That cools us after parching toil
And all the heat of strife abates,

That wafts sweet dreams to weary brains,
That gives young hearts a noble thrust,
To it let my unsullied words
Become my tribute, pure and just.

He who has known excessive thirst
Knows with what truth my speech is slaked:
How earth, made taut with sultry heat,
By dire torridity is baked,

How every stem beseeches help
And every blade of grass cries out,—
Oh, how the wing of some dark cloud
Can bring us joy and raise our shout!

Ah, moisture, moisture!—withering woods
Are whispering in the stifling heat,—
Far off the thunder rolls at last
Our long-enduring pangs to greet!

Moisture! Pray grant a moment's life!—
The feather-grass grows dry and faint . . .
But suddenly a breeze is felt
And rustling drowns the sad complaint,

And hopes of spring return once more,
Horses above the black earth neigh,
And nature, like a new-washed child,
Laughs in its mother's lap at play.

He who has known an army's trek,
The stones, thorns, dust, that marching bodes,
The weariness of bleeding feet,
The burning heat of endless roads,

The fever of dust-tainted wounds,
The breathing knotted in the throat,
The heavens like a dried-out jug,
The earth where embers spread a coat,

Who kept on walking lest he drop,
Who when he fell still sought to crawl,
Who knew the shimmering mirage
That brought a lure like mead to all,—

That man will know what rivers mean,
Where herbage green abounds to bless,
Where water gushes from the ground
And breathes with cooling peacefulness.

O water! Goodness unsurpassed!
Joy to my thirst your help assigns!
Having bedewed my soul, come down
Upon the grain, the flowers, the vines!

O rivers, sisters of my soul,
Circle the earth the whole day long,
Make it abound in happiness—
Become the subject of my song!

SECOND VOICE

“Don’t throw the bread around, it’s blessed!”
Thus, in his kind severity,
A hoary grandsire often scolded
The curly youngsters in their glee.

“Don’t play with bread, for that’s a sin!”
Thus even to her infant child
A mother often spoke, reproving,
Though even as she spoke, she smiled.

The infants and the young ones grew
And gradually walked as men,
And all the warnings of their youth
Were utterly forgotten then.

Not without reason, we consigned
The word “sin” to museum shelves,
We who in curly-headed youth
Had learned new words to please ourselves.

Yet there has still remained with us,
No great fault, if the truth be said,
A deep respect through all our lives—
Ah yes!—for this our blessed bread!

Fair is the toil, profuse the sweat,
To win the honey breath of rye
That feeds the life of humankind
And calls forth language, pure and high.

And he who sows the golden grain
And brings the earth to ardent yield
Himself will grow up like the wheat
Upon the universal field.

THIRD VOICE

The hand of spring omnipotent
Sways the damp cherry-branches frail,
And hearts would challenge to a duel
The love-song of the nightingale.

In every fragrant clustered flower,
Each bud that blossomed where it stood,
There courses in a boiling stream
My life, my song, my very blood.

The footprints of the mating bears
Meet at your feet, O Passion's fairy;
Round your white garments gaily floats
The blossom of the wild chokecherry.

O fair, delightful snow-wing's maid,
Rest at your destination now,
Spread wide your arms, and upwards fling
The silken snood from off your brow.

As if amazed, your pupilled eyes
Are opened wide, as though in night;
The dream that will forever range
Down the green slopes salutes the light.

And fragrant flowers stoop to melt
On your sweet lips that they adore,
And night with amber necklace stands
Till morning knocks upon the door.

The curtain of the past has parted. Silhouettes rise in the mist.

FIRST SILHOUETTE

A little boy with tattered clothes,
A bag, an onion and some bread.
Evening, fatigue, a city's towers.—
“If only things were changed instead.

“If only no one had to fall,
Could come at last, and enter in!
If only starving folk could take!
No, seizing here is not a sin!”

The illness of the paling day
Stoops to the night without remorse,
Splashed on with mud. “Out of my way!”
—A plump lord's child spurs on his horse.

SECOND SILHOUETTE

She makes embroidery and sings,
And no one knows, as hours prolong,
Where she completes her patterned stitch
And where she first begins her song.

For all the world her song she'd sing,
Stitch for the world if she were able—
Her mother sickens in the house,
And mouldy bread is on the table.

“Come, are you tired out, my child?
Go, borrow wood, our hearth-fire start!”
A dead, bent knee. And it is night.
An endless night within the heart.

SILHOUETTES

They were many, were many, were many.
Dark wrinkles their lean faces sat on.
Some were maimed, some were only disabled,
Some slain—but they all had been spat on.

The world from the stream to the forest
Spreads rainbow-clear, brightly afloat;

And there through a veil iridescent
A fisherman sits in his boat.

But they see neither fisher nor dory,
Nor rainbow nor forest nor sky.
They can know only raucous exchanges
And the throat-knot that stifles the cry.

They were many, were many, were many . . .
With bowed backs they're cursed' to begone . . .
With curses renewed, interrupted . . .
On the earth' still the struggle storms on.

A TALE

A fairy once unrolled a golden clew;
Tracing its trail, a young child sought the world;
Each of her steps revealed some region new;
The dove-blue distance quaked as space unfurled.

The mother, slowly ailing in her bed,
Forbade her child to seek aid from another;
So through the window in the night she fled
To find some healing herb to cure her mother.

Through brushwood and across ravines she went,
And reached at last a forking of the road;
The golden thread in friendship, kindly meant,
Then led the child where living waters flowed.

The fairy said there was one cooling spring
In all the world, that gushed forth crystal clear,
And as the guardian of its issuing
Stood the child's lover, resolute and dear.

His forehead, like the moon, was proud of worth;
His eyes were bright as azure-coloured stars;
He from the stones had struck the fountain forth
And forced the water to lay down its bars.

The child proceeded by a winding path
That led to jungles and to desert drouths,
Where serpents hiss, and wild beasts roar in wrath,
And vomit smoking venom from their mouths.

The child walked on, and as she walked she grew;
 Pang^s of primordial fear her heart must feel;
 Until the fairy gave her, as her due,
 A two-edged sabre of Damascus steel.

She walked not for a day, nor for a year;
 She ripened like the wheat across the land
 As into maidenhood her charms appear,
 A two-edged sabre in her slender hand.

And many an angry beast the maiden kills;
 And, hacked in pieces, many a snake abhorred
 Died, where amid the forests and the hills
 Walked the white-handed beauty with the sword.

. . . .

The haze sways and fluctuates. In it stand out the whiteness
 and the gold of the Monastery belfry, the greenery of the
 extensive hillocks, fields, orchards, buildings. Irpin.¹
 A newly planted garden.

Do you remember, my belovèd wife,
 That spring day that was sweet as all the pain
 Of our first love?—With little Bohdan there
 I bustled round the garden. We had planted
 Prickly acacia slips along the fence
 To give us shade and shelter, like the garden.
 You in the crumbly flower-beds were planting
 The bulbs of tulips and the monstrous roots
 From which in time the lovely dahlias grow.
 And friendly voices from our neighbours came;
 And we replied with shouts and laughter. Gaily
 The happy train bore people on their journey,
 All of them tipsy with the joy of spring,
 And in the song they sang about young Halia
 The voice of youth responded ringingly.
 An early butterfly went flitting past
 And, like a dry leaf, settled quite at random
 Upon the apple-tree that had been planted,

¹A town near Kiev, situated within a picturesque landscape.

In order due, by our lively Kopilenko²—
 Then up it rose again, frightened by Bohdan
 Or else by Bubbles who in doggish joy
 Barked loudly her delight at all the world.
 The humid air streamed soft across the land,
 The clouds, like sails, were floating in the blue,
 The heart beat high.

Suddenly from a distance
 There could be heard—or was it but imagined?—
 A deep sound. I was first to startle at it
 And gave a shout: The geese! Yes, it was they,
 The migrant birds, the harbingers of spring!
 And there we all looked up with friendly eyes
 At those great flocks that sailed their lofty path
 And in their gabbling cries we thought we heard
 Their shouts and laughter, kind and neighborly,
 Just as it was with us.—O geese, dear geese!
 Fly down today to take upon your wings
 Us children of the earth! But no! In vain!
 My garden is a waste, my house a prison!

And I direct my voice to the west which reddens outside my window.

Barefooted shepherds
 And girls in damp cornflowers,
 Mothers who met your children on the doorstep
 With a spoon of pear-tree wood held in a sturdy hand!
 Blacksmiths and tillers of the soil,
 Scholars and poets,
 Who issued forth from the same house
 To tread on highroads broad as all the world!
 Inventors and makers of orchards
 Who boldly and decisively
 Cut out the garments of the earth
 To your content and ours!
 My Kiev, golden in the sunshine,
 Calm Irpin region, redolent with resin,
 And you, my rosy Romanivka!³
 Rivers and meadows, fields and factories,
 Made spiritual by warm, human toil!

²Oleksander I. Kopilenko, a Soviet Ukrainian writer and a close friend of Rilsky's.

³The village where Rilsky was brought up as a child.

My own fair, sunlit room
With books as clear as bells!
Portraits of Shevchenko and of Rustaveli,⁴
Pushkin's bronze bust,
And simple letters sent by budding poets!
Tender shoots that I engrafted
With happy, amiable friends!
Unquenchable thirst of my people
That led to steep mountain crests
Sown on with purple poppies
And covered with imperishable laurels!
Who crossed all that out
With a black, bloody smudge?
Who threw into the cup of a fresh, clear morning,
When my young son
And thousands of our young sons and daughters
Saw in a brave new dream
The fabulous opening of the stadium—
Who flung into that cup of brightest crystal
The seed of livid venom?
Who slashed our heaven
With villainy's bloody knife?
What damned one shook our land
With the thunder of pillage?
Every day, every minute, every instant I hear
The crunching of children's tender bones
Broken by beastly paws.
I hear the hoarse rattle of the final agony
Of my friend and of my sister,
Of my friend's mother and of all the mothers
Who in their hallowed torments once gave birth
To the pure joy of a new generation.
I see the bloody, shrieking mouths
Of the martyred, of the violated,
Of the maltreated and of the injured
Who were my own kith and kin!
Ukraine!
My anguish and my joy, Ukraine!

⁴Shota Rustaveli, Georgian classical poet of the twelfth century, whose poem, *The Warrior in the Tiger Skin*, was one of the greatest epics of the times.

The smoke of your conflagrations
Covers the shuddering sky of all the world!
Ukraine,
Silver ploughs,
Golden sickles,
Hands browned by the sun!
Ukraine,
Living, bell-clear sounds
Of hammers and of axes,
Reverberations of early factory whistles!
Ukraine,
My song, my precious flower, Ukraine!
Who shattered the windows in the schoolroom covered
with wind-blown snow,
Where bent over the blue scribblers
Like the shy little heads of birds
Were the fair and dark, well-washed heads
Of our precious children?
Who let in the wind and the cold and death?
Who drove with filthy wheels
Across tender, warm bodies,
Across the warm and shuddering books?
How at that moment
Could the stupid victors not hear
That into all the world, into all the worlds, beyond the worlds,
From under the wheels the piercing curse resounded
Of the blacksmith's son, of the serf's son,
And of my country that has conquered death
With the immortal, steel-sharp power of her word?
Ukraine!
You have all thundered out with imprecation,
You were all filled with wrath
Up to your very gilded rims,—
And your quickening thirst
Became the sacred thirst for our revenge!
You are alive, my Ukraine,
For in the breath of your wind,
For in the sound of your clear waters,
For in the rustle of your fields, my native fields,
To the enemy—is death!

THE VOICE OF EXECRATION

From the blue sky and from our land's blue flowers,
From the good heart and all pure thoughts of ours,
From dreaming morning grainfields of our nation,
As our requital, meet our execration!

From little hands that moved at mother's knee,
From births, and songs, and toil, and agony,
From all our books, our boldness of conviction,
Meet now our malediction!

There is no punishment too harsh for you,
There is no leaf on earth so light to view
But on your conscience like a stone 'twould lie,
If conscience in your soul one might imply.

There is no judge who could at all efface,
The verdict for your death, you villain race;
There is no hand, hallowed by calloused toil,
That would not yearn to smite you for your spoil!

The corpse that fell by a vindictive hand
The scornful raven circles in our land;
And where death silences a murderer's cries,
The wolf, repugnant, leaves it where it lies.

The earth will not receive you as you are;
Only the mighty wind will blow you far
Into wild gorges, through the desert waste,
And scatter your cold remnants with distaste.

From fields, from sea, and from dark, grassy mounds,
From clouds of smoke that darkened all our bounds,
From orphans, widows, maimed—may you all be
Cursed for eternity!

And I see her, I see the one at whose suffering feet the poets of the entire world, and of all the centuries, have laid their most precious offerings. I see the mother.

Slowly her lean hands forth she spread
To comb the fair curls on his head,
Curl after curl she counts their store,—
Pray, has he found his looks a bore?

Is not his youth a lovely sight,
And are his eyes not clear and bright?
He does not find his looks a bore—
But loud the clouds of tempest roar,
And down their angry flood is shed
Upon the mother's old grey head.

Go then, my lad, my curly-locks,
My precious one, my goldilocks,
Whom once in clover-dew I'd bring
And cover with the mint of spring,
Whose life I longed for from the start
And warmed below my very heart!
I'll close my lips, and silence keep,
Tears from my eyes I shall not weep;
Your horse's bridle I shall take
And lead him to you, for your sake.

Go, go, my child, to find your fate!
May never a stain your heart await!
There are your brothers at the gate.

Your brothers' bidding calls you hence,
To march forth in our land's defence.

One charge alone I shall rehearse,
As potent as my angry curse:

Strike at the foe without a wince,
Let all your life that stroke evince;

Into his heart let fall the blow:
Your race is bold against the foe.

I'll close my lips, and silence keep;
Tears from my eyes I shall not weep;
I'll wait for news, and shall not sleep.

And the sons leave, bearing in their breasts their mother's benediction—and the earth resounds—and the waters roar—and the corpses of the enemy cover the dank earth—and in my heart is heard this word:

You are all thirst, and you are all a-flaming,
You—bow, and arrow, and the string tight-drawn,
A vision for the centuries' proclaiming,
My shining, universal star of dawn!

Many a time your lips, O heaven's daughter,
Held tight the secret of your darkest dearth,
When to procure the vivifying water
You went, O holy wanderer of the earth.

When you were coming homeward from your questing,
Having attained the iridescent source
And bringing on a solid beam unresting
Two golden pails, salvation to endorse—

A robber smote you from around a corner;
Shattered the golden vessels; crucified
Your youthful body, as an obscene scorner,
And mocked the immortal form in which you died.

You, there uplifted with your arms outspreading,
Looked down in silence at the rabid horde
Trampling your tender children with their treading,
Looked at the knife that slashed, the cutting cord,

Looked at the buildings and the towers falling
From their proud height to crumble into dust,
At conflagrations like fierce serpents crawling,
Consuming pale-blue houses in their lust,

At cherry-trees that blackened in the burning,
At the stampeding flocks and frenzied herds,
And at a world to hellish darkness turning
In fields that groaned with malediction's words,—

And your mute glance, O gentle mother, ran on
In thunder that outdid the hostile guns,
Deafening all the arrogance of cannon,
Uniting all the spirits of your sons;

Then the great deed had ripened to beginning,
The designated time at last had come,—
Though yet the wizard had not forged our winning,
Nor quill had trimmed for our exordium,

No scroll has been unrolled, of noble features,
On which might be inscribed, in colours warm,
How, in a duel with inhuman creatures,
The host of men began to rage and storm.

High on the cross I see you, foot and finger
 Swathed in white flashings and in suffering rife,
 But know that while the sun and stars shall linger
 Justice shall not be lost from human life,

And I believe, O mother, till I perish,
 That ray of justice that all men must cherish
 Will be a golden sword to make an end,—
 And at the final hour, by God appointed,
 In the blue calm for which you were anointed
 You, my own love, will from the cross descend!

Mikhaylo Dray-Khmara

(1889-1938?)

Of peasant stock, Mikhaylo Dray-Khmara was born near the town of Cherkassy. After a brilliant career as a student at the exclusive English-type Halahan College in Kiev and at the University of Kiev, in both of which he specialized in modern languages, he spent some time in various centres of Eastern Europe, devoting himself to research on Old Croatian literature. Between 1918 and 1923, he was a professor of languages at the University of Kamianetz-Podilsky established by the independent régime of the Ukrainian People's Republic. From 1923 to 1933, he held the same position at the Medical College in Kiev.

In the earlier years of his literary activity, Dray-Khmara underwent the influence of the French symbolist Paul Verlaine as well as Tichina's aestheticism, but he eventually acquired original resources of vivid imagery and colourful, plastic phraseology rich in innovations and archaic traits. He was one of the five chief Ukrainian neoclassicists (the other four—Rilsky, Filipovich, Klen, Zerov) who grouped themselves under the appellation *Hrono* (The Cluster) and whose purpose was to cultivate Attic tastes and values in poetry and to make the organization strong enough to withstand materialistic inroads into Ukrainian art. His only collection of verse, *The Snow Flower*, was published in 1926.

For this "bourgeois" tendency and his nationalist bent Dray-Khmara was, in 1933, deprived of his position, and from then on lived in constant danger and privation. In 1935 he was arrested and underwent an ordeal by the dreaded Cheka who in vain attempted to extract from him a confession of counter-revolutionary activities against the régime. In 1936 he was taken to Moscow and there sentenced to five years of forced labour in the gold mines of the Kolyma region in far eastern Siberia. There, in bitter weather and fearful working conditions, his health declined rapidly. Already ailing, in 1938 he was taken to Ortukan, a place where those designated for execution

were usually sent. (It is estimated that well over a million Ukrainian political prisoners were executed in the various Soviet concentration camps in 1937 and 1938). Dray-Khmara, being a man of extraordinary will power, was not meant for execution; rather his resistance was to be broken there by hard labour, hunger, and cold. His life ended in that Siberian tundra region, probably in 1938.

* * * *

The entire world my eye receives;
I love its colours and its lines;
The sparkling ploughshare deeply cleaves
The glebe that cloaks my world's designs.

I love the words that still ring clear,
That fragrant as the mead can please
That in the depths of some dark mere
Have lain for long, dull centuries.

A provocation suits them best,
Oft born in unexpected pools;
The iamb and the anapaest
Alone would guard poetic rules.

The golden-braided Fall I hail,
Where sorrow like a ruby gleams
Set in a ring; it cannot fail
As yet to dominate my dreams.

I look and listen: clear as noon
The current of creation sings;
I seem to know that very soon
My verses too will spread their wings.

* * * *

Again with burnt-out match-tips and my groans
On the grey walls I mark my cold, grey days;
And ceaselessly I tread the prison stones,
And drink till I am dull in sorrow's praise.

Then having drunk my fill, I hitch my horses
And seek to overtake my youthful years;
I fly through dove-blue space in distant courses
Where golden youth once blossomed, free from fears.

“Return,” I beg, “at least for one brief hour!”
 “We’ll not return,” from far off come their calls.
 I burst in tears upon a dreamland flower . . .
 And once again I see these sad, grey walls.

A patch of sky my window crucifies;
 A tassel on a willow branch is grown;
 But there my jet-black steed no longer flies:
 I smother here in stone, a sack of stone.

Mikola Zerov

(1890-1941)

Zerov was a native of the region of Poltava. After his university studies in the capital of Ukraine, he eventually became a professor of Ukrainian literature at the University of Kiev. While pursuing his scholarly career, Zerov was the most active of the Five of the *Hrono* group (see DRAY-KHMARA). During the Purge of 1935, he was arrested and sentenced to hard labour on the Solovetski Islands. Two years later he was removed to an unknown concentration camp, where he died in 1941.

Zerov was a scholar of unusual erudition, concentrating his attention on Classical literatures, as is evidenced by the two volumes of his anthology of Roman poetry. His own sonnets and lyrics, based mostly on themes of Greek and Roman antiquity, attest his intense love of the ancient ideals. Only one collection of his original verse, *Kamena*, appeared in Kiev in 1924. A compilation of all his available sonnets was published by his brother, M. Orest, in Berchtesgaden in 1948 under the title *Sonne-tarium*, and certain other preserved or recovered lyrics, captioned *Catalepton*, in Philadelphia in 1951.

Among his works of literary criticism, a powerful influence was exerted by *Do Dzherel* (also known as *Ad Fontes*), in which appeared some of the polemic articles with which he battled the Soviet revolutionary régime whose purpose was to obliterate the cultural achievements of the past. At the peril of his life, Zerov maintained that Ukraine must seek her spiritual food (independently of Moscow) in Western sources, both ancient and contemporary, including even those of feudal Europe; otherwise her arts and literature would remain provincial and stagnate into primitivism. In that attitude, Zerov, during the so-called “Literary Discussion,” lent solid support to the greatest contemporary prose writer, Mikola Khvilovy, the leader of the Westernizing movement in the late twenties and the early thirties. This Europeanizing movement on the part of the Ukrainian neo-classicists and neo-romantics of course went against the grain of Soviet “socialist realism” and caused the great Purge in which scores of Ukrainian writers were annihilated by exile and execution, or, as in the case of Khvilovy, were driven to suicide.

Zerov's sonnets and lyrics, based predominantly on the ancient past, reveal him as a highly refined master of expression whose philosophic content, couched in exquisitely chiselled forms, raise them to a peak of Ukrainian poetic achievement. Although he was accused by his Soviet detractors as an escapist from the essential reality then prevailing, even his "antique" poetry contains allusions, ironic though they are, to his harsh present, and represents a supreme endeavour to speak out in bold accents in the defence of the spiritual values of humanity as a whole. To the Soviet revolutionary régime, Zerov, with his sedate Classicism, was a reactionary and a rebel, but to Europe he stands out as a great cosmopolitan, a fervent devotee of Beauty and, like Keats, a spokesman of that only Truth.

TO A BUILDER

He will yet come, not architect but poet,
 New scion of old builders, bold of standing,
 With marble white on staircase and on landing
 He will adorn each slope, with grace to show it.

He'll break with architectural common fare,
 The shameful heritage of styleless years,
 He will soar up on wings above the spheres
 And set free captive Beauty from the snare.

The hilly garden and the distant sand
 Spondylic brick and glass and concrete stand,
 Spreading new backgrounds of creative ways;

With fires of night they'll bloom in pearl-like splendour
 And say: No ancient village do we render
 But the grand capital of future days.

THE LAESTRYGONS¹

Odyssey X.77-134

This, King, is the wild land of Laestrygons
 And the exhausted slaves who herd their sheep.
 What path implacable across the deep
 Brought you to these grim folk with hearts of bronze?

¹A race of giants and cannibals whose region Odysseus visited during his wanderings.

You answer “Polyphemus”?² Neptune’s child.
 But fire he knew—and these devour men raw.
 Their fierce ferocity defies all law,
 And hospitality they have defiled.

Do not depart. Nay, hide here in the cliff.
 At night I shall direct your mighty skiff
 To find the land of those who live by bread.

I shall remain, though pain my misery mocks—
 I shall in fancy seek my native rocks
 And like a sea-mew fly where you have sped.

VERGIL

A Mantuan peasant, easy-paced and brown,
 From childhood cradled in a village realm,
 He praised the staff, the plough, the copper helm,
 And rose to heights of unsurpassed renown.

For through the fire and smoke of martial hate
 He saw a better age and sang a psalm
 How Caesar’s eagle would at last bring calm
 In the mild yoke of the immortal state.

That age has passed—to Rome and Caesar’s deeds,
 Through history’s hand, lo, dusty death succeeds
 Where crowns and ghosts of all the ages sleep.

Yet Vergil lives. His epic’s loud narration
 Still fills our dreams with Dido’s lamentation,
 The sound of arms and triremes in the deep.

DANTE

On a strange gulf, borne without oar or rudder,
 We sailed there, I and Vergil, the Enchanter.
 Like bronze he seemed. The river’s liquid canter
 Drew us to distant lilies, without shudder.

²Neptune’s son, a one-eyed Cyclops who imprisoned Odysseus in his cave and ate several of his companions. Odysseus blinded him and so effected his escape.

The water-lilies were beyond all number,
And dawn was breaking on those golden billows,
My glance was sinking in those shining pillows,
My hearing, as I listened, seemed to slumber.

My guide said that those flowers, through magic years,
Away from earth, our distant vale of tears,
Had grown here, scattered by the Lord's own hand.

Distant from quarrels and all earthly troubles,
They are lulled and dream, those everlasting doubles
Of poems that an unborn Petrarch planned.

ARISTARCHUS¹

In the world's capital, in learning's mart,
Museums, porticos and paths apart,
The offspring of the Alexandrine masters
Still buzzed and swarmed, those bards and poetasters,
Aped every phase of literary modes,
And wove their sovereigns wreaths of worthless odes;
Daily they wrangled on—made peace, contended . . .
But in one nook their ceaseless clamour ended,
Silenced to impotence: the lonely study
Where learned Aristarchus, sane and ruddy,
Turned to the future, by no folly vexed,
Immersed himself in the Homeric text.

OVID¹

suppositum stellis nunquam tangentibus aequor . . .

Ovid *Tristia* 3.10.4

My brotherhood of old! If I might say so,
Speak out, were it but once, to exiled Naso,

¹A scholar who lived in the first half of the second century B.C. He was the keeper of the Library at Alexandria, and was noted especially for his elucidation of Homer's texts.

* * * *

¹Ovidius Naso (43 B.C.–17 A.D.), a Roman poet, the author of the *Tristia* and the *Metamorphoses*. He was banished by the Emperor Augustus, in 9 A.D., to a region of the Black Sea coast near the mouth of the Danube, for a reason not definitely determined, although it is suspected that it was for his indecent amatory poems in some of which Augustus' promiscuous daughter Julia was the cryptic subject.

Old, weak, decrepit, by all men forgotten,
 Here where all year the winter climate's rotten,
 The sea roars loud and barbarous men are bold . . .
 A savage land! In spring, mere filth and cold;
 In summer, a dark plain. No groves it yields
 Nor vineyards, no, nor cultivated fields.
 Frost comes again; the sky is grey as dust;
 And waggons creak; hooves strike the icy crust;
 Then the Sarmatian comes with bow and quiver
 And drives his captives off beyond the River.

IMMORTALITY

The wreath on Ovid's brow will never fade:
 His deathless "Tristia," keen and matchless made,
 His sultry elegies, like blossom'd willows,
 The "Metamorphoses," like sunny billows,
 And the wise subtlety of learned love . . .
 Let Caesar frown and years of exile prove
 That backs can stoop and hair be patched with grey,
 Let the Sarmatian¹ roar, Goths come to slay,
 Let angry Pontus² rage, the hills crowd in—
 Nations and ages still will pleasure win
 From the sweet order of his wanton songs,
 The tender sighing that to love belongs.

IN THE STEPPE

High, level prairie. A green row of mounds
 And dreaming distances whose hazy bounds
 Enchant and summon one where Greece besets.
 On the horizon move dark silhouettes—
 Tents, horses, waggons and the Scythian herds.
 From warmer climes come gabbling flocks of birds,
 And from the sea, a hot wind frets and blows.
 But what to me are all those windy throes,

¹The ancient tribes who ranged from the Vistula to the southern reaches of the Volga.

²Pontus Euxinus, the ancient name of the Black Sea.

The songs of larks, the spreading growth of grasses?
 For me the dream that all these sights surpasses
 Is a port's din, blue tracts of sea to please,
 And streets and pavements in old Chersonese!¹

SALOME

There the Levantine moon works sorcery
 And fluctuates the warm blood in the heart;
 There a wild bloom of love has flowered apart
 And all is blood—the scent of blood floats free.

From gathered streams and punishments foretold
 Thunder the fulminations of wild speech . . .
 Yokanaan! . . . No such voice the forests teach,—
 But flames and wilderness his words enfold.

And then, Salome! Still a child (a child!)
 She drinks the potion, horrible, defiled,
 That summons up dark vengeance and the sword.

My soul! By ship fly quickly from such shocks
 And seek the place where amid snow-white rocks
 Nausicaa walks like sunlight on the sward.

LUCROSA¹TO O. BURGHARDT²

For rural Muses, in Lucrosa's mud,
 Where mind and sense lie sleeping in the blood,
 We live who have left Baalbek,³ not Ukraine.
 Apart from folk and books and converse plain,
 We sow our grain that harvesting may follow.
 At times we serve our sovereign Apollo,

¹The name of a region in the present Crimea, near Sebastopol, anciently colonized by the Greeks.



¹Lucrosa, Latin “profitable.” Probably a grim pun on the name of Zerov's forced labour camp.

²Ukrainian neo-classical poet. See YURIY KLEN, pseudonym.

³A town in Lebanon, Ancient Helopolis, famous for its Temple of the Sun.

And incense smoulders on our lowly altar.
 So once in Olbia⁴ did the sculptors falter,
 Yet in dull business and a venal peace
 Nursed in their souls the dream of distant Greece,
 And for the surrounding hordes with many a groan
 Would fashion, out of marble, gods unknown.⁵

Yakiv Savchenko

(1890-1938)

Of peasant stock, Savchenko was born in the region of Poltava. Lack of material means prevented him from completing his studies at the University of Kiev, and it was as a teacher of lower schools that he gained his livelihood before embarking upon a strictly literary career.

Savchenko began as a symbolist, dabbled in futurism, and ended as a critic in the service of the Communist régime, which used him in combatting neo-classicism in Ukrainian literature and the nationalist tendencies of its adherents. That service, however, did not save him from becoming suspect as to his own signs of an independent nationalist outlook (though proletarian), and he was eventually included in the list of those men of letters who were destined to end their lives on the Solovetski Islands in the White Sea.

Under the keen impression of the dire years of World War I and the revolutionary terror that followed, Savchenko's symbolism (see his collection, *Poems*, published in 1919) was somewhat marred by an unhealthy pessimism which generated gruesome mysticism, visions of fatalistic contingencies, all wrapped in a haphazard mysteriousness whose sole purpose, it would seem, was to inspire fear. Natural phenomena Savchenko discerned as negative, annihilating forces: the sun—a hangman, the universe—a dragon, death—a voracious beast, and the only blessing for a man suffering life—the darkness of Nirvana, and death which dissolves all into utter insensibility. Occasionally, however, he managed to drop the theatricality of his symbolism and assumed a realistic approach to life, particularly to the ordeal of the “crucified” peasant masses. In such verses he is at his best.

⁴An ancient city on the northwestern Black Sea coast, colonized by the Greeks. Its site was just slightly east of the present Odessa.

⁵In dealing with these out-of-the-way places, as well as with Ovid's exile, Zerov had in mind the distant concentration camps to which Ukrainian writers were sent during the purges that began in Ukraine in 1934.

HE WILL COME

At night he will come rushing on his raging horse
And knock upon the window with his iron sword.
. . . You'll finish your last tale to me of course—
And streaming tears will down your cheeks be poured.

All will grow clear. You will not ask his name,
Nor why by night nor from what land he strays.
You'll only light the candles—and our ways proclaim—
And then betimes you'll vanish in the haze.

And for all time. Forever . . . But no myth remaining
Will be his lot, like mine, by burial to be mocked.
Thus you'll remember me: he on his horse came straining
And at the window knocked.

CHRIST WAS MOWING THE AFTER-GRASS

Outside of my window four shrubs had been dancing
At a time when no more of my teardrops could fall.
In wars of revolt had our son died, mischancing,
And no one brought tidings at all.

The fall carried sunlight in buckets of gold,
While the peasant in sorrow kept weeping in vain.
“Dad, saddle no horse but the wind in its course
And in the steppe seek him again.

“Perhaps he is resting some place in exhaustion
Or bearing Good Friday's black weight on his chest,
Or out on the prairie, in paths solitary,
His steed, cropping ergot, may rest.”

And so they fled—
By valley scenes,
Across ravines
And forests dread.

And up, aloft
A lonely moon
At a high gate
Proclaims its tune,
Utters in grief:

“Ah, sorrow, peasant’s sorrow,
As red as blood you pass
And soft as silken grass!
It will not be your lot to drink
Of water from a well—
Because into a dreadful dream
You, sorrow, surely fell.
You will not fondle, not again,
Your fair-haired son—don’t ask it!
Because that son is now enclosed
In a brocaded casket . . .

And when they were returning:

The peasant fell on swaths of yesteryear:
A hundred sudden stars bloomed in heaven’s tracks!
He looked: And Christ was mowing all the after-grass
And laying it in stacks.

Attentively he looked: why, who is this?
Is it you, my sonny? Or is it you, Christ,
Tattered and barefoot?
Who is this?

These words across the steppes bloomed like the stars;
The sorrow of the fields burst forth in tears.
“The human field has long ago been ploughed,
But the after-grass still waits across the years . . .”

The peasant rose. Blue grief enshrouds his face.
He melts before Christ’s eyes and gentle brow.
“I came to mow your field in your son’s place;
Your son is working at my harvest now.”

Ah, the wind went flying
To the peasant’s cottage
And alighted on the porch-step:
“Good-evening!
Rejoice, O Mary!
Gather the periwinkle,
Spread the gromwell
On the wooden floor.
Your father from the steppe comes home to rest,
And with him—
Christ is coming as a guest . . .

THE SUN UNDER OUR HEADS

Let us light up the skies—cast our souls in the air!
 We'll loose a blind horse on the prairie.
 As the fire is crackling—believe for all time!
 The earth is the incendiary.

We come out barefooted—we sharpen our scythes—
 Our grief is our wrath—a fierce volley in blood!
 We still dream of the eyes that have rotted away
 Befouled in the muck and the mud . . .

We still see great crowds in the squares of the town;
 The bodies of children lie slain in the thorps;
 The gore of sunset that redly goes down
 Makes raucous abuse of each corpse . . .

It does not behoove us, as men, to weep wildly;
 Our warm hearts have tears that the eye never sheds.
 Today we will cover ourselves with the star-host
 And put the sun under our heads.

Dmitro Zahul

(1890-1938)

Zahul's place of origin was Bukovina, a Ukrainian province formerly under Austria. At the university in Chernivtsi, its capital, he specialized in German and in Slavic languages. During World War I, as an Austrian soldier, he was taken as a hostage by the Russians, and passed the revolutionary period in Kiev where he engaged in various journalistic and literary pursuits.

At heart Zahul was a symbolist, at the beginning optimistically inclined but, under the stress of the times, gradually lapsing into pessimism as he strove in vain to escape from reality into the sphere of "unattainable Beauty" and to achieve an understanding of the Absolute. Not being able to reach that impossibility, he became utterly disillusioned with life, which he came to contemplate as the shadow of a dream, and all human achievements, no matter how great, as hardly discernible specks in the boundless space of Eternity (see his *Embroidery* (1913), *On the Edge* (1918), and *Our Day* (1925)).

Like Savchenko, Zahul was impressed by the Soviet régime into opposing the Westernizing endeavours of Ukrainian neo-classicists, but on account of his own stand in favour of an independent Ukrainian proletarian literature, he suffered a like dismal fate in Russia's sub-Arctic north.

Compelled though he had been to battle the “Westernizers,” he had himself rendered into Ukrainian considerable portions of Schiller’s ballads, Heine’s lyrics, and Goethe’s *Faust*.

* * * *

Beyond the impenetrable curtain
Live people such as I—
While here an alien, all uncertain,
By day and night my soul must sigh . . .

I have been struggling with that barrier
Five hundred thousand years—
But my mute thought is still a tarrier,
The world beyond no closer veers.

Will anybody come with hands immortal
To tear the curtain from those realms of day,
That I may meet, beyond the gleaming portal,
Those who are free, as once I used to stray?

* * * *

Poet, in vain you mourn, a silly caper!
Plenty of topics wait a poet’s dreams.
Take any issue of the daily paper—
You’ll find a thousand sorts of unsung themes.

Just take a look at science, and its section,
Or at the columns given to common things.
How many joys and sorrows wait inspection!
What miniatures of life each issue brings!

Petty are all your tragedies, my fellow,
That have been severed from the march of time!
Why, then, do you continually bellow
About your anguish and your grace of rhyme?

Byron and Heine are a vanished race;
Sad Werther and Schlemihl no more are heard;
And everything has grown so commonplace
That individual pain is now absurd.

When millions round the earth are all a-stir
 To mount aloft to achievements yet unviewed,
 Your puny fancies are a silly blur,
 A poetry of tedious solitude.

Oleksa Slisarenko

(1891-1937?)

Slisarenko was born in the region of Kharkiv, where he pursued the profession of an agronomist. After demobilization in 1917, he settled in Kiev and there plunged into the feverish literary activity that marked the period of the so-called "Ukrainization." During its first phase, he was one of the representatives of symbolism but he later abandoned it for expressionistic and futuristic experiments. After publishing several collections of verse, he relinquished poetry in 1928 in order to devote himself almost entirely to prose, the result of which was a five-volume edition of his collected stories published in Kharkiv in 1932.

Through his symbolism, Slisarenko attempted (obscurely, it is true) to picture the pitiful state of the Ukrainian people under the scourge of the Revolution and its aftermath. Many of these verses are intertwined with religious allusions which tend to enhance their significance.

For many years Slisarenko was persecuted by the Soviet authorities, particularly after 1927, when he wrote a sharp reply to Gorky's claim that it was superfluous to translate Russian books into Ukrainian because Ukrainians understand Russian anyway. By that means Gorky attempted to minimize the importance of the Ukrainian language, thus evoking Slisarenko's resentment. In 1935, he was arrested and sent to the Solovetski Islands where, during the executions in 1937, he disappeared forever.

DROUGHT

A fiery snake devours the humid mist,
 With murderous scythe it mows the unripe rye.
 The soil has cracked—the black wounds writhe and twist . . .

Droning their prayers a host of voices cry—
 Shocked peasants bear church banners to assist;
 Winds in the fields above the millet die . . .

The fiery snake across the grass has hissed,
 Its greedy breath the dew will torrefy
 And penitential prayers will soon desist.

The rye is scorched, the millet long since dry.
 Black wounds of drought are widely orificed,
 And still the fiery scythe goes mowing by!

THE AUTUMN

Out on the plainsmen's biblical terrains
 The rusty threads in tangled riot lie—
 The greyness of the early morning sky
 Turns to October scarlet on the plains.

Gather together now, you huntsmen bold,
 Equip yourselves with weapons, feed your hounds—
 For autumn beasts are just beyond the bounds;
 Your snares' strong meshes will the quarry hold . . .

Out of the bushes rush the spotted dogs,
 Roused by my call against fantastic beasts;
 On carrot-coloured hides I see the yeasts
 The forest all bewitched upon them flogs;

I see the cinnabar of crusted scars,
 The coldness of the yellow garments dire,
 And the subsiding sparkle of the fire
 Against a background of torn saddle-bars.

* * * *

Every rhyme, every word I have placed on the altar of stone,
 Every thought of my youth, every fancy my boyhood has known.
 At the slab sacrificial, my spirit its own prayer uprears
 From the rise of the evening star till the dawn star appears.
 I beseech the pure-souled, universally bright God eternal
 To grant us sure victories over the darkness infernal.
 I pray that the children of sorrow and earth shall not fail
 To deck their white vessels with blossoms of heart's joy, and sail
 To seek the gold fleece in the kingdom of fairies, and grope
 Across the great plains of the sea, with the mainsails of hope . . .
 From the rise of the evening star till the dawn-star gives sign,
 The candles of loveliest dreams on the altar-stone shine;
 A hymn from the heart soars aloft, and my faith is set fast
 That the children of sorrow will win to their Zion at last.

WALT WHITMAN

I am a man.
 So commonplace that it is just ridiculous—
 A crystal river between stinking banks.
 The ages
 Are fluttering above me with their wings.
 The trembling and anxiety
 I transmute into courage in my foundries,
 Listening to the sound of the winds, the voice of machines, and
 the breathing of a beloved woman;
 I see the clouds, the earth, the smoke-stacks, beasts and men;
 I touch things, I smell scents.
 I am so ordinary that it is just ridiculous.
 And my day expands like a lotus blossom.

TO THE MEMORY OF HNAT MIKHAYLICHENKO¹

On crosses we have all been crucified;
 And all of us have wounds that pity scans.
 Before our feet atrocious paths gape wide,
 Ordained by vile Korans.

We were all destined to be heretics,
 Sons of the savage fate that Evil yields,
 Compelled to hew the steppes, its paths to fix,
 And drop down in the fields.

Beyond the night of Golgotha's dark woe
 We hoped a kindly Christ would meet and stay us,
 And that in strophes of delight would flow
 The highroads to Emmaus . . .

But now our eyes are dazed by distant spaces;
 Our bleeding wounds no more are talismans;
 And our ordeals have endured disgraces
 From rancorous Korans.

¹Hnat Mikhaylichenko (1892–1919), a Ukrainian novelist who wrote hyperbolically about the revolutionary period.

Mikhayl Semenko

(1892-1939)

Semenko was born in the region of Poltava. Three years before the outbreak of World War I, he studied at the Institute of Psycho-Neurology at St. Petersburg. In 1911 he was on his way to the United States via Vladivostok, but stopped there for three years and engaged in literary work. He returned to Kiev in the early stages of the Revolution, became a Party member (from 1916 to 1922), and within its framework began and headed the futuristic movement. This school rejected all lyricism of the romantic and symbolistic types and initiated an urbanizing trend in Ukrainian poetry. And so Semenko sought after the commonplace, prosaic manifestations of city turmoil, packing them into his unrestricted metrical forms, making them chaotic with the dissonant, disjointed, confused sounds of cafés, traffic, and surging humanity, and the neurotic din of a metropolis gone berserk.

Semenko's literary output was quite prolific—some twenty volumes of verse between 1918 and 1931. In these he strove to establish his pre-eminence over all literary schools in the post-revolutionary Ukraine. Filled with a vaulting ambition to become the political as well as the ideological leader in literature, he mercilessly attacked all and sundry (including Shevchenko) who stood in his way to achieving that hegemony. In 1924 he even published his own *Kobzar*, totalling 650 pages! The result was that even his closest adherents, on recognizing his folly, abandoned the futuristic movement and lent their support to the organizations he sought to liquidate. Left almost alone in his inordinate pretensions and unable to find a place in "socialist realism," Semenko was reduced, in the eyes of his contemporaries, to a laughing-stock. Nevertheless he remained faithful to the bitter end to his rowdy, bohemian Muse that inspired in him novel urbanistic themes, cacophonous sounds, measures, metaphors, strophic structures, and rendered him an utterly obscure and perplexing craftsman, but one who, regardless of his anarchism, could not be lightly shrugged off. Certain of his ideas, published in the literary magazine, *Nova Generatsiya*, seemed valid enough for Futurism and Constructivism.

Despite his strict partisanship in the Communist cause, Semenko's friendly leanings towards the futurist schools of Western Europe, and his influence in that respect on his followers of the younger generation, caused him to be disposed by the Soviets with the finality afforded by the dread Islands of the White Sea.

ENDEAVOUR

Who is sitting at the light-blue table?

It is he.

The fire brought tumbling to the ground the concrete beams
and the fragility of the stone walls.

Who stood in the darkness above the black corner,
having lowered the strange banner to his feet?
To him, as I steady my spirit with a truss, will come—
I.

Crumble, O stone,
into fine dust.—
All the columns with their bas-reliefs are broken,
The lions have kicked the bucket.

The fountains spilled in artificial lakes;
under deciduous trees they mounted drab.
A dragon through the squares his journey takes,
and on a sweetheart's breast appears a scab.

The meteors in pearly garlands rose
across the slippery space of glassy vaults;
The sky replied with Arab folios;
some unknown shadow mustered its assaults.

Simplified thoughts in cycles multiplied;
millions of libraries the dreams recall.
Pleading that all was vain, one person sighed
that he had grown accustomed to it all.

Microbes arose with elemental force,
and the curse shrieked out, endlessly expressed:
When mystic bawdy-houses knew remorse
and gonococcus cried: "I am distressed!"

Mutinous shapes in lantern shadows wept,
Spring's lilac term was ending in a swoon,
the gasping streets infernal chattering kept
and motors flung their poems to the moon.

But when the wheat-ear closed its eyes, half-stunned,
and in a dream would well-filled backs peruse,
a terrier halted, leaped, decision shunned,
and hid himself among young misses' shoes.

Fancies in fogs like ships from distant isles
beckoned and wept and aped their tiny flame,—
but the throngs pressed their all-effacing files,
the swards of garbage broidered souls with shame.

Puppies helped simply of their soul's neurosis
beside posts plastered with official papers,
electric buttons went in for hypnosis
and used narcotic hashish in their capers.

The moon went crawling in reserve assorted
behind dark buildings' outlines in the mud,
while deathlike features were indeed distorted
and smeared upon the sidewalks there was blood.

And no one could the mystery declare;
in hot pulsations all the ages flocked;
I crouched exhausted in the muddy square
where all the exits had been closed and locked.

Ichthyosaurians in raging swoops
took their revenge upon a dream betrayed;
terribly savage epochs came in troops
while a policeman ruled the mad parade.

SMOKE AND NOISE

On an inky night there was smoke
And an uproar rose.
The city began to tremble. It stirred in its concrete woes,
And a rioting stream outbreake.

The city began to clatter
with iron wheels' duress;
it hissed in its angry chatter
with its resin-smelling express—
on a dark night—a scarlet smoke
overcast the sky with its murky cloak.

In slender files, in slender files
the power is alive,
chained into one by a mutual aim,
with the outcry of inspired souls,
with the outcry of inspired will—
in slender files the power is enchain'd
by a mutual aim.

Before the train pulls out, rush to the station;
don't wait for dawn—the steel will flash elation,
the sun will light our gains by intuition,
the will of the elements dictates its law,
earth glories in a prostitute's ambition,
dreams to material forms their essence draw.

The town was scattering its iron chords
with the bold hand of avenues of steel,
when to the centre marched the anxious hordes,
and the high roofs their blazing wreck reveal.

And sinuous flames in monstrous arias merged
and the unsoldered steel sang red romance;
on the red sidewalks like a torch it surged;
subsiding cadences of history dance.

With measured pace and bold associate deeds
the throngs advanced through fire to their goal;
the individual halts—'tis love he needs,
but rumbling stones above his death-cries roll.

Who, who has fallen in love with flaming shows?
Whose heart goes pulsing as he sees the smoke?
The city trembles under iron blows,
the town is muffled in a murky cloak.

And when the morning comes, when clouds disperse,
and when the corpse of genius walks again,—
the sidewalks in the brightness will converse
and agelong scabs fall off, devoid of pain.

The steamships and the trains, controlled by will,
will fringe with roads the stations' black-squid brood;
structures will blossom, built by fortune's skill:
thinkers will close their books, and call it good!

All of the powers and fragments start to sound
in a stream roaring ruthless, void of pity,
and concrete pedestals befoul the ground,
while a great pall of smoke conceals the city.

YEARNING

Tedium, you know, has given me this grace
that I am not the same as others are.
Thus fate has thrown me nights of commonplace,
and lonely in the park I pace afar.

I heard a grieving mother cry aloud
in azure winter when day's visions fail.
My soul in solitude then wept and bowed—
to whom shall I relate my sorrowing tale?

My fate, you understand, has set me here
and not among the scenes of lovely Rome.
Boredom upon my heart has poured its sheer
black stream of evil on my hapless home.

Perhaps in life I shall succeed by art
to leave my prints upon the dew impressed.
This, you must know, will press upon my heart
because I somehow differ from the rest.

I am the victim of a world grown dim.
I am a wounded beast's exorbitance.
Perhaps upon an aerolite I skim
and hence survey you with disdainful glance.

My spirit is agog with future's dreams
but in my blood are countless atavisms.
I bask in purple cloudlets and their beams
and everywhere suffuse their aëry chrisms.

Passions and instincts in my spirit blaze—
I am a synthesis of bards and visions.
Down through all conflicts I have lived my days
and wear a uniform with strange elisions.

When all the beasts and men at last shall rise—
when all my foes and forebears rush to see—
I shall disclose my bosom's bloody guise
and how much energy is left in me.

And they will see my mixed and mighty strength,
ask for my blood to serve for track and stain.
I'll give my might to serve some cause at length;
I am eternal, dauntless, young as rain!

Thus my almighty strife its end will near,
 though ages will not calm my waves of charm.
 I'll greet some woman and will say: "My dear,
 let me bite off a piece of your naked arm!"

Pavlo Filipovich
 (1891-1937?)

Filipovich was born into a priest's family in the region of Kiev where he completed his higher studies. He was later appointed professor of Ukrainian at the State University and, as brilliant scholar of Slavic and East European languages, retained that post till his arrest and exile, in 1935, to the concentration camps of the Russian north, where he disappeared.

His first poetic attempt was in Russian, but in 1917 he turned to Ukrainian as a budding symbolist, and published his first lyrics in that school's influential journal *Muzagetes*. From symbolism Filipovich was converted to neo-classicism and joined the Five of the *Hrono* nucleus (see DRAY-KHMARA). Among his collections are *The Earth and the Wind* (1922) and *Space* (1926).

Attuned to the literary spirit of the West, Filipovich accepted its modernistic tendencies and novel poetic resources, and fused them with the classical and folklorist elements which he cultivated. This amalgam he further invested with antithetic philosophic ideas relating to life and death, barbarity and humanity, decay and revival, past and future. His own present he direly contemplated as lying prone in the ashes of spiritual ruin, but clung to the hope that man, despite the ugly mechanization and regimentation of his life, would eventually rise above crass materialism and find his salvation in an all-emancipating humanism and its ideals of Truth and Beauty.

* * * *

Only the Will can rule the universe;
 One path alone our race's future charts;
 One testament alone at death we'll nurse
 Within our strong, unconquerable hearts.

To save himself and beauty, man avails.
 Life will resume its growth above the ashes—
 A dream, unique in wisdom, never fails
 To ring its timeless bell above earth's clashes.

Ages fly past, but on the unbounded sea
 One only burning sun for earth will rise,
 And all will merge in fate's infinity—
 Man, beast, and flower, and the azure skies.

FROM ANTIQUE BAS-RELIEFS

A Titan on a cliff sat, shaping clay
 (Muscles all-powerful, a shaggy head!)
 Before him—like a miracle they lay—
 Were cold, immobile infants, still and dead.

The day was splendid, with the trees in bloom,
 And all the dark-blue zenith shone like fire.
 Then suddenly the haze withdrew its brume
 As nearer drew the goddess to inquire.

She was so calm, imperious and slender,
 Surpassing bright and with a helmet dressed.
 A spear is in one hand, a shaft of splendour;
 The other holds a gift—as yet unguessed.

Clay-creatures of Prometheus! Here she nighs—
 And now you are alive and full of joy—
 And towards the children's heads already flies
 Minerva's butterfly,¹ serene and coy.

THE SUN

You were so pleasant and so bright,
 So cruel and indifferent,
 Amusing me with rays of light
 And stabbing me with hot intent.

I loved you long, I love you still,
 And yet must hate you, hot with blame
 When on my virgin soil with skill
 You mercilessly fling your flame.

¹Minerva, Roman goddess of Wisdom, identified later with the Greek goddess Pallas Athena. The butterfly with which she is associated was fashioned by her on a tapestry during her competition in weaving with Arachne.

For when you drink the hot sands dry
And gnaw a withered willow's bark,
I know that ages will pass by
And then your sword will grow less stark.

You will grow old, and fall asleep,
So pale, so hoary, so unblest;
And my descendant, from his keep,
Will often bid you be his guest.

All who are dead will earn his praise,
Our era is his keen desire,
Since in these far, delightful days
You scorch us with your ardent fire.

* * * *

You take a handful of the sleepy seed,
The action of your own hand never heeding—
Let the blue day prevail, let root-stalks breed,
And woman's laughter and the sun of reading.

I do not love a solitary sigh—
Why must we breathe our feelings to the stars?
Never, to reach the unknown world on high,
Will my poor thoughts soar up past heaven's bars.

* * * *

Warmth and allurement all your charm repeats;
The wires will always hum above your head;
Above you night will spread its sombre sheets;
You'll not grow young, for now your youth has sped.

For dreamy hope and mournful lamentation
Have in the haze been lost, forever banned,
While a keen-eyed and virile generation
Already grows throughout a youthful land.

* * * *

June summons its delightful warmth again
 To quiet orchard nook and boundless field,
 And the blue flower gives forth no tinkling sound
 When to its bell the bee's bright wing is wheeled.

It merely bends its tender calyx low
 And stretches when a butterfly flits past;
 Each tiny insect bears a load of joy,
 A bounty that the happy flowers have cast.

You too will study, when your day has come,
 To give the honey of your love most clear,
 Enticing with the colours of your songs
 All men who wander forth from far and near.

So, pass on to far ages, all unseen,
 Those hidden particles of deathless seed.
 Death will not pass you by; you too must go;
 But what you sowed will feed the future's need.

Yuriy Klen, pseud.

Oswald Burghardt (1891-1947)

Klen was born in the Podilia (Lowlands) region of Ukraine, and studied in the University of Kiev. The period of World War I he spent as a German subject in exile near Murmansk. On his return to Kiev, he joined the neo-classicist movement and closely co-operated with Zerov as one of the Five of the *Hrono* group (see DRAY-KHMARA). In 1931 he moved to Germany and held temporary posts in several universities there, lecturing on Slavic literatures. After World War II, he lived mostly in Austria where he plied the crafts of a poet, critic, journalist, and novelist. His death occurred in Augsburg, Germany, as a result of material privations.

Two volumes of his poetry are of extraordinary significance: *The Caravels* (1943) and *The Accursed Years* (1938, 1943). Particularly in the latter, he described the Stalin-organized famine in Ukraine in 1933 as a world-shaking catastrophe falling upon the Ukrainian peasantry. An impeccable classic octave form (*ottava rima*) enhances the tragic images of annihilation of everything that was sacred and human in that martyred land.

Idealistically inclined, Klen considered the spirit stronger than matter, and on that concept he based his poetic ideology. That spirit he symbolized in Joan of Arc, St.

George, the Knights of the Holy Grail, and the intrepid Vikings, all of whom struggled for freedom and justice. In that respect Klen was to a large extent a romantic. In his unfinished epic, *The Ashes of the Empires* (Tsarist Russia, Nazi Germany and the Soviets), while retaining his neo-classical traits, he became a realist in that he presented on a vast canvas the horrors suffered by the Ukrainian people and their leaders in the recent decades of this century. As a poet who erupts with righteous wrath against oppressors and persecutors, and incites his people to acts of heroism in order to achieve their ideals, Klen's tone often assumes a prophetic, biblical potency rendered the more impressive by the mastery of his poetic technique.

Klen is also to be noted as a superb translator of several of Shakespeare's plays and of the French symbolists. As an experienced editor, he published the complete works of Jack London in thirty volumes.

CRUEL DAYS

Days fashioned of ferocity and steel,
Years that are born in scarlet with a moan,
And a sun forged of copper's burning zeal
To light us onward into times unknown.

Fierce tempests that will crush the mountain down,
And subterranean thunder's aftermath,
And dust of meteors flung from heaven's crown
In all directions in a golden wrath.

Thus the age greeted us in startling forms
Upon the threshold where new life appears . . .
Thus do the lightnings of the threatening storms
Blaze out to human hearts through smoking years . . .

The winds, as if they swept through burned-out spaces,
Resounded through our hearts with clamorous cry;
But stars that led the Kings of Magian races
Have not yet risen in our inky sky.

Blest be the day of cursing and damnation!
'Tis we, who have been tempered in the snow,
Blown over by the ash of conflagration,
Will shine forever in the sun's red glow.

Carry hot ashes on the future's tide,
Immortal embers of the things we see—
Some day our actions will be glorified
By singers in the ages yet to be.

From AUTUMNAL LINES

The forest lake, serene and light,
Into itself all colours blends;
And in its depths, all blue and bright,
The autumnal sky its blooming ends.

O morning's solemn point of time
On which high peace descends to sleep!
Life, in the stillness of day's prime,
Is like the waters clear and deep.

It carries off the bounteous gift—
It scatters it, like leaves, abroad,
While azured silver grace I lift
From the blue mirror, glory-shod.

Is it not wonderful to see
So small a tarn and yet all space,
The image of eternity,
Is captured in its soft embrace.

In me the highest height has rest;
In me the dreamy lake grows blue;
Translucent shadows are possessed;
The morning hoar-frost gleams anew.

Nature's a sad and silent thing,
But even here is hope, it seems,
—For there will some day come a spring
Such as is now beyond your dreams.

From THE ACCURSED YEARS

Blessed is he who leaves his native shore
And staff in hand seeks destiny abroad,
Led by the wings of April to explore
A distant country that he ne'er has trod.
Thrice blessed yet is he who would abhor
To give far bread and tea a yielding nod,
And pausing by the path of homeland's loss,
Remains to taste the torments of the cross . . .

A dungeon in Poltava I remember—
 The Cheka¹ kept me waiting there three hours.
 Through windows poured the sunlight of September,
 And on a plastered wall that custom scours
 I read inscriptions . . . As with glory's ember
 Were scratched the names of those whom death devours,
 Greetings from men, too soon of life bereft,
 Stroked on the wall to those who still are left:

“From Petro Paliy: I shall soon be shot.”—
 “Today, my people dear, I die for you.
 Thus Ivan Mandziuk.”—“Wassil Makoda's lot
 Is death. To those who kill are curses due.”—
 “Live on, and let your dreams be unforgot,
 If to the sun of beauty you'd be true!
 Mikhaylo Viun.”—“Marusia, still be mine.
 I go to death. Maniura Valentine.”

The high walls of the Cheka prison there
 For three months made me share the sacrifice
 Of people whose pure hearts like birds of air
 Went flitting to some unseen paradise,
 Regardless of the fact that death's cold stare
 Had poured its light-blue mist into their eyes.
 We were some sixty, and our songs untortured
 Bloomed like the plum-trees in a kerkul's² orchard.

It seemed a bark was peeling off our souls
 And the white hardwood trunk was silver sweet
 When Franko's “Hymn”³ like thunder onward rolls
 And prison walls are trembling to the beat:
 A happy god was splashing from full bowls
 The golden nectar of a heart replete.
 And all our choruses, by one assent,
 Were crowned for us by “The Last Testament.”⁴

¹Cheka, an abbreviation of *Chrezvichainaya Komissiya* (Extraordinary Commission), a secret police body established by the Soviet régime to deal with counter-revolutionary activities. The name was later replaced by OGPU, and still later by NKVD, both alphabetical abbreviations.

²A pejorative name given by the Communist régime to the well-to-do farmers who owned land and refused to submit to collectivization.

³See p. 210, fn. 1.

⁴See p. 153, fn. 1.

II

Let us then pray⁵ for those who have been taken,
 Who sail in peril on a stormy main;
 Likewise for those, the suffering and the shaken,
 Who in the darkness seek a path in vain;
 Those buried in the snow, who will not waken,
 Who ne'er will find their homeward path again.
 On them, O Lord, from Heaven where You stand,
 Extend in mercy your sustaining hand!

And let us pray for all whose lives are naught,
 Who cannot see again the light of day;
 Those whom I cannot compass with my thought,
 And those whose very homes were swept away;
 Whom ruthless hands have into dungeons brought
 So that their joys are withered in dismay.
 Ah, with a touch of hands as light as snow,
 Relieve them, Lord, of suffering and woe!

Let us, moreover, pray for those whose plight
 Dooms them to die, far from their homes' environ;
 For those who in despair at dead of night
 Now gnaw their grated windows' bars of iron;
 Who choke their grief in torment out of sight;
 For whom the hangman's noose is still a siren.
 O Lord, in your celestial firmament,
 Let hands of mercy to their souls be lent!

And let us pray for those who for the fray
 Can neither energy nor strength invoke;
 For all whom bitter misery turns gray
 And breaks at last beneath the heavy yoke;
 Who drink the cup of sorrow day by day,
 Compelled to bless the life on which they choke;
 Those singers who, for rationed bread and tea,
 Must sing of hell as heaven's facsimile.⁶

⁵Klen imitates the supplicatory responses of the Byzantine Mass, here praying for those who suffered the horrors of the war and Revolution, as well as for those who still suffer their effects.

⁶Those poets and writers who remained in the service of Communism and whom Klen presents here as restricted in their inspiration and suffering from that defect.

Their lot, perchance, is quite the worst of all:
 For they must praise the clasp of hands they hate,
 But when alone their breaths more freely fall:
 When the night's scents their brains intoxicate,
 Verses of freedom then in stealth they scrawl
 Which presently the fire must cremate.
 The world will never hear their notes of spring
 That wail in chilling songs of suffering.

And let us pray for those who will come after,
 Who to the breast of fate will not be bound,
 Who know no joys save such as drive them dafter,
 For all who under ruthless stones are ground;
 Within whose throats pain chokes the voice of laughter,
 Whose lightless days as black as night are found.
 Leave them not, Lord, in darkness at the last
 But bless the desert path their feet have passed.

A SYMBOL

The Prince Danilo in disastrous times¹
 prayed on a hill beneath a bright oak tree,
 where stood a wooden cross, made dark by time,
 and lifting up his hands, a fingered chalice,
 he raised his supplication: "Lord, my God!
 Send but a small sign: let it indicate
 the final destiny of my Ukraine!
 Will you abandon her, a prey to foes,
 or give her sunny days of deeds and glory?
 In grievous hours of wanhope and despair
 I bow my head before Your blessed feet.
 Make plain to me what fortune she will find."
 And then, as if in answer, a ripe acorn
 fell from the tree into his folded palms.
 In wonder for a long time he reflected
 what hidden meaning for his questing heart
 might lie in that mysterious revelation.
 He called to mind a parable forgotten

¹Perhaps Prince Danilo of Halich (Western Ukraine), 1201-64, who warred with the Hungarians, the Poles, and the German knights, and who had also to cope with Mongolian inroads into his lands.

which Christ composed about a mustard seed,
then smiled, for his imagination saw
how the brown acorn would begin to sprout,
how from it grows a branching oak, and how
around it, with the years, there will arise
a family of young and sturdy oaks,
until at last a shadowy grove expands
where the birds will nest among the leafy branches
and shaggy beasts will sleep in darkened lairs.
Within the acorn, pressed tight in his hand,
he felt the years and hurricanes resound,
springs germinating with the hope of blossoms,
the wind a-rustle in the foliage dense,
the god of terror and the night's dull rumble.
On a clear day the radiance of the sun
played on the tree-trunks and their spotted bark
a march omnipotent of life and power.
Above the darkened treetops, days and ages
rustled their wings like flocks of migrant birds . . .
And the Prince saw that forest all laid low,
felled by the axe, and temples, homes and towers
rise from the earth, begotten by those trees;
he watched great cities built by toil and labour,
set by a ruler in a ring of state.
All that with which the future time is gravid,
defeat's dark suffering, disdain's oppression,
the bells of victory and glory's echoes,
all these were hidden in that common fruit,
the immortal symbol of eternal life—
an answer to anxiety of spirit.

If you should pick a casual acorn up
and hold it in your hands, can you not hear
across the rustling grass and fragrant flowers
the discourse of a forest yet to be,
with fearsome shrieks of birds and roars of beasts?
Do you not see the slender trunks arise
from which at last high towers will be built
or vessels that will boldly carry you
some future day to tread on distant shores
where a descendant will build highways proud?

Thus, when misfortune subjugates your people,
 don't cloak your native land in dark complaints
 but hide the naked seed for future sowing.
 In its brown shell, the acorn is asleep:
 Let your hand warm it, press it to your brow,
 and listen for the future grove to grow.

Yuriy Darahan

(1894-1926)

After serving as a captain in the Ukrainian Army of Liberation and spending some time in a Polish military prison after World War I, Darahan settled in Prague, where a goodly number of Ukrainian writers sought refuge to pursue their literary activities unhampered politically. Darahan died prematurely, from tuberculosis, at the age of thirty-two, leaving but a single collection of verse entitled *Sahaydak* (The Quiver). In this he is revealed as a tender lyricist of nature, evoking in vivid visions the distant past with such power of artistry as to make the images from the Ukrainian Princedom and Cossackdom stand out in all their romanticized, "bronze and metal" glory. As a worshipper of that past, he exerted a certain influence on the young Ukrainian émigré poets.

AN EVENING

The day—a wounded prince—stoops to the west,
 Casts its red shield aside and lets it lie.
 Rubies of blood upon the roof-top rest;
 The peaceful pond reflects the scarlet sky.

The zephyr's gentle breath flows past in sighs
 And frankincense—the fragrance of the fall.
 The evening pulls a mitre o'er its eyes
 And celebrates its rites funereal.

The fray is loud and bright and resolute,
 My God! And now the trumpet-calls out-blare . . .
 Grant, when my time shall come, I may salute
 The dark as splendidly and free from care.

Volodimir Kobiliansky (1895-1919)

Kobiliansky was a native of Bukovina (Western Ukraine), where he completed his gymnasium studies and taught before moving, in 1913, to Kiev. After the Revolution, he worked in various educational and publishing institutions, and died at the age of twenty-four as a result of exhaustion from overwork. His only collection of verse, *My Gift*, appeared posthumously in 1920. Like all other poets hailing from Bukovina, Kobiliansky was under the spell of the German romantics. He translated many lyrics from Schiller and Heine. Since he belonged to the Musagete circle of poets in Kiev, it is understandable that his own lyrics are highly symbolic in character.

AUTUMN

Such fair and melancholy autumn days,
When rustling, yellow leaves slip slowly down!
They mourn the fate of summer with her crown,
In a fir coffin now she stays—
Such fair and melancholy autumn days!

The grace of passing is the greatest beauty.
The leaves are lovely, lying under foot—
A cloak of corpses on the roads they put,
And heavens grow bright in graveside duty . . .
The grace of passing is the greatest beauty.

Mikhaylo (Maik) Yohansen (1895-1937)

Of Swedish origin, Yohansen was born in Kharkiv where his father was a teacher of German. In the local University, he received a thorough philological training, and there became a lecturer in his line. A Westerner in spirit, Yohansen was a rare erudit, an all-round man of culture—linguist, poet, translator, fiction writer, critic, lexicographer, theoretician of prosody, and sportsman. In 1919, when in Kharkiv (then the capital of the Ukrainian SSR), he came in contact with Mikola Khvilovy, who led the movement of independence for Ukrainian literature. Yohansen now began to write exclusively in Ukrainian and engaged personally in putting into force the various manifestos issued by Ukrainian literary groups to that effect.

Yohansen imbibed a certain amount of European and American modernism, but remained highly original in his technique and resources. Since he relentlessly experimented with words, the diction of his literary output is, in Ukrainian literature, one of the richest mines of innovations, coinages, neologisms and sound-couplings which he compounded into a verbiage that is both novel and astounding. For that reason he was considered as a jeweller of forms, a philologist of prosody, an excavator of lexicographic depths.

Yohansen belonged to the VAPLITE and to the restricted group of the so-called "romantic vitaists," and his endeavour to reveal naked life analytically classified him as one of the Ukrainian "fauves" (cf. French school of painting of the same name.) Much of his verse, however, appears as a mere *tour de force*, and served him as a vehicle for his play of verbal imagery approaching, if not actually being, sheer artificiality.

Yohansen stood apart from the raging political arena but, under pressure, made an effort to extol the Soviet régime. This was to no avail, however, for in the grim years of the middle thirties he was arrested and sent to a concentration camp, destination unknown, where he lost his mind before being executed.

* * * *

The fields are blue with evening thanks,
 The stream is chatting with its banks
 And so mysteriously
 The white tents in the sky afar
 Smoke in their crowds.
 —A supper for the gods is being cooked.
 Closer and closer still night's shadows pass,
 Lower and lower weep the chords of grass.
 All now is dark and still.
 Pine forests—poets of the sky—
 Sleep in the clouds.

* * * *

Goose-coloured morning from aloft descended
 On the blue city. But the stone was slumbering—
 Only the rain was sighing in the eave-troughs.
 There wandered in the street a man whose fate
 It was to hang, and piteously he prayed:
 “O Tear Immaculate, a tower out yonder
 Has hid itself untimely in the fog.

(Its brimming breasts had fed the locomotives),
The goatish moon, expanding with its milk,
Has grown and in the mist has burst in tears.
I've thrown my heart out on the city commons.
Let me, with you, dissolve myself in weeping!"
I pressed my face upon the grey verandah
But found in sorrow that the stone was slumbering—
Only the rain was sighing in the eave-troughs.

THE OATS

Oats at the sky's edge grow upon the sand,
A greybeard cloud above them is a-doze
 In gloomy sleep: above them stand
The centuries, whose idle musing flows.
—The oats keep growing, sway, and hold their place.

Far out upon the sea the vessels lower
Their Latin sails in evening's gentle sway.
—The oats become a forest, strength's bestower.
The pillars are horrific, pale and grey;
They rot, and on the road their fall is grand . . .
—Oats at the sky's edge grow upon the sand.

* * * *

Out of the morning mists a heron floats;
It flaps its wings in silence as it flies
Into the leaves—it sheds blood from its heart
And there before my sight a berry lies.

Then still more silently it passed from sight;
Somewhere beyond the firs it slipped away.
The heron—or perhaps a female stork—
In the deep, purple calm sank down to stay.

Above the checkered covering of the field
What were more sad and sweet, by fancy said
In love's soft night! Near my autumnal dreams
The sun was born, a berry bright and red.

Teodosiy Osmachka

(1895-1962)

Of peasant stock, Osmachka was born in the region of Cherkassy and, after a high-school education, taught in public schools. During the short-lived independence of Ukraine after World War I he served in the Black Zaporozhian regiment and, following its demobilization, studied at the University of Kiev. In the Ukrainian capital, he attached himself to the literary group "Mars," which fostered expressionism. During the repressive thirties, he was arrested twice, the second time as he was trying to flee to Poland. It was only by simulating insanity (a recourse he attempted successfully several times) that he was able to escape the liquidation suffered by most of his closest friends.

During the German occupation of Ukraine, Osmachka moved to Western Ukraine where he concentrated on prose fiction. Two of his novels, dealing with the harsh times then prevailing, were published in post-war Germany. His last prose work, *Rotonda Dushehubtsiv*, was published in Toronto, Canada, in 1958, and was shortly after translated into English under the title of *The Gallery of Assassins*. In it he re-created in trenchant, realistic terms the inferno through which he and millions of his fellow-countrymen passed during what Yuriy Klen called the "accursed years" of the Stalin era. Shortly after World War II, Osmachka emigrated to the United States, lived for a while in Canada, returned to Europe, but died on Long Island, N.Y.

In his poetry, even more than in his prose, Osmachka is a painfully incisive expressionist, storming with elemental hatred against those who caused his ruin and that of his country. The tragedy of Ukraine, symbolized by himself as a lonely, desperate creature lost in a hostile universe, generates a gloom that is at times difficult to endure; yet so graphically vivid is the majesty of suffering reflected in his verse by his super-sensitive, agitated soul that one is drawn to it perforce, as to an ocean roused by a powerful tempest. In the descriptive, analytical qualities of his impressions, Osmachka is perhaps unsurpassed in Ukrainian literature, and in that respect, as well as in the originality of his concepts, his talent occasionally reaches the heights of genius. Unfortunately, the force of his feelings often inflated his form beyond its capacity.

THE DOG

Like a mysterious grief, a spell that nags
Or the unmeasured heavens round his head,
The Carpathian eagle gabbles on the crags;
His wing is shattered and his days are sped.
From rock to rock below him down the steep
The river dashes and its raucous breath
Proclaims his final anguish in the deep,
His fated and inexorable death.

Though ancient firs, dark lutes, up time's ascents
Have played no dirge to any mountain's lord,
The mighty emperor of the elements
Shrieks in his frenzy at a fate abhorred.
My spirit, like that far-off eagle's soul,
Out of autumnal nights proclaims its cries;
I have not sought your friendship to enrol,
Nor pitying words, nor kindness from your eyes.

To your young maids and wives, as to a lyre
I often have applied in love and wonder;
From my grey eyes sincerity shot fire
Like a July of agitated thunder.
But they laughed loudly in my very face:
Who was the saucy man? They sought to know . . .
So sounds a well-fed pack of wolfish race
In wastes where Cossacks mustered long ago.

Only a poor, wild dog, on hunting bent,
Did not avoid me and drew near my hand
As I with gentle word sought his assent:
"Come you as friend or foe in this far land?"
And therefore when in winter you will bear me
Forth in my coffin to my last, low cell,
Bury that dog beside me to declare me
His friend beneath a cross, my place to tell.

And if a band of maidens I shall lack
To sigh above my grave where fir-trees tower,
I know that there will come the canine pack
That once my dog knew in an earlier hour . . .
And they will howl into the sky's deep valleys
Till the moon dims with grief beyond a man's;
Their baying there will join the eagle's sallies
From the high cliffs and far Carpathians.

My spirit above wood and stream together
Up to the great maimed eagle high will spring,
Will end its life with him, in stormy weather,
A kinsman of his heart and of his wing.

IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP

The window shows the roofs piled high with snow
and reeking chimneys that are dark with soot:
from them the puffs of smoke like black birds go
or like a herd that raves with bellowing bruit.

The room is stifling hot, the air hangs thick
with exhaled breath and writhing, stinking smoke;
young fellows, where they lie, are loud and quick
with talk of juicy whores and dirty jokes.

And meanwhile I, beside the heated stove,
bend low amid the scurilous harangue
and whisper through my teeth, with thoughts that rove:
“When shall I break away from such a gang?”

At home I seemed a slave in Syracuse;
Vienna was a foe, my fate to mar;
only antiquity's Ukrainian Muse
kept watch above my spirit from afar.

But to what home can I invite her straight,
into what nook insist that she consort
where fierce Maecenases no longer wait
to judge me in their Bolsheviki court?

For from the smutty talk and smoke's narcosis,
as from a serpent's sting, I surely vow,
my withering brain has suffered a neurosis
and deafens on the circuit of my brow.

And I no longer know if for a season
I search the wind for hope, from thence to pluck it,
or struggle to revive unhappy reason
with water from the first convenient bucket . . .

But you, my Queen Most High, with power to infuse,
will not abandon me to certain wrath
And even will draw nigh in wooden shoes
Nor hesitate to cross my hapless path . . .

I await you in the forest and the city
and in the orchard where the spring bees hum;
sprinkle on me the mercy of your pity,
Muse of my country, come to me, ah come!

A MEETING

I thought of her by starlight; inexpert
I deemed her a most amiable sin;
I listened, and how sensuously her skirt
made music round the beauty of her shin . . .

I also thought that in the light of day
I'd meet her with my eye's appealing art
and to her candid soul would frankly say
that she by night was cradled in my heart.

But why do day and cloud defeat our pleasure
and end at last with darkness as their goal,
when both of them can only know the measure
of what is called the sorrow of the soul?

What use to us are language and the mind
(which stride in books directly to their end)
when our emotions lead them, dazed and blind,
into sheer chaos when we meet a friend?

For out of doors I met her, and she carried
a few bright apples in her apron's flap;
and suddenly as mute as mice I tarried,
merely a spot I stood, my mouth a gap.

And even casual greetings I forgot,
though in my heart a hive of words was humming;
her anxious breast was heaving, full and hot,
and from her tender bosom sighs were coming . . .

Why did she not let fall her revenue
of apples in despair and give a groan?
but turning from my silence she withdrew
like the Three Kings into the far unknown . . .

What use to us are language and the mind,
those splashes from the soul's eternal river,
if we by misadventure only find
mute errors that must mock the heavenly Giver?

Valerian Polishchuk

(1897-1938)

Polishchuk was born into a peasant's family in the province of Volynia. After completing his gymnasium studies at Katerinoslav, he entered the Institute of Civil Engineering at St. Petersburg, but transferred to the historical-philological faculty at the University of Kamianetz-Podilsky. Both in Kharkiv and in Kiev, Polishchuk belonged to literary groups that favoured the establishment of a purely Ukrainian proletarian literature. Although he soon became a thoroughly subservient Soviet writer, the régime none the less detected in his works certain deformities and heresies, particularly in *The Avangard*, a monthly which he edited and in which he fostered a modernization of Ukrainian art and literature. For this he was one of the most denounced of Ukrainian writers and branded by Moscow as "an enemy of the people." As such he was finally liquidated on the Solovetski Islands.

Polishchuk was a prolific poet, but most of his verses are bogged down in the extreme leftist futuristic quagmire of "constructive dynamism," or, as it was also known—"spiralism." As a poet he is chaotic, cynically erotic, revelling (even wallowing) in maniacal imagery and putrescent fantasies. No master of form, his poetry appears dishevelled, slovenly, angular, leaving one suspended high and dry. Still, he is interesting as a representative of those few poets who, in their drastic experimentation to evolve new forms, took awful risks in methods so abnormally analytical as to threaten the disintegration of the mind itself.

THE CREATIVE MOMENT

I live in candour, like the fragrant wormwood,
 When the chained heat rings out along the steppes.
 Spacious I feel in comfort. On a blue day I dream:
 It seems a stork is gabbling on the wing,
 A gentle song comes flying from afar
 Into that same deep blueness of the steppe!
 Then to me
 There cuddles glittering the creative moment.
 I cast it casual trifles,—
 Rich images in eminent disorder,
 Loud images, like crashing plates of glass,
 And rhythms all unstable.
 Here they are leaping, jostling one another into conflict,
 Unfolding rainbows like the tails of peacocks,
 Beating themselves into the memory
 With the bony spines

Of fleshy, well-fed larvae;
They push each other apart with resilient gas molecules,
They suddenly come flying with clamour,
They vibrate, and will not let me think . . .
Then I am roused by a creative ferocity,
I open the sluices of my fantasy—
And they all, like treacherous friends,
Rush off—as if misfortune now were mine.
To meet them in their swift rapacious flight,
Still newer images come flying near:
Of all kinds, full of contrasts, velvety-tender,
Like light and heavy elves, in flight like mallards—
Scattered along my illusion, they seek the edges;
But here my eye, grown swift and accurate,
Shoots at them with a black pencil,
For example such images:
A storm keeps thundering from behind the mountain
With its deep, mighty rattlings,
And from these waves its fiery kerchief
Of lightnings.
Another image:
A motor boat
Builds up steps of waves
That it may mount on them to the horizon . . .
More images:
The water dropping from a faucet
Hisses as between gritting teeth.

An amber current of illumination
Flows down the sides of the waves.

The hoar-frost is dry to the taste
Like powdered, sugary icing.

The dark ice of the piano
Laughs with its horse teeth.

A coral maggot
Lies in the juicy honey of the split plum.

The propeller hums with its screw.

Towards the borders of the corrugated waves is poured
The greasy, golden oil of the sun . . .

And further and further—other images emerge
In their criss-cross, irrepressible game
And weave themselves into a storm
Like flocks of swallows
Above the autumnal sea . . .
Then, as each flashes past in a trice,
I choose the best of them
With the secret logic of my thought,
I trim their shaggy hair, unkempt and unclean,
Give them at last direction and a goal—
And now my winged friends, in resolute array,
Are carrying riches everywhere;
Harnessed together, they bear
The lofty ideal,
And I print it—
And rake in gold and glory.
There are, of course, still other plans of creation,
When thought onrushing binds the subject fast
And lets it grow its own phonetic flesh . . .
Of this I'll write to you
Perchance some other time.

Leonid Mosendz

(1897-1948)

Mosendz was a native of the region of Podilia. After 1920 he lived the life of an émigré, first in Poland and then in Czechoslovakia, where he finally settled and worked as a chemist in private and university laboratories. He died in Switzerland, where he had sought a cure for his tubercular condition.

His early lyrics are tinged with philosophical reflections on the mysteries of the universe. Later, as a scientist, he applied to his "cosmic" themes the concepts of astronomy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and archaeology, this last as he attempted to reach into the prehistory of his race. Perhaps his greatest ambition was to synthesize Ukraine with Western Europe, his clarion call being "Don't forget the West!" What attracted him to the West particularly was the nobility and knightly manner generally characterizing its composite mind. Mosendz was also a prose writer of some note, reflecting in his fiction many of the ideas and ideals that enliven his lyrics and sonnets.

From THE ZODIAC

Time without end. Yet limits must be set
To the Zodiac's unchanging constellations.
The passing of the years will tear the net
Of our familiar signs and void their stations.

Great Leo will, exhausted, smoulder out
When all the Leonids shall pass in fire;
Aquarius' bucket will be burst, no doubt
In fiery fragments of metallic ire.

Old Sagittarius will lose his arrows;
Without their golden scales the Fish will die;
The Twins will fade in fog like truant sparrows,
The Scorpion sting himself and clear the sky.

All universal causes and effects
Will slip from off the Scales in dark disgrace;
Only the Virgin, starry-eyed, rejects
The cosmic chaos and retains her place.

.

Then into atoms there will start to crumble
All planets, constellations, stars and suns;
These in a common welter there will tumble
That to a comet's spiral fiercely runs.

Across new space a starry host will dance
And grant once more the endlessness of time . . .
The Virgin will renew her holy glance,
The Deed be born and born the Word sublime . . .

And yet, in the unlikeness of the Act,
The mighty fugue will tremble to set free
A heritage of elemental fact,
A power that lies beyond eternity.

Dmitro Falkivsky (1898-1934)

Falkivsky was born in the Polisia region. His studies at the Gymnasium of Berest-Litovsky were interrupted by World War I, and he was immediately drawn into the vortex of the Revolution, during which he served in the Red Army and for some time, it is suspected, in the Cheka. (His first published poem bears the title "The Chekist.") Having returned to civilian life, Falkivsky, as a staunch Bolshevik, collaborated in various Red literary journals and organizations until he eventually became disillusioned with the régime to the point of making his verses convey his feelings in more than subtle terms. Collections of his poems are *The Horizons* (1927), *The Fire Site* (1928), and *Polisia* (1931).

The Soviet authorities imputed to him as a crime his romanticist longing for the peaceful rural past which the beauty of his native Polisian countryside evoked in him. It was perhaps a sense of guilt resulting from certain criminal acts he had committed as a member of the Cheka (although this has not yet been established) that caused in him an intense desire to escape from the bloody unscrupulousness of the times to a primal purity of nature and of heart. He was one of the first Ukrainian writers to be executed by the Soviets, in a group of twenty-eight Ukrainian writers and activists.

Falkivsky was by no means an innovator in form or expression. His verses are mostly free from the heaviness of symbolist imagery and expressionist fantasy that burdened those of his contemporary fellow-craftsmen. But he looms large in the history of Ukrainian literature as an eloquent spokesman for those who, having suffered the physical and mental agonies of that dire period, yearned for the freedom to enjoy the amenities of peace in the lap of soothing Nature.

* * * *

Summer has rustled by . . . The rye has sung reproof
And only the hard wind strikes sparks upon the stubble;
Like the shadow of reproach, with its disdainful hoof
The dry-boned autumn steps upon the sad fields' rubble.

There where the dews once played in cherry-blossomed morning
Tender sweet basil rings no more with voice of laughter;
Above the lonely porch, green leaves the ash adorning
Will whisper now no longer in the eves hereafter.

The fields, in dreamy pensiveness, will speak no longer;
In drowsy wistfulness the blue-eyed space remains;
Under my casement window now the web grows stronger
Of gossamer and golden grief for human pains.

* * * *

Some have been granted to perform great deeds
That the long future in a chain conjoins;
I am content no guile my soul impedes—
I've never sold my heart for copper coins;

I am content I did not treat as wares
The petty little deeds that I essay;
I did not cart them out to sell at fairs
Like a low huckster on a market day.

And though fatigue has fallen on my ways
And care is furrowed deep upon my brow,
I still am glad that every little phrase
In all my songs is filled with warmth enow;

I still am glad that simply as I sang
I blessed mankind and every hour that passed;
That though my heart endured exhaustion's pang,
I still taught men to yearn and love at last.

I feel no touch of envy or of ill;
Let others seek by deeds their fame to prove . . .
I am content I know how to instil
Into each phrase of song a drop of love.

Vassil Bobinsky (1898-1939)

Born in Western Ukraine, Bobinsky began his gymnasium course in Lviv and completed it in Vienna. In 1916 he joined the Sitch Legion of Galicia which became the nucleus of the Ukrainian Army fighting for the liberation of the Ukrainian soil at the end of World War I and during the Revolutionary period. While in Kiev, he fell under the influence of certain leftist Ukrainian writers, and returned to Galicia in 1920 as an extreme socialist. There for a time he co-operated with Ukrainian nationalist literary groups but, fired by the idea of a complete social transformation of society, he soon turned to Communism and became the chief representative of the Soviet line of thought in Western Ukraine. As a result, he was arrested by Polish authorities and imprisoned for a period of five months, during which he wrote his greatest poem, "The Death of Franko." On his release, he resumed his previous

activity in pro-Communist literary journals and newspapers. When, in 1930, Polish police made it difficult for him to continue, he moved to Kharkiv where he enjoyed tolerable freedom until 1933 when he was arrested as a Rumanian spy by the NKVD, tried, and exiled to a northern concentration camp. There, after five years of hardship, he died of physical exhaustion.

As a poet, Bobinsky employed modernistic resources and remained under the influence of the French impressionist, Arthur Rimbaud, some of whose poetry he rendered into excellent Ukrainian. In his own verses, he is revealed as of a pessimistic frame of mind, his metaphoric verve alternating between gloom and radiance, with the former mood predominating.

THE BLACK EARTH

I

Soaked with the sweat of peasants who have turned you,
You lie, Black Earth, unwitting, mute and mild,
Forgetting that the fire of heaven has burned you,
That you were both fructiferous and wild,

That you had once been drowned beneath a tide
Of potent juices—heady, bitter, green.
You have forgot; are mute. Fields stretch out wide
In hazy swaddling clothes of summer sheen.

Field after field reflects the boundless sky,
Inimical and alien, leaden-hued.
Only the wind at night, with mad-dog cry
Will terrify your sleep in howlings rude. . . .

III

On black nights you come forth in lonely space:
Your restless heart beats out its palpitations.
The wind howls like a frightened beast apace,
Foreboding bloody wars and conflagrations.

To the earth press your breast; in the ensheathing
Of her deep bosom place your hand of toil:
The glow of the eternal breast is breathing,
The blood shows scarlet in the ancient soil . . .

Fall on it! Hear! The Black Earth is not mute
But breathes unearthly verse across life's smother.
O wind that howlest like a wounded brute,
My brother thou, the Black Earth's very brother!

Evhēn Malaniuk

(1897-)

Malaniuk was born in the region of Kherson. During the brief independence of Ukraine following World War I, he served as an officer in the Ukrainian Army and, after demobilization, settled in Czechoslovakia, where he completed his studies in agronomy. At various times he lived in Poland and Germany, and after World War II emigrated to the United States where he now lives.

Malaniuk began his poetic career under the influence of Tichina's Symbolism, but shook it off when the latter capitulated to the Soviet régime. His originality, in the main, consists in his historiosophic approach to the idea of the future Ukrainian state. As a powerful innovator, he constructs his concepts in that regard on a strictly voluntaristic basis, couching his strophes with expressions tempered into iron hardness. With his poetic dynamism he blasts all sentimentality and spinelessness as attributes of servility. Just as his own verse clashes like "the Varangian steel and Byzantine copper," so, in his ideological conception, must the Ukrainian nation resound. Malaniuk envisioned Ukraine as a "steppeland Hellas" which cannot but respond to the turbine force of poetic and cultural power if she hopes ever to become an armour-clad Rome with her own free Capitolium. Himself he posed as a poet of just such power in his ringing exhortation to his subdued nation to rise in rage and hatred against monolithic Communism. Of all the émigré Ukrainian poets, Malaniuk is perhaps the most nationalistic, to such an extreme as to cause his verses to bristle as with bayonet points. It is at times difficult to feel at ease reading certain portions of the poetic creation of this "emperor of armoured strophes," as he came to be known.

Among the Ukrainian poets beyond the confines of the Ukrainian SSR, Malaniuk is the greatest and for that reason the most hated by the Soviet régime. Yet even there his works, although rigidly prohibited, are well known in the restricted poetic circles where they are studied as a powerful expression of the national mentality of the Ukrainian emigration whose chief mouthpiece Malaniuk at times appears to be.

Among his chief collections are *Stiletto and Stylus* (1924), *The Earth and Iron* (1930), *The Earthly Madonna* (1934), and *The Ring of Polycrates* (1939). In 1962 he published in Toronto a substantial collection of his critical and ideological essays under the title, *A Book of Observations*.

NOT SLAVDOM'S BREAD AND HONEY

Not Slavdom's bread and honey: steel and rifle.
Not Hellas' peace and amiable speech:
Strong metal arms all speechlessness will stifle,
Short sword and fatal lance their ardour preach.

Instead of songs flow streams of bitter tears,
 Instead of fleeting rage and feeble action
 Come tension and integrity and cheers
 And bronze and steel—to cut through all detraction.

For foemen will not vanish like the dew,
 Slaves for the sun of freedom vainly wait.
 Let grace of Scyth¹ and Hellene pass from view
 On the stout continent beyond the Strait—

Let our own Rome be bounded by the skies
 And let our Capitolium arise.

FAUSTIAN NIGHT

A Gothic night.¹ Above, as in a book,
 Mechanics mark the Law and do not err.
 The cold moon, like a bald philosopher,
 Reckons the births and deaths of king and cook.

But listen close: this Paradise by night
 Is sighing with dark bosoms heaving deep—
 It is a symphony, and not a sleep
 Frozen in cold blue icepacks, still and tight.

With the eternal thrust of ebb and flow
 The ancient ocean beats against the shores,
 The cosmos thunders like a paean's throes.
 Evolving mind, as yet, the abyss ignores.
 In vain, through the vast spheres that circling go,
 Black Lucifer on batlike pinions soars.

A STONE

Look at the stone. It holds its peace:
 On faith and wisdom it is bent.
 The world may thunder, wars increase,
 Blood gush and boundaries be rent—

¹An inhabitant of the region of Scythia, the territory now comprising the southern part of Ukraine along the Black Sea coast and eastward to the Caspian Sea.



¹Gothic night, inspiring gloomy, mystic, medieval thoughts.

But cold and bare for all to see
It marks the crossroads.

Cars rush on
And footsteps pass it leisurely.
All pass it by.

Like truth to con
It stands there unconditional
With just a hint of scorn expressed.
That stony laughter at them all
The passing throngs have never guessed.

* * * *

After each loss I learn that that is
A point in time that subtly blends,
Sub specie aeternitatis,¹
All our beginnings and our ends.

The wounds that surgeons' hands inflict
And all the mechanism of time
Are much too plain to contradict;
To curse at beauty were a crime.

We know what was and what will be,
We drink clear venom as we know
Men sink more bestial in degree,
Life must more vegetable grow.

But matter with sagacity
Will cut a path where tempests roar;
God's spirit of entelechy
Will cosmos in the flux restore.

EARTHLY MADONNA

As in Ionic columns¹ here
The virgin snow and rose compete,

¹*Sub specie aeternitatis*—In the perspective of eternity.

* * * *

¹Ionic columns in architecture distinguished by their slender proportions, delicate flutings, narrow echinus (cushion) and abacus (top of the capital) between which emerge the twin spirals of a volute resembling an infolded scroll. The Ionic style denotes grace, suppleness, elegance.

These hues the swelling breasts endear,
The lilded hands, the lilded feet.

She is unique! Madonna's like
I have not seen on earth till now,
With Cythera's blush the eye to strike,
With bashfulness of cheek and brow;

Blood struggles in her light-blue vein as
Birds in spring winds might shaken be.
Ah, what sweet Gothic cantilena
Could hymn her through eternity!

In heaven as Virgin still addressed,
Here upon earth you shine, a star,
And guard upon your glowing breast
The pearl of chastity you are.

TECHNOCRACY

We calculate, destroy and with our fists
Create the modes where nature's guile invents;
While man grows still more base in evil twists
And Earth incomprehensible persists,
A helpless playthin ζ of blind elements.

With geometric arcs we brace our strands,
Stitch through the canvas of co-ordinates,
While God from heaven extends his cosmic hands
And sows his pain on our audacious lands
And snaps the puny threadlet of our fates.

Too vain, too trifling are our sorceries
To charm the eternal question we'd unlock.
Here is a world of living vortices:
We cannot build Niagaras, if you please,
Nor can our concretes ape the granite rock.

A SUMMATION

Forever it is spring, inebriate glory,
And the blue radiance of the skyey heights—
Thus did imagination paint the story
Of this firm world, this earth of awful sights.

The years go flitting past like petals blown,
And age has creased the forehead with its ills,
But all I see is only steel and stone
And windmills on the summits of the hills.

No fragment from past years may now remain;
Though fantasies are dead, and fancies too,
Not vainly did our hearts beat out their pain,
Not vainly did our eyes drink in the blue.

I ciphered out the years in onward flow,
Nor is it vain, the lesson that I learn:
My heat, some day, will burst into a glow,
And to reality the myth will turn.

My vigorous outcry and my pangs of hate,
As they burn out my sordid rust and sin,
Will form the firm component of a state,
The steel and stone that I shall build therein.

Evhen Pluzhnik

(1898-1936)

Pluzhnik was born in the region of Voronizh into a peasant's family. There he studied at a gymnasium and for a while taught public school, after which he took a course in veterinary science in Kiev. There too, he later attended lectures and took practical instruction in subjects pertaining to the theatre at the Lysenko School of Art. From 1923 on, he devoted himself almost exclusively to *belles lettres* and was active in various literary organizations. In 1935 he was arrested and condemned to be executed, but the sentence was commuted to ten years of hard labour on the Solovestski Islands, where he died from tuberculosis shortly after his arrival.

In Ukrainian literature, Pluzhnik, often considered a Ukrainian Rilke, is one of the most pronounced individualities. At first glance he would appear to be an eclectic

who incorporated into his poetic work the best features of classicism, symbolism, expressionism, and impressionism; but in the depths of his erudition (mostly self-acquired) he fused all these elements into a great original whole to which he gave a philosophic, if tragic, basis. The problems of human existence that he dealt with are both individual and universal, of current and of eternal value. His pessimism stemmed not only from his personal experience of the harsh times that beset him and from the severe introspection to which he subjected himself, but also from his keen sense of the discrepancies of life and the vast gap between man's goals and his actual achievements. Hence came his poetic "spleen" and the skepticism with which many of his verses are taxed. Concentration of thought makes his style appear ascetic, as if he were a pale-faced victim wanly ruminating on the injury done him by man and nature, and giving vent to his feelings in laconic phrases, sparing himself any exhausting verbosity in order to produce the very kernel of the matter and expose only the essence of the fact.

Despite the tragic sense of life that he infused in his verses, Pluzhnik, in his irrepressible love of life and humanity, proclaims his faith in man, who, he firmly believes, will eventually find an issue from the pains and cacophonies of existence and gain an equilibrium between mind and body and salvation for both. This hope is expressed most succinctly in his pithy line: "With your resurrection do I live, O dead Earth!" One is tempted to conclude that it was the philosophy of the Spaniard Ortega y Gasset that exerted some influence on Pluzhnik's life and work. If it did, then Pluzhnik lived it personally to the extreme, surpassing the concept of the man of "blood and bone" by applying to it even more intensely than did Ortega the redeeming factor of the vivifying spirit amid the harvest of death. Among his chief collections are: *Days* (1926), *Early Autumn* (1926), and the posthumous *Equilibrium*, published in Augsburg in 1948.

COLUMBUS

The stubborn Isabel's¹ consent dispels
 All obstacles that blocked the Admiral's scheme—
 And now Columbus moors his caravels
 To build a myth and realize a dream!

For seventy days and nights they sailed. The lap
 Of unknown seas they met, now bright, now dense . . .
 Was it all false, both Toscanelli's map²
 And the surmises of experience?

¹Isabella I, called the Catholic (1451-1504), who with her husband Ferdinand V ruled the Spanish provinces of Castile and Leon. It was under their patronage that Columbus sailed to discover America.

²Paolo Toscanelli (1397-1482), astronomer and geographer, who probably encouraged Columbus to undertake the voyage to the New World.

Are there no roads to India perchance?
Will all their enterprise be brought to shame?
And nowhere in dark waves can any glance
Show a young land to verify their aim?

But through the bright mirage a grey dove flies—
The herald of a not too distant land—
Already in the tattered rigging plies
A spicy breeze that from some shore is fanned.

Land ho! Land ho! The country long expected!
According to his word, its shores are won!
Derision, hunger, scorn are all neglected—
“Columbus!” is their cry. The deed is done!

He answers their salute. Upon their faces
A tribute to his fortitude he saw . . .
—And having thus found “India”, he embraces
The shining shores of an America.

* * * *

One writes, one tears it up . . . again one writes!
Again it turns out badly . . . clotted curds . . .
Thus until weariness the memory blights
And sweeps away the mouldy husks of words!

The corners of your lips begin to tremble
And truth is still too tedious to find:
You cannot, lad, your lack of words dissemble—
You cannot drain the bottom of your mind!

Even if nerves are roused, if you feel lately
The moving thrill of inspiration fine,—
Pray, also learn the way to yawn sedately
Over a limping, still unfinished line.

* * * *

It is the law: no man his time outlives—
The even series of your days will snap;
And few among your friends and relatives
Will walk beside you to your last, long nap.

One leaves behind great affluence and glory,
 One leaves his children phthisis and a debt . . .
 If all your friends remember not your story,
 Perhaps your enemies will not forget!

O granite slab, you level all in scorn
 Recording on the rock a simple score:
 Stating that then and there a man was born,
 And then and there he died . . . and not much more.

* * * *

The window shows a garden, whence the scent
 Of herbs allays the bitter drugs I take . . .
 Tell me, disease, how has your power been lent
 My little joys a large delight to make?

Or does your stubborn fever but conceal
 One of most cunning Nature's tricks impure—
 And is this heightened life a double deal
 Of druggists and my body's temperature?

* * * *

A peasant near a forest mowed his rye
 And struck his scythe against a yellow skull . . .
 Who was the man here slain, and when, and why,
 And for whose sake he died all-dutiful,
 The mower cares not . . .

On this battle-field
 The rye grows high and thick. That someone once
 Had made himself manure for such a yield
 Moves not the dunce.

The mower bent above the precious Thing—
 Leaning upon the scythe that nicked the skull,
 And with his foot he kicked it, muttering
 “A nuisance sure you are, a thing of null!”

* * * *

One happy day, the atolls I had passed
And stood on the most distant of the isles,
A naked savage, old and dark of cast,
Met me beside the sacred wood with smiles . . .

Long we ascended to a higher station;
At last the island lay below our feet—
A wondrous fragment of the world's creation,
Known but from tales, beyond all books' conceit.

The happy monkeys swung from branch to branch,
Steered by tenacious tails in faultless flight
(From such a skill as this my mood would blanch,
Though I were born an ancient troglodyte!)

Then there came beasts—a gracious mien they bore,
But science could not name their class or clan;
And gentle wavelets ushered to the shore
Bright, flower-like fishes never seen by man.

Under my feet bent still untrodden grass . . .
And I remember . . . yes, as in a dream . . .
A tree of knowledge with a plaque of brass:
“*Zutritt verboten!*” was its word supreme.

Later from off my brig I cast a look
(a brig too old to suit poetic styles)
And pondered sadly on that secret book
Where disappeared the loveliest of all isles!

* * * *

In ancient times some savage in a sweat,
Being priest and hunter with a poet's sight,
Once, from a roe's hoof, made an amulet
To save him from the spectres of the night.

While he was carving with his unskilled hand
That fragment of the hoof, could he foresee
That from his leisure and this work he planned
His times would mingle with futurity?

That somewhere, in some century unknown,
The master of the seas who sought new shores
'Mid bellowing tempests and the mast's deep groan
Would blaze the trail of the conquistadors,

And would direct his battered brigantine
To islands where the buried savage lay,
From whose rough beach the wind had washed out clean
Even the traces of that far-off day!

And as his custom was in seeking gold
He'd pick up a few pebbles from the ground—
And there within his wind-blown hand would hold
The shining, speckled amulet he'd found!

And when the Spaniard stuffed into his coat
That paltry legacy of savage faith,
Could he suspect a future age would gloat
On what primordial genius left a wraith?

That his descendant, home in old Castille,
Forgetting all the glory of his line,
His country's woes would often cease to feel
In gazing on that amulet's design . . .

That later the barbarian's artifact
Would pass through many countries, towns and hands—
So full of meaning in its sculptured tact,
So deathless in creative deodands!

An alchemist, a learned bachelor,
A marquis and an antiquarian,
London, Berlin and Paris—none forbore
The witchcraft of the amulet to scan.

And later still on velvet it would rest
In a museum, that in dust would mew it
Until the wheel of time made manifest
The moment when a poet bent to view it,

All deep in thoughts, beyond the power of speech,
He sailed as in a dream, light-blue and vast,
'Till the communion of his soul could reach
That crude barbarian of the unknown past.

Mikola Tereshchenko

(1898-)

Tereshchenko was a native of the Poltava region. At the Kiev Polytechnical Institute he specialized in chemistry and then took a thorough course in foreign languages at the state university. Following the ordeals of the Revolution, he worked in an educational capacity in Poltava and, later, in the Commissariat of Education in Kiev. Before and after World War II he was employed as a literary editor in various state institutions.

In his youth, the Belgian symbolist Verhaeren (some of whose poetry Tereshchenko translated) seems to have been his idol. As a lyricist, he likewise underwent the *chiaroscuro*, "joy and sorrow" influence of O. Oles, and wrote romantically and emotionally on patriotic themes in which the *chernozem* (black soil) element plays a prominent part. For a brief period, he also drew his inspiration from the Cossack past. After a passing fancy for Panfuturism, Tereshchenko found his element in lyrical realism richly interspersed with romantic and symbolistic traits in his depiction of human toil. Finally he attached himself to strict "socialist realism," concentrating exclusively on the current political and practical needs of the Communist régime.

SEPTEMBER

From this transparent day a deep glance falls
Into the cosmic soul.

This day belongs
To autumn! As its mellow light entrails,
I brood above the azure lakes of songs.

And high above the azure lakes of songs
There lie both sky and blood . . .

An autumn moon.

The yellowed wood is full of leaves in throngs,
The extinguished fires of the forest's noon.

The extinguished forest and the yellowed wood
Are close to death.

It is an autumn hour.
But in these last days I have understood
Peace in its depths and joy's triumphant power.

An autumn day—it brings a glance profound
Into the cosmic soul.

A day all-knowing!
Now the blue lakes of songs are girt around
With the deep sense of God's own will on-going.

Volodimir Sosiura (1898-)

Sosiura's father belonged to the peasant intelligentsia class and, at the close of the nineteenth century, was employed in the geological section of the Donbas industrial area where the poet was born. Young Sosiura himself laboured there as a miner and for about a dozen years worked in a sodium nitrate factory. His education was desultory: he studied at a trade school and took courses in agronomy. During the brief existence of the independent Ukrainian People's Republic he served in its national Army, but soon joined the Red troops, and from then on remained solidly in the Communist camp. After the Revolution, he resumed his studies in practical sciences in several institutions at Kharkiv, but it was in the literary sphere that he finally found his place.

The hardships he suffered in his childhood and youth predisposed him to a proletarian ideology and made his entry into Communism easier. His services to the cause of the Soviet régime have been extensive: over thirty collections of original verse and, in addition, extra cultural, political, and propaganda duties with which he was burdened by the Party in order to further its aims. Those tasks he performed willingly enough, yet not without certain disillusionments which led to a nervous breakdown during the terroristic purges of the thirties, in which he saw his closest friends fall victims to inhuman repression. This lapse in health probably saved him from their fate.

For his services to the Soviet Union, Sosiura has been decorated several times, and in 1948 was awarded the Stalin prize for poetry. Yet in quite a few of his lyrics he dared to dwell idealistically on the Cossack past of Ukraine and reveal his affection for his native land to a greater degree than was prudent. This tendency caused the Soviet authorities to eye him suspiciously as a Ukrainian patriot first and foremost (even though a Communist) and only secondly as a Soviet citizen. During World War II when the Stalin régime, in order to rouse the Ukrainian population against the German invaders, gave licence to the Ukrainian writers to strike up a patriotic tune, in fact demanded that they stir up in the people a passion for their land, Sosiura took the Soviet leaders at their word and wrote a lyric entitled "Love Ukraine." In it he concentrated such intense, undiluted *amor patriae* that Moscow could not but become apprehensive about the results of the poem's influence on the minds of his countrymen. This short lyric caused a storm to break out over Sosiura's head, and the event became a political *cas célèbre*, important enough to be reported fully in many American newspapers. Sosiura, who throughout the Stalinist era had remained utterly subservient to Party dictatorship, recanted abjectly and, after a period of eclipse, was restored to its good graces.

Since the time when he began to write and publish in 1917, Sosiura has been the most popular poet in Ukraine. What made all and sundry so enamoured of him was the passionate lyricism of his verses. Whether he dealt with love, nature, life, toil, war, or revolution, he imparted to his poetry such disarming sincerity as could not but evoke a sympathetic response from the simplest to the most sophisticated Ukrainian.

ian soul. It is true that owing to his lack of formal education and self-discipline, as well as to the pressure exerted on him by the régime, Sosiura's talent did not rise to the heights of many of his contemporary fellow-poets; but an impressive romantic vein that illuminated and imparted meaning to the commonplace ideas he treated gained him a greater recognition among his countrymen. In his verses are to be detected transitory influences of various literary trends, but it is as a neo-romantic that he is finally to be classed.

LOVE UKRAINE

Love your Ukraine, love as you would the sun,
The wind, the grasses and the streams together . . .
Love her in happy hours, when joys are won,
And love her in her time of stormy weather.

Love her in happy dreams and when awake,
Ukraine in spring's white cherry-blossom veil.
Her beauty is eternal for your sake;
Her speech is tender with the nightingale.

As in a garden of fraternal races,
She shines above the ages. Love Ukraine
With all your heart, and with exultant faces
Let all your deeds her majesty maintain.

For us she rides alone on history's billows,
In the sweet charm of space she rules apart,
For she is in the stars, is in the willows,
And in each pulse-beat of her people's heart,

In flowers and tiny birds, and lights that shine,
In every epic and in every song,
In a child's smile, in maidens' eyes divine,
And in the purple flags above the throng . . .

Youth! For her sake give your approving laughter,
Your tears, and all you are until you die . . .
For other races you'll not love hereafter
Unless you love Ukraine and hold her high.

Young woman! As you would her sky of blue,
Love her each moment that your days remain.
Your sweetheart will not keep his love for you,
Unless he knows you also love Ukraine.

Love her in love, in labour, and in fight,
 As if she were a song at heaven's portal . . .
 Love her with all your heart and all your might,
 And with her glory we shall be immortal.

* * * *

And now the star with horns of gold,
 Where wormwood flowers still cling,
 Rests on the fiery thresholds bold
 Its slowly greying wing.

No lilies grace the sidewalks' girth,
 No swans are crying now—
 A loud abyss above the earth
 Flames with its pensive brow.

From fragrant hands upon the field
 The autumn sows its wealth . . .
 While where the iron horse has wheeled
 The cool grass breathes out health . . .

TO MARY

If all earth's loves, in flaming disarray,
 That was, and is, and will be, could combine,
 It would be night . . . set by my soul's bright day . . .
 For men have never known such love as mine.

If all the stars from heaven together came
 And all suns in one universal squeeze,
 My passion more resplendently would flame
 Than all the suns for countless centuries . . .

If all the flowers that all winds have bent
 On all the planets could collected be,
 My love would still emit a richer scent
 Than all those flowers throughout eternity . . .

If all the ages all their beauties brought
 And marched them past me in an endless file
 Not one of them would Mary's peer be thought,
 Nor would one maid of them my song beguile.

Let all their eyes merge in a single glance
And let that glance fall radiant on my heart,
It would not, dear, like yours, my life entrance,
It never could replace your eye's sweet art.

From what elysium have you flown divine,
My friend, my peerless comrade and my wife? . . .
Shine on my spirit then, forever shine,
The one and only star of all my life.

* * * *

Behind the hedge, the sunflower bends its head;
Beyond the stream, the maidens' songs are spread.
I hear that distant song with anxious groan . . .
Alas, my youth is lost in the unknown!

The song constricts my heart and stirs my blood;
In it my love's old pulses seek to thud.
Why do you wander there, my youth unwise,
In an embroidered shirt, with hazel eyes?

Sit down beside me here, lost years I love
Like the green meadows and the sky above!
My youth hears not . . . While I am all aflame . . .
Only its laugh from past the river came . . .

My youthful voice sinks deeper in despair.
Only the wind now sports with my grey hair . . .
Grey hair . . . my voice . . . songs . . . and the evening's sped.
Behind the hedge, the sunflower bends its head.

GOSSAMER

Gossamer, gossamer, all a-drowse . . .
The heart feels the trammels of autumn's dread . . .
Someone has tangled the anxious boughs
Into the cobwebs' golden thread.

The leaves now hark to the cold wind sighing
And furl their banners serene and bright;
While at the submissive beauty of dying,
The sun looks down from its mournful height . . .

Wither then gladly, red lips that rove . . .
 There is joy in life as in autumn leaves!
 Into the golden web of your love
 You have tangled my heart that no longer greives.

LEAVES

The loud winds hold the boughs in thrall—
 Now here, now there their strife;
 The yellow leaves from the branches fall
 And bid farewell to life . . .

The wind strikes hard with hands of dearth;
 Throughout the walks it grieves;
 In her maternal breast the earth
 Receives those tiny leaves.

Destined not only to decay,
 They yet shall have their use—
 For roots will draw up from the clay
 In spring their lusty juice.

Their path of sorrow does not lead
 At last to utter loss,
 For brave new foliage yet will feed
 Upon their potent dross.

And that will be their proud return
 Under the sky's blue vault.
 Thus life through death new life will earn
 And win in death's default.

Yuriy Lipa
 (1900-1944)

Lipa began to write verses while still a gymnasium student in his native city of Odessa. Between 1917 and 1921, he took part in the Ukrainian War of Liberation, and during that period found time to study law at the University of Kamianetz-Podilsky. In 1920 he emigrated to Poland, where he completed a medical course in Poznan and practised his profession in Danzig and Warsaw. In the Polish capital he simultaneously studied political science and continued his literary work.

Lipa is better known as a prose writer. His collection of short stories entitled *Notatnik* (Notebook) glorified the exploits of the Ukrainian troops fighting for their country's freedom. The novel, *The Cossacks in Muscovy*, was a notable contribution to Ukrainian literature between the Wars. His nationalistic ideology with regard to the future of the Ukrainian state was eruditely expressed in his historico-theoretical work, *Ukraine's Destiny*, and his views on literary matters in *The Struggle for Ukrainian Literature*. He was also a dramatist of note.

In 1943 he settled in Yavoriv, Western Ukraine, to continue his practice, but a year later, as chief of the medical corps of the Ukrainian Army, he lost his life in a battle with Red troops in the Carpathian region.

Lipa began as a symbolist, passed through a phase of "voluntaristic romanticism," and ended as a neo-classicist. In his determined stand in defence of Ukraine, he chose as his emblem Ruthlessness towards all her enemies, and cultivated a kind of heraldic pose with a dynamic will to dare to conquer. In that intense attitude, he often plunged deeply into mystic fatalism of a Romanic-Gothic mentality in which his bent for archaic phraseology was given full rein, as in *The Cossacks in Muscovy*. Lipa was a restless soul in search of the ultra-nationalistic ideal which his turbulent age could not offer him easily. And that was the tragedy of his life. His chief collections of verse are: *Brightness* (1925), *Severity* (1931), and *I Believe* (1938).

* * * *

Rich as a convent's golden bell,
The lusty summer sings with glee;
A planet in the sky's blue shell
Is secretly in love with me;
In flowering wisdom of the roads,
My soul with dreamy myths is wrapped
About the days that scorn my goads,
The years my laughter has not trapped.

THE BASILISK

The basilisk, similar to the winged dragon, with its single glance kills venomous reptiles. It has on its head a diadem and shines with white light when angry.

—from the *Bestiaries of the Middle Ages*

My emblem I have made the basilisk:
Above the flags it rears its cruel maw;
And with the bane of princes in its craw,
It dares the darkness and the battle's risk.

The slavish vipers, spread in foul committee,
Run from its kingship, which austere frames
Its anger in the magic strength of flames
And slays them unrelenting, without pity.

As emblem I have chosen Ruthlessness;
It floats above me like a living dragon;
And from its anger, like a fiery flagon,
Flows blazing death to evils that transgress.

Above all howls of rage and fear's faint plea,
In white light blooms my proud tranquillity.

Oleksa Stefanovich

(1900-)

A native of the vicinity of Ostrih in Volynia (the cradle of the revival of Ukrainian learning in the sixteenth century), Stefanovich reflected in his verses (particularly the sonnets) the natural beauty of that part of Ukraine. Going back beyond the Cossack period, he was likewise at his poetic ease in dealing with the early ages of Ukrainian history. The descriptive episodes of the times of the Princes and of the later devastation of his country by the Mongolian hordes are most vividly presented by this poet who made an entire millennium of Ukrainian history his artistic domain. As she appears in his poetic work, Ukraine throughout the early centuries found herself at the crossroads between nomadic and settled tribes and, as a result, was exposed to endless political and economic chaos. In that predicament she continued down the centuries. Her only salvation now is to be found in the shedding of her humility and self-effacement and in the acquisition of a determined warlike spirit, capable of crushing the present and future inroads of her enemies. Although not a mystic, Stefanovich likes to introduce religious motifs and archaic phraseology into his verses, and, whether he deals with the present or the past state of his country, he does so in an ancient heroic manner that often assumes an apocalyptic tone. He now lives in Buffalo, N.Y.

BLACK DIV

Black Div, the god of Terror, now is heard . . .
An ancient deity, who forests trod,
He grows now to be universal god
And his gigantic maw's prophetic word
Opens up human darkness, black and blurred.

Above the world, sound cries of hate and scorn;
 Above the lost, the wings of Div float dun . . .
 And only he who was the Virgin's Son
 Can save our spirits from the fatal storm—
 For he is Christ, alone the Virgin-born.

When will He rise to meet us, glad and plain?
 When shall we rise up to the deed expected?
 And when shall we exalt the resurrected
 And not the crucified, pale Christ in pain?
 When shall we take Him from His cross again?

1941-1944

The grain surrounds her, full of grace—
 A curse to her has been that grain.
 A Doomsday region is the place,
 A Black Apocalypse's plain.

The fatal Book is now unsealed
 In the unfolding of the rye;
 The Book of life was in this field
 And now behold it blackly die.

The clouds rise up in endless pothe—
 A black and evil misty host.
 “Lift up your hearts!”—Your right hands rather,
 Blest to the glory of the Father,
 And of the Son, and Holy Ghost.

Vassil Chumak (1901-1919)

Born in the Chernihiv region into a peasant's family, Chumak began to write verses at the age of ten, but his greatest creative effort occurred in 1919, the year when he, as an underground revolutionary, was captured and executed by the Russian White troops under General Denikin. Several brief collections of his poetry appeared posthumously. His talent, nipped as it was in the bud, failed to develop to the degree of maturity which his youthful verses, bubbling with vitality and spontaneity, presaged. To a slight extent impressionistic, these verses are rich in original imagery, melodious phraseology, sincerity of sentiment, and clarity of thought.

* * * *

I'll tear those paltry wreaths apart from ages of disaster;
 I'll crush them underfoot and tramp their leaves to dust and plaster;
 Then in their stead I'll pour out waves of golden solar song,
 an utterance that should to birds, those light-winged sprites, belong;
 I'll temper them with strength of steel, with silver I will chase them,
 I'll give them all the wings of birds, in lightnings I'll encase them,
 and set them free. Then let those thoughts—my meteoric lays—
 fly not to noisy palaces, nor into boundless space,
 but into huts of men who live in penury apart.
 My songs are simple and they please the simple, toiling heart.
 There let them shine forth like the stars, deep in the azure sky—
 the worker and the peasant then no more will lonely lie.

* * * *

To weave a song—to embroider dove-like wings
 So that the far, blue haze upon them clings,
 So that the grasses' murmur there resounds,
 I gathered in the steppes mysterious sounds.

Plashes—and rustlings—and elaborate scales—
 I've decked them out like dolls in farthingales
 Of pretty cornflowers. And the lark's brave lays
 I have entwined with dew-drops' pearly rays.

And then my song soars up—on dove-like wings:
 Joyous the far, blue haze upon them clings,
 From sparkling blades the grass its murmurs shed . . .
 Why did the sun's rays rend my fragile thread?

* * * *

She brought with her the swaying of the field,
 And sang with laughter like the winnowed wheat.
 —Is mouldy greenness in your chamber sealed?
 And do your sleepy eyes show life's defeat?

She opened doors and threw the casements wide,
 She summoned to her house her youthful guests.
 —Blue sky and sun for long you have not spied!
 Look: for the cherry-tree shows white her breasts!

We wandered on the steppe-land, dewy-grassed,
 Where feather-grasses to the sky-line rolled.
 Above the rippling prairie, green and vast,
 The falcon watched its quarry, swift and bold.

And hey . . . One has an urge to stretch one's wings.
 The feather-grass breathes tales of boundless space.
 Aloft a fleet of white-sailed cloudlets swings;
 The blue about it flows with velvet grace.

Mikola Chirsky

(1902-1942)

Chirsky was one of the émigré poets who settled in Czechoslovakia and there joined an influential group known as the "Prague Literary School." Like others of that *belle-lettrist* élite (Darahan, Stefanovich, Olzhich, Mosendz, etc.), he made his clear, passionate lyricism a vehicle for his political and nationalist ideals. Interspersed in his verses are to be found keen, merciless epigrams directed against those Ukrainian writers who remained in Ukraine to serve the Soviet cause. Chirsky began under the influence of E. Malaniuk's heroic idealism and remained his disciple to the end, although some of his lyrics reveal a modicum of imagism. He also gained certain recognition as a witty dramatist.

* * * *

Another transient grief we'll see depart;
 Another dream will vanish altogether;
 But hardened like enamel is the heart,
 And this our love was lighter than a feather.

Let the sweet constellation of your eyes
 From other hearts of steel now strike their fire;
 I in this gloaming find such moods arise
 From the clear autumn sky, now brooding nigher,

 That treachery and sadness I despise,
 And so my glance, in love with pure desire,
 From over my broad shoulder
 Swordlike I'll plunge to smoulder
 Where the green twilight shadows still suspire.

Mikhaylo Orest
(1901-1963)

In that Orest, among contemporary Ukrainian poets, reached the most ecstatic and visionary heights, he is often compared to the German poets Rilke and George. In further comparison, his poems and lyrics generally resemble irradiated stained-glass windows causing one to respond sympathetically to their symbolic, metaphysical inspiration. If to those characteristics is added the quality of filigreed refinement, it is possible to gain the impression that Orest possesses a poetic talent equal to the best of the present West European poets.

In the mid-thirties, Orest was sent by the Soviet régime to a slave-labour camp in the sub-Arctic region, but managed to return home just before the outbreak of the Nazi-Soviet War. During the German occupation, he went first to Lviv and then to Germany, where he died.

A younger brother of Mikola Zerov, he did much to preserve and publish the latter's poetry. Being himself well versed in European poetic literature, he has produced outstanding translations from it, especially in his two anthologies of French and German poetry.

Many of his poems he composed when in concentration camps and in Soviet Ukraine, but he never tried to publish them there. In fact, he retained them in memory for years and put them on paper only when the Soviet troops retreated from Ukraine. Among his collections the chief are: *The Echoes of the Years* (1943), *The Soul and Destiny* (1946), and "The Dominion of the Word" (about to be published).

DURATION

I saw myself. There where the storms prevailed
 Amid the battle . . . By dark bullets swept
 A soldier lay, and death would soon accept
 His final anguish as his life-blood failed.

His paling fingers in his dying throes
 Were furrowing the snow: he longed to save
 His blood from waste, rather this gift he gave
 For his own country's fields to decompose . . .

The past from which you came will not annul—
 Corruptible and incorruptible—
 The life you lived, its future still compiled.

The tumults of the battle long since die . . .
 But from me, O my darling, in the rye
 The poppies warm are whispering to your child.

A FRAGMENT

I once discovered in an ancient book
a fragment of an unknown manuscript
and read it slowly:

—“ . . . for a long time now
ill-boding omens have accumulated:
trees did not bloom, the flowers disappeared
from off the earth, and clad in purple vestments
the evenings blazed with threats of coming Doom;
vice, malice, luxury insatiable
cut short men’s lives with merciless despatch.
False prophets then arose among the people;
fierce, power-greedy and insidious,
they drove the world to abysses of perdition,
for they had deified nonentity.
Altars of wars blazed forth. Skies were inflamed
with incense of dread battles. Famine next,
and pestilence and plague laid waste the land.
The people, robbed of reason, smashed the temples,
defiled the graveyards and were swift to slay
all who opposed them in their evil deeds.
Then the last seers withdrew into the desert,
and, having lodged in caverns, day by day
in holy supplication they awaited
the End of Things. But still the savage horde
found paths across the sands to nose them out
and roused up by the horrid instigations
of devilish leaders, they made haste to murder
the saints of wisdom. Suddenly the azure
was darkened. A great tempest broke, and thunder . . .”
With that word was the manuscript cut short.
What was it then? A dread prophetic warning?
An ancient legend? Or a premonition
Of some old seer whose very name is lost?
And how did that portentous tale conclude?

WORDS

There are some days when words approach you freely,
light-hearted, candid and benevolent;
their warmth and trembling you can gladly feel,
and mark their captivated willingness
not to conceal their riches but to offer
all service that your project may demand.

But there are other days, when at your summons
they will emerge—reluctant, unsubmitting,
dim-countenanced, secretive, miserly;
like the servant in the Gospel parable,
they sullenly return the unused talent,
and, having paid their lord unwilling tribute
in their dull discontent, withdraw again
into their own mysterious dwelling-place.

And there are times, when your creative effort
yearns to lay hold on forms, the words come not,
but only lightning fantasies of words
pass swiftly through your brooding consciousness:

Visions of words that have not yet been born,
words that may never see the light of day—
and naught avails to halt them or recall;
from the unknown they come, and thither pass.
But what a holy warmth they leave behind
after such visits of benevolence!
How brightly shines the soul when they depart!

Vassil Barka

(1908-)

Barka is a complex poet to decipher. Evaluations of his work have been varied, ranging from high praise for his facility in merging Shevchenko's idealism with Tichina's symbolism to somewhat deprecatory comments on his mannered lyricism in which sentimentality plays too great a part as he seeks to mingle it with his modernistic concepts. But that Barka is an intriguing poet, there is no doubt. The philosophical import of his poetry may be reduced to the basic idea that man and nature

are essentially good but, vitiated by pride and indifference to his fellow-beings, man has clashed with nature, and this collision causes his suffering. Yet it is by that very suffering that the human soul is cleansed of evil, fortified in goodness, and, assisted by nature, is capable of renovating mankind in charity, truth, and justice. In the achievement of that aim, the apostolic rôle of the poet is paramount, for it is he who, in the struggle between good and evil, reveals to man the eternal values of humanism, humanity, and humaneness that alone can lead to godliness. However, in order to attain that end, it is necessary to be severe, even inhuman, in coping with evil. The restoration will surely come, but only as a result of a remedy whose efficacy may bring on a frightful crisis.

Barka's verse, as Shevchenko's, abounds in archaisms from Old Church Slavonic and in folklorist elements, whereby the beauty of his poetic whole is greatly enhanced; but, as often as not, intolerable obscurities mar his otherwise extraordinary creative endeavour. At times it is too intellectualistic to be properly understood.

Barka now lives in New York, where, in addition to poetry, he produces critical articles on literary themes. He has also written a novel, *Paradise*, in which he deals radically with the Soviet reality. Among his verse collections one may note *The Apostles* (1946), *The White World* (1947), and "The Ocean" (publication pending).

BLASPHEMY

In snowy India, that sacred land,
 The day is bright, but people die in silence,
 Not stabbed in the saints' names, not thunder-smitten
 Nor plague-struck, but they trudge along the roads
 And then stoop down (and even the stones can hear them!)
 And the poor wretches hush till Judgement Day.

Silence prevails; only the radio
 Keeps prophesying about golden ages
 Along the Ganges and the Indus rivers.
 God covers up the voiceless ones with snow;
 The unclean vultures near the temple door
 Tear something into shreds. The tiny children
 Lift up a tearful cry: "Mother, dear mother!
 O help us, we are dying! Give us food!"

Amid that hell, a gaunt old man is grieving,
 A monk or something; hot and lacerated,
 His old soul shines forth through his fevered eyes.
 That all his prayers and curses are in vain
 He knows full well, and mercy on the moon,
 Yonder, as indicated to his brethren.

Within the temple, stony silence reigns—
 The only light is filtered through the ferns
 Engraved upon the windows by the snow . . .
 Down through the dark it falls on hazy ciphers
 And on the face of him who knows all pain.
 The old man on his knees recites the prayers
 That once his mother taught him to repeat;
 With burning tears he wets the cold stone floor.
 Then he begins to supplicate the heavens
 At least to look with pity on the children—
 Why should they die of hunger in this fashion?

He prays: “O King! Some fierce prophetic word
 Proclaim, and grant the children your protection;
 Say that you know the torturer and bid him
 Be punished on the final Day of Judgement . . .
 Alas! Whence has this cursed destiny,
 This dire distress, descended on us all?

“Some suffer in black misery, while others
 Speak not a word! All are indifferent,
 And keen-eyed only for their creature-comforts.
 O human souls, O wretched human souls,
 When I behold you, all are miserable,
 All poor, all caught in blind contingency.
 No ray of consolation has appeared—
 Except in a far fable, in a tale
 About the resurrection of the dead . . .

“Forever we must vanish, we must die
 In foul disease and in consuming fire,
 So that the rivers to the sea may bear
 All vestige of our ashes and decay.
 Thus wives, and little children in the womb,
 And husbands and grandfathers—all will die.
 Meanwhile the earth, resplendent in her beauty,
 Will rush on headlong without vanity,
 Impervious to goodness and to evil.
 I grieve. For there is darkness all around . . .
 My soul aches. O ill-fortuned India!
 We should be destined to rejoice and rock
 Our infants by the high and lace-like lilies.
 There, in the garden, out behind the house,

Our hands should find a task for many years . . .
 What, then, is happening? Here and everywhere
 The famished children past all number die;
 They shed their tears upon the blackened bricks,
 Upon the snow, the earth. To think that we
 Are driven into Hell like unclean dogs,
 Rabid from our own howlings! Into the earth
 Made hard by lying idly through the years,
 Filthy from dung of dogs and all things foul!
 Shall I survive indeed, Almighty One,
 To see the day when I am purified
 From such defilement? Luminously good,
 O sunny Consolation, I must weep
 And turn to wrath; I suffer horribly
 In this appalling day, and all my soul
 Is bleeding with the enmity of death.
 Cramps, deadly plagues and the grim Pestilence—
 Old Asia's rod—these might at least arrest
 The tide of human ire! Or may the waters,
 Ascending from the bottom of the sea,
 Flood to its brim this vale of suffering
 And then subside. Thus, having slipped from Hell,
 Eternal darkness would rule everywhere.”

II

Before the shining image of the Christ
 The old man stands—most sorrowful of shadows
 Of all the sons of earth. The vale of torment
 Where labour, hardship and temptation dwell
 He has passed through, and on his daring lips,
 Burning with quenchless torment, struggle forth
 These words of blasphemy: “Step from your throne
 Among the spheres, descend to us, our King!
 Our spirit strives, strives to extremity,
 And then at last is trampled in the mire.
 Though you can resurrect corrupted flesh,
 The annihilated soul is past your power.
 Your state, Almighty, ceases to exist.
 Your life would seem to be in human hearts,
 But look at them. A desolated ruin! . . .

"Soon you yourself will turn into a corpse! . . .
 The soul is ashes, nothingness, a phantom.
 In sacrilege and blasphemy, I cry:
 —I here renounce you! Thus I crush the viper!"

Broad lightning, like a veritable stream,
 Descended from the heights in rapid motion
 And blazed out bloodily within the temple.
 Outlined against that fiery purple breach,
 The old man's figure stands out cruciform;
 Then, in an instant, when the thunder crashed,
 Shattered the sky and set the seas a-boiling,
 His form, as left there by the hand of death,
 Lies like a sheaf upon the ancient stone.

Then darkness fell, a time of utter darkness.
 At once the entire state of earthly life
 Was trembling with the tears of sinless roses
 And the warm song: Hosannah in the highest!—
 Was born from joy of spirit and of body.
 Down from the unseen throne that stands among us,
 He who knows human deeds and human thoughts
 Descends and stoops above the ancient man,
 Revives him, lifts him gently from his knees,
 And weeping softly He embraces him
 And without speaking bids him hear these words:
 "Amid the dread crimes of the centuries,
 Like deathly torment, the terrestrial mind
 Hears man blaspheme against the Holy Ghost.
 I will forgive this unforgivable
 And utter sin, because in deathly torment
 You suffer for the little ones who perish,
 In all their innocence, of dearth and cold . . .
 I will forgive, while you, from this day forward,
 Instead of voicing curses, will proclaim
 My Judgement Day, my Day of Punishment
 And of the nuptial vintage of the Lamb;
 While, like the burning bush that is not spent,
 The message of your songs will flame immortal . . ."
 The old man rose; it seemed that he was blind,
 As he went groping through that twilight space;
 And he was weak, only a drop more strong

Than was the wind, opposing which he sought
The iron-mounted portals. From his feet
The naked prints were laid upon the snow;
And in the wintry tempest and the cold
The dead leaves fluttered down to cover them.

Yuriy Yanovsky

(1902-1954)

Yanovsky was born in Elizavetgrad (now Kirovograd). After two unsuccessful years in electrical engineering at the Kiev Polytechnical Institute, he abandoned the course to devote himself entirely to literature. Besides doing creative work, he proved a capable editor of various Soviet periodicals, and during World War II served as a correspondent at the front.

His first poem "The Sea," published in 1922, established him as the creator in Ukrainian literature of "marine" poetry. In the thirties, Yanovsky turned almost exclusively to prose and in that domain became one of the greatest stylists of his time. In his novels and stories he developed strong, wilful, adventurous characters, and revealed himself as a bold innovator, risking the unity of his plots by subplots, complex situations, and unconventional mannerisms. Despite the fact that in 1949 he received the Stalin prize for literature, the Soviet authorities kept an ever watchful eye on him, for in several of his works of fiction (some actually prohibited), in which he dealt with the partisan movement in Ukraine, he infused into his powerful characters the old Cossack spirit and made them appear as if they were fighting solely for the freedom of their own land. His chief novel is *The Four Sabres*, which he interspersed with some of his best poetry.

Although Yanovsky relinquished verse for prose, he never ceased to be a poet, for all his prose narratives are distinguished by their rhythmic flow, and the artistic resources he uses in his descriptive passages are highly poetic and lack only versification.

DEDICATION

Aloft the falcons flew, and then were gone;
Far in the sea the guests sailed on and on,—
Sail passed by sail in ever-swift array.

Expanding their white breasts, the frigates passed.
The moon rose from the sea: above the mast
It stood on guard to mark the spacious way.

Glad day of nomad love, replete with charms!
Upon the deck were wine and clash of arms!
The splash of billows seemed a horse's neigh.

Expanding their white breasts, the frigates passed.
The moon rose from the sea: above the mast
It stood on guard to mark the spacious way.

On the vivacious deck rule potent loves;
The vessel like a slow, white spectre moves;
A starlike lamp is on its mast a-sway.

Expanding their white breasts, the frigates passed.
The moon rose from the sea: above the mast
It stood on guard to mark the spacious way.

An epigraph from the novel FOUR SABRES

SONG 5

O happy journey as you march afar!
Trample it down, yea, plough the heavy planet.
Our fleeting lives numbers of numbers are—
A deep abyss, and silhouettes that span it.

Mysterious Time—like night or like a bat—
Its sable pinions in the darkness hides;
And famous wounds are healed for all of that,
Dread wounds that sated earth with homicides.

Above the carrion troops the grasses grow—
This destiny both grass and soldier keep!
Embers of ancient fires no longer glow,
Yet bivouacked here still others soon will sleep.

The seeds of ruthless wars are sown anon.
Their veterans are blown about the world.
The nations pass. Time flies unchanging on.
Ghost standards from the grave are not unfurled.

Revolve, O Earth, within your iron round.
Summer its winter, good its ill has got!
Hills marching to meet hills are never found,
But human fates merge darkly in a knot.

Oksana Liaturinska

(1902-)

Oksana Liaturinska was born in the province of Volynia. In literature she is in the main a miniaturist, interested chiefly in ancient Ukrainian ages, particularly in mythological subjects of pre-Christian times. Her poetry appears to be influenced by *The Tale of Ihor's Campaign*, whose heroic elements she often incorporates in her own poetic work. The plasticity of her "masculine" expression to a certain extent derives from the fact that she is a noted sculptor and painter. Although she now lives in the United States, the bulk of her work belongs to the period of the Prague School of Ukrainian literature.

* * * *

May peace upon this spot preside!
 Here will I rest, as hours pass.
 Above my head, that comrade tried,
 My horse, and the tall feathergrass
 Will keep the guard of honour true.
 High in the night the stars will glitter.
 Ever the wormwood will be bitter,
 Ever the cornflowers will be blue.

* * * *

A spear, a fang, a claw, a hoof.
 A brave man here held foes aloof.
 Here mammoths bellowed. Here the bear
 Strode shaggy to his cavern-lair.
 Here the hawk wheeled in shining skies,
 While on the lake a black swan plies.

* * * *

A level plain, a prairie vast,
 Its endless verdure outward cast.
 Old mounds along its sky-line press.
 How shall one mete its boundlessness
 Of height and strength, yearning and force?
 How can one spare to spur one's horse
 Into a heavy-footed race?
 The far horizon at that pace
 Draws near and rosy in unrest.
 The hero swells his mighty breast.

Geo Shkurupiy
(1903-1934)

Born in the town of Bendery, into the family of a railway machinist, Shkurupiy himself, for a time in his youth, was employed as a railroad worker. His gymnasium studies were completed in Kiev. After auditing a course at the Institute of External Affairs in Ukraine's capital, he launched himself into journalism and literature and became famous almost overnight as an impassioned panfuturist and, after Semenko, the most active proponent, polemist, and theoretician of that extreme literary trend.

As such, Shkurupiy of course sought to sever all connections with the past and prevailing literary schools, and flaunted his apparent success in a swaggering manner, with a bombastically sarcastic tone and a braggadocio strut. At times, however, amid his nondescript phraseology, which he purposely attempted to render coarsely prosaic, he produced first-rate verse, even if metrically dishevelled. Together with Yanovsky and Vlizko, he developed in Ukrainian literature a serious school of poetry of the sea.

Throughout his literary activity, he remained a faithful supporter of the Soviet rule in Ukraine. His loyalty, however, wavered somewhat when he was sent to villages to agitate for the collectivization of peasants' farms. The reaction of the rural population aroused his sympathies, and the ensuing genocide of the Ukrainian people through Stalin's enforced famine, further alienated him from the régime. However carefully, he none the less voiced his protest in the satirical poem entitled "The Winter." It was it, together with his evident Western tendencies, that caused him to be included among those Ukrainian writers who ended their lives in the northern concentration camps.

Shkurupiy carried more weight as a prose writer of stylistically complex compositions (as a poet he was often derided). In both his novels and his short stories, in which he dealt with the events of the day, as well as in his poems and lyrics, he strove to orientate Ukrainian contemporary literature (still within the proletarian, Communist framework) towards European and American modernistic standards. If it were possible to go so far, one might classify him as a romantic with a futurist mentality.

FAMINE

Feed me with bounteous fingers, warm me well! . . .

Raise from my eyes

the straw-bands of the lashes without colour! . . .

For you will scare me with a crust of bread

and I you—with the paleness of my eyelids.

I am the surly, northern wolf,

master of limitless dry plains.

With paw of parching heat, all bread I've beaten down
and through the night I howled above the dead.

I draped my body in a tattered quilt
like a Roman patrician in his toga,
and felt my feet grow beastly cold.

O Sun!
I want to rub my back
against your hot face,
and the cold of my breath
will penetrate the heart and even deeper.
I'll drape my body in a tattered quilt
like a Roman patrician in his toga.
I am the master of the universe:
—Famine.

* * * *

With fog-horn speaks the friendly port;
a beauty there entices me;
boards sparkle back the heat's retort;
the harbour store-house smells of tea;
my heart is filled with passion's sport,
my eyes with her I long to see.

Above my head the Southern Cross;
below, blue velvet deep;
the wind is from the south-south-west;
the skipper is asleep.

Oh, slender are the masts of ships,
but slenderer than all, Maria . . .

Above my head the Southern Cross;
below, blue velvet deep;
the wind is in the south-south-west;
the skipper is asleep.

THE SONG OF THE THROAT-CUT CAPTAIN

The courage of adventures
Has driven us to sea,
The courage of adventures
Burns fierce in you and me . . .

On through the night's dark mists
Our captain's course persists,
On through the night's dark mists.
No peace at all is found in tavern's scheming,
For there the blood on blades is rankly steaming.
When wind and ocean call us forth,
We kiss the navaja's bright blade,
We leave the drunken cellar's cup
And then a squall will snatch us up,
The wind is full of violence,
The fog-horn's voice is hoarse.
We do not spare our necks at all
Nor spare our rigging in the squall . . .
To battle then,
To battle then,
Our captain holds his course.

Hey-ey-ey! . . .

The wind sings in the rigging,
It whistles through the stays,
And black, the pirate's banner
Stirs and enflames our gaze.
On through the night's dark mists
Our captain's course persists,
On through the night's dark mists.
Flowing with blood, our ship's a wreck;
A battering-ram has breached the deck;
His eyes would drive old Death to dote—
Our captain with his slashed-out throat.
We grieve
To see our shattered masts today . . .
Hey-ey-ey! . . .

Mikola Bazhan

(1904-)

Bazhan was born in Kamianetz-Podilsky into the family of a military topographer with the rank of general. His higher education was acquired in the Uman and Kiev technical schools, where he studied the co-operative movement, and later at the Kiev

Institute of External Affairs. Journalistic and literary careers followed. During World War II his activity increased at a feverish pace and, besides doing hack editorial jobs, he found time to publish several collections of verse. On two occasions he was awarded the Stalin prize for literature. Of all the contemporary Ukrainian Soviet writers, Bazhan is perhaps the most decorated and recognized by the régime. Between 1946 and 1949 he served as vice-president of the Ukrainian SSR, and at other times in various other governmental capacities. After several years as chairman of the Ukrainian Writers' Association, he became editor-in-chief of the Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia.

Bazhan began as a staunch defender of the rights of the Ukrainian writers to develop their own proletarian literature independently of Russia's. His early poetry firmly tended in that direction. For a brief period he bore the imprint of M. Semenko's futurism, but abandoned that school in favour of expressionism, with which he became enamoured when he fell under the influence of the *Berezil* theatrical group (likewise with an independent programme) activated by its energetic director and theoretician Les Kurbas. This led him to an association with O. Dovzhenko, a film producer of European fame, for whom he wrote several scenarios.

As a modernist, Bazhan evolved a powerfully original style which has been classified as baroque-romantic: baroque in that the poet synthesized the vast amount of the concepts he dealt with into an ornate expressionistic whole; and romantic in his vitaistic view of life in general, which outlook, before his final submission to the Soviet ferule, he particularized idealistically into an ardent desire for the cultural and political revival of his people, free from the Dostoevskian messianistic pretensions upon it of the Russian Slavophils.

Bazhan is undoubtedly the greatest innovator in Ukrainian literature of the present century, and one of its most intellectual representatives. His lexicographical fund surpasses that of any other Ukrainian poet, and this he manipulates as a supreme constructivist, stylist, and analyst of the individual and universal aspects of being. In his creativity he gives greater importance to power than to beauty. Seemingly it is a vast ocean upon which he unleashes the elemental forces of his brain to seek amid its savage turbulence the meaning of existence. One need not delve too deeply into Bazhan's colossal work to find his vital *raison d'être* (or, more aptly, *élan vital*). It is to be discovered in his powerful poem, "The Blind" (1930), in which the thematic nucleus is the longing of a human creature, blinded by the buffeting of evil fortune, to conquer his fate, pierce through its obduracy, and emerge not as a martyr but as a man. Its publication was not possible in the USSR.

After his definite conformity with Soviet exigencies, Bazhan became a mere mouthpiece of the Party and a servile panegyrist of the Communist régime. His poetic diapason contracted; yet he found an issue for his artistic drive by turning into an Oriental philologist. As such he devotes much time to masterful translations into Ukrainian from the Near Eastern literatures. The greatest of these was Shota Rustaveli's *The Warrior in a Tiger's Skin*, a Georgian epic of the thirteenth century, one of the finest in world literature. Otherwise, Bazhan remains a Soviet bureaucrat, quite religiously orthodox in his Communist faith.

THE BLOOD OF CAPTIVE WOMEN

The tethered, shaggy horse stamps with his hoof.
Deep down in hollowed barrels unawares
Boils the sweet milk of the lascivious mares.
The offshoots void their scent—wild, salty-proof.

The horsemen sleep. Not even death could wake them.
Unmoving on the ground their bodies drowse.
The heavy patterns of the tree-top boughs
Like muscles on a lion's belly strake them.

Downward inclines the brushwood of the fire;
The smoke, cord-straight, supports the heavenly vault.
Tearing their dirtied garments where they halt,
The full breasts bend their buds of outraged ire. .

With lavish moisture, fertile sweat indeed,
Ukrainian captive women's bodies flow;
Their mouths are bruised; tomorrow starts to grow
In maidens' wombs the caustic Mongol seed.

And the years grow, the eternal after-grasses;
In quivered hearts, the tale has smouldered out;
But the old blood, for centuries, past doubt,
Their issue, in his veins, still darkly passes.

We love those words, as heavy as black smoke
Of threatening pyres that gave the Tartar light;
We cultivate the blood's dim appetite;
And the expanse of steppeland, vast and bright,
We welcome with the hearts of simple folk.

THE FERN

A pocked, old forehead is this white-faced moon;
Like dreams forgotten are these white-foamed clouds.
And I perceive: in unfamiliar shrouds
The pagan night on the black woods is strewn.

The smoke of midnight offerings scents the breeze.
The priests bear on the spread of flaxen shifts
To their mute gods their reverential gifts:
The heavy honey and the toothsome cheese.

A pagan night its weird delusion takes;
Embroidered mists come floating from the lakes
And fronds of fern with drowsy scent are strong.

And on the dewy meadow they convoke
The nuptial circle of young forest-folk,
Of Slavic fields the unforgotten song.

THE ROAD

The picket-shadows darkly trail;
Above the steppeland's grass and mires
Range, like a raging comet's tail,
Mild and mysterious evening fires.

Sharp shadows we beside us find;
The branches are more clearly styled;
Into dark spaciousness inclined,
The clusters of the stars run wild.

I walk; the highroad's broken blocks
Beneath my feet asunder twine.
So hard it is on cruel rocks
To lay the solid highway's line.

So hard it is on cruel stone
To set out roads with skill and art.
Have I perhaps too feeble grown
For highways where men meet and part?

O highroad where men part and meet,
O human road—be onward drawn,
Reflecting on life's cold and heat,
The fires of night, the friends of dawn.

And each, to tread you, will not fail,
O human road of jolts and jars!
Above my weary head there trail
The tracks of the beblobbed stars.

And I shall know where I must walk,
The regions where my feet shall tread.
Can man's enthusiastic talk
Still lack a destiny ahead?

Not every heart surrenders to the worm;
 Not every highway within limits stands;
 And beds of rue will sprout up, green and firm,
 Upon the yellow sands.

THE NIGHT CROSSING

TO Y. YANOVSKY

A hand is being raised insultingly;
 The notched pen bends its body like a sword;
 A line falls broken on a sketch rough-scored
 Like some blunt mast without tenuity.
 There strain the gliding mainsails of the strophes
 And creaks in the cold rigging of the text
 A wind ill-vext,
 A wind of far-fetched plots and tragic trophies.

The search for plots and vagrant inspiration
 Is a joy above all joys for mortal man.
 Let your poor ship sail onward if it can,
 Your frigate of pathetic dissertation,
 Which, through the storms and night and darkness feels,
 Though shaking from the rudder to the bow,
 The destiny before it,
 The summons that implore it
 To sate the virile rovings of a sailor's prow.

Even and straight as stakes
 Upon the sea are laid
 The seaman's dauntless wakes
 Like scars by sabres made.
 The restless shadow, dark of wings,
 That to the pirate's frigate clings
 Will sail upon the treacherous seas;
 Past its dark boards a sullen breeze
 In unleashed force will blow again,
 The tempest of intrepid men,
 An albatross between the masts it shrieks,
 Its mood is tauter than a cross-bow's cheeks,
 Direct as a stiletto's thrust it speaks
 And rough as rust deep-laid
 Upon a corsair's blade.

Cut through the chains, vacate your haven's walls,
 For not in ink-wells does your ship seek squalls.
 For you, who are a warrior and a man,
 In such a time of dire "All hands on deck"
 Your compass and your heart willreck
 And sail to meet the fate your eye can scan.

From the cycle MICKIEWICZ IN ODESSA

ON THE SEA SHORE

The earth, by billows broken, seeks its grave
 And slowly crumbles down into the deep
 Where in the mirrored and resounding wave
 The sea's sheen plays, and boundless shadows leap.

It fills the verse with a tumultuous rumble
 Of recollections, images and dreams;
 Unceasing in your brain your broodings tumble;
 No touch of peace your solitude redeems.

Here are but sea and you, a world to scan,
 The waves' hexameter, the silent shore,
 Where all is tumult and complains to man,
 Yearning for words its meaning to explore.

Tensely you wait—and in your soul's lagoon
 There breaks into the verse a sudden squall,
 Bringing the fragrance of the word's young noon,
 The salt of insult and rebellion's gall.

The wrathful verse defies all reservations;
 The heart cannot be hushed by undertones,
 By sweet-tart blends of jests and imprecations
 Or by a harem pasha's languid groans.

And only by the whispering of "Excuses"
 Will careful listeners some day learn aright
 It was the Furies, not the tuneful Muses
 Who shook your being on that lonely night,

Upon the shore of this dark, troubled sea,
 Mid the black precipices' loud acclaim,
 When you were such as you would always be—
 Servant and spokesman of a mighty aim.

Yuriy Kosach
(1909-)

A nephew of Lesia Ukrainka, Kosach was born in the province of Volynia and pursued his studies in Lviv, Warsaw, and Paris. His first volume of poetry, *The Purple*, was published in Lviv in 1934 and was awarded a literary prize. A romanticist with colorful language but without great poetic discipline, he abandoned poetry for the historical novel and the drama. While in Western Ukraine, he wavered politically between Right and Left and concentrated his literary activity in two influential periodicals—*Nazustrich* (Meeting the Future), a progressive biweekly, and *Novi Shliakhi* (New Highroads), a Leftist monthly. In 1949 he emigrated to the United States, where he now edits an anti-nationalist magazine, *Za Synim Morem* (Beyond the Blue Ocean). In this he stands apart from all the other Ukrainian writers in exile, who have carefully detached themselves from him because of his ultra-Leftist leanings.

As a poet, dramatist, and fiction writer, Kosach, in the main, is now considered a baroque artist with expressionistic tendencies and with stylistic gifts apt to recreate the ornate period idiom of the Ukrainian seventeenth century, a period in which he is wholly at home. This talent is especially evident in his novels and short stories, which are redolent with a grandiloquent, euphuistic, sententious style and, though somewhat pedantic, attract the reader by the novelty of their subject matter.

The selection translated here is from *The Purple*.

DICKENS

I

The day is cool. And Pickwick, as I note,
Will take his top hat and his snuff-hued coat
And with his face with glowing health bestowed
Will leave the inn and seek the ancient Road.
Now the postillion sounds his joyful horn,
The coach for south or north will start this morn.
Carrying sturdy squires, all hale and hearty,
Whom Pickwick has invited to his party:
To stories at the inn, to jesting fine,
No end to such an evening I divine:
It happened once in Dartmoor, gentlemen . . .
(O England, rich in tales of tongue and pen!)
Alas, that bad postillion, come tomorrow,
Will take me from you, Pickwick, to my sorrow;

Even in parting is a certain charm . . .
God, Mr. Pickwick, keep you from all harm!

2

Happy in early spring is he who holds
Abundant hopes. That mighty faith enfolds
Amid old things of everyday concern
Gleams of pure gold. May dreams in which you yearn,
For you, young Nickleby, strong wings importune
When you, like Sinbad, go to seek your fortune.
Some day, I know, you will all cares surmount
With shares in India and a bank account.
You, little Dorrit, seamstress poor and scant,
Will be a lady, but not arrogant—
(For you know well how ill the poor afford
To dress in rags the proud heart of a lord . . .)
And company directors, to you all
I wish gold names on 'scutcheons bright and tall,
While in a London fog securely sealed
I seek my old friend, Davy Copperfield.

3

In grimy garrets of suburban stone,
In alleys where the factories heave and groan,
Where black-winged smoke from carbon's dim domains
Flings its dark news at tiny windowpanes,
Where life is penury to try men's souls
But joy may blossom in the glowing coals,
A usurer's den, a dank pawnbroker's cage,
At the Exchange where ruthless passions rage,
At a proud merchant's house, that cold resort,
By prison bars, among the clerks at court,
Where amid creaking pens, sometimes in play
That prankster mocks the gloom, the sun's bright ray,
Or at a cottage hearth's paternal niche
That is a castle for both poor and rich,
There you will meet him—in his name you trace
The friend who can make glad your weary face;
Hearken to him—of pleasant words the garth—
Our mutual friend, the cricket on the hearth!

Bohdan Krawciw
 (1904-)

Krawciw was a native of Galicia, where he was active in political, cultural, athletic, and literary fields. As a staunch nationalist, he became the leader of the students', youth, and scout organizations, and edited several literary journals. His early verses bear the stamp of his political convictions. Krawciw is also noted as a fine translator of R. M. Rilke, as a researcher in Ukrainian mythology and cartography, and as an expert critic dealing chiefly with contemporary Ukrainian literature and its bibliography.

His greatest non-political collection of verse, entitled *Sonnets and Strophes*, was written in a Polish prison where he was detained for his Ukrainian national activity. It is a record of the feelings of one who, as his physical movements are restricted, reflects on life, his hopes alternately sinking to the blackest depths of despair and rising to sunny crests of optimism.

Of a classicist frame of mind, Krawciw worked painstakingly in modelling his lyrics and sonnets into forms of plastic perfection. Perhaps his greatest contribution to Ukrainian literature was the influence he exerted on the younger generation of West Ukrainian poets to break, as he did, the barriers of provincial regionalism and cope with the problems of life in their broader aspects.

* * * *

From fields and groves, my teeming native land,
 I took some simples to a foreign strand,
 A few small songs, a bunch of vital words,
 Placed in a knapsack that a charm begirds.
 Lovage and thyme I took, and sage and rue,
 To guard me from all spells, and poisons too . . .
 And bitter wormwood's leaves I also carried;
 But all these are now dust, by friction harried—
 Today I feel keen bitterness of heart . . .
 Yet I have kept some yevshan¹ herb apart,
 So that my sons may one day catch its scent
 And find their way home from this banishment.

¹In Ukrainian folklore, a herb whose smell recalls one's native land.

* * * *

Like birds far off, by thundering storms' behests,
We have been driven from our stars and nests.
Flames came in flood. And all our homes and plans
Were burned to ashes—and our little clans
Fled like the birds, without a rest, it seems . . .
Some memory, some ember of our dreams
We sought to save, to cherish in our hearts—
About our native land! A dark path starts
Forever from its fields to lands afar . . .
These we have found, but lost our homelands are—
Today we beg a tempest might arise
And take our children to those lands we prize.

* * * *

The grated, stained-glass window, guard-house style,
An echo of the organ's voice remembers;
The smoke of incense rises from the embers,
And fusty chophouse odours stir the bile.

Here groups of captive criminals are spread—
The murderer, the woun der and the wencher;
The smug, fat chaplain gives them words of censure
In ugly sermonizing, tritely said.

While I behold: Christ passes down the nave
And to the thief and murderer he bends
And utters a compassionate "My brother!"

His all-forgiving hands are stretched to save—
To eager lips and eyes his touch extends
And to the broken heart's bewildered smother.

Sviatoslav Hordynsky

(1906-)

Hordynsky was born in Galicia. His father Yaroslav was a noted scholar of literature and a pedagogue who exerted marked influence on him. Sviatoslav Hordynsky studied art in Lviv, Berlin, and Paris, and developed into one of the finest graphic and

pictorial artists of the Byzantine style in Ukraine. He now lives in the United States, where he continues to pursue his talents as a painter, a poet, and a scholar.

It is somewhat difficult to ascertain in which of the first two categories he is greater, just as it is perplexing to determine exactly to which literary school he belongs, for elements of both Romanticism and Classicism abound in his poetic work. Suffice it to say that among the contemporary Ukrainian poets he is one of the most cultured. From the time of his affiliation with the progressive "Nazustrich" group in Western Ukraine down to the present day, Hordynsky has been experimenting with new artistic forms and ever toiling at the perfection of his phraseology. What makes him quite distinct among his contemporary fellow-craftsmen is his idealistic approach to vital, universal problems, and the quasi-prophetic tones with which he condemns all manner of tyranny to which man has been, and continues to be, subjected.

His mastery of form is also evident in his prolific translations of numerous European poets and of such Americans as Poe and Whitman. In the field of criticism, his contribution to both art and *belle-lettistic* scholarship is of prime importance. He is likewise considered an eminent expert on *The Tale of Ihor's Campaign*, whose text he has elucidated to a high degree. He is the author of several monographs on traditional and modern art.

A METEOR

I hold a meteor-fragment in my hand,
A gift from starry worlds to our sad race;
But yesterday its flaming passage spanned
The black infinities of frigid space.

It now is dead and sheds its light no more—
To all it is a paltry chunk of stone;
Yet it to me is something I adore
For an unfathomed secret of its own.

I touch it on the spot the flame congealed
Into a sable ring as metal flowed;
The power of its flight is here revealed;
I feel the destiny that it bestrode:

To streak with its white brilliance the abyss,
To leave old mysteries to keep their calm;
To glow across the midnight with a hiss
And lie extinguished on a poet's palm.

* * * *

The traces of the past are thick with rust.
How long will ruthless Time leave even scars?
 And down are tumbled in the dust
The tall, triumphant trophies of past wars.

Into the distance you gaze pensively:
The peaceful day maintains its blue endeavour . . .
 Wait: and there presently will be
Battles, campaigns, and wars as bad as ever;

Again, at dawn, you will come out to find
Waggons and tents and neighing frantic horses,
 But you must walk or stay behind;
Your eager hand the weapon's haft endorses.

On cliffs of craggy mountains, waste and lone,
In some cramped pass you'll face a foeman's rank.
 With parched lips yonder falling prone
You'll drink the water at the river's bank.

You'll totter daily on your weary feet,
And yet from fight to fight you'll still press on;
 Only the paving stones you meet
Will witness in far lands where you have gone.

And in the night, when battles mute their scream,
And fighters sleep while bonfires mock the skies,
 You still will be allowed to dream
As formerly, of Cleopatra's eyes,

About her swarthy arms, her golden breasts,
And the sweet yearning of your foeman's smile.
 Simple by starlight are your zest
That life and death, hatred and love beguile.

From THE BOOK OF THE REFUGEE

(*Alcaics*)

We wakened sadly, finding ourselves despoiled,
Quite reft of kin and home; and we curse the hand
 That stole our arms in wicked treason,
Fighters of Justice who yearn for Freedom!

A voice had summoned us. And the night was calm.
 Until that instant came: and in storms we saw
 Prometheus¹ sacred fire was doubted;
 Then were our hearts all enswathed in darkness.

A howling rose from ages forgotten deep
 Within subconscious depths of our withered souls.
 Again a werewolf growled rapacious:
 Thus did the wilderness gape within us.

The heroes sought their ultimate battle there;
 And time was bent on conquering dauntless men.
 No more they'll leave their expedition,
 Muting their cry in the depths of snow-storms.

Wild wastelands cloak us, ruins surround us here . . .
 All destitute, a taggle of exiles we.
 Ideals fair still light our pathway;
 Only our faith would exhort to courage.

All things on earth most precious and dear to man
 Forever we have learned are a bitter show—
 Gone is our trust in Man, in Justice;
 Only Ukraine is our faith forever.

To foreign countries, far into joyless lands,
 We carry forth, in wounds that are wide and deep,
 The flaming dreams that we have nourished,
 Sated so oft with our blood ungrudging.

THE LYRE AND THE BOW

“Which do you choose?” Apollo sought to know.
 “Here is the gold-stringed lyre, and here the bow;
 I’ll teach the highest art that you desire!”
 And taking up the golden-chorded lyre,
 He touched its strings. Ah, strings they did not seem,
 But the sun’s rays. And not with sounds, I deem,
 They murmured, but as by some miracle
 They blended in a lustre fair and full
 And so were gilded in their boundlessness.
 Seven warm streaks of rainbow seemed to bless

¹See p. 130, fn. 3.

And interweave their hues with potency—
Splendidly, proudly and triumphantly—
And thus disclosed the mystery eternal
Of living light. From radiant strings supernal
And their primordial power, there rose the grace
Of those strange sounds and floated far through space . . .
I felt myself raised upwards, ever higher
Than clouds or mountains or my soul's own fire:
Listening intently, I myself forgot
Until Apollo roused me on the spot
With gentle voice: "Would you in such a school
Aspire with me the human heart to rule?"
He set aside the lyre; then took the bow
And twanged the string; the weapon curved its slow
And snaky body with a viper's hiss
Like a sharp sabre stroke that cuts amiss
The yielding air. A moment's brief suspense
Was humming with its terror, taut and tense,
As if it sighed—then gradually diminished
Until the sound in dissolution finished,
A hush of expectation most profound
As if the eyes and heart across the ground
Would trace the arrow's flight . . .

And I bestow

Involuntary hands to take the bow:
"Ah, give me, if you will, that one-stringed lyre,"
Said I to him, "and teach my warm desire
To play it! Let the hummings of that string
Be the most precious sound that I can bring
To all my friends; and to my enemies
Let it be viper's hissing to displease!
And teach my hand with those destructive darts
To aim unerring at all evil hearts
That merit wrath. O art, divine and bright,
Instruct me surely with my ire to smite,
Even as you could send, with angry lips,
Death and contagion to the Atridae's ships!"

Andriy Harasevich
(1917-1947)

Harasevich was born in Lviv, but passed his youth in the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine (then under Czechoslovakia) and completed his higher studies in Prague. At the age of thirty he met a tragic death in the Bavarian Alps. In his poetic endeavour, he was a belated symbolist, much of his verse being infused with religious allusions, as were many of his highly lyrical short stories.

IN THE OLD HOUSE

The autumn rain is falling;
The foggy stream is grey;
In rows of watery windows
Darkens the cold, late day.

Through yellow walls, the water
Trickles with oily pace;
Upon those walls, the angels
Are staring into space.

Three Magi sip their silence
As from a heavy cup;
Above our heads the twilight
Has hung its lanterns up.

The ancient stairs are creaking . . .
Where dusty cobwebs lie
A robed one roams eternal,
His shadow marches by.

And when the bells are frozen,
High in their evening height,
He prays to the Madonna,
Immortal and all-bright.

Mikola Matiyiv-Melnik

(1890-1947)

A native of Western Ukraine, Matiyiv-Melnik was better known as a fiction writer who drew his subjects from the War of Ukrainian Liberation and from the life of the people as they endured that turmoil. These shorter and longer works are characterized by the plasticity of their descriptive passages, psychological insight into the types presented, and a certain amount of lyricism. In his poetry he was inspired by historical themes in Ukraine's past, particularly those that had a bearing on contemporary situations. After World War II, he emigrated to the United States, where he died soon after his arrival.

HILARION'S SERMON¹

The Tithe Church² to its vaulted roof resounds
 With singing, and the incense spreads its scent,
 A thousand eyes behold the high, blue rounds . . .
 And candles fill the church with wonderment.

High on his throne sits mighty Yaroslav;³
 Behind him stand his boyars and his thanes,
 All of Kiev is here, serene and suave—
 The whole main army from his royal domains.

The frescoes have revived their colours gay;
 The gold and jewels drip with precious art;
 On them the sparkling sunlight seems to play;
 Joy strikes against the borders of the heart.

A stately man, gold-mitred, slowly stalks
 To mount the starry stand and pause thereon—
 The lay crowd in the nave excited gawks
 And whispers: "It is he, Hilarion!"

And honey-flowing words come pouring out:
 "Blessèd throughout all ages be our God,
 Who all our cares and griefs has put to rout,
 And bowed the wicked pagans with His rod!

¹The Metropolitan of Kiev in the eleventh century, a famous homilist. See the Introduction, p. viii.

²The church in ancient Kiev for whose foundation and upkeep the princes donated a tenth of their incomes.

³Yaroslav the Wise. See p. 4, fn. 2.

“Blessèd is He who gave this fertile Land,
 With a bright Lily on the Dnieper shore;
 Who with a seething sea her border spanned,
 Filled her with wealth and beauty more and more.

“Blessèd is He who forested her hills,
 Set iron in her depths, and copper veins,
 Who gave us silver that our stores o'erspills—
 And two-edged swords to further our campaigns.

“Who put a tide of life in our black soil,
 Who makes profuse with harvests all our fields,
 Who has reserved the dew to bless our toil
 Throughout these sunny chambers that he yields.

“And He who to this Land vast limits set
 Has granted dauntless princes to her folk,
 Bore tempests on our sword-points farther yet
 To brave the steppe-hordes and defy their yoke.

“With steel-clad cohorts he has cast them down:
 Yatvangian, Mordva and the greedy Chud⁴—
 By Dnieper and Slavuta's⁵ old renown
 He spreads His arms and pours abroad their blood.

“Behind their shields our warriors stand, a wall;
 Their helmets are a forest sprung from earth—
 Blessèd be then our God amongst us all,
 His hosts and temples of surpassing worth!

“That country is not lean nor is it strange
 In which the gold-forged throne is standing fair—
 Our thundering strokes have made our glory range;
 To south and west and east our warriors dare! . . .

“O brethren, suffer not the bold blasphemer
 Of this united Land, the glory free
 Of Yaroslav and ancient Volodimir—
 Let it not sink in strife and treachery!

⁴The barbaric races who were subdued by the early Kievan princes.

⁵In Ukrainian folklore the Dnieper was often personified as “Slavutich,” the son of the god Slavuta, the Glorious One.

"Offer your prayers to God in peace primeval,
 To the Creator who abides above,
 Who granted us a triumph over evil,
 Who gave the State and Throne in His great love.

"Pray and preserve the covenants of old,
 So that His wrath may pass our people by.
 Pray that—while sunlight sheds its timeless gold—
 Under a foreign hand we may not lie!

"That shining Kiev, which is all our pride,
 May not be conquered by a foe accurst;
 That on its ruins, scattered far and wide,
 We may not weep in hunger and in thirst . . .

"That we may not be sent, a helpless flock,
 To alien lands, with care and torment shod;
 That foreigners may not deride and mock:
 'Where is your home, O strangers, where your God?'

"O brethren, know the Will has power to bless—
 Given by God to man in saving measure;
 And woe to him who, in his wantonness,
 Has spent and thrown away that precious treasure!

"Then will all evil his dark path defame
 And sorrow make his heart its gloomy den
 As foreign conquest bends his neck in shame—
 Let this, my discourse, guide your footsteps then,
 Like Horeb's inextinguishable flame⁶—
 O brethren, shun that fatal path . . .

Amen!"

Hritsko (Geo) Koliada

(1904-)

Koliada is a native of the Kharkiv region, where he worked in seed and tree nurseries before he got the opportunity to complete his higher education. This enabled him to become an inspector of adult education and, later, a teacher. In 1923, he moved to

⁶The bush from whose flames came Jehovah's words to Moses on Mount Horeb.

Moscow and there took a course in transport engineering. As a poet, Koliada was a futurist and served the Communist cause well in that capacity. In the mid-thirties he was nevertheless sent to a concentration camp. He now lives in Uzbekistan.

A WOMAN FROM THE UKRAINIAN STEPPESS

Here then she stands—a peasant woman from the Ukrainian steppes!
In the sun's heat she is tying the sheaves in the fields.
Dressed in an embroidered, homespun skirt,
Barefoot and tanned,
With long black braids.
Eyes hazel and sky-blue.
Dark eyes.

Here then she stands—a peasant woman from the Ukrainian steppes!
She rides a bullock-cart and sings a doleful song.
Or in the wintertime she spins, and still she sings.
Or bustles round the stove and cooks her food.
Or in the evening, when the moon with its silvery paths
descends upon the earth, she is out on the street, or
on the common with the windmills—dancing,
singing or jesting with young men.

Here then she stands—a peasant woman from the Ukrainian steppes!
As free as the steppe!
And in her azure eyes there is the sky and a dream . . .
Her eyes are sky-blue, hazel—and—as dark as the night . . .
And it also happens, she is swollen with hunger.
And every day excessive toil awaits her.
But there is the song and the azure sky, as azure as azure itself.
But there is the steppe—the dark-blue steppe . . . without electricity
and machines.

Olena Teliha

(1907-1942)

Born in St. Petersburg, where her father, Ivan Shovheniv, was a professor of engineering, Olena Teliha passed the turbulent years of 1917-19 in Kiev. In 1923 she moved to central Europe, first to Poland and then to Czechoslovakia, where she completed her

higher education and married. Her first, and later, verses conformed to the rigid nationalistic standards of the literary-political journal *Vistnyk* (The Herald, edited in Lviv by the uncompromising theoretician of Ukrainian nationalism, Dmitro Dontsov), in which they were extensively published. In 1929 she and her husband settled in Warsaw and lived there till the German invasion of Poland, when she moved to Cracow to lead the nationalistic movement in that region. During the German occupation of Ukraine, she returned to Kiev and there edited a literary journal, *Litavry* (Kettle-Drums). In 1942 the Gestapo arrested her and her collaborators and executed the entire group for its activity in the Ukrainian national cause.

In her voluntaristic patriotism, as in the determination of her convictions, Teliha was akin to Lesia Ukrainka. Her verses are of a tense, nervous temperament, and in them she make plain that the Ukrainian woman, to play her rôle in her country's struggle, must adopt a severe Spartan attitude devoid of any idyllic preconceptions, and must arm herself with spiritual strength equal to the physical power to endure heroically not only the buffets of war but also the despair of solitude resulting from it.. Teliha is often referred to as the Joan of Arc of Ukraine. The powerful, steel-couched, clashing idiom of her verses make her stand out rather as a Ukrainian Amazon. A significant collection of her poetry in this respect is *The Soul on Guard*, published posthumously in 1946.

AN EVENING SONG

Outside the panes, the day grows cold
Where broke the day's first clangour . . .
Close in my hands at eve I hold
Your hatred and your anger!

Place on my lap the cruel rocks
Day's memories repeat;
The silver of your wormwood bring
And lay it at my feet.

So that your light, unfettered heart
May like a free bird sing;
That you, the mightiest, may recline
And at my soft lips cling.

Soft as a child's low laughter, I,
With a warm kiss unsought,
Shall blot out all the flaming hell
Within your eyes and thought.

Tomorrow when the bugle's sound
 First breaks the murk of dawn,
 Then in the gloaming I myself
 Will put your garments on.

You will not take my tears with you—
 They are till later stored!
 But I shall give you for the fight
 My kiss, a piercing sword.

That you may have 'mid whistling steel—
 For shouts or silence made—
 Lips like a musket's stern discharge,
 Hard as a sabre-blade.

1933-1939

The flood of reminiscences draws near . . .

V. Sosiura

Unknown to us the starting and the leaving—
 We do not understand the measure rare
 When life into a wreath is darkly weaving
 At intervals our faith and our despair.

On the resplendent day descends the shadow
 Of evil-boding clouds, a mourning veil;
 And the cold night, a trembling renegado,
 The flaming morn embraces, bold and hale.

The iron power that knows no limitations
 God's breath will melt to tears of conquered pride,
 Will twist a lash of ruthless conflagrations
 From tiny sparks that in the ashes hide.

Thus have the steps we would have joined forever
 Been parted by God's limits for all time.
 Without warm words or glances of endeavour,
 We parted on the street in pantomime.

But it can happen in a field of dangers
 We may retrace the paths that once we trod.
 Again tomorrow we shall not be strangers
 As we receive this glorious gift from God.

* * * *

Oh yes, I know, women should not advance
With sword in hand and lightning in the blood,
With martial step and with a huntsman's glance
With resolution through both fire and flood.

Why we are man's true haven, calm and bright,
Where like a shattered ship you turn to rest.
The Virgin, not the Lion, is our light;
For tenderness, not wrath, our name is blest.

But hardly from your feeble hands in stress
Slips down your weapon to the foeman's feet
Than the famed raven drains our tenderness—
That demon of the battle and defeat.

And then our fingers, long and slender, strive
To rend conventions like old door-drapes worn,
That from your hands your weapons we may rive
And smite your enemies with proper scorn.

But when the sparkling sword at last assuages
In our determined grasp this manlike share,
Time will unfold to us its ancient pages
Of love and passion, tenderness and care . . .

Oleksa Vlizko

(1908-1934)

Vlizko was born in the village of Korosten, near Novhorod. It is not known what sort of education, if any, he received. At the age of fourteen, as a result of scarlet fever, he lost his hearing and soon afterwards his speech. This double tragedy appears only to have spurred him on to a feverish creativity, and no sooner did he come to Kiev, at the age of sixteen, than he became a recognized poet, bubbling with "revolutionary optimism." For the ten brief years still left him, his pace was dynamic indeed.

Vlizko adhered to the futuristic school, but not slavishly, for he continued to experiment with various forms and expressions under the banner of "romantic vitalism," and with such a spontaneous force as to gain himself the appellation of the "Benjamin of Ukrainian literature." In tone, rhythm, epithet, and metaphor, Vlizko's poetry appeared electric and vibrant; and it is difficult to imagine that a young man whose education was so hazy could accumulate and manipulate as rich a lexicography

as that which filled his verses. True enough, they suffer from excessive polymorphism and, in many instances, lack synthetic balance, but the sincerity, nobility, and altruism of his thoughts render them as exalted now as they were to his contemporaries. Their salient feature is the poet's longing for the "superhuman love" ("The Ninth Symphony") which, he sensed, could be attained only by the man who cleanses his heart with the destructive but restorative fire of the existential ordeal. Only so purified, can one reach that far-off port.

He reached his apogee in his poetry of the sea. In it he glorified that elemental force, as well as the passion and reckless fatalism of those adventurers who risk their lives upon it in order to conquer or perish in the attempt. His collection, *The Drunken Ship*, is representative of that phase of his creative art.

Vlizko himself was a poetic corsair in Ukrainian literature, eager to take risks in order to gain his goals, for the sheer devilment of it as well as to achieve in it the freedom of space in which to reveal his inborn creative potentialities in a modernized, industrialized Ukraine. In that respect he was a romantic, bent not on the destruction of her old norms of life but on the introduction of vital innovations based on them.

His great popularity (collections of his verses sold almost as fast as they were published, and his volume of selected poetry reached the unprecedented number of 33,000 copies) and the influence he exerted on his contemporaries by the ironical prongs directed against the Soviet régime (e.g., "The Ballad of the Short-sighted Eldorado," a satire on Soviet collectivization in Ukraine) caused consternation in Moscow itself. A special military tribunal was appointed to look into the matter and, after a brief session, Vlizko and twenty-eight other writers and cultural leaders were condemned to be executed. He was but twenty-six at the time.

* * * *

We look down on the world from lofty towers—
Far constellations with our hands we seize! . . .
From sky-blue branches above sunny flowers
The squirrels laugh and with the petals tease . . .

We grow! On threshing-floors of days and years
We send up offshoots beyond stars sublime,
Until our grief an ancient myth appears
And vanishes like smoke beyond all time!

* * * *

I took my stand there, in the crossroads dust,
Too weak to break my fitters' wicked skill—
In writing, at the Institute, the Trust,
I fled one spot and found one duller still.

A fellow-traveller, a specialist—
As such, I found my powder grow more damp . . .
Was I a friend? A foe? They then insist.
In some dark hole my merits they would cramp.

Indifferent and drier than a roach,
I watched our planet in a mood of lead;
I seemed to see the entire world approach,
Directed straight and deadly at my head.

The scale of my thermometer grew small;
The gnawing sin of silence still grew stronger;
The gates forbade me to advance at all,
Nor to retreat—and there were roads no longer.

THE NINTH SYMPHONY

A MONOLOGUE

Fire, fire!—I long for superhuman love!
Let blood boil fiercely in all youthful breasts!
I take you up, O thorny world of mine,
Into my bright embrace!

Like a warm bird,
A fiery bird, my spirit soars about
Past all the worlds—and stretch above all men
My boundless wings. Let all then come to shelter
Beneath them. If they find not paradise,
They will discover hell in my embraces,
All-human, powerful, within which malice
Will burn to ashes,—and the beastly heart,
Which chatters with its teeth and sucks the blood
Of its own brother, sink to rise no more;
It will not rise, will find no resurrection,
As that man will not rise up who has fallen
Into a fiery pit, the unplumbed crater
Of a volcano like the human heart!

Fire, fire! I long for boundless turbulence
Of a new love, unspoken, beaten down
By the lips of eunuchs, by the lips of hearts,
In gloves inserted—so that none may see

The poison, stinking dungeon underground
 With worms and maggots—all that generous filth
 Perpetuated by rachitic scions
 Of those degenerates who boast “blue blood,”
 With heraldry, the beauty of their mansions,
 And rotting wounds beneath their golden cloaks!

Fire, fire! I long for superhuman love!
 Life—to the strong, but death—to the decadent!
 Exuberant love, as passionate as fire,
 Enchanting love for all things, so that I
 May fully love the earth, and beasts, and men,
 And live by virtue of the sun alone
 And my own sweat, and thus win happiness
 For sons and grandsons and the far-off seed
 Of days that are to be! . . .

O fire of love!

Let blood boil fiercely in all youthful breasts!
 I take you up, O thorny world of mine,
 Into my bright embrace! And in my love,
 As in a fire, I place you! Blaze with light
 And heal the ailing eyes of hapless men,
 While blinding him who has grown fond of darkness—
 Hide in the underground!

O love and fire!

SAILORS

Tempered by suns, inured by winds,
 Across strange worlds we sail;
 We have no path, no portal sure,
 That we at last must hail.

We cast our hearts in storms and calms,
 We spit in Satan’s face,
 And by the ton we calculate
 The measure of our days.

Our weapon is the tempered sword;
 Our song—the seabird’s flight;
 Our heart is in the coal-black port
 Where blooms the anthracite.

HERE IN THE PORT

(Hexameters)

Here in the port stand the ships, and the flags are asleep at the mast-heads,
Somewhat the worse for the storm, but the sailors are gay notwithstanding,
Moving about; and to them in the square in the quiet of evening
Graciously smile the young women, whose-cheeks are a-blossom like poppies.

Both the young maids, to be sure, and the sailors are happy and carefree,—
Yet, with the morrow, the sailors will sail to some far-away ocean,
Yet, with the morrow, still others will fondle the willing young women,—
Such is the will of the sea . . . To the port come the vessels forever.

THE FOG

Now here, now there the shaggy mainsails run,—
The massive smoke mounts up from sea to sky,
And only sometimes from the surface pry
The rugged light-rays of a distant sun,

And pluck away the haze where breakers foam
And whirl the waves like swirling carousels,
While the drunk ship goes flitting through the swells,
The seas that under and above you roam . . .

Again you settle . . . And with fiendish curses
The captain will baptize you like a dog;
And like a battering-ram against the fog
The harbour-siren its fierce note rehearses.

THE BALLAD OF THE SHORT-SIGHTED ELDORADO

The ships went questing to a far-off strand
With people now a nuisance to their land,
And people who were weary of their place
And who'd grown tired of their monarch's grace;
So to the harbours' wharves they gladly pace.

Their pockets were as empty as a clout;
A knife-haft from their boots was sticking out.
Fantastic growths their various mouths attire,
From downy fuzz to great beards, long and dire;
Their hands were strong enough to tear up wire.

They boarded thus their ship with manners gay
And to amazing lands they sailed away.
The people slept on deck in frost and heat;
Their cheeks were smitten by an unclewed sheet;
At night the sailors trampled on their feet.

With charming lakes their dreams were all a-stir.
They mumbled in their sleep: "Excuse me, sir."
A laughing sailor spat, but did not wake them;
He dreamed of the next port that luck would stake them—
There with the girls he'd drink—the devil take them!

Each day they ate their bread, quite stale and dark,
And waited for the land, to disembark.
These, then, to Para's port the vessel brings;
There, in Priapus' jungle, beauty stings,
And gold, and syphilis, and other things.

Forth from the vessel all the people pour
And set their foot upon a foreign shore.
Their last, red penny in the port they spent;
That they have nothing, they would all assent;
And now to seek their goal is their intent.

A talented hidalgo to them came
And chanced to find them destitutely lame.
He told them that he had a great design
To find an Eldorado, rich and fine;
But—just one point—a contract they must sign.

He led them on; and they were moved to stare as
They met the foothills of the Cordilleras.
At a plantation yonder, "Stop!" he said,
"Your Eldorado's here! Eat peasant's bread!
To run off, means a bullet in your head."

The people thought: This, Eldorado? No!
Not this the dream we've carried to and fro."
It was too late. No exit meets their ire.
No hope of home is left this crew entire
Whose hands are strong enough to tear up wire.

O. Olzhich, pseud.

Oleh Kandiba (1908-1944)

Born in Zhitomir, son of O. Oles, Olzhich emigrated to Western Europe in his early teens. He studied in Vienna and received his doctorate in archaeology from the Charles University in Prague. Before and during World War II, he was one of the leaders of the Ukrainian Nationalist Movement, particularly on the territory of the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine where he organized an underground resistance against the Hungarian occupants. Captured by the Nazis, he was sent to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, where he was tortured to death.

As an archaeologist, he infused his poetry with the spirit of antiquity, to which he added a vitalistic philosophy of his own, based on the severity of the times in which he lived. In Ukrainian literature, he is one of its most significant idealists who sought strength in utter simplicity of form and expression. These he concentrated and disciplined to such an extreme that at times apparent obscurities resulted. Yet even such compression did not work to the detriment of his philosophic whole which by its very intensification increases the glow of his nuclearity.

Writing as he did under the compulsion of his turbulent environment, Olzhich could not but exhort his compatriots to a warlike endeavour to meet the requirements of the hour, but his appeal to them went beyond the immediate, and posed to the entire nation the activist ideals of Justice, Truth, and Courage to serve it for all times. In cultural outlook, he displayed a universality rarely attained by Ukrainian men of letters, and on that account he is now considered by the younger literary creators as one upon whom to pattern themselves in their quest of eternal values. His three important verse collections are *Gravel* (1934), *The Towers* (1940), and the posthumous *At the Foot of the Castle* (1946).

THE POLYNESIANS

This deep-blue morning, hasten, slender youths,
To launch your boats where the lagoon withdraws!
Let them like lively water-spiders leap
That scatter pearl-drops with their hairy paws.

In languid longing, daylight will decline,
Down, down, to seascapes broad and quietsome;
And on the beach, with war-songs' bellowing,
To meet you, bearded companies will come.

Their bowstrings thin will twang like nightingales
While power its brave banquet boldly blesses,
That flower-decked young maids may ply their dances
And the soft night grow drunken with caresses.

* * * *

Phoenicia's purple days will now adjourn,
Its cycle has been closed on history's page;
Time gnaws away the grimly taciturn
Old granites of the legendary age.

O rawness of the sky, and leaden water,
And branches bending heavy in the mist,
Horrible pregnancy that carries fruits
That only for our grandsons will exist.

Behold these slender men, bright-eyed and lean,
In the simplicity of vanished days—
Can you among them recognize or guess
A Servius Tullius¹ whom the world will praise?

* * * *

The city tower is striking three . . .
The minute-hand has gone its round.
An hour has died. And you have frowned:
I shall not curse finality.

For days will die and nights be ashes,
Full-breasted summer will grow chill;
Be brave, close not your eyes to ill,
Look straight ahead at life that lashes.

Is it an evil that love dies?
That old age comes at last to men?
What joy to lose that word "again"—
On, ever on, our pathway lies!

Only to you, O wisest race,
Has life been given to foam and shine.
Finality is earth's best wine.
The clock strikes three. Make bright your face.

¹Servius Tullius, the sixth king of Rome in the sixth century B.C., who curtailed the power of the aristocracy and raised the *plebs* to political importance.

A PRAYER

The abbot rose. Dominicans in state
Walked from the tables in two files devout;
The church's heart the anthems penetrate,
And gloom itself grows fervent and rings out.

Here is one brother, burly past belief,
With reddish tonsure and a bear's thick shape.
Somewhere he once had been a brigand chief
And tortured peasants as they screamed agape.

O Jesus Christ, your power is not scant
That even such as he adores you now!
He prays. And something sweet and radiant
Is shining from beneath his savage brow.

Bohdan Ihor Antonich

(1909-1937)

Antonich was born in Galicia. His brief literary career centred mostly about the journals *Dzvony* (The Bells) and *Nazustrich*, published in Lviv. It was cut short prematurely by peritonitis that set in after a belated appendectomy. Otherwise, if one can judge by the promise he revealed, he might have evolved into a poet of the first rank.

After mastering the Ukrainian literary idiom, Antonich began in a religious, reflective vein, but with remarkable rapidity developed into an imagist whose chief characteristic was expert use and manipulation of expressionistic metaphors. These seemed to gush out of him as from an irrepressible source as he immersed himself totally in the joy of living and, St. Francis-like, intimately related himself to the least manifestation of Nature. In his bubbling enthusiasm for the sheer pleasure of existence he appeared as if splashing boyishly in the beauties of circumambient phenomena. Although not intellectual in magnitude, Antonich nevertheless possessed a modicum of philosophical concepts in his pantheistic approach to the world of things. Childlike and unaffected, he strove to reach the divine through his own identification with the marvels of creation, accepting with glee both its pleasant and its disagreeable aspects. Perhaps his greatest claim to originality lies in his effortless attempt to reveal plastically his subconscious mind and to harmonize it with the mysteries of Nature. His work reveals him as a sensuous "pagan," in love with all the facets of the stirring universe around him, and represents a lyrical biography of his inner self.

ON THE HIGHWAY

A morning intertwined with winds
Darts like a gypsy from the water,
And young and tawny on the sand
It clamours like the soul of slaughter.

The winding river's tuneful bed
Is lashed by winds that seek to mock it;
Day hides the moon behind a cliff
Like some old penny in a pocket.

Scythes in the hazels peck and sing;
The road like copper rings out bolder;
There walks a laughing barefoot lad,
A boy with sunshine on his shoulder.

A NIGHT IN ST. GEORGE'S SQUARE

The midnight is as black as coal.
A shadow prowls St. George's Square,
Whose streaks in hoops and circles twist
Upon the grey walls gleaming there.
The moon is a mysterious ring
Enchased in ebonies of night.
Beneath the welkin's frigid roof
You feel that frost is in its light.
And you yourself cannot be sure
What things are real, what but seem,
Whether a fancy mocks your eye
Or facts as cunning as a dream.
Where tuneful towers are of glass,
The fire is cold and speaks derision:
It is the limit of the world,
The architecture of a vision.
The midnight hour as black as coal
Spills on our eyes the ash of sleep,
And as the sky to earth still clings
Adorns it with a silver sweep.
Night echoes in St. George's Square;
The cross is like a mighty key.
And like a gloomy shadow seems
A future yet unknown to me.

A MORNING

The morning flashed. The sun like a red brick arose
And on the tin roofs rolled in flashing play;
Shadows and dreams at dawn came swiftly to a close;
The song of waggons vanished with the day.

Again the sky's unbounded azure will be crossed
By crooked orbits of the falling stars.

The city, strangely white, from ghostly vistas lost,
Floats from the mist, a miracle from Mars.

Only this sheltered nook is still in shadows hidden;
The violin, its strings relaxing, sleeps;
In dreamy peace, only the pen, unchecked, unhidden,
A buzzing shaft, across the paper sweeps.

THE VILLAGE

The cows are praying to the sun
That like a poppy flames absurd;
The slender poplar tapers off
As if the tree became a bird.

The moon has left the Wain behind.
The vast sky has in hemp been dressed.
All space is overblown with smoke
And in it looms the forest's crest.

The leaves are flying from the hills.
Distaff and cradle take control.
The day into the valley pours
As fresh milk pours into a bowl.

HOME BEYOND THE STAR

(*Hexameters*)

Only this moment I live. As to whether for longer, I know not.
Thus from the plants I learn physic, and growth, and profusion of juices.
Haply my home is not here. And perhaps it may lie beyond star-flight.
Only of this I am sure: I am singing, and therefore existing.

MUSICA NOCTIS

Come, kindle in the sky the pale moon's torch,
And light the darkness of the night with stars;
Let loneliness no more our spirits scorch
When twice ten thousand worlds the sky unbars.

To hearts enveloped in the scarves of peace
Melodiously tuned is every tone;
The planets notes of whispering harps release;
God's diapason makes the night its own.

Like a fair summer after spring's behests,
A fulness sways the soul when day is done
And on the grey horizon dimly rests
The golden cupola of the setting sun.

Up to the wooded peaks the warm airs rush,
And on the breezes scents of flowers linger.
Hark to the concert, when, 'mid evening hush,
On God's pianoforte He sets his fingers!

AN ELEGY ABOUT THE RING OF THE SONG

I have a house, by it a yard,
And here are lyric apple trees.
The dew is fresh as morning milk
Or honey, giving man his ease.
The flower-decked roof is like a hat;
The house is painted like a chest.
And thieves about the garden prowl,
Through hedge and fence they hold their quest.
One must build parapets around,
Must raise a wall of dreams and stone.
Here in my garden grows the sun—
Tobacco flowers to drug my moan.

I seek my garden. To my heart,
All unassuaged, unpacified,
A light green scherzo plays its part
As cherry trees set grief aside.
I seek my garden in the dusk

When evening trembles like a chord;
If one could only sum up life
And live a moment as its lord!
I seek my garden, plucking words,
My trees of inspiration's fruit.
Ah, lad, in desperation look
Into those eyes so resolute!

Eve's elegy is now burned out,
Shrunk like a song and sunk to ashes.
Put in your jug its gentle words,
A prayerful song that youth abashes.
A pyre, the sun has spent its flame,
Singeing my eyebrows as it burned;
And, hesitant, my forehead glad
Into the burning wreath is turned.

Evening grows night. It fills with mist,
As if from countless censers' smoke.
Disk-like the sun has rolled away
And hidden in the gloaming's cloak.
The flower-decked house, the bluish murk,
Sees night with stars adorn the sky.
And you, my boy, beware of spring—
Its dew may lay you low to die.

Again the lily scents the air;
The sweet of honey sates the blood;
Although my step seems free from care,
My heart with grief again must thud.
The garden's lord, a poet young,
I walk the night with quiet tunes;
And from my loaded arm is slung
A basket full of ripened moons.

The trees are rustling elegies.
What do they speak of?—Love and dreams.
Thus did the evening's sultry ease
Imprison me in moonlight's beams.
Mysterious shadows—night's dim flowers—
Are whitened tree-trunks' gentle souls.
They long to climb the moon's high towers,
But not a breeze their hopes consoles.

O jubilant and lofty learning!
O arrowy words that skyward tend!
The moon, a young musician yearning,
Notes from the garden seeks to send.
Chimerical, triumphant fancy!
To the unknown the night's path leads.
Heaven gives not back its hieromancy
And from the earth no word proceeds.

Hark to the trees! Their soft confession
Write swiftly in the Book of Night!
Lean to your soul in silent session
As when a maple bows its height.
The Book of Night has silver letters;
It rustles with inspired art;
Make not your hands its thoughtless fetters
But set the volume in your heart.

Like stars that in abysses sleep,
Made radiant by a phantom dream,
The words far down alive will leap
Within the soul that scorns to weep
And from the depths a song will teem;
The maple with a song replies,
The night responds from singing skies,
The restless step will pause from pain.
With fancy's compass, fair and wise,
You'll draw a strophied circle plain.

Then let your heart, from terror tamed,
Become a fledgeling, all inflamed.
Let winged thoughts to the sky be aimed,
Fly ever on in fellowship,
Spring ever upward in the night!
O word that trembles on my lip,
Why should I now arrest your flight?

I feel you passing sombrely,
Intoxicating, painful song;
Your sharp form seeks to voice for me
The sense of my anxiety,
My joy so luminous and strong
And depths of weakness, pale and wrong.

Into my heart with words I pry;
Blood spurts despair; but as I die,
Impetuous pleasures through me throng.

On my home's door there is an evil sign:
My song's ill-omened ring is its design.

THE ARCTIC

The blossoming comets with their peacock-tails,
red windowpanes of sea in frames sedate,
where icy cliffs beneath curled snowdrift-veils
have slowly spread apart, an eerie gate.

On crests of billows, seal-herds rock and roll;
down from the zodiac they dive, and red
under the Aurora turns the green sea scroll
of phantom waves from fancies dark and dread.

Like cold, blue lead, the sky hangs down by night,
and the moon's skull, a pale and shattered mass,
falls on the snow, where packs of foxes white,
drawn by the Pole-star, to oblivion pass.

Evhen Fomin

(1910-1942)

Fomin was born into a labourer's family in the region of Kherson, where he studied at the county's Institute of Agriculture. At the age of seventeen he published a collection of his lyrics under the auspices of the Kherson Association of Proletarian Writers. As a Soviet man of letters, Fomin had to conform to the demands of the Party, and was not able for at least a brief period, as were his predecessors of the older generation, to express himself in a manner other than that within the framework of "socialist realism." Yet as an ardent worshipper of Nature, his extraordinary talent found scope to rise above the commonplace and to assimilate her variegated aspects into his tender lyricism to suit his personal moods. The lyrics he wrote during World War II, while he served in the Red Army, are particularly forceful in the intensity of pathos concentrated in them. He was captured by the Nazis and killed in prison by the Gestapo at the age of thirty-two.

MOTHER

I trod the road, as earth was being dressed
 in her new garments, fragrant, fresh and green.
 The twilight shadows on the fields sought rest
 and round about me less and less was seen.

Somewhere the far horizon had been lost;
 and heavy sleep about me spread its wings.
 Weary, I fell asleep . . . my vision crossed
 my mother, dearest of all mortal things.

In her lean hand, a crescent sickle burned;
 it sparkled, as it blazed, with tears of pain.
 How long ago it was! . . . Now I discerned
 once more that misery your soul had slain.

When I awoke, the sunrise was aflame,
 and to it, with a song, the poplar bent . . .
 My mother's face—the knowledge later came—
 I only saw as through the fields I went.

* * * *

Shall I no longer find, when war is past,
 What in its hideous stench I lost aghast?
 Will utter ashes sweep the land I cherish?
 Will every mother die, each infant perish?
 My land, I have not lost you in the dark,
 But sorrow in my soul is grim and stark.

THE DNIEPER

I cannot reckon how the Seine is blue
 Nor how the Thames round granite wharves is curled;
 Yet in the whole, vast, many-peopled world
 I do not know a stream more dear than you,
 My Dnieper!

As I greet the morning star,
 I mount the cape and watch you boil below,
 And deep relief and deeper love I know
 For this glad country where your waters are.

Leonid Pervomaysky, pseud. (1908-)

Pervomaysky was born in the Poltava region into the family of a bookbinder, Samuel Hurevich. There he completed his gymnasium studies and, later, attended a trade school, after which he took part in organizational work and various journalistic, educational, and literary activities arranged for him by the Soviet authorities in Ukraine. For his services, he was rewarded with many prizes and decorations by the régime, among them the Stalin prize for literature.

Of Jewish descent, Pervomaysky assimilated the idiom and the spirit of the Ukrainian language to the extent of becoming one of the more influential writers of the post-revolutionary period. His literary output is quite extensive in verse, plays, stories, and novels. In addition to lyrics and poems, many of which he wrote on the orders of the Party, he also produced erotic poetry ranging from the passive to the passionate. Despite the optimism of his general outlook, Pervomaysky, under the pressure of the tragic years he experienced, occasionally betrayed moods of grief and even despair. His buoyant nature, however, enabled him time and again to emerge from the depressive atmosphere and instil some humour into his verses. In 1958 his poem *Kazka* (A Tale), an example of "pure poetry," drew down upon him severe criticism from the Soviet censorship. He was also prolific as a translator, and his renderings constitute a distinct contribution to the vast international store of folklore transmuted from foreign literatures into fine Ukrainian.

* * * *

When in the wilderness a fir-tree falls,
An echo answers from the mountain high,
The distant highland pasture makes reply
And the deep valley with its craggy walls.

And when the hunter's bullet strikes its mark,
To the deer's sigh, in its last agony,
The vast, immobile silence then will be
A background to the jungle's answer dark.

And when in your nocturnal loneliness
A song begins to throb within your heart,
Be calm—in answer to your music's art,
An echo from the world will come to bless.

Andriy Malishko

(1912-)

Born in the Kiev region, Malishko began to prepare himself for the medical profession but turned to literature. After a short period of teaching and military service, he was assigned by the Soviet authorities to various organizational and journalistic tasks. During World War II, he served as a military and partisan correspondent at the front.

Perhaps his best poetry is that which he wrote under the impressions of the War. In much of it he tends to reveal the reality of the conflict through psychological traits other than human (e.g., "Sirkо"). In the post-war years he created several poems epic in tone and extent, but of unequal value. One of them, "Prometheus," earned him the Stalin prize. Although the content of his verse deals with Soviet actuality, Malishko derives his poetic resources chiefly from traditional forms. Particularly does he use elements of fantasy as he seeks, with varied success, to fuse them with the reality of his day.

* * * *

We shall come home, my friend, in days far flung,
 And there, in peaceful chambers, warm shall lie.
 What dreams we have imagined in the rye!
 What songs in times of tempest we have sung!

What labours on our shoulders have been laid!
 What fearful storms have come to blind our sight!
 What grey dust of the years has barred the light
 From eager eyes in shadowy ambuscade!

Set all that down, one item, in our annals.
 To your work-benches make your final bow.
 Look: before dawn the storm is ending now
 And a good seed breaks forth in ploughland's channels.

* * * *

Often at night you'll call upon me yet,
 As parting's burden on your back is set;
 All, all alone you'll wait, and wait for me,
 Suffering beyond all measure in your hope;
 And you'll remember, from youth's pale debris,
 Our native land, where tides of battle grope.

There, from afar, your vision cannot see
How heat dries out and weather withers me,
Tanks mangle and the mists of battle lie
Over our land, that once an Eden loomed,
Where love shone amid soft, grey heaps of rye
And garden flowers like a rainbow bloomed.

Our homeward way is difficult to find
Across the corpses and the cannon's glances,
The swords of the projectors, darkness blind,
Deep sleep and sieges, battles and advances!
Often you'll call for me with anxious care,
While through the nights you will be waiting there.

SIRKO

Sirko, a battery-horse, by us campaigned,
With shaggy hooves and nostrils full of heat.
He pulled a cannon, in the harness strained,
In happy days or nights of dark defeat.

He trampled stony roads and farmers' lands
Amid the crunch of bugs and beetles' eggs;
And twice in battle's heat a farrier's hands
With pincers pulled out splinters from his legs.

And when the gunner in the fierce attack
Fell and grew silent under drifts of snow,
No one saw Sirko's heart was on the rack
As he shed tears in heavy equine woe.

He had his stall, as soldiers have their burrows,
And rationed food—of simple hay and straw—
And children too—this thought his forehead furrows,
How could he send a letter to their ma?

At night, a captain, having had a drag
Of whisky from a flask, wiped Sirko's brow
And spoke as to his fellow: "Thank you, nag,
For honest work, the friendship you avow!"

He spilled him out such oats as he had dreamed of:
Dry, noisy-poured, with pollen from the plain.
And Sirko thought: The war we are redeemed of.
Tomorrow will the gunner braid my mane.

Ihor Kachurovsky

(1918-)

Kachurovsky was born in the Chernihiv region. Under pressure, such as he so vividly describes in the excerpt given below, he escaped to the West, and later emigrated to the Argentine, where he continues to write both verse and prose. Besides short stories and, thus far, one lengthy novel, which are based more or less on his personal experiences under the stress of Communism, he also writes critical articles on Ukrainian poetic literature.

From THE VILLAGE

THE RAINY NIGHT

The windows weep with rain. The wind is gusty.
 All conversations dwindle to an end.
 And this remains: a half-dream, grey and dusty,
 That I in loneliness must apprehend.

The rain continues, and the leaves are falling.
 My heart from recollection cannot stop.
 The pressure of the twilight is appalling,
 As time is sinking, drop by bloody drop.

I dream or think—and grief, no longer banished,
 Fills up your hours with pain, A rainy night.
 A distant flame has darkly flashed and vanished.
 Today there is no time for living light.

With leaves against the glass the tempest blows.
 And all that was is branded deep with pain.
 Dark reminiscence in a gloomy doze
 All lonely visions of today has slain.

And I recall our first flight, as of old:
 An autumn wind in rainy darkness grieves.
 The trampled grass, the puddles and the cold,
 Blend in the tumult of the fallen leaves.

A man's form by the window-pane I saw;
 He whispered—what a word our peace to pillage:
 "Tonight . . . with children . . . to Siberia . . .
 Flee quickly. But keep clear of all the village."—

So unexpectedly this message came,
It seemed that something snapped within one's soul.
For such a flight no warning could we claim
And tasty dumplings winked within my bowl.

What shall we leave behind? What shall we take?
Where shall we seek for shelter? Whither go?
My father and unmarried brothers make
A silent survey of the arms they stow.

That we must leave thus did not most annoy;
Another feeling then my spirit spanned:
I felt a painful urge, though but a boy,
To clutch a steel revolver in my hand . . .

O Lord! Our lands . . . our house . . . our hearts' delight . . .—
Was it forever? . . . Could we not return?
The darkness seemed appointed for our flight:
None in those shadows could our path discern.

Against the window panes the raindrops beat;
The wind is tearing through the garden black.
. . . Two loaves, a goodly portion of salt meat,
Had now been tossed into a haversack.

The property a lifetime had acquired
Remained for anyone to take at will.
Out of our wardrobe, what we most desired
We snatched in haste, due service to fulfil.

We walked out quietly and closed the door
And vanished in the gloom as we were able;
And bowls of untouched supper as before
Remained to steam upon the lonely table.

Behind the storehouse then, our footsteps mash
The clods of sticky earth the garden gird.
Out on the highroad something seemed to flash,
And angry voices from afar were heard.

Quick! Quick! Already at the door one pounds.
We hear them: "Do the reptiles hope to lock it?"
Quick! Quick! We are the quarry of these hounds—
My brother pulls a pistol from his pocket.

The village, to the right, has homes in ranks,
 Where evening windows are a row of lights.
 To leftward lie the steep slopes of the banks
 Down to the river. There our path invites.

Entreating the Last Judgement from the sky,
 We plunge to meet the night, the wind, the rain;
 I vow I'll not forget until I die,
 Nor yet forgive, that hour of mortal pain.

Through reeds and utter darkness lay our road . . .
 The door from off its posts we heard them jar . . .
 The gloomy river pool by which we strode
 Bore no reflection of a single star.

Yar Slavutych

(1918-)

Slavutych was a native of the Kherson region. During World War II he emigrated to the West and, later, to the United States where, as a linguist, he served as an instructor at the Monterey Military School. At present he is on the staff of the University of Alberta as a professor of Slavic languages.

From the natural beauty of the Kherson area stem his pictorially plastic sonnets, whose descriptive qualities established his reputation as a "lyrical painter." His creative endeavour derives directly from the folklorist-historical fund of Ukrainian culture. His borrowings from it, however, Slavutych evolved into an original expression conforming to contemporary literary exigencies. A pithy lyrical chronicle, one might say, is revealed in his *Homin Vikiv* (Reverberations of the Ages) in which he succinctly recreated the salient episodes of his country's past, from the hazy Cimmerian remoteness, through pagan antiquity, the age of the Princes, and the Cossack era, down to the latest Ukrainian movement of liberation, of which he is one of the most eloquent spokesmen. His poetic felicity is further enhanced by his knack for dialect and archaic phraseology. Slavutych is still in the process of creative evolution, and a definitive statement on his work cannot as yet be made.

* * * *

The low-browed breed of darkness rests abhorred;
 The plains, as dour as granite, bear their doom.
 When will the lowlands, trampled by this horde,
 Rejoice in spring with freedom's radiant bloom?

The world grows deaf. Like an unhealing wound
 Are nations. At the swift Apocalypse,
 Above the face of men, in evil swooned,
 A comet roars as one of God's great whips.

The gulfs sound dully and like sea-mews call
 Bemoaning times that murder liberty,
 Times when our hopes in dark exhaustion fall
 And Azrael's sword will quarter such as we.

THE COTTAGE

Above the blue Dnieper, upon a green hill,
 Where buckwheat lay warm every hour,
 There stood among poplars, contented and still,
 A cottage as white as a flower.

The rains pattered down on the stream like a ghost,
 Grain's promise the furrow outruns;
 And the old mother oft of her daughters would boast,
 The father would vaunt of his sons.

But who at the midnight were driven away,
 And who in sad exile must die?
 Our fathers afar had to live out their day;
 Their bones past the Urals now lie.

Their daughters and sons must all wander the earth,
 Recalling their lives on the plain;
 Or are they embattled to give Freedom birth,
 A destiny noble to gain?

The cottage still grieves on its sorrowful hill;
 Its windows are clamant in prayer.
 The poplars are dead; in the yard cold and chill,
 The wolf-winds are howling despair.

BEFORE SHAKESPEARE'S HOUSE

Man, bow your head before this cottage small
 That for our world a Titan could beget;
 Touch with your brow its old foundation wall
 That charms us with its newness even yet!

Out of this place, King Richard's pride could spring,
 Iago's guile, Macbeth the murderous chief;
 Here Juliet's love achieved its blossoming
 And Hamlet's virtue and Ophelia's grief.

Shakespeare is a Colossus! Of mankind
 He's the bright mirror; with a sovereign sway
 And myriad names he rules the heart and mind
 Though far from Stratford he has made his way;

The rapture of his word's magnetic power
 Has caught and held all nations to this hour.

Stepan Semczuk

(1899-)

Semczuk was born in Lviv. After completing his gymnasium studies at Peremishl, he served in the Austrian army on the Italian front, where he took part in several offensives at the Piave. As an officer, he also was active in Ukrainian partisan operations in Western Ukraine. After his release from a prison camp, he studied theology and was ordained priest in 1923. His first pastorate was in the Carpathian region of Ukraine. In 1928 he emigrated to Canada and continued his spiritual work among the Ukrainian settlements of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In the latter province he organized, in 1932, the Brotherhood of Ukrainian Catholics which shortly became dominion-wide; and for the ten ensuing years he was the editor of its *Bulletin* and other publications. In 1946 he was appointed to serve as a diocesan director of immigration for displaced persons. The centre of his activities for many years was Winnipeg, where he now resides.

His literary activity began in Western Ukraine under the aegis of the Organization "Logos." Three collections of his verse, *The Meteors* (1924), *The Fanfares* (1931), and *The Canadian Rhapsody* (1959) were published respectively at Lviv, Chicago, and Winnipeg. In the zestful lyrics they contain are to be detected the elements of both symbolism and impressionism. Especially significant are his recent verses which prismatically reveal the vicissitudes and ordeals of Ukrainian pioneer life in Canada, as well as the staunch spirit of Canadianism with which the children and grandchildren of the early Ukrainian settlers have become permeated.

A CANADIAN RHAPSODY

Once the Carpathian land and the blue of its lakes were our chanting,
 Broideries varied and lovely and garnish of fur on the jackets,
 Sleeves that would glimmer afar with the shimmering hues of the rainbow,
 Catching the eyes of us all with the rapturous fabric of visions.
 There would the centuries pass with the ponderous pace of the victor;
 Blood of the people flowed forth, out of deep inexhaustible sources.
 Pruth¹ on its stones bore its song, of past glory and ancient devotion,
 Passing by ramparts of Dobush,² now covered with dust and with mosses.
 Then did we dream of acquiring our strength from Ukrainian annals,—
 Kiev, all-golden of domes, and mysterious gates of young Michael,
 Tumuli, mounds, and the bones, in them buried, of dutiful forebears,
 Sian's³ silver band, Peremishl, exuberant waters of Poprad,⁴
 Watering-places delightful, and villas built high in the Tatras⁵—
 These did we sing, and our bosoms were lifted in glad expectation,
 Hoping old times would revive in our songs and our epics eternal.

II

Then across oceans we ventured, and came to a world that was alien,
 Adamant wilderness covered with aspens a-tremble and maples,
 Meadows and hills that are silvered with bountiful carpets of wormwood.
 Taking a pick-axe in hands that were tough, from the sea we made highways,
 Cut through the forests for roads, that would lead to the limitless prairies,
 Over the bogs and the lakes and in bridging the depths of the rivers.
 Then in the prairie we planted three grains of the wheat we had cherished,
 Promptly it sprouted and yielded a harvest of fruit by the hundred,
 Gilding our glebe with its gold, in advance of the coming of winter.
 Into the wilderness granites, we burrowed and bored with our augers,
 Seeking the golden veins that shone in the depths for our seeking;
 Silver and nickel and copper, and zinc and the redness of iron
 Out of the depths we extracted and fashioned machines by our wisdom.
 Inky black rock we obtained from the heart of our dear mother Gea,
 Blue and mysterious flame in its burning we gazed at in wonder.
 Sanctified churches we built; in their confines we worshipped the Godhead,

¹The Pruth (or Prut), a river flowing through Bukovina.

²See p. 188, fn. 1 ("Dobush").

³Sian (or San), a river flowing through the Ukrainian city of Peremishl, in the western part of Galicia.

⁴The Poprad, a river flowing through the Lemko region of Western Ukraine.

⁵A high mountain range in the Carpathians, whose region abounds in health and summer resorts.

Graveyards grew broad with the crosses that carried our names on their crossbars.

Bricks on the prairies we baked, and we reared up the skyscrapers tawny,
Mocking the winds on the plains and mocking the frosts of December.
High in the capital raised, the bright vaults of our lofty cathedral,
Lulled with melodious bells, are resplendent with lights past description.
Names we have set on the roster, for all of the world to behold them:
God gives us honour, and strength, and authority over all creatures.
Sheer through the mountains we pierced and a cataract comes at our summons,

Formed by our will in the mountains and falling from crags we have fashioned.

Lakes we have made by our dams in the path of the currents of rivers; .
There we have reared up in masterly fashion our structures of concrete.

III

Come, let us sing a new song about Kitimat,⁶ Redwater also,
Bold Sherritt Gordon and Sudbury, sing of Lake Lyn and Ungava,—
Virginal, young and primordial, vast is the range of our country,
Oceans are set as its boundaries, northward its rigours are lethal—
Maidens in Canada's ardours of winter grow stern and full-breasted,
Bold and clear-eyed and unfathomed in labours and laughter of playtime—
Lads like the pine-tree grow sturdy, inured to the coldness of winter,
Clever to fashion all things with ingenious skill of the craftsman,
Cunning past words in their working, enduring as flint in their courage.
Fighting is light to their hands and the gaining of victories easy.
Young still and staunch, they will journey to countries of far-off adventure,
Bearing white Liberty's word and a heart that is hungry for Freedom,
Prone to teach others well-being and offer the presents of progress—
Europe remembers their names, and the seas and old Asia recall them—
Radiant still as the sun they will stand in their love unextinguished,
Justice and truth blaze anew in abiding regard for their glory,
Canada's name and renown will be carried in deathless remembrance.

⁶Kitimat and other Canadian localities mentioned here are some of the places where the Ukrainian workers supplied their labour, in mining, lumbering, agriculture, and other employment, thus helping to develop Canada industrially.

TO THE MAPLE LEAVES OF CANADA

The oceans are like eagles' wings,
The heart is like a sea.
The swelling breast is filled with power
By the Canadian lea.

The ploughland, black, unconquerable,
In sunlit beauty lies—
Its native glory has enflamed
The prairie eagle's eyes.

Upon the far fields, from above,
His drops of courage fall;
And Flanders poppies, red as blood,
The eagle's flight recall:

For he, the bright and lustrous bird,
Free-winged and full of pride,
For Canada—beyond the sea—
Has shed his blood and died . . .

The maple's heart is full of knots;
Its sinews fain would sing;
How proudly on the grassy plain
Its leaves are murmuring!

The blue waves splash in happy gusts—
The sea-mews' wings convoy . . .
And armoured vessels voyage home
With spirits full of joy.

The cranes return in serried flocks,
And gabbling marks the geese—
May maple leaves of Canada
Be sunlit and increase!

FORTY BELOW ZERO

A hidden hand has decked with haze
The forelocks of the trees,
And scattered pure and hoary down,
And set the lips a-wheeze—

Since early morning it has spread,
A setting for a hero—
Oh, what a masterpiece it is:
This forty below zero!

The homes have muffled up their throats;
With icicles they smother;
The windows have been wrapped in quilts
As by a kindly mother.
The mighty frost-strings now prepare
The music of a Nero.
The gusts will soon strike up a tune
At forty below zero!

Out on the plains the folks will come,
As hard as callouses—
If from the sun they get no warmth,
They'll take the snow's caress.
Chasing the cows behind the house,
The wind's a cavalero—
Oh, flee the wind, get under thatch,
At forty below zero!

The city like a candle grows
And softly breathes its fire;
Ten thousand eyes in sparkling light
Reflect the heavenly choir.
The steel has tensed its tingling breast,
The world is a chimera—
Only mankind knows no defeat
At forty below zero!

Mikita I. Mandryka

(1886-).

A scion of the old Zaporozhian Cossacks, Mandryka was born in the Dnieper region of Ukraine. He studied in Kiev, Sofia, and Prague, acquiring a varied education in agronomy, economics, sociology, law, and diplomacy. For a time, he was professor of law at the Ukrainian Free University in Prague, Czechoslovakia.

His political career in Europe was associated with the Socialist movement. During

the brief period of Ukraine's independence after World War I, he served in various official capacities under the Ukrainian Central Rada (Council). For some fifteen years previously, he had taken part in the co-operative movement in Ukraine. As a political figure, Mandryka was active in several diplomatic missions which in 1919 and 1920 took him to almost all parts of Asia.

In his first important collection of verse, *Songs About Anemone* (1917), he paid a passionate tribute to his youth; but his greatest development as a poet occurred after he had emigrated to Canada in 1928. His poetry encompasses a variety of moods, ranging from sensuous eroticism to philosophic musings, as he seeks to plumb the meaning of life in the apparent chaos of ideas and events that beset humanity in this age of storm and stress. His exotic lyrics written under the influence of his extensive travels are among his best. Another notable achievement is his poem "Canada," a monument of grateful recognition to his adopted land. In it he deals with the life of the Ukrainian settlers, their aims, aspirations, and achievements, and their gradual merging into the cultural and political life of their fellow-citizens of other national extractions. Historically and philosophically, Mandryka's poetry is of intrinsic worth, and presents a concise record of the emotional and social aspects of his life.

* * * *

The rains descended, and the blacksmith frost
Forged them to pearly tears of countless cost,
Stringing the brilliant beads in shining rows,
And decking all the town in crystal shows.

Now where a maze of copper wires sings
The forge of winter stretches silver strings;
And back and forth the blacksmith's fingers pass,
Decking the city out in silvered glass.

Alas, the woods are groaning, all dismayed;
And the white birches, wrapped in silver braid,
Were drooping, cold and mute, by terror racked . . .
Meanwhile the forest moaned, the forest cracked.

The heavy sheets of sleet, in such a vise,
Then writhed like dragons into braids of ice.
I heard, I heard, the trees' lament come after . . .
I heard, I heard, the frost's demonic laughter.

Great flakes of snow are falling overhead,
As if the forest leaves were being shed;
Where strings of pearls were hanging yesterday
Great shaggy tufts now cling in disarray.

It seems a tale—snow, snow, and yet more snow . . .
 All outlines vanish in the world below,—
 What human genius could not hope to do
 The playful frosts in easy grace bestrew,
 Then in the snow the frost softly down sinks;
 Nature stands silent in another gown . . .
 And weeping stirs the broken birches' crown.

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO¹

D'Annunzio desired, secure from pain,
 Dying, to flee corruption's foul persistence;
 Thus, at his final parting, he was fain
 To lapse like ether into non-existence.

The mob and all his friends prevented that:
 They placed him in a coffin, on a bier . . .
 With hollow grief they bore the autocrat
 Into death's palace and its gloom austere.

The genius of the word was powerless
 To rise up from the casket and its flowers
 And with a panic fear to dispossess
 The hydra-headed mob's marauding powers.

And so they all made certain of his death
 And laid his body in the heavy clay,
 That in his splendid coffin, void of breath,
 His silent flesh might slowly rot away.

But lo, the poet was no longer there:
 In a celestial song behold him rise!
 Like his last sonnet on the dreaming air,
 He'd flown away to lawns of paradise.

The messianic bard was here no longer,—
 Become a burning light, a heavenly flame,
 That from the spirit's portals, ever stronger,
 Kindles the rapture of undying fame.

¹Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938), Italian author and soldier.

Nothing remained on earth from man to mask it—
Only the candle's wax works out its turn,
The miserable booty of the casket
In which the spirit's wick had ceased to burn.

THE LAND OF LIBERTY

Niagara, a wonder of the world,
Here foams and thunders in a cataract . . .
My fortunes, Canada, in yours be furled!
With you forever be my spirit's pact!
Here, like this flood, at last have roared away
The deeds of Hiawatha, vanished now;
The heavy-souled, wild bison and their sway
Have yielded to the kingdom of the plough.
There where the whistling arrows flew with force
From beaded quivers, with unceasing motion
The rails of steel have run their serpent course
Across the land, from ocean to salt ocean . . .
Into a team two seas were now controlled,
Through forests, hills and plains the ties increase,—
Who will remember now the wounds of old
In such a land of beauty and of peace?!

Who will still listen to the groaning dead
Slain on these prairies countless years ago?—
On fields made rich by blood of white and red
The golden tides of wheat unceasing flow.

Here into battle went the British Lion
And Gallic Chanticleer in days long past;
Defeat was total then for France's scion,
Though the Romanic heritage would last,—
In peaceful union under common law
Their fortune for all days to come remains
On the ancestral lands of Iroquois
And the broad acres of Algonquin plains.
The brave, red warriors of earlier orders
Descend forever to oblivion's sea;
Their memory within their ancient borders
Barely survives where multitudes are free.

O Canada! Thou limitless expanse,
Country of freedom and assured success,
To all on earth who suffer dark mischance
Thou openest thy doors, with hope to bless.
The British came on ships across the deep,
The Irish from their hills of emerald green,
The Scotsmen brought incomparable sheep,
The men of Iceland all their skill marine,—
The Vikings' bold descendants, fierce and sharp,
Without their vizors and their warlike sabres,
Intent to conquer goldeye, pike and carp
In corded nets and their unceasing labours.
Industrious Teutons likewise hither came
To seek their golden fleece with zeal intense;
And French colonials of ancient fame
Established here their teeming settlements.
And many a humble Danton¹ hither sailed
And many a mute, unsullied Robespierre;¹
In lands of elk and bison they prevailed
And made Quebec La France d'Outremer.²
And may not sons of Ukraina's galleys
Come westward in their ships across the sea
Into vast forests and primeval valleys
Of Canada, the land of liberty?
For did not Manitoba in her day
Become one grainfield, and Saskatchewan
And broad Alberta show their rich array
Of harvests that in treasured glory shone?
Just as the fruitful Frenchman in Quebec
Has formed a native land beyond the main,
So may our sturdy people hope to deck
A New World model of our far Ukraine.
Let the eternal Will be glorified
And thanks be raised to God, whose generous hand
Our chains of slavery has cast aside,
Here in the freedom of this great New Land!

¹Leaders of the French Revolution.

²France beyond the sea.

Honoré Ewach

(1900-)

Ewach was born of peasant stock in Ukraine and came to Canada as a boy of nine. In 1929, he graduated in Arts from the University of Saskatchewan. He has been a lecturer on Ukrainian literature at the Peter Mohyla Ukrainian Institute in Saskatoon and at the Ukrainian Orthodox Seminary in Winnipeg, and has for many years been associate editor of the *Ukrainian Voice*. He has published several small volumes of verse.

ACROSS THE SPACES

Across the spaces of eternity,
A bullet made of porcelain I flee
Into the unknown distance, void and vast.
The air keeps rubbing at the bullet's pride,
Smoothing and polishing its cold outside
Until it turns to crystal at the last.

I shall not utterly be rubbed away,
But only alter slowly, day by day,
Into a diamond, most hard and fair.
And all this constant change throughout the years
Is ever for the better, it appears:
This is the end of life and this its care.

THE CHERRY-BLOOM FALLS

The cherry-bloom falls
On the highway dun,
And a mother yearns
For her prison'd son.

The willow-tree droops,
And the river sighs,
And a girl weeps low
Where her lover lies.

The peewit cries low
O'er her rifled nest

And the widow's son
In the earth at rest.

The periwinkle grows
A green living wreath
Where the heroes lie
In the earth beneath.

WILL YOU SO LIVE ?

Will you so live that all your days may pass
As fresh forever as the dreams of youth,
While all your thoughts, like flowers in springtime grass,
May by their beauty lure men on to truth?

Will you so live that you each burning day
May grow in mind, and in your soul upreach,
So that when centuries have passed away
Mankind may light its fires at your speech?

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