

Taras na Parnasie

annotated and translated

BY

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Taras na Parnasie is one of the most important works of nineteenth-century Byelorussian literature, and also one of the most mysterious. Neither place nor date of origin are known, and the question of authorship is as open now as when it first appeared in print, but despite these uncertainties the poem remains fresh and alive, illustrating some of the most positive features of Byelorussian cultural development.

For a long time the main putative authors were Arciom Viaryha-Dareŭski, Vikienci Dunin-Marcinkievič and the students of the Horki (Mahiloŭ region) Agricultural College.¹ Amongst more recent candidates may be mentioned a former Decembrist who lived under the name of Jaŭchim Krupieňki at Puciavišča near Klimavičy in the Mahiloŭ region,² but the subject is far from closed, with leading literary scholars like Hienadž Kisialoŭ constantly seeking and sifting new evidence,³ whilst occasional amateurs continue to produce their own theories.⁴ One factor hindering rather than helping understanding of the poem's origins has been the tendency to link it to the other major anonymous verse narrative of the nineteenth century,

Enieida navyvarat, written in the 1820s but first published in 1845.⁵ The points of similarity are obvious:⁶ language characteristic of the Viciebsk and Mahiloŭ regions of eastern Byelorussia, certain links with Russian literature (*Enieida navyvarat*'s connection with Osipov through Kotljarevskij;⁷ *Taras na Parnasie*'s overt and covert concern with Russian cultural polemics), and, not least, the use of iambic tetrameters, predominant in Russia,⁸ but relatively rare in nineteenth-century Byelorussian verse where both syllabic and tonic metres were more widely employed, and where, of the syllabo-tonic metres that were used, trochees occurred considerably more commonly than iambs.⁹

But striking though these similarities are they should not be allowed to obscure the works' major differences: the verse of *Taras na Parnasie* is more flexible than that of the earlier poem,¹⁰ its language and style more polished, the hero better characterized, and the compositional and aesthetic unity more consistently maintained; the strong thematic and stylistic links with folk literature represent another distinguishing feature, and, as has been convincingly argued by M. A. Łazaruk, its polemical thrust is quite different from that of the earlier work.¹¹

Taras na Parnasie was first published in 1889,¹² and from 1896 onwards appeared in many different versions;¹³ it has twice been put into Russian, once by a certain M. Ostrogožskij in 1891¹⁴ and more recently by M. Lozinskij. The version of the poem printed and translated here is that given in, amongst other places, the three-volume *Antaŭohija biełaruskaj paezii* (ed. P. Broŭka et al.), Minsk, 1961.

Although it first appeared in print towards the end of the nineteenth century, *Taras na Parnasie* was undoubtedly written much earlier. The official policy of russification in all aspects of life, legal, religious and linguistic, was at its height precisely at the time the poem is thought to have been written,¹⁵ and it could only be printed after the ban on Byelorussian printing had been lifted in 1889.¹⁶ Most scholars place it in the late 1830s or 40s on the basis of the allusion to Bulgarin's abuse of Gogol' in the *Severnaja pčela* (VI, 9-11).¹⁷ The journalistic attack to which this passage refers has generally been assumed to be that of either 1836 or 1842, making the year of composition 1837 or 1843, but Łazaruk points out that Bulgarin made comparable attacks in 1848 and 1852, and that, moreover, the case for 1853 having been the year of writing is strengthened by the fact that Gogol' and Žukovskij (who had long ceased to be active in literature)¹⁸ both died in 1852; indeed, their deaths may have stimulated the reference.¹⁹ It is typical of the enigmas surrounding *Taras na Parnasie* that well over a century after it was written it can still only be dated somewhere between 1837 and 1853.

The re-birth of Byelorussian literature in the nineteenth century came after more than a hundred and fifty years of strong cultural polonization and almost complete national stagnation, during which

time the preservation of Byelorussia's spiritual heritage lay in the riches of folk tradition and vernacular language. Indeed, the movement to collect and record ethnographic materials which began in the 1830s, developed in the 1860s-70s and came to full fruition with scholars like Nikiforovskij, Šejn and Romanov in the 80s and 90s, revealed immense riches — in strong contrast with the generally rather puny products of contemporary cultivated literature, which, in any case, often drew their inspiration from popular sources.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that *Taras na Parnasie* reveals many linguistic, stylistic and compositional features characteristic of popular models: the exordium and ending are folk *topoi*,²⁰ whilst the poem's narrative pattern, mingling fantasy with realism in its description of a descent/ascent to another world, recalls such well-known tales as *Padziemnaje carstva*²¹ and *Muzyka Klimiata i čerci*.²² In language, phraseology and imagery, as in the portrayal of the peasant hero, the poem clearly reflects the influence of popular verse and prose narratives: tautology abounds and epithets and similes are often traditional, as when the writers proceed to Parnassus 'like peacocks' (VII, 8). None of this escaped Maksim Bahdanovič, possibly the most perceptive of all Byelorussian critics, but in his brief note on *Taras na Parnasie* it was precisely the poem's literary qualities that he singled out as distinguishing features in the context of Byelorussian literature of the time; its lively if unsubtle humour, colourful language and supple verse were rightly judged to be its enduring assets.²³

In some respect the Byelorussian satirical tradition goes back beyond *Enieida navyvarat* to such seventeenth-century prose works as *Pramova Mialeški* and *List da Abuchoviča*. On the other hand there is little connection with the rather didactic and moralistic tone of Čačot's *Piosnki* or Dunin-Marcinkievič's plays and poems, though Rypinski's *Niačyšcik* of 1852 has something of *Taras na Parnasie*'s verve without the polish. Nor does the poem have strong links with the socially conscious verse of Bahuševič and his contemporaries, although Fieliks Tapčeŭski's vivid pictures of aristocratic merry-making seen through peasant eyes in *Viečarynka* and *Panskaje ihryšča* have something of its fluency and relative purity of language.²⁴ The mouth-watering descriptions of food in *Taras na Parnasie* inevitably recall Kołas's *Novaja ziamla*, but it is difficult to fully share the view that Taras represents a forebear of Michaś and Anton.²⁵ What lies beyond dispute is that *Taras na Parnasie* and *Enieida navyvarat* greatly extended the possibilities of the free lyric-epic narration that was to reach its peak in the poetry of Bahdanovič, Kupała and, above all, Kołas when Byelorussian literature came to maturity at the beginning of the twentieth century.

But even without its historical and cultural associations, *Taras na Parnasie* remains a remarkable example of the art which conceals art. Unassuming but polished narration, vivid language and salty humour will surely guarantee the lasting popularity of this evergreen classic.

ТАРАС НА ПАРНАСЕ

I

Ці знаў хто, братцы, з вас Тараса,
 У палясоўшчыках што быў?
 На Пуцявішчы, у Панаса,
 Ён там ля лазні блізка жыву.
 Што-ж? Чалавек ён быў рахмань,
 Гарэлкі ў губу ён не браў!
 За тое-ж ў ласцы быў у пана, —
 Яго пан дужа шанававу.
 Любіла тож Тараса й паня,
 І вайт ні разу не збрахаву.
 За тое-ж ён балота з рання
 Да цёмнай ночы пільнававу.
 Чуць золак — ён стрэльбу за плечы,
 Заткне сякеру за паяс, —
 Заўсёды ходзіць бор сцяргчы
 І птушак біць з ружжа Тарас.
 Хадзіў ці доўга ён, ці мала,
 Ды толькі нешта адзін раз
 Бяда ў бары яго спаткала . . .
 Во, як казаў нам сам Тарас.

II

«На самага Кузьму-Дзям'яна
 Пайшоў я ў пушчу паміж мхоў:
 Устаў я нешта дужа рана, —
 Здаецца, з першых петухоў.
 Іду сабе я панямногу,
 Але на пень крыху прысеў,
 Аж тут — лоп-лоп! Цераз дарогу
 Як быццам цецярук зляцеў,
 Злажыўся стрэльбай — кляпсь! — не паліць,
 Крамзель з другога! — не пякець!
 Гляджу — аж вось з-за елі валіць
 Як ёсць хароміна-мядзведзь!
 Хоць не труслівы я дзяціна,
 Але затросся, як асіна,
 Зубом, як цюцька, лепячу.
 Гляджу — аж зломлена лясіна,
 І ўздумаў: дай-ка ускачу!

III

Скакнуў — не трапіў, паслізнуўся
 І ў яму старчаком лячу!
 Ляцеў, ляцеў — як разануўся, —

TARAS ON PARNASSUS

I

I wonder, friends, did it betide that
 You knew the forester, Taras?
 In Puciavišča, close beside the
 Bath-house, he boarded with Panas.
 Well? He was a meek man, and never
 Did he let brandy in his mouth!
 Thus he stood high in the squire's favour —
 The squire esteemed him well, in sooth.
 The lady liked him too, the bailiff
 To him no slander could indict.
 For our Taras from the first daylight
 Over the marshes watched till night.
 At crack of dawn his gun he'd shoulder,
 Into his belt he'd tuck his axe.
 Thus went, the forest to watch over,
 To slay birds with his gun — Taras.
 However long his walk might last then,
 Once only did it e'er befall
 That in the woods he met disaster.
 This is how Taras told it all.

II

'On Cosmas-Damian day²⁶ exactly,
 Into the woods, where mosses grow,
 I went; somehow up early, 'fact is
 I rose that day at first cock's crow.
 And as I made my way it happened,
 I sat on a stump a bit, you know,
 And then — came something flap-flap-flapping!
 Maybe a woodcock, I don't know.
 I aimed the gun; click! Didn't fire! I
 Struck the spare flint! It didn't catch!
 I looked: from out behind the fir-tree
 Stalked a colossal bear! I watched;
 Then, though I am no child to shiver,
 With fear I like an aspen quivered,
 My teeth were chattering — click-click!
 I looked round, saw some broken timber,
 I thought: I'd better jump up quick!

III

I jumped, I missed my foothold, slipping!
 Into a pit headlong I fly!
 I flew, flew — bumped my head to splitting —

Аж стала зелена ў ваччу!
 Ляцеў ці доўга я, ці мала,
 Таго ніяк не уцямлю.
 Але ўжо ладна расвітала,
 Як я зваліўся на зямлю.
 Устаў з зямлі, абкалаціўся, —
 Бо быў ў гразі я, як свіння,
 І дужа, дужа я дзівіўся, —
 Дзе апынуўся гэта я?
 Рукой паскробшы каля вуха,
 Дабыў з табакай рагавень
 І храпы напіхаў цяртухай, —
 Бо не ўжываў я цэлы дзень!
 Як прасвятлелі мае вочы,
 Мядзведзя ўжо я не шукаў
 Закінуў стрэльбу я за плечы
 І па бакох глядзець я стаў.

IV

А вохці мне! Як там прыгожа!
 Ну, быццам хто намаляваў!
 Чырвоны краскі, мак і рожы, —
 Ну, як сукенку хто паслаў!
 І птушкі ёсць там, дужа стройна
 Пяюць, палешы за салаўя!
 А вохці мне, а-а-а-вой я!
 Куды патрапіў гэта я?
 Стаяў я доўга і дзівіўся,
 Разявіў зяпу і глядзеў,
 Аж вось адкулека з'явіўся —
 Ці то прышоў, ці прыляцеў —
 Хлапчына нейкі круглалікі,
 Увесь кудравы, як баран,
 І за плячмі ў яго вялікі
 Прычэплен лук быў і каўчан.
 — Адкуль, куды дарога гэта? —
 Спытаўся я ў хлапца той час.
 — Дарога гэта з таго света,
 Ідзе прамою на Парнас!
 Сказаўшы, хлопчык таго часу
 На скрыдлах шпарка паляцеў,
 Дарогу-ж паказаць Тарасу,
 Не меўшы часу, не хацеў.

V

Падумаў я тады нямнога:
 Што за шайтан Парнас такі?

Then all went green before my eyes!
 However long my flight did last then,
 There is no way that I can tell.
 But now full day its light was casting,
 And down upon the ground I fell.
 I got up, shook myself (for covered
 With mud I was just like a sow),
 And very very much I wondered
 Quite where had I arrived just now.
 I gave my ear a thorough scratching,
 Took some ground 'baccy from my horn,
 And in my snout snuff started packing,
 For that was the first time that morn.
 When my eyes saw once more the daylight,
 I gave up searching for the bear,
 I shouldered up my gun and straightway
 Started to look all round me there.

IV

My goodness! It was all so pretty
 As any picture, and no doubt!
 Red flowers, poppies, roses glittered
 Like a maiden's skirt spread out.
 And there were birds there, very sweetly,
 Better than nightingales, they did sing.
 My goodness gracious! Lost completely!
 Where came I in my wandering?
 I stood a long time, greatly wondered,
 Opened my mouth and looked about.
 Then suddenly appeared from somewhere,
 Or came, or else flew in, no doubt,
 A small boy, somewhat round of visage,
 All curly-headed like a ram,
 And from his shoulder there, a quiver
 And likewise a great bow did hang.
 "Whence does this road come from, and whither?"
 I to the lad my question bent.
 "'Tis from the other world, and thither
 Straight to Parnassus it doth wend!"
 Having said this, the boy full swiftly
 Took wing, and flew off straightaway.
 Having no time, he did not wish to
 Show to poor Taras the way.

V

Then for a while I thought and pondered:
 Parnassus — what the devil's that?

Пайшоў я проста тэй дарогай,
 Узяўшы ў рукі добрый кій.
 Прайшоў вёрст дзевяць тэй дарогай,
 Аж бачу я — гара стаіць;
 Пад тэй гарой народу многа,
 Як-бы кірмаш які кіпіць.
 Прышоў я бліжэй, што за ліха:
 Народ не просты, ўсё паны!
 Хто дужа шпарка, хто паціху,
 Ўсе лезуць на гару яны,
 І, як у школе, галасуюць,
 Гатоў адзін другога з'есць,
 Бо кожны морду ўперад сучець,
 Каб першым на гару узлесць.

VI

Усе з сабой цягаюць кніжкі,
 Аж з іншых пот руччом плюшчыць,
 Друг дружцы выціскаюць кішкі,
 Аж нехта з прамеж іх крычыць:
 «Памалу, братцы, не душыце
 Мой фельетон вы і «Пчалу»,
 Мiane-ж самога вы пусціце
 І не дзяржыце за палу!
 А не, дык дадушы, ў газеце
 Я вас аблаю на ўвесь свет,
 Як Гогаля у прошлым леце —
 Я-ж сам рэдактар ўсіх газет!»
 Гляджу сабе — аж гэта сівы,
 Кароткі, тойсты, як кабан,
 Плюгавы, дужа некрасівы,
 Крычыць, як ашалелы, пан.
 Нясе вялікі мех пан гэты,
 Паўным-паўнюсенькім набіт.
 Усё там кніжкі ды газеты,
 Ну, як каробачнік які!
 Таварыш поплич з ім ідзе
 І несці кніжкі пасабляе,
 А сам граматыку нясе,
 Што ў семінар'ях вывучаюць.

VII

Во, нешта разам зашумелі,
 Народ раздаўся на канцы;
 І, як-бы птушкі, праляцелі
 Чатыры добрых малайцы.
 Народ то быў ўсё не такоўскі:
 Сам Пушкін, Лермантаў, Жукоўскі

Then up the road I went straight onward,
 With a good cudgel in my hand.
 About nine miles along that highway
 I went, then saw — a mountain tall.
 Under this mountain — folk, a mighty
 Throng, like a market on the boil.
 I came up closer — what the devil?
 Not simple folk, lords great and fine!
 Some swift, some slow, but from the level
 Plain, up the mountainside they'd climb.
 And all, as if in *shul*,²⁷ are keening,
 Ready to eat each other up,
 For each shoved his snout forward, meaning
 To be first at the mountain-top.

VI

And all of them dragged books behind them,
 From some sweat trickled like a stream,
 One kicked his fellow's guts unkindly,
 And sudden one of them did scream:
 "Slowly, my brothers! Please stop choking
 My feuilleton, and the dear *Bee!*"²⁸
 Pray do not hang so on my coat-tails!
 Unhand me, fellows, instantly!
 Else, 'pon my soul, I'll write and scold you
 For the whole world to read, no less,
 As only last year I did Gogol!
 For now I edit all the Press!"
 I took a look. He was grey-hoary,
 Stocky and thick-set like a boar,
 And ugly, most unlovely, surely,
 Like a madman he raved, this lord.
 A knapsack large the lord bore, laden,
 Full up as far as it would go,
 And all of it was books and papers.
 A pedlar looks exactly so!
 His comrade close beside did come
 To help him lug the books of knowledge,
 With his own grammar-book, the one
 They use in Teachers' Training College.²⁹

VII

But now came buzzing and a flurry,
 The people parted to the sides,
 And, like birds flying, through them hurried
 Four fellows true, and bold besides.
 Not one of them was not a toff, see!
 'Twas Puškin, Lermontov, Žukovskij,³⁰

і Гогаль, шпарка каля-нас
 Прайшлі, як павы, на Парнас.
 Ну, словам, многа тут народу
 Сабралась лезці на Парнас:
 Былі паны, было і зброду,
 Як часам і на свеце ў нас.
 Праміж людзей і я штурхаўся
 І ціснуўся, што ёсць пары;
 Вось чуць-не-чуць такі прабраўся
 І лезу проста да гары.

VIII

Узлез. Гляджу — аж хата нова
 Стаіць, зазвычай, панскі двор,
 Кругом яго там тын яловы:
 Нябойсь не плох — не ўлезе вор!
 А на дварэ тым свінні ходзяць,
 Сабакі, козы, бараны . . .
 Знаць, і багі хазяйства водзяць,
 Калі свіней дзяржаць яны.
 На грошы ў тронкі тут гуляюць
 Парнаскі хлопцы-дзецюкі;
 А хто капейкі з іх маець,
 Той лупіць толькі на шчаўчкі.
 Улез к багам тады я ў хату . . .
 А вохці мне! Ні даць, ні ўзяць,
 Як у казарме тут салдатаў —
 Багоў — не можна пашчытаць!

IX

Тарасу ліха што здаецца, —
 Ну, як-бы ў рандзе ён сядзіць:
 Хто піпку курыць, хто смяецца,
 А іншы песню бурудзіць
 Глядзіць ён, аж на лаўцы шыюць
 Шаўцы багіням хадакі,
 Багіні-ж у начоўках мьюць
 Багам кашулі і парткі.
 Сатурн там, лыкі размачыўшы,
 Падвіркай лапці падплятаў;
 Па свеце добра пахадзіўшы,
 Лапцей ён многа патаптаў.
 Нептун на лаўцы чыніць сеці,
 І восці садзіць на шасты,
 Пры ім-жа, мусіць, яго дзеці,
 Дзіравы ладзяць нераты.

And Gogol' swiftly they did pass us.
 Pressed on, like peacocks, to Parnassus!
 In short, there had assembled plenty
 Of folk Parnassus to ascend.
 Riff-raff there were, and also gentry,
 Just as our world doth often wend.
 And I too pushed between the people,
 With all my efforts shoved away;
 At last I got through, slowly creeping,
 And up the mountain climbed straightway.

VIII

I reached the top. There I discerned a
 House, like a mansion, new and fair.
 Around, a fence of fir, for certain
 Not bad; no thief would break in there!
 And in the courtyard pigs were roaming,
 And likewise goats and rams and dogs . . .
 It seems the gods went in for farming,
 If they were really raising hogs.
 And there the young men of Parnassus
 Played stick-knife — 'twas for money-stakes;
 Or he who hadn't any cash a
 Forfeit would pledge to undertake.
 There to the gods' home climbed I boldly:
 Good lord! Nor give nor take, the same
 Number as in a camp of soldiers —
 The score of gods no man can name.

IX

To Taras it all seemed amazing,
 It seemed that he was in an inn,
 Some smoking pipes, some laughing gaily,
 While others songs were murmuring.
 He looked round: on the bench were cobblers
 Sewing the goddesses some shoon,
 Goddesses at the tubs were washing
 Shirts for the gods, and pantaloons.
 Saturn was there, he's steeped the bast, and
 Was weaving sandals with an awl;
 Much in the world he'd walked, hence fast he'd
 Worn out his sandals, one and all.
 On the bench Neptune nets was mending,
 New spikes into his fish-prong set;
 By him his sons, it seemed, sat tending,
 Repairing holes in the sweep-nets.

X

Вось б'юцца Марс ды з Геркулесам,
 А Геркулес, як той мядзвездзь, —
 Каб цешыць старага Зевеса,
 Хахол ён Марсу добра мнець.
 Зевес-жа наўзніч на печы,
 Сярмягу ў голавы паклаў . . .
 Ён грэў на печы стары плечы
 І нешта ў барадзе шукаў
 Во перад люстрам задам меліць
 І маслам мажыць валасы
 Ды нечым белым твар свой беліць
 Венера, знаць, дзеля красы.
 Амур-жа з дзеўкамі жартуе,
 Ну, проста смех ажно бярэ!
 То ён знянацку пацалуе,
 То хустку з галавы здзярэ;
 То у гуслі ён зайграе,
 То німфам песню запяе,
 То адным вокам ён міргае,
 Як быццам ён каго заве.

XI

Вось затраслася ўся гара:
 Зевес на печы зварухнуўся,
 Зяўнуў і дужа пацягнуўся
 Ды кажа: «Есці ўжо пара!»
 Прыгожа дужа дзеўка Геба
 Гарэлкі ў чаркі наліла
 І, як жарон, букатку хлеба,
 Прынёсшы, — бразь! сярод стала!
 Во, з усяго сабралісь неба!
 Як тараканы каля хлеба,
 Багі паселі ўкруг стала
 І стравы смачны з печы Геба
 Насіць да столу пачала.

XII

Наперш дала яна капусту,
 Тады са скваркамі кулеш,
 На малацэ крупеню густу
 Дае уволю, толькі еж.
 І з пастаялкай жур сцюдзёны.
 А з кашы сала аж цякло,
 Ды і гусяціны пражонай

X

There Hercules with Mars was fighting,
 And, like a bear, bold Hercules
 To Mars's top-knot gave a mighty
 Crumpling, and thus old Zeus did please.
 For Zeus upon the stove lay sprawling,
 His great-coat folded 'neath his head,
 His old bones on the stove was warming,
 And hunting trouble in his beard.
 Before the mirror, Venus wriggled
 Her bottom, buttered down her hair,
 Whitened with something white her pretty
 Face, so indeed to seem more fair.
 While Cupid with the girls was jesting,
 Well, laughter quite took hold of me!
 One in a kiss he swiftly pressed, or
 Snatched at a kerchief suddenly.
 Now on the zither he would tinkle
 A tune, or sing the nymphs a song,
 Or with one eye he'd start a winking,
 As if he wished to call someone.

XI

But now the mountain trembled, lo!
 Zeus on the stove had started rousing,
 Yawned, stretched himself awake from drowsing,
 And said: "It's time to eat, you know!"
 Hebe, a maiden mighty fair, now
 Spirit into the glasses poured,
 And a loaf, millstone-size, did bear in,
 And, bang! She slammed it on the board!
 She works as housekeeper in heaven,
 To cook the meals and wash the clothes.
 She surely earns her keep! Whoever
 Would have the art to feed that host?
 From the whole heaven then approaching,
 Round the bread flocking, like cockroaches.
 The gods came, sitting down in droves.
 And Hebe brought, in swift devotion,
 Savoury dishes from the stove.

XII

First of all she gave them cabbage,
 Then gravy served with crackling crisp,
 Them, brimming with new milk, came porridge,
 Just eat as much as you might wish!
 Jelly came next, with plums — served chilly,
 And buckwheat, swimming in its fat,

Уволю ўсім багом было.
 Як унясла-ж на стол каўбасы,
 Бліны аўсяны ў рашаце,
 Аж слінкі пацяклі ў Тараса
 І забурчала ў жываце.
 Гарэлку піць багі пачалі,
 З насадкі ў чаркі так і льюць;
 Падпіўшы, песні запаялі,
 Ну, як у рандзе, ўсе пяюць.
 Бах з п'яну пеў такі прыпеўкі,
 Што аж не можна гаварыць,
 Аж засароміліся дзеўкі,
 Так стаў ён брыдка развадзіць.
 А Зеўс тым часам насцябаўся,
 Што носам чуць зямлю не рыў, —
 Ён вочы плюшчыў і ківаўся
 Ды быццам нешта гаварыў
 Хоць не маё то, праўда, дзела,
 Не след мне можа і казаць,
 Любіў ён цешыць грэшна цела
 Ды часам лоўка падгуляць.

XIII

Але багі-такі усталі,
 Як ўсё паелі, папілі.
 Во . . . разам ў дудку заігралі,
 Скакаць багіні пачалі.
 Узяўшы хустачку, Венера
 Пайшла «мяцеліцу» скакаць
 Прыгожа, стройна цераз меру,
 Пяром не можна апісаць.
 Чырвона, тоўста, круглаліца
 І вочы, як на калясе;
 Як жар, гарыць яе спадніца,
 Істужкі ўплецены ў касе.
 Хапіўшы келішак гарэлкі,
 Амур яшчэ павесялеў —
 Іграць пачаў ён на жалейцы
 І дзеўкам стройна песні пеў.
 Нептун з прыгожанькай наядай
 Пайшоў ў прысядку казака;
 Нябось і у старога гада
 Кроў грае, як і ў дзецюка.
 А во і сам Юпітэр з Вестай, —
 Пусціўся, стары хрэн, у пляс,
 Як-бы жаніх перад нявестай,
 Заткнуў ён рукі за паяс.
 А во і Марс у новых ботах;

Then came fried goose, tasty and filling,
 Enough for all the gods at that!
 But when the sausages she brought them,
 Bore in the sieve oat-pancakes fried,
 Then Taras found his mouth a watering,
 He started rumbling then inside.
 The gods began to drink the spirit,
 From flask to glasses poured it out,
 And, being tipsy, started singing,
 Chorusing like a tavern rout.
 Bacchus who was quite drunk and bleary,
 Sang ballads, (which one shouldn't name),
 So that the maidens blushed to hear them.
 So crudely sang he, without shame.
 And Zeus became so drunk, he nearly
 His nose into the earth did sink,
 He staggered, swayed, all round him peering,
 And tried something to say (I think).
 Still, though it's true, it's not my business,
 'Tis not for me the rest to tell.
 He liked thus to console his sinful
 Flesh and, at times, to revel well.

XIII

But now the gods were growing weary,
 All had been eaten, drunk at last.
 The bagpipes started playing — hear ye!
 The goddesses began to dance.
 Taking a kerchief, Venus, prancing,
 Began the "Snowstorm reel"³¹ so well,
 Such lovely, fair, expressive dancing,
 So that the pen could never tell.
 Rosy and plump, face round and bonny,
 And eyes that rolled this way and that;
 Like fire her skirt glowed, brightly, strongly,
 Ribbons were woven in her plait.
 Another glass of spirit filling,
 Cupid became more merry still,
 Upon the flute he started trilling,
 Sang to the girls with sweetest skill.
 And Neptune, with a pretty naiad,
 Started a jumping Cossack step;
 You see, even in this old viper,
 The blood, as in a young lad, leapt.
 And Jupiter, Vesta beside him,
 He too, old stick, began to dance!
 Like a bridegroom before his bride, he
 With arms akimbo, boldly pranced.
 And Mars, in fine new boots of leather,

Ён, мусіць, ботаў не жалеў,
 Бо з німфамі скакаў да поту,
 Гуляў у жмуркі і шалеў.
 І кожны бог так расплясаўся,
 Што аж не можна удзяржаць,
 А хто гарэлкі насцябаўся,
 Таго пад лаўку клалі спаць.

XIV

Вось як зайграў дудар плясучу,
 Ніяк Тарас наш не ўцярпеў,
 І з лавы ён, што меўшы духу,
 Скакаць на хату паляцеў.
 Як стаў прыстуківаць атопкам,
 Аж рот разінулі багі:
 То ён прысвісне, то прытопне,
 То шпарка пойдзе у кругі.
 Глядзеў Юпітэр і дзівіўся,
 І пад дуду ў далоні біў,
 Ў канцы к Тарасу прыбліжыўся
 І так яго перапыніў:
 «А ты адкулечка, прыяцель?
 Зачым прышоў ты на Парнас?
 Ты хто такі? Ты не пісацель?»
 «Не, мой панок! — сказаў Тарас, —
 Я палясоўшчык з Пуцявішча,
 Чуць золак сённа са двара
 Прышоў сюды я да паўдня 'шчэ
 Ды ўжо й дадому мне пара.
 Ці не была-б, паночак, ласка
 Адсюль дамой мяне завесці?
 Хадзіўшы па гары Парнаскай
 Мне дужа захацелась есці . . .»

XV

Кіўнуў Зевес — і мігам Геба
 Крупені ў міску наліла
 І добрую краюху хлеба,
 Сказаўшы еж, — мне падала.
 Крупені ўволю я пaeўшы,
 Усіх падзякаваў багоў;
 Кашэль за плечы прывязаўшы,
 Сбраўся ўжо ісці дамоў.
 Але зефіры падхапілі,
 Хто за руку, хто за паяс,
 І, як-бы птушкі, паташчылі
 Яны мяне цераз Парнас.
 Няслі на скрыдлах, быццам вецер,
 І проста прыняслі ў наш лес.

— He did not spare his boots, you know —
 Danced with the nymphs until he sweated,
 Played hide-and-seek and revelled so.
 And each god danced so hard, he couldn't
 Keep upright on his feet at all;
 And those who'd drunk more than they should were
 Laid 'neath the bench there, one and all.

XIV

The piper now began *plasucha*,³²
 Taras no longer could keep still,
 Leaped from the bench with sound and fury,
 Into the dance with all his will.
 With his old shoes he started thumping,
 So the gods stood agape to see,
 Now he whistled, now was stamping,
 Now came circling rapidly.
 Jupiter looked on and marvelled,
 To the pipes' rhythm clapped awhile;
 Finally he approached the dancer,
 And stopped him, speaking in this style:
 "Where have you come from, friend? And why-for
 Came you up to Parnassus, Why?
 Who are you? You are not a writer?"
 "No, my Lord." Taras did reply.
 "In Puciavišča I'm the woodsman.
 Up from the yard at dawn today
 I came here before noon. Now good it
 Would be to start my homeward way.
 Sir, would you be so kind and gracious
 To help me to get home from here?
 For wandering upon Parnassus,
 I've got an appetite, I fear!"

XV

Zeus waved his hand, and straightway Hebe
 Ladled some groats into a bowl,
 Cut a great hunk of bread, said "Please ye
 To eat!" and gave it me, good soul!
 When of the groats my fill I'd eaten,
 I paid the gods the thanks I owed,
 And buckling on my satchel neatly,
 I was all ready for the road.
 But then the Zephyrs seized me swiftly,
 One the hand, one the belt, and there
 Like birds did carry me and lift me,
 High over Mount Parnassus fair.
 On wings they bore me, like the breezes,

Гляджу я: мусіць ужо вечар,
 Бо маладзік на неба ўзлез . . .»
 З тых пор Тарас ужо не ходзіць
 Так дужа рана па лясах,
 А дзеля гэтага не шкодзіць
 Бярвенне красці па начах.
 Дык вось што бачыў наш Тарас,
 К багам узлезшы на Парнас.
 Ён гэта мне апавядаў,
 А я ў паперку запісаў.

1. See V. V. Barysienka (ed.), *Historyja bielaruskaj dakastryčnickaj litaratury*, II, Minsk, 1969, p. 25, and I. Bas, 'Drukavanyja i rukapisnyja varyjanty paemy *Taras na Parnasie*', *Bielaruskaja litaratura: dašledavańnia i publikacyi*, III, 1960, pp. 213-14.
 Harecki also mentions V. Ravinski and notes that some copies of the poem even bore the name of Adam Mickiewicz. M. Harecki, *Historyja bielaruskaje litaratury*, 3rd ed., Vilna, 1924, p. 63.
2. Where Taras also lives, of course. S. Aleksandrovič, 'Pisaŭ. Chimka, pisaŭ Jaŭtuch . . .', *Litaratura i mastactva*, 3 October 1961.
3. H. Kisialou, 'Čhto aŭtor? Sprečki vakoŭ paemy *Taras na Parnasie*', *Potymia*, 3, 1973, pp. 202-31 and 4, 1973, pp. 155-82.
4. A particularly strange and unilluminating example of this was P. Šaŭcoŭ's *Spradviečnaje: dašledavańni ab časie i miešci napisańnia 'ananimnych' poem 'Eneida navyvarat' i 'Taras na Parnasie'*, Minsk, 1973. See also Id., 'Siamiejnaje padańnie', *Potymia*, 10, 1971, pp. 203-20, and A. Kulašoŭ, 'Što chavajecca za siamiejnym padańniem', ib., pp. 201-3; the 'Siamiejnaje padańnie' article includes a version of the poem that is longer than any other, but its authenticity is exceedingly dubious.
5. 'Eneida navyvarat', *Majak*, XXIII, Smes', 1845, pp. 33-9.
6. M. A. Łazaruk suggests that the widespread belief that the poem was a 'twin' of *Eneida navyvarat* tended to make copied versions of it resemble the earlier work more closely than would have been the case had there been less copies. M. A. Łazaruk, *Stanaŭleńnie bielaruskaj paemy*, Minsk, 1968, p. 186.
7. The poem is loosely based on Ivan Kotljarevskij's late eighteenth-century imitation of Nikolaj Osipov's *Virgilijeva Jenejda, vyvoročennaja na iznanku* (St Petersburg, 1791).
8. See B. O. Unbegaun, *Russian Versification*, Oxford, 1956, p. 21.
9. For a detailed analysis of the versification of this period see Arnold B. McMillin, 'Stanza, Rhyme and Metre in Nineteenth-Century Byelorussian Verse: Some Statistical Observations', *JBS*, III, 2, 1974, pp. 157-70.
10. M. M. Hrynčyk has analysed the free use of iambic metres in this poem and calculated that 10.4% of the lines employ enjambment whereas in *Eneida navyvarat* the proportion is only 4.7%. M. M. Hrynčyk, *Štachi bielaruskaha vieršaskladańnia*, Minsk, 1973, p. 96.
11. Łazaruk (op. cit., pp. 162-94) argues that the poem not only refers to certain major figures in contemporary Russian literature (VII, 6) but that it is, in fact, polemically directed against 'official romanticism' and the Slavophile view of *narodnost'* being propagated in Russian literary journals of the 1840s; in contrast with the anti-classicist travesty of the *Aeneid*, he shows *Taras na Parnasie* as an ironic comment on sentimentalist and 'conservative romantic' trends in literature. The poem is compared not with its apparently obvious folk models but with such purely literary works as K. N. Batjuškov's polemical *jeu d'esprit*, *Videnije na beregach Lety* (1809).
 Another interesting but not widely held theory is that the poem represents an echo of Taras Ševčenko's establishment as a writer. See A. Adamovič, 'Da pabudovy navukovaje historyi bielaruskaje litaratury', *Zapisy*, II, 1963, 90n.

And to the forest came full soon.
 I looked: it seemed already evening,
 For in the sky climbed a young moon . . .'
 Now, since that time, Taras won't venture
 Into the forest at first light,
 Therefore 'tis safe, should you adventure
 Forth to steal firewood in the night.
 Well, that's the vision of Taras's,
 When to the gods he climbed Parnassus.
 He told me all the tale indeed,
 I wrote it down that men might read.

12 'Taras. Belorusskaja poema', *Minskij listok*, 37, 1889.

13 The fullest compilation of variant readings has been made by I. Bas (see n. 1).

14 M. Smolkin, 'Ruski pieraklad "Tarasa na Parnasie" 1891 h.', *Potymia*, 11, 1964, pp. 123-7.

15 See M. Bahdanovič, 'Bulgarin v belorusskoj šutočnoj poeme', *Zbor tvoraŭ*, II, Minsk, 1968, p. 163.

16 Many other anonymous works from the first half of the century were not published until long after they were written. See Arnold B. McMillin, 'A Conspectus and Bibliography of Byelorussian Literature in the Nineteenth Century', *JBS*, II, 3, 1971, p. 273n.

17 The reference to Faddej Bulgarin is unmistakable, as is that to his friend Nikolaj Greč later in the same passage. The version of the poem published by M. Dovnar-Zapoľskij in *Vitebskije gubernskiye vedomosti* in 1896 actually includes four lines making explicit reference to Greč.

Bulgarin himself was a native of the Viciebsk region, although it was in Russian rather than Byelorussian literature that he attained notoriety. In *Ivan Vyžigin* (1829), his best novel, he made good use of his background with detailed descriptions of Jewish and aristocratic life in Byelorussia.

18 See, for example, I. M. Semenko, *Vasily Zhukovsky*, Boston, 1976, p. 40.

19 M. A. Lazaruk, op cit., p. 189. In M. Dovnar-Zapoľskij's heavily polonized and generally unreliable version (see n. 17), however, as in a few other printed versions including one as late as 1939, Puškin, Lermontov and Žukovskij (VII, 6) are replaced by Mickiewicz, Puškin and Kochanowski.

20 I. Bas ('La vytokaŭ realizmu', *Belaruskaja litaratura: dašledavaŭnia i publikacyi*, II, 1959, p. 23) gives as examples of stories with similar openings *Visielnik* and *Duraň* from Seržputovskij's collection. A. K. Seržputovskij, *Skazki i rassказы belorusov-polešukov*, St Petersburg, 1911, pp. 55 and 90.

21 See P. P. Achrymienka, *Belaruskaja litaratura i falktor*, Minsk, 1962, p. 21.

22 P. V. Šejn, *Materialy dlja izučeniya byta i jazyka russkogo naselenija Severo-Zapadnogo kraja*, II, St Petersburg, 1893, pp. 98-101.

23 See M. Bahdanovič, op cit., pp. 163-4.

24 Tapčeŭski's poems, of which only five have survived, also enjoyed great popularity, circulating widely in manuscript copies.

25 See, for example, M. A. Lazaruk, op. cit., p. 180.

26 1 July, a day on which, according to Slavonic folk legend, unexpected and fantastic events may happen.

27 The synagogue.

28 *The Northern Bee* (*Severnaja pčela*, 1825-64) was until 1859 edited by Bulgarin and Greč. See n. 17.

29 See n. 17. N. Greč's *Praktičeskaja russkaja grammatika* was published in 1827.

30 See n. 19.

31 A popular Byelorussian folk dance in 2/4 time performed with sashes or scarves.

32 An improvised solo dance, sometimes accompanied by singing, popular at peasant gatherings.