

The Word *Žyd* ('Jew') in the Poetic Works of Taras Ševčenko

Oleh S. Ilnytskyj (Edmonton)

The name of Ukraine's major nineteenth-century Romantic poet Taras Ševčenko is from time to time linked with anti-Semitism. An article in *The Washington Post*, to take one example, argued that the National Park Service and the District of Columbia should remove from Washington's streets a variety of statues of "19th century bronzed soldiers and other has-beens". "In the non-military category" the paper identified Taras Ševčenko as "a prime candidate for removal", describing him as "a reputedly anti-Semitic" "19th century Ukrainian poet...". The paper continued: "In the early 1960s, opponents of the memorial said Ševčenko was not only an idol of Soviet Communists but an anti-Semite and anti-Polish to boot"¹.

Allegations such as these rest largely on a small number of portrayals of Jews in Ševčenko's poetry and more specifically on the presence of the word *žyd*, which by analogy to the Russian *žid* is construed by some as a slur, meaning 'yid'². This view, however, ignores the sociolinguistic situation of the Ukrainian language in the Russian Empire, especially the lexical and stylistic differences between Ukrainian and Russian. Since this is not the place to review the history of Ukrainian, I will briefly note that the language was not officially recognized in the empire until 1905 and was subject to harsh administrative repressions both before and after that year. The standardization of Ukrainian proceeded slowly through the nineteenth century. Outside observers frequently judged its stylistic practices with reference to the norms of Russian, which, obviously, dominated imperial discourse. The Russian language, under the influence of official government usage, had gradually transitioned from the forms *žid*, *židovskie* to *evrej*,

¹ Mathews 2000: B8. In 1964, at the unveiling of the Ševčenko monument former President Dwight D. Eisenhower declared: "...In unveiling this memorial to the great nineteenth century Ukrainian poet we encourage today's poets in Ukraine, in Eastern Europe, and around the world to embody in their poetry mankind's demands for freedom, for self-expression, for national independence, and for liberty for all mankind. We know that were he alive today, he would still be in the forefront of that great struggle..." (<www.eisenhowermemorial.org/speeches/19640627%20Taras%20Shevchenko%20Monument%20Washington%20DC.htm> Consulted January 17, 2008).

² Klier 1982: 1-15. Klier writes on the history of the word *žid* in Russian, touching on Ukrainian issues as well. He erroneously writes that the Ukrainian Cyrillic form of the word is "Жуд," whereas in fact it is "Жид" (cf. p. 2).

*evrejskie*³. Russian-language speakers, who became habituated to the new practice from the late eighteenth century, increasingly found the Ukrainian word *žyd* to be controversial. Already in the nineteenth century, it was said that the word was fit to identify “scoundrels” but not “Jews”⁴. While the social function of *žid* on the imperial, i.e., Russian-language level, became controversial and gradually fell out of use, in the Ukrainian context *žyd* functioned as a standard literary term right up to the end of the 1920s, reflecting more closely the practices, say, in Polish (*żyd*) and Czech (*žid*). From the 1930s, under the influence and pressure of the Russian language, official Ukrainian usage moved toward the term *jevrej* as well. Even then, however, Soviet Ukrainian dictionaries accepted *žyd* as an unmarked synonym for *jevrej*, citing Ševčenko as an example of its neutral application⁵. In Ukraine today *jevrej* serves as the standard literary form. Nevertheless, in the western regions of the country (and especially in the Diaspora) the older terminology enjoys currency and is used without necessarily carrying offensive connotations. Thus any assessment of the word in Ševčenko must first locate its conventions in the proper historical and sociological context. The word, in and of itself, tells us little⁶. A recent item by a Ukrainian-Jewish writer argues that Ševčenko’s life and work demonstrate a sympathetic stance toward Jews and Biblical themes⁷. One should also note that in 1858 Ševčenko, along with other Ukrainian and Russian writers, denounced anti-Semitic views that appeared in the Russian journal *Illustracija*, which among other things defended the use of the word *žid* in Russian⁸. In 1861, following Ševčenko’s death, a polemic ensued between Jews and Ukrainians about the appropriateness of using *žyd* on the pages of the Ukrainian journal “Osnova”, with some Jews expressing dissatisfaction with the word⁹. But, as Klier points out, even among Jews themselves, there was no clear consensus initially that the word *žid* was necessarily a pejorative¹⁰. That meaning took hold over time.

Oddly, while some scholarly remarks on Jews in Ševčenko’s work¹¹ do exist, the subject remains mostly understudied. This is particularly true for the word *žyd* itself, which is touted as a sign of anti-Semitism but has never been examined in depth or in the framework of Ševčenko’s entire body of poet work. The availability now of *A Concordance to the Poetic Works of Taras Shevchenko*

³ Klier 1982: 3.

⁴ See Serbyn 1988: 87-91, 96, 98, 103.

⁵ See *Slovník ukrains’koji movy*, volume II (Kyjiv 1971): 528. Only in a secondary meaning does the dictionary define the word as an “insulting name for Jews”.

⁶ It might be noted, as Klier does (cf. 5), that the term *evrej* also can be, and was used, pejoratively by Russian-language authors.

⁷ Kacnel’son 2002: 202-210.

⁸ Klier 1982: 6-8. For further details on the so-called “*Illustracija* Affair”, see note 23 in Klier. See also Grabowicz 1988: 333.

⁹ Serbyn 1988: 85-110; Klier 1982: 10-11; Grabowicz 1988: 333.

¹⁰ Klier 1982: 11-12.

¹¹ Grabowicz 1988: 332-333.

(Oleh S. Ilnytkyj and George Hawrysch 2001) allows us to remedy the situation rather painlessly by scrutinizing the manner in which this still controversial word is used by Ševčenko. The present paper is limited primarily to showing the stylistic and narrative implementations of *žyd*, but even such a circumscribed exercise should help refute the notion that Ševčenko expresses hatred for Jews in his poetry.

The *Concordance* reveals that in his primary ('canonical') poetic texts Ševčenko used 18,401 unique word-forms and that his poetry contains a total of 83,731 words and 22,241 lines of verse¹². Out of this total, 61 words/lines refer to Jews through adjectival or nominal variations of the word *žyd*. Of these only 28 are actually unique instances of the word (i.e., some forms recur more than once). Looked at from another perspective, out of the 220 poems in Ševčenko's oeuvre only 20 have one or more uses of this word or its derivative. It is rather interesting that of the 61 lines that contain some version of the word *žyd* almost half (29 or 48%) come from a single long historical poem: *Hajdamaky* (The Hajdamaks). The second most frequent use of the word (8 occurrences) appears in a relatively little discussed poem, "U Vil'ni, horodi preslavnim" (In Vilnius, the Famous Town). The poem *Kniazna* (The Princess) has 4 occurrences of the word; *Švačka* ([Mykyta] Švačka) has 3 and *Son* (*Komedija*) (Dream [A Comedy]) has 2. In the 15 other poems *žyd* appears only once per poem. Finally, separate mention should be made of the single use of the genitive *žida* in Ševčenko's Russian-language poem, *Slepaja* (The Blind Woman, line 859). Here the word appears as a Ukrainianism in a song sung by a female character.

While Ševčenko, like other nineteenth-century Ukrainian authors, never used the word *jevrej* when writing in Ukrainian, he does have thirteen uses of words derived from *Judeja* ('Judea') as, for example, in the phrase "the Judean capital" ("judejs'ka stolycja", *Marija*, line 676). Five of these words are pious references to the Holy Land. The proper noun *Juda* (Judas) also functions sometimes as a synonym for *žyd*. In addition, Ševčenko has three forms of the word 'Rabbi' ("Ravvi", "ravvinamy"); all bear a positive meaning and come from the poem *Marija*, a text about the Mother of Christ.

The derivatives of *žyd* in Ševčenko's works span an array of meanings, from the neutral to the positive to the negative. By themselves most of these words cannot be read as offensive since, as in the case of *žyd* (masculine) and *žydivka* (feminine), they primarily serve as objective designators of nationality. Forty-nine of the 61 forms derived from *žyd* (adjectives and nouns in various cases, number and gender) fall into this impartial category. While none of these words can be construed as national or ethnic insults, several instances of their usage – given the historical and confrontational contexts in which they appear – do associate Jewishness and Jewish subjects with some form of disapproval. In other words, a *žyd*-word, in and of itself, might not be stylistically marked as contemptuous but might nonetheless serve in some circumstances as a form

¹² Ilnytkyj, Hawrysch 2001: xi-xvii.

of abuse or mark scenes of verbal or physical cruelty either toward Jews or by Jews¹³.

The poetry also contains a few stylistic derivatives from the root *žyd* that seem unambiguously derogatory purely at face value: *žydova*¹⁴, *žydovyn*, *žydjuha*, *žydok* (all convey strong degrees of loathing)¹⁵. A total of 8 word-forms fall into this category. Diametrically opposite to them is a diminutive feminine noun that is equally clear-cut in its complimentary meaning: *žydivočka* (dear young Jew-ess). There are four occurrences of this word, each communicating tenderness, affection or compassion.

As mentioned, nearly half of the 61 uses of *žyd* come from *Hajdamaky* (1839-1841), Ševčenko's longest narrative poem (2569 lines). It depicts a bloody eighteenth-century rebellion of Cossacks and peasants against the oppression of Polish gentry and their Jewish agents (the poem *Švačka* is also about the Hajdamak movement)¹⁶. In *Hajdamaky* one of the principal characters is a Jewish innkeeper by the name of Lejba, an evil and greedy individual who serves the Poles partly under duress and partly for personal financial gain – and in the process abuses his young Ukrainian servant, Jarema. Ševčenko shows Lejba both as a ruthless victimizer and a pathetic victim of the Polish nobility's sadism. The most vituperative *žyd*-expressions materialize within this framework of Polish-Jewish interactions. For example, the gentry abuse Lejba with phrases like these: “Zdorov, svyne, zdorov, žyde” (Hello, swine, Hello Jew). This aristocratic bigotry repeats itself in *Knjažna* (line 262), where the diminutive but derogatory *žydka* (genitive of *žydok*, little Jew) exemplifies a Prince's mindset, with the word differentiating his internal voice (i.e., his subjective musings) from the narrative proper¹⁷. Compare:

Минають літа: люде гинуть,
Лютує голод в Україні,
Лютує в княжому селі.
Скирти вже княжі погнили.
А він байдуже – п'є, гуляє
Та жида з грішми виглядає.
Нема жидка...

The years pass: people die,
Famine grips Ukraine,
Famine grips the prince's village
The prince's grain stacks have already rotted.
It's all the same to him – he drinks, he plays
And awaits the Jew with money.
No sign of the little Jew...

The attribution of anti-Jewish sentiments to people with power and control receives a Russian twist in *Kavkaz* (The Caucasus), where a smug imperial

¹³ The phrase “žydivs'ka sobako” (Jewish dog, *Hajdamaky*, line 1835) is used by a Hajdamak rebel to insult a fellow Ukrainian.

¹⁴ The words appear in the instrumental case: “žydovoju”. For details, compare the paragraph below on “Čyhryne, Čyhryne”.

¹⁵ All these words are identified as “insulting” in *Slovnyk movy Shevchenka* (Kyjiv 1964).

¹⁶ On the Hajdamak movement, see Pelenski 1988: 31-42, esp. 36. Compare also: Kohut 1977: 359-378.

¹⁷ Ševčenko also uses this device, the belittling diminutive “panky” (noblemen), to refer to the Polish gentry (cf. *Hajdamaky*, line 304).

voice describes Jews as thieves ("Щоб крадене перекупать, / Як ті жиди. Ми по закону!...", lines 114-115). The poet, on the other hand, satirizes and condemns everything this voice represents. While the evidence in the foregoing examples is relatively thin, it does suggest that Ševčenko was sympathetic to the disadvantages Jews faced when dealing with the upper classes and those in a position of power.

Since the interaction between Jews and noblemen (or authority in general) accounts for many of the *žyd* words, neither their negative use nor the attitudes they express can be reasonably attributed to Ševčenko or, more accurately, the narrative voice, which functions as his alter ego. The authorial discourse, which is often autobiographical, has a distinctly autonomous presence not only in *Hajdamaky* but also in nearly all of Ševčenko's long narrative works. Its function is to interrogate the actions of characters and events, register an ethical message, and express disappointment at the absence of love and justice in the world¹⁸. In *Hajdamaky*, for example, the narrator calls the vengeance that is visited upon the Poles and Jews as "worse than hell" (line 1541), explaining it as a conflict that resulted from religious and social intolerance. In short, it would be quite naïve to read the scenes where Jews are mistreated as if they were endorsed by Ševčenko or represented his authorial voice.

Having said this, it should be pointed out that while the narrator himself is almost never implicated in anti-Jewish sentiments like the ones professed by his characters, there are cases in *Hajdamaky* and *Son (Komediya)* where he too – quite independently of his protagonists – seems at first reading to show hostility toward Jews by using antipathetic forms of the word *žyd*. For example, *Son (Komediya)* contains arguably the most unambiguous use of a slur by the narrator in that the word *žydjuha* come from his voice:

Та й сон же, сон, напричуд дивний,
Мені приснився –
Найтверезіший би упився,
Скупий жидюга дав би гривню,
Щоб позирнуть на ті дива.

(lines 62-66)

And a dream, a very strange dream
Came to me at night –
The most sober of men would turn to drink,
And a cheap Jew would give a coin
To get a glimpse at these wonders.

But before coming to any firm conclusions, it is important to consider a few extenuating circumstances. *Son (Komediya)* is a political satire on the Russian Empire and its social and political evils. Although the narrator seems culpable for his choice of words, even here there is reason not to identify him with Ševčenko-the-Poet, because *žydjuha* is part of a carefully crafted persona, created to motivate the fantastic dream (a social critique) that is at the root of the poem. This persona, at the moment the word *žydjuha* is uttered, is a stumbling drunkard and the lexicon is used deliberately to create an unsophisticated character rather than an exalted image of the Poet. The section in which the word

¹⁸ On the function of digressions in *Hajdamaky*, see Sloane 1978: 310-333.

appears (lines 41-74) is ironic and slightly crude (cf. the phrase “Ta čorta z dva”, line 67) in order to strike a comic mode, with the utterance itself functioning more as a parody of anti-Jewish attitudes than an expression of the attitudes themselves. The intentionally lowbrow narrator is a mask behind which the Poet hides to condemn the empire and to ‘make strange’ its false glory.

Another possible illustration of Ševčenko appearing as if he harbored hostility toward Jews is found in *Hajdamaky* when Lejba is addressed as *žydjuha* (line 417) and the phrases “bad Jew” (“žyd pohanyj”, line 333) and “cursed Jew” (“prokljatyj žyd”, line 780) are employed to characterize him. The full meaning of these quasi-authorial outbursts can only be grasped by taking into account two aspects of the poem: (1) Lejba’s negative deeds, which the narrator observes and is obliged to condemn along with those perpetrated by the Polish gentry; and (2) the contrasting sympathy the narrator shows for his underdog protagonist, Jarema, and Lejba’s daughter.

The expression “bad Jew” is part of the narrator’s summation, a moralizing reaction, which follows a scene that shows Lejba maltreating Jarema (lines 322-332). This is a fairly typical reaction by Ševčenko-the-narrator to all kinds of negative characters and episodes of violence in his work. The use of *žydjuha* (roughly translated, ‘ugly Jew’) to identify Lejba is motivated by a short section that suggests some sort of sexual impropriety on the part of Lejba (lines 417-436)¹⁹. Ševčenko is enigmatic here but the ferocity with which he reviles Lejba implicates the father in some kind of wrongdoing, either active or passive. Lejba is seen counting money near the bed on which his semi-naked daughter is sprawled on her back. Violence against her is intimated by reference to a “ripped bodice” (“rozirvana pazuxa”). The scene is ambiguous, open to interpretation, but the abnormality it portrays and the culpability of Lejba in the narrator’s eyes is not in doubt²⁰. It is important to emphasize that Ševčenko draws a sharp contrast between this evil father and his apparently victimized daughter, who is “unbaptized” (“nexeščena”) but described in loving diminutives: “moloden’ka” (very young); “beautiful beyond words” (“neskazano harna”); “a flower in a field” (“kvitočka v hajju”). In fact, Ševčenko endows Lejba’s daughter with one of his favorite tragic virtues: loneliness and lonesomeness (“Mabut’, dušno / Na peryni spaty / Odynokij, moloden’kij; / Ni z kym rozmovljaty, – Odna šepče...” [Perhaps, it is too warm / to sleep on the duvet / for the lonely young woman; / She has no one to speak to, – / She whispers to herself]). This ennobling quality is characteristic of Ševčenko’s many heroes and heroines and is also the trait by which the narrative voice identifies itself in much of the oeuvre. The scene therefore bespeaks of unusual empathy for the Jewish girl.

There are broad parallelisms between the episode with Lejba’s daughter in *Hajdamaky* and the short narrative poem “U Vil’ni, horodi preslavnim”.

¹⁹ On the subject of sex and rape in Ševčenko’s other work, see: Grabowicz 1979: 320-347 and Ilnytzkyj 2000: 3-17.

²⁰ See also the comments on the character of Lejba in Grabowicz 1988: 332. Grabowicz cites Ševčenko’s word for Lejba as *žydjura* but the correct form is *žydjuha*.

Ševčenko had lived in Vilnius as a serf from 1829 to 1831 with his master P. Engelhardt but wrote the poem in exile (1848), relying perhaps on real events²¹. The rather melodramatic plot is about the mutual but secret love between a Lithuanian boy (the son of a "proud countess") and a "young Jewish girl" ("žydivka molodaja", line 23), who is also being wooed by a banker. The girl eludes her stern father to meet with the Lithuanian boy. As the two lovers kiss, the girl's father suddenly appears with an axe and kills the youth. It is at this point that the narrator, a confirmed believer in unfettered Romantic love, condemns the murderer with the harsh word *žydovyn* (line 73). The daughter – who, in contrast, is defended and addressed by the authorial voice with the affectionate form *žydivočka* (a word used three times in the poem) – takes hold of her father's ax, kills him and then drowns herself. A few lines later, the poet writes: "Dyvvalys' dovho ljudy, / De vona sxovalas', / Žydivočka ta hadjuča, / Ščo bat'ka ubyla" (For a long time people wondered / where she concealed herself / that snake-like Jewess / who killed her father; lines 43-85). The attribute "snake-like" ("hadjuča") is clearly not the poet's voice or his personal judgment, but society's – Ševčenko's perennial villain – which is always callous and indifferent to matters of the heart. The coldhearted Jewish parents in this poem (the mother, too, is described as "prokljata" [cursed, line 28]) recall the Ukrainian parents in *Kateryna* (Catherine, 1838-1839), who reject their daughter because she loves and bears the child of a Russian soldier, a disavowal that eventually results in *Kateryna's* suicide (also by drowning). The poem "U Vil'ni..." in fact encapsulates very typical features of Ševčenko's poetry: a strong identification with women and their fate; a rejection of oppressive authority (societal and parental, especially if it is male); and an idealization of love and individual freedom.

A single instance of the compassionate plural form *žydivočky* (young Jewesses) appears also in *Hajdamaky* in a scene that depicts unremitting slaughter of the civilian population by desperate and grief-crazed rebels. Among the hapless victims that the narrator enumerates (cripples, old people, little children, etc.), he mentions young noblewomen and young Jewish girls. Whereas the *Hajdamaks* are merciless, the narrative voice introduces an ethical and sympathetic modulation to the horrific depiction by describing the female victims through diminutives: *šljaxtjanočky i žydivočky* (cf. line 1690).

²¹ The editors of Ševčenko's *Povne zibrannja tvoriv u dvanadcaty tomach* (The Complete Collection of Works in Twelve Volumes, Kyjiv 1989-1990) point to a similar theme in M. Lermontov's "Ballada", which begins with the line "Kuda tak provorno, židovka mladaja..." (Where are you running so fast, young Jewess?), cf. vol. II: 513. This ballad appears under the year 1832 in Lermontov's work but was first published in 1876. Ironically, Ševčenko's "U Vil'ni..." also saw first publication that year in a Prague edition of his works. Lermontov uses the word *židovka* twice in his ballad (*evrejka* once). Lermontov's Jewish girl is in love with a Russian (*russkij*) and is running to warn her lover about her father's death threat. She explains that the "law of Moses" forbids loving a Russian. The poem ends with the young couple found murdered with a knife that lies in front of a building.

As indicated above, words with the root *žyd* are, statistically, a relatively minor group in Ševčenko's oeuvre. They are a minority also relative to words that identify other national and social classes whom Ševčenko considers Ukraine's exploiters and the source of her suffering. Consider, for example, that there are 117 references to Poles as *ljaxy* and three references to them as *poljaky* (the respectful term)²². Poles are also frequently invoked simply as a social class, i.e., the "nobility" (*šljaxta*, *šljaxectvo*, etc.) and even more frequently as "masters" or "lords" (*pany*, *panstvo*, etc.). Words that refer to "Muscovites," "Moscow," etc. appear well over one hundred times²³. Germans (*nimec'*, *nimota*) and Tatars (*orda*, *tatary*) are not uncommon as well. In short, Ševčenko's mention of Jews is not some exceptional fixation on a particular people but part of a broader symbolic structure that concerns itself with finding the cause of Ukraine's social and national tragedy. Jews are not so much singled out as villains as amalgamated into an all-inclusive category that has social (i.e., class) as well as national (i.e., ethnic) features. Thus, for example, Jews (as *žyd* or *juda*) appear almost as a rule within the immediate environment of some reference to Poles or the nobility (*ljaxy*, *pany*, *šljaxta*, *knjaz'*). The following lines from the *Concordance* will illustrate this pattern of collocates (emphases are mine):

- 016B 0248 Голодніі люде. А скирти гниють. / А пани й полову жидам продають.
/ Та голоду раді, та Бога благають,
- 016B 0298 А тим часом жида в селі / З грішми появились. / Радіє князь, запро-
дує
- 061A 0482 Лях хреститься, / А за ним Іуда. / "Браво! браво!" Охрестили.
- 061A 0882 Орли налетіли; вони рознесуть / Ляхам, жидам кару; / За кров і по-
жари
- 061A 1027 Ночували ляшки-панки / В будинках з жидами, / Напилися, простяг-
лися
- 061A 1184 Велике свято в Україні. / Минув – і лях, і жидовин / Горілки, крові
упивались,
- 061A 1192 Що вже їм завтра не вставать. / Ляхи заснули, а Іуди / Ще лічать гроші
уночі,
- 061A 1302 Прокинеться доля; козак заспіва: / "Ні жида, ні ляха", а в степах Ук-
райни – / "О Боже мій милий – блисне булава!"
- 061A 1672 Кров'ю червоніє / Шляхетською, жидівською; / А над ним палають
- 061A 1698 Ні душі живої / Шляхетської й жидівської. / А пожар удвоє
- 061A 1706 Мертвих віша, палить. / "Дайте ляха, дайте жида!" / Мало мені,
мало!
- 104B 0164 Московкою всюди / Хиляється... і по жидах, / І по панах, боса...
- 111B 0042 А препоганії пани / Жидам, братам своїм хорошим, / Остатні прода-
ють штани...
- 121B 0009 А понад шляхами. / Та питаю в жидовина, / В багатого пана,

²² The forms attested are *poljakam*, *poljakamy*, and *poljaky*.

²³ Derivates from *moskal'* can refer to both "Russians" and to "soldiers." Much of Ševčenko's usage has a national connotation. For various uses of the word see volume 2 of the *Concordance* (Ihnytskyj, Hawrysch 2001).

- 125B 0031 У славному місті. / Покотилось ляхів, жидів / Не сто, і не двісті.
 125B 0047 З Левченком укупі, / Потоптати жидівського / Й шляхетського трупу.

In this same vein, Jews are also found in the semantic neighborhood of Germans (foreigners), Russians (Muscovy) and Tatars:

- 169A 0030 Степи мої запродані / Жидові, німоті, / Сини мої на чужині,
 199A 0265 Як та орда у таборі, / Або жиди в школі... / І всім разом заціпило!..
 221A 0290 Вже ж і Січ їх бісновата / Жидовою поросла. / Та й москаль незгірша штука:
 180A 0520 Остатню корову / Жидам продав, поки вивчив / Московської мови.

In "Čyhryne, Čyhryne" (Oh, Čyhryn, Čyhryn), a lyrical lament on the sad fate of the former seat of Cossack power, Ševčenko's persona describes the city as "swaddled in Jews", by using the derogatory phrase "povytyj žydovoju" (line 43). The city, and by extension Ukraine, is seen as a victim of foreign oppression. Lines 17 to 20 mention Poles, Tatars (*orda*) and Muscovites. While Jews are not in the immediate textual vicinity of other foes and mentioned later in the poem, the structural pattern remains largely the same. Finally, it is noteworthy that this trope of the oppressor, as a collection of nationalities, can function also *without* any mention of Jews:

- 024A 0007 Вимовля словами, / Як москалі, орда, ляхи / Бились з козаками,
 207A 0450 То, бач, ради страху, / Щоб ляхи або татаре / Часом не спіткали".

Ševčenko's catalogues of nationalities and social classes create a collective representation of the oppressor, the enemy, and the outsider. Stock modifiers ('bad') add further to unifying this culpable but variegated group (e.g., "prepo-hani pany" [bad masters], "žyd pohanyj" [bad Jew], "pohanyj tataryn" [bad Tatar], "ljax pohanyj" [bad Pole], "carjamy pohanymy" [bad Tsars])²⁴. Ultimately, Ševčenko's poetry does not distinguish Jews for special censure but inscribes them (somewhat ambivalently if we judge by the image of Lejba) into this larger collective of the oppressor. When Jews are condemned, this is done in the name of the powerless, a group to which Jewish women also belongs. Jews (as ancient Hebrews) are designated either as "poor" or "pitiful" (rather than "bad") when they are victims of the mighty – as in the poem *Saul* (cf. "žydam serdešnym" [to the poor wretched Jews], line 33). For Ševčenko, resistance to the societal evil he identifies in the past and present is a moral and national obligation. He glorifies the act of resistance (by all subjugated peoples) but he does not take pleasure in the terrible human price accountability for evil exacts.

²⁴ The linkage between "bad" noblemen and "bad" Jews receives an ironic twist in these lines from the poem "I vyris ja na čužyni" (And I Grew Up in Foreign Lands); "А препоганії пани / Жидам, братам своїм хорошим, / Остані продають штани..." (0042) (And the wicked lords / Sell their last pair of pants / to the Jews, their good brethren). Emphasis added.

There is no question that Ševčenko's images of Jews still share to some degree in the stereotypes prevalent in the Ukrainian and Russian literary tradition of the first half of the nineteenth century (Jews tend to appear as avaricious, servile, dirty). As personalities and social characters, his Jews are circumscribed to a fairly narrow range of 'types', largely because of the historical themes and village settings Ševčenko favored. If their image is negative, it is because they (like Poles, Russians, and others) do bad things²⁵ or because they are seen disapprovingly through the prejudiced eyes of the rich and powerful. The poetry however also admits that Jews are oppressed: they do not simply lord over serfs and Cossacks, but are themselves subordinate to Polish landlords. If examined closely, Jews in Ševčenko's oeuvre are not just a source of suffering for Ukrainians, but also a nationality that suffers. Jews appear as a stratified society (they are poor and rich, they live in village and city), they have family and social problems, and they have women that are both beautiful and vulnerable to arbitrary male authority. The limitations that the images of Jews have in Ševčenko's work can be ascribed first of all to his time and to his historical and ethnographic sources. The portrait of Jews is certainly not reducible to the word *žyd*, which as we have seen, is endowed with a broad palette of meanings, subtle textual functions and discursive points of view. A reading of Ševčenko's work that calls him anti-Semitic, namely, impugns to him blanket animosity toward Jews, is a reading that ignores his work as whole – not to mention the linguistic, historical and social context that gave rise to it.

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²⁵ In *Lileja* [Lily] Jews ("Жиди... нечистіі" [impure Jews]) and wicked Ukrainian villagers are morally equivalent for maltreating an illegitimate girl. The phrase is part of a character's quoted speech, not the narrator's.

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