

LORD BYRON: MAZEPPA

edited by Peter Cochran



According to the draft manuscript, Byron started writing *Mazeppa* on April 2nd 1817, two months before starting *Childe Harold IV*, and finished it on September 26th 1818 – a long time to be writing such a relatively short poem. The composition of *Childe Harold IV*, *Beppo*, and *Don Juan* I interrupted its progress. Byron seems to have finished it rapidly, for he writes to Murray on September 24th that “[I] have *Mazeppa* to finish besides”,¹ and two days later has done so. He started the first canto of *Don Juan* on July 3rd 1818 and finished it on September 6th, twenty days before he finished *Mazeppa*. He started Canto II of *Don Juan* on December 13th. The overlap would account for the echoes of the later poem which we find in the one started earlier: but *Mazeppa* is as remarkable for the recollections it contains of previous works – *The Prisoner of Chillon* being first among them; as well as being unique in Byron’s work by itself.

The 1814 *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte* had already set up a parallel between Bonaparte and Charles XII of Sweden, Mazeppa’s master; this poem may, in dwelling on the anguish and isolation of Mazeppa himself, be intended as making a further parallel between Byron and Bonaparte.

Mary Shelley fair-copied it between September 30th to October 2nd 1818.² It was published, with the *Ode To Venice*, and with a prose fragment which upset Hobhouse, on June 28th 1819.

Copy-text for this edition is the rough draft, which is the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, collated with Mary Shelley’s fair copy, which is in the Brotherton Collection at the University of Leeds.

1: BLJ VI 71.

2: See *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, ed. Betty T. Bennett, I 228.

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CELUI qui remplissait alors cette place, était un gentilhomme Polonais, nommé Mazeppa, né dans le palatinat de Padolie; il avait été élevé page de Jean Casimir, et avait pris à sa cour quelque teinture des belles-lettres. Une intrigue qu'il eut dans sa jeunesse avec la femme d'un gentilhomme Polonais, ayant été découverte, le mari le fie lier tout nu sur un cheval farouche, et le laissa aller en cet état. Le cheval, qui était du pays de l'Ukraine, y retourna, et y porta Mazeppa, demi-mort de fatigue et de faim. Quelque paysans le secoururent: il resta long-tems parmi eux, et se signala dans plusieurs courses contre les Tartares. La supériorité de ses lumières lui donna une grande considération parmi les Cosaques: sa réputation s'augmentant de jour en jour, obligea le Czar à le faire Prince de l'Ukraine. .”—VOLTAIRE, *Histoire de Charles XII*, p.196.³

“Le roi fuyant et poursuivi eut son cheval tué sous lui; le Colonel Gieta, blessé, et perdant tout sa sang, lui donna le sien. Ainsi on remit deux fois à cheval, dans le suite, ce conquérant qui n'avait puy monter pendant la bataille.”—VOLTAIRE, *Histoire de Charles XII*, p.216.⁴

“Le roi alla par un autre chemin avec quelques cavaliers. Le carrosse, où il était, rompit la marche; on le remit à cheval. Pour comble de disgrâce, il s'égara pendant la nuit dans un bois; là, son courage ne pouvant plus suppléer à ses forces épuisées, les douleurs de sa blessure devenues plus insupportables par la fatigue, son cheval étant tombé de lassitude, il se coucha quelques heures au pied d'un arbre, en danger d'être surpris à tout moment par les vainqueurs qui le cherchaient de tout côtés.”—VOLTAIRE, *Histoire de Charles XII*, p.218.⁵

3: “The one who then filled up that place was a Polish gentleman, named Mazeppa, born in the Palatinate of Padolie; he had been brought up as a page of John Cazimir, and had acquired, at his court, some interest in *belles-lettres*. A youthful intrigue with the wife of a Polish gentleman having been discovered, the husband caused him to be bound stark naked on the back of a wild horse, and sent him forth in that condition. The horse, which was from the Ukraine, went back there, carrying Mazeppa, half-dead with exhaustion and hunger. Some peasants saved him; he remained a long time in their midst, and distinguished himself in several actions against the Tartars. His evident superiority gained him great respect among the Cossacks; his reputation, daily increasing, obliged the Tzar to make him Prince of the Ukraine.”—VOLTAIRE, *Histoire de Charles XII*, p.196.

4: “The king, fleeing from pursuit, had his horse killed under him; Colonel Gieta, wounded and losing blood, gave him his. Thus this conqueror, who had not been able to mount during the battle, was twice placed on a horse in its aftermath.”—VOLTAIRE, *Histoire de Charles XII*, p.216.

5: “The king, with some horsemen, took another route. The coach in which he was placed slowed progress; he was placed on a horse. To crown his humiliation, he got lost in a wood during the night; there, his courage no longer being able to compensate for his loss of strength, the pain of his injury made more insupportable by tiredness, his horse having fallen down from exhaustion, he rested for a few hours at the foot of a tree, in constant danger of being surprised by the victors, who were everywhere looking for him.”—VOLTAIRE, *Histoire de Charles XII*, p.218.

MAZEPPA

1.

'Twas after dread Pultowa's day,⁶
When Fortune left the royal Swede⁷ –
Around a slaughtered army lay,
No more to combat and to bleed.
The Power and Glory of the war, 5
Faithless as their vain votaries, Men,
Had passed to the triumphant Czar,⁸
And Moscow's walls were safe again –
Until a day more dark and drear,
And a more memorable year,⁹ 10
Should give to slaughter and to shame
A mightier host and haughtier name –
A greater wreck – a deeper fall,
A shock to One – a thunderbolt to all.¹⁰ –

2.

Such was the hazard of the die;¹¹ 15
The wounded Charles was taught to fly¹² –
By day and night, through field and flood,
Stained with his own and subjects' blood –
For thousands fell that flight to aid,
And not a voice was heard t'upbraid 20
Ambition in his humbled hour,
When Truth had naught to dread from Power.¹³

6: *dread Pultowa's day*: the battle of Poltava in southern Russia, on July 8th 1709, when

7: *the royal Swede*: King Charles XII of Sweden (1682-1718) with a force of 12,500, was defeated by

8: the triumphant Czar: Peter the Great (1672-1725) with a force four times as large. Byron gets his transliteration in part from Johnson, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, 210: *Hide, blushing Glory, hide Pultowa's Day ...* and his sense of the battle as a major cataclysm from Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII* (1731) Livre IV.

9: *a more memorable year*: 1812.

10: *A shock to One – a thunderbolt to all*: the defeat of Napoleon in Russia in 1812 was the beginning of his downfall – the genius, who had for Byron and many others appeared to herald a new age, overreached himself and ruined his and their hopes. A post-Vienna poem, *Mazeppa* is written in the shadow of his final exile on St Helena, and the restoration of all the corrupt regimes he had abolished.

11: *Such was the hazard of the die*: chance actually played less of a part at Poltava than the line would assert.

12: *The wounded Charles*: Charles XII had been wounded in the foot on June 28th. A ball had passed through his heel and lodged behind his toe, forcing him to be carried in a litter during the battle.

13: *And not a voice was heard t'upbraid / Ambition in his humbled hour, / When Truth had naught to dread from Power*: Byron had been told by Stendhal about the continued loyalty of Napoleon's troops on the retreat from Moscow. Here is Hobhouse's diary account of what he said, which helps to understand Byron's Charles XII and his defeated troops: *Beyle was in waiting on Napoleon on the Russian expedition. After the affair of "Maristudovitch" (or some such name) and when the cavalry was dismounted, Napoleon quite lost himself. He actually signed eight or ten decrees of advancement or some such things, "Pompée", and when Beyle took the occasion afterwards to say, "Your Majesty has made a slip of the pen here", he looked with a horrid grimace, and said "Ah yes," and tore the decree and signed another. He would never pronounce the word "Kaluga" but called it sometimes "Caligula", sometimes "Salamanca" – his attendants, who knew what he meant, went on writing or listening without making any remark. During the retreat he was always dejected – his horse not being able to stand on account of the ice, he was obliged to get off and walk with a white staff – there is a*

His horse was slain, and Gieta gave
 His own; and died the Russians' slave.¹⁴
 This too sinks after many a league¹⁵ 25
 Of well-sustained but vain fatigue –
 And in the depths of forests' darkling –
 The watchfires in the distance sparkling –
 The beacons of surrounding foes –
 A King must lay his limbs at length. 30
 Are these the laurels and repose
 For which the Nations strain their strength? –
 They laid him by a savage tree¹⁶
 In outworn Nature's agony;
 His wounds were stiff – his limbs were stark – 35
 The heavy hour was chill and dark;
 The fever in his blood forbade
 A transient slumber's fitful aid,
 And thus it was – but yet through all,
 Kinglike the monarch bore his fall, 40
 And made in this extreme of ill
 His pangs the vassals of his will¹⁷ –
 All silent and subdued were they,
 As once the Nations round him lay. –

French saying, "When a man is in misfortune that he takes the white stick". One of the six or seven people close to him happened to say out loud "Ah, voila l'Empereur qui marche avec le baton blanc". Instead of taking this in good part – he said gloomily "Oui messieurs, voilà les grandeurs humains". Mr de Beyle walked close to him for three hours – then he never spoke a word.

It is not true the army cried "A bas le manteau!" – on the contrary, everybody thought that his salvation depended on Napoleon – the whole army looked anxiously at him to see in [the] face what hopes he might form. Once or twice some soldiers cried as he passed, "Ce matin nous fait tuer tous!" He turned round and looked at the speakers – the soldiers burst into tears. The distress of the army was so great, that every man was half a fool – and many quite – even the bravest hearts gave way. Davout cried like a child. In twenty-four hours eighty-four generals of brigade and division came to headquarters weeping and screeching, "Ah, ma division – ah ma brigade!"

A dysentery seized on the army. The Prince Major-General Berthier, having pulled down his breeches for his occasions, could not button them again. Excelmans, who pulled off his gloves to do it, lost the use of one of his fingers instantly – the whole army which at Konigsberg amounted to 45,000 men who were half a day at stool ... (B.L. Add. Mss. 56537 110r.-102r.)

14: *His horse was slain, and Gieta gave / His own; and died the Russians' slave:* Voltaire records (see above, Advertisement, second paragraph) that a Colonel Gieta, who was dying, gave Charles his horse, enabling the king – who had been unable to ride during the battle – to escape. Voltaire does not record Gieta's death.

15: *This too sinks after many a league:* as will Mazeppa's at the end of his "ride": see 691.

16: *They laid him by a savage tree:* remotely suggests Calvary, but the evidence is from Voltaire.

17: *... made in this extreme of ill / His pangs the vassals of his will:* echoes the speech of the Spirit in the Hall of Arimanes at *Manfred*, II iv 160-4:

*Yet see – he mastereth himself – and makes
 His nature tributary to his will –
 Had he been one of us he would have made
 An awful Spirit. –*

3.

A band of chiefs – alas! how few 45
Since but the fleeting of a day
Had thinned it – but this wreck was true,
And chivalrous; upon the clay
Each sate him down all sad and mute
Beside his monarch and his steed – 50
For danger levels man and brute,¹⁸
And all are fellows in their need.
Among the rest Mazeppa¹⁹ made
His pillow in an old Oak's shade,
Himself as rough and scarce less old – 55
The Ukraine's Hetman,²⁰ calm and bold.
But first, outspent with this long course,
The Cossack Prince rubbed down his horse,
And made for him a leafy bed,
And smoothed his fetlocks and his mane, 60
And slacked his girth, and stripped his rein,
And joyed to hear how well he fed;
For until now he had the dread
His wearied courser might refuse
To browse beneath the midnight dews; 65
But he was hardy as his lord,
And little cared for bed and board –
But spirited and docile too,
Whate'er was to be done, would do,
Shaggy and swift – and strong of limb – 70
All Tartar-like he carried him,
Obeyed his voice, and came to call,
And knew him in the midst of all,
Though thousands were around, and Night,
Without a star, pursued her flight; 75
That Steed from Sunset until dawn
His chief would follow like a fawn. –

4.

This done, Mazeppa spread his cloak,
And laid his lance beneath his oak –
Felt if his arms in order good 80
The long day's march had well withstood –
If still the powder filled the pan,
And flints unloosened kept their lock;
His sabre's hilt and scabbard felt,
And whether they had chafed his belt; 85
And next the venerable man
From out his haversack and can

18: ... *his monarch and his steed – / For danger levels man and brute*: introduces the species-bonding theme which is to dominate the poem.

19: *Mazeppa*: Ivan Stepanovich Mazeppa (c.1644-1709) had been Cossack Hetman since 1687. Peter the Great had made him Prince of the Ukraine, but as Peter had started to curtail Cossack privileges, he had gone over to the Swedish side. Thus a renegado, of the kind Byron had written about in, for example, *The Siege of Corinth* (1816).

20: In Poland and Lithuania, the Hetman was the first among military leaders under the monarch.

Prepared and spread his slender stock,
 And to the monarch and his men
 The whole or portion offered then – 90
 With far less of inquietude
 Than courtiers at a banquet would.
 And Charles of this his slender share
 With smiles partook a moment there,²¹
 To force of cheer a greater show, 95
 And seem above both wounds and woe. –
 And then he said – “Of all our band,
 Though firm of heart and strong of hand
 In skirmish, march, or forage, none
 Can less have said or more have done, 100
 Than thee, Mazeppa – on the earth
 So fit a pair had never birth,
 Since Alexander’s days till now,
 As thy Bucephalus and thou.²²
 All Scythia’s fame to thine should yield 105
 For pricking on o’er flood and field.”
 Mazeppa answered – “Ill betide
 “The school wherein I learned to ride.” –
 Quoth Charles – “Old Hetman, wherefore so,
 Since thou hast learned the art so well?” 110
 Mazeppa said – “’Twere long to tell,
 And we have many leagues to go,
 With every now and then a blow,
 And ten to one at least the foe,
 Before our steeds may graze at ease 115
 Before the swift Borysthenes²³ –
 And, Sire, your limbs have need of rest,
 And I will be the Sentinel
 Of this your troop.” – “But I request,”
 Said Sweden’s monarch – “thou wilt tell 120
 This tale of thine, and I may reap
 Perchance from this the boon of sleep²⁴ –
 For at this moment from mine eyes
 The present hope of Slumber flies.”²⁵ –
 “Well, Sire, with such a hope, I’ll track 125
 My seventy years of memory back.
 I think ’twas in my twentieth spring –
 Aye, ’twas, when Casimir was king²⁶ –

21: *And Charles of this his slender share / With smiles partook a moment there:* Charles, like “Suwarrow” (Suvorov) in *Don Juan* VII-VIII, was famously Spartan in his habits, and part of his popularity lay in his refusal to ask his men to endure conditions which he was not prepared to put up with himself.

22: *... thy Bucephalus and thou:* Bucephalus was the horse of Alexander the Great. The relationship between Mazeppa and his own mount – as opposed to the one he is forced to “ride” in his tale – may have served Scott as model for that between Dugald Dalgetty – the mercenary protagonist of *A Legend of Montrose* (1819) – and his superbly-trained battle-horse. Dalgetty is proud of having fought for Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden.

23: *The Borysthenes* is the river Dnieper. Mazeppa refers to it again at 855.

24: *... I may reap / Perchance from this the boon of sleep:* the plan works. See the last line of the poem.

25: *... at this moment from mine eyes / The present hope of Slumber flies:* links Charles with such insomniac monarchs as Richard III, Henry IV and Macbeth.

John Casimir – I was his page
 Six summers in my earlier age; 130
 A learned monarch, faith, was he –
 And most unlike your Majesty –
 He made no wars, and did not gain
 New realms to have them back again –
 And (save debates in Warsaw’s Diet) 135
 He reigned in most unseemly quiet. –
 Not that he had no cares to vex –
 He loved the Muses and the Sex,
 And sometimes these so froward are,
 They made him wish himself at war; 140
 But soon, his wrath being o’er, he took
 Another mistress – or new book;
 And then he gave prodigious fêtes –
 All Warsaw gathered round his gates
 To gaze upon his splendid court, 145
 And dames and chiefs of princely port;
 He was the Polish Solomon –
 So sung his poets – all but one –
 Who, being unpensioned, made a satire,
 And boasted that he could not flatter. 150
 It was a court of jousts and mimes,
 Where every courtier tried at rhymes;
 Even I for once produced some verses,
 And signed my odes “Despairing Thyrsis”.²⁷ –
 There was a certain Palatine,²⁸ 155
 A Count of high and far descent,
 Rich as a Salt or silver mine; *
 And he was proud, ye may divine,
 As if from heaven he had been sent;
 He had such wealth in blood and ore 160
 As few could match beneath the throne –
 And he would gaze upon his store,
 And o’er his pedigree would pore,
 Until, by some confusion led,
 Which almost looked like want of head, 165
 He thought their merits were his own. – –
 His wife was not of his opinion;
 His junior she by thirty years,²⁹
 Grew daily tired of his dominion,
 And after wishes, hopes, and fears, 170
 To Virtue a few farewell tears,
 A restless dream or two, some glances
 At Warsaw’s youth, some songs, and dances –

26: ... when Casimir was king: John Casimir (1609-1672) was a Jesuit who was proclaimed King of Poland in 1649 and retired in 1670.

27: “Despairing Thyrsis”: standard classical name for a love-lorn shepherd. Compare Milton, *L’Allegro*, 83: *Where Corydon and Thyrsis meet*.

28: *a certain Palatine*: a Palatine nobleman had quasi-regal powers and privileges over the territory he held in fief from the actual monarch.

29: *His junior she by thirty years*: roughly the age-discrepancy between Teresa Guiccioli and her husband; a weird coincidence, for Byron and Teresa (whose name is that of Mazeppa’s lover) had not fallen in love when *Mazeppa* was written (April 2nd 1817-September 26th 1818). They first met on January 22nd 1818, but their affair did not start until April 1819.

Awaited but the usual chances,
 Those happy accidents which render 175
 The coldest dames so very tender. –
 To deck her Count with titles given,
 'Tis said, as passports into heaven;³⁰
 But, strange to say, they rarely boast
 Of these who have deserved them most. 180

* This comparison of a “salt mine” may perhaps be permitted to a Pole as the wealth of the country consists greatly in the Salt mines.³¹

5.

“I was a goodly stripling then –
 At seventy years I so may say
 That there were few, or boys or men,
 Who in my dawning time of day,
 Of vassal or of knight’s degree, 185
 Could vie in vanities with me;
 For I had strength, youth, gaiety –
 A port not like to this ye see,
 But smooth, as all is rugged now;
 For time, and war, and care have ploughed 190
 My very soul from out my brow;
 And thus I should be disavowed
 By all my kind and kin, could they
 Compare my day and yesterday;
 This change was wrought, too, long e’er Age 195
 Had ta’en my features for his page. –
 With years, ye know, have not declined
 My strength, my courage, or my mind,
 Or at this hour I should not be
 Telling old tales beneath a tree, 200
 With starless skies my canopy. –
 But let me on – Theresa’s³² form –
 Methinks it glides before me now,
 Between me and yon chestnut’s bough;
 The memory is so quick and warm, 205
 And yet I find no words to tell
 The Shape of her I loved so well.
 She had the Asiatic eye,³³

30: *To deck her Count with titles given, / 'Tis said, as passports into heaven:* compare *Don Juan*, V 154 7-8: *To no men are such cordial greetings given / As those whose wives have made them fit for heaven.* No editor is able to find any writer or aphorism, according to whom or which, cuckolds may inherit eternal bliss. Both Coleridge and DJP, annotating the *Don Juan* lines, refer to the “horns of salvation” worn by Michaelangelo’s Moses; both Coleridge and McGann refer to these lines in *Mazepa*. None refer to the words of Benedick to Don Pedro at *Much Ado About Nothing* V iv, 118-19: *Prince, thou art sad. Get thee a wife, get thee a wife. There is no staff more reverend than one tipped with horn.*

31: Byron’s note to 157: compare *Don Juan* X, 58 1-2:

*They journeyed on through Poland, and through Warsaw,
 Famous for Mines of Salt, and Yokes of Iron ...*

32: ... *Theresa’s form:* the spelling with an “h” is common to both manuscripts (Teresa Guiccioli’s Christian name lacked it).

Such as our Turkish Neighbourhood
 Hath mingled with our Polish blood, 210
 Dark as above us is the sky –
 But through it stole a tender light
 Like the first Moonrise at Midnight –
 Large, dark, and swimming in the stream
 Which seemed to melt to its own beam – 215
 All love, half languor, and half fire,³⁴
 Like Saints that at the Stake expire³⁵ –
 And lift their raptured looks on high
 As though it were a joy to die.
 A brow like a Midsummer lake, 220
 Transparent with the Sun therein,
 When waves no murmur dare to make,
 And Heaven beholds her face within –
 A cheek and lip – but why proceed? –
 I loved her then – I love her still – 225
 And such as I am love indeed
 In fierce extremes – in good and ill.³⁶
 But still we love even in our rage,
 And haunted to our very age
 With the vain shadow of the past – 230
 As is Mazeppa to the last. – – –

33: *She had the Asiatic eye ... Dark as above us is the sky:* the description recalls Byron's Venetian mistress Margarita Cogni.

34: *All love, half languor, and half fire:* compare the description of Italian women at *Beppo*, Stanza 45:

*I like the women too (Forgive my folly!)
 From the rich peasant-cheek of ruddy Bronze,
 And large black eyes, that flash on you a volley
 Of rays that say a thousand things at once,
 To the high Dama's brow, more melancholy,
 But clear, and with a wild and liquid Glance –
 Heart on her lips, and Soul within her eyes,
 Soft as her Clime, and Sunny as her Skies.*

35: At this point in the rough draft occur three erased lines: *<And><something - which was not desire> / <But would have been, save for the Soul> / <Which gently chastened down the whole>*. Byron used them in his description of Donna Julia at *Don Juan* I 60, 5-8:

*Her Eye (I'm very fond of handsome eyes)
 Was large and dark, suppressing half its fire
 Until she spoke, then through its soft disguise
 Flashed an expression more of pride than ire,
 And love than either; and there would arise
 A Something in them which was not desire,
 But would have been, perhaps, but for the Soul
 Which struggled through and chastened down the whole.*

These occur in the *Don Juan* rough draft without erasure.

36: *And such as I am love indeed / In fierce extremes – in good and ill:* compare *The Giaour*, 1099-1102:

*The cold in clime are cold in blood,
 Their love can scarce deserve the name;
 But mine is like the lava flood
 That boils in Ætna's breast of flame.*

6.

“We met, we gazed, I saw and sighed –
 She did not speak, and yet replied –
 There are ten thousand tones and signs
 We hear and see, but none defines – 235
 Involuntary sparks of thought
 Which strike from out the heart o’erwrought,
 And form a strange intelligence,
 Alike mysterious and intense,
 Which link the burning chain that binds, 240
 Without their will, young hearts and minds,
 Conveying, as the electric wire,
 We know not how, the absorbing fire. –
 I saw and sighed – in silence wept –
 And still reluctant distance kept, 245
 Until I was made known to her,
 And we might then and there confer
 Without suspicion – then, even then,
 I longed, and was resolved to speak,
 But on my lips they died again, 250
 The accents tremulous and weak³⁷ –
 Until one hour. There is a Game,
 A frivolous and foolish play,³⁸
 Wherewith we wile away the day –
 It is – I have forgot the name – 255
 And we to this, it seems, were set,
 By some strange chance which I forget;
 I recked not if I won or lost;
 It was enough for me to be
 So near to hear, and oh! to see 260
 The being whom I loved the most. –
 I watched her as a Sentinel
 (May ours this dark night watch as well!)
 Until I saw, and thus it was,
 That she was pensive, nor perceived 265
 Her occupation, nor was grieved
 Nor glad to lose or gain, but still
 Played on for hours, as if her will
 Yet bound her to the place, though not
 That hers might be the winning lot; 270
 Then through my brain the thought did pass,
 Even as a flash of lightning there,
 That there was Something in her air
 Which would not doom me to despair –
 But on the thought my words broke forth, 275
 All incoherent as they were –
 Their eloquence was little worth,
 But yet she listened – ’tis enough;
 Who listens once will listen twice;
 Her heart, be sure, is not of ice, 280

37: *But on my lips they died again, / The accents tremulous and weak:* anticipates Don Juan in love with Julia.

38: *There is a Game, / A frivolous and foolish play:* game unnamed because irrelevant.

And one refusal no rebuff.

7.

“I loved, and was beloved again;
They tell me, Sire, you never knew
Those gentle frailties – if ’tis true,³⁹
I shorten all my joy or pain; 285
To you ’twould seem absurd as vain;
But all men are not born to reign,
Or o’er their passions, or as you,
Thus o’er themselves and nations too.
I am – or rather *was* – a Prince, 290
 A Chief of thousands, and could lead
 Them on where each would foremost bleed,
But could not o’er myself evince
 The like controul; but to resume –
I loved, and was beloved again; 295
 In sooth – it is a happy doom,
But yet, where happiest, ends in pain. –
 We met in secret, and the hour
 Which led me to that Lady’s bower
 Was fiery Expectation’s dower. 300
My days and nights were nothing – all
Except that hour, which doth recall,
In the long lapse from youth to age,
 No other like itself – I’d give
 The Ukraine back again to live 305
It o’er once more, and be a Page,
The happy Page who was the Lord
Of one soft heart and his own Sword,
And had no other gem nor wealth
Save nature’s gift of youth and health; 310
We met in secret – doubly sweet,
Some say, they find it so to meet;
I know not that – I would have given
 My life but to have called her mine
In the full view of earth and heaven, 315
 For I did oft and long repine
That we could only meet by stealth. –

8.

“For lovers there are many eyes,
 And such there were on us; the Devil
 On such occasions should be civil – 320
The Devil – I’m loathe to do him wrong –
 It might be some untoward Saint,
Who would not be at rest too long,
 But to his pious bile gave vent –
But one fair night, some lurking spies 325
Surprized and seized us both. –

39: *They tell me, Sire, you never knew / Those gentle frailties:* Charles XII seems never to have been afflicted with sexual desire of any orientation, but to have found fulfilment solely in warfare.

The Count was something more than wroth –
 I was unarmed; but if in steel,
 All *cap-à-pé* from head to heel,⁴⁰
 What 'gainst their numbers could I do? 330
 'Twas near his castle, far away
 From city or from succour near,⁴¹
 And almost on the break of day;
 I did not think to see another –
 My moments seemed reduced to few, 335
 And with one prayer to Mary Mother,
 And, it may be, a Saint or two,
 As I resigned me to my fate –
 They led me to the Castle Gate;
 Theresa's doom I never knew – 340
 Our lot was henceforth separate. –
 An angry man, ye may opine,
 Was he, the proud Count Palatine,
 And he had reason good to be;
 But he was most enraged lest such 345
 An accident should chance to touch
 Upon his future Pedigree;
 Nor less amazed, that such a blot
 His noble Scutcheon should have got,
 While he was highest of his line; 350
 Because unto himself he seemed
 The first of men, nor less, he deemed,
 In others' eyes, and most in mine. –
 'Sdeath! with a Page! – perchance a King
 Had reconciled him to the thing – 355
 But with a stripling of a Page –
 I felt, but cannot paint, his rage. –

9.

“‘Bring forth the horse!’ The horse was brought;
 In truth, he was a noble Steed,
 A Tartar of the Ukraine breed, 360
 Who looked as though the Speed of thought
 Were in his limbs – but he was wild,
 Wild as the wild-deer, and untaught,
 With spur and bridle undefiled;⁴²
 'Twas but a day he had been caught, 365
 And snorting with erected mane
 And struggling fiercely but in vain,
 In the full foam of wrath and dread,
 To me the Desart-born was led. –
 They bound me on, that menial throng, 370
 Upon his back with many a thong,
 Then loosed him with a sudden lash –

40: *Cap-à-pé* means “from head to heel”: see *Hamlet*, I, ii, 200.

41: Line 332 is without a rhyme.

42: ... *he was wild, / Wild as the wild-deer, and untaught, / With spur and bridle undefiled*: the horse upon which the historical Mazeppa was tied was one of his own mounts, which, despite what Voltaire and Byron write, took him straight home – a short distance.

Away! – Away! – and on we dash! –
Torrents less rapid and less rash.

10.

“Away! – Away! – my breath was gone – 375
I saw not where he hurried on –
'Twas scarcely yet the break of day,
And on he foamed – Away – Away! –
The last of human sounds which rose
As I was darted from my foes 380
Was the wild shout of savage laughter,
Which on the wind came roaring after,
A moment from that rabble-rout;
 With sudden wrath I wrenched my head,
 And snapped the cord which to the mane 385
 Had bound my neck in lieu of rein,
And, writhing half my form about,
 Howled back my curse; but 'midst the tread,
The thunder of my courser's speed,
Perchance they did not hear nor heed, 390
It vexes me – for I would fain
Have paid their insult back again;
I paid it well in after days –
There is not of that castle gate, 395
Its drawbridge and portcullis weight,⁴³
Stone, bar, moat, bridge, or barrier left,
Nor of its fields a blade of grass,
 Save what grows on a ridge of wall
 Where stood the hearth-stone of the hall;⁴⁴
And many a time ye there might pass 400
Nor dream that e'er that fortress was.
I saw its turrets in a blaze⁴⁵ –

43: *There is not of that castle gate, / Its drawbridge and portcullis weight, / Stone, bar, moat, bridge, or barrier left ...:* recalls the description of Hassan's destroyed palace at *The Giaour*, 287-98:

*The steed is vanished from the stall,
No serf is seen in Hassan's hall;
The lonely Spider's thin grey pall
Waves slowly widening o'er the wall;
The Bat build in his Haram bower;
And in the fortress of his power
The Owl usurps the beacon-tower;
The wild-dog howls o'er fountain's brim,
With baffled thirst, and famine, grim,
Foe the stream has shrunk from its marble bed,
Where the weeds and the desolate dust are spread.*

This would parallel Leila's betrayal of Hassan with the Giaour and Theresa's of the Count with Mazeppa; but where the desolation in the earlier poem is tragic, Mazeppa's sufferings allow him to gloat over what he achieved.

44: ... *the hearth-stone of the hall:* the destruction of home is an important theme in Byron, as in Homer or Virgil. At *Don Juan* I 36, 4-6, Byron comments of the self-ruined Don José, *It was a trying moment that which found him / Standing alone beside his desolate hearth, / Where all his household Gods lay shivered round him.* *Don Juan* I was sent to London in the same packet as *Mazeppa*. Compare Lambro at *Don Juan* III Stanzas 51-2, *Marino Faliero* at III ii 361-4, and Byron's own experience, as recorded at BLJ VI 69. But, as with the lines previously noted, the perspective is here reversed, and the ruin is seen from the viewpoint of the perpetrator.

Their crackling battlements all cleft –
 And the hot lead pour down like rain
 From off the scorched and blackening roof, 495
 Whose thickness was not vengeance-proof.
 They little thought, that day of pain,
 When launched, as on the lightning's flash,
 They bade me to destruction dash,
 That one day I should come again, 410
 With twice five thousand horse, to thank
 The Count for his uncourteous ride.
 They played me there a bitter prank
 When, with the wild horse for my guide,
 They bound me to his foaming flank; 415
 At length I played them one as frank –
 For Time at last sets all things even,
 And if we do but watch the hour,
 There never yet was human power
 Which could evade, if unforgiven, 420
 The patient search – and vigil long –
 Of him who treasures up a wrong. –

11.

“Away! Away! my steed and I,
 Upon the pinions of the wind,
 All human dwellings left behind; 425
 We sped like meteors through the sky,
 When with its crackling sound the Night
 Is chequered with the Northern light⁴⁶ –
 Town – village – none were on our track,
 But a wild plain of far extent, 430
 And bounded by a forest black
 And, save the scarce-seen battlement
 On distant heights of some stronghold
 Against the Tartars built of old,
 No trace of man – the year before 435
 A Turkish army had marched o'er,
 And where the Spahi's hoof hath trod
 The Verdure flies the bloody sod.⁴⁷
 The sky was dull, and dim, and grey,
 And a low breeze crept moaning by 440

45: Byron delays some rhymes: line 394 rhymes with 402, and 397 with 403.

46: ... *the sky, / When with its crackling sound the Night / Is chequered with the Northern light*: for other references to the Aurora Borealis, see *Don Juan* VII 2, 3, XII 82, 5-6, and *The Vision of Judgement* Stanza 27.

47: ... *where the Spahi's hoof hath trod / The Verdure flies the bloody sod*: the Spahi were Turkish cavalry. Compare *The Siege of Corinth* 32 and, especially, 645-52:

*Tartar, and Spahi, and Turcoman,
 Strike your tents, and throng to the van;
 Mount ye, spur ye, skirr the plain,
 That the fugitive may flee in vain,
 When he breaks from the town; and none escape,
 Aged or young, in the Christian shape;
 While your fellows on foot, in a fiery mass,
 Bloodstain the breach through which they pass.*

I could have answered with a sigh,
 But fast we fled – Away! Away! –
 And I could neither sigh nor pray,
 And my cold sweat-drops fell like rain
 Upon the courser’s bristling mane; 445
 But, snorting still with rage and fear,
 He flew upon his far career.
 At times I almost thought, indeed,
 He must have slackened in his speed –
 But no – my bound and slender frame 450
 Was nothing to his angry Might,
 And merely like a spur became.
 Each motion which I made to free
 My swoln limbs from their agony
 Increased his fury and affright; 455
 I tried my voice – ’twas faint and low,
 But yet he swerved as from a blow;
 And, starting to each accent, sprang
 As from a sudden trumpet’s Clang;
 Meantime my cords were wet with gore, 460
 Which oozing through my limbs ran o’er;
 And in my tongue the thirst became
 A something fierier far than flame. –

12.

“We neared the wild wood; ’twas so wide,
 I saw no bounds on either side; 465
 ’Twas studded with old sturdy trees,
 That bent not to the roughest breeze
 Which howls down from Siberia’s waste,
 And strips the forest in its haste –
 But these were few and far between, 470
 Set thick with shrubs more young and green,
 Luxuriant with their annual leaves,
 Ere Strown by those autumnal Eves
 That nip the forest foliage dead,
 Discoloured with a lifeless red 475
 Which stands thereon like stiffened gore
 Upon the slain when battle’s o’er –
 And some long Winter’s night hath shed
 Its frost o’er every tombless head,
 So cold and stark, the Raven’s beak 480
 May peck, unpierced each frozen cheek:
 ’Twas a wild waste of Underwood,
 And here and there the Chestnut stood,
 The strong Oak, and the hardy Pine –
 But far apart – and well it were, 485
 Or else a different lot were mine;
 The boughs gave way, and did not tear
 My limbs; and I found strength to bear
 My wounds, already seared with cold;
 My bonds forbade to loose my hold; 490
 We rustled through the leaves like wind –
 Left shrubs, and trees, and wolves behind –

By night I heard them on the track –
 Their troop came hard upon our back
 With their long gallop, which can tire 495
 The hound's deep hate, and Hunter's fire;
 Where'er we flew they followed on,
 Nor left us with the morning Sun;
 Behind I saw them, scarce a rood,
 At day-break winding through the wood, 500
 And through the night had heard their feet
 Their stealing, rustling step repeat –
 Oh! how I wished for spear or sword,
 At least to die amidst the horde
 And perish, if it must be so, 505
 At bay, destroying many a foe!
 When first my courser's race begun,
 I wished the goal already won –
 But now I doubted Strength and Speed –
 Vain doubt! his swift and Savage breed 510
 Had nerved him like the mountain roe;
 Nor faster falls the blinding Snow
 Which whelms the peasant near the door
 Whose threshold he shall cross no more,
 Bewildered with the dazzling blast, 515
 Than through the forest paths he past –
 Untired – untamed – and worse than wild,
 All furious as a favoured child
 Balked of its wish, or, fiercer still,
 A Woman piqued, who has her will.⁴⁸ – 520

13.

The wood was past – 'twas more than Noon,
 But chill the air, although in June;
 Or it might be my veins ran cold –
 Prolonged Endurance tames the bold,
 And I was then, not what I seem, 525
 But headlong as a wintry stream,
 And wore my feelings out before
 I well could count their causes o'er;
 And what with fury, fear, and wrath,
 The tortures which beset my path, 530
 Cold, hunger, Sorrow, shame, distress,
 Thus bound in Nature's nakedness –
 Sprung from a race whose rising blood,
 When stirred beyond its calmer mood,
 And trodden hard upon, is like 535
 The rattle-Snake's in act to strike –
 What marvel if this outworn trunk
 Beneath its woes a moment sunk?
 The earth gave way, the skies rolled round,
 I seemed to sink upon the ground, 540
 But erred, for I was fastly bound.

48: ... *fiercer still*, / *A Woman piqued, who has her will*: a rare example of Byron nudging the reader by making a metaphor into a simile (horse = woman).

My heart turned sick – my brains grew sore,
 And throbb'd awhile, then beat no more –
 The Skies spun like a mighty wheel;
 I saw the trees like drunkards reel, 545
 And a slight flash sprang o'er my eyes,
 Which saw no farther – he who dies
 Can die no more than then I died,⁴⁹
 O'ertortured by that ghastly ride.⁵⁰
 I felt the blackness come and go, 550
 And strove to wake, but could not make
 My senses climb up from below;
 I felt as on a plank at sea,
 When all the waves that dash o'er thee
 At the same time upheave and whelm 555
 And hurl thee towards a desert realm;⁵¹
 My undulating life was as
 The fancied lights that flitting pass
 Our shut eyes in deep Midnight – when
 Fever begins upon the brain. 560
 But soon it passed, with little pain,
 But a confusion worse than such –
 I own that I should deem it much
 Dying to feel the same again,
 And yet I do suppose we must 565
 Feel far more ere we turn to dust;
 No matter – I have bared my brow
 Full in death's face – before, and now.

14.

“My thoughts came back – where was I? – cold,
 And numb, and giddy – pulse by pulse 570
 Life reassumed its lingering hold,
 And throb by throb, till grown a pang,
 Which for a moment would convulse,
 My blood reflowed, though thick and chill;
 My ear with uncouth noises rang – 575

49: ... *he who dies / Can die no more than then I died*: compare *The Prisoner of Chillon*, 227-8: *I know not why / I could not die ...*

50: *O'ertortured by that ghastly ride*: E.H.Coleridge and McGann compare the crocodile words of Geraldine at Coleridge's *Christabel*, I 216-17: *Alas! said she, this ghastly ride – / Dear lady! it hath wildered you!* Vampire-Geraldine's relationship with the bewitched Christabel is quite different from that between Mazeppa and his enforced steed, neither of whom has entered into the bond willingly.

51: *I felt as on a plank at sea, / When all the waves that dash o'er thee / At the same time upheave and whelm / And hurl thee towards a desert realm*: compare *Don Juan II Stanza 107* (soon to be written):

*Nor yet had he arrived but for the Oar,
 Which, providentially for him, was washed
 Just as his feeble Arms could strike no more,
 And the hard wave o'erwhelmed him as 'twas dashed
 Within his grasp; he clung to it, and sore
 The Waters beat while he thereto was lashed;
 At last, with swimming, wading, scrambling, he
 Rolled on the beach, half Senseless, from the Sea ...*

as in Juan's case, Mazeppa's torture will eventually be relieved by a woman's tenderness. See below, Part 19, note.

My heart began once more to thrill –
 My Sight returned, though dim, alas!
 And thickened as it were with Glass;
 Methought the dash of waves was nigh –
 There was a gleam too of the sky, 580
 Studded with stars – it is no dream –
 The Wild Horse swims the wilder stream!
 The bright broad river's gushing tide
 Sweeps winding onward far and wide,
 And we are halfway struggling o'er 585
 To yon unknown and silent shore –
 The waters broke my hollow trance,
 And with a temporary strength
 My stiffened limbs were rebaptized⁵² –
 My Courser's broad breast proudly braves 590
 And dashes off the ascending waves
 And onward we advance!
 We reach the slippery shore at length –
 A haven I but little prized,
 For all behind was dark and drear, 595
 And all before us Night and fear.
 How many hours of night or day
 In those suspended pangs I lay
 I could not tell; I scarcely knew⁵³
 If this were human breath I drew. – 600

15.

“With glossy skin, and dripping mane,
 And reeling limb, and reeking flank,
 The wild steed's sinewy nerves still strain
 Up the repelling bank.⁵⁴ –

52: *The waters broke my hollow trance, / And with a temporary strength / My stiffened limbs were rebaptized:* McGann compares the revivifying effect which water has at Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, V Stanzas 2-3:

*The silly buckets on the deck,
 That had so long remained,
 I dreamt that they were filled with dew,
 And when I awoke, it rained.*

*My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
 My garments all were dank;
 Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
 And still my body drank.*

53: *How many hours of night or day / In those suspended pangs I lay / I could not tell:* E.H.Coleridge compares Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 393-394:

*How long in that same fit I lay,
 I have not to declare.*

McGann tries to follow him, but gets the line-numbering wrong, referring instead to “201-2”. Byron had already used the idea of time which suffering has made irrelevant, at *The Prisoner of Chillon* 366-369:

*It might be months, or years, or days –
 I kept no count – I took no note,
 I had no hope my eyes to raise
 And clear them of their dreary mote.*

We gain the top – a boundless plain	605
Spreads through the shadow of the night,	
And onward, onward, onward seems,	
Like precipices in our dreams,	
To stretch beyond the sight;	
And here and there a speck of white,	610
Or scattered spot of dusky Green,	
In masses broke into the light,	
As rose the Moon upon my right, ⁵⁵	
But nought distinctly seen	
In the dim waste would indicate	615
The omen of a cottage gate;	
No twinkling taper from afar –	
Stood like a hospitable Star –	
Not even an ignis fatuus rose	
To make him merry with my Woes ⁵⁶ –	620

54: “*With glossy skin, and dripping mane, / And reeling limb, and reeking flank, / The wild steed’s sinewy nerves still strain / Up the repelling bank:* the repetition and physicality here may owe something to Ugo Foscolo’s 1799 poem *A Luigia Pallavicini caduta da cavallo*:

*Invan presaghi i venti
il polveroso agghiacciano
petto e le reni ardenti
dell’inquieto alipede,
accresce impeto al corso.*

*Ardon gli sguardi, fuma
la bocca, agita l’ardua
testa, vola la spuma,
ed i manti volubili
lorda, e l’incerto freno,
ed il candido seno;*

*e il sudor piove, e i crini
sul collo irti svolazzano,
suonan gli antri marini
allo incalzato scalpito
della zampa che caccia
polve e sassi in sua traccia.*

*Già dal lito si slancia
sordo ai clamori e al fremito,
già già fino all pancia
nuota ...*

[*Foreseeing in vain, the winds froze the dusty chest and burning haunches of the restless Pegasus, for the bit, chafing it, gave greater impulse to its flight. / Its glances burn, its mouth steams, the proud heads shakes, foam flies, and covers the rider’s flying skirts, and insecure bridle, and pale bosom; / sweat pours down, the mane flutters on the bristling neck, the sea-caves resound to the frenzied beating hoof which throws up dust and stones from its track. / Already it throws itself from the shore, deaf to the rider’s cries and trembling; now, now, it swims up to the belly ...*] Luigia Pallavicini – seriously injured in the riding accident – had been Foscolo’s lover. Byron may have been studying Foscolo’s work in 1817, for he met Foscolo’s friend Pindemonte, and used his 1807 poem *Dei Sepolcri* as a massive subtext to *Childe Harold IV*. The sexual power of Foscolo’s imagery in *Luigia Pallavicini* would not have escaped his attention.

55: *As rose the Moon upon my right:* McGann compares Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 83: *The Sun now rose upon the right ...* each celestial body having as little effect on the protagonist’s agony as the other.

56: *Not even an ignis fatuus rose / To make him merry with my Woes:* one of Byron’s favourite images rendered still more striking by negative use: Mazeppa doesn’t even have a will-o’-the-wisp to cheer

That very cheat had cheered me then,
 Although detected, welcome still,
 Reminding me, through every ill,
 Of the abodes of men: –



16.

“Onward we went, but slack and slow; His savage force at length o’erspent, The drooping courser faint and low All feebly foaming went – A sickly infant had had power To guide him forward in that hour –	625 630
But useless all to me, His new born tameness nought availed – My limbs were bound – my force had failed, Perchance, had they been free: With feeble effort still I tried To rend the bonds so starkly tied, But still it was in vain – My limbs were only wrung the more, And soon the idle strife gave o’er, Which but prolonged their pain.	 635 640
The dizzy race seemed almost done, Although no Goal was nearly won; Some streaks announced the Coming Sun – How slow, alas, he came! Methought that mist of dawning grey	 645

him up. For other examples, see *To a Youthful Friend* (CPW I 221) 68; *The Prisoner of Chillon* 34-35; *Manfred* I i 195; *Don Juan* VII 46 5-8, VIII 32, 4-5, XI 27, 5-8 and XV 54 6; *The Vision of Judgement* 105, 5-6; *Werner* III iii 40; and *The Deformed Transformed* I i 477 plus following stage direction.

Would never dapple into day –
 How heavily it rolled away
 Before the Eastern flame
 Rose crimson, and deposed the Stars,
 And called the radiance from their Cars, 650
 And filled the Earth deep from his throne
 With lonely lustre all his own.

17.

“Up rose the Sun; the Mists were curled
 Back from the solitary world,⁵⁷
 Which lay around, behind, before – 655
 What boot it to traverse o’er
 Plain, forest, river? Man nor brute,
 Nor dint of hoof, nor print of foot,
 Lay in the wild luxuriant soil;
 No sign of travel – none of toil – 660
 The very air was mute,
 And not an Insect’s shrill small horn,⁵⁸
 Nor matin bird’s new voice was borne
 From herb nor thicket; many a verst,⁵⁹
 Panting as if his heart would burst, 665
 The weary brute still staggered on,
 And still we were, or seemed, alone.
 At length, while reeling on our way,
 Methought I heard a courser neigh
 From out yon tuft of blackening firs; 670
 Is it the wind those branches stirs? –
 No – no – from out the forest prance
 A trampling troop. I see them come –
 In one vast squadron they advance –
 I strove to cry – my lips were dumb⁶⁰ – 675
 The steeds rush on in plunging pride,
 But where are they the reins to guide?
 A thousand horse and none to ride! –
 With flowing tail, and flying mane,
 Wide nostrils never stretched by pain, 680

57: “Up rose the Sun; the Mists were curled / Back from the solitary world: McGann compares the more relentless Coleridge, at *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 83-5:

*The Sun now rose upon the right:
 Out of the sea came he,
 Still hid in mist, and on the left
 Went down into the sea.*

58: ... an Insect’s shrill small horn: both E.H.Coleridge and McGann compare Milton, *Lycidas*, 28: *What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn ...*

59: ... many a verst: a verst is a Russian measure, equivalent to two-thirds of a mile. See *Don Juan* VII 9, 7.

60: *I strove to cry – my lips were dumb:* McGann compares the much more lurid effect of Coleridge, at *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, III Stanza 4:

*With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
 We could nor laugh nor wail;
 Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
 I bit my arm, I sucked my blood,
 And cried, A sail, a sail!*

Mouths bloodless to the bit or rein,
 And feet that iron never shod,
 And flanks unscarred by spur or rod –
 A thousand horse – the wild – the free,
 Like Waves that follow o'er the Sea 685
 Came thickly thundering on,
 As if our faint approach to meet.
 The sight re-nerved my courser's feet –
 A moment staggering, feebly fleet,
 A moment with a faint low neigh 690
 He answered, and then fell;
 With gasps and glazing eyes he lay,
 And reeking limbs immoveable –
 His first and last career is done!
 On came the troop – they saw him stoop – 695
 They saw me strangely bound along
 His back with many a bloody thong –
 They stop – they start – they snuff the air –
 Gallop a moment here and there –
 Approach, retire, wheel round and round, 700
 Then plunging back with sudden bound,
 Headed by one black mighty Steed,
 Who seemed the Patriarch of his breed,⁶¹
 Without a single speck or hair
 Of white upon his shaggy hide; – 705
 They snort – they foam – neigh – swerve aside,
 And backward to the forest fly
 By instinct from a human eye.⁶² – – –
 They left me there, to my despair,⁶³

61: ... *the Patriarch of his breed*: compare the ram at *Don Juan III* 32, described as *The patriarch of the flock* ...

62: *They snort – they foam – neigh – swerve aside, / And backward to the forest fly / By instinct from a human eye*: the idea may be from the description of Jacques and the wounded deer at *As You Like It*, II I, 52-7:

*Anon, a careless herd,
 Full of the pasture, jumps along by him
 And never stays to greet him. "Aye," quoth Jaques,
 "Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens;
 'Tis just the fashion. Wherefore do you look
 Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?"*

63: can be compared with the similar picture of terminal isolation and despair described in *The Prisoner of Chillon*, Part 9:

*What next befell me then and there
 I know not well – I never knew,
 First came the loss of light and air,
 And then of darkness too;
 I had no thought, no feeling – none;
 Among the stones I stood – a Stone,
 And was – scarce conscious what I wist –
 As shrubless Craggs within the mist,
 For all was blank, and bleak, and grey;
 It was not night – it was not day –
 It was not even the dungeon-light
 So hateful to my heavy sight,
 But vacancy – absorbing space,*

Linked to the dead and stiffening wretch 710
 Whose lifeless limbs beneath me stretch,
 Relieved from that unwonted weight
 From whence I could not extricate
 Nor him nor me – and there we lay,
 The dying on the dead; 715
 I little deemed another day
 Would see my houseless, helpless head.⁶⁴ – –
 And there from Noon till Twilight bound
 I felt the heavy hours toil round,
 With just enough of life to see 720
 My last of Suns go down on me,
 In hopeless certainty of mind
 That makes us feel at length resigned
 To that which our foreboding Years
 Presents the worst and last of fears 725
 Inevitable, even a boon,
 Nor more unkind for coming soon,
 Yet shunned and dreaded with such care,
 As if it only were a snare
 That Prudence might escape: 730
 At times both wished-for and implored;
 At times sought with self-pointed sword,
 Yet a still dark and hideous Close
 To even intolerable woes,
 And welcome in no shape. 735
 And, strange to say, the Sons of pleasure –
 They who have revelled beyond measure
 In Beauty, Wassail, Wine and Treasure –
 Die calm, or calmer, oft, than he
 Whose Heritage was Misery; 740
 For he who hath in turn run through
 All that was beautiful and new
 Hath nought to hope, and nought to leave,
 And save the future (which is viewed
 Not quite as men are base or good, 745
 But as their nerves may be endued)
 With nought perhaps to grieve. –
 The Wretch still hopes his woes must end,
 And Death, whom he should deem his friend,
 Appears to his distempered eyes 750
 Arrived to rob him of his prize,
 The tree of his new Paradise. – –

*And fixedness – without a place;
 There were no stars – no earth – no time –
 No check – no change – no good – no crime –
 But Silence – and a stirless breath
 Which neither was of life, nor death;
 A Sea of stagnant Idleness
 Blind – boundless – mute – and motionless.*

64: *my houseless, helpless head:* would parallel Mazeppa with the beggars on whose behalf Lear prays at III iv 30-2:

*How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
 Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
 From such seasons as these?*

Tomorrow would have given him all,
 Repaid his pangs – repaired his fall –
 Tomorrow would have been the first 755
 Of days no more deplored and curst,
 But bright, and long, and beckoning years
 Seen dazzling through the mist of tears,
 Guerdon of many a painful hour;
 Tomorrow would have given him power – 760
 To rule – to shine – to smite – to save –
 And must it dawn upon his Grave? –

18.

“The Sun was sinking. Still I lay,
 Chained to the chill and stiffening steed;
 I thought to mingle there our clay, 765
 And my dim eyes of death had need –
 No hope arose of being freed.
 I cast my last looks up the sky,
 And there between me and the Sun⁶⁵
 I saw the expecting Raven fly, 770
 Who scarce would wait till both should die
 Ere his repast begun.
 He flew – and perched – then flew once more,
 But each time nearer than before;
 I saw his wing through twilight flit, 775
 And once so near me he alit
 I could have smote, but lacked the strength –
 But the slight motion of my hand,
 And feeble scratching of the sand –
 My exerted throat’s faint struggling noise – 780
 Which scarcely could be called a voice –
 Together scared him off at length.
 I know no more – my latest dream
 Is something of a lovely star
 Which fixed my dull eyes from afar, 785
 And went and came with wandering beam;
 And of the cold, dull, swimming, dense
 Sensation of recurring Sense,
 And then subsiding back to death,
 And then again a little breath – 790
 A little thrill – a short suspense –
 An icy sickness curdling o’er
 My heart, and sparks that crossed my brain –
 A gasp – a throb – a start of pain –
 A sigh, and nothing more. 795

65: *And there between me and the Sun / I saw the expecting Raven fly:* E.H.Coleridge (but not McGann) compares the shadow cast by the Death Ship at Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 175-6: ... *that strange shape drove suddenly / Betwixt us and the Sun.*

“I woke – where was I? – do I see
 A human face look down on me?
 And doth a roof above me close?
 Do these limbs on a couch repose?
 Is this a chamber where I lie, 800
 And is it mortal, yon bright eye,
 That watches me with gentle glance?
 I closed my eyes again once more,
 As doubtful that their former trance
 Could not as yet be o’er. 805
 A slender Girl, long-haired and tall,
 Sate watching by the cottage wall;
 The Sparkle of her eye I caught
 Even with my first return of thought,
 For ever and anon she threw 810
 A pitying, prying, glance on me
 With her black eyes so wild and free;
 I gazed and gazed – until I knew
 No vision it could be,⁶⁷
 But that I lived, and was released 815
 From adding to the Vulture’s feast.⁶⁸ –
 And when the Cossack Maid beheld
 My heavy eyes at length unsealed,
 She smiled – and I essayed to speak,
 But failed – and she approached, and made 820
 With lip and finger, Signs that said
 I must not strive as yet to break
 The silence, till my strength should be
 Enough to leave my accents free;
 And then her hand on mine she laid, 825
 And smoothed the pillow for my head,
 And stole along on tiptoe tread,

66: Part 19 resembles the meeting of Juan and Haidee in *Don Juan* Canto II, although no romantic involvement is suggested between Mazeppa and the Cossack maid. Here is Stanza 112 of the Canto:

*His eyes he opened, shut, again unclosed,
 For all was doubt and dizziness; methought
 He still was in the boat, and had but dozed,
 And felt again with his despair o’erwrought,
 And wished it death in which he had reposed,
 And then once more his Feelings back were brought,
 And slowly by his swimming eyes were seen
 A lovely female face of Seventeen.*

67: *For ever and anon she threw / A pitying, prying, glance on me / With her black eyes so wild and free; / I gazed and gazed – until I knew / No vision it could be:* part of Mazeppa’s amazement may be owing to the fact that the Tartar girl reminds him of the horse to which he has been tied for most of the last two days. Here are lines 359-64 again:

*In truth, he was a noble Steed,
 A Tartar of the Ukraine breed,
 Who looked as though the Speed of thought
 Were in his limbs – but he was wild,
 Wild as the wild-deer, and untaught,
 With spur and bridle undefiled ...*

The horse’s soul may have transmigrated into the body of his new protectress.

68: ... *the Vulture’s feast:* the Raven (770) has been demoted.

And gently oped the door, and spoke
In whispers – ne'er was voice so sweet!
Even Music followed her light feet.⁶⁹ 830

But those she called had not awoke,
And she went forth, but e'er she passed,
Another look on me she cast,
Another sign she made, to say
That I had naught to fear, that all 835
Were near at my command, or call,
And she would not delay
Her due return: – while she was gone,
Methought I felt too much alone.

20.

“She came with Mother and with Sire⁷⁰ – 840
What need of more? I will not tire
With long recital of the rest,

Since I became the Cossack's guest –
They found me senseless on the plain,
They bore me to the nearest hut, 845
They brought me into life again –
Me – one day o'er their realm to reign. –

Thus the vain fool who strove to glut
His rage, refining on my pain,
Sent me forth to the Wilderness 850
Bound, naked, bleeding, and alone

To pass the desert to a throne –
What Mortal his own doom may guess?
Let none despond – let none despair –

Tomorrow the Borysthenes 855
May see our coursers graze at ease
Upon his Turkish banks, and never
Had I such welcome for a river
As I shall yield when safely there –

69: *spake / In whispers – ne'er was voice so sweet! / Even Music followed her light feet:* compare the feelings of Don Juan when he awakens at Canto II Stanzas 150-151, to find Haidee looking at him:

*And thus upon his Elbow he arose,
And looked upon the Lady, in whose cheek
The Pale contended with the Purple Rose,
As with an effort She began to speak;
Her Eyes were eloquent, her words would pose,
Although She told him, in good modern Greek,
With an Ionian Accent low and sweet,
That he was faint, and must not talk but eat.*

*Now Juan could not understand a word,
Being no Grecian; but he had an ear,
And her voice was the warble of a bird,
So soft, so sweet, so delicately clear,
That finer, simpler Music ne'er was heard;
The sort of sound we echo with a tear,
Without knowing why – an overpowering tone,
Whence Melody descends as from a throne.*

70: *She came with Mother and with Sire:* unlike Haidee, whose mother is dead and whose father is taken – erroneously – to be so.

Comrades – Good Night!” – the Hetman threw 860
 His length beneath the oak-tree shade
 With leafy couch already made,
A bed nor comfortless nor new
To him, who took his rest whene'er
The hour arrived, no matter where; 865
 His eyes the hastening slumbers steep –
And if ye marvel Charles forgot
To thank his tale, *he* wondered not –
 The King had been an hour asleep.

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