



PERFORMING ART \* ИСПОЛНИТЕЛЬСКОЕ ИСКУССТВО



**A. BORODIN  
PRINCE IGOR**

**А. БОРОДИН  
КНЯЗЬ ИГОРЬ**

**A. BATURIN  
M. MIKHAILOV  
N. OBUKHOVA  
S. PANOVA  
I. KOZLOVSKY  
A. PIROGOV**

**А. БАТУРИН  
М. МИХАЙЛОВ  
Н. ОБУХОВА  
С. ПАНОВА  
И. КОЗЛОВСКИЙ  
А. ПИРОГОВ**

**THE USSR BOLSHOI THEATRE  
CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA  
Conductor  
Alexander MELIK-PASHAEV**

**ХОР И ОРКЕСТР  
БОЛЬШОГО ТЕАТРА СССР  
Дирижер  
Александр МЕЛИК-ПАШАЕВ**



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МИНИСТЕРСТВО КУЛЬТУРЫ СССР.  
**МЕЛОДИЯ**  
ВСЕСОЮЗНАЯ ФИРМА ГРАМПЛАСТИНОК

МОНО М10 46279 005  
(Комплект из 3-х пластинок)



А. БОРОДИН (1833—1887)

## КНЯЗЬ ИГОРЬ

Опера в четырех действиях с прологом

Либретто А. Бородина

Сценическая редакция Большого театра СССР (без третьего действия)

Сторона 1

Увертюра — 10.37

Пролог

1. Интродукция — 14.28

Сторона 2

1. Интродукция (окончание) — 5.55

ДЕЙСТВИЕ ПЕРВОЕ

2. Сцена у князя Владимира Галицкого — 15.26

- а) Хор
- б) Речитатив и песня Владимира Галицкого
- в) Речитатив
- г) Хор девушек и сцена
- д) Сцена
- е) Княжья песня
- ж) Хор

Сторона 3 — 28.27

3. Ариозо Ярославны

4. Сцена Ярославны с девушками

5. Сцена Ярославны и Владимира Галицкого

6. Финал

Сторона 4 — 26.54

ДЕЙСТВИЕ ВТОРОЕ

7. Хор половецких девушек

8. Пляска половецких девушек

9. Каватина Кончаковны

10. Хор (половецкий дозор)

11. Речитатив и каватина Владимира Игоревича

12. Дуэт Кончаковны и Владимира Игоревича

Сторона 5 — 30.35

13. Ария князя Игоря

14. Сцена князя Игоря и Овлура

15. Ария хана Кончака

16. Речитатив

17. Половецкие пляски (с хором)

Сторона 6 — 26.46

ДЕЙСТВИЕ ЧЕТВЕРТОЕ

25. Плач Ярославны

26. Хор

27. Речитатив Ярославны и дуэт Ярославны и князя Игоря

28. Песня гудошников, сцена и хор

29. Заключительный хор

Действующие лица и исполнители  
Игорь Святославич, князь Северский — Александр Батулин, бас-баритон

Ярославна, его жена во втором браке — Софья Панова, сопрано

Владимир Игоревич, сын его от первого брака — Иван Козловский, тенор

Владимир Ярославич, князь Галицкий, брат княгини Ярославны — Александр Пирогов, бас

Кончак, половецкий хан — Максим Михайлов, бас

Кончаковна, его дочь — Надежда Обухова, меццо-сопрано

Надежда Обухова, меццо-сопрано

Овлур, крещеный половчанин — Федор Годовкин, тенор

Федор Годовкин, тенор

Гудошники:

Скула — Сергей Колтыпин, бас

Ерошка — Дмитрий Марченков, тенор

Половецкая девушка — Евдокия Сидорова, сопрано

Евдокия Сидорова, сопрано

Хор Большого театра СССР

Хормейстеры:

Михаил Шорин, Александр Хазанов

Оркестр Большого театра СССР

Дирижер Александр Мелик-Пашаев

Реставратор О. Гурова. Редактор П. Грюнберг  
Художник Б. Столяров

А. BORODIN (1833 — 1887)

## PRINCE IGOR

Opera in 4 acts and Prologue

Libretto by A. Borodin

Stage version of the Bolshoi Theatre

(without Act III)

Side 1

Overture — 10.37

Prologue

1. Introduction — 14.28

Side 2

1. Introduction (the end) — 5.55

ACT I

2. Scene at Vladimir Galitsky's — 15.26

a) Chorus

b) Vladimir Galitsky's Recitative and Song

c) Recitative

d) Maidens's Chorus and Scene

e) Scene

f) Prince's Song

g) Chorus

Side 3 — 28.27

3. Yaroslava's Arioso

4. Scene with Yaroslava and Maidens

5. Scene with Yaroslava and Vladimir Galitsky

6. Finale

Side 4 — 26.54

ACT II

7. Chorus of Polovtsian Maidens

8. Dance of Polovtsian Maidens

9. Konchakovna's Cavatina

10. Chorus (Polovtsian Guards)

11. Vladimir Igorevich's Recitative and Cavatina

12. Duet of Konchakovna and Vladimir Igorevich

Side 5 — 30.35

13. Prince Igor's Aria

14. Scene with Prince Igor and Ovlour

15. Khan Konchak's Aria

16. Recitative

17. Polovtsian Dances (and Chorus)

Side 6 — 26.46

ACT IV

25. Yaroslava's Lamenting

26. Chorus

27. Yaroslava's Recitative and Duet of Yaroslava and Prince Igor

28. Song of Gudok-Players, Scene and Chorus

29. Closing Chorus

The Cast

Igor Svyatoslavich, Prince Seversky — Alexander Baturin, bass-baritone

Yaroslava, his second wife — Sofia Panova, soprano

Vladimir Igorevich, his first wife's son — Ivan Kozlovsky, tenor

Vladimir Yaroslavich, Prince Galitsky, Princess Yaroslava's brother — Alexander Pirogov, bass

Konchak, Polovtsian Khan — Maxim Mikhailov, bass

Konchakovna, his daughter — Nadezhda Obukhova, mezzo-soprano

Ovlour, Christened Polovtsian — Feodor Bodovkin, tenor

Gudok-Players:

Skula — Sergei Koltypin, bass

Eroshka — Dmitri Marchenkov, tenor

Polovtsian Maiden — Evdokia Sidorova, soprano

The USSR Bolshoi Theatre Chorus

Chorus masters: Mikhail Shorin, Alexander Khasanov

The USSR Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra

Conductor Alexander Melik-Pashaev

Restorer O. Gurova. Editor P. Grünberg

Cover design by B. Stolyarov

На этих пластинках впервые публикуется первая запись шедевра русской оперной классики, оперы А. Н. Бородина «Князь Игорь». Творческие биографии выдающихся артистов Большого театра, осуществивших эту запись под руководством замечательного советского дирижера А. Ш. Мелик-Пашаева, настолько общеизвестны, что нет необходимости повторять их в этой статье. Партии в «Князе Игоре», исполненные ими, принадлежат к лучшим достижениям советского музыкального театра.

Запись «Князя Игоря» была выполнена в 1941 году на тонфильм (звуковую дорожку киноленты). Исполнялась сценическая редакция оперы, шедшая в то время на сцене Большого театра. Пропущено третье действие, сокращена небольшая сцена Кончаковны (после каватины), есть сокращения в ариозо Ярославны. Несмотря на эти купюры, запись представляет большую художественную ценность. Отдельные интонационные неточности, очевидно, неизбежные у певцов, не нарушают превосходного общего впечатления, а такие страницы оперы, как дуэт Кончаковны и Владимира Игоревича в исполнении Н. А. Обуховой («Князь Игорь» — одна из двух оперных записей с ее участием) и И. С. Козловского, принадлежат к подлинным жемчужинам вокального искусства. Следует иметь в виду также то обстоятельство, что запись «Князя Игоря» была сделана одновременно, без монтажа и замены неудавшихся фрагментов, что вошло в практику в послевоенные годы с появлением магнитозаписи.

Первая запись «Князя Игоря» А. П. Бородина выходит в свет в год, когда отмечается 800-летие «Слова о полку Игореве». Этому юбилею посвящается выпуск оперы, созданной на основе прославленного шедевра древнерусской литературы.

\* \* \*

Счастливая мысль предложить А. П. Бородину написать оперу на сюжет эпической поэмы «Слово о полку Игореве» принадлежит В. В. Стасову, вдохновителю многих выдающихся созданий русской музыки. «Мне казалось, — писал Стасов, — что тут заключаются все задачи, потребные для таланта и художественной природы Бородина: широкое эпическое мотивы, национальность, разнообразие характеров, страстность, драматичность».

Будущее подтвердило эти соображения критика. Могучий музыкальный талант Бородина ни в одном другом сочинении не выказался с такой полнотой и силой, как в

единственной опере композитора, связанной с образами древнерусского эпоса.

Бородин сам взялся за сочинение либретто оперы. Одновременно шла усиленная работа над музыкой. Но, как это обычно происходило у Бородина, его научная и общественно-просветительская деятельность (Бородин был крупным ученым-химиком и одним из организаторов Высших женских врачебных курсов) почти не оставляла времени для планомерных занятий музыкой. А без этого, по его же собственным словам, «творчество, в большой вещи, как опера, немислимо». «Некогда одуматься, перестроить себя на музыкальный лад, — писал Бородин. Сочинение растянулось на целых восемнадцать лет (оперу, уже после смерти автора, завершили по сохранившимся черновым наброскам Н. А. Римский-Корсаков и А. К. Глазунов). Но это нисколько не отразилось на художественном единстве произведения. Замечательное определение музыкального стиля оперы, задуманной как величавый эпос о походе Игоря, дано академиком Б. В. Асафьевым: «Эпическое спокойствие, плавность, простор, ширь и величие при колоссальном размахе творческой силы — наиболее характерная черта бородинской музыки. Зато когда в моменты драматического напряжения эта мощная полнозвучная музыка начинает медленно раскачиваться и приходить в состояние возбуждения, — ею овладевает стихийный порыв, в ней пробуждаются энергия и страстность. Но всегда и всюду в этой музыке звучит плавная и сочная мелодия...»

Эпичность «Игоря» — не только в спокойствии, монументальной поступи его музыки, но и в характере драматургии; действие оперы, как в созданных народным эпосом, разворачивается неторопливо, от картины к картине, без драматических столкновений героев, обрисовка которых, в виде обособленных портретов, носит преимущественно монологический характер и сосредоточена в одной или нескольких ариях. В характеристике Игоря — это его героико-романтическая ария «Ни сна, ни отдыха измученной душе», обращенная к мыслям о страждущей родине. В характеристике Кончака — ария, рисующая его грозным врагом, наделенным в то же время большой душевной щедростью и благородством. Весь Галицкий — это, в сущности, одна его пьяная, разгульная песня, которую он поет в первой картине первого действия, и разговор с девушками, требующими отпустить похищенную подружку. Последующая

его сцена с Ярославной лишь дорисовывает уже готовый портрет. То же можно сказать о Кончаковне и Владимире Игоревиче; характеристика каждого из них складывается, в основном, из арии и любовного дуэта в картине половецкого стана: трепетное ожидание любовной встречи, страстное упоительное чувство, — и все это под покровом таинственной, чарующе-волшебной ночи.

Одухотворенный образ — соединение обаятельнейшего лиризма с высокой гражданственностью чувств — создал Бородин в портретной характеристике Ярославны: от тревог любящей женщины, от ариозо тоскливых раздумий о муже (в прологе и первой картине первого действия) до глубокой боли за судьбу родины, что звучит в плаче-причитании в начале четвертого действия. Здесь лирика, как голос личного чувства, личных невзгод, приобретает подлинно эпическое звучание. Не обычный бытовой причет, а безутешное горе, вобравшее в себя переживания целого народа. Поэтому так органично, как прямое продолжение только что отзвучавшей лирики «плача», приходит, сливаясь с ней в одно целое, народная лирика гениального хора поселян: «Ох, не буйный ветер завывал, горе навевал...». «Никнет трава от жалости, а дерево с тоскою к земле приклонилось» — так проникновенно описал безвестный поэт «Слова о полку Игореве» разорение, постигшее русскую землю после неудачного похода Игоря. Так, в духе летописных повествований о народных бедствиях, воплотил ту же историческую картину Бородин.

Эпическая трактовка драматического сюжета обусловила и характер других народных хоровых сцен оперы. Основанные на обобщенном претворении различных интонационных сфер народно-песенного творчества, они исполнены той широты и спокойствия, за которыми чувствуется огромная, исполинская сила. Это, однако, не лишает их глубокого драматизма звучания, когда того требует сюжетная ситуация, как, например, в том же хоре поселян или в сцене прихода думных бояр («Мужайся, княгиня, недобрые вести тебе мы несем») с последующим набатом, возвещающим нашествие вражеских полчищ (вторая картина первого действия).

Большим драматическим напряжением отмечена и симфоническая картина затмения солнца в разгар торжественной народной «Славы» («Солнцу красному слава»), которой открывается могучий пролог оперы. По первоначальному замыслу композитора, хор этот, поражающий современников архаической си-





Князь Игорь — А. Батурин  
Prince Igor — A. Baturin



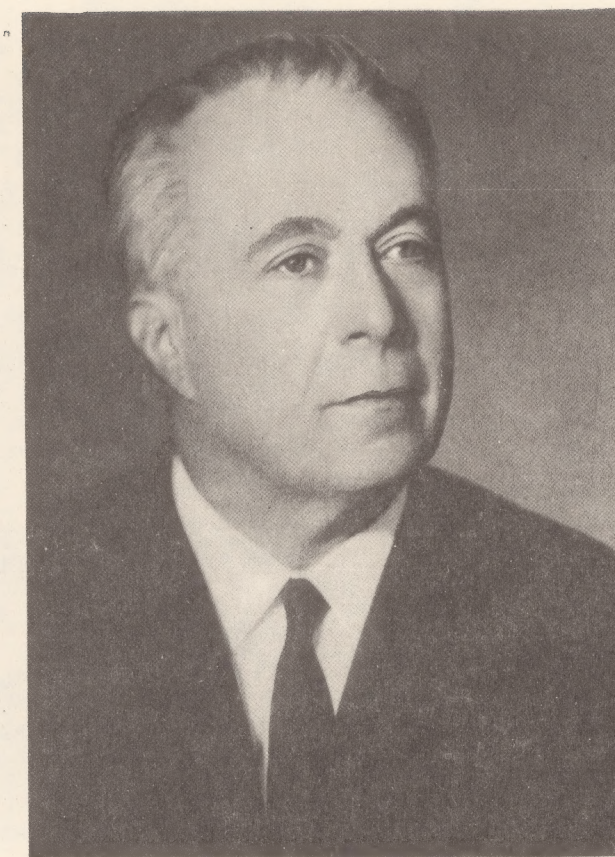
Ярославна — С. Панова  
Yaroslavna — S. Panova



Владимир Игоревич — И. Козловский  
Vladimir Igorevich — I. Kozlovsky



М. Шорин/М. Shorin



А. Хазанов/А. Khasanov



А. Мелик-Пашаев/А. Melik-Pashaev

Князь Галицкий — А. Пирогов  
Prince Galitsky — A. Pirogov



Кончак — М. Михайлов  
Konchak — M. Mikhailov



Кончаковна — Н. Обухова  
Konchakovna — N. Obukhova



лой своего звучания, должен был венчать собой монументальное здание всей оперы. Лишь впоследствии он был перенесен из эпилога в пролог.

«Опера «Князь Игорь» — родная сестра великой оперы Глинки «Руслан и Людмила», — писал Стасов. — В ней та же мощь эпической поэзии, та же грандиозность народных картин и сцен». На близость «Игоря» глинкинскому «Руслану» и, еще шире, глинкинской оперной эстетике указывал сам Бородин. Об этом говорит и посвящение оперы памяти Глинки.

Как и в «Руслане», в «Игоре» русскому миру, русской древности противостоит эпически же воплощенный мир Востока, яркий, многокрасочно-живописный, исполненный любовной неги и вместе с тем могущественно-стихийный. Здесь нет никакого окарикатуривания. Простой и строгой красоте русских характеров противопоставлены в опере такие же цельные характеры, но с иной культурой чувств и иными жизненными устремлениями. Бородин шел здесь прямо и непосредственно за Глинкой (вспомним восхитительные танцы польского акта в «Сусанине», восточные страницы в «Руслане»). Как пронзительно заметил Асафьев, «плениаясь стихийной удалью половецких танцев и любовной негой южной степной ночи, слушатель

все-таки делает выбор вместе с Игорем, т. е. предпочитает этически высокое чувство долга эстетическому «плену сознания»: когда в начале последнего акта разворачивается в суровых красках картина путивльского разорения и когда «плач Ярославны» звучит скорбью душевного одиночества, а хор поселян несет над опустевшими полями песнь-плач о разоренной земле, забыто обаяние степной «вольной воли». Как желанное, приходит возвращение из плена витязя-героя и его встреча с Ярославной под шумные возгласы ликующего финального хора народа.

В этом — сущность оперы, ее музыкальной драматургии, воплощенной с великим искусством великого художника.

С. Шлифштейн

#### КРАТКОЕ СОДЕРЖАНИЕ

**Пролог.** 1185 год. Площадь перед собором в городе Путивле, заполненная княжеской дружиной и войском, готовящимся к выступлению в поход против половцев. Вместе с Игорем отправляются «на брань с врагом» его сын Владимир, брат Всеволод. Народ славит их: «Солнцу красному слава! Князю Игорю слава, слава у нас на Руси». Внезапно все кругом темнеет, торжественно

ную картину проводов нарушает солнечное затмение. Всех охватывает суеверный ужас: «Ох, не к добру то затмение, князь!.. Ох, не ходить бы в поход тебе, князь!» Но решение Игоря непоколебимо...

Из всех ратников лишь двое — Скула и Ерощка — незаметно выходят из строя: «Пускай себе идут, а мы, брат, не пойдем».

Наступает прощальный обряд целования; княгиня и боярыни приходят проститься со своими мужьями и сыновьями. Ярославна умоляет Игоря остаться: «Не время, князь, — поверь мне!» Но напрасно. Игорь поручает свою «голубку ладу» заботам остающегося в Путивле князя Галицкого: «Тебе, как брату, ее я поручаю. Оберегай покой сестры твоей...»

Теперь все готово к выступлению в поход, опять звучит торжественная «Слава».

**Первое действие. Картина первая.** На княжем дворе Владимира Галицкого идет пир горой. Разгулявшаяся челядь прославляет «подвиги» князя. В центре — уже знакомые слушателю Скула и Ерощка. Залихватскую песню подхватывают все остальные: «Князь и молодцы гуляли, князю девку воровали». Хоровую песню сменяет хмельная, разухабистая песня самого Галицкого: «Эх, только б мне дожидаться чести на Путивле князем сести... Пожил бы я в славу, ведь на то и власть!..»



Вбегающая толпа девушек просит князя выдать им их подружку. Девушек прогоняют, и оргия продолжается. «На площадь! Сзывать народ на вече!» — разбушевавшаяся челядь решает посадить Галицкого князем на Путивле. На сцене остаются лишь вконец охмелевшие Скула и Ерошка.

**Картина вторая.** Горница в тереме Ярославны. Ярославна одна, тоскует по своему мужу: «Ах, где ты, где ты, прежняя пора... Одна в тоске все дни с утра, одна в слезах не сплю я ночи...»

В горницу входят девушки. Они пришли искать управы на бесчинствующего, «хуже врагов, хуже половцев» Галицкого: «Мы к тебе, княгиня, мы к тебе, родная! Просим, молим: не оставь нас!» Но неожиданно появляется сам Галицкий, и все разбегаются. Негодующая Ярославна требует назвать имя похищенной девушки, угрожает рассказать обо всем Игорю; когда тот вернется. Но Галицкий не боится угроз: «Мне стоит только кликнуть клич, я сам у вас здесь князем сяду». Двусмысленными намеками он оскорбляет Ярославну, и только ее гневная отповедь заставляет его несколько уюмониться.

Галицкий уходит. В горницу с недобрыми вестями входят думные бояре: на Русь перешли вражьи полки. В неравном бою полегла вся рать, все княжеское войско. Сам Игорь с братом своим и с сыном взят в плен. Но не все еще погибло: «Нам, княгиня, не впервые... у ворот встречать врагов! Город крепок, стены крепки... Отстоим Путивль!» Сзывая народ на борьбу с врагом, звучит набатный колокол.

**Второе действие.** Половецкий стан в степи, напоенной ароматом душистых трав. Теплый южный вечер. Звучит печальная, по-восточному пленительная песня о бедном сердце, увядающем без любви, подобно цветку на безводье. Песню сменяет грациозный танец. Это половецкие девушки своими песнями и плясками развлекают дочь хана Кончаковну. Но ее мысли заняты другим: «Меркнет свет дневной... Скоро ночь... Недалек час любви, час свидания».

Ночной половецкий дозор оповестил об окончании дня, «всем пора на покой». Опустилась ночь. Навстречу Владимиру Игоревичу из шатра выходит Кончаковна. Любовную сцену прерывают приближающиеся шаги. Погруженный в раздумья, входит Игорь: «Ни сна, ни отдыха измученной душе. Один в тиши ночей». Вновь и вновь переживает он события горестного прошлого — «и божья знаменья угрозу», и «горестный конец».

приведший к гибели всех его полков и к его собственному «постыдному плену». Одна Ярославна своим любящим чутким сердцем поймет и простит его. Но «знать, что враг терзает Русь... и день за днем влечь в плену...»

Крадучись, появляется половчанин Овлур. Тайно преданный русским, он предлагает Игорю бежать из плена. Обмануть хана, взявшего его на поруки? Нет, «бежать я не могу».

Из шатров выходит вернувшийся с охоты хан Кончак. Грозный завоеватель, сеющий вокруг себя смерть и разорение, он хотел бы видеть в своем пленнике, полюбившемся ему «за отвагу да за удаль в бою», не врага, а союзника и друга. «Все пленником себя ты здесь считаешь!.. Но разве ты живешь, как пленник, а не гость мой?...»

Чтобы рассеять «думы мрачные» Игоря, Кончак велит привести пленниц: «Пусть они песнями и пляской потешат нас». На все готов он для полюбившегося гостя, даже отпустить его на родину, если только тот даст слово не поднимать больше меча на половцев.

Но ничто не способно заставить князя солгать. «Лишь только дай ты мне свободу, полки я снова соберу. И на тебя ударю вновь!.. Испить шеломом Дона снова попытаюсь!»

Под статью Игорю и его властитель: «Люблю: ты смел и правды не боишься! Я — сам таков! Эх, когда б союзниками мы с тобою были... Да несговорчив ты...»

По знаку хана приведенные невольницы начинают петь и плясать. Медленную пляску сменяет быстрая, темпераментная пляска мужчин. Постепенно в нее вовлекаются все остальные. В буйных возгласах, похожих на воинственные выкрики, половцы величают своего повелителя — хана. Стремительно, подобно вихрю, проносятся мальчики. Снова звучит печальная песня невольниц, движения опять приобрели плавный характер. Но постепенно темп убыстряется, девушки и мальчики, мужчины и женщины — все смешалось в одном общем движении, в яркой, многокрасочной симфонии грации и отваги.

**Четвертое действие.** Городская стена и площадь в Путивле. Раннее утро. Ярославна одна на городской стене. Льет слезы и горестно взывает: «Ах, плачу я, горько плачу я...» В отдалении с песней проходят поселяне: «Ох, не ветер буйный завывал, горе навевал: хан Гзак нас повоевал...» Постепенно песня замирает. И опять звучит одинокий голос Ярославны.

Вдали показываются два всадника. В од-

ном из них Ярославна узнает «Игоря знакомые черты». Радостная встреча, объятия. И снова звучит мужественный призыв: «Я кликну клич из края в край: на хана вновь ударю я, и хан падет — гроза Руси...»

Ярославна и Игорь удаляются в кремль. На сцену с издевательской, шуточной песней, «прославляющей» неудачный поход Игоря, выходят ничего не ведающие Скула и Ерошка. Завидев удаляющихся Игоря и Ярославну, немеют от ужаса, но, благодаря смекалистому Скуле, быстро спохватываются и начинают трезвонить во все колокола, сзывать народ на радостную весть. «Да это пьяные гудошники чудят!.. Гоните их отсюда вон!» Но постепенно недоверие уступает место радостному изумлению. Гудошников прощают и одаривают подарками. Теперь они «не Галицкие», а «здешние, тутошние». На радостях пьянчуги запевают песню «во славу князя Северского». Народ, бояре, старцы, женщины в праздничных одеждах — все с хлебом-солью направляются на встречу с Игорем и Ярославной. Звучит финальный хор.

These discs present the first recording of A. Borodin's opera „Prince Igor”, a masterpiece of Russian operatic classics. So well known are the artistic careers of the noted Bolshoi singers who take part in the recording under the direction of the eminent Soviet conductor A. Melik-Pashaev, that there is no need to write about them in this article. Their parts in „Prince Igor” are among the greatest accomplishments of Soviet musical theatre.

The recording of „Prince Igor” was made on a sound film, the opera's version being the one shown at the Bolshoi Theatre at that time. There is no third act, a small Konchakovna's scene is reduced (the one after the Cavatina), there are also omissions in Yaroslavna's Arioso.

Despite the reductions, this recording is of great artistic value. Some inevitable intonational inadequacies do not spoil the overall excellent impression; such scenes as Konchakovna and Vladimir Igorevich's Duet with N. Obukhova („Prince Igor” is one of her two existing operatic recordings) and I. Kozlovsy are real gems of vocal art. It should be borne in mind that this recording was made in one session, without any mounting or replacing of inadequate passages, which has become the practice with the advent of magnetic recording techniques.

The first recording of A. Borodin's „Prince Igor” is released in the year of the 800th anni-

versary of the publication of „The Lay of Igor's Host” and is dedicated to this immortal masterpiece of ancient Russian literature, which provided the basis for the opera.

#### SUMMARY

**Prologue.** The year of 1185. The square in front of the cathedral in Putivl. filled with the Prince's warriors and troops preparing to set out against the Polovtsians. Igor is accompanied on this march by his son Vladimir and brother Vsevolod. People hail them: „Glory to the great sun! Glory to Prince Igor, glory in all Russia!” Suddenly darkness sets in — the ceremony of departure is interrupted by the solar eclipse. All are in superstitious awe: „Oh, it is a bad omen, Prince... Oh, you should not set out on the march, Prince!.. But Igor is firm in his decision...»

Only two out of all warriors — Skula and Eroshka — leave the formation, unnoticed: „Let them go, but we, brother, are not going.”

The ceremony of kissing before departure comes; the Princess and boyarynyas come up to their husbands and sons to say good-bye to them. Yaroslavna pleads with Igor to stay: „It is not time, Prince — believe me!” But all is in vain. Igor entrusts his beloved to Prince Galitsky who remains in Putivl; «I entrust her to your care, as a brother. Look after your sister...»

Now everything is ready for the march, again „Glory” is heard.

**Act I. Scene 1.** There is a great feast at the court of Prince Galitsky. Drunken servants praise the Prince's „deeds». In the centre are already familiar Skula and Eroshka. Their hilarious song is picked up by all the rest: „The Prince's men went on a spree, stole a girl for the Prince”. The Chorus is followed by a drunken, rollicking song of Galitsky himself: „Hey, if only I lived till having the honour of becoming the Putivl Prince... I'd have a great time, after all, this is what power is for!...»

A group of maidens rushes in, asking the Prince to give their friend back to them. They are sent away, the orgy continues. “To the square! Call the people to assemble” — the wild servants decide to make Galitsky the Prince of Putivl. Only totally drunk Skula and Eroshka remain on the stage.

**Scene 2.** A room in Yaroslavna's chambers. She is alone, sadly thinking of her husband: „Oh, where have you gone, the old times... I am alone with my grief from morning till night, alone in tears during sleepless nights...»

The girls enter the room. They have come to ask Yaroslavna to restrain Galitsky whose beha-

viour is more outrageous than that of „the enemies, the Polovtsians”: „We have come to you, Princess, to you, our own! We ask you, plead with you: do not desert us!” But suddenly Galitsky himself appears and the maidens run away. The indignant Yaroslavna demands to tell her the name of the kidnapped girl threatening to inform Igor of what has happened when he returns. But Galitsky is not intimidated by the threats: “I only have to say a word and I shall become the Prince here myself.» With his ambiguous hints he insults Yaroslavna and only her angry rebuke makes him cool down a little.

**Act II.** The Polovtsian camp in the steppe filled with the aroma of fragrant herbs. A warm southern evening. A sad, captivating Oriental song is heard, narrating of a poor heart dying without love like a flower on arid soil. The song is followed by a graceful dance. It is the Polovtsian maidens who, with their singing and dancing, entertain Konchakovna, the Khan's daughter. But her thoughts are occupied with something else: „The light is fading... Night will come soon... The hour of love, the hour of the rendezvous is nearing.”

The Polovtsian night guards has announced the end of the day, “all must rest”. The night has descended. Konchakovna comes out of the tent to meet Vladimir Igorevich. The love scene is interrupted by the sound of approaching steps. Enters Igor, deep in thought: „No sleep, no peace of mind for my tortured soul. Alone throughout silent nights”. Again and again he relives the events of the sad past — „the threat of God's sign”, and „the disgraceful end” resulting in the defeat of all his regiments and his own „shameful capture”. Only Yaroslavna with her loving, tender heart may understand and forgive him. But „to know that the enemy is torturing Russia... and live in captivity day after day...»

The Polovtsian Ovlour stealthily comes up to Igor. Secretly loyal to Russians, he suggests Igor escape from captivity. «To cheat the Khan who has taken him on parole? No, «I cannot escape».

Khan Konchak having returned from a hunt comes out of the tent. An awesome victor leaving death and destruction behind him, he would like to see in his prisoner, whom he likes for his „bravery” and „courage in battle”, not an enemy but an ally and friend. „You still feel yourself a prisoner here!.. But do you live like a prisoner and not like my guest?”

To distract Igor from „gloomy thoughts” Konchak orders to bring captive maidens: „Let them amuse us with their songs and dances.” He does not grudge his guest anything, he is even prepared to let him return to his native country if

Igor promises not to take up arms against the Polovtsians.

But nothing can make the Prince lie: „Try and give me freedom, and I shall gather my regiments again. And shall strike against you!.. I shall again try to drink the Don water from my helmet!”

Igor's captor is a match to him: „I like it: you are brave and not afraid of telling the truth! I am like that myself! Oh, if you and I could be allies! But you are stubborn...»

On Khan's order the captive maidens start singing and dancing. The slow dance is followed by the men's fast and temperamental dance. Gradually all the rest are drawn into it. In wild shouts sounding like war cries the Polovtsians praise their ruler — the Khan. Like a turbulent whirlwind the boys rush by. Then the sad song of the captive maidens, the movements becoming slow and graceful. But again, little by little, the tempo increases, boys and girls, men and women — all is one general movement, a colourful symphony of grace and valour.

**Act IV.** The town wall and square in Putivl. Early morning. Yaroslavna is alone on the wall. She is weeping and calling mournfully: «Oh, I weep, I weep bitterly...» The distant song of the passing people is heard: „Oh, it was not the whining of the wind bringing us grief: It was Khan Gzak who defeated us...» The song is slowly fading away. And again only Yaroslavna's voice is heard.

Two horsemen appear in the distance. In one of them Yaroslavna recognizes „Igor's familiar features”. A joyous meeting, embraces. And again a courageous call sounds: „I shall send a call from border to border: I shall strike against the Khan again, and he — Russia's menace — will fall...»

Yaroslavna and Igor retire into the fortress. Skula and Eroshka, unaware of the events, go out on the stage and sing a mocking song “praising” Igor's unsuccessful campaign. On seeing Igor and Yaroslavna going away they become speechless, but, thanks to clever Skula, soon recover and start ringing all the bells calling the people to hear the happy news. “These are the tricks of drunk gudok-players!.. Throw them out of here!” But gradually distrust is replaced by happy amazement. The buffoons are forgiven and offered gifts. Now they are not “Galitsky's men” but “local people”. The drunks, happy, sing a song praising “Prince Seversky”. People, boyards, old men, women in festive clothes — all leave to welcome Igor and Yaroslavna with bread and salt. The Finale's chorus is heard.

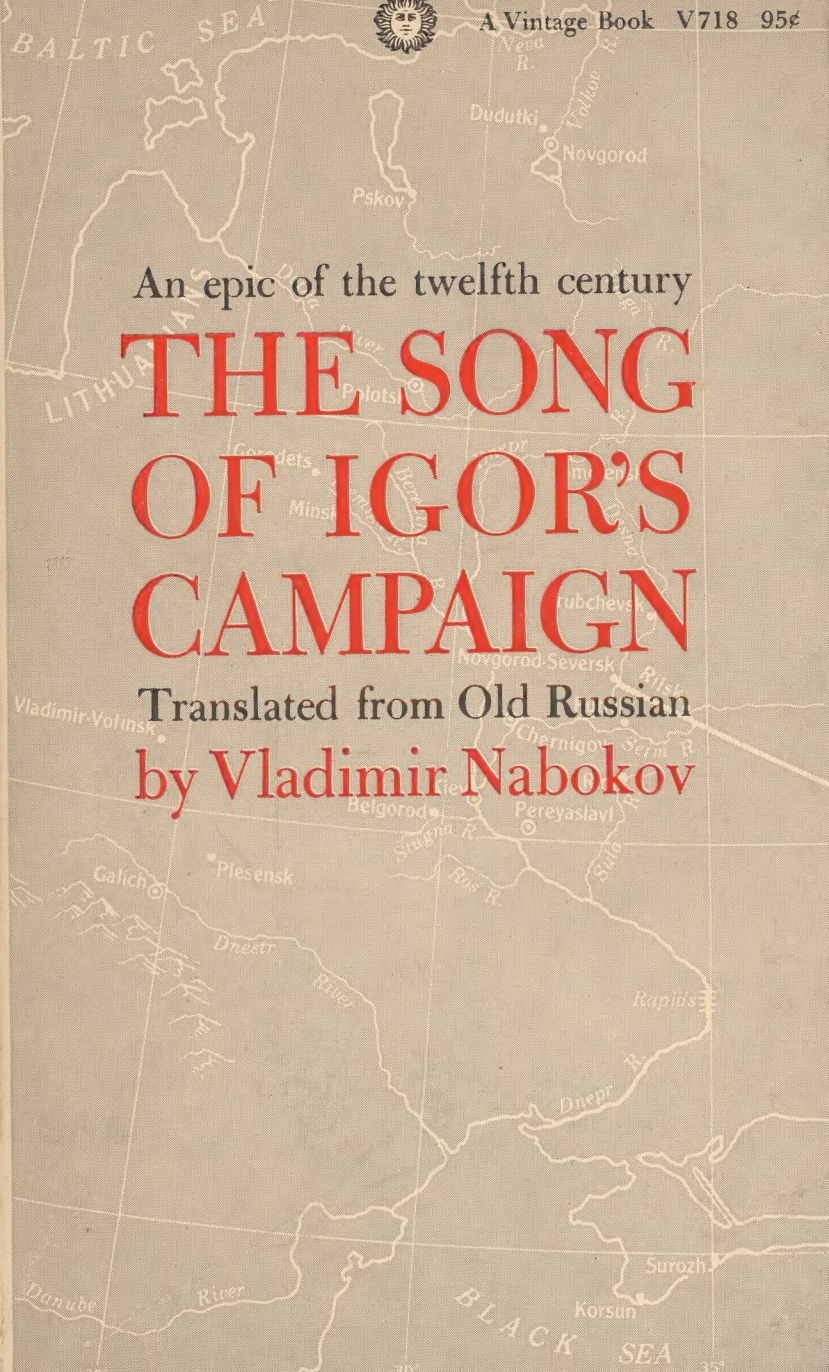




An epic of the twelfth century

# THE SONG OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

Translated from Old Russian  
by Vladimir Nabokov





## The Song of Igor's Campaign

According to the annals of Kievan Russia, four territorial princes set out on April 23, 1185, for the prairies beyond the river Donets to fight the Kumans who had been assailing the southeastern steppes of Russia for the last hundred years. The four princes were Igor—the leader of the expedition—his brother, his nephew and his young son. On Sunday, May 12, the four princes were defeated and taken captive, whereupon the Kumans invaded Russia and made off with much booty.

Six centuries later, in about 1790, a manuscript text of *The Song of Igor's Campaign* turned up quite unexpectedly in a batch of antiquities and proved to be, according to Mr. Nabokov, "a magnificent literary masterpiece." His translation gives a literal rendering of the text as he understands it, and his accompanying notes illuminate the history of the work and its structure.



THE SONG OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN





VLADIMIR NABOKOV was born in 1899 in St. Petersburg, Russia. His father, a member of the old Russian nobility, was an eminent statesman of the Liberal group. He was educated in private schools in Russia and at Trinity College, Cambridge University, England. He graduated with honors in French and Slavic. He acquired considerable fame as a novelist and poet in émigré circles in Europe under the name Sirin.

Mr. Nabokov came to the United States in 1940 and became not only an American writer, but an American citizen. He had been a member of the faculty at Cornell University until 1959. He is the author of many novels; among the best known in English are *Lolita*, *Invitation of a Small Fool*, *Invitation of a Small Fool*, *Laughter in the Dark*, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, and *Bend Sinister*. He is also the author of *Nikolai Gogol*, a critical biography; *Nabokov's Dozen*, a collection of short stories; *Speak Memory*, a memoir; and has contributed short stories and poems to such periodicals as *The New Yorker*, *Partisan Review*, and *Atlantic Monthly*. Several monographs by Mr. Nabokov on the morphology and taxonomy of Lepidoptera have appeared in scientific journals. He was a Research Fellow in Entomology at the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard, from 1942 to 1948.



THE SONG OF  
IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

*An Epic of the Twelfth Century*

*Translated from Old Russian by*

VLADIMIR NABOKOV



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## Foreword

According to the annals<sup>1</sup> of Kievan Russia, four territorial princes with throne towns on the rivers Desna and Seim, east of Chernigov, set out on Tuesday, April 23, 1185, for the prairies beyond the river Donets to fight the Kumans. The four princes were: Igor,<sup>2</sup> leader of the expedition; his brother, Vsevolod;<sup>3</sup> their nephew, Svyatoslav;<sup>4</sup> and Igor's young son, Vladimir.<sup>5</sup> The Kumans,<sup>6</sup> nomads of obscure Turco-Mongolian origin, who had been assailing the southeastern steppes for the last hundred years, had been soundly trounced in 1183 by Igor's cousin, Svyatoslav III.<sup>7</sup>



Igor was moved by the spirit of rash emulation in undertaking his own expedition without consulting the senior prince.

Igor's mounted troops, marching leisurely in a general southeasterly direction, took nine days to cover the distance, about 250 miles, between Igor's throne town, Novgorod-Seversk, and the river Donets. They continued southward, through oak brush and pine barren, between the Donets and the Oskol. In the steppes some 80 miles south of the junction of those two rivers, about 400 miles from Novgorod-Seversk, they clashed with the Kumans. On Sunday, May 12, after three days of fighting, the army of the four princes was completely defeated. They were captured by four different khans<sup>8</sup> and taken to four different camps. In the course of the following months the Kumans invaded Russian territory between the Sula and Seim rivers and retreated with a rich booty.

After at least one year of captivity Igor managed to escape. In the meantime young Vladimir, in *his* place of confinement, married the daughter of Khan Konchak. Vladimir was back in Russia, with wife and child, by the autumn of 1187, and it is reasonable to suppose that his uncle, Vsevolod, had also been liberated by that time. The fourth member of the expedition apparently died in captivity.

Six centuries later, around 1790, Count Aleksey Musin-Pushkin, collector of antiquities and high-ranking lay member of the Synod, had the singular good fortune to acquire a certain batch of old manuscripts. His agent (whose name was never divulged)

bought them—so the count asserted in 1813—from the archimandrite Joel (*Ioil'*), “a man of culture and a lover of literature”: he had administered the Spaso-Yaroslavskiy monastery till 1788, at which time it was turned into an *arhiereyskiy dom* (“episcopal house”). Upon the dissolution of the monastery, Joel had lapsed into indigence and was glad to have Musin's mysterious commissioner buy from him the manuscripts that had belonged to the disbanded cloister. Among these was a magnificent literary masterpiece, half poem, half oration, henceforth to be known as the *Slóvo o polkú Igoreve*,<sup>9</sup> The Song of Igor's Campaign. It was bound, with several other manuscripts, in a volume marked “Nr. 323” where it was placed fifth.<sup>10</sup> Its text presented a mass of more or less fused, often abbreviated or not completed words “on glossy paper . . . in a rather neat hand.”<sup>11</sup> A modicum of internal evidence, which most scholars today believe to be not an injection by a Russian Macpherson, but a natural exhalation of inherent truth, forces one to assume that the unknown author of the song composed it in the spring or early summer of 1187.<sup>12</sup> The actual text discovered by Musin was, however, a much later transcript made, it is conjectured, in the sixteenth century, and not in Kiev but perhaps in Pskov, by a monastic scribe who could not understand a number of old words and phrases which consequently he botched.<sup>13</sup> In preparing the First Edition, Musin and his two co-editors (Bantish-Kamenski, director of the Archives in Moscow, and his assistant, Malinov-



ski) separated the words (sometimes incorrectly), introduced modern punctuation and rather haphazardly paragraphed the text.<sup>14</sup> They also printed *en regard* a modern Russian version which abounds in all kinds of inaccuracies, pseudoclassical paraphrases, and glaring blunders. This First Edition of the *Slovo o polku Igorevye, Igorya sina Svyatoslavlya, vnuka Ol'gova* (The Song of the Campaign of Igor, Igor Son of Svyatoslav [and] Grandson of Oleg) came out in Moscow on December 5, 1800, in a volume entitled *Iroicheskaya pyesn' | o | pohodye na polovtsov | udyel'nago knyazya Novagoroda-Syeverskago | Igorya Svyatoslavicha, | pisannaya | starinnim russkim yazikom | v iskhodye XII stolyetiya | s perelozheniem na upotrebyaemoe ninye naryechie. | Moskva | v Senat'skoy Tipografii, | 1800*. (The heroic song of the campaign against the Kumans of the territorial prince [udel-owner, "independent prince"] of Novgorod-Seversk, Igor son of Svyatoslav, written in the ancient Russian language at the close of the twelfth century, with a transposition into the idiom now in use).<sup>15</sup>

The precious manuscript of the *Slovo* perished during the Moscow conflagration of 1812 when Musin's house was burned to the ground. All we possess in the way of basic material is the edition of 1800 and an apograph that in 1795 or 1796 Count Musin-Pushkin had a scribe make from the MS for Empress Catherine II. This Apograph (known as the *Arhivniy*, or *Ekaterininskiy, Spisok*), which differs only in a few insignificant details from the *editio princeps*, was discovered among Catherine's papers

more than six decades later by the historian Pekar-ski, who published it in 1864 in an Appendix 2 to volume V, 1862, of *Zapiski Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk* (Memoirs of the Imperial Academy of Sciences).

It was during the preparation of the Apograph and of three or four additional copies (now lost) that the news of Musin's remarkable acquisition spread among the lovers of Russian letters. They learned that not only had a great bard flourished in Russia at the end of the twelfth century but that he had had a predecessor named Boyan<sup>16</sup> in the eleventh. Of the author of The Song, we do not know the name but know the work; of his predecessor, we do not know the name but possess only such samples of his work as are alluded to in The Song.

## 2.

The original text of The Song as published in 1800 consists of 14,175 letters or about 2850 words. I have divided it, in my English literal translation, into 860 lines. Its first sections are devoted mainly to an account of the unfortunate foray. The facts tally with those of the Ipatiev Chronicle but they are grouped and illumined according to the poet's own views and needs. That there was some exchange of information between the original chronicler and the author of The Song is evident from a few bizarre coincidences (see for example notes to lines 91 and 814-830), but who was influenced by whom is far from clear. The



chronicle is the work of a learned monk adept at pious formulas, a conscientious writer with a shapeless style and little originality of thought. The Song, on the other hand, is a harmonious, many leveled, many hued, uniquely poetical structure created in a sustained and controlled surge of inspiration by an artist with a fondness for pagan gods and a percipience of sensuous things. Its political and patriotic slant pertaining to a given historical moment is, naturally, of small importance in the light of its timeless beauty, and although I have provided the reader with all necessary notes, I am not interested in considering The Song as a corollary of history or a birch-stump speech.

The structure of The Song shows a subtle balance of parts which attests to deliberate artistic endeavor and excludes the possibility of that gradual accretion of lumpy parts which is so typical of folklore. It is the lucid work of one man, not the random thrum of a people. From the extraordinary prelude, where the tenacious shadow of Boyan is used by our bard for his own narrative purpose, to the conclusion of the work, where Boyan is once more invoked to preside over the happy end, there is a constant interplay of themes and mutual echoes. The entire composition neatly divides itself into five parts: 1. Exordium (lines 1-70); 2. Narration (lines 71-390); 3. Conjunction (391-730); 4. Liberation (lines 731-830); 5. Epilogue (lines 831-860). In Part 2, Vsevolod's speech to his brother before they set out (lines 71-90) forms a companion piece to

the description of Vsevolod in action on the battlefield (lines 211-230); the bright sun which is eclipsed in 91-110, when Igor addresses his warriors before the campaign, later rises in gory grandeur over the battlefield (181-183), is addressed by Euphrosyne from the rampart (722-730), and finally sheds a gay and benevolent radiance on Igor's homecoming (841). In another ingenious arrangement of nicely fitting pieces, the Winds, which in Part 2 drive enemy arrows against Igor (197-199), are conjured by Euphrosyne in Part 3 (699-708), and in answer to her prayer brew up a diversionary storm (731-732) to assist Igor's liberation. Especially satisfying to one's sense of inner concord and unity is the ample treatment of the theme of the Rivers, among which the Great Don plays a leading role. Igor's urge to take a look at it (100) and drink a helmetful of it (110), expressed in a stylistically perfect refrain at the beginning of Part 1, is repeated with a symmetrical intonation at 180 and 190, in the beginning of the great battle, when the resounding, redoubtable Don is felt to be on the side of the Kumans. Throughout The Song that river is mentioned a number of times in terms of terror and disaster (131, 194, 205, 309, 741) as well as in terms of passionate desire (100, 110, 416, 503, 567), with the subtheme of the "helmetful" repeated at 416 and 503. Igor does not attain the blue mirage of the Don (which will be reached two centuries later in the *Zadonshchina*, a vulgar imitation of The Song concocted in celebration of a great victory over the Mongols), but in a



perfect structural move the artist substitutes for the Great Don its tributary, the Lesser Don, the "little" Donets, with which, or rather with whom, the prince in the Liberation part of *The Song* indulges in a charming colloquy (771-802), contrasting the kind Donets with a much less amiable stream, the Stugna, in a passage (791-802) which resolves itself in a last echo of danger and misfortune. Igor's speech of thanks to the Lesser Don is beautifully duplicated by his wife's prayer to the Dnepr (711-719): the great Kievan river transmits as it were the power of intercession and assistance to the prairie stream, and Igor's historical recollection of a less fortunate lady's weeping on the Dnepr's banks is a necessary element of rhetorical harmony to balance, at the close of the entire movement, Euphrosyne's initial apostrophization of that river. And finally there is the river Kayala, near which the disastrous battle is fought. The reiteration of its name with emblematic allusions is a haunting presence throughout *The Song* (194, 251, 292, 380, 431, 694).

An array of animals, resembling the stylized fauna of rich-hued rugs, and marginal designs of delicate plants play a changeful double role in the structure of *The Song*. They give its circumstances a touch of local reality, and they participate in the general theme of magic, prophecy and conjuration, a theme bespeaking a singular freedom of thought and distinguishing this pagan poem from the pallid and rigid compositions of routine Christian piety which by that time had begun to direct and to drain literary

art. It will be noted that here again the diverse expressions of the theme enter into a subtle arrangement of calls and recalls, with every step having its reverberation and every echo its arch. Thus, the colorful prairie creatures participating as agents of doom and as the Kumans' allies in the excitement of the eclipse (115-126, 132-139) or taking cruel advantage of the dead (263-266, 602-604), or reveling in tragedy (406-407, 422-443), are replaced and responded to, within the work's plural melody, by the antiphonal pro-Russian birds (787-790, 806-813), assistants of the river gods conjured by Euphrosyne and, in the case of the nightingales, representatives of Boyan.

In what may be termed a more feminine strain, flowers and trees by their drooping movements express their choral compassion for the misfortunes of the Russians. Besides an allusion at 562, the formula of their participation occurs as a refrain at 299-301 and again at 801-802: it comes here during that triumphant homeward trek where, seemingly, nothing but elation could be experienced by Igor, but where, by an artistic device, the pathetic refrain lends a poetically needful support to the symmetry of the over-arching theme of melancholy; which melancholy is now transformed into a remembered event referring to a long-dead prince and thus brings out, in vibrant contrast, among the light and shade of riverside willows, the lucky fate of the live hero.

The all-pervading sense of magic so vividly conveyed by flora and fauna, demon peacocks and fairy-



tale ducks, waters and winds, auroras and thunders, is introduced by our bard's descriptions of Boyan's enchantments (especially 11-18 and 35-38) and is further illustrated by a series of thematic panels such as the Eclipse (91-119), the Portentous Storm following it (132-139 and 181-190), the Arrival of the Antivirgin (306-310), the King's Dream (391-410), the Spells of Vseslav (651-690), Euphrosyne's Incantation (691-750) and Igor's Escape (especially 731-733, 751-760, 781-790, 806-810).

Among other elements of our author's technique the good reader will note his art of transition and preparation. Thus, interrupting with a dramatic aside the account of the battle which starts with the "Vsevolod Wild Bull" movement (211-230), our bard, in preparation of the political centerpiece of The Song (that magnificent section, 497-686, where old feuds are recalled and contemporaneous princes implored to help Igor), contrives a first digression beginning at 231, "There have been the ages of Troyan" (which in itself is a companion intonation to the Boyan apostrophe at 51-60), and continuing to 270, after which we return to the Kayala battlefield. In this long digression the feuds of Oleg Malglory (233-238), the death of Boris son of Vyacheslav (245-250) and that of Izyaslav I (251-254) are recalled, and the image of a dissension-torn Russia (255-268) is projected from there into another section (311-350) where a clamor of lament rises after Igor's defeat. The transition from that defeat to the recent victories of Svyatoslav III leads to the great

scene in Kiev, while the various evocations, pictorial in brightness and dramatic in sonority, of Oleg, Vyacheslav and Izyaslav have now prepared eye and ear for the brilliant glimpses of princes who are rallied to Igor's assistance: Yaroslav of Chernigov (466-478), Vsevolod of Suzdal (497-510), the brothers Rurik and David (511-522), Yaroslav of Galich (523-541), Roman later of Galich and his brother Mstislav (542-559) and Mstislav's brothers Ingvar and Vsevolod (571-582), after which a historical recollection, the recent death of Izyaslav son of Vasilko (591-610), leads to the admirable evocation of the enchantments and misfortunes of Vseslav, Izyaslav's grandfather (631-678).

Within these ample surgings of interlinked themes we can mark such smaller elements of inner unity as intonational refrains and recurrent types of metaphor. Among the refrains are such striking repetitions of euphonious formulas as "seeking for themselves honor and for their prince glory" (89-90, 149-150), "O Russian land, you are already behind the culmen" (140-141, 195-196), the double formula of "drooping" pertaining to grass and trees (299-301), to ramparts and merriment (387-390), to voices and merriment (611-614) and, in perfect structural symmetry, to the flowers and the tree at 801-802. Another refrain is the plea to avenge Russia and Igor (519-523, 539-541, 580-583); and "Yaroslavna early weeps in Putivl on the rampart, repeating" is an especially musical reiteration recalling Western European ballads (697-698, 709-710, 720-721). Finally, I leave



to the students of generic style to notice the various categories of metaphor which adorn The Song and add the pleasures of connotation to those of direct imagery. These metaphors can be classified mainly as belonging to the vocabulary of the hunt, to the domain of agriculture and to that of meteorological phenomena.

## 3.

Throughout The Song there occur here and there a few poetical formulas strikingly resembling those in Macpherson's *Ossian*. I discuss them in my Commentary. Paradoxically, these coincidences tend to prove not that a Russian of the eighteenth century emulated Macpherson, but that Macpherson's concoction does contain after all scraps derived from authentic ancient poems. It is not unreasonable to assume that through the mist of Scandinavian sagas certain bridges or ruins of bridges may be distinguished linking Scottic-Gaelic romances with Kievan ones. The curious point is that if we imagine a Russian forger around 1790 constructing a mosaic out of genuine odds and ends with his own mortar, we must further imagine that he knew English well enough to be affected by specific elements of Macpherson's style; but in the eighteenth century, and well into the age of Pushkin, English poetry was known to Russians only through French versions, and therefore the Russian forger would not have rendered, as Letourneur did not render them, the

very special details of that curious "Ossianic" style of which I give examples in my notes.

The eleventh and twelfth centuries were marked in Kievan Russia by amazing artistic achievements, but the making of diadems, frescoes, ikons, and marvelously lovely churches, such as the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Kiev (built in 1036) or the Uspenskiy Cathedral in Vladimir (1158-1189) or the Dmitrievskiy Cathedral in the same town (1193-1197), does not necessarily imply a contemporaneous development of literature; and similarly, great poetry is known to have been produced at periods when the (on the whole more primitive) arts of painting and architecture did not exactly flourish. Despite the Marxist scholastics and nationalistic emotions which tend to transform modern essays on The Song into exuberant hymns to the Motherland, Soviet historians are as helpless as earlier Russian scholars were to explain the striking, obvious, almost palpable difference in artistic texture that exists between The Song and such remnants of Kievan literature as have reached us across the ages. Had only those chronicles and sermons, and testaments, and humdrum lives of saints been preserved, the Kievan era would have occupied a very modest nook in the history of medieval European literature; but as things stand, one masterpiece not only lords it over Kievan letters but rivals the greatest European poems of its day.

Considerations of historical perspective prevent one from believing that The Song was composed around 1790 by an anonymous poet endowed with a



degree of genius exceeding in originality and force that of the only major poet of the time (Derzhavin) and possessing an amount of special erudition in regard to the Kievan era which none in his time possessed. Suggestions to the effect that a forger gave up a future of personal fame in order to glorify the past of his country, or that he was able to avail himself of documents which are now lost, immediately provoke new questions requiring new conjectures to deal with them. But after all this has been said, and the possibility of fraud contemptuously dismissed, and the entire burden of its proof shifted onto the frail shoulders of insufficient scholarship, we still have to cope with certain eerie doubts.

We are faced by the unnatural combination of two generically different notions: we are forced, first, to assume that at a singularly precise point in historical reality, namely in the early summer of 1187, somewhere in Kievan Russia a person describes—pen in hand or harp in lap—a series of events which started only two years before and are still in a state of live flux and formlessness; and second, we are forced to combine in our mind this political, local, actual, journalistic reality with the impact of such poetical imagery in The Song as is usually associated with the maturity of fondly manipulated impressions and with a long period of time—a decade, a century—elapsing between the event and the metaphor. In other words, it is very difficult to imagine the author of The Song singing the actual dew with which Igor's cloak was still wet as he rode into Kiev, or echoing Euphros-

yne's sobs while she was actually rushing down from her wooden tower in Putivl to embrace her prince; or turning into a mannered dialogue the panting messenger's news of Vladimir's bringing home a wife from the Kuman steppe.

## 4.

The existence of The Song in manuscript form at some point of time between the end of the twelfth century and the end of the fourteenth century is attested by there being an imitation of it knocked together at the latter time limit and discovered only in the middle of the last century, six decades after The Song came to light. This is the composition generally known as the *Zadonshchina*.

On the misty morning of September 8, 1380, on the Kulikovo Field, a united Russian army of some 150,000 men, from almost all the existing principalities, under the leadership of Prince Dmitri of Moscow (d. 1389) assisted by the princes Andrey of Polotsk, Dmitri of Bryansk, Dmitri of Volin and Vladimir of Serpuhov, having forded the Don at the mouth of its affluent, the Nepryadva (in the present Tula region), engaged in a tremendous battle with twice as many Tatars led by Khan Mamay, and won Russia's first big victory over the Mongols after a century and a half of servitude. A few years later, probably around 1385 (judging by internal evidence) the Kulikovo Battle was sung and discoursed upon by a certain Sophonias (*Sofon*, *Sofoniy* or *Sofoniya*),



a priest from Ryazan (or perhaps a gentleman from Bryansk turned monk after a military career). This composition has reached us in half a dozen transcripts, none of them good, of which the main ones are entitled:

1. *Zadonshchina* [the Beyond-the-Don Campaign] of the Great Prince Dmitri son of Ivan and his cousin Vladimir son of Andrey, being a manuscript of 1470, discovered in the St. Cyril monastery of Belozersk, and first published in 1859.

2. *Skazaniye* [the Narrative, or Tale] by Sofon the Ryazanian, in praise of the princes Dmitri and Vladimir, a manuscript of the XVII c., in the Library of the Synod, first published in 1890; and

3. *Slovo* [the Song, or Discourse] about the princes Dmitri and Vladimir, a manuscript of the XVII c., published by its discoverer, Undolski, in 1852.

Of these texts, the first is the shortest; its title, *Zadonshchina*, is traditionally used to signify the entire sorry thing as known from the transcripts. Sophonias, an enthusiastic but clumsy plagiarist, adapted the general structure of the first two parts of The Song of Igor's Campaign and a jumble of specific details (epithets, images, rhetorical formulas) to a generalized description of the Kulikovo Battle. Some of the details he did not understand, and his floundering attempts to incorporate them in his imitation led to a preposterous mixture of inchoate bombast, meaningless metaphors, and his own patriotic platitudes. It belongs to the coarse and ponderously

didactic Moscow era which succeeded the marvelously artistic Kievan one. The *Zadonshchina* differs from The Song of Igor as sackcloth from samite.

Not Boyan, but "the nightingale bird" (St. Cyril text) or "the nightingale, summer bird, joy of fair days" (Synod text), is bluntly and lamely suggested as a singer of the Kulikovo heroes. The mysterious, wonderfully poetical phrase of The Song addressed to the Russian land, "*uzhe za Shelomyanem esi*" (you are already behind the hill), is turned into the ludicrous "*kak esi bila doseleva za tsarem' za Solomonom, tak budi i ninyecha za knyazem' velikim Dmitriem*" of the same St. Cyril text (a phrase which if it means anything at all may be translated as "even now shall you be under Great Prince Dmitri as you were under King Solomon"). The passage of The Song (492-493), "now in Rim [people] scream under Kuman sabers," becomes in the St. Cyril text of the *Zadonshchina*, "the *divo* calls under the Tatar sabers." And Euphrosyne's incantation is distributed among several garrulous ladies.<sup>17</sup>

## 5.

In my translation of The Song I have ruthlessly sacrificed manner to matter and have attempted to give a literal rendering of the text as I understand it.<sup>18</sup> Each page (except the first, the last, and one in the middle) of the lost original contained presumably an average of 310 letters (arranged in about twenty



lines of about the same length each). I have preserved on each page of my English translation the amount of material corresponding to what I think was that amount on each given page of the lost MS (or, more correctly, of an earlier MS on which Musin's MS was based); but the breaking up of these batches into lines is arbitrary and only meant to provide easy reference.

No satisfactory edition of The Song exists in Russian. By satisfactory I mean a volume that would include among other things photostats of the First Edition and of the Apograph, a summary of all recensions and commentaries and a complete bibliography. We can light-heartedly go without the "poetical" versions of The Song and articles on its politico-national importance, all of which are so lavishly represented in Soviet editions.

Among recent works the most useful are Lihachyov's commentaries in *Slovo o polku Igoreve*, edited by Miss Adrianov-Peretts, Leningrad, 1950; those by Kudryashov, Eleonski and Rzhiga in *Slovo o polku Igoreve*, edited by Klobukovski and Kuzmin, Moscow, 1947; and Dmitriev's commentaries in his edition of the same work, Leningrad, 1952. Another useful edition is *La Geste du Prince Igor, texte établi, traduit et commenté sous la direction d' Henri Grégoire, de Roman Jakobson et de Marc Szeftel assistés de J. A. Joffe*, New York, 1948. This contains among other matter a poor English version of The Song by Samuel Cross more or less patched up

by the editors. I have also seen the *Tale of the Armament of Igor*, edited and translated by Leonard A. Magnus, Oxford, 1915, a bizarre blend of incredible blunders, fantastic emendations, erratic erudition and shrewd guesses. It has some clearly presented genealogical charts. Some of these I have used, revising them in the light of data selected from the other works listed above, in compiling the Pedigree of Princes printed on page 24. When identifying the princes variously involved in The Song, the reader must be prepared to countenance a formidable recurrence of the same syllables. As will be seen from the Index and the Pedigree (where the "great princes" enthroned in Kiev are recognizable by the regal numerals affixed to their names) the termination in *slav* (meaning "glory," "glorious") is most frequent. There are six Svyatoslavs (Sv. I, d. 972; Sv. II, d. 1076; Sv. III, d. 1194; Sv. of Chernigov, Igor's father, d. 1164; Sv. of Rîl'sk, Igor's nephew, d. 1186; and Sv., Igor's small son) and six Mstislavs. Another popular component is *vlad* or *volod* with connotations of "rule," "sway." There are four Vladimirs (Vl. I, "the Saint," d. 1015; Vl. II, "*Monomachus*," d. 1125; Vl. of Putivl, Igor's son, d. 1212; and Vl., son of Mstislav of Smolensk) and six Vsevolods (Vs. I, d. 1092; Vs. II, d. 1146; Vs. of Suzdal, d. 1212; Vs., Igor's brother, d. 1196; Vs., a descendant of Vseslav of Polotsk; and Vs., a descendant of Mstislav I). Russian students learn to group princes by the pluralized patronymics of a celebrated ancestor (e.g.,



Yaroslavichi) into "nests" or "houses," and it will be seen that our bard is directly concerned with the House of Oleg (Ol'govichi), while his predecessor the bard Boyan seems to have been particularly interested in the House of Polotsk.

Index

The names and patronymics of Russian princes mentioned in The Song.

*Boris Vyacheslavich*, line 245.

*Bryachislav Vasil'kovich*, line 605.

*David Rostislavich*, lines 511, 685.

*Efrosiniya Yaroslavna*, see *Yaroslavna*.

*Glyebov (Glyebovich)*, see *Volodimir*.

*Glyebovi (Glyebovich)*, line 510.

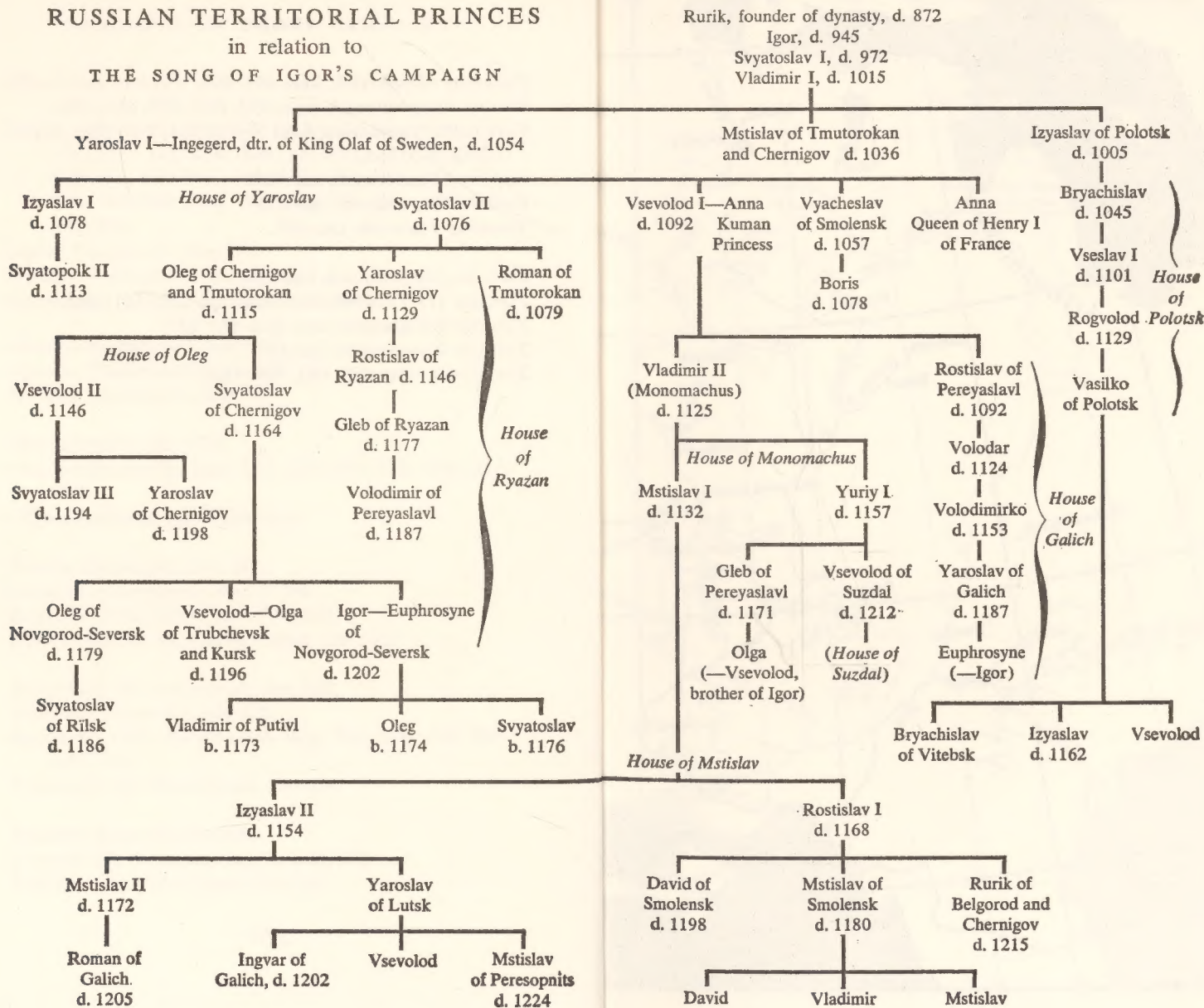


- Glyebovna*, line 229.
- Igor' Svyatoslavich*, lines 4-5, 42, 61, 71, 73, 91, 94, 111, 131, 170, 285, 290, 326, 351-352, 378, 383, 455, 521-522, 540-541, 560, 565, 581-582, 733, 738-740, 745-746, 752, 766, 772, 776, 804, 840, 842, 847, 854.
- Ingvar Yaroslavich*, line 571.
- Izyaslav Vasil'kovich*, line 591.
- Izyaslav (I) Yaroslavich*, see *Svyatopolk*.
- Mstislav Rostislavich*, line 572.
- Mstislav Vladimirovich*, line 26.
- Mstislav Yaroslavich*, line 542.
- Oleg Igorevich*, line 428.
- Oleg Svyatoslavich*, lines 172, 233-234, 235, 249, 255, 834.
- Ol'ga Glyebovna*, see *Glyebovna*.
- Roman Mstislavich*, line 542.
- Roman Svyatoslavich*, lines 29-30.
- Rostislav Vsevolodich*, lines 797, 800.
- Ryurik (Rurik) Rostislavich*, lines 511, 685.
- Svyatopolk (II) Izyaslavich*, line 252.
- Svyatoslav Igorevich*, line 428.
- Svyatoslav (III) Vsevolodich*, lines 356, 370, 376, 391, 451, 715.
- Svyatoslav (II) Yaroslavich*, line 834.
- Vladimir Igorevich*, line 856.
- Vladimir (I) Svyatoslavich*, lines 41, 682.
- Vladimir (II) Vsevolodich*, line 242.

- Volodimir Glyebovich*, lines 494, 496.
- Vseslav Bryachislavich*, lines 595, 617, 627, 632, 659.
- Vsevolod Svyatoslavich*, lines 71, 72, 211, 221, 286, 351-352, 455, 855.
- Vsevolod Vasil'kovich*, line 606.
- Vsevolod Yaroslavich*, line 571.
- Vsevolod Yurievich*, line 497.
- Yaroslav Svyatoslavich*, line 834.
- Yaroslav (I) Vladimirovich*, lines 25, 232, 241, 648.
- Yaroslav Volodimirkovich*, lines 523, 617.
- Yaroslav Vsevolodich*, line 470.
- Yaroslavna*, lines 688, 697, 709, 720.



PEDIGREE OF  
RUSSIAN TERRITORIAL PRINCES  
in relation to  
THE SONG OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN









The Song of Igor's Campaign,  
Igor son of Svyatoslav and grandson of Oleg.

*Exordium* Might it not become us, brothers,  
to begin in the diction of yore  
the stern tale  
of the campaign of Igor,  
5 Igor son of Svyatoslav?

Let us, however,  
begin this song  
in keeping with the happenings  
of these times  
10 and not with the contriving of Boyan.



*Exordium*  
(continued) For he, vatic Boyan,  
if he wished to make a laud for one,  
ranged in thought  
[like the nightingale] over the tree;  
15 like the gray wolf  
across land;  
like the smoky eagle  
up to the clouds.

For as he recalled, said he,  
20 the feuds of initial times,  
"He set ten falcons  
upon a flock of swans,  
and the one first overtaken,  
sang a song first"—  
25 to Yaroslav of yore,  
and to brave Mstislav  
who slew Rededya  
before the Kasog troops,  
and to fair Roman  
30 son of Svyatoslav.

*Exordium*  
(concluded) To be sure, brothers,  
Boyan did not [really]  
set ten falcons  
upon a flock of swans:  
35 his own vatic fingers  
he laid on the live strings,  
which then twanged out by themselves  
a paean to princes.

So let us begin, brothers,  
40 this tale—  
from Vladimir of yore  
to nowadays Igor,  
who girded his mind  
with fortitude,  
45 and sharpened his heart  
with manliness;  
[thus] imbued with the spirit of arms,  
he led his brave troops  
against the Kuman land  
50 in the name of the Russian land.



*Boyan apos-  
trophized*

- O Boyan, nightingale  
of the times of old!  
If *you* were to trill [your praise of]  
*these* troops,  
while hopping, nightingale,  
55 over the tree of thought;  
[if you were] flying in mind  
up to the clouds;  
[if] weaving paeans around *these* times,  
[*you* were] roving the Trojan Trail,  
60 across fields onto hills;  
then the song to be sung of Igor,  
that grandson of Oleg [, would be]:
- "No storm has swept falcons across  
wide fields;  
flocks of daws flee toward the Great  
Don";
- 65 or you might intone thus,  
vatic Boyan, grandson of Veles:  
"Steeds neigh beyond the Sula;  
glory rings in Kiev;  
trumpets blare in Novgorod[-Seversk];  
70 banners are raised in Putivl."

*Vsevolod's  
speech*

- Igor waits for his dear brother  
Vsevolod.
- And Wild Bull Vsevolod [arrives and]  
says to him:  
"My one brother, one bright brightness,  
you Igor!  
We both are Svyatoslav's sons.  
75 Saddle, brother, your swift steeds.  
As to mine, they are ready,  
saddled ahead, near Kursk;  
as to my Kurskers, they are famous  
knights—  
swaddled under war-horns,  
80 nursed under helmets,  
fed from the point of the lance;  
to them the trails are familiar,  
to them the ravines are known,  
the bows they have are strung tight,  
85 the quivers, unclosed,  
the sabers, sharpened;  
themselves, like gray wolves,  
they lope in the field,  
seeking for themselves honor,  
90 and for their prince glory."



*The Eclipse  
and Igor's  
speech*

Then Igor glanced up at the bright sun  
and saw that from it with darkness  
his warriors were covered.

And Igor says to his Guards:

95 "Brothers and Guards!  
It is better indeed to be slain  
than to be enslaved;  
so let us mount, brothers,  
upon our swift steeds,  
100 and take a look at the blue Don."

A longing consumed the prince's mind,  
and the omen was screened from him  
by the urge to taste  
of the Great Don:

105 "For I wish," he said,  
"to break a lance  
on the limit of the Kuman field;  
with you, sons of Rus, I wish  
either to lay down my head  
110 or drink a helmetful of the Don."

*Igor sets out;  
accumulation of  
omens*

Then Igor set foot  
in the golden stirrup  
and rode out in the champaign.  
The sun blocks his way with darkness.

115 Night, moaning ominously unto him,  
awakens the birds;  
the whistling of beasts [arises?];  
[stirring?] the daeva calls  
on the top of a tree,  
120 bids hearken the land unknown—  
the Volga,  
and the [Azov] Seaboard,  
and the Sula country,  
and Surozh,  
125 and Korsun,  
and you, idol of Tmutorokan!

Meanwhile by untrodden roads  
the Kumans make for the Great Don;  
[their] wagons scream in the middle of  
night;  
130 one might say—dispersed swans.



*Igor rides on* Igor leads Donward his warriors.  
 His misfortunes already  
 are forefelt by the birds in the  
 oakscrub.  
 The wolves, in the ravines,  
 135 conjure the storm.  
 The erns with their squalling  
 summon the beasts to the bones.  
 The foxes yelp  
 at the vermilion shields.  
 140 O Russian land,  
 you are already behind the culmen!

Long does the night keep darkling.  
 Dawn sheds its light.  
 Mist has covered the fields.  
 145 Stilled is the trilling of nightingales;  
 the jargon of jackdaws has woken.  
 With their vermilion shields  
 the sons of Rus have barred the great  
 prairie,  
 seeking for themselves honor,  
 150 and for their prince glory.

*The first engagement* Early on Friday  
 they trampled the pagan Kuman troops  
 and fanned out like arrows  
 over the field;  
 155 they bore off fair Kuman maidens  
 and, with them, gold,  
 and brocades,  
 and precious samites.  
 By means of caparisons,  
 160 and mantlets,  
 and furred cloaks of leather  
 they started making plankings  
 to plank marshes  
 and miry spots  
 165 with all kinds of Kuman weaves.

A vermilion standard,  
 a white gonfalon,  
 a vermilion penant of [dyed] horsehair  
 and a silver hilt  
 170 [went] to [Igor] son of Svyatoslav.



THE SONG OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

*Night, and  
dawn of  
Saturday* In the field slumbers  
Oleg's brave aerie:  
far has it flown!  
Not born was it to be wronged  
175 either by falcon or hawk,  
or by you, black raven,  
pagan Kuman!  
Gzak runs like a gray wolf;  
Konchak lays out a track for him  
180 to the Great Don.

On the next day very early  
bloody effulgences  
herald the light.  
Black clouds come from the sea:  
185 They want to cover  
the four suns,  
and in them throb blue lightnings.  
There is to be great thunder,  
there is to come rain in [the guise of]  
arrows  
190 from the Great Don.

THE SONG OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

*Saturday:  
the Kumans  
counter-  
attack* Here lances shall break,  
here sabers shall blunt  
against Kuman helmets,  
on the river Kayala by the Great Don.  
195 O Russian land,  
you are already behind the culmen!

Now the winds, Stribog's grandsons,  
in [the guise of] arrows waft from the  
sea  
against the brave troops of Igor!  
200 The earth rumbles,  
the rivers run sludgily,  
dust covers the fields.  
The banners speak:  
"The Kumans are coming  
205 from the Don and from the sea and  
from all sides!"  
The Russian troops retreat.  
The Fiend's children bar the field  
with their war cries;  
the brave sons of Rus bar it  
210 with their vermilion shields.



*Vsevolod in  
battle* Fierce Bull Vsevolod!  
You stand your ground,  
you spurt arrows at warriors,  
you clang on helmets  
215 with swords of steel.  
Wherever the Bull bounds,  
darting light from his golden helmet,  
there lie pagan Kuman heads:  
cleft with tempered sabers  
220 are [their] Avar helmets—  
by you, Fierce Bull Vsevolod!

What wound, brothers,  
can matter to one  
who has forgotten  
225 honors and life,  
and the town of Chernigov—  
golden throne of his fathers—  
and of his dear beloved,  
Gleb's fair daughter,  
230 the wonts and ways!

*Recollections of  
Oleg's feuds* There have been the ages of Troyan;  
gone are the years of Yaroslav;  
there have been the campaigns of Oleg,  
Oleg son of Svyatoslav.  
235 *That* Oleg forged feuds with the sword,  
and sowed the land with arrows.  
He sets foot in the golden stirrup  
in the town of Tmutorokan:  
a similar clinking  
240 had been hearkened  
by the great Yaroslav of long ago;  
and Vladimir son of Vsevolod  
every morn [that he heard it]  
stopped his ears in Chernigov.

245 As to Boris son of Vyacheslav,  
vainglory brought him to judgment  
and on the Kanin [river]  
spread out a green pall,  
for the offense against Oleg,  
250 the brave young prince.



*Recollections of  
Oleg's feuds  
(continued)*

- And from *that* Kayala  
Svyatopolk had his father conveyed  
—cradled between Hungarian pacers  
[tandemwise]—  
to St. Sophia in Kiev.
- 255 Then, under Oleg, child of Malglory,  
sown were and sprouted discords;  
perished the livelihood  
of Dazhbog's grandson  
among princely feuds;  
260 human ages dwindled.  
Then, across the Russian land,  
seldom did plowmen shout [hup-hup  
to their horses]  
but often did ravens croak  
as they divided among themselves the  
cadavers,  
265 while jackdaws announced in their  
own jargon  
that they were about to fly to the feed.  
Thus it was in those combats  
and in those campaigns,  
but such a battle  
270 had never been heard of.

*Termination  
of battle*

- From early morn to eve,  
and from eve to dawn,  
tempered arrows fly,  
sabers resound against helmets,  
steel lances crack.  
275 In the field unknown, midst the  
Kuman land,  
the black sod under hooves  
was sown with bones  
and irrigated with gore.  
280 As grief they came up  
throughout the Russian land.
- What dins unto me,  
what rings unto me?  
Early today, before the effulgences,  
285 Igor turns back his troops:  
he is anxious about his dear brother  
Vsevolod.  
They fought one day;  
they fought another;  
on the third, toward noon,  
290 Igor's banners fell.



THE SONG OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

*Defeat and  
Lamentations*

- Here the brothers parted  
on the bank of the swift Kayala.  
Here was a want of blood-wine;  
here the brave sons of Rus  
295 finished the feast—  
got their in-laws drunk,  
and themselves lay down  
in defense of the Russian land.
- 300 The grass droops with condolences  
and the tree with sorrow  
bends to the ground.  
For now, brothers, a cheerless tide has  
set in;  
now the wild has covered the strong;  
Wrong has risen among the forces  
305 of Dazhbog's grandson;  
in the guise of a maiden  
[Wrong] has stepped into Troyan's  
land;  
she clapped her swan wings  
on the blue sea by the Don,  
310 [and] clapping, decreased rich times.

THE SONG OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

*Lamenta-  
tions  
(continued)*

- The strife of the princes  
against the pagans  
has come to an end,  
for brother says to brother:  
315 "This is mine,  
and that is mine too,"  
and the princes have begun to say  
of what is small:  
"This is big,"  
320 while against their own selves  
they forge discord,  
[and] while from all sides with victories  
the pagans enter the Russian land.
- O, far has the falcon gone, slaying  
birds:  
325 to the sea!  
But Igor's brave troops  
cannot be brought back to life.  
In their wake the Keener has wailed,  
and Lamentation has overrun the  
Russian land,  
330 shaking the embers in the inglehorn.



*Lamenta-  
tions  
(concluded)*

The Russian women  
have started to weep, repeating:  
"Henceforth our dear husbands  
cannot be thought of by [our] thinking,  
335 nor mused about by [our] musing,  
nor beheld with [our] eyes;  
as to gold and silver  
none at all shall we touch!"

And, brothers, Kiev groaned in sorrow,  
340 and so did Chernigov in adversity;  
anguish spread flowing  
over the Russian land;  
abundant woe made its way  
midst the Russian land,  
345 while the princes forged discord  
against their own selves,  
[and] while the pagans, with victories  
prowling over the Russian land,  
took tribute of one vair  
350 from every homestead.

*Victories of  
Svyatoslav  
III recalled*

All because the two brave sons of  
Svyatoslav,  
Igor and Vsevolod,  
stirred up the virulence  
that had been all but curbed  
355 by their senior,  
dread Svyatoslav, the Great [Prince] of  
Kiev,  
[who kept the Kumans] in dread.

He beat down [the Kumans] with his  
mighty troops  
and steel swords;  
360 invaded the Kuman land;  
leveled underfoot  
hills and ravines;  
muddied rivers and lakes;  
drained torrents and marshes;  
365 and the pagan Kobyaka,  
out of the Bight of the Sea,  
from among the great iron Kuman  
troops,  
he plucked like a tornado,  
and Kobyaka dropped in the town of  
Kiev,  
370 in the guard-room of Svyatoslav!



*Igor blamed* Now the Germans,  
 and the Venetians,  
 now the Greeks,  
 and the Moravians  
 375 sing glory  
 to Svyatoslav,  
 but chide  
 Prince Igor,  
 for he let abundance sink  
 380 to the bottom of the Kayala,  
 [and] filled up Kuman rivers  
 with Russian gold.

Now Igor the prince  
 has switched  
 385 from a saddle of gold  
 to a thrall's saddle.  
 Pined away  
 have the ramparts of towns,  
 and merriment  
 390 has drooped.

*Svyatoslav's dream* And Svyatoslav saw a troubled dream  
 in Kiev upon the hills:  
 "This night, from eventide,  
 they dressed me," he said, "with a black  
 pall  
 395 on a bedstead of yew.  
 They ladled out for me  
 blue wine mixed with bane.  
 From the empty quivers  
 of pagan tulks  
 400 they rolled great pearls  
 onto my breast,  
 and caressed me.  
 Already the traves  
 lacked the master-girder  
 405 in my gold-crested tower!

All night, from eventide,  
 demon ravens croaked.  
 On the outskirts of Plesensk  
 there was a logging sleigh,  
 410 and it was carried to the blue sea!"



*The Boyars  
explain their  
sovereign's  
dream*

And the boyars said to the Prince:  
 "Already, Prince, grief has enthralled  
 the mind;  
 for indeed two falcons  
*have* flown off the golden paternal,  
 throne  
 415 in quest of the town of Tmutorokan—  
 or at least to drink a helmetful of the  
 Don.  
 Already the falcons' winglets  
*have* been clipped  
 by the pagans' sabers,  
 420 and the birds themselves  
 entangled in iron meshes."  
  
 Indeed, dark it was  
 on the third day [of battle]:  
 two suns were murked,  
 425 both crimson pillars  
 were extinguished,  
 and with them both young moons,  
 Oleg and Svyatoslav,  
 were veiled with darkness  
 430 and sank in the sea.

*The Boyars'  
speech  
(continued)*

"On the river Kayala  
 darkness has covered the light.  
 Over the Russian land  
 the Kumans have spread,  
 435 like a brood of pards,  
 and great turbulence  
 imparted to the Hin.  
  
 "Already disgrace  
 has come down upon glory.  
 440 Already thralldom  
 has crashed down upon freedom.  
 Already the daeva  
 has swooped down upon the land.  
 And lo! Gothic fair maids  
 445 have burst into song  
 on the shore of the blue sea:  
 chinking Russian gold,  
 they sing demon times;  
 they lilt vengeance for Sharokan;  
 450 and already we, [your] Guards, hanker  
 after mirth."



*Svyatoslav's  
speech*

Then the great Svyatoslav  
let fall a golden word  
mingled with tears,  
and he said:

455 "O my juniors, Igor and Vsevolod!  
Early did you begin  
to worry with swords the Kuman land,  
and seek personal glory;  
but not honorably you triumphed  
460 for not honorably you shed  
pagan blood.

Your brave hearts are forged of hard  
steel  
and proven in turbulence;  
[but] what is this you have done  
465 to my silver hoariness!

"Nor do I see any longer  
the sway of my strong,  
and wealthy,  
and multimilitant  
470 brother Yaroslav—

*Svyatoslav's  
speech  
(continued)*

with his Chernigov boyars,  
with his Moguts, and Tatrans,  
and Shelbirs, and Topchaks,  
and Revugs, and Olbers;  
475 for they without bucklers,  
with knives in the legs of their boots,  
vanquish armies with war cries,  
to the ringing of ancestral glory.

"But you said:  
480 'Let us be heroes on our own,  
let us by ourselves grasp the anterior  
glory  
and by ourselves share the posterior  
one.'

Now is it so wonderful, brothers,  
for an old man to grow young?  
485 When a falcon has moulted,  
he drives birds on high:  
he does not allow any harm  
to befall his nest;  
but here is the trouble:  
490 princes are of no help to me."



*The Author  
apostro-  
phizes con-  
temporane-  
ous princes*  
495

Inside out have the times turned.  
Now in Rim [people] scream  
under Kuman sabers,  
and Volodimir [screams]  
under wounding blows.  
Woe and anguish to you, [Volodimir]  
son of Gleb!

Great prince Vsevolod!  
Do you not think of flying here from  
afar  
to safeguard the paternal golden  
throne?

500 For you can with your oars  
scatter in drops the Volga,  
and with your helmets  
scoop dry the Don.  
If you were here,  
505 a female slave would fetch  
one nogata,  
and a male slave,  
one rezana;  
for you can shoot on land live bolts—  
510 [these are] the bold sons of Gleb!

*Apostrophe  
(continued)*

You turbulent Rurik, and [you] David!  
Were not your men's gilt helmets  
afloat on blood?

Do not your brave knights roar like  
bulls

515 wounded by tempered sabers  
in the field unknown?

Set your feet, my lords,  
in your stirrups of gold  
to avenge the wrong of our time,

520 the Russian land,  
and the wounds of Igor,  
turbulent son of Svyatoslav.

Eight-minded Yaroslav of Galich!  
You sit high on your gold-forged  
throne;

525 you have braced the Hungarian  
mountains

with your iron troops;  
you have barred the [Hungarian] king's  
path;

you have closed the Danube's gates,  
hurling weighty missiles over the clouds,  
530 spreading your courts to the Danube.



*Apostrophe*  
(continued)

Your thunders range  
 over lands;  
 you open Kiev's gates;  
 from the paternal golden throne  
 535 you shoot at sultans  
 beyond the lands.  
 Shoot [your arrows], lord,  
 at Konchak, the pagan slave,  
 to avenge the Russian land,  
 540 and the wounds of Igor,  
 turbulent son of Svyatoslav!

And you, turbulent Roman, and  
 Mstislav!

A brave thought  
 carries your minds to deeds.  
 545 On high you soar to deeds  
 in your turbulence,  
 like the falcon  
 that rides the winds  
 as he strives in turbulence  
 550 to overcome the bird.

*Apostrophe*  
(continued)

For you have iron breastplates  
 under Latin helmets;  
 these have made the earth rumble,  
 and many nations—  
 555 Hins, Lithuanians, Yatvangians,  
 Dermners, and Kumans—  
 have dropped their spears  
 and bowed their heads  
 beneath those steel swords.

560 But already, [O] Prince Igor,  
 the sunlight has dimmed,  
 and, not goodly, the tree sheds its  
 foliage.

Along the Ros and the Sula  
 the towns have been distributed;  
 565 and Igor's brave troops  
 cannot be brought back to life!  
 The Don, Prince, calls you,  
 and summons the princes to victory.  
 The brave princes, descendants of  
 Oleg,  
 570 have hastened to fight.



*Apostrophe  
(continued)*

- Ingvar and Vsevolod,  
 and all three sons of Mstislav,  
 six-winged [hawks?] of no mean brood!  
 Not by victorious sorts  
 575 did you grasp your patrimonies.  
 Where, then, are your golden helmets,  
 and Polish spears, and shields?  
 Bar the gates of the prairie  
 with your sharp arrows  
 580 to avenge the Russian land  
 and the wounds of Igor,  
 turbulent son of Svyatoslav.  
  
 No longer indeed does the Sula flow  
 in silvery streams  
 585 for [the defense of] the town of  
     Pereyaslavl;  
 and the Dvina, too,  
 flows marsh-like  
 for the erstwhile dreaded  
 townsmen of Polotsk  
 590 to the war cries of pagans.

*Izyaslav re-  
called*

- Alone Izyaslav son of Vasilko  
 made his sharp swords ring  
 against Lithuanian helmets—  
 [only] to cut down the glory  
 595 of his grandsire Vseslav,  
 and himself he was cut down  
 by Lithuanian swords  
 under [his] vermilion shields,  
 [and fell] on the gory grass  
 600 [as if?] with a beloved one upon a bed  
  
 And [Boyan] said:  
 "Your Guards, Prince,  
 birds have hooded with their wings  
 and beasts have licked up their blood."  
 605 Neither your brother Bryachislav  
 nor your other one—Vsevolod—was  
     there;  
 thus all alone  
 you let your pearly soul drop  
 out of your brave body  
 610 through your golden gorget.



*Conclusion  
of Apos-  
trophe*

- Despondent  
are the voices;  
drooped  
has merriment;  
615 [only?] blare  
the town trumpets.
- Yaroslav, and all the descendants of  
Vseslav!  
The time has come  
to lower your banners,  
620 to sheathe your dented swords.  
For you have already departed  
from the ancestral glory;  
for with your feuds  
you started to draw the pagans  
625 onto the Russian land,  
onto the livelihood  
of Vseslav.  
Indeed, because of those quarrels  
violence came  
630 from the Kuman land.

*Vseslav's  
fate recalled*

- In the seventh age of Troyan,  
Vseslav cast lots  
for the damsel he wooed.  
By subterfuge,  
635 propping himself upon mounted  
troops,  
he vaulted toward the town of Kiev  
and touched with the staff [of his lance]  
the Kievan golden throne.
- Like a fierce beast  
640 he leapt away from them [the troops?],  
at midnight,  
out of Belgorod,  
having enveloped himself  
in a blue mist.  
645 Then at morn,  
he drove in his battle axes,  
opened the gates of Novgorod,  
shattered the glory of Yaroslav,  
[and] loped like a wolf  
650 to the Nemiga from Dudutki.



THE SONG OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

*Vseslav's  
fate  
(continued)* On the Nemiga the spread sheaves  
are heads,  
the flails that thresh  
are of steel,  
655 lives are laid out on the threshing floor,  
souls are winnowed from bodies.  
Nemiga's gory banks are not sowed  
goodly—  
sown with the bones of Russia's sons.

Vseslav the prince judged men;  
660 as prince, he ruled towns;  
but at night he prowled  
in the guise of a wolf.  
From Kiev, prowling, he reached,  
before the cocks [crew], Tmutorokan.  
665 The path of Great Hors,  
as a wolf, prowling, he crossed.  
For him in Polotsk  
they rang for matins early  
at St. Sophia the bells;  
670 but he heard the ringing in Kiev.

THE SONG OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

*Vseslav's  
fate  
(concluded)* Although, indeed, he had  
a vatic soul in a doughty body,  
he often suffered calamities.  
Of him vatic Boyan  
675 once said, with sense, in the tag:  
"Neither the guileful nor the skillful,  
neither bird [nor bard],  
can escape God's judgment."  
Alas! The Russian land shall moan  
680 recalling her first years  
and first princes!  
Vladimir of yore, he,  
could not be nailed to the Kievan hills.  
Now some of his banners  
685 have gone to Rurik and others to David,  
but their plumes wave in counterturn.

Lances hum on the Dunay.  
The voice of Yaroslav's daughter is  
heard;  
like a cuckoo, [unto the field?]  
unknown,  
690 early she calls.



THE SONG OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

*Euphros-  
yne's incan-  
tation*

- "I will fly, like a cuckoo," she says,  
"down the Dunay.  
I will dip my beaver sleeve  
in the river Kayala.  
695 I will wipe the bleeding wounds  
on the prince's hardy body."  
Yaroslav's daughter early weeps,  
in Putivl on the rampart, repeating:
- "Wind, Great Wind!  
700 Why, lord, blow perversely?  
Why carry those Hinish dartlets  
on your light winglets  
against my husband's warriors?  
Are you not satisfied  
705 to blow on high, up to the clouds,  
rocking the ships upon the blue sea?  
Why, lord, have you dispersed  
my gladness all over the feather grass?"  
Yaroslav's daughter early weeps,  
710 in Putivl on the rampart, repeating:

THE SONG OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

*Incantation  
(continued)*

- "O Dnepr, famed one!  
You have pierced stone hills  
through the Kuman land.  
You have lolled upon you  
715 Svyatoslav's galleys  
as far as Kobyaka's camp.  
Loll up to me, lord, my husband  
that I may not send my tears  
seaward thus early."  
720 Yaroslav's daughter early weeps,  
in Putivl on the rampart, repeating:
- "Bright and thrice-bright Sun!  
To all you are warm and comely;  
Why spread, lord, your scorching rays  
725 on [my] husband's warriors;  
[why] in the waterless field  
parch their bows  
with thirst,  
close their quivers  
730 with anguish?"



- Igor's escape* The sea plashed at midnight;  
waterspouts advance in mists;  
God [?] points out to Igor  
the way from the Kuman land  
735 to the Russian land,  
to the paternal golden throne.
- The evening glow has faded:  
Igor sleeps;  
Igor keeps vigil;  
740 Igor in thought measures the plains  
from the Great Don  
to the Little Donets;  
[bringing] a horse at midnight,  
Ovlur whistled beyond the river:  
745 he bids Igor heed—  
Igor is not to be [held in bondage].  
[Ovlur] called,  
the earth rumbled,  
the grass swished,  
750 the Kuman tents stirred.

- Igor's escape*  
(continued) Meanwhile, like an ermine,  
Igor has sped to the reeds,  
and [settled] upon the water  
like a white duck.  
755 He leaped upon the swift steed,  
and sprang off it,  
[and ran on,] like a demon wolf,  
and sped to the meadowland of the  
Donets,  
and, like a falcon,  
760 flew up to the mists,  
killing geese  
and swans,  
for lunch,  
and for dinner,  
765 and for supper.
- And even as Igor, like a falcon, flew,  
Vlur, like a wolf, sped,  
shaking off by his passage the cold  
dew;  
for both had worn out  
770 their swift steeds.



THE SONG OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

*Igor's escape*  
(continued)

Says the Donets:

"Prince Igor!

Not small is your magnification,  
and Konchak's detestation,  
775 and the Russian land's gladness."

Igor says:

"O Donets!

Not small is *your* magnification:  
you it was who lolled

780 a prince on [your] waves;  
who carpeted for him  
with green grass  
your silver banks;  
who clothed him

785 with warm mists  
under the shelter of the green tree;  
who had him guarded  
by the golden-eye on the water,  
the gulls on the currents,  
790 the [crested] black ducks on the winds.

THE SONG OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

*Igor's escape*  
(continued)

Not like that," says [Igor],

"is the river Stugna:

endowed with a meager stream,  
having fed [therefore]

795 on alien rills and runnels,  
she rent between bushes  
a youth, prince Rostislav,  
imprisoning him.

800 On the Dnepr's dark bank  
Rostislav's mother weeps the youth.  
Pined away have the flowers with  
condolement,  
and the tree has been bent to the  
ground with sorrow."

No chattering magpies are these:  
on Igor's trail

805 Gzak and Konchak come riding.

Then the ravens did not caw,  
the grackles were still,  
the [real] magpies did not chatter;  
only the woodpeckers, in the osiers  
climbing,

810 with taps marked [for Igor] the way to  
the river.



*Igor's escape*  
(continued)

- The nightingales  
with gay songs  
announce the dawn.
- Says Gzak to Konchak:  
815 "Since the falcon to his nest is flying,  
let us shoot dead the falcon's son  
with our gilded arrows."  
Says Konchak to Gza [*sic*]:  
820 "Since the falcon to his nest is flying,  
why, let us entoil the falconet  
by means of a fair maiden."  
And says Gzak to Konchak:  
"If we entoil him  
by means of a fair maiden,  
825 neither the falconet,  
nor the fair maiden,  
shall we have,  
while the birds will start  
to beat us  
830 in the Kuman field."

*Igor's return*

- Said Boyan, song-maker  
of the times of old,  
[of the campaigns] of the kogans  
—Svyatoslav, Yaroslav, Oleg:  
835 "Hard as it is for the head  
to be without shoulders  
bad it is for the body  
to be without head,"  
—for the Russian land  
840 to be without Igor.
- The sun shines in the sky:  
Prince Igor is on Russian soil.  
Maidens sing on the Danube;  
[their?] voices weave  
845 across the sea  
to Kiev.  
Igor rides up the Borichev [*slope*]  
to the Blessed Virgin of the Tower;  
countries rejoice,  
850 cities are merry.



*Conclusion* After singing a song  
to the old princes  
one must then sing to the young:

855 Glory to Igor son of Svyatoslav;  
to Wild Bull Vsevolod;  
to Vladimir son of Igor!  
Hail, princes and knights  
fighting for the Christians  
against the pagan troops!  
860 To the princes glory, and to the knights  
[glory]—Amen.

## Notes to Foreword

1. The Ipatiev Chronicle (*Ipat'evskaya*—from the monastery of that name, where the chronicle, *letopis'*, was preserved) is a record covering four centuries from the beginnings of Russia to the end of the thirteenth century. It has 612 pages and is written, on paper, in a script pertaining to the fourteenth century. The first part contains the Kievan annals recording events of the twelfth century. This *Ipat'evskaya letopis'*, with the account of Igor's campaign under the year 6693 (A.D. 1185), has been published by the Archaeographic Commission in the *Polnoe*



*sobranie Russkikh lyetopisey* (Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles), St. P., 1843 (Second edition, 1908; Third edition, 1923). Another chronicle, the Lavrentiev one (*Letopis' po Lavrentievskomu Spisku*), which contains a much briefer account of Igor's campaign, under the wrong date 6694 (with correct days of the week), can be found in another publication of the same *Arheograficheskaya Kommissiya*, St. P., 1897.

2. The protagonist of The Song is the shadow of an actual contemporary of our bard who, for the rest, has greatly magnified the campaign of 1185. This glorified personage is Igor (1151-1202), at the time (since the death of his elder brother Oleg in 1179) prince of Novgorod-Seversk (a small town east of Chernigov), grandson of Oleg prince of Chernigov and Tmutorokan, and son of Svyatoslav of Chernigov (d. 1164). In 1198, on the death of his first cousin Yaroslav of Chernigov, Igor became prince of that city. His first wife had born him five sons; his second wife was Euphrosyne, the Yaroslavna of The Song, daughter of Yaroslav of Galich. History remembers Igor as an insignificant, shifty and pugnacious prince.

3. Vsevolod, prince of Trubchevsk and Kursk—towns to the north and east of his brother Igor's seat (see Map). He died in 1196 and is remembered by the chronicler as the most valorous and the kindest of the descendants of Oleg Malglory. His wife (the Glebovna of our Song) was presumably Olga daughter of Gleb of Pereyaslavl.

4. Svyatoslav of Rîlsk (1166-1186), son of Oleg

prince of Novgorod-Seversk, Igor's brother.  
5. Vladimir, prince of Putivl (1173-1212), eldest son of Igor.

6. During the period immediately following the death of Yaroslav I, in the second half of the eleventh century, three powerful princes reigned in Kievan Russia: Izyaslav I, son of Yaroslav, and his two brothers, Svyatoslav, at the time prince of Chernigov (later Svyatoslav II), and Vsevolod, at the time prince of Pereyaslavl (later Vsevolod I). It is at this time that the Kumans (whom Russian sources term *Polovtsi* or *Kipchaki*) first invade the steppes between the Dnepr and the Volga. In their numerous forays of which at least fifty considerable ones can be counted between 1061 and 1210, they kept devastating Russian settlements in the southern parts of the Kievan region. It is also then, in the eleventh century, that begin the internecine feuds between the descendants of Yaroslav I. The worst offender was the founder of the house of Chernigov, Oleg Malglory (son of Svyatoslav II), Igor's grandfather, who waged bitter battles against his uncles and cousins (especially Vladimir Monomachus). Up to around 1180 Igor, like other descendants of Oleg Malglory, had pursued the policy of concluding military alliances with the Kumans in order to conduct feuds with the descendants of Rostislav I. The Kumans disappear from the pages of history in the third decade of the thirteenth century when they are engulfed in the invasion of the Mongols (Tatars).

7. Svyatoslav III (d. 1194), son of Vsevolod II



and grandson of Oleg Malglory, thus Igor's first cousin. His dominion was limited to the city of Kiev, the rest of the Kievan region being ruled by Rurik, son of Rostislav I, with whom he had routed the Kumans in 1183, without Igor's participation. Our bard exaggerates Svyatoslav's greatness and might.

8. Igor (who was wounded in the arm) and the three other princes were captured by four different Kuman chieftains, whose names are hopelessly Russianized by the chronicler: Chilbuk took Igor; Roman son of Kza took Vsevolod; Kopti took Vladimir; and Eldechyuk took Svyatoslav.

9. The accents are there merely to indicate the correct stress to the non-Russian reader. They are not shown in Russian. The Russian "u" is always pronounced as in "June," the "i" as in "Pisa" and the "e" (or the "ye") as in "yes." The transliteration "Igorëve" is based on the modern (post-Revolution) Russian spelling. In old Russian another letter, arbitrarily represented by "ye," and pronounced identically with "e," replaced the latter in certain roots and endings. For the sake of exactitude I have kept this "ye" when transcribing the texts and titles in which it was used.

The original title of the work under consideration is: *Slovo o polku Igorevye, Igorya sina Svyatoslavlyya, vnuka Ol'gova* (as given in the First Edition, Moscow, 1800, p. 1). The obvious translation of *slovo* is "word," in the sense of "discourse," "oration," "sermon"; but these terms stress too heavily the didactic character of a work to the exclusion of its poetry.

The term "*slovo*" is looser and more comprehensive than "discourse," etc., but it should be noted that the author himself, within his work, refers to it by means of other terms, such as "tale" (lines 3 and 40) and "song" (line 7). It is indeed a merging of prose and poetry, with apostrophic intonations of oratory mingling with the lyrical strain of melodious lamentations. Its peculiar lilt, with beats matching the breath of cadenced eloquence, is closer to rhythmic prose than to poetry. On the whole, and despite the lack of measure and rhyme, it must be classified, as its first editors did, as a "*chanson*," a gest, a heroic song. It is too dramatic and elaborate to be termed a "lay," and the word "tale" is inadequate to cover the rich variety of its subject, where accounts of battles are interrupted by poetical and political digressions, and where the story is variegated with dialogues, and dreams, and incantations, and many other tricks of style. After a good deal of hesitation I have decided to call it "song," and have been moved in doing so by the final consideration that our author was above all a poet, and that, as in all literary masterpieces, only inspiration and art really matter.

10. This information is supplied by a casual footnote on page VII (penultimate) of Musin's introduction (entitled "The historical contents of the Song") to the First Edition (and is later amplified by Karamzin in his *History of Russia*, 1816, vol. 2, note 333, and vol. 3, notes 272 and 282). Eight titles are listed but they boil down to six works in all: two historical tracts containing the annals of ancient Rus-



sia; The Tale of Opulent India; The Tale of Akir the Wise; The Song of the Campaign of Igor; and the Acts and Life of Digenis Akritas (three titles), in this order.

11. According to a dignified but ridiculously inadequate letter, dated December 31, 1813, which Musin wrote to Kalaydovich in answer to a series of questions set by that scholar.

12. The date of the actual composition of The Song can be established more precisely than that of most European epics of the twelfth century. In a central passage our bard apostrophizes a number of contemporaneous princes among whom we find Volodimir of Pereyaslavl and Yaroslav of Galich. The first is mentioned as severely wounded (494-496), and we know from the chronicle that he died of his wounds on April 18, 1187; the second is mentioned as flourishing (523-538), and we know that he died on October 1, 1187. We also know that Igor's escape from the Kuman camp took place in the spring or early summer of 1186, and that first he visited his principality (Novgorod-Seversk) and that of his uncle (Chernigov) before riding into Kiev (847-848). The end of The Song implies that the author is aware that Igor's son Vladimir of Putivl married, while in captivity, a Kuman princess; according to the chronicle he arrived home around St. Euphrosyne's day, September 25, 1187, with wife and child (this places his marriage in Kuman land not later than the middle of 1186).

It is pretty useless to deduce the life history and

human form of a poet from his work; and the greater the artist the more likely it is for us to arrive at erroneous conclusions. It seems reasonable to suppose that our bard was a *druzhinnik*, a Kievan knight; but for all we know he might have been a learned monk taking a pagan vacation. We may suppose he was a courtier of Svyatoslav III of Kiev but it is just as likely that his home was Pereyaslavl in the Sula region or that he hailed from Kursk. He was evidently a keen sportsman with a fine knowledge of prairie fauna and flora and generally of the country from the Seim to the Azov Sea. It is possible that he took part in Igor's campaign, or in some phase of it.

13. Today, after a century and a half of comment and amendment, The Song has almost regained its (presumable) pristine clarity which generations of transcribers (including Musin's amanuensis) had impaired. Apart from several separate terms, the exact meaning of which is doubtful because probably misspelt by transcribers, there are only a few passages (such as lines 115-119, 406-410, 426-430, 599-601, 635-636, 794-799, 831-834) which are really hopelessly corrupted. A small number of words, usually nonce words, remain obscure, and there is a remote chance that texts in other manuscripts may still come to light that will satisfactorily explain them.

14. After our lines 38, 150, 180, 687, 730, and 830. The apograph is more or less similarly punctuated by Musin's scribe, but is not paragrammed.

15. The Song occupies the left side of forty-six pages with the modern Russian version *en regard*.



There are sixty-two footnotes, a list of four misprints, and a Pedigree of Princes. The editors lean heavily on the standard Russian history of the day, Vasilii Tatishchev's *Istoriya Rossiyskaya s samih drevneyshih vremyon*—especially volume 3, published, after the author's death, by Miller in 1774. Facsimiles of this First Edition can be found in Adrianov-Peretts, 1950, and in Dmitriev, 1952.

16. As proven by Eleonski (in *Slovo o polku Igoreve*, Moscow, 1947, p. 96) the first allusion to "Igoreva Pesn'" (and to Boyan) occurs in Canto Sixteen of the third edition of Mihail Heraskov's epic "Vladimir [I]" as completed by him in November, 1796 and as published in his *Works*, Part 2, Moscow, January, 1797. This wretched poem is in Alexandrine couplets (following the French style). An asterisk prefixed to the lines

O bard of ancient years, boreal *Ossiyán*,

Self-buried in the ruins of centuries, *Bayán* [*sic*]:  
leads to the following footnote (*op. cit.* p. 301):  
"Recently there has been discovered a manuscript entitled *Pyesn'* (song) *o polku Igorevu* composed by an unknown writer, it seems, many centuries before our times [;] therein is mentioned Bayan [*sic*], the Russian songster."

In the same year, 1797, the October issue of *Le Spectateur du Nord*, a French émigré monthly journal published in Hamburg, Germany, carried a note written by its Russian correspondent, the historian Karamzin (in *Lettre au Spectateur sur la littérature russe*, signed N.N.) announcing the event thus: "On a dé-

*terré, il y a deux ans, dans nos archives, le fragment d'un poème, intitulé le Chant des guerriers d'Igor* [a mistranslation of *polk*, taken here in the sense of "host" instead of the true "campaign"]." This would place the discovery in 1795. Following Heraskov's lead, Karamzin in his article compares "the ancient Russian bard" to Ossian and describes The Song in the following ludicrous manner: "*Le poète, traçant le tableau d'un combat sanglant, s'écrie: Ah! Je sens que mon pinceau est foible et languissant; je n'ai pas le talent du grand Bayan* [*sic*], *ce rossignol des temps passés.*" The automatic terms used by Karamzin in describing The Song ("fragment," "style énergique," "héroïsme sublime," "horreurs de la nature") are the stock-in-trade of French writers when speaking of Letourneur's *Ossian*.

Beyond the allusions to him by our bard (and by Sofoniy), nothing is known of this Boyan, a prophetically inclined Kievan minstrel who—judging by the dates pertaining to the princes he sang—must have flourished from 1035 to 1105, a tremendous span for a poet. Our bard deliberately quotes his great predecessor in lines 163 and 210, and perhaps in two other passages (4, 146). Moreover, he cunningly mimics Boyan's manner in order to introduce his own story (51-70).

Boyan is a name of southern Slav origin. A Bulgarian king (Simeon, d. 927) had a son Bayan (Baianus) who had been taught magic. By an amusing coincidence, in 1783, long before Boyan or Bayan had come to light, Vasilii Lyovshin, author of the



famous Russian Tales, while in the process of fabricating pretty feminine names hit upon "Bayana" (derived from *obayanie*, fascination, charm) for one of his princesses.

17. André Mazon, of the Collège de France, has attempted to turn the tables on time and prove that it is The Song that is an imitation of the *Zadonshchina*. His study (*Le Slovo d'Igor*, Paris, 1940, pp. 5-179), while containing many interesting juxtapositions, is fatally vitiated by his total incapacity of artistic appreciation. There is no great sin in calling The Song "*une oeuvre récente en forme de pastiche*" (p. 41) but it is meaningless to contrast it as a work "*factice, incohérente et médiocre*" (p. 173) to the *Zadonshchina* which Mazon describes as "*toujours sincère*" (a phrase used praisefully by people who do not understand art).

The *Zadonshchina* can be found in *Voinskie Povesti Drevney Rusi* (Military Tales of Ancient Rus), a collection edited by Miss Adrianov-Peretts, Leningrad, 1949.

18. I made a first attempt to translate *Slovo o Polku Igoreve* in 1952. My object was purely utilitarian—to provide my students with an English text. In that first version I followed uncritically Roman Jakobson's recension as published in *La Geste du Prince Igor*. Later, however, I grew dissatisfied not only with my own—much too "readable"—translation but also with Jakobson's views. Mimeographed copies of that obsolete version which are still in circulation at Cornell and Harvard should now be destroyed.

## Commentary

### line

<sup>2</sup> In the diction of yore: in an ancient style of speech, in outdated wording, *starimi slovesi*. *Stariy* would mean today merely "old," but is used by our bard in a sense best rendered as "of old" or "of yore" (thus, for instance, in reference to former princes at 25 and 682).

<sup>3</sup> Stern: *trudnih*. In old Russian the word *trud* connotes not only "work" but also "grief," "pain," "endeavor" and the hardships of war.



## line

- 4 Igor: see note 2 to Foreword.
- 8 In keeping with the happenings: *po bilinam*: according to actual events, to facts and not to fiction.
- 10 In the *Zadonshchina*, Boyan is praised as *gorazdīy gudets v Kieveye*, the skillful Kievan bard. While singing or reciting, the *gudets* played (*gudel*) on the *gusli*, a kind of small horizontal harp or cithara, of ten strings (judging by a vignette of 1358 reproduced in *La Geste du Prince Igor*, p. 181). Except for The Song (and the obviously imitative *Zadonshchina*) there is no known work mentioning Boyan. He must have died around 1105 (see also note 16 to Foreword).
- 11 Vatic (from Latin *vates*, a seer, a prophet): *veshchīy*; thus endowed with the power not only of inspiration but of magic.
- 13-14 In thought over the tree: *mīslīyu po drevu*. This has taxed the scholarship and artfulness of numerous commentators. At least two species of squirrel (evolved from *mīs'*, mouse) have been made to perform in the branches of the metaphor. But apart from the fact that the same image in another form occurs at 55, and that a genuine squirrel is properly named *belya* at 349, it seems

## line

- clear that the logical or clerical lacuna here between "thought" and "tree" should be filled with *slaviem* ("in the guise of a nightingale"), thus completing the triple formula (the first member of which is explicitly supplied by 54). Some commentators have treated, here and elsewhere, the tree, *drevo*, synecdochically (in the sense of "timber," "grove," "wood"), but this only blurs the clear-cut quality of the image in relation to "branching thought."
- 17 Smoky: this seems the simplest way of translating *shizīy* (now *sizīy*), smoke-colored, dove-gray, blue-gray, slate-blue, the dimness of dusk, the tint of distance.
- 21-24 The image of the ten falcons pursuing swans is the first of a series of metaphors borrowed from the hunt. The St. Cyril text of the *Zadonshchina* has the silly "his golden fingers on the live strings," while the Synod text turns this into the still sillier "his white hands on the golden strings."
- 25-30 The three princes named here are: Igor's great-great-grandfather, Yaroslav I, the Wise (d. 1054), son of Vladimir I; Yaroslav's brother, Mstislav of Tmutorokan (d. 1036); and Yaroslav's grandson, Roman of Tmutorokan (d. 1079); son of Svyatoslav II and brother of Igor's

## line

grandfather, Oleg Maglory. During a campaign which Mstislav undertook in 1022 against the Kasogs (a Caucasian tribe related to the Circassians), their leader Rededia, when both hosts confronted each other, challenged him to a wrestling match—instead of having their troops wage a bloody battle. In the course of the contest, Mstislav discovered that Rededia was stronger than he and, after a quick prayer to the Virgin, produced a knife, and dispatched the poor giant.

- 41 Presumably Vladimir I, the Saint (d. 1015) who baptized Russia in 988.
- 48 The historical Igor set out for the Donets river-shed from his principedom of Novgorod-Seversk on April 23, 1185. He intended to reach the Don (some 500 miles to the southeast), and even Tmutorokan (another 200 miles south) but actually did not get further than the prairie south of the Donets (some 400 miles southeast of Novgorod-Seversk).
- 49 See note 6 to Foreword.
- 50 In the name: for the defense of, for the sake of, on behalf of, for the Russian land, *za zemlyu rus'kuyu*. The phrase also occurs at 298; but at 539 and 580 the same particle assumes a meaning of "to avenge." Other references to the "Rus-

## line

sian land" occur in 140, 195, 261, 281, 298, 323, 329, 342, 433, 625, 679, 735, 775, 839 and 842. In the last passage, *v Ruskoy zemli*, the translation "on Russian soil" seems the closest (*zemlya* meaning both land and earth, extent and essence).

- 51-70 I follow Sobolevski and other scholars (see Gudziy in the collection *Slovo o polku Igoreve* edited by Adrianov-Peretts, 1950) in assuming that a page was transposed by mistake in the lost manuscript book from which the First Edition and the Archival Apograph took their text. I do this from considerations of artistic structure, not of historical sequence as given in the Ipatiev Chronicle (to which no manipulation neither can nor need make The Song conform). In the First Edition and in the Apograph the line corresponding to my line 50, and concluding, as I think, page 3 of the lost manuscript, is followed by the passage corresponding to my lines 91-110 (solar eclipse and Igor's speech), after which come the lines corresponding to my 51-70 (apostrophe to Boyan), then 71-90 (the wait for Vsevolod and his speech), and 111-130 (Igor's departure and the omens). Surely, the apostrophe to Boyan (51-70) must come immediately after the evocation of his style and the settling of the theme of The Song (31-50); and, on the other hand, Igor's departure (111-113), which



## line

is treated by our bard as synchronous with the eclipse (114-119), cannot be separated from Igor's speech during that eclipse by the apostrophe to Boyan. The section corresponding to my 91-110 seems to have filled exactly one page in the original, and this page might have got accidentally transferred from after page 5 to after page 3.

- 52 Of the times of old: *starago vremeni*. Cf. Macpherson's *Fingal*, Book II (p. 81, vol. I, Laing's edition of *The Poems of Ossian*, Edinburgh, 1805): "To the ages of old, to the days of other years"; and "Carthon," first line (p. 311, vol. I, Laing's edition): "A tale of the times of old! The deeds of days of other years!"

It is from French versions of "Ossian," not from The Song (which at that time he did not know as well as he did later) that young Pushkin borrowed the lines relating to *his* Boyan (borrowed from Heraskov) in "Ruslan and Ludmila" (1820):

*Delá davnó minúvshih dnéy,  
Predán'ya starinú glubókoy . . .*

The deeds of days past long ago,  
traditions of deep ancience. . . .

- 54-55 Hopping, O nightingale, over (i.e., upon and about) the tree of thought ("cogitational tree"),

## line

*skacha slaviyu po mǐslenu drevu*. As if in compensation for the absence, nominally, of the first emblematic animal at 14, now the nightingale is present, but the rest of the trio, the eagle and wolf, are not named.

- 56-57 (See also lines 13 and 17-18.) A similar image (possibly implying a knowledge of The Song), *parya mǐsliyu aki orel po vozduhu*, soaring in thought as the eagle upon the air, is found in the remarkable *Molenie Daniila Zatochnika*, Lament of Daniel the Confined—a native of Pereyaslavl (early thirteenth century). This is a resonant plea of considerable poetical merit voiced by a young man in trouble who after accumulating all sorts of biblical and local metaphors ends with a series of colorful allusions to such exploits as reckless riding in the hippodrome or flying from the church tops by means of silken wings. He is said to have been banished to a remote lake shore in the Olonets region.

- 59 Roving the Troyan trail: *rishcha v tropu Troyanyu*. What is this trail or path which is being reached, or penetrated by a poet racing, wolflike, across country? Its punning correspondence to "*Tropaeum Traiani*," Trojan's Trophy, a monument to the Roman emperor Marcus Ulpius Nerva Trajanus (52-117 of our era) erected at the beginning of the second century in Dobrujia,

## line

cannot be dismissed as a mere coincidence. It may be the obscure echo of a foreign name. "Trajan's roads" are known to have existed in various parts of the Black Sea region. On the other hand, a god called Troyan, attributes and functions unknown, is mentioned in a twelfth century transcript of one of the apocrypha relating to the activities of the Blessed Virgin (*Hozhdenie Bogoroditsi po Mukam*) where he heads a company of condemned idols: "Troyan, Hors, Veles, Perun." (The last is the god of thunder, and the two others are Hors, the sun god, and Veles, the god of shepherds, the Russian Apollo). The Roman emperor and the Russian god seem to have got hopelessly entangled by the time The Song was composed. One can understand line 59 as "following the divine way (of inspiration and magic?)," or endow it with a geographical sense (in connection with line 307). The mysterious Troyan is mentioned four times in The Song, the other three references being: 231, "There have been the ages of Troyan," *Bili vyechi Troyani*; 307, "into Troyan's land," *na zemlyu Troyanyu*; and 631, "In the seventh age of Troyan," *na sed'mom vyetsye Troyani*. At 231 the meaning is, presumably, "heathen times" (Karamzin says that the word in the MS was not *vyechi* but *syechi*, "battles," but we have to follow the *editio princeps*). At 304-310 there is the image of Wrong, the Anti-

## line

virgin, entering southern Russia (a region metaphorically ruled by the legendary amalgam evoked at 59). Finally, at 631, in reference to Vseslav's adventure in the year 1068, the "seventh age" would seem to relate to the centuries elapsed since the fall of Roman rule in the Kievan region.

- 63 A type of construction (negative metaphor) much used in Russian folklore; "it is not a storm that has swept falcons . . .": *Ne burya sokoli zanese . . .*
- 66 Grandson of Veles: *Velesov' vnuche*. "Grandson" in the general sense of descendant, scion, the archaic "nephew," Latin *nepos*, the *neveu* of French pseudoclassicism. A footnote on p. 7 of the *editio princeps* says "Veles, a Slavic God [*sic*] in heathendom, the protector of herds. . . ." Veles, or Volos (perhaps akin to Helios) is mentioned by the chronicles as being the god of cattle. The invocation *Velesov vnuche* bears an odd resemblance to the pseudoclassical *neveu d'Apolon*. The Song mentions four other known pagan gods: Stribog, the god of winds (197); Dazhbog, or Dazhdbog, the god of abundance (258, 305); Hors, (Horus), the god of the rising sun (665); and Troyan (59, 231, 307, 631). Our bard ignores Perun, the Russian Jupiter, whose effigy Vladimir I caused to be drowned in the Dnepr.



*line*

Instead of him, the Christian deity (perhaps, substituted by a scribe for Stribog) amiably directs events in one passage, and one passage only (733).

67 The Sula is the frontier river, or one of the frontier rivers, east of Kiev, beyond which spreads the Kuman-infested steppe (see Map). So great is our bard's preoccupation with the Sula (67, 123, 563, 583) that one can hardly help locating his home in that region—perhaps, in Pereyasavl. Novgorod-Seversk and Putivl mentioned further are the seats of Igor and his son Vladimir.

1-70 Under the pretext of trying to decide what style to adopt, the old, involved, and grandiloquent style of Boyan, or something more in keeping with a contemporaneous subject—the would-be singer of Igor's campaign asks himself how would Boyan have begun, invents examples of Boyan's poetical idiom (63-70), as if to see how they fit recent events, toys with them, rejects them—but in the meantime he has craftily and successfully fashioned of them the beginning of his story. Thus, in his *Pamyatnik* (The Monument), Pushkin in 1836 parodied a poem by his predecessor Derzhavin (1743-1816) on a Horatian theme ("*Exegi monumentum . . .*"), in order to smuggle in his own secret aspirations, his own secret pride, under the cloak of high mummery.

*line*

71 Art and history are at variance in this passage and in the next ones. Our bard has Igor await Vsevolod (who is presumably coming from Trubchevsk which lies 50 miles to the north) at Novgorod-Seversk, the starting point of the general march east; and in order to enhance the dramatic force of the portent, he has further, at 91-116, the solar eclipse (which historically took place on May 1) coincide with Igor's setting out from Novgorod-Seversk (which historically took place on April 23). Vsevolod's speech concerning his forces—already collected ahead near Kursk—is likewise synchronized with an eclipse which is not over when, at 111-114, Igor rides out into the prairie. The Ipatiev Chronicle, on the other hand, implies that after starting on their march from Novgorod-Seversk on Tuesday, April 23, 1185, the brothers separated somewhere on the way (near Putivl or near Rilsk), Vsevolod heading for a point just south of Kursk to place himself at the head of his militia, and Igor proceeding slowly toward the Donets. On May 1, as he was reaching that river, the historical Igor witnessed the eclipse and according to the chronicles made a long speech to his retinue, upon which he at once forded the Donets, reached the Oskol watershed, and for a couple of days waited there for Vsevolod who (still according to the chronicles) was coming by another route, from the Kursk area, about 100

line

miles north. It is curious to note that the Lavrentiev Chronicle (which is not considered reliable in respect of places and dates) has Igor start not from Novgorod-Seversk but from Pereyaslav (where perhaps our Song started), with *two* sons, besides his brother and nephew.

72 The names *Buy Tur*, Wild Bull or Turbulent Aurochs, and *Yar Tur*, Fierce Bull or Ardent Aurochs, as applied to Vsevolod have struck nonbelievers in the authenticity of The Song as Americanisms of the late eighteenth century imported into Russia via France. *Tur* may mean either of the two species of *Bos*, the real *tur*, urus, *Bos primigenus* (from which the domestic ox has been evolved) and the *zubr*, aurochs, *Bison bonasus*. By the twelfth century the primordial bull was extinct but aurochs occurred in southern Russia up to the eighteenth century and symbolized courage and strength. On the other hand, the word *tur* has consistently been applied in the Ukraine to a large gray form of domestic bull.

73 One brother: *odin brat*. As Szeftel notes (in *La Geste du Prince Igor*, p. 103), Igor's eldest brother, Oleg (father of Svyatoslav of Rïl'sk), from whom he had inherited his principedom of Novgorod-Seversk, had been dead for at least five years.

line

83 Ravines: *yarugi*. The comparatively rare word *yaruga*, which in our times is still a regional term for the northern *ovrag* or the southern *balka* (meaning "gully," "hollow," "barranca," and so forth), occurs three times in The Song (83, 134, and 362).

91 As mentioned in the note to lines 51-70, the following section probably represents one misplaced page of the lost original (in the First Edition and in the Apograph this passage comes between the sentences rendered by my lines 50 and 53). The solar eclipse—that blinking eye of Clio—started at 3:25 P.M., Wednesday, May 1, 1185, when the historical Igor was approaching the Donets after a week's march from Novgorod-Seversk. The Ipatiev Chronicle describes the eclipse in terms that bear a singular resemblance to those of The Song, with which the chronicler may have been familiar (to mention only one possibility); but the pious and didactic speech which the historical Igor makes to his warriors lacks the poetical eloquence, aphoristic conciseness, and sportive zest of the corresponding passage (95-100) in The Song; both addresses are marked by a fatalistic strain but the wording is different except for a bizarre coincidence of terms at the start. Here is the relevant passage in the Ipatiev Chronicle: "Igor glanced up at the sky [cf. line 91], and saw the sun standing moon-



## line

like, and said to his boyars and his Guards: 'Do you know what that is?' Whereupon they gazed and saw all, and their heads drooped, and the men said: 'Prince! This omen bodes no good [cf. end of the King's Dream].' And Igor said: 'Brothers and Guards [cf. 95]! None knows the secrets of God,' etc. The Lavrentiev Chronicle supplies the following highly artistic description of the eclipse: "On May 1 [1185] there was an eclipse of the sun, in the afternoon; for more than an hour it was most murky; the stars were visible, as if it were night, and people saw green [*voochiyu zeleno byashe*], and the sun dwindled to what seemed a moon crescent, from whose horns there seemed to issue a glowing ember [or "burning coal," *ugl' goryashch'*]."

- 94-95 The Guard, the Guards: *druzhina*; retinue, bodyguard, a company of knights under the direct leadership of the territorial ruler.
- 100 Blue. The epithet as applied to the river Don here, and to the sea further on, is a mere cliché of folklore eloquence. It is not, or is no longer, a color epithet in the specific visual sense, and thus should not be confused with the livid flash of the blue lightnings at 187, or with the dark amethyst of the blue wine at 397.
- 108 *Rusitsi* or *Rusichi*: here and elsewhere (148, 209) our bard employs this nonce word as an

## line

affectionate form of address (*Rus'* being transformed into a kind of tender patronymic).

- 110 A formula found also in the chronicles: "Formerly Vladimir Monomachus drank from his golden helmet the Don" (Ipatiev Chronicle, 1201).
- 112 The formula is repeated at 237.
- 115-117 The sudden night due to the eclipse causes the nocturnal birds of prey to awake and the bobacs (marmots) and susliks (ground squirrels) to utter warning whistles. This passage is badly disfigured and the meaning is problematic. Line 117 (*svist zvyerin v sta*) and the continuation of the last word commencing the next line (*zbi*) are missing in the Apograph.
- 118-126 The Daeva, or Diva, *Div* is the demon bird of Oriental myths, a cross between an owl and a peacock. It is here an agent of the Kumans and will swoop down from the top of his poplar at 443. Something of the kind occurs in *Ossian*. Lines 9-10 in Macpherson's "First Bard" (in "The Six Bards, a Fragment," see vol. II, pp. 416-417 of Laing's edition) read in their "verse for verse" form:

From the tree at the grave of the dead  
The lonely screech-owl groans.

## line

which in the "measured prose" form become "From the tree at the grave of the dead the long-howling owl is heard." This is rendered by Letourneur (*Ossian, fils de Fingal, barde du III siècle: Poésies Galliques*, Paris, 1777, two volumes) as "*La chouette glapissante crie au haut de l'arbre qui est auprès de la tombe des morts.*"

- 120 The steppes to the south and to the east of the river Sula, where the Kumans roam, are termed "the land unknown" or (276, 516) "field unknown." The Daeva's command "to the land unknown," *zemli neznaemye*, is to take heed, *poslushati*. Cf. in "The War of Inis-thona" (vol. I, Laing's edition, p. 264), "The traveller is sad in a land unknown"; also, in "Cath-loda" (*op. cit.* vol. II, p. 298 and p. 318), "Few are the heroes of Morven, in a land unknown!" and, "He fell pale, in a land unknown." The Russian counterpart "*zemlya neznaema*" frequently occurs in the chronicles (for example, under the year 1093; see Lihachyov, in the Andrianov-Peretts edition, p. 394). Letourneur (1777) who never renders, of course, the intonations, the mournful cut, the pathetic brevity of Macpherson, translates the first "Cath-loda" passage thus: "*Les héros de Morven ne descendirent pas en grand nombre sur cette terre inconnue.*"

- 124-125 Surozh (Sudak) and Korsun (Hersones, Chersonesus, a Greek colony) are Crimean place

## line

names, and from that peninsula, in lines 444-449, Goth maidens will presently echo the Daeva's cry.

- 126 *Tmutorokan'* was in the region of the present Taman, on the Sea of Surozh (now Sea of Azov). This fiercely coveted town had been a Russian principedom in the eleventh century, and its loss to the Kumans rankled badly, especially in the mind of Igor to whose grandfather Oleg it had belonged. The "idol" presumably refers to some huge Greek statue, such as that of Astarte or Artemis, which had been erected there in the third century B.C.
- 127 Untrodden: *negotovami*. With a sense of "unprepared."
- 128 Here and at 178-180, commentators disagree as to the direction in which the Kumans move (*pobygosha* may mean "flee" as well as "run" or "speed")—retiring eastward to the Don from their places of hibernation in the Donets Basin, or on the contrary hurrying westward to the Don from the Volga region in order to repulse the Russians. The former seems to be the better sense, especially in conjunction with the image of the disturbed swans at 130, and with the general theme of cunning enticement and foolhardy pursuit adumbrated throughout the next sections



## line

- up to the ominous passage 203-204 when the Kumans attack the Russians who have advanced too far. There is no need to take into account a sentence in the blundering Lavrentiev Chronicle which has the Kumans proclaim that they will "march against them (the Russians) beyond the Don," i.e., from east to west.
- 130 The allusion is to the mournful, clarinet-like cry of migrating flocks of swans, a characteristic feature of spring nights on the lakes and marshes of southern Russia.
- 131 Downward: *k Donu*. Igor proceeds in a general southeasterly direction, through the brush which grades into grass prairie between the Donets and the Oskol (see Map).
- 133 In the oakscrub, in the chaparral. I accept the reading *po dubiyu*, instead of the *podobiyu* of the text.
- 139 Vermilion shields: *chorleniĭya shchitiĭ*; modern Russian: *chervlyonĭe shchitiĭ*. The Russian shields of the time were ovate in form, manufactured of light wood, rimmed with iron, and painted a bright carmine red by means of *cherlen'*, a color made of *chervets* ("little worm," "*vermiculus*," specifically the scale insect *Coccus polonicus*) which is not as deep as kermes (rich crimson,

## line

- Russian *bagrets*). Vermilion as applied to chemical dyes has lost today the rosy tinge it formerly had.
- 141 Behind the culmen, beyond the culm, or helm (in the sense of hill): *za shelomyanem*. It has been conjectured that in The Song this Shelomya, or Sholomya, is a definite place, namely the Izyum Tumulus in the Donets region; which would abolish the poetry.
- 151 According to the chronicler, the historical Igor met the army of the Kumans Friday morning (May 10) on the west bank of the lost river Syuurliy (apparently a tributary of the Donets south of the Oskol). After shooting from the opposite bank a first hurtle of arrows, the Kumans fled into the prairie. The Russians pursued them and captured the tents they had left behind.
- 162-163 Plankings to plank: *mosti mostiti*, grammatically, "[with] bridges to bridge"; the allusion is to causeways laid across marshy ground.
- 165 Possibly this phrase, which is preceded by an "and" in the text, begins a new sentence, the rest of which is lost. Some editors in order to keep the conjunction transfer "and with all kinds of Kuman weaves" to a position between 161 and 162.

## line

- 172 The reference is to the descendants of Oleg of Tmutorokan (d. 1115), dubbed Malglory (*Gorislavich*), son of Svyatoslav II, brother of Roman of Tmutorokan, grandson of Yaroslav I and grandfather of Svyatoslav III as well as of Igor. See in this respect the uniquely important passage 255-260. The Lavrentiev Chronicle starts its brief account of Igor's campaign with the words: "Oleg's grandsons bethought themselves of setting out against the Kumans to obtain praise for themselves."
- 178 Khan Gzak (Gza, Kza, Koza) seems to have been the father of the Kuman chieftain who was to capture Vladimir, Igor's son (see note 8 to Foreword).
- 179 With his present foe Konchak, and with another khan (Kobyaka, see note to 365-369), the historical Igor had formed some five years before a brief alliance in his feud with the sons of Rostislav I, and together they suffered an ignominious defeat at Dolobsk, in 1180. Igor and Konchak jumped into a boat and barely escaped capture. Although, after this, Igor broke with the Kumans, he was not invited to take part in the campaign which his cousin Svyatoslav III successfully waged against Kobyaka.
- 182 Bloody effulgences: *krovavīya zori*. The turn is clumsy and I would have said (needing a

## line

- plural form) "blood-red auroras," but *zori* is used in Russian for the glow of both rising and setting sun. See also 284, *pred zoryami*, before the (plural) glow (of sunrise).
- 186 The four Russian leaders, Igor of Novgorod-Seversk, his son, Vladimir of Putivl, his brother Vsevolod of Kursk, and their nephew, Svyatoslav of Rīl'sk.
- 187 Blue lightnings. Our bard is far ahead of his first editor's time. The blue throb of an electric discharge is a modern conception. Most people with some amount of color sense today see lightning as a flash of ozone blue. Writers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries rationalized whatever impact lightning had on their sluggish retinas as "yellow" or "red" because logic told them that this was the color of fire. Macpherson has "the red lightning of heaven" in *Fingal*, Book IV (vol. I, Laing's edition, p. 131) and Pushkin has "with the red glitter," *bleskom aīim*, of lightning in a short poem ("The Tempest," 1825). We also find in Macpherson's "Oithona" (vol. I, p. 527) the "red path of lightning on a stormy cloud"; but on the other hand, there is also "thy sword is before thee, a blue fire of night," steel being blue (Macpherson's footnote to *Temora*, Book VI, vol. II, p. 179). It is curious to note that the first com-



line

mentators of The Song could not understand why the lightnings were "blue." Musin and his assistants translate the original phrase *v nih trepeshchut sinii molnii* into routine eighteenth century Russian as *sverkaet v nih molniya*, "lightning flashes in them."

194 Today the bed of the stream cannot be located exactly. The Kayala is supposed to have emptied in the Surozh Sea (Azov Sea) after traversing Kuman country. There I have marked it on the Map. A punning twist is given to its name in later passages.

196 See note to 141.

197 Stribog, the Slavic god of the Wind. The annals for A.D. 980 list the idols "wooden Perun, with a head of silver and a mustache of gold; Dazhbog, and Stribog, and Simar'gla, and Mokosha," Perun is the god of thunder, and Dazhbog (see 258 and 305), the god of fertility. The two others are unknown.

200-202 The cavalry muddies the rivers at fords, makes the earth reverberate and causes clouds of dust to veil the plain.

206 Modern editors prefer to read *ostupisha* (surround) instead of *otstupisha* (retreat, as in the

line

First Edition and in the Apograph), and to connect the preceding words "and from all sides" with the Kumans (as in lines 322-323) who "surround the Russian troops." I see no reason for this manipulation, even though in other manuscripts, such as the chronicles, early transcribers are known to have confused the two words.

207 The children of the devil: *dyeti byesovi*. The Ipatiev Chronicle supplies the name of these Kuman chieftains. They are reeled off by Igor in a curse-spitting speech before the Saturday battle: "Konchak, and Kza, and Toksobich, and Kolobich, and Etebich, and Tetrobich" (the last four are apparently patronymics).

211-230 The Ipatiev Chronicle says that they, the Russians, "fought on foot, and in their midst Vsevolod showed no little valor." Igor was wounded in the left hand or arm, and was on horseback.

214-215, 219-220 *Gremleshi o shelomī mechi haraluzhñimi . . . poskepanī . . . shelomī*, you clang on helmets with sword of steel . . . cleft are helmets. Cf. *Fingal*, Book I (pp. 34-35, Laing's edition of *The Poems of Ossian*, vol. I): "Steel, clanging, sounds on steel. Helmets are cleft on high." *Haraluzhñiy* is supposed to mean "made of steel," "steely." In the *Zadonshchina* it seems

## line

to be used as a synonym of *bulatniy* (the ordinary adjective for weapons of steel) but also as an epithet of river banks which The Song calls "silver." The derivation of *haraluzhniy* has been sought in the Turkish language and in old Russian allusions to Charlemagne, Carolus Magnus, which would turn it into "Frankish steel."

- 217 *Svoim zlatim shelomom posvyechivaya*. The effect of this image on the mind of the reader is curiously similar to that of "Intermitting, darts the light from his shield" in Macpherson's *Temora*, Book V (p. 149, vol. II, of Laing's edition). The phrase is also found in the *Zadonshchina* where it appears as *zlatim shelomom posvyechivashe*, and other variants such as *dospyehom* (armor) instead of *shelomom* (helmet).
- 220 The Avars were a Caucasian tribe. The kind of helmet they made (in Daghestan, East Caucasus) had a sharp apical point and a spatulate neck guard.
- 228-229 Of his dear beloved, Gleb's fair daughter: *svoya miliya hoti krasniya Glyebovni*: The reference is presumably to Olga, daughter of Gleb of Pereyaslavl (d. 1171), son of Yuriy of Suzdal and grandson of Vladimir II (founder of the House of Monomachus).

## line

- 230 *Svichaya i obichaya*. A taglike formula meaning "love and endearments" or "devotion and affection."
- 231-250 The intonation of the first line here resembles the apostrophe to Boyan (51-70), while on the other hand, the invocation of Oleg's feuds prepares the magnificent apostrophizations of the 471-650 section. For Troyan see note to 59.
- 232, 241 The references are to Yaroslav I (see note to 25), his son Svyatoslav II (d. 1076), and his grandson Oleg of Tmutorokan.
- 242-244 Vladimir II (d. 1125), known as Vladimir Monomachus, son of Vsevolod I, grandson of Yaroslav I and first cousin of Oleg of Tmutorokan, Igor's grandfather. He is the author of a remarkable *Pouchenie* (Testament).
- 245-250 Boris (d. 1078), son of Vyacheslav of Smolensk and grandson of Yaroslav I. He was slain fighting his uncles Izyaslav and Vsevolod in the battle of Nezhatina Niva, near Chernigov (where there existed, as a tributary of the Desna, a small Kanin stream, mentioned in relation to another prince by the chronicle of 1152). Boris in his pride had dismissed the prudent advice to surrender given him by his ally Oleg Malglory, Igor's grandfather. The "green pall" seems to be



## line

a metaphorical allusion to the rank weeds of the unharvested plain growing over the bodies of the dead warriors. Some commentators apply the concluding clause (250) to Boris rather than to Oleg.

- 251 A kind of metaphorical pun is intended here. The Kanin river (247) was the site of calamities similar to those connected with the Kayala river, and the latter name, although of non-Russian origin (possibly, as has been suggested, from Kayalī, meaning in Turkish "canyon-like" or "rocky," and identified by some as applicable to the Kalmius, flowing into the Azov Sea) has in Russian the connotation of "lament," "regret," "reproach." See also note to 292.
- 252 Svyatopolk II (d. 1113), son of Izyaslav I (d. 1078), grandson of Yaroslav I, and first cousin of Oleg Malglory. His father was killed in the same battle as Boris (see preceding note). The two amblers, both bestridden, were hitched one behind the other, with the litter between gently lolling to the rhythm of their pace. It is curious that the Kievan chronicle mentions another church, not St. Sophia, as Izyaslav's burying place, but our bard, not the chronicler, is right, as confirmed by a text in the "First Sophian annals," published by Kudryavtsev only recently (1925).

## line

255-260 *Togda pri Olzye Gorislavlichi syeyashetsya i rastyashet' usobitsami; pogibashet' zhizn' Dazhd'-Bozha vnuka, v Knyazhih kramolah vyetsi chelovyekom' skratishas'.* Thus in the First Edition, pp. 16-17. The Apograph has "pogibashet'," "knyashih," and "chelovyekom." This passage has the unique distinction of having been paraphrased in another work—not the *Zadonshchina*. A learned monk writes at the end of the Pskovan *Apostol* of 1307 (these Acts of the Apostles, dated 1307 and 1309-1312 came from the Monastery of St. Panteleymon near Pskov), in reference to the struggle between two princes of the time, Yuriy of Moscow and Mihail of Tver: "*Pri sih knyazeh syeyashetsya i rostyashe usobitsami; ginyashe zhizn' nasha v knyazyeh kotori, i vyetsi skorotishasya chelovyekom*" ("under these princes sown were and grew discords, perished our livelihood in princely quarrels, and human ages [i.e., lives] dwindled"). He substitutes a pronoun for the pagan phrase applied by our bard to the Russian people "grandson of Dazhd[d]bog," in which "grandson" (*vnuk*, Latin *nepos*) is used collectively, and Dazhbog is the ancient god of fertility and abundance.

- 269-270 Our bard greatly exaggerates the scope and significance of this affray.
- 273-275 A similar din of arms is heard in "Berrathon" (p. 566, vol. I, of Laing's edition): "Darts hiss

*line*

through the air. Spears ring on mails. Swords on broken bucklers bound." This is immediately followed in The Song (276) by the very Ossianic "in the field unknown" (see note to 120).

276-281 A sustained tilling metaphor of which other examples are found further.

282-283 *Chto mi shumit', chto mi zvenit'?* The wistful and tuneful intonation of this lyrical phrase cannot be rendered in literal translation. The natural rhyme in this passage of the basically rhymeless Song is the result—a not unusual one in immemorial folk songs—of a coincidence of simple verbal endings. In the history of European rhyme the first words to mate were verbs. Cf. *Igor spit, Igor bdit* at 738-739.

285 The Ipatiev Chronicle for the year 1185 relates that the *kovui* (Turkic mercenaries, a company of which, under one Olstin, had been given to Igor by his cousin Yaroslav of Chernigov) were the first to be put to rout. Igor, who by then was wounded, rode out to them to make them return. In this he failed, and on his way back to his regiment was taken prisoner by a Kuman chieftain (Chilbuk). As he was being tied and borne away, he could see his brother Vsevolod still fighting desperately.

*line*

287-290 A recapitulation; the triple formula—otherwise a stock device of all epics—reflects here the actual sequence of events. The chronicle says the battle, including the first skirmish, lasted all Friday, continued Saturday and ended Sunday.

292 Kudryashov identifies it with the river Makatiha in the region of the Tor salt lakes (where the mercenaries drowned).

296 In-laws: *svatī*. Russian princes often married Kuman girls; these were renowned for their beauty. Our bard is evidently aware at the time of writing that Igor's son is to wed, or has actually wed, in captivity Konchak's daughter. Igor's grandfather, Oleg, had married the daughter of a Khan Asalup, and Igor's stepmother was the granddaughter of a Khan Girgen. There is thus a specific slant to the sustained metaphor of the feast illustrating the battle.

299-301 See also 387-390, 611-614, 801-802.

303 *Uzhe pustini silu prikrila*. The image is that of the prairie grass concealing the dead heroes (see 248).

305 See 258.

306-310 As pointed out by various commentators, the image of a swanlike maiden personifying Bode-



*line*

- ment, Calamity or Injustice, is an ancient component of Russian folklore.
- 330 This bizarre expression of grief is attested by an ancient miniature illustrating funeral rites of 1096, in the Chronicle of Radzivil, first reproduced in 1902 (see *La Geste du Prince Igor*, p. 190).
- 333 Our dear husbands: *svoih milih lad; lada*: darling, spouse, consort of either sex (the word is also used at 703, 717 and 725).
- 345-350 This is a very artistic repetition and development of the theme at 320-323.
- 349 *Belya*, a vair skin; *belaya veveritsa*, white sable, or more probably blue-gray squirrel, dearer of course than ordinary squirrel, one skin of which would not have been much of a tax.
- 351-357 Here our bard expresses his basic political views (further reflected in 455-465 and 479-482) as he pronounces a severe judgment on Igor.
- 356 Svyatoslav III (d. 1194) son of Vsevolod II and grandson of Oleg Malglory, thus Igor's first cousin. His actual dominion was limited to the city of Kiev, the rest of the Kievan region being ruled by Rurik, son of Rostislav I (House of

*line*

- Mstislav), with whom he had routed the Kumans in 1183, without Igor's participation. The remarkable passage devoted to his dream (391-405) is being prepared by our bard.
- 365, 369 Kobyaka, a Kuman khan with whom Igor had been in a brief alliance (see note to 179).
- 366 *Iz luka morya*. The allusion is to the bend of the Azov Sea at the mouth of the Don. In the Lavrentiev Chronicle the Kumans are made to say "*Idyom po nih u luku morya*" (Let us go along the bight of the sea to get them).
- 387-390 *Unisha bo . . . zabrali, a veselie poniche*: mournful are the ramparts, merriment has drooped. Cf. in *The Poems of Ossian*, "The Death of Cuthullin" (p. 369, vol. I, of Laing's edition): "Mournful are Tura's walls. Sorrow dwells at Dunscaï."
- Zabrali* means more exactly the breastwork set up on the ramparts of fortified towns to protect their defenders. It is also there that Euphrosyne mourns in the section 691-730.
- 397 *Sinee vino*: blue wine. The allusion is either to whortleberry wine or dark grape wine. One recalls that the Greeks saw the dark-blue sea as wine-colored (for the interpretation of which there is no need to drag in a reflected sunset as

*line*

some color-blind Homerians do). A very dark red wine does have a purple-blue depth of tone like the southern seas—especially in warm patches near the coast. In fact, I would have said “purple wine” had not the epithet almost turned to blood-red under the influence of Continental, especially French, concepts of *pourpre*. In this connection it is amusing to note that Russians translate the purple of English poets as applied to the sea as *purpurnoe* (or *bagryanae*), which, as in French, is crimson, instead of the correct *lilovo-sinee* or *fioletovoe*. According to a footnote on page 185, vol. I, of Laing's edition of *Ossian* (*Fingal*, Book VI), the Caledonians used a liquor which they called “blue water” (said to be “*Gorm-ui*” in Erse), and this no doubt was a bilberry wine.

398-400 Cp. with the old Oriental and Spanish custom of marking one's glad days with white pebbles and one's sad days with black ones. A dying man might like to have the boxful of his days sorted out to measure how happy he had been. We may imagine a warrior king using a quiver for a box and pearls for his days of triumph. One also thinks of Tamerlane (Tamburlaine, Timur Leng, Mongol emperor of the fourteenth century), who in the dust and terror of fabulous marches had each soldier, on the way to battle, lay down a stone and remove one on the way

*line*

back, so that the mound left by the survivors automatically served as a monument to the fallen.

The tulks are tame heathens, domesticated aliens, used as interpreters.

407 Demon ravens, *bosuvi vrani*. The translation of the adjective is conjectural. I have followed those scholars who distinguish a connection between it and the equally obscure epithets at 448 (demon times, *vremya Busovo*, see note) and at 757 (demon wolf, *bosim volkom*). Cf. also the *dyeti byesovi* at 207. Other commentators have suggested that all three epithets (407, 448, 757) should be simply translated by “dusky” (for which there is an old Russian word *busiy*); but this would be a very artificial color epithet for the raven and the wolf which have their traditional “black” and “gray,” respectively, firmly attached to them by stylistic tradition (see, for example, 176 and 15).

408-410 The passage is very corrupt and it is not clear why the town of Plesensk (see Map) should provide the sleigh (it has also been suggested that the name may stand for Plosk, implying a *ploskaya chast'*, flat part near Kiev). An illustration to a Lives of Saints MS of the fourteenth century, showing four men carrying a boat-shaped logging sleigh with a corpse to be buried,



*line*

seems to explain nicely the image here; and the sea is the burial place of the great.

415-416 This sounds as if the boyars were ironically quoting Igor (see 110), the foolish and flighty prince. Tmutorokan (Greek Tamatarakha)—a rich town and region on the Taman peninsula—had belonged to Russia in the eleventh century and was usually the principedom of Chernigov rulers. Igor, as other princes before him, dreamt of getting it back from the Kumans.

424-430 Cf. *Fingal*, Book V (Laing's edition, vol. I, p. 174): "they sunk behind the hill, like two pillars of the fire of night."

Who are the "both young moons," *molodaya myesyatsa*? The names Oleg and Svyatoslav which follow may either apply to the second and third sons of Igor (both of them mere children), or else "Oleg" may have been a scribe's substitution for Vladimir (Igor's eldest son, 1173-1212), and then "Svyatoslav" should mean the young prince of Rîl'sk (1166-1186), Igor's nephew whose patronymic (Oleg) perhaps influenced the slip. The chronicles do not tell us if Igor had taken his two younger sons with him in the 1185 campaign; but they do tell us that in 1183 Igor summoned his son Oleg, aged nine (or rather the company of knights under Oleg's nominal leader-

*line*

ship), besides Svyatoslav of Rîl'sk and Vsevolod of Kursk, to fight the Kumans who that time evaded battle (see also note to 71). As to 430, this phrase is obviously misplaced in the text, jammed as it is between 435 and 436, where it makes no sense. Historically nobody was drowned except the unfortunate mercenaries who perished in one of the lakes of the Tor, termed in the chronicle a "sea." The two setting suns are certainly Igor and Vsevolod. Their red columniform reflections in the water (a fine metaphor based on exact observation) are either their retinues or (if we accept the meaning of the two moons as Igor's younger sons) they represent the two other leaders, Svyatoslav of Rîl'sk and Vladimir of Putivl.

We are at the mid-point of The Song.

Opinions vary as to whether the passage 422-430 is a continuation of the boyars' speech or, as I think it is, an authorial interpolation after which the courtiers and counselors take over again.

437 Imparted to the Hin: *podast' Hinovi*. The name, a nonce word, probably applies to the entire group of Asiatic tribes as known to the Russians (see further 555 and 701).

442 See note to 118-126.

## line

- 444 A Teutonic tribe in the Crimea, remnants of the East Goths, vanquished by the Huns and sympathetic to the Kumans.
- 448 *Vremya Busovo*. See note to 407. It has also been suggested that the reference is to an ancient king of the Antes, Bos, Bous, or Booz, who was defeated by a king of the Goths in the fourth century.
- 449 Sharokan, spelled also Sharohan or Sharukan, a Kuman chief, Konchak's grandfather who had been defeated by the Russians in a great battle on the Sula river in 1107.
- 450 Guards: *druzhina*. I suppose this is here a synonym for "boyars," though the actual meaning, of course, is retinue, bodyguard, etc.
- 453 In regard to the historical Svyatoslav III and the events of 6693 (=1185 A.D.), as described in the annals, nothing is said about his seeing a prophetic dream at the time; but at one point the Ipatiev Chronicle does briefly coincide with The Song. When in Chernigov (not Kiev) late in May, 1185, Svyatoslav was informed by one Byelovolod of the defeat of Igor, he "wiped his tears and said . . ." The little speech of 46 words which follows (with Svyatoslav both pitying Igor and regretting that by his rashness Igor had de-

## line

- stroyed the results of his, Svyatoslav's, former victory) is not textually paralleled in The Song except for a reference to the Pagans "throwing open the gates to the Russian land," a phrase in the chronicle which resembles 528, 533 and 647 insofar as *vorota* (gates) are mentioned.
- 456-457 Cf. *Fingal*, Book III (vol. I, p. 90, Laing's edition): "Early were thy deeds in arms."
- 470 Yaroslav of Chernigov (d. 1198), son of Vsevolod II and brother of Svyatoslav III. Historically he did supply Igor with a regiment of mercenaries.  
Cf. the intonation of this passage with *Temora*, Book I (p. 19, vol. II, of Laing's edition): "Cathmor, my brother, is not here. He is not here with his thousands."
- 472-474 A list of the tribal names or nicknames of mercenary troops. None has been identified with complete certainty although some suggest obvious determinations to tempt the scholiast.
- 492 Rim or Rimov, a town on the Sula, was sacked by the Kumans on their way back from Pereyaslavl. See next note.
- 494-496 Volodimir or Vladimir of Pereyaslavl, son of Gleb of Ryazan. It would seem that the rumors



*line*

of his death in result of the wounding blows had not yet reached our bard, and this helps us to date The Song rather accurately (see note 12 to Foreword). In the summer or autumn of 1185, after defeating Igor, Konchak, proceeding westward, tried to storm Pereyaslavl but was repelled by its prince, Volodimir. The latter was badly wounded; nonetheless he marched against the Kumans (who by then had taken Rim). He returned to Pereyaslavl very ill, and died there on April 18, 1187. The news of his death should not have taken more than a fortnight to reach our bard, if he was anywhere in the Kiev region.

497 Vsevolod of Vladimir (a town in the Suzdal region), later Vsevolod III (d. 1212), surnamed The Big Nest, son of Yuriy I. In Igor's time this Vsevolod was perhaps the most powerful prince among the descendants of Vladimir Monomachus, his grandfather.

500-501 In 1183 Vsevolod had overcome the Volga Bulgarians (Bolgars) and sunk a number of their vessels.

504-508 The general meaning of this passage is that "if you were here, fighting the Kumans, your prisoners would be so numerous that their price on the crowded slave market would become ridiculously small." One nogata was the twen-

*line*

tieth part of a grivna which consisted of fifty rezas. The average price of a male slave at the time was five grivnas (a hundred nogatas or two hundred and fifty rezas). In terms of hides, a rezana or ryazana was a cut skin worth twenty kopeks, and a nogata was a whole skin, including the feet, worth fifty kopeks.

509 Bolts: *shereshiri*. The meaning of the word is not quite settled. Some form of "Greek fire" may be implied. Curiously, the epithet "live" (*zhivimi*) is lacking in the Apograph.

510 The "brave sons of Gleb" are the four brothers of Volodimir of Pereyaslavl.

511-518 Rurik of Belgorod (d. 1215), a mighty prince, and David of Smolensk (d. 1198), sons of Rostislav I (d. 1168) and grandsons of Mstislav I (d. 1132). A third brother, Mstislav of Smolensk (d. 1180), is mentioned patronymically at 572. Turbulent Igor had feuded with these princes some seven years before The Song was composed. The "floating on blood" presumably alludes to a battle with the Kumans fought by Rurik and David in 1183, on the river Orel, or Horol.

523-539 Yaroslav of Galich, surnamed Osmomisl (of the Eight Thoughts). He was the father of Igor's

*line*

- wife, Euphrosyne. He died on October 1, 1187, a few months after being addressed by our bard.
- 529 The word in the First Edition and in the Apograph is *vremenī*, which all commentators read as *bremenī*, weights; perhaps, heavy stones shot from catapults.
- 535 This is thought to be an allusion to a possible participation of the Galich warriors in the Third Crusade.
- 538 Slave: *kashchey*, in the sense of "villain."
- 542-559 Two princes of the Mstislav House: Roman of Galich, son of Mstislav II, a great warrior and a celebrated prince, killed in a battle with the Poles in 1205; and Mstislav of Peresopnits (d. 1224), son of Yaroslav of Lutsk, whose two other sons are mentioned at 571.
- 551 Breastplates: *paporzi*. This nonce word has been associated by Buslaev with "*persi*," breast, and by Peretts with "*popers'tsi*," breastplate. All this is more likely than the "translation" "*zheleznīe parobtsi*," iron fellows, concocted recently by patriotic scholarship (Orlov, followed by Liachyov).
- 555 Hin: see note to 437; Yatvangians: *yatvyazi*, a Lithuanian tribe; Dermners: *deremela*, probably

*line*

- another Lithuanian tribe, also known as Dermen or Dermne.
- 567-570 This unexpected statement has been variously explained: "The Don (which, you claimed, called you) is still calling you and the other princes. You, the descendants of Oleg Malglory, have been too hasty in waging your war." But all this is guesswork; and there exist some even less convincing glosses.
- 571-583 Ingvar and Vsevolod, two Volhynian princes active in Igor's time, sons of Yaroslav of Lutsk (House of Mstislav) and brothers of Mstislav of Peresopnits mentioned at 542; and the three sons of Mstislav of Smolensk (d. 1180), son of Rostislav I: these, not named in The Song, were: David (not to be confused with his uncle, David of Smolensk), Vladimir, and yet another Mstislav. The epithet "six-winged" remains as obscure as the exploits of these three young warriors.
- 584 The epithet "silvery" applied to "streams" (here, in the archaic sense of "shafts of water") has seemed to some commentators to be the odd foreglimpse of a modern cliché. Cf. "Fragments" (p. 395, vol. II, Laing's edition of *The Poems of Ossian*): "Blood tinged the silvery stream."



## line

591-610 Izyaslav (died in the Battle of Gorodets, 1162), son of Vasilko and great-grandson of Vseslav (House of Polotsk); and his two brothers Bryachislav of Vitebsk, and Vsevolod (or "Volodsha").

595 It is here that for the first time falls the wizard shadow of Prince Vseslav who will be the subject of a special section.

600 The passage is garbled and obscure.

601 The attribution of this quoted phrase to Boyan is a tempting conjecture.

608-610 According to Russian traditional belief, the seat and point of exit of the soul is the hollow of the throat above the chest bone, the triangular dimple called *dushka*. The dress a prince wore under his mantlet was fastened on the chest by a system of loops and had, higher up, a round or square gap at the front of the collar. This opening (which the soul might conveniently use for its exit from the throat) was adorned with gold braid and precious stones forming a broad band called the *oplechie* or, as in our text, *ozherelie* (which I have rendered as gorget). Today the latter word means only necklace. The image of the soul dropping out like a pearl occurs in re-

## line

ligious works as late as the seventeenth century (e.g., Avvakum's "Letters").

617 Possibly, Yaroslav of Galich. For Vseslav here and at 627 see further.

631 See note to 59.

631-678 Vseslav of Polotsk (d. 1101), son of Bryachislav and great-grandson of Vladimir I. This turbulent prince was deemed a magician. Taking advantage of an insurrection that knocked Izyaslav I (House of Yaroslav) off the Kievan throne, Vseslav became its holder for seven months in 1068. The year before he had taken Novgorod (the great city north of Polotsk, see Map) which traditionally belonged to the House of Yaroslav. This was immediately followed by the Battle of the Nemiga (a river in the Minsk region) where the three sons of Yaroslav I routed him. Vseslav was sung by his contemporary Boyan, from whom our bard seems to have borrowed certain details.

643-644 *Obyesisya sinye m'glye*, having enveloped himself in a blue mist. Cf. *Fingal*, Book II (p. 64, vol. I, Laing's edition): "The blue mist . . . hides the sons of Inis-fail," and *Temora*, Book VI (p. 185, vol. II, *op. cit.*): "He clothes, on hills, his wild gestures with mist," and Book VII

## line

(p. 208): "From the skirts of the evening mist, when it is rolled around me."

645-646 *Utr zhe vozzni [voznzi] strikusī*. I follow the conservative commentators who dimly discern in the nonce word *strikusī* a weapon or war engine. Leonard Magnus, in the notes to his English translation (1915, p. 110) suggests reading *utr zhe vyazni v tri kusī* (he tore his bonds into three pieces) which he finds more sensible than *utr zhe vazni s tri kusī* (he cast off his luck in three bites). Jakobson (in *La Geste du Prince Igor*, 1948, p. 196) substitutes "snatched" for "cast off." All this belongs to the category of linguistic parlor games.

648 Yaroslav I, founder of the House to which Vseslav's foes belonged.

650 From Dudutki: *s Dudutok*. This place name has never been exactly identified. Basing himself on unknown documents, Karamzin, 150 years ago, suggested that the reference is to a monastery at Dudutki, near Novgorod. The playful imagination of some commentators has dissected and recombined *s Dudutok* into various odds and ends of specious sense.

651-658 The bloody battle which Vseslav lost on the river Nemiga took place on March 3, 1067 (ac-

## line

cording to the Lavrentiev Chronicle). He was vanquished by the sons of Yaroslav I (Izyaslav, Svyatoslav and Vsevolod) and fled.

664 *Do Kur Tmutorokanya*. The capitalization of the second word (evidently a clerical error) induced the first editors to understand (instead of "cocks") "Kursk"!

665 Hors, the sun god (see note to 66).

666-670 This passage somehow always reminds me of the charming lines in Walter Scott's "The Last Minstrel," 1805, Canto Two, stanza XIII:

In these far climes it was my lot  
To meet the wondrous Michael Scott,  
A wizard of such dreaded fame  
That when in Salamanca's cave  
Him listed his magic wand to wave  
The bells would ring in Notre Dame.

676-677 *Ni hitru, ni gorazdu, ni ptitsyu gorazdu* (neither the guileful, nor the skillful, nor the bird skillful). I follow Magnus (1915, p. 19 and p. 59) in amending the second line to *ni ptitsyu, ni gudtsyu*.

679 Our bard echoes Boyan with a prophecy of his own: Russia, too, cannot escape God's judgment.



## line

682 Presumably, Vladimir I.

685 Rurik and David: See note to 511.

687 Lances hum on the Dunay: *Kopia poyut na Dunai*. I think the intonation here is the same as at 282-283, "What dins unto me, what rings unto me," and is, in a sense, the response to that melodious query.

688 Yaroslavna: this is Igor's second wife (since 1184), Euphrosyne, daughter of Yaroslav of Galich. She employs the name Dunay (specifically, the Danube) as a generic term for any great river (Magnus suggests, p. 69, that perhaps "Yaroslavna in her imagination hears her father Yaroslav of Galicia, preparing his men to relieve Igor"). It will be noticed that Euphrosyne has no tears for her stepson Vladimir, whose mother, Igor's first wife, died in 1183.

699-708 Cf. the apostrophe to the winds in "Dar-thula" (p. 381-3, vol. I, Laing's edition): "Where have ye been, ye southern winds! when the sons of my love were deceived? . . . O that ye had been rustling, in the sails of Nathos [son of Usnoth], . . . It was then Dar-thula [daughter of Colla] beheld thee, from the top of her mossy tower." And also Colma's complaint in "The Song of Selma" (pp. 455-456, *op. cit.*):

## line

"Cease a little while, O wind! stream, be thou silent a while! let my voice be heard around. Let my wanderer hear me! Salgar! it is Colma who calls."

711 *O Dnepre slovutitsyu*. A folklore epithet with a homey intonation difficult to render in English. Some understand "son of Slovuta" son of renown, or identify Slovuta with a tributary in the Dnepr's upper reaches.

712-713 This refers to the rapids (*porogi*) just east of meridian 35°.

731 Here begins the last part of The Song. The forces of nature heed Euphrosyne's plea. One wonders if the "God" at 733 is not a pious transcriber's amendment for "Stribog."

738-739 *Igor spit, Igor bdit*. One moment he sleeps, he keeps vigil the next. The crisp rhyme and concise rhythm cannot be rendered.

741-742 Our bard sees his hero as being further to the east than the historical Igor was at his place of captivity.

When did Igor escape? The Ipatiev Chronicle says that he remained "that year" (1185) in the Kuman camp. The Lavrentiev, on the other hand, says only: "*I po malih dnei uskochi Igor*"

## line

(And not many days later Igor escaped); but at least a year must have passed, and it is spring again, judging by the vernal phenomena depicted further.

- 751 The escape of the historical Igor must have occurred soon after he learned of Konchak's doings in the Pereyaslavl's region in the beginning of 1186 (see note to 494-496). It was rumored that upon Konchak's returning to the prairie all the princes would be put to death, and Igor, who had earlier refused to avail himself of a chance which the other captive princes had not been given, now decided to take it. According to the chronicle, he had a not too arduous time in captivity. He was allowed to go hunting with his hawks. He had a Russian priest brought from the Kievan region. The chronicle also corroborates our bard's account of Igor's escape. He had sent word to LAVOR (Ovlur, Vlur), a friendly Kuman, possibly a kinsman, to cross to the farther bank of the river Tor (a tributary of the Donets, see Map) with a led horse. The guards were drinking fermented mare's milk and making merry. Igor took advantage of this to join LAVOR. The chronicle tells us that God rescued Igor on a Friday. After fording the Tor he rode off but apparently soon dismounted: the chronicle says, "He walked on foot eleven days to the town of Donets." From there

## line

he proceeded to Novgorod-Seversk. After that he traveled to Chernigov for a conference with Yaroslav. Finally he went to Kiev where he was welcomed by Svyatoslav III and the co-ruler Rurik.

- 757 *Bosim volkom*, as a werewolf. The adjective has also been explained as meaning "bare," "bare-footed," "white-footed," with various connotations of survival, might, and magic (see also note to 407).
- 768 *Trusya soboyu studenuyu rosu*. This admirable image refers to the long damp grasses of the prairie in springtime.
- 778 *Ne malo ti velichiya*: Not small is unto thee the fame (the glory, the greatness). Cf. a similar intonation in *Fingal*, Book I (p. 18, vol. I, Laing's edition): "But small is the fame of Connal!"
- 783 The epithet has been explained by some as applying to the chalky coloration of the banks.
- 791-802 Rostislav of Pereyaslavl, son of Vsevolod I, brother of Vladimir Monomachus, and paternal ancestor of Igor's wife, was drowned in the Stugna (a tributary of the Dnepr, a few miles south of Kiev) in 1093, while attempting with



line

his luckier brother to ford it during the retreat, following a disastrous affray with the Kumans.

796 *Rostre na kustu* and 799, *Dnyepr temnye bere-zye*. An obscure and corrupt passage, line 796 has been also understood as "she widened toward the issue" (*k ust'yu*), and 797-798, as "imprisoning him at the bottom near (*dnye pri*) the dark bank." The sudden appearance of yet another river, the great Dnepr, is of course stylistically rather disturbing; but the "*dnye pri*" is a most artificial combination which no poet could endure exactly because of the resemblance to that very "*Dnyepr*" which supposedly fooled the scribe.

814-830 The Ipatiev Chronicle contains a different dialogue conducted by the historical Konchak and Kza. The connection between it and the structural conversation composed by our bard is as evident as it is inexplicable. Here is the chronicler describing the somewhat chaotic plans of the Kuman leaders after their victory over Igor: "Quoth [*molvyashet*] Konchak: 'Let us march on the Kievan side where our brothers and our great prince Bonyak have been beaten.' And Kza quoth: 'Let us march toward the Seim where the women and children have been left [in Putivl]: a collection of captives is ready for us; as to the town we shall take it without risk.'" Konchak attacked Pereyaslavl (see 472-476), and Kza

line

Putivl, but neither managed to take those fortresses. Falling back, Konchak destroyed Rim, and Kza wrought havoc in the Seim region. It should be noted that the historical Kza (as well as the poetical Gza) seems more commonsensical and prudent than the vainglorious Konchak of history and art.

831-832 Song-maker of the times of old: *pyesnotvortsa starago vremeni*. Cf. "The War of Caros" (p. 235, vol. I, Laing's edition): "Bard of the times of old."

833-834 *Svyatoslavlya . . . , Yaroslavlya, Ol'gova, Koganya*. "Kogan" or "kagan" was a title given to Hazar and Avar chieftains and sometimes applied to the Russian princes of the XIth century. The princes sung by Boyan might have been Svyatoslav II and his sons Yaroslav and Oleg (see Pedigree).

831-834 The passage is very muddled in the text. This is the best I can do.

843-846 Artistically these maidens weaving their songs at a distant southwestern point on the Danube (unless this is the same generalized Dunay that Euphrosyne evokes) form a curious counterpart to those other maidens who perform on the shore of the blue sea at 444-449. It is con-

line

jectured that here, at 843-846, the reference is to Russian colonies on the lower reaches of the Danube, but the roundabout way the songs take to attain Kiev remains rather odd.

847 This slope, several times mentioned in the chronicles, is located in Kiev.

848 This church was founded by Mstislav I in 1132, and is one of the very few Christian allusions in the poem.

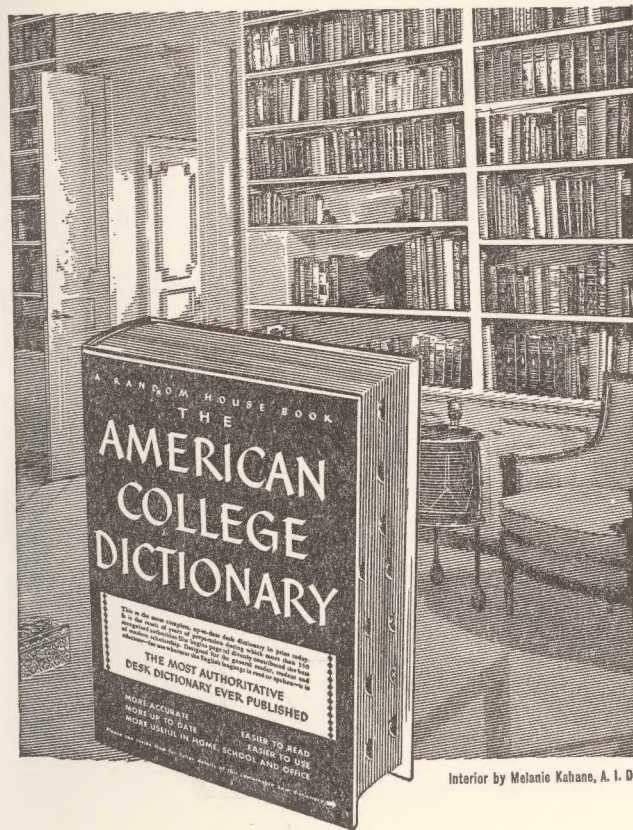
856 According to the Ipatiev Chronicle, Vladimir son of Igor returned to Novgorod-Seversk, with wife and child, in the second part of September, 1187. The Christian rite of marriage was performed *post factum*, and his bride, Konchak's daughter, received (according to Tatishchev in his *History of Russia*) the baptismal name of Svoboda, Liberty. In The Song there is no indication to the effect that our bard completed it *after* Vladimir's return; but his "glory" to Vladimir implies that he knew of the young prince's being alive and married (according to Kuman rites) in the place of his not unpleasant captivity which he must have left sometime in the summer of 1187.

860 *Knyazem slava, a druzhinye Amin'*. As it stands, this ambiguous phrase rather pointedly dismisses the retinue with a curt amen while glorifying the

line

princes. The line should probably read: "Glory to the princes and to the knights," with "Amen" appended by a pious transcriber. Or perhaps, the word *chest'*, honor, has been left out between "knights" and "Amen."





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Александр Мелик-Пашаев  
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