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

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

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

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

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1: BLJ VI 71.
CELUI qui remplissait alors cette place, était un gentilhomme Polonais, nommé Mazeppa, né dans le palatinat de Padolie; il avait été élevé page de Jean Casimir, et avait pris à sa cour quelque teinture des belles-lettres. Une intrigue qu’il eut dans sa jeunesse avec la femme d’un gentilhomme Polonais, ayant été découverte, le mari le fit lier tout nu sur un cheval farouche, et le laissa aller en cet état. Le cheval, qui était du pays de l’Ukraine, y retourna, et y porta Mazeppa, demi-mort de fatigue et de faim. Quelque paysans le secoururent; il resta long-temps parmi eux, et se signala dans plusieurs courses contre les Tartares. La supériorité de ses lumières lui donna une grande considération parmi les Cosaques; sa réputation s’augmentant de jour en jour, obligea le Czar à le faire Prince de l’Ukraine.

“Le roi fuyant et poursuivi eut son cheval tué sous lui; le Colonel Gieta, blessé, et perdant tout sa sang, lui donna le sien. Ainsi on remit deux fois à cheval, dans le suite, ce conquérant qui n’avait puy monter pendant la bataille.”—VOLTAIRE, Histoire de Charles XII, p.196.

“Le roi alla par un autre chemin avec quelques cavaliers. Le carrosse, où il était, rompit la marche; on le remit à cheval. Pour comble de disgrace, il s’égara pendant la nuit dans un bois; là, son courage ne pouvant plus suppléer à ses forces épuisées, les douleurs de sa blessure devenues plus insupportables par la fatigue, son cheval étant tombé de lassitude, il se coucha quelques heures au pied d’un arbre, en danger d’être surpris à tout moment par les vainqueurs qui le cherchaient de tout côtés.”—VOLTAIRE, Histoire de Charles XII, p.218.

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

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

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

1.
'Twas after dread Pultowa's day, 6
When Fortune left the royal Swede 7
Around a slaughtered army lay,

No more to combat and to bleed.
The Power and Glory of the war,
Faithless as their vain votaries, Men,

Had passed to the triumphant Czar, 8
And Moscow's walls were safe again –
Until a day more dark and drear,
And a more memorable year, 9
Should give to slaughter and to shame
A mightier host and haughtier name –
A greater wreck – a deeper fall,
A shock to One – a thunderbolt to all. 10

2.

Such was the hazard of the die; 11
The wounded Charles was taught to fly 12
– By day and night, through field and flood,
Stained with his own and subjects' blood –

For thousands fell that flight to aid,
And not a voice was heard t'upbraid
Ambition in his humbled hour,
When Truth had naught to dread from Power. 13

6: dread Pultowa's day: the battle of Poltava in southern Russia, on July 8th 1709, when
7: the royal Swede: King Charles XII of Sweden (1682-1718) with a force of 12,500, was defeated by
8: the triumphant Czar: Peter the Great (1672-1725) with a force four times as large. Byron gets his

transliteration in part from Johnson, The Vanity of Human Wishes, 210: Hide, blushing Glory, hide
Pultowa's Day ...

9: a more memorable year: 1812.
10: A shock to One – a thunderbolt to all: the defeat of Napoleon in Russia in 1812 was the beginning

of his downfall – the genius, who had for Byron and many others appeared to herald a new age,
overreached himself and ruined his and their hopes. A post-Vienna poem, Mazeppa is written in the
shadow of his final exile on St Helena, and the restoration of all the corrupt regimes he had abolished.
11: Such was the hazard of the die: chance actually played less of a part at Poltava than the line would
assert.
12: The wounded Charles: Charles XII had been wounded in the foot on June 28th. A ball had passed
through his heel and lodged behind his toe, forcing him to be carried in a litter during the battle.
13: And not a voice was heard t'upbraid / Ambition in his humbled hour, / When Truth had naught to
dread from Power: Byron had been told by Stendhal about the continued loyalty of Napoleon’s troops
on the retreat from Moscow. Here is Hobhouse’s diary account of what he said, which helps to
understand Byron’s Charles XII and his defeated troops: Beyle was in waiting on Napoleon on the
Russian expedition. After the affair of “Maristudovitch” (or some such name) and when the cavalry
was dismounted, Napoleon quite lost himself. He actually signed eight or ten decrees of advancement
or some such things, “Pompeé”, and when Beyle took the occasion afterwards to say, “Your Majesty
has made a slip of the pen here”, he looked with a horrid grimace, and said “Ah yes,” and tore the
decree and signed another. He would never pronounce the word “Kaluga” but called it sometimes
“Caligula”, sometimes “Salamanca” – his attendants, who knew what he meant, went on writing or
listening without making any remark. During the retreat he was always dejected – his horse not being
able to stand on account of the ice, he was obliged to get off and walk with a white staff – there is a
His horse was slain, and Gieta gave
His own; and died the Russians’ slave.\(^{14}\)
This too sinks after many a league\(^{15}\)
Of well-sustained but vain fatigue –
And in the depths of forests’ darkling –
The watchfires in the distance sparkling –
The beacons of surrounding foes –
A King must lay his limbs at length.
Are these the laurels and repose
For which the Nations strain their strength? –
They laid him by a savage tree\(^{16}\)
In outworn Nature’s agony;
His wounds were stiff – his limbs were stark –
The heavy hour was chill and dark;
The fever in his blood forbade
A transient slumber’s fitful aid,
And thus it was – but yet through all,
Kinglike the monarch bore his fall,
And made in this extreme of ill
His pangs the vassals of his will\(^{17}\) –
All silent and subdued were they,
As once the Nations round him lay. –

\(^{14}\) Voltaire records (see above, Advertisement, second paragraph) that a Colonel Gieta, who was dying, gave Charles his horse, enabling the king – who had been unable to ride during the battle – to escape. Voltaire does not record Gieta’s death.

\(^{15}\) As will Mazeppa’s at the end of his “ride”: see 691.

\(^{16}\) Remote suggests Calvary, but the evidence is from Voltaire.

\(^{17}\) ... made in this extreme of ill / His pangs the vassals of his will: echoes the speech of the Spirit in the Hall of Arimanæs at Manfred, II iv 160-4:

Yet see – he mastereth himself – and makes
His nature tributary to his will –
Had he been one of us he would have made
An awful Spirit. –
3.

A band of chiefs – alas! how few
   Since but the fleeting of a day
Had thinned it – but this wreck was true,
   And chivalrous; upon the clay
Each sate him down all sad and mute
   Beside his monarch and his steed –
For danger levels man and brute, 18
   And all are fellows in their need.
Among the rest Mazeppa 19 made
   His pillow in an old Oak’s shade,
Himself as rough and scarce less old –
   The Ukraine’s Hetman, 20 calm and bold.
But first, outspent with this long course,
The Cossack Prince rubbed down his horse,
   And made for him a leafy bed,
And smoothed his fetlocks and his mane,
   And slacked his girth, and stripped his rein,
   And joyed to hear how well he fed;
   For until now he had the dread
His wearied courser might refuse
To browse beneath the midnight dews;
   But he was hardy as his lord,
And little cared for bed and board –
   But spirited and docile too,
Whate’er was to be done, would do,
   Shaggy and swift – and strong of limb –
All Tartar-like he carried him,
   Obeyed his voice, and came to call,
And knew him in the midst of all,
   Though thousands were around, and Night,
Without a star, pursued her flight;
   That Steed from Sunset until dawn
His chief would follow like a fawn. –

4.

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

18: ... his monarch and his steed – / For danger levels man and brute: introduces the species-bonding theme which is to dominate the poem.
19: Mazeppa: Ivan Stepanovich Mazeppa (c.1644-1709) had been Cossack Hetman since 1687. Peter the Great had made him Prince of the Ukraine, but as Peter had started to curtail Cossack privileges, he had gone over to the Swedish side. Thus a renegado, of the kind Byron had written about in, for example, The Siege of Corinth (1816).
20: In Poland and Lithuania, the Hetman was the first among military leaders under the monarch.
Prepared and spread his slender stock,
And to the monarch and his men
The whole or portion offered then – With far less of inquietude
Than courtiers at a banquet would.
And Charles of this his slender share
With smiles partook a moment there;21
To force of cheer a greater show,
And seem above both wounds and woe. – And then he said – ‘Of all our band,
Though firm of heart and strong of hand
In skirmish, march, or forage, none
Can less have said or more have done,
Than thee, Mazeppa – on the earth
So fit a pair had never birth,
Since Alexander’s days till now,
As thy Bucephalus and thou.22
All Scythia’s fame to thine should yield
For pricking on o’er flood and field.’”
Mazeppa answered – “Ill betide
“The school wherein I learned to ride.” – Quoth Charles – “Old Hetman, wherefore so,
Since thou hast learned the art so well?”
Mazeppa said – ‘’Twere long to tell,
And we have many leagues to go,
With every now and then a blow,
And ten to one at least the foe,
Before our steeds may graze at ease
Before the swift Borysthenes23 –
And, Sire, your limbs have need of rest,
And I will be the Sentinel
Of this your troop.” – “But I request,”
Said Sweden’s monarch – “thou wilt tell
This tale of thine, and I may reap
Perchance from this the boon of sleep24 –
For at this moment from mine eyes
The present hope of Slumber flies.”25 – “Well, Sire, with such a hope, I’ll track
My seventy years of memory back.
I think ‘twas in my twentieth spring –
Aye, ’twas, when Casimir was king26 –

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

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

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

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

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

26: ... when Casimir was king: John Casimir (1609-1672) was a Jesuit who was proclaimed King of Poland in 1649 and retired in 1670.
28: a certain Palatine: a Palatine nobleman had quasi-regal powers and privileges over the territory he held in fief from the actual monarch.
29: His junior she by thirty years: roughly the age-discrepancy between Teresa Guiccioli and her husband; a weird coincidence, for Byron and Teresa (whose name is that of Mazeppa’s lover) had not fallen in love when Mazeppa was written (April 2nd 1817-September 26th 1818). They first met on January 22nd 1818, but their affair did not start until April 1819.
Awaited but the usual chances,
Those happy accidents which render
The coldest dames so very tender. –
To deck her Count with titles given,
‘Tis said, as passports into heaven;\(^{30}\)
But, strange to say, they rarely boast
Of these who have deserved them most.

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

5.

“I was a goodly stripling then –
At seventy years I so may say
That there were few, or boys or men,
Who in my dawning time of day,
Of vassal or of knight’s degree,
Could vie in vanities with me;
For I had strength, youth, gaiety –
A port not like to this ye see,
But smooth, as all is rugged now;
For time, and war, and care have ploughed
My very soul from out my brow;
And thus I should be disavowed
By all my kind and kin, could they
Compare my day and yesterday;
This change was wrought, too, long e’er Age
Had ta’en my features for his page. –
With years, ye know, have not declined
My strength, my courage, or my mind,
Or at this hour I should not be
Telling old tales beneath a tree,
With starless skies my canopy. –
But let me on – Theresa’s\(^{32}\) form –
Methinks it glides before me now,
Between me and yon chestnut’s bough;
The memory is so quick and warm,
And yet I find no words to tell
The Shape of her I loved so well.
She had the Asiatic eye,\(^{33}\)

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

\(^{31}\): Byron’s note to 157: compare Don Juan X, 58 1-2:

They journeyed on through Poland, and through Warsaw,
Famous for Mines of Salt, and Yokes of Iron ...\n
\(^{32}\): ... Theresa’s form: the spelling with an “h” is common to both manuscripts (Teresa Guiccioli’s Christian name lacked it).
Such as our Turkish Neighbourhood
Hath mingled with our Polish blood,
Dark as above us is the sky –
But through it stole a tender light
Like the first Moonrise at Midnight –
Large, dark, and swimming in the stream
Which seemed to melt to its own beam –
All love, half languor, and half fire, 34
Like Saints that at the Stake expire 35 –
And lift their raptured looks on high
As though it were a joy to die.
A brow like a Midsummer lake,
Transparent with the Sun therein,
When waves no murmur dare to make,
And Heaven beholds her face within –
A cheek and lip – but why proceed? –
I loved her then – I love her still –
And such as I am love indeed
In fierce extremes – in good and ill. 36
But still we love even in our rage,
And haunted to our very age
With the vain shadow of the past –
As is Mazeppa to the last. – – –

33: She had the Asiatic eye... Dark as above us is the sky: the description recalls Byron’s Venetian mistress Margarita Cogni.
34: All love, half languor, and half fire: compare the description of Italian women at Beppo, Stanza 45:

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

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

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

These occur in the Don Juan rough draft without erasure.
36: And such as I am love indeed / In fierce extremes – in good and ill: compare The Giaour, 1099-1102:

    The cold in clime are cold in blood,
    Their love can scarce deserve the name;
    But mine is like the lava flood
    That boils in Ætna’s breast of flame.
6.

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

37: But on my lips they died again, / The accents tremulous and weak: anticipates Don Juan in love with Julia.
38: There is a Game, / A frivolous and foolish play: game unnamed because irrelevant.
And one refusal no rebuff.

7.

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

8.

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

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

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“'Bring forth the horse!’ The horse was brought;
   In truth, he was a noble Steed,
      A Tartar of the Ukraine breed,
Who looked as though the Speed of thought
   Were in his limbs – but he was wild,
      Wild as the wild-deer, and untaught,
With spur and bridle undefiled;\(^{42}\)
   'Twas but a day he had been caught,
   And snorting with erected mane
And struggling fiercely but in vain,
   In the full foam of wrath and dread,
To me the Desart-born was led. –
   They bound me on, that menial throng,
Upon his back with many a thong,
   Then loosed him with a sudden lash –
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\(^{40}\): *Cap-à-pé* means “from head to heel”: see *Hamlet*, I, ii, 200.
\(^{41}\): Line 332 is without a rhyme.
\(^{42}\): ... *he was wild, / Wild as the wild-deer, and untaught, / With spur and bridle undefiled*: the horse upon which the historical Mazeppa was tied was one of his own mounts, which, despite what Voltaire and Byron write, took him straight home – a short distance.
Away! – Away! – and on we dash! –
Torrents less rapid and less rash.

10.

“Away! – Away! – my breath was gone –
I saw not where he hurried on –
’Twas scarcely yet the break of day,
And on he foamed – Away – Away! –
The last of human sounds which rose
As I was darted from my foes
Was the wild shout of savage laughter,
Which on the wind came roaring after,
A moment from that rabble-rout;
With sudden wrath I wrenched my head,
And snapped the cord which to the mane
Had bound my neck in lieu of rein,
And, writhing half my form about,
Howled back my curse; but ’midst the tread,
The thunder of my courser’s speed,
Perchance they did not hear nor heed,
It vexes me – for I would fain
Have paid their insult back again;
I paid it well in after days –
There is not of that castle gate,
Its drawbridge and portcullis weight, 43
Stone, bar, moat, bridge, or barrier left,
Nor of its fields a blade of grass,
Save what grows on a ridge of wall
Where stood the hearth-stone of the hall; 44
And many a time ye there might pass
Nor dream that e’er that fortress was.
I saw its turrets in a blaze 45 –

43: There is not of that castle gate, / Its drawbridge and portcullis weight, / Stone, bar, moat, bridge, or barrier left ...: recalls the description of Hassan’s destroyed palace at The Giaour, 287-98:
The steed is vanished from the stall,
No serf is seen in Hassan’s hall;
The lonely Spider’s thin grey pall
Waves slowly widening o’er the wall;
The Bat build in his Haram bower;
And in the fortress of his power
The Owl usurps the beacon-tower;
The wild-dog howls o’er fountain’s brim,
With baffled thirst, and famine, grim,
Foe the stream has shrunk from its marble bed,
Where the weeds and the desolate dust are spread.

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

44: ... the hearth-stone of the hall: the destruction of home is an important theme in Byron, as in Homer or Virgil. At Don Juan I 36, 4-6, Byron comments of the self-ruined Don José, It was a trying moment that which found him / Standing alone beside his desolate hearth, / Where all his household Gods lay shivered round him. Don Juan I was sent to London in the same packet as Mazeppa. Compare Lambro at Don Juan III Stanzas 51-2, Marino Faliero at III ii 361-4, and Byron’s own experience, as recorded at BLJ VI 69. But, as with the lines previously noted, the perspective is here reversed, and the ruin is seem from the viewpoint of the perpetrator.
Their crackling battlements all cleft –
   And the hot lead pour down like rain
From off the scorched and blackening roof,
Whose thickness was not vengeance-proof.
   They little thought, that day of pain,
When launched, as on the lightning’s flash,
They bade me to destruction dash,
   That one day I should come again,
With twice five thousand horse, to thank
   The Count for his uncourteous ride.
They little thought, that day of pain,
When launched, as on the lightning’s flash,
They bade me to destruction dash,
   That one day I should come again,
With twice five thousand horse, to thank
   The Count for his uncourteous ride.
They played me there a bitter prank
   When, with the wild horse for my guide,
They bound me to his foaming flank;
   At length I played them one as frank –
For Time at last sets all things even,
   And if we do but watch the hour,
There never yet was human power
Which could evade, if unforgiven
   The patient search – and vigil long –
Of him who treasures up a wrong. –

11.

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

45: Byron delays some rhymes: line 394 rhymes with 402, and 397 with 403.
46: ... the sky, / When with its crackling sound the Night / Is chequered with the Northern light: for other references to the Aurora Borealis, see Don Juan VII 2, 3, XII 82, 5-6, and The Vision of Judgement Stanza 27.
47: ... where the Spahi’s hoof hath trod / The Verdure flies the bloody sod: the Spahi were Turkish cavalry. Compare The Siege of Corinth 32 and, especially, 645-52:

Tartar, and Spahi, and Turcoman,
Strike your tents, and throng to the van;
Mount ye, spur ye, skirr the plain,
    That the fugitive may flee in vain,
When he breaks from the town; and none escape,
Aged or young, in the Christian shape;
While your fellows on foot, in a fiery mass,
Bloodstain the breach through which they pass.
I could have answered with a sigh,  
But fast we fled – Away! Away! –  
And I could neither sigh nor pray,  
And my cold sweat-drops fell like rain  
Upon the courser’s bristling mane;  
But, snorting still with rage and fear,  
He flew upon his far career.  
At times I almost thought, indeed,  
He must have slackened in his speed –  
But no – my bound and slender frame  
Was nothing to his angry Might,  
And merely like a spur became.  
Each motion which I made to free  
My swoln limbs from their agony  
Increased his fury and affright;  
I tried my voice – ’twas faint and low,  
But yet he swerved as from a blow;  
And, starting to each accent, sprang  
As from a sudden trumpet’s Clang;  
Meantime my cords were wet with gore,  
Which oozing through my limbs ran o’er;  
And in my tongue the thirst became  
A something fierier far than flame.–

12.

“We neared the wild wood; ’twas so wide,  
I saw no bounds on either side;  
’Twas studded with old sturdy trees,  
That bent not to the roughest breeze  
Which howls down from Siberia’s waste,  
And strips the forest in its haste –  
But these were few and far between,  
Set thick with shrubs more young and green,  
Luxuriant with their annual leaves,  
Ere Strown by those autumnal Eves  
That nip the forest foliage dead,  
Discolour’d with a lifeless red  
Which stands thereon like stiffened gore  
Upon the slain when battle’s o’er –  
And some long Winter’s night hath shed  
Its frost o’er every tombless head,  
So cold and stark, the Raven’s beak  
May peck, unpierced each frozen cheek:  
’Twas a wild waste of Underwood,  
And here and there the Chestnut stood,  
The strong Oak, and the hardy Pine –  
But far apart – and well it were,  
Or else a different lot were mine;  
The boughs gave way, and did not tear  
My limbs; and I found strength to bear  
My wounds, already seared with cold;  
My bonds forbade to loose my hold;  
We rustled through the leaves like wind –  
Left shrubs, and trees, and wolves behind –
By night I heard them on the track –
Their troop came hard upon our back
With their long gallop, which can tire
The hound’s deep hate, and Hunter’s fire;
Where’er we flew they followed on,
Nor left us with the morning Sun;
Behind I saw them, scarce a rood,
At day-break winding through the wood,
And through the night had heard their feet
Their stealing, rustling step repeat –
Oh! how I wished for spear or sword,
At least to die amidst the horde
And perish, if it must be so,
At bay, destroying many a foe!
When first my courser’s race begun,
I wished the goal already won –
But now I doubted Strength and Speed –
Vain doubt! his swift and Savage breed
Had nerved him like the mountain roe;
Nor faster falls the blinding Snow
Which whelms the peasant near the door
Whose threshold he shall cross no more,
Bewildered with the dazzling blast,
Than through the forest paths he past –
Untired – untamed – and worse than wild,
All furious as a favoured child
Balked of its wish, or, fiercer still,
A Woman piqued, who has her will. 48 –

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

48: ... fiercer still, / A Woman piqued, who has her will: a rare example of Byron nudging the reader by making a metaphor into a simile (horse = woman).
My heart turned sick – my brains grew sore,
And throbbed awhile, then beat no more –
The Skies spun like a mighty wheel;
I saw the trees like drunkards reel,
And a slight flash sprang o’er my eyes,
Which saw no farther – he who dies
Can die no more than then I died, 49
O’ertortured by that ghastly ride: 50
I felt the blackness come and go,
And strove to wake, but could not make
My senses climb up from below;
I felt as on a plank at sea,
When all the waves that dash o’er thee
At the same time upheave and whelm
And hurl thee towards a desart realm; 51
My undulating life was as
The fancied lights that flitting pass
Our shut eyes in deep Midnight – when
Fever begins upon the brain. 52
But soon it passed, with little pain,
But a confusion worse than such –
I own that I should deem it much
Dying to feel the same again,
And yet I do suppose we must
Feel far more ere we turn to dust;
No matter – I have bared my brow
Full in death’s face – before, and now.

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

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

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

51: I felt as on a plank at sea, / When all the waves that dash o’er thee / At the same time upheave and whelm / And hurl thee towards a desart realm: compare Don Juan II Stanza 107 (soon to be written):
Nor yet had he arrived but for the Oar,
Which, providentially for him, was washed
Just as his feeble Arms could strike no more,
And the hard wave o’erwhelmed him as ‘twas dashed
Within his grasp; he clung to it, and sore
The Waters beat while he thereto was lashed;
At last, with swimming, wading, scrambling, he
Rolled on the beach, half Senseless, from the Sea ...

as in Juan’s case, Mazeppa’s torture will eventually be relieved by a woman’s tenderness. See below, Part 19, note.
My heart began once more to thrill –
My Sight returned, though dim, alas!
And thickened as it were with Glass;
Methought the dash of waves was nigh –
There was a gleam too of the sky,
Studded with stars – it is no dream –
The Wild Horse swims the wilder stream!
The bright broad river’s gushing tide
Sweeps winding onward far and wide,
And we are halfway struggling o’er
To yon unknown and silent shore –
The waters broke my hollow trance,
And with a temporary strength
My stiffened limbs were rebaptized
My Courser’s broad breast proudly braves
And dashes off the ascending waves
And onward we advance!
We reach the slippery shore at length –
A haven I but little prized,
For all behind was dark and drear,
And all before us Night and fear.
How many hours of night or day
In those suspended pangs I lay
I could not tell; I scarcely knew
If this were human breath I drew. –

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

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

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

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

53: How many hours of night or day / In those suspended pangs I lay / I could not tell: E.H.Coleridge compares Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, 393-394:
How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare.

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

It might be months, or years, or days –
I kept no count – I took no note,
I had no hope my eyes to raise
And clear them of their dreary mote.
We gain the top – a boundless plain
Spreads through the shadow of the night,
   And onward, onward, onward seems,
Like precipices in our dreams,
To stretch beyond the sight;
And here and there a speck of white,
   Or scattered spot of dusky Green,
In masses broke into the light,
As rose the Moon upon my right,\(^{55}\)
   But nought distinctly seen
In the dim waste would indicate
The omen of a cottage gate;
No twinkling taper from afar –
Stood like a hospitable Star –
Not even an ignis fatuus rose
To make him merry with my Woes\(^{56}\).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

56: Not even an ignis fatuus rose / To make him merry with my Woes: one of Byron’s favourite images rendered still more striking by negative use: Mazeppa doesn’t even have a will-o’-the-wisp to cheer
That very cheat had cheered me then,  
Although detected, welcome still,  
Reminding me, through every ill,  
Of the abodes of men: –

16.

“Onward we went, but slack and slow;  
His savage force at length o’erspent,  
The drooping courser faint and low  
All feebly foaming went –  
A sickly infant had had power  
To guide him forward in that hour –  
But useless all to me,  
His new born tameness nought availed –  
My limbs were bound – my force had failed,  
Perchance, had they been free:  
With feeble effort still I tried  
To rend the bonds so starkly tied,  
But still it was in vain –  
My limbs were only wrung the more,  
And soon the idle strife gave o’er,  
Which but prolonged their pain.  
The dizzy race seemed almost done,  
Although no Goal was nearly won;  
Some streaks announced the Coming Sun –  
How slow, alas, he came!  
Methought that mist of dawning grey
Would never dapple into day –
How heavily it rolled away
Before the Eastern flame
Rose crimson, and deposed the Stars,
And called the radiance from their Cars,
And filled the Earth deep from his throne
With lonely lustre all his own.

17.

“Up rose the Sun; the Mists were curled
Back from the solitary world, 57
Which lay around, behind, before –
What booted it to traverse o’er
Plain, forest, river? Man nor brute,
Nor dint of hoof, nor print of foot,
Lay in the wild luxuriant soil;
No sign of travel – none of toil –
The very air was mute,
And not an Insect’s shrill small horn, 58
Nor matin bird’s new voice was borne
From herb nor thicket; many a verst, 59
Panting as if his heart would burst,
The weary brute still staggered on,
And still we were, or seemed, alone.
At length, while reeling on our way,
Methought I heard a courser neigh
From out yon tuft of blackening firs;
Is it the wind those branches stirs? –
No – no – from out the forest prance
A trampling troop. I see them come –
In one vast squadron they advance –
I strove to cry – my lips were dumb 60
The steeds rush on in plunging pride,
But where are they the reins to guide?
A thousand horse and none to ride! –
With flowing tail, and flying mane,
Wide nostrils never stretched by pain,

57: “Up rose the Sun; the Mists were curled / Back from the solitary world: McGann compares the more relentless Coleridge, at The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, 83-5:
The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

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

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

60: I strove to cry – my lips were dumb: McGann compares the much more lurid effect of Coleridge, at The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, III Stanza 4:
With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked my blood,
And cried, A sail, a sail!
Mouths bloodless to the bit or rein,
And feet that iron never shod,
And flanks unscarred by spur or rod –
A thousand horse – the wild – the free,
Like Waves that follow o’er the Sea
Came thickly thundering on,
As if our faint approach to meet.
The sight re-nerved my courser’s feet –
A moment staggering, feebly fleet,
A moment with a faint low neigh
He answered, and then fell;
With gasps and glazing eyes he lay,
And reeking limbs immovable –
His first and last career is done!
On came the troop – they saw him stoop –
They saw me strangely bound along
His back with many a bloody thong –
They stop – they start – they snuff the air –
Gallop a moment here and there –
Then plunging back with sudden bound,
Headed by one black mighty Steed,
Who seemed the Patriarch of his breed, 61
Without a single speck or hair
Of white upon his shaggy hide; –
They snort – they foam – neigh – swerve aside,
And backward to the forest fly
By instinct from a human eye; 62
They left me there, to my despair,

61: ... the Patriarch of his breed: compare the ram at Don Juan III 32, described as The patriarch of the flock ...
62: They snort – they foam – neigh – swerve aside, / And backward to the forest fly / By instinct from a human eye: the idea may be from the description of Jacques and the wounded deer at As You Like It, II 1, 52-7:

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

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

    What next befell me then and there
    I know not well – I never knew,
    First came the loss of light and air,
    And then of darkness too;
    I had no thought, no feeling – none;
    Among the stones I stood – a Stone,
    And was – scarce conscious what I wist –
    As shrubless Crags within the mist,
    For all was blank, and bleak, and grey;
    It was not night – it was not day –
    It was not even the dungeon-light
    So hateful to my heavy sight,
    But vacancy – absorbing space,
Linked to the dead and stiffening wretch
Whose lifeless limbs beneath me stretch,
Relieved from that unwonted weight
From whence I could not extricate
Nor him nor me – and there we lay,
   The dying on the dead;
I little deemed another day
Would see my houseless, helpless head. 64
And there from Noon till Twilight bound
I felt the heavy hours toil round,
With just enough of life to see
My last of Suns go down on me,
In hopeless certainty of mind
That makes us feel at length resigned
To that which our foreboding Years
Presents the worst and last of fears
   Inevitable, even a boon,
Nor more unkind for coming soon,
Yet shunned and dreaded with such care,
As if it only were a snare
   That Prudence might escape:
At times both wished-for and implored;
At times sought with self-pointed sword,
Yet a still dark and hideous Close
To even intolerable woes,
   And welcome in no shape.
And, strange to say, the Sons of pleasure –
They who have revelled beyond measure
In Beauty, Wassail, Wine and Treasure –
Die calm, or calmer, oft, than he
Whose Heritage was Misery;
For he who hath in turn run through
All that was beautiful and new
   Hath nought to hope, and nought to leave,
And save the future (which is viewed
Not quite as men are base or good,
But as their nerves may be endued)
   With nought perhaps to grieve. –
The Wretch still hopes his woes must end,
And Death, whom he should deem his friend,
   Appears to his distempered eyes
Arrived to rob him of his prize,
   The tree of his new Paradise. – –

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

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

   How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
   Your loop’d and window’d raggedness, defend you
   From such seasons as these?
Tomorrow would have given him all,
Repaid his pangs – repaired his fall –
Tomorrow would have been the first
Of days no more deplored and curst,
But bright, and long, and beckoning years
Seen dazzling through the mist of tears,
Guerdon of many a painful hour;
Tomorrow would have given him power –
To rule – to shine – to smite – to save –
And must it dawn upon his Grave? –

18.

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

65: And there between me and the Sun / I saw the expecting Raven fly: E.H.Coleridge (but not McGann) compares the shadow cast by the Death Ship at Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, 175-6: ... that strange shape drove suddenly / Betwixt us and the Sun.
Part 19 resembles the meeting of Juan and Haidee in Don Juan Canto II, although no romantic involvement is suggested between Mazeppa and the Cossack maid. Here is Stanza 112 of the Canto:

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

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

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

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

... the Vulture’s feast: the Raven (770) has been demoted.
And gently oped the door, and spoke
In whispers – ne’er was voice so sweet!
Even Music followed her light feet.⁶⁹
   But those she called had not awoke,
And she went forth, but e’er she passed,
   Another look on me she cast,
   Another sign she made, to say
That I had naught to fear, that all
Were near at my command, or call,
   And she would not delay
Her due return: – while she was gone,
Methought I felt too much alone.

20.

“She came with Mother and with Sire⁷⁰ –
What need of more? I will not tire
With long recital of the rest,
Since I became the Cossack’s guest –
   They found me senseless on the plain,
   They bore me to the nearest hut,
They brought me into life again –
Me – one day o’er their realm to reign. –
   Thus the vain fool who strove to glut
His rage, refining on my pain,
   Sent me forth to the Wilderness
Bound, naked, bleeding, and alone
To pass the desart to a throne –
   What Mortal his own doom may guess?
Let none despond – let none despair –
Tomorrow the Borysthenes
May see our coursers graze at ease
Upon his Turkish banks, and never
Had I such welcome for a river
   As I shall yield when safely there –

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

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

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

⁷⁰: She came with Mother and with Sire: unlike Haidee, whose mother is dead and whose father is taken – erroneously – to be so.
Comrades – Good Night!” – the Hetman threw
    His length beneath the oak-tree shade
    With leafy couch already made,
A bed nor comfortless nor new
To him, who took his rest whene’er
The hour arrived, no matter where;
    His eyes the hastening slumbers steep –
And if ye marvel Charles forgot
To thank his tale, he wondered not –
    The King had been an hour asleep.
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