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The Nexus of the Wake: Ševčenko's *Trizna*

GEORGE G. GRABOWICZ

The entire body of Ševčenko's creative writings divides fairly cleanly along two lines. One is the division between his poetry and prose that gives us, on the one hand, the poetic oeuvre, traditionally called the *Kobzar*, and, on the other, his nine Russian novellas and the Diary (*Žurnal*).¹ The second, even more obvious demarcation is linguistic, dividing the canon into his Ukrainian and Russian writings. For the most part, the two lines of division are congruent and, as I have argued elsewhere, define the two fundamentally different modes, creative stances, and, indeed, personalities that appear in Ševčenko's works.²

The two lines of demarcation, the formal (or modal) and the linguistic, are not entirely congruent, however, and the two basic spheres of Ševčenko's writings — the Ukrainian poetry and the Russian prose — do not constitute the entire picture of his literary creativity. For between them lies a distinct intermediate zone which is an extension, as it were, of each of the two spheres. This is the small body of his Russian poetry, the long poems "Slepaja" and *Trizna*, and the verse in the preserved fragment of his drama "Nikita Gajdaj." In manifest, formal terms these works — poetry, but in Russian — mediate between the overall opposition of Ukrainian poetry/Russian prose. They also present the possibility of mediation on a deeper structural level and give promise of providing a key to the fundamental question of the interrelation of the two radically different (and ostensibly mutually exclusive) creative and psychological modes in Ševčenko's writings.

¹ For present purposes, I will not consider Ševčenko's non-belletristic writings, i.e., his letters in both Ukrainian and Russian and various fragments and short pieces. The prose drama *Nazar Stodolja*, which Ševčenko originally wrote in Russian but which now exists only in Ukrainian translation (by P. Kuliš and another unknown translator) is also a special case.

² See my "Do pytannja hlybynnix struktur u tvorčosti Ševčenka," *Sučasnist'*, May 1979, pp. 95–108; the original English version is to appear in *Shevchenko and the Critics*, ed. by George S. N. Luckyj (forthcoming).

Despite the apparent significance of Ševčenko's Russian poetry, the critical attention actually devoted to it has been limited. As with much of his work, critics have focused for the most part on surface content and "thematic" interpretation, and have occasionally elaborated this with ideological digressions and more or less reductive explications of Ševčenko's "language question." Since a unified understanding (or model) of Ševčenko's imagination and, especially, a method for analyzing the symbolic code of his poetry were lacking both in Soviet and (with but slight exceptions) in non-Soviet Ševčenko scholarship, it is not surprising that the Russian poetry was perceived largely in terms of extrinsic, or even entirely extra-literary criteria.³ Even before the deep structures are established and the symbolic code analyzed, however, it is evident that far from being mere exercises designed to demonstrate proficiency in Russian, as P. Zajcev had claimed,⁴ these works constitute an important stage in the evolution of Ševčenko's poetry — on both the surface and deep levels.

Already the monologues in the extant fragment of "Nikita Gajdaj" (published in the journal *Majak* in 1842) introduce new elements and intimate further developments in Ševčenko's work. Here, as has been variously observed, there are clear echoes of Ryleev, particularly his *Vojnarovskij*, as seen in both the elevated, pathetic rhetorical mode and, even more so, in the themes of the sanctity of the fatherland and of the

³ One of the first to comment on the poetry (in the context of Ševčenko's Russian writings in general) was A. Pypin in his "Russkija sočinenija Ševčenka," *Vestnik Evropy*, 1888, bk. 3, pp. 246–86. Of those critics who have specifically focused on this issue, one must first mention Pavlo Zajcev. His contribution, however, is marred by the *a priori* and evaluative thesis that for Ševčenko Russian was an unnatural medium: cf. especially his "Poeziji Ševčenka rosijs'koju movoju," in Taras Ševčenko, *Povne vydannja tvoriv*, 14 vols. (Chicago, 1962), 5: 212–28. A somewhat different approach is provided by L. Bilec'kyj, who argues that even though (!) *Trizna* is written in Russian it is an important, indeed "messianic" work; cf. his *Taras Ševčenko v Jahotyni* (Augsburg, 1949), and the commentaries to his edition of the *Kobzar*, vol. 2 (Winnipeg, 1952), pp. 57–76. To this day the most substantial statement on the subject is L. Bulaxovs'kyj's "Rosijs'ki poemy T. Ševčenka ta jix misce v systemi poetyčnoji movy peršoji polovyny XIX stolittja," in *Pam"jati T. H. Ševčenka* (Moscow, 1944). In more recent Soviet publications the issue is per force presented in terms of Ševčenko's "progressive" reliance on Russian literary models. Cf., e.g., F. Ja. Pryjma's *Ševčenko i russkaja literatura XIX veka* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1961); cf. also *Ševčenkoznavstvo: Pidsumky i problemy*, ed. by Je. P. Kyryljuk et al. (Kiev, 1975), and the relevant entries in *Ševčenkivs'kyj slovnyk*, vols. 1 and 2 (Kiev, 1977). In émigré circumstances, on the other hand, the difficulty caused by Ševčenko's bilingualism, and particularly the need to reject this state of affairs, may lead to remarkably paranoid lucubrations. Cf., e.g., R. Zadesnjans'kyj [R. Bžes'kyj], *Apostol ukrajins'koji nacional'noji revoluciji* (Munich, 1969).

⁴ Zajcev, "Poeziji Ševčenka rosijs'koju movoju."

ultimate imperative of serving the cause of its freedom.⁵ In contrast to Ryleev (and to other Decembrists), however, personal happiness, and indeed one's honor, need not be inevitably sacrificed on the altar of civic duty; instead, as is typical for Ševčenko, the public and the personal domains are conflated, and just as the hero's love for the Ukraine is made identical to his love for his wife, so also his future glory and that of his country are made one.⁶

The concluding historiosophic meditation of the hero on the tragedy of the fratricidal conflict between two Slavic peoples is, of course, a recapitulation of the Slavophile sentiments expressed at the conclusion of *Hajdamaky*, which was published only a few months earlier. This has been duly noted in the critical literature; what has not been stressed, but is perhaps more revealing of Ševčenko's "ideological" framework, is his use of history — very much in the spirit of the Decembrists, but also in the manner of such Polish pre-Romantic poets as Niemcewicz or Zaborowski, who turned to the Ukrainian past — as a metaphor for the present. To be sure, for Ševčenko this is not the persistent, determining perception of the past as an allegory for the present, nor is it the sense of history as a *magistrix mundi* that it was for these predecessors. Still, at times it is quite clear that the referent, the projected reality, is Ševčenko's time, not Xmel'nyč'kyj's. A striking instance of this is Nikita Gajdaj's last and most solemn tirade, with these crucial lines:

(*Немного помолчав*).

В ком нет любви к стране родной,
Те сердцем нищие калеки,
Ничтожные в своих делах
И суетны в ничтожной славе.

(*Немного помолчав*).

И чем несчастней, тем милей
Всегда нам родина бывает,

⁵ These echoes are perceptible not only in the elevated and by then slightly worn sentiments (e.g., "Svjataja rodina! Svjataja! Inače kak ee nazvat"? / Tu zemlju miluju, rodnuju, / Gde my rodilyjsja, rosli / I v kolybeli poljubili / Rodnye pesni stariny"; Taras Ševčenko, *Povne zibrannja tvoriv v šesty tomach* (hereafter *Tvory*), 6 vols. [Kiev, 1963], 3: 56), but also in the use of elements that are characteristic of an *exotic* image of the Ukraine. Such an element, to be found in the poetry of Ryleev or Puškin but never in Ševčenko's Ukrainian writings, is the term *kozačka*, which Nikita Gajdaj uses when addressing his wife (p. 51).

⁶ Cf. the words of the protagonist: "I ty / Ukrajin' obraz nesravnennyj. / Ljublju tebjja, v tebe odnoj / Ja vsju Ukrajinu obožaju" (line 51), or "Ja slavu slovom zavojuju / I slavnij podvig toržestvuju / S toboj odnoj! V tebe odnoj / Ja vsju Ukrajinu poceluju!" (lines 55–56).

Тем краше вид ее полей. (*Со вздохом*).
 А наша родина страдает, (*печально*).
 А прежде счастлива была.
 Тогда враги ее боялись,
 Тогда сыны ее мужали
 И славные отцов дела
 Своею славой обновляли.
 И все минуло, все прошло,
 Козак в неволе изнывает,
 И поле славы поросло
 Травой негодной. . . умирает
 И звук, и память о былом! (*Торжественно*).
 Нет, запоем мы песню славы
 На пепелище роковом.
 Мы цепь неволи разорвем,
 Огонь и кровь мы на расправу
 В жилища вражьи принесем. . . .

(lines 18–41)

As much as this foreshadows the great tribunicial poetry of the “three years” period, it is still not the most critical moment. That pivotal moment occurs, rather, as an extension of the shift in historical perspective; for along with the temporal displacement, there also appears in the narrative a displacement of identity: Nikita Gajdaj, Xmel’nyč’kyj’s messenger to the Polish *sejm*, comes to incarnate the poet himself. As he ponders his address to the king and the ravages of this “stoletnjaja vojna . . . meždu rodnymy brat’jami,” he arrives at a new self-perception: “Čto, eželi opredelono sud’boju mne, prostomu čeloveku, okončit’ to slovami, čego milliony ne mogli končit’ sabljami!”⁷ And as he turns — “v vostorge” — to his wife, he again repeats, “Ja slavu slovom zavojuju. . . .” What is prefigured here, in short, is a quantum jump in the evolution of Ševčenko the poet. And this leads us directly to *Trizna*.

Intervening between these two works, however, is the poem “Slepaja,” now thought to have been written sometime in the first half of 1842, although first published well after Ševčenko’s death, in 1886. Judging by purely aesthetic and formal criteria, and, as Bulaxovs’kyj has demonstrated, by the norms of the literary Russian of the day, “Slepaja” is, in various respects, a weak poem. Its diction is highly rhetorical, vague and repetitive (especially when compared to Ševčenko’s Ukrainian poems); it is not only long as his poems go (second only to *Hajdamaky*, though with little plot and hardly any of the dynamism of the latter), but is so

⁷ *Tvory*, 3:55.

convoluted that even as uncritical a reader as Varvara Repnina found it illogical and confusing.⁸ It is perhaps Ševčenko's most "Byronic" poem in its free use of melodramatic effects and its virtual abandonment of discipline. For all that, it is a highly revealing poem, above all, in its intensely autobiographical and confessional qualities.⁹ Of all his early poems (and indeed it has been suggested that it may have been written as early as 1840),¹⁰ "Slepaja" is the richest in psychoanalytic material; its obsessive recapitulation of the primal traumatic experience, its extended "mad scenes," and with that the heightened self-consciousness that inevitably accompanies Ševčenko's Russian writings, makes it a central link in his symbolic code, and thus a work that deserves and requires close analysis. To be effective, however, this analysis must necessarily encompass the whole genre of Ševčenko's narrative poems, from "Pryčynna" to "Maria," for they all share similar structures.

The same does not obtain for *Trizna*: within Ševčenko's canon, it is in many respects an autonomous, almost *sui generis* work. The fact that it was published in a separate edition (in 1844; it first appeared that same year under the title "Bestalannyj" in the journal *Majak*) does not in itself make it unique, of course — it shares this distinction with *Hajdamaky* (1841) and the poem "Hamalija" (which also appeared in 1844). The fact that it was written in 1843, the year of Ševčenko's first Ukrainian journey, does give it a particular significance, especially when one notes that *Trizna*, along with the short poem "Rozryta mohyla," was the sum of his poetic production that year. The period 1843–1845, traditionally called *Try lita* after the manuscript collection and album by that name (which, in turn, was taken from the title of a poem in that collection), is generally considered the time when Ševčenko reached his full, mature stature. It is in this period that he writes his major "ideological" poems, from "Čyhryne, Čyhryne," to "Son," "Kavkaz," "Poslanije" and "Velykyj l'ox," and finally the so-called "Zapovit" ("Jak umru to poxovajte . . ."). Quite frequently, the year 1843 is taken as a watershed in Ševčenko's creativity, signaling, as a consequence of the impressions and insights gained during his journey in the Ukraine, a break between the early Romantic and idealized picture of the Ukraine and the harsh vision of its present social and

⁸ Cf. her letter of 19 June 1844 in *Lysty do T. H. Ševčenka, 1840–1861* (Kiev, 1962), p. 27.

⁹ This was already observed by Pypin, "Russkija sočinenija Ševčenka," p. 259.

¹⁰ Cf. Pypin, "Russkija sočinenija Ševčenka," and the memoirs of Ja. Kuxarenko in *Sphody pro Ševčenka* (Kiev, 1959), p. 75.

national oppression. For this very reason, on the simple extrinsic basis of chronology, *Trizna*, the major work of this critical year, would naturally compel our attention. It becomes all the more important when, upon closer analysis, we see that “Rozryta mohyla” does not in fact fully, i.e., structurally, develop the transition in question.

Another moment that clearly distinguishes *Trizna* from Ševčenko’s poetry as a whole, including “Slepaja” and the lyrico-rhetorical monologues of “Nikita Gajdaj,” is its formal and conventional side, specifically the high degree of its “literariness.” Such critics as Fylypovyč, Bulaxovs’kyj, and Zajcev have elaborated on the manifest parallels — in diction and phraseology, in the general “pathos” and style — between *Trizna* and the Russian Romantic poems of the 1820s to 1840s;¹¹ they (and more recently Ivakin) have also uncovered in *Trizna* distinct echoes and reminiscences, indeed “subtexts,” of Ryleev’s and Puškin’s poetry.¹² Fylypovyč, in his monographic study of Ševčenko and the Decembrists, and subsequently Zajcev stressed the virtual cult of the Decembrists that flourished in the Repnin home where Ševčenko wrote much, if not all, of the poem. Zajcev also noted the influence of Masonic mysticism, particularly in the person of O. Kapnist, on Varvara Repnina, and thus, presumably, on Ševčenko himself.¹³ Elements of the cult and of the mysticism, or at least of Masonic ritual, are indeed evident in the poem. Minute biographical research (a particularly fertile field in Soviet Ševčenko scholarship) has uncovered the detail that it was precisely during his stay at Jahotyn, the Repnin estate (November–December, 1843), that Ševčenko learned of the death of the Decembrist Nikita Muravev (28 April 1843).¹⁴ Despite this range of circumstantial as well as purely literary influences, the qualification made by Bulaxovs’kyj deserves reiteration: *Trizna* not only presents us with high and inspired poetry — poetry which, as Kuliš was the first to observe, could well have been written by Puškin — but, far from being derivative, remains throughout a uniquely

¹¹ See P. Fylypovyč’s *Ševčenko i Dekabrysty* (Kiev, 1925), as well as the articles of Bulaxovs’kyj and Zajcev mentioned in fn. 3. While providing new information, Zajcev’s article is flawed by his desire to see *Trizna* as haphazard, occasional, and above all vitiated by the very fact of being written in Russian.

¹² In a short but interesting article Ju. O. Ivakin has noted echoes of Puškin’s “Čem časče prazduet licej” (1831) and “19 oktjabrja” (1825): “Notatky ševčenkoznaveca,” *Radjans’ke literaturoznavstvo*, 1975, no. 3, pp. 33–35. Zajcev also sees echoes of Hugo, *Faust*, and Lermontov (“Poeziji Ševčenko rosijs’koju movoju,” p. 226).

¹³ Zajcev, “Poeziji Ševčenko rosijs’koju movoju,” p. 223 fn.

¹⁴ Cf. Pil’huk, *T. Ševčenko i dekabrysty* (Kiev, 1958), p. 14, cited in *T. H. Ševčenko: Biohrafija*, ed. by Je. P. Kyrlyjuk et al. (Kiev, 1964), p. 117.

and specifically Ševčenkian poem.¹⁵ And this of course, holds true not only for the manifest and formal, but, above all, for the deeper, structural level.

The ultimate argument for the poem's importance within Ševčenko's poetic oeuvre also rests on such structural considerations. For although I have argued that the Russian poetry as a whole performs a mediating function between the two different modes of his creativity, this mediation, in fact, is carried primarily by *Trizna*: Nikita Gajdaj, as we have seen, only intimates the issue, whereas "Slepaja" is in various essential respects closely tied to Ševčenko's "Ukrainian" mode. (It is indicative, for example, that for Bulaxovs'kyj, and others too, it reads much like a translation — and not always a very successful one — from his Ukrainian.) In short, it is *Trizna* which performs that unique dual function for Ševčenko of, on the one hand, carrying and developing what one can call his myth of the Ukraine, and, on the other, commenting and intellectualizing this process and task. This latter, "ratiocinative" function is something that goes against the very grain of his Ukrainian poetry; the mythical, emotive mode cannot accommodate it. Conversely, his Russian prose, while often treating "the same" issues, reveals a distanced attitude, and does not share the basic prophetic premises of his poetry. Between them stands *Trizna*.

In length *Trizna* is about average for Ševčenko's long poems — 508 lines, i.e., less than half the length of "Slepaja." In broad terms, its exposition shares various features with his other longer, narrative poems: introduction and invocation, digression and asides, shifts of narrative focus, etc. More specifically, just as the manifest content of *Trizna* sets it apart from all his other long poems, so also its narrative composition is individual and complex. The poem is dedicated to Princess Varvara Repnina in a separate thirteen-line poem dated 11 November 1843. Such dedicatory prefaces are not uncommon for Ševčenko's longer poems (cf. "Jeretyk," or "Neofity," or indeed "Maria," or even *Hajdamaky*, where the long, heterogeneous first "Introduction" is, after all, formally a dedication to Hryhorovyč), but this dedication is untypical in its formal conciseness and its unrefracted focus. Like many of his poems, *Trizna* has an epigraph from the Gospels, and these verses (22–25) from the First Epistle General of Peter concerning the rebirth of the chosen and the pure of

¹⁵ Kuliš's comment is cited without further reference by Zajcev, "Poeziji Ševčenka rosij's'koju movoju," p. 226. Cf. Bulaxovs'kyj, "Rosij's'ki poemy T. Ševčenka," p. 75 and passim.

heart in the word of God that “endureth forever” point precisely to the central theme of the poem.

The first twenty lines constitute the opening part of the poem proper. They present the setting and purpose of the wake: twelve places have been set for a banquet of remembrance, a ritual, yearly wake. An initial doubt as to whether the twelve friends will actually appear (lines 3–6), is dispelled; they do appear to celebrate the wake, and the section concludes with an injunction in the elevated rhetoric characteristic of the Decem-
brists:

«Счастлиное братство! Единство любви
Почтили вы свято на грешной земле;
Сходитесь, други, как ныне сошлись,
Сходитесь долго и песнею новой
Воспойте свободу на рабской земле!»

(lines 16–20)

The following section (lines 21–84) is a paean to the one for whom the wake is held, the recently buried “najlučšyj drug.” It opens with a two-line benediction, “Blagosloven tvoj malyj put’ / Prišlec ubogij, neizvestnyj!,” which is repeated at the conclusion of this part, except that the attributes in the second line are subtly and meaningfully altered: “Prišlec neslavlennyj, čudesnyj.” It is, first of all, a hymn of praise for the *prišlec*, the apostle, and his message of love, freedom and peace:

Ты силой господа чудесной
Возмог в сердца людей вдохнуть
Огонь любви, огонь небесный.
Благословен! Ты божью волю
Короткой жизнью освятил;
В юдоли рабства радость воли
Безмолвно ты провозгласил.
Когда брат брата алчет крови —
Ты сочетал любовь в чужих;
Свободу людям — в братстве их
Ты проявил великим словом:
Ты миру мир благовестил;
И, отходя, благословил
Свободу мысли, дух любви!

(lines 22–36)

It is also a plea to the *prišlec* (who is now projected as being with God in heaven and is addressed in the feminine as “duša”) to send down pure thoughts to heal the coldness of mind and darkness of heart (lines 53–59); to teach one how to rule one’s own and men’s restless hearts (“... nauči vladet’ serdcami / Ljudej kičlivyx i svoim, / Uže rastlennym, uže zlym . . .”;

lines 63–65), to impart the secret wisdom of how to lead men to righteousness —

Скажи мне тайное ученье
 Любить гордящихся людей,
 И речью кроткой и смиреньем
 Смягчать народных палачей,
 Да провещаю гимн пророчий,
 И долу правду низведу,

(lines 67–71)

— and finally to find true friends, a peaceful death, and union with him/her in God. Whereas the two functions of benediction and supplication are straightforward, the passage is in fact involuted, almost confusing. The difficulty in part is that what could be logically perceived as a eulogy expressed by the twelve assembled friends, a direct address with no indication as to whether the speaker is one or more persons, suddenly becomes (with line 49) the address of a single supplicant. This apparent shift in number, however, merely indicates a more profound shift in narrative voice. For what had been ostensibly a statement *about* the departed friend, becomes literally *his* statement, with the above discussed plea (lines 49–82) clearly serving as a recapitulation of his, the *prišlec*'s path. The means, or the locus, of this shift is precisely the semantic ambivalence of the “*duša*,” which in the first part of the address is simply the soul of the deceased, and in the second (after line 49) becomes a feminine persona, structurally equivalent to the muse, the guiding light, the star, mother, etc., of so many of Ševčenko's poems. The identification implicit here is something to which we shall return; for the moment we see it as a complication of narrative stance and voice which is not at all untypical of Ševčenko in general, but which is particularly expected here, in *Trizna*, a work resonating with the paradox so favored by the Romantic imagination — an autobiography focused on the last stage, the wake, where one is both subject and witness.

The third part of the poem (lines 85–442) is by far the longest, and it presents the lifestory of the hero, who is, as the mottoes bracketing the preceding section indicate, a fusion of opposites, both lowly and sublime, “bestalannyj” and “čudesnyj.” Leaving a close look at the basic structures and motifs of this crucial part for later, one can simply note here its compositional arrangement. The account, which indeed begins at the beginning (“*V sem'e ubogoj, neizvestnoj / On vyrastal; i žizni trud, / Kak sirota, on vstretil rano*”; lines 85–87), is in fact focused exclusively on the

emotional high points, on feelings rather than events, on the trials and the “epiphanies” of the hero’s life. For the most part these are illustrated by his soliloquies, which range from brief exclamations of a few lines to longer monologues; the latter (i.e., lines 233–256, 331–351 and 427–437) are unquestionably crucial to the exposition of his life and the poem’s overall meaning. While the narrative is constantly emphatic — to the extent of blurring any distinction between the narrator and the hero of his story — there are two extended “digressions,” or, more precisely, authorial commentaries (lines 183–220 and 259–270). Analogously to the first half of the preceding section, they again describe, with high rhetorical pathos, the nobility, purity, suffering, and self-abnegation of the hero. The first of these, moreover, while stressing his victorious passage through life’s tribulations and temptations (“Projti mytarstva trudnoj žizni, / Izmerjat’ propasti strastej / . . . I soxranit’ polet orla / I serdce čistoju golubicy! / Se čelovek!”; lines 184–191) turns into an impassioned indictment of the false prophet-poet who is guided by cold — but blind — reason, by self-advertisement, by fashionable cosmopolitanism and spitefulness. The second commentary, on the other hand, bemoans the fate of the one who feels and sympathizes:

. . . но тот, кто не оком,
А смотрит душою на козни людей,
И может лишь плакать в тоске одинокой —
О боже правдивый, лиши ты очей! . . .
(lines 263–266)

The hero is predestined for an early death — indeed, he longs for it (“Stradal neščastnyj sirota / Vdali ot rodiny šťastlivoj / I ždal konca neterpelivo”; lines 352–354) — and his life, gnawed by a secret, unsharable sorrow, is epitomized by the metaphor of a slowly wilting flower: “I vjanet on vjanet, kak v pole bylina, / Toskoju tomimyj v čužoj storone” (lines 327–328). His death, however, is peaceful and fitting, surrounded by his “prekrasnaja sem’ja” and fortified by their love and promise of remembrance. The last part of the poem recounts his burial (lines 443–451), the first wake that his friends hold for him (452–457), their determination to faithfully repeat this ritual (458–466), and, finally, the last such wake, with the last surviving friend departing, to return no more (467–502). At the end the poem comes full circle. The final six lines recapitulate the opening, only now the initial premonition is substantiated: “Nikto ne prixodit, / Naveki, naveki zabyty oni.”

Two aspects of the poem stand out clearly. One is its strong autobio-

graphical cast — which is not, however, confined to the extrinsic facts, events, and details that traditional criticism has found in the poem.¹⁶ Equally pronounced, and rather more significant, are the various moments of Ševčenko's inner life which appear here, as in so many of his works, especially his narrative poems, as *topoi* of his symbolic autobiography. Such, for example, are the overwhelming and recurring feelings of solitude, the sense of alienation, the sense of sublime calling or mission, coupled with a bitter awareness that this mission is at best only dimly perceived by his friends and contemporaries and more frequently scorned. This deeper form of autobiography constitutes the initial basis for our considering *Trizna* as a representative, conjunctive expression of Ševčenko's inner world.

The other outstanding aspect is the poem's emotionalism, its reliance on pathos, and its recourse to the sentimental. Indeed, the basic themes of the work — the hero's transcendent goodness, his preordained suffering and early death, and especially the concept of the wake, with its morbid fascination with one's death and its effect on others — link *Trizna* to pre-Romantic and Sentimental poetics. To be sure, emotionalism, sentiment, and the brooding over and lamenting of one's fate are not untypical for Ševčenko's early (and, *mutatis mutandis*, also his later) poetry. What distinguishes *Trizna* is the intensity of these moments *and* the total absence of irony and distance. Yet there is a paradoxical turn here, for with all its pathos and apparent self-indulgence or self-pity, *Trizna*, when taken in the broader context of Ševčenko's poetry, serves precisely as a means for putting his life in perspective and as a vehicle for summarizing, in basically rational terms, his sense of himself as a poet. In this respect one cannot but see the essential difference between *Trizna* and the longer Ukrainian narrative poems: whereas the latter continue to reiterate only a few fundamental crisis points or traumas in Ševčenko's symbolic autobiography, *Trizna*, for all its "distortion," attempts to present this autobiography in its entirety. Moreover, whereas the deeper meaning of the given Ukrainian poems is inevitably highly coded, *Trizna* presents its message almost overtly, and in so doing recapitulates and bares the basic structures of Ševčenko's poetry.

Recapitulation, here and in Ševčenko's oeuvre in general, is rooted precisely in the autobiographic principle of his work — both poetry and

¹⁶ I.e., his orphanage, early hardships, and notes of social protest, as well as allusions to his personal charm and ability to captivate people, etc. Cf. the entry in the *Ševčenkivs'kyj slovnyk*, as well as Zajcev, "Poeziji Ševčenkova rosijs'koju movoju," and Bilec'kyj, *Taras Ševčenko v Jahotyni*.

prose. It follows that if his poetry is guided by this principle (or structure), its focus must be thematically narrowed and the content recurrent. And, of course, it is. (Thus, Shevelov's observation on the "pantoptical" nature of the poetry written by Ševčenko in the last year of his life, arguing that a given poem may seem almost an allusive grammar of themes and motifs expressed in the earlier poetry, is only a statement of the narrower case.¹⁷ The principle, if not the lapidary form of expression, becomes evident already with Ševčenko's mature work, and in its most profound sense is evident throughout.) It is also apparent that his life and emotional experiences, primarily those of his early years, are for Ševčenko the touchstone and measure for determining meaning and value in the world.¹⁸ *Trizna*, in fact, proceeds to illustrate this.

As various critics have observed and subsequently analyzed with varying degrees of critical acumen, the image of the mother and the poet's relation to her figure very prominently in Ševčenko's poetry. Given the frequency and the virtual obsessiveness of this "theme" and, even more importantly, the fact that it appears not simply as a theme but as a structure, too, i.e., a semantic unit and function in a cluster of relationships and movements but with variable manifest values, that it is capable, for example, of being either positive (in "Marija," "Neofity," etc.) or negative ("Utoplana," "Petrus") or indeed both positive and negative ("Najmyčka," "Vid'ma," and others) — given this, it is evident that this figure and her role necessarily originate not from a conventional or ideological frame, but from deeper psychic recesses. In *Trizna*, as we have noted, the mother appears only indirectly: she is the object of the introductory invocation, and though the actual addressee or referent is identifiable as Varvara Repnina, essentially, functionally, she is no different from the female object of reverential invocation found in "Marija" or "Knjažna." A mother figure is also implicit, however, in the second part of what I have called the paean (lines 49–85) — and this leads to something

¹⁷ See George Y. Shevelov, "The Year 1860 in Ševčenko's Work," in *Taras Ševčenko, 1814–1861: A Symposium* (The Hague, 1962), p. 82 and *passim*.

¹⁸ This is not to deny various ideological constructs in Ševčenko's world view or "ethical system"; nevertheless, in his work, especially the poetry, emotional experiences constitute the core, the deep structures. It is on this basis, therefore, that one can speak of Ševčenko's poetry, as opposed to his prose, as simultaneously fixated and visionary (cf. "Do pytanja hlybynyx struktur . . ."). I would also argue that this is precisely what underlies Orest Zilyns'kyj's assertion that "Svit Ševčenka antropolohičnyj i antropocentryčnyj. Ne teoretyčni ujavlennja pro svitoporjadok, ne abstraktna ideja ljudjanosti, ne polityčni včennja, a ljudyna sama po sobi, v svojemu real'nomu butti, stojit' u centri joho uvahy." See his "Kil'ka aktual'nyx dumok pro Ševčenka," *Duklja*, 1968, no. 2, pp. 140–41.

rather more significant. For as closer analysis of Ševčenko's poetry will show, the mother figure is not merely an addressee of lyrical invocations or an object at which emotion, whether love or anger is directed, *but also a function, a role with which the poet, or more precisely a part of the poetic ego, identifies*.¹⁹ Although in *Trizna* this identification is not developed, in contrast to such poems as "Vid'ma," "Najmyčka," "Slepaja," or "Marija," here it is operant, and it is signaled primarily by the narrative shifts of the poem. Beginning with Ševčenko's earliest poetry, e.g., the poem "Dumka" ("Tjažko važko v sviti žyty"), there appear sudden shifts of perspective and narrative center, where the narrator's overt identification with his represented characters (here a Cossack pining in a distant land) appears and disappears like the moon through the clouds that Ševčenko describes in the opening lines of "Pryčynna." (In *Hajdamaky* also, identification with the represented characters occurs at various times and at various levels, and not only in the longer digressions.)²⁰ In *Trizna* this process is rather intricate. There are, first of all, several voices in the narration: the omniscient third-person author, who sets the scene and describes the events of both the wake and the hero's life, but also makes lyrical apostrophes; the second-person paeon to the *prišlec* (lines 23–48), which is probably to be understood as spoken by the twelve friends, but which shifts to a first-person supplication (lines 49–83); a first-person narrator, who appears briefly (in line 457: "Ax triznu takuju otpravil i ja") and seems to link up to the third-person narrator; and, at the end, the voice of the last living friend to come to the wake (lines 483–502). In view of the fact that the poem is autobiographical, that it is about the poet — in a word, that *he* is the *prišlec* and that the poem thus becomes his apotheosis — this complication of narrative may be taken as a kind of "safety mechanism" providing ostensible distance and depth and thus

¹⁹ The phenomenon of identification, of course, figures prominently in psychoanalytic theory. It is not surprising that in the first (and to this day the only!) psychoanalytic study of Ševčenko, Stepan Balej's *Z psyxol'ogiji tvorčosty Ševčenka* (Lviv, 1916), this moment is identified and commented at some length. At the same time, it must be noted that Balej's application of (Freudian) psychoanalytic theory is very tentative and at times diluted — perhaps in the hope of assuring some receptivity. This did not materialize, however, and, unfortunately, Balej's work, and its most valuable contribution, the approach itself, left no mark on Ševčenko criticism. The phenomenon in question is so pronounced, however, that the subtle critic, even when working without the framework of a rigorous method, occasionally could not but notice it: cf., e.g., M. Ryl's'kyj, "Žinoča' liryka Ševčenka," in *Zbirnyk prac' Juvilejnoji desjatoji naukovoji ševčenkivs'koji konferenciji* (Kiev, 1962), pp. 22–27.

²⁰ On the subject of digressions see David A. Sloane's "The Author's Digressions in Ševčenko's 'Hajdamaky': Their Nature and Function," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 2, no. 3 (September 1978): 310–33.

making the proceedings more objective and less egocentric. While such a “modesty formula” is plausible, it is not the full answer, for in fact the shifts of voice and perspective create a pattern of resonance and recapitulation that clearly shows them to be refracted from a single source; the pattern determines alter egos, not autonomous presences. Two examples may suffice. At the conclusion of the paean, the speaker, addressing the *prišlec*, i.e., the soul in heaven, asks: “Pošli mne istinnyx družej / Složit’ xladejuščie ruki / I beskorystija elej / Prolit’ iz družeskix očeј” (lines 75–78). This, of course, is a capsule summary of the whole poem, a recapitulation of the opening scene and a foreshadowing of coming scenes; at the same time the speaker is functionally identified with the *prišlec*. The same is found when the movement is reversed. In one of his first soliloquies (lines 146–154) the *prišlec* addresses a heavenly light, implicitly a shining star (cf., for example, Ševčenko’s apostrophes to the star in his lyrics, or his invocation to “Knjažna” or “Maryna”) and asks for enlightenment and peace of heart: “Pošli na um tvoju svjatynju, / Svjatym naitiem napoj” (lines 151–152) — and this is an exact echo of the narrator’s earlier supplication *to the soul of the prišlec* (cf. lines 49–83). The implicit equation of narrator and hero is unmistakable. Moreover, it follows from this that however much the former is fallen, he is destined to attain the peace and glory in heaven that the departed hero already has. It is also more than plausible that the two figures or voices personify the two states of the poet’s soul or the two parts of his ego.²¹

Trizna, in short, illustrates much more overtly than do Ševčenko’s other long poems the operation of a characteristic system of identifications where ostensibly autonomous characters and voices are in fact fragments or projections of the poet’s ego.²² This is a central point for any future rigorous analysis of Ševčenko’s symbolism.

In the world of Ševčenko’s narrative poems, rape or seduction of the

²¹ A further variation on this is that occasionally (as, for example, in the opening of “Moskaleva kryncycja” [1847] or in “Petrus”) the narrator himself is split between two voices. This, in turn, leads to the very interesting and quite unexamined problem of the dialogic structure of Ševčenko’s poetry and prose, and his recourse to doubles or twins. (In his prose this is especially evident in the novellas *Bliznecy* and *Muzykant* and in the narrative composition of *Xudožnik*.)

²² One should stress here that these identifications are part of a psychological system of equivalencies which are the building blocks of Ševčenko’s symbolic autobiography. They are not “masks.” To treat them as such, i.e., in terms of Romantic irony and conscious play, as B. Rubchak apparently does in his “Shevchenko’s Profiles and Masks: Ironic Roles of the Self in *Kobzar*” (to appear in *Shevchenko and the Critics*), will not serve to uncover Ševčenko’s symbolic code and the essential structures in question.

main character is very frequently the central event; almost always this befalls a woman (e.g., in “Kateryna,” “Slepaja,” “Vid’ma,” “Najmyčka,” “Knjažna,” “Maryna,” “Marija,” and others), but it can also happen to a man (cf. “Petrus”). Frequently too, the seduction or sexual violence is associated with or presaged by a dream (or sleep). Emblematic of this is the poem “Knjažna,” in which the poet exhorts the princess to wake before the incestuous rape is perpetrated: “Prokyns’ / Prokynsja, čystaja! Sxopys’ / Ubyj hadjuku, pokusaje! / Ubyj i Boh ne pokaraje!” (lines 353–355). The dream is often the source, i.e., the “motivation” of the poem, and the story that the dream tells often turns to sexual violence, as in “Vid’ma,” for example, or, even more starkly, in “Buvaje v nevoli inodi zhadaju. . . .”²³ In this poem the story told by an old Cossack (whom the poet sees in his dream) of a Polish attack on his homestead, the ravishing of his daughter, and the revenge of the father as he sets fire to the buildings, killing both villains and victims, illustrates yet another connection — of sexual violence and a conflagration. Here, as in several major poems (“Knjažna,” “Slepaja,” implicitly in *Hajdamaky*), rape is followed by fire, either as retribution or as coincidence (which, of course, is not coincidental).²⁴ Indeed, the contiguity established between rape — as general violence — and fire carries over into the imagery of Ševčenko’s “political” poems, as witnessed for example by “Jeretyk” or by the conclusion of the short lyric “Meni odnakovo . . .”:

Та не однаково мені,
Як Україну злії люде
Присплять, лукаві, і в огні
Її, окраденую, збудять . . .
Ох, не однаково мені.

In effect, the dream (or sleep), rape (or seduction, or violation in general), and fire (often as consequence or retribution) constitute a structural unit. As such, it need not have rational motivation or explanation; as in the structure of myth, or in dreams, the interrelation of the components stems from deep unconscious or preconscious associations. But though in this case the coherence is primarily symbolic, it is not devoid of logic. One can

²³ A fairly large number of poems falls into this category, beginning with the three poems entitled “Son.” One of the first to deal with this issue was N. F. Sumcov, in his “Sny T. G. Ševčenka,” *Izvestija Otdelenija russkogo jazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoj akademiji nauk*, 1913, no. 4, pp. 355–64.

²⁴ It is worth noting that whereas in “Knjažna” the fire *breaks out spontaneously* after the rape, with no explanation offered as to its causes and as if it were a self-explanatory accompaniment, in the “parallel” novella, *Knjaginja*, an entirely logical explanation is provided.

readily observe, for example, that the set is explainable by the mechanism of psychic trauma and repression: the repressed content (i.e., the “rape”) is revealed — and *nota bene* it is only “revealed,” that is, stated and restated obliquely and symbolically, i.e., repeated “obsessively” — only when the defenses of the conscious mind are down, as in dreams. An integral component of the experience is the recollected shock, the total assault on the ego which is here symbolized by destructive fire, by a conflagration.²⁵

What, one may ask, is the relevance of this for *Trizna*? The relevance is, in fact, considerable, for in this instance, as in various others, *Trizna* provides a unique “barring of the device”; that which is so often present but encoded in Ševčenko’s other narrative poems is virtually transparent here. The scene in question appears at the very beginning of the hero’s biography, and is in fact the first extended depiction of the hero. After one or two cursory generalities about his childhood (“ . . . žizni trud, / Kak sirota, on vstretil rano; / Upreki zlye vstretil on / Za xleb nasuščnyj . . . ”; lines 86–89), it presents the following:

. . . В сердце рану
Змея прогрызла . . . Детский сон
Исчез, как голубь боязливый;
Тоска, как вор, нетерпеливо,
В разбитом сердце притаясь,
Губами жадными впилась,
И кровь невинную сосала . . .
Душа рвалась, душа рыдала.
Просила воли . . . ум горел.
В крови гордыня клокотала . . .
Он трепетал . . . он цепенел . . .
Рука, сжимаясь, дрожала . . .
О, если б мог он шар земной
Схватить озлобленной рукой,
Со всеми гадами земными;
Схватить, измять и бросить в ад! . . .
Он был бы счастлив, был бы рад.
Он хохотал, как демон лютый,
И длилась страшная минута,
И мир пылал со всех сторон;
Рыдал, немел он в иступленьи,

²⁵ Other aspects of Ševčenko’s fire symbolism should not be ignored, as, e.g., fire as Promethean creative energy, a purification, etc. Cf. in this regard Gaston Bachelard’s *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* (Boston, 1964); Bachelard’s emphasis, however, is more on archetypes than on the individual’s psychic processes.

Душа терзалась страшным сном;
 Душа мертвела . . .

(lines 89–111)

This is a remarkable sequence. From his dream of childhood the hero “awakens” through the agency of a “serpent” (!) into a terrifying reality, which is called at the end a “strašnyj son.” That the scene is full of sexual implications and veiled allusions to sexual violation is hardly in doubt; it is enough to compare it with analogous scenes in “Knjažna,” “Slepaja,” “Maryna” or “Cari” to see distinct parallels. Significantly, too, the constant in these seductions-rapes is the image of the snake, the *zmija* (cf. for example, the exclamations of the narrator in “Knjažna” cited above or the mother’s warning to her daughter in “Slepaja”: “Ty ne znaeš, / Čto skoro vstretiš’ meždu nimi / Zmeju, užasnuju zmeju!”; lines 597–599).²⁶ The serpent, moreover, is not merely a tempter, but, as the movement of the passage makes clear, a violator; and the fate of the hero, as of all the ravished victims in the various other poems, is *to be helpless*. Finally, here, too, we see the recollected violation presented through the image of cataclysmic fire: “I mir pylal so vsej storon.”

The parallelism, indeed, the structural equivalence of this seduction-rape with the various others is not extraordinary by itself. What is extraordinary, however, is the fact that the usual encoding is dropped — the victim now is not one of Ševčenko’s many seduced (or raped) and abandoned women, but the autobiographically, if symbolically, projected persona of the poet himself. The importance of this cannot be overestimated. It again reaffirms the pattern of identifications, and here specifically the pattern of Ševčenko’s feminine identification. It is a pattern that coheres into a fundamental structure of his creative personality, and as such must figure prominently in any future study of Ševčenko’s psychological makeup.²⁷

What follows this primal trauma is something that can only be called a *sui generis* curse. The hero, to be sure, does awaken, and he is cleansed

²⁶ This image is often simply pejorative, as in political invective, e.g., in “Jeretyk.” Its narrower, more intrinsic meaning is centered on treachery, perfidy, and lust (cf. especially “Saul” or “Cari”).

²⁷ See fn. 19, above. Many have commented on Ševčenko’s “concern” or “sympathy” for women at great length and with varying degrees of pathos. Although we are now at only a preliminary stage of analysis, it should be noted that in terms of psychoanalytic theory, such feminine identification often points to a homosexual orientation. In Ševčenko, this is substantiated by a number of other patterns and factors. Further textual and biographic investigation, focused on the role and function of this orientation in Ševčenko’s overall creative personality, is obviously necessary.

through tears (“. . . On v slezax / Upal i zemlju lobyzaet, / Kak perši materi rodnoj . . . On snova čistyj angel raja”; lines 116–119); and he does not abandon hope (“Nadeždy on ne sxoronil, / Vosprjanul dux, kak golub’ gornyj, / I mrak serdečnyj, mrak judol’nyj / Nebesnym svetom ozaril”; lines 156–158). But a fatal consequence begins to crystallize. He goes forth to seek his destiny, and, given his origins, he attains more than he or anyone could have hoped for. And yet, in sketching his life, the author repeatedly stresses that he is profoundly unfortunate, that he is, as the very title of the first edition of the poem had it, *bestalannyj*.

Behind the conventional pathos of his tearful visage the cause of his ill fortune is seen as solitude and his isolation from humankind. It is an isolation, however, that flows from no external circumstances but is essentially immanent; it is embodied in his lovelornness, in his destined lovelessness. While this may be taken as a fairly conventional Romantic plaint, it is adumbrated by his strong sense of abandonment and conjoined with the feelings of an exile in a foreign land. On the simply biographical level this is of course an echo of Ševčenko’s early orphanage, and feelings of rejection that did not and could not heal — just as the resultant feelings of anger and self-pity could never be fully defused.²⁸ On the literary (semantic and symbolic) level, it is worth noting that the actual evocation of the desired love is marked equally by eroticism and sublimated purity, and this tension is fittingly conveyed when he speaks of the hero’s desire “. . . s’edinit’ / Požar ljubvi, ljubvi nevinnoj” (lines 368–369).

The opposition of the erotic and the innocent actually reflects a more fundamental and pervasive opposition of what is traditionally called the sacred and the profane. It is perhaps in terms of this opposition, rather than the trauma of abandonment, that we can see the cause of the hero’s misfortune, his curse. For as much as he is depicted as a man of virtue, purity, and selfless dedication to the betterment of his fellow-man, he also

²⁸ In the course of Ševčenko’s creativity this is expressed in the symbolic movements of the narrative poems and the various novels, and in discrete fragments or elements in the non-narrative or lyrical poems. Thus we have the dominant pattern of abandonment, the narrower “theme” of orphanage, and the symbolic punishment of the mother in the manifest plot, i.e., in “Kateryna,” “Vid’ma,” “Knjažna,” or “Najmyčka” (the latter poem, in fact, is the most overt elaboration of such a “punishment”). This problem also requires further analysis. One might note that Ševčenko’s attitude to the mother in his poetry is characteristically complex. The infantile desire to punish the mother for having abandoned him — by dying — is linked to an equally infantile fantasy of the mother-lover, which Balej treats (with valid observations on the characteristic passivity that obtains in this relationship) under the rubric of Ševčenko’s Endymion motif; *Z psyxologiji tvorčosty Ševčenka*, pp. 16–46.

bears — evidently in consequence of that primal violation and “fall” — an indelible stain on his soul which condemns him to loneliness and prevents him from full participation in the normal life of men, and, to be quite specific, separates him from the company of women. This profane side of his soul can be purged only through death.²⁹

His approaching death is linked directly to this unresolved tension, and is, in effect, its resolution. The final description of his life and travails, which follows a pathetic invocation to the long sought for but unrealizable love (lines 358–382), opens with the already established motif of resignation:

Но было некого любить;
Сочетаваться не с кем было;
А сердце плакало, и ныло,
И замирало в пустоте.
(lines 383–386)

but then turns in what would seem on the surface an unexpected direction:

Он таял тихо, молчаливо,
И на задумчивых очах
Туман ложился. Взор стыдливый
На нем красавица порой
Покоя, тайно волновалась;
И симпатической красой
Украдкой долго любовалась.
И, может, многие грустили
Сердца девичие о нем,
Но *тайной волей, высшей силой*
Путь одинокий до могилы
На камнях острых проведен.
(lines 392–403; emphasis mine)

It hardly need be argued that the roots of the hero’s alienation from love (again — specifically heterosexual love) lie not with any mundane reason (his unattractiveness, lack of opportunity, etc.) but in the very essence of his being, or, in terms of the mystically tinged and exalted poetic idiom of this work, in the workings of “a secret will, a higher power.” The very next lines (404–436, beginning with “Iznemogal on, grud’ bolela . . .”) depict his end. His death is both a release from the curse, from his *bestalannost’*, and a logically necessary step: with the confession made, with his life laid

²⁹ This set, depicting the profane and debased side of his soul, is pronounced and overt in Ševčenko’s poetry quite apart from its coded presence in the narrative poems; cf. “Čy to nedolja ta nevolja,” “Meni zdajetsja ja ne znaju,” “Buvaje v nevoli inodi zhadaju,” “Kolys’ durnoju holovoju,” and others.

bare, the hero can leave the scene, and in his place another set of symbols and issues can assume center-stage.

This final set or frame constitutes the essential, core meaning of the poem, and though it assumes full dramatic prominence only with the death of the hero and the inception of the ritual of the *trizna*, it is actually co-extensive with the whole. And here, the modality is as important as the content. It is the operant mechanism of *Trizna* and at the same time a deep structure for all of Ševčenko's poetry — the drive to apotheize the persona of the poet. The apotheosis is characteristically antipodal, and bodies forth on the plane of both the sacred and the profane. In *Trizna*, to be sure, the profane aspect is not developed as fully and drastically as it is in the poetry as a whole. But while the hero of *Trizna* is not manifestly an outcast or reprobate, as in “Varnak” or “Moskaleva krynycja,” or a fallen, debauched soul, as in the above mentioned lyrical poems “Čy to nedolja to nevolja . . . ,” “Meni zdajetsja ja ne znaju . . . ,” and others, he nonetheless epitomizes (as we again think back on the original title, “Bestalannyj”) the unfortunate protagonist-persona. He is an orphan, and, for all his friends, a lonely and inconsolable sufferer; he is, quintessentially, an outsider (cf.: “No on bednjak, on vsem ne svoj, / I tut i tam. Planeta naša, / Prekrasnyj mir naš, raj zemnoj, / Vo vsax koncax emu — čužoj”; lines 167–170); and, as we have seen, he is permanently marked by the violation and trauma that become for him his peculiar original sin. Structurally, he is one with the various cast out and despised protagonists of Ševčenko's poetry.

Parallel to this, however, there appears yet another crucial identification. In the course of his tribulations, “Providja žizni naznačen'ie, / Velikij Božij prigovor, / V samopytlivom razmyšlen'i” (lines 221–223), he addresses his homeland:

. . . «О святая!
Святая родина моя!
Чем помогу тебе, рыдая?
И ты закована, и я. . .
(lines 233–236)

And here once again, an identification that is virtually omnipresent in the Ukrainian poetry is made overt and explicit: his suffering and that of his native land are equated and identified (“I ty zakovana, i ja”).³⁰ Indeed,

³⁰ While there is no question that the Ukraine is meant, Ševčenko does not name it in the poem — which is in keeping with the more distanced, “universalist” tenor that is part and parcel of his “Russian mode.” Cf. below.

symbolically *he becomes the Ukraine* on the strength of a twofold reason — he is one with it in suffering *and* sanctity. The continuation of his soliloquy expresses the heart of the matter:

Великим словом божью волю
Сказать тиранам — не поймут!
И на родном прекрасном поле
Пророка камнем побьют!
Сотрут высокие могилы
И понесут их словом зла!
Тебя убили, раздавили;
И славословить запретили
Твои великие дела!
О боже! сильный и правдивый,
Тебе возможны чудеса.
Исполни славой небеса
И сотвори святое диво:
Воспрянуть мертвым повели,
Благослови всеильным словом
На подвиг новый и суровый,
На искупление земли,
Земли поруганной, забытой,
Чистейшей кровию политой,
Когда-то счастливой земли».

[Как тучи, мысли расходились,
И слезы капали, как дождь! . .]

(lines 237–258)

Several key elements merge here, perhaps the most evident of which is the other side of his apotheosis, the apotheosis of the sacred. As in so much of his poetry (most obviously in “Neofity,” “Marija,” “Jeretyk,” but in others as well), the poet’s protagonist-persona is presented as an apostle or prophet, the bearer of truth who expiates through his own suffering for the sins of his countrymen and mediates between them and God. Here, too, the deep structure that was steadily built up in the course of the poem is laid bare as he actually speaks of himself as a *prorok*. (Cf. also the reference to rule over men’s hearts [line 63]; the goals that the hero — though not explicitly identified — sets for himself in the invocation to the *duša*: “. . . reč’ju krotkoj i smiren’em / Smjagčat’ narodnix palačej, / Da proveščaju gimn proročij, / I dolu pravdu nizvedu” [lines 68–71]; or, finally, the words of the narrator as the hero expires: “Ego ne stalo! I mir proroka poterjal, I slava syna poterjala” [lines 440–442].)

Along with the apotheosis of the sacred, we also find here an articulate and explicit summation of Ševčenko’s poetic mission, of the very essence of the message that he is called to bring to his countrymen — his holy

mission to resurrect the past, to make his debased countrymen conscious of who they are and who their parents were, and in so doing to restore them to true life.³¹ While the statement of this “new and severe task” of “redeeming” a land both “defiled” and “forgotten” but also holy, i.e., “drenched with the purest blood,” is moving and eloquent, it is also clear that at this point he does not see himself as doing this alone, but turns to God for help: “Blagoslovi vsesil’nym slovom. . . .” And this leads to the final and most fundamental structure of the poem — the search for and the creation of the Word.

The issue and the semantic field itself is signaled already at the very beginning of *Trizna*, in the dedication to Varvara Repnina.³² Written in a diction and with sentiments characteristic of her milieu, it focuses exclu-

³¹ The topos and “theme” of waking the dead, of resurrection, is indeed prominent in Ševčenko’s poetry. There is, of course, the well-known “Poslanije,” the full title of which is (N.B. the first term) “I mertvym i žyvym i nenarodženym zemljakam mojim v Ukrajinu i ne v Ukrajinu moje družnjeje poslanije.” Beyond that, there are numerous moments when the dead are made to rise up through the working of his visionary power, as he says in *Hajdamaky*: “Zaspivaju — rozvernulas’ / Vysoka mohyla . . .” (lines 113–14); cf. the already mentioned “Za bajrakom bajrak” and “Buvaje v nevoli inodi zhadaju” as the most explicit instances of this. The wakening of the dead and the “living-dead” are, in turn, part of an even larger set, in which a prominent role is played by the *mohyla* as the resting place of the national soul, which sleeps but is not dead (e.g., “Rozryta mohyla,” “Velykyj l’ox,” and others). In overtly ideological terms, the theme of resurrection, often coupled with images of apocalyptic judgment, is most pronounced, particularly in the later poetry.

³² There is general critical agreement that Varvara Repnina was in love with Ševčenko, but that his feelings for her were platonic; a subtle summation of the relationship and its context is provided in Marietta Šaginjan, *Ševčenko* (Moscow, 1941). It is worth noting that apart from her memoirs, Repnina also expressed her feelings toward Ševčenko in belles lettres, i.e., in an unfinished, autobiographical *roman à clef* (cf. *Russkie propilei*, vol. 2, ed. by M. Geršenson [Moscow, 1916], pp. 179–263). This work includes a letter from Ševčenko (see also *Tvory*, 6: 25–26) in which he recapitulates in the same highly emotional tone some of the feelings expressed in *Trizna*. Repnina’s *povist’* also contains an inserted story entitled “Devočka,” which she gave to Ševčenko separately and to which he replied in the letter noted above (which was written sometime between 23–25 November 1843). What is quite remarkable here is that this breathlessly lyrical and allegorically autobiographical story is very much influenced by *Trizna*, and at times is almost a pastiche of Ševčenko’s poem. (It is clear from Repnina’s own account [cf. *Russkie propilei*, pp. 209–211] that she had received a copy of *Trizna* from Ševčenko at least two or three days prior to writing “Devočka.”) Along with such elements as exalted religiosity, anguish, and resignation over a life of unrequited love, it has such specific echoes as references to a *prišlec*, a troubled dream, contemplation of and spiritual succor in the beauty of nature, an appeal to God (“Tebe možno čudesa,” a direct quotation from *Trizna*, line 245) and the early and unmotivated death of the heroine. While in itself the work has little literary value, it is interesting as perhaps the earliest instance of a literary text written under the influence of Ševčenko.

sively on the process of creating poetry.³³ Yet, while apparently accepting her mystical, almost quietist understanding of the soul's path (lines 1–4), and thanking her as the muse-angel (and beyond that, more basically, as the mother-surrogate) who brings him inspiration and peace of heart (lines 10–13), the statement about the actual creation itself (lines 5–9) is ambiguous. For the referent of *slovo* in line 5 is polysemous: it may be the soul and its destiny, God's gift of inspiration, or the poem that follows. It is not the Word, however, for as the dedication makes clear, the poet has succeeded only in turning tears into sounds; he has not yet found the message that arms the soul.

There is further ambivalence when in the beginning of the poem, in the paean to the hero, it is said, on the one hand, that “V judoli rabstva radost' voli / Bezmolvno ty provozglasil” (lines 28–29), and a few lines further this is reversed: “Svobodu ljudjam — v bratstve ix / Ty projavil velikim slovom” (lines 32–33). In terms of the poem's autobiographical subtext, *bezmolvno* may have three meanings. It may refer to the fact that the language in which Ševčenko's message, his poetry, was couched was not recognized, that his Ukrainian writings — both the medium and the content — were scorned as the pointless efforts of a *mužik* writing for *mužiks*; Ševčenko himself sardonically paraphrased this attitude in the introduction to *Hajdamaky*:³⁴

33

Душе с прекрасным назначеньем
Должно любить, терпеть, страдать;
И дар господний, вдохновенье,
Должно слезами поливать.
Для вас понятно это слово! . . .
Для вас я радостно сложил
Свои житейские оковы,
Священнодействовал я снова,
И слезы в звуки перелил.
Ваш добрый ангел осенил
Меня бессмертными крылами
И тихостройными речами
Мечты о рае пробудил.

³⁴ Ševčenko was always concerned with the reception of his works, but he was also determined to establish his right to write in Ukrainian and, generally, the right for a literature in Ukrainian to exist and develop. Cf. especially his introduction to the unpublished *Kobzar* of 1847 (*Tvory*, 6:312–15). In his letter to H. S. Tarnovs'kyj (25 January 1843), while speaking about the reception of *Hajdamaky*, he put the matter bluntly: “. . . tut moskali zovut' mene entuziastom, syrič durnem. Boh jim zvydyt', nexaj ja budu i myžyc'kyj poet, aby til'ko poet, to meni bil'she ničoho i ne treba. Nexaj sobaka laje, viter roznese” (*Tvory*, 6:23). The first reactions to the *Kobzar* of 1840 generally acknowledged the poet's talent, but several reviewers expressed dismay at his decision to write in a “dead language” or in “dialect.” The reaction of Belinskij was virulently hostile.

А то дурень розказує
 Мертвими словами
 Та якогось-то Ярему
 Веде перед нами
 У постолах. Дурень! дурень!
 (lines 73–77)

Secondly, as almost a corollary to the preceding, it may refer to what Ševčenko may have perceived as a tepid reaction on the part of the Ukrainian and Russian reading public, to the fact — as he saw it — that his poetry did not have the desired effect.³⁵ The third and more profound possibility is that he himself, as noted above, had not yet found the full power of the Word. The reference to the “great word,” in line 33, is therefore not so much a contradiction of *bezmolvno* as it is an expression of belief in the power of God’s word, which the poet, however, has only *in potentio*, as it were. This latter reading is reinforced when he concludes the account of his life’s trials with: “Vot drama strašnaja, svjataja! . . . / I on prošel ee rydaja, / Ee on strogo razygral / Bez slova” (lines 201–204). This is, moreover, the statement in the passage cited above (lines 237–258): while he, the hero-prophet, knows the divine message and is ready to sacrifice himself for it, he is powerless to effect anything and can only ask God’s help for a miracle (“ . . . sotvori svjatoe divo”). His lack of efficacy, his literal helplessness is underscored when the scene concludes with his tears (not words!), “I slezy kapali, kak dožd’!,” and the following scene elaborates this to the point of despair: “. . . no tot, kto ne okom, / A smotrit dušuju na kozni ljudej, / I možet liš’ plakat’ v toske odinokoj — / O Bože pravdivyj, liši Ty očej!” (lines 263–266).

The structure of the work, however, demands that a resolution be found. This resolution, as suggested above, is precisely the hero’s death. Not simply death, but death and transfiguration. For it is through death that the hero’s profane nature, his “original sin” and “curse,” are purged and expiated, and his sacred nature finally established; with death the human frailties that turned the Word into tears are cast off and its power released; with death *he* can now become the Word. Indeed, as the title intimates, and the movement of the poem actually demonstrates, the hero-prophet’s death is what gives meaning to his life.³⁶ The central and

³⁵ Cf. the letter to Tarnov’s’kij cited in fn. 34 or the letter to P. M. Korol’ov of 22 May 1842.

³⁶ Clearly, the name “Trizna” is more resonant and meaningful than the original “Bestalannyj.” L. Bilec’kij’s argument to the contrary (*Ševčenko v Jahotyni*, pp. 15, 19, and *passim*) is superficial and unpersuasive.

unifying metaphor of the wake now also serves to elucidate the poem's circular and, on its surface, possibly confusing structure, in which shifting narrative voices and identifications repeatedly blur the distinction between time past and present. It becomes clear that the telescoping of time is precisely the point, that *Trizna* is nothing less than a ritual reenactment, not just a mass for the dead, but a celebration (replete with various elements of Christian liturgy, especially echoes of the Last Supper, the twelve friends-apostles, etc.) and a dramatic recapitulation of the life, the meaning, and the destiny of the "divine" hero. As in all myths, he must die in order to be reborn into a higher reality and into his true self.

The grandiose dimensions of this transformation, with the poet's persona assuming the role of Christ himself, may surprise us, if at all, only in the explicitness of the formulation. A closer look at Ševčenko's poetry shows such transformations to be part of a basic structure. The symbolism of his martyrdom and of his expiation and mediation is frequently conveyed by grandiose images: he is Hus and Prometheus ("Jeretyk" and "Kavkaz"), the holy tree ("U Boha za dvermy ležala sokyra"), and the oak that represents the Ukraine ("Buvaly vojny i vijs'koviji svary"); he not only speaks *with* God as the sole representative of his people (in "Zapovit"), but in the very voice *of* God (in the paraphrase of Hosea, chap. 14). What may seem an unexpected deviation from the structure, however, is the fact that *Trizna*, while asserting the ultimate identification of poet as Christ, apparently retreats from its implications, i.e., from the poet's sublime claim of prophecy and redemption. For the poem does end in disillusionment and dejection: the message and the memory of the *prišlec* is apparently fated to die with the last of his friends; the ritual of the *trizna* is apparently fated to be shortlived. The future is missing from the mythic conflation of time.

But this, in fact, is precisely where the context of Ševčenko's poetry must be allowed to reassert itself and the final meaning of *Trizna* as a symbolic nexus and stage in poetic development be allowed to emerge. For, as we can now see, it is a poem that is focused expressly on the search for the Word, on the identification and justification of that search. Whereas before, in the earlier poetry, Ševčenko could only, as he himself put it, generate tears, "A ja . . . a ja / Til'ko vmiju plakat', / Til'ko sl'ozy za Ukraju . . . / A slova — nemaje . . ." ("Dumy moji, dumy moji"; lines 66–69), he now establishes the Word as the essential, active core of his poetry; moving beyond the quixotic aspirations of a Nikita Gajdaj, he identifies both the prophetic function and the sacred content of his calling.

Taken by itself — especially by virtue of its ending — *Trizna* expresses

a pessimistic judgment on the poet-prophet's ability to fulfill the task before him: the wake encompasses both him and his message. As such, the poem conveys a characteristic Romantic sense of defeat and inadequacy in the face of the transcendent possibilities of the poet's calling, a feeling exemplified by Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode." The picture changes dramatically, however, when we see *Trizna* in the context of Ševčenko's poetry as a whole, and particularly in the tightly-knit unity of the poetry of *Try lita*. In this frame it becomes a necessary and positive evolutionary stage which ushers in a new chapter in his creativity. In a word, *Trizna* culminates the theme of the paradoxically solitary and mute bard who, like Perebendja, speaks only with nature, or, like the persona of "Dumy moji, dumy moji," communicates only with himself and a distant and amorphous Ukraine, or of the meek sufferer who can only weep over his own and his country's misfortune, and heralds the Promethean theme and the tribunicial stance of the poetry that follows. It is indicative that "Rozryta mohyla" — completed before *Trizna*, in October 1843 — which by virtue of the lament over the Ukraine's subjugation becomes Ševčenko's first "illegal" poem, is still written in the mode of tearful and helpless complaint (formally underscored by the fact that the body of the poem is an apostrophe by the ravished mother-Ukraine). In contrast, "Čyhryne, Čyhryne" — written just after *Trizna*, in February 1844 — already draws upon a new poetics: while there are still many echoes of the previously dominant plaint (e.g., "Nexaj že serce plače, prosyt' / Svjatoji pravdy na zemli") there is a palpable transition from passive lamentation to the imperative of action, if not revolution.³⁷ Even more indicative is the

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Не рвіть, думи, не паліте!
 Може верну знову
 Мою правду безталанну,
 Моє тихе слово.
 Може викую я з його
 До старого плуга
 Новий леміш і чересло. —
 І в тяжкі упруги . . .
 Може зорю переліг той,
 А на перелозі . . .
 Я посію мої сльози,
 Мої щирі сльози.
 Може зійдуть, і виростуть
 Ножі обоюдні,
 Розпанахають погане,
 Гниле серце, трудне,
 І вицдіять сукровату,
 І наллють живої

contrast between *Trizna* and “Zapovit” (Jak umru to poxovajte . . .), the poem which concludes both the period of *Try lita* and the album-collection after which it is named (and which became for later generations of Ukrainians an unofficial national anthem). The latter deals with the same essential “subject matter” as *Trizna* — the poet’s death and his legacy — but the mode and the meaning are entirely different. The poet’s role as spokesman for his people is evident (cf. the symbolic location of his grave and his mission of mediating between his nation and God); his message (at least on the manifest level) is unswervingly that of rebirth through revolution —

Поховайте та вставайте,
Кайдани порвіте
І вражою злою кров’ю
Волю окропіте. —

and now, too, the remembrance of the poet, the “wake,” is to be conducted not by twelve mortal followers but by the entire nation:

І мене в сем’ї великій,
В сем’ї вольній, новій,
Не забудьте пом’янути
Незлим тихим словом.

Even though elements of pathos and disenchantment will never disappear, and will, indeed, be prominent in the lyrics written in exile, the tribunicial voice of Ševčenko’s poetry, from the great poems of *Try lita* (“Son,” “Kavkaz,” “Poslanije,” and others) to “Neofity” and “Marija” will have been firmly established.³⁸ Its culmination, and the apotheosis of the power of the Word, will come in the powerful adaptations of the biblical prophets of the last years of Ševčenko’s life, of “Isaija. Hlava 35” (“Prorvetsja slovo, jak voda, / I depr’-pustynnja nepolyta, / Zciljuščoju vodoju vmyta, / Prokynetsja . . .”), of “Osiji. Hlava XIV” (“. . . pravda

Козацької тії крові,
Чистої, святої!!!
(lines 51–70)

³⁸ In a very essential way, “Marija,” the last of Ševčenko’s long narrative poems, also recapitulates *Trizna*. At the end of the poem, the Virgin Mary epitomizes the polarized apotheosis discussed above. She is both *beztalanna* and *čudesna*. She rallies and gives moral strength to Christ’s weak disciples (“I ty, velykaja v ženax! / I jix unynije i strax / Rozvijala, mov tu polovu, / Svojim svjatym ohnennym slovom!”; lines 732–35), and yet she dies forsaken and forgotten (“. . . Ty ž pid tynom, / Sumujučy, u burjani / Umerla z holodu. Amin!”; lines 744–46). In this, and in her sacred function as mother of the Logos, she is, of course, a projection of the poet himself. And it is through the Word, moreover, that she, and the poet who identifies with her, will live on: “. . . a ty . . . / Mov zoloto v tomu hornyli, / V ljudskij duši vozobnovylas’ . . .” (lines 752–54).

ožyve, / Natxne naklyče, nažene / Ne vetxeje, ne drevlje slovo / Roztljen-
noje, a slovo nove / Mež ljud'my krykom ponese / I ljud okradenyj spase"),
and especially of the paraphrase of the 11th Psalm, with these often cited
lines: ". . . Vozvelyču / Malyx otyx rabiv nimyx! / Ja na storoži kolo
jix / Postavlju slovo."

In this development *Trizna* plays an important, dual role. It allows us to speak with more confidence of an intrinsic and integral (not simply biographical or chronological) periodization of Ševčenko's poetry, specifically of the thematic-structural development of his poetic voice and the transition from a self-focused and largely sentimental to a Promethean and tribunicial stance. At the same time it illustrates the special function of Ševčenko's Russian poetry. In its narrative and dramatic structure *Trizna*, as I have argued, functions like a requiem, a mass, a solemn retelling of the life of the hero through a focus on its central "mysteries"; it is also a ritual recapitulation. To be sure, such recapitulation of central moments in the hero's symbolic biography is at the heart of Ševčenko's Ukrainian narrative poems, but there it is invariably deeply encoded. (The system of identifications, for example, can be perceived not from any one poem but only from a juxtaposition of patterns and movements of the various poems taken as variants of a basic story line.) In *Trizna* the meaning is relatively close to the surface, and at times almost explicit. And this corresponds to the more rational and the more distanced tenor of Ševčenko's Russian writings. Whereas the Ukrainian poetry invariably makes the poet, his persona and world actual and experientially immediate, the Russian mode involves distance and intellectual control (especially as regards the prose) and is conducive to commentary and observation. Because of this, *Trizna*, uniquely in Ševčenko's poetry, serves to summarize his past poetic achievements and to discuss them in terms of a program. Here the poet can take stock of what he has already done and, through the sublime paradox of rebirth through death, brace himself for his new task.

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