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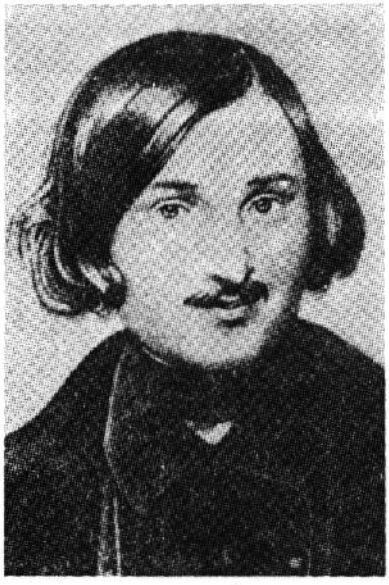

N. V. GOGOL
(Hohol)

T. OŚMACHKA

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GOGOL*) AND OŚMACHKA

I

While the problem of Gogol's influence on Russian literature has been the subject of various critical works, and he has been claimed as the master of the two main literary movements, realism in the middle of the 19th century,[1] and symbolism at the turn of the century, his impact on Ukrainian literature is still open to research. The only book dealing extensively with it — N. E. Krutikova, Hohol' *ta ukraïns'ka literatura,***) Kyïiv, 1959 — in spite of some valuable material gathered in it, lacks scholarly value because of its political tendenciousness. Moreover, its main objective is the literature of the 19th century, while the literature of the 20th century is given only lip service, and the problem of contemporary Ukrainian authors outside of the Soviet Union is completely overlooked. As a matter of fact, Gogol's influence on Ukrainian literature, in some respects, is even stronger than it is on Russian literature, and particularly the importance of his Ukrainian stories, included in his *Evenings on the Farm near Dikańka* and *Mirgorod,* should not be underestimated. In spite of the resentment of Ukrainians, because of the fact that he chose Russian as the language of his work, many Ukrainian authors have claimed him as a Ukrainian writer and have considered him their precursor and master. The same national ground and national traditions that nourished the

*) Gogol's name has two versions: Russian, *Gogol,* adopted in English and other languages, and Ukrainian, *Hohol',* used only in the Ukraine, which, probably, was the closest form to his own pronunciation. In the present article the English adaptation is being used.

**) The transliteration of Ukrainian and Russian names and words is based on the one used by the Library of Congress.

talent of the early Gogol and contributed to the richness of his language, which according to Orlov's and Bulakhovskiĭ's statements are "almost inaccessible for imitation by Russians",[2] created strong links between him and his countrymen. From the time when his first works appeared Gogol attracted the minds of his Ukrainian contemporaries, like Shevchenko and Kostomariv, and many writers of the following generations. The enchantment with Gogol resounded again in the period of symbolism, neoromanticism, and modernism. Stepan Vasylchenko (1878-1932) voiced the opinion for his predecessors and contemporaties when he announced: "The influence of Shevchenko and Gogol was so powerful that it removed any other influence on my writing. The Ukrainian folksongs, Shevchenko and Gogol were the sources that helped me toward my growth as a Ukrainian writer."[3]

Among the admirers and followers of Gogol is also Todoś Ośmachka, the Ukrainian modernist writer, whose first works appeared in the 1920's. Gogol's works were for him, as they were for many of his fellow writers, an integral part of Ukrainian national heritage, and a source of inspiration, equal to Shevchenko and Ukrainian folksongs. In some respects Gogol's influence was even more powerful, since neither Shevchenko nor folksongs are directly reflected in Ośmachka's literary production, whereas Gogol is reflected either in references or quotations or, much more, in certain borrowed literary devices and in the literary stylization in Gogolian manner.

II

> "All my life stopped on impassable roads,
> Like an unfinished painting..."[4]

Whereas Gogol's life has been an object of numerous studies, and his own literary production has been greatly outnumbered by critical works, Ośmachka's life and literary creation will never be presented to posterity in their completeness because of the tragic and inhuman epoch in which

he lived. Even those of us who knew him and shared with him the miseries of exile in the camps for displaced persons in post-war Germany have scant facts about his previous life. In a time when the preserving of bare life was of primary importance, not many people were concerned about a lofty, strangely behaving poet, reluctant to speak openly, even with his carefully selected friends. Presently, seven years after his death, only one biographical essay of real value, based on personal impressions and memoirs about the last period of his life in Germany and North America, exists.[5] Besides this his own works, particularly his novelettes, contain some autobiographical material.

He was born in 1895, in the province of Kiev, the son of a poor peasant-worker, and studied at the University of Kiev. His first book, published in 1922,[6] established him immediately as an outstanding poet. He joined a literary organization, "Lanka", in Kiev and participated in literary activities of that time. In 1930, during the Stalin-Yezhov genocide era, his persecution started. His books were removed from libraries and bookstores, and soon he was arrested, released for a short time and arrested again in 1932. During World War II, he was freed and he went West. In 1949, he came to the United States. He died in New York in 1962.

The lives of Gogol and Osmachka were as different as the historical epochs, political and social conditions, in which they lived. Evidently, there are no analogies between the Russia of Czar Nikolai I of Gogol's time and the pre- and post-revolutionary Ukraine of Osmachka, between the land-owner's home in Poltava region and the poor peasant home near Czerkasy, between Neshyn Lyceum at the beginning of the 19th century, and the University of Kiev in the 1920's, between the Petersburg literary circles of Pushkin's era and the Association of the Ukrainian Writers in Kiev in the 1920's, between Gogol's life abroad and Osmachka's life in Soviet prison. And yet, in spite of all of these differences, similarities in the lives and works of both poets are worth noting.

Both lived in the stifling atmosphere of an empire controlled by police and political terror, an atmosphere which greatly contributed to their confusion and mental disorder. As though in defiance of unfavorable circumstances, both poets were of highly individualistic and eccentric dispositions, and only seldom in accord with the society and world in which they lived. Mirsky's comment on Gogol as "supremely interesting individuality, a psychological phenomenon of exceptional curiosity" (p. 154),[7] might also suitably describe the psychological profile of Ośmachka. Entirely different in their physical appearance (unattractive, frail, short man Gogol and handsome, well-built and perfectly healthy Ośmachka), they were similar in the essence of their mentality, in their perception of life, in the evaluation of their own importance as writers, and their highly subjective litarary production. Moreover, even in some aspects of everyday life they had much in common. They were two eccentric strangers, arousing the smiles of complacent spectators, and solitary wanderers amidst the people. Both of them, the witty and spicy anecdote-teller Gogol, and the humorous and humor-loving Ośmachka tasted the "sweet" bitterness of loneliness and lived lives of true recluses and self-appointed ascetics, avoiding ordinary human amusements and follies. In their own way, both of them were great men, never compromising with any trivialities that contradicted their principles, real or fictional; both were passionate defenders of their own truth, great writers and great tragic figures and martyrs. And finally, in the last period of their lives both of them were consumed with the same mental illness with strikingly similar symptoms.

A description of Gogol's and Ośmachka's mental illness lies beyond the scope of this paper, and here only a symptom that cast a long shadow on their lives and creation will be discussed. It was a persecution mania. For Gogol it started after his greatest play, *The Inspector General,* appeared on the stage of the Petersburg theatre in 1836, and a storm of criticism arose against him. Life in those circumstances seemed unbearable for him. He left Russia for Western

Europe only one month after the first performance of the play. But this move failed. What he fled from followed him persistently. "He fancied a hostile Russia creeping and whispering all around him and trying to destroy him both by blaming and praising his play."[8] He lived in Europe for twelve years, coming to Russia or his native Ukraine for short periods only (Mirsky, 156). At first, impressed by the magnificent beauty of Rome, he adopted the Eternal City as his second home, but only for a few years. Most of his time he spent in a whirl of journeys from one European city to another, in a feverish escape from something, and in a restless search of something, for changing impressions, for inspiration, for more favorable climatic conditions. "O God! How beautiful you are at times, far off, far off journey! How many times I snatched at you, like a dying and sinking one, and you always generously carried me out and saved! And how many wonderful ideas, and poetical dreams were born then, how many marvelous impressions were perceived . . . ",[9] exclaimed Gogol happily, but his delight was always short-lived. In perpetual movement from place to place he tried in vain recapture lost peace, but to the end of his life, peace was never present in his mind. He became a stranger amidst the people in Petersburg where even friendly fellow writers regarded him as a foreigner;[10] and in Moscow, in spite of numerous admirers of his genius, and in his family home in Vasilevka. The whole world seemed to turn to a place of dead souls, especially after his futile attempt to fulfill the expectations of his admirers and critics, and his burning desire to be a reformer of morals by creating positive heroes acting in a world of complacent harmony. Everything seemed to fail and desert him, and worst of all when he was only 33 and after he reached the peak of his creation, his muse started to abandon him. His creative genius practically dried up. His once so powerful imagination became a prey of anguish and evil demons. His burning of the second volume of "*Dead Souls*" and his premature and absurd death were only a logical finale to his ordeals.

Almost one hundred years after Gogol's voluntary and legal escape from Russia abroad, Ośmachka disappeared from the life of ordinary Soviet citizens, and was predetermined by his persecutors to fall into oblivion forever. Arrested by the Soviet secret police and delivered to physical and moral torture, which went far beyond any fictional nightmares that human imagination can create, he owed his survival only to his ability to simulate insanity during all these years in prison. He emerged to freedom after ten years in prison, and to his writing after fourteen years of coerced silence. In his late forties, he started a new life as an incredible specimen of human endurance and vitality. In spite of recurrent symptoms of mental disorder, the aftereffects of Soviet imprisonment, he was able not only to reconstruct some of his previous works, destroyed by Soviet police, but also to write the essential bulk of his literary production.[11] But his mind was never freed from the experiences of his prison life. The persecution mania that haunted him far exceeded any comparison with Gogol's „hostile Russia creeping and whispering all around him." It was the bloody GPU[12] that, in his tormented imagination, followed him step by step all over and wherever he went, that sent its emissaries to spy on him, that poisoned the food he was going to eat... There was no safe place for him any more; even among his friends all of a sudden loomed a wicked face, and occasionally an indifferent word aroused new suspicions in his haunted mind. He gathered his scarce belongings and headed for a safe place. A whirl began in the never-ending search for security, a futile search for intimate and understanding friends, for sympathetic listeners, for tranquillity and home, for inspiration. Friends and even dedicated admirers of his talent were found, but promptly abandoned; the muses were capricious and frightened away in the crowded and noisy barracks of refugee camps. For the confused and lonely soul, tormented by shocking memories of the past, consumed by his unquenched thirst for the creative power and world fame of a Shakespeare and the greatness of a Dante, the only home

and world that really existed for him, was his art. When the United States opened its gates to refugees, Ośmachka arrived on the hospitable shores of the „land of the free" with new hope for poetic fulfillment and fame. But soon the bright hope faded away, replaced by disillusionment and the harsh realities of his new life. With no fluency in English and no skills in any manual work, his lot in the new world was far from enviable. But his faith in his poetic mission never vanished. After several attempts to settle down and to adjust, another swirl of travel started to different places in the United States, Canada, and Europe — again in search for inspiration, for safe and favorable conditions of living, for benign publishers. In a burning desire for international fame, if not for the Nobel prize, he strove to introduce his books to world readers, but only one of his works was translated into French, and an English translation was in preparation only. Frustration, loneliness and ever-increasing persecution mania oppressed inceasingly his mind. His burden went beyond the limits of human endurance. During his travel in Europe, Ośmachka collapsed in the streets of Munich, Germany. As an American citizen he was cared for and transported to the U. S. where death finally silenced his turbulent life.

III

Whereas the only poem by Gogol, *Hanz Küchelgarten,* is a frustrating episode, poetry is the main field of Ośmachka's artistic achievement in which his true originality and the best aspects of his mastery are displayed. However, in his late forties, Ośmachka also tried his hand at literary prose, and his first novelette, *The Best Man,* proved to be a success. In several respects, this book is different from Ośmachka's previous and later works. In spite of the fact that it was written in the most unfavorable circumstances of the turbulent days of one year before the end of World War II, it is idyllic and interwoven with optimistic overtones. Obviously, the poet wanted to take refuge from the atrocities he experienced, and the horrors of the war. He

happily submerged himself in the distant world of his youth, and in the rich wealth of the national heritage of his fatherland as if to regain his strength in this way.

The Best Man is a romantic work par excellence, and as such owes a debt to Gogol, especially to his first two books, *Evenings on the Farm Near Dikanka* and *Mirgorod*, with their famous Ukrainian stories. However, the romanticism of Gogol and of Ośmachka are not of the same nature, in spite of some similar points between them. Romantic aspects in Gogol's presentation are mostly gruesome and full of terror, particularly in *Vii, The Terrible Vengeance* and *The Drowned Girl*. Even the crude humor of *Vii* does not relieve the depressing feeling in this kingdom of cadavers. Its queer hero, Khoma Brut, is only a passive victim of fatalistic forces that destroy him in a vicious circle of inevitability. Also the gloomy world of *The Terrible Vengeance* is overshadowed with the darkness of an inescapable fate leading to total destruction. Such a way of presentation was in accordance with the aesthetic standards of the West European romanticists, like Sterne, Tieck and Hoffmann, and particularly of the "furious school" of French romanticists, upon which Gogol relied frequently.

Ośmachka's romantic world is quite different. Whereas the author of *The Terrible Vengeance* is himself engrossed in the affairs of his creation, Ośmachka, having put romantic weirdness mostly into the sphere of his peasant characters, watches it with a discreet smile, like someone who looks at the toys and long-forgotten books of his childhood. His romanticism is already devoid of first-hand romantic features. It is the stylized neoromantic manner of a writer with the mentality of a modern man who eventually also tries his hand in the ways of modernistic and expressionistic writing. Some other romantic aspects of a melodramatic work of the preceding century, such as a forceful attractive plot, a positive and successful hero,[13] non-existent, however, in Gogol's works, are used by Ośmachka as an effective means of literary stylization, which adds to a harmonic whole of *The Best Man*.

IV

A. Several stories of Gogol were reflected immediately, or distantly in Ośmachka's *Best Man; Vii* and *The Old-World Landowners* in structure and style, *The Terrible Vengeance* and *Dead Souls* — mostly in stylistic expression. They are different works in their plot and content, and only close analysis can reveal genetic links between them and *The Best Man.*

Vii starts with the beginning of the summer vacation in June. The strange adventures of the hero, Khoma Brut, begin on his way from Kievan Seminary during a summer night, in a sheephouse, a place assigned to him for an overnight stay, and where he is about to fall asleep. A female witch, an old and ugly woman, visits him there and forces him to serve her as a "riding horse" for her nightly escapades over the earth. He is overwhelmed with horror and revulsion but he must surrender. During a frenzied ride with the witch on his back, Khoma Brut dashes under the sickle of the young moon, above the earth covered with the transparent haze. In prite of extremely confusing feelings when he is overcome with creeping terror and a "diabolic sweet sensation" and a "kind of piercing oppressive and terrible enjoyment," he is able to find a source of resistance to this state in some words of prayer which come to his mind. As soon as he regains his strength, he takes the witch's place and puts her under his command. By chance, when the rider and his "horse" come closer to the earth, Khoma Brut comes upon a log which he picks up to tame the witch. She gives up and falls down to the earth exhausted. "I can not any more," she whispers, prostrated at his feet. "In front of him lay a beauty with dishevelled magnificent braid, with long arrowlike eyelashes" . . . Shortly after this eventful meeting the witch returns home and dies of injuries inflicted by Khoma Brut. She appears to be a daughter of a wealthy widowed Cossack. Before her death she expresses her last wish to have Khoma recite prayers at her coffin for three consecutive days. During three nights Khoma becomes an object of the most horrifying satanic

powers of the dead witch. On the third night, after a futile stuggle for survival, Khoma is defeated. He collapses and dies.

This rather simple plot of *Viĭ,* saturated with many digressions, seemingly has nothing in common with the attractive and eventful action of *The Best Man,* which if adapted to the stage technique can satisfy the taste of any movie or TV fan. Likewise no common points could be found between the rather vulgar and epicurean Khoma Brut, indulging in plentiful meals and brandy ("gorelka"), and Hordiĭ Lundyk, the hero of *The Best Man,* endowed not only with the autobiographical, but also with the idealistic features of his creator. And yet, after a close look, several resemblances can be revealed.

In June 1912, Hordiĭ Lundyk, who graduated from teachers' college ("seminariĭa") in Cherkasy, arrives in the village Ternivka to stay with his aunt, Horpyna Koretska, for the summer vacation. In the evening of the day of his arrival he goes to the barn to stay there over night. Through the open door he contemplates the cosmic abyss of the starry skies. In the moment when his heart is aching with anguish he hears a female voice sing a song filled with grief that seems to spread through the whole universe. Gripped with unbearable sadness, Hordiĭ leaves the barn to search for the source of this unusual singing. Like a lunatic under the moonlight he crosses the river and on the other bank he notices "a female figure clad in a long white shirt . . . On her back lay a loose magnificent braid . . . " It came to his mind that this apparition was like one in a fairy tale in which witches and drowned maidens are shown with disheveled hair . . . He follows her, struggling with a painful anguish. She approaches the pastor's house, takes a ladder, and after having climbed to the roof, she disappears in the opening of a chimney. Disregarding his fear, Hordiĭ also approaches the house. From behind the house appears a maiden. He touches her small warm hand to find out if she is a living creature, and suddenly he is overwhelmed with a cosmic power: " . . . he felt with all his

elementary human substance this eternal woman's warmth and the bewildering sweet feeling for which lads would jump from the highest belltowers . . . or climb the steepest mountain peaks, if this should be demanded . . . He felt the tremendous power of this emotion that begets the world, having destroyed billions of unknown worlds before. He dragged the strange woman to himself. He pressed her to his fiery young heart and started to kiss her face as if he were intoxicated, looking with his kisses for passionately sweet woman's lips . . . " The woman at first did not defend herself but after a moment she ran toward the door and shouted: "You are mad . . . "[14]

There are several parallels between these two "love" scenes, no matter how different they are. Khoma Brut is forcefully overcome and taken into the strange world of a witch. She succumbs under the power of his superiority. Khoma Brut's log — "kiss" is a turning point in the witch's fate; it causes her transformation from an ugly old woman into an astoundingly beautiful maiden, her natural appearance in everyday normal life. Nevertheless, in spite of this, the final victory is hers and not Khoma's. His violence is revenged by the witch's multiviolence.[15]

In strong contrast to Khoma Brut's encounter with the strange and enigmatic world of womanhood is Ošmachka's version of the man-woman relationship. These are two different presentations which, however, are not devoid of points of similarity. The love affair in *The Best Man* is a powerful, passionate factor, bounded by universal cosmic laws. Hordiĭ Lundyk is also forcefully overcome and taken into a strange world of a "witch" amid the magic beauty of a summer night. He cannot resist the powerful attraction of her sorrowful song and her mysterious appearance and follows her blindly until he unites with her in the first love kiss. Contrary to the Khoma Brut — witch relationship, based on fear, revulsion, and sometimes mixed with "diabolic, sweet sensation" and "piercing enjoyment," the Hordiĭ — Varka relationship is an ordinary love affair between two young healthy people. Khoma's "kiss" leads

to the death of the witch, and subsequently to his own destruction. Hordiĭ's kiss is also fateful in its consequences in his and Varka's life, and in the lives of the other characters. Like Gogol's witch, Varka undergoes a basic change after the first meeting with her partner; from an undecided maiden she changes to a resolute woman, capable of conscious and purposeful action. She is engaged to Charlampiĭ Proń, a rich landowner whom she has never loved. Her wish to have Hordiĭ as the best man for their wedding can be paralleled with Gogol's witch's wish to have Khoma Brut recite prayers at her coffin, and her marriage to the unloved man can correspond to the witch's death and coffin. According to the techniques of romantic aesthetics, death is the solution of the plot action, but Ośmachka's heroes are not destined to die. Because of her love for Hordiĭ, Varka finds strength to escape her symbolic death by breaking the engagement to Kharlampiĭ Proń who, as an adversary of the main hero and an obstacle on the road to his happiness, is doomed to die. Proń's moral death occurs in the home of Varka's father as a result of his offensive behavior when Hordiĭ slaps him in the face and he attempts to shoot Hordiĭ in the presence of Varka and her father. His physical death by Hordiĭ's hand after a few days is only a logical end of this fatal beginning. But before he dies, as an embodiment of evil, he must be an agent of a tragic gruesome episode. When looking for vengeance he comes to Aunt Koretska's home and causes her sudden death by frightening her with his violent conduct. After a futile search for Hordiĭ he invents another way of revenge by hanging Koretska's corpse in order to make Hordiĭ her alleged killer.

There are several significant points, concealed in the death of old Koretska, who in some respects represents Hordiĭ's alter ego. As such, she is the center of the supernatural romantic world, which being rather mildly echoed in Hordiĭ's mentality, plays an important role in her life. Her story and her dream about the demonic Markura Pupań, who in the time of her youth destroyed the lives

of many women in the village by his unrestrained lust, and who to a certain extent might have a distant resemblance to the "koldun" ('wizard') from *The Terrible Vengeance,* belongs to the most colorful episodes of the book. Koretska, instead of Hordiĭ, becomes an object of the inevitable romantic evil powers, usually aimed at the main hero, and through her death she relieves Hordiĭ, her foster son, from the fatal lot. Before she dies, she like Khoma Brut tries in vain to scare away the alleged evil ghosts (Proń and his companion) with the whole ritual of exorcisms and prayers, but like Khoma, she fails in her struggle. And like Khoma, who died on the third day after meeting the witch, she dies on the third day of the appearance of the alleged "witch" (Varka singing her song at night).

The tragic death of old Koretska, and the death of Proń, which simultaneously is the highest achievement of Lundyk's bravery (he kills Proń while carrying out the tasks assigned to him by the underground conspirators), constitute the culminating point in the plot action of the book. After those two events Ośmachka leads his heroes to the victorious solution: Hordiĭ finds Varka in a monastery. She does not yield to the outburst of his passion. He leaves her cell and arrives at the farmstead of the deceased Aunt Koretska. In despair, he wants to commit suicide, but Varka, who had left the monastery in the hope of finding him again, saves him. At Koretska's grave they perform an unusual ceremonial of wedding. As husband and wife, they leave the village, disguised in peasant clothes, with the decision to find new, safer places for their lives and work.

This portion of the book, which is Ośmachka's own creation, is saved from incredible sensationalism by being an organic part of a romantic work. Gogol's influence seems to disappear, at least from the plot involving the main heroes. And yet, Gogol's voice resounds also here, this time, however, in the portrayal of the subsidiary characters, and in the adoption of the devices of another story by Gogol. *Viĭ* disappears from the foreground.

B. *The Old-World Landowners* and *The Best Man.* The ninth and tenth chapters of *The Best Man* devoted to

the description of the deserted pastor's homestead, show close links with this story of Gogol. The main motif in both works is mourning after a social class that disappeared and is already a part of the historic past. In Gogol's story, it is the old-fashioned landowners; in Ośmachka's book, the class of the country pastors who disapeared from the historic scene in the Ukraine after the 1917 revolution.

Gogol expresses his mournful feeling in the introductory lines: "I very much like the modest life of those secluded owners of the remote villages who are called old-fashioned in the Little Russia, and who are like the decrepit picturesque little house, beautiful in their medley of colors, and their perfect contrast to the new smooth building with the walls not yet washed by rain, with a roof not yet covered with green mould, and a porch, which not yet stripped of its plaster, doesn't show its red bricks. Sometimes I like to descend for a minute into the sphere of this unusually solitary life where not a single desire flies over the palisade which encircles a small courtyard, over the wattle of the orchard filled with the apple and plum trees, and over the village huts that enclose it and are shaded with willows, elder and pear trees. The life of those modest landowners is so quiet that for a while you can forget yourself, thinking that passions, desires and the restless brood of the evil spirit, disturbing the world, don't exist at all. From over here I see the little house with a veranda of blackened tree-trunks, in the midst of garden . . . " etc., etc.[16]

After this sentimental introduction Gogol describes with a warm sympathy, mixed with glittering sparks of humor, the bucolic life of an elderly couple, good-natured and hospitable, leading a simple and undisturbed existence, indulging in plentiful eating, and happy in their stagnant self-complacency. Nothing important happens in this small world, where everybody and everything is in perfect harmony with the quiet and lazy life of its owners, Afanasiĭ Ivanovich and Pulkheriĭa Ivanovna. The lazy maids and servants, even the domestic birds and animals, seem to be

well adapted to this general picture of sloth and gluttony. Only a little cat, the pet of Pulkheriïa Ivanovna, is destined to signalize the disaster which started with the death of the landlady. After Pulkheriïa Ivanovna died, Afanasiï Ivanovich, lost in his grief, lets the little estate fall into disorder and finally a complete destruction after his death, when the housekeeper, the prikashchik and the voĭt (village official) take away all belongings of the old-world owners, and their distant relative squanders their estate, until it turns into a thorough ruin.

Ośmachka starts his story about the destruction of the pastor's homestead with different, and yet similar words: "Nobody knows how I liked the tranquillity of the former pastors' homesteads, the tranquillity when the silent entracte was beginning during the day after the bustling farm work, when the churches, towering above the villages, like heaps of white hot sunny fog, lowered down their bells and listened to their last sounds which were snatched from them by the bell-ringers last Sunday and thrown away on the flitting steppe winds that will carry their quieted buzz, like cranes, to the faraway sea shores, where they will alight in the rumble of the waves . . .

Nobody knows how I liked this tranquillity of the former pastors' homesteads when a thought separated from the other thoughts, like the constellation of the Big Dipper separated from the billions of other stars . . . And when a fond image becomes so great that there is no more room for it between the sky and earth . . . But in order to find space in the world, it bends over the circle of the horizon and absorbs in its colors the sun's rays like a young maiden receiving love from a youth, tired of passion and calmed by her."[17]

Those two rather lengthy quotations are introduced here in order to show Ośmachka's ways of adapting Gogolian devices or transforming them to his own artistic ideas. As is evident in the quoted passages, Ośmachka moves in Gogolian footsteps along several points, syntactical, rhythmical, stylistical and structural. From Gogol's in-

troductory sentence, consisting of 51 words, one main clause, two clauses related to the main clause, and one comparison, inserted into the second relative clause, which displays Gogol's fondness of long elaborate, baroque-like sentences, there goes a direct line to Ośmachka's first sentence which is even more elaborate and more complex than its original pattern. It exceeds Gogol's sentence by 21 words and by one dependent clause.[18] The favorite device of Gogolian rhetorical style, so frequent in his lyrical digressions, is used by Ośmachka with predilection and in abundance. However, in spite of those obvious similarities, not of the least importance are some basic differences, particularly as far as ideological aspects are concerned. In Ośmachka's introduction there are already several hints indicating that the main lines of his plot will go in the opposite direction. Gogol's central image in the introduction is static: the old houses, picturesque, but slowly deteriorating, which he uses for a comparison with his heroes, the elderly couple of the old-world landowners who in their stagnancy move slowly toward their final end. On the other hand, Ośmachka's central image is dynamic and charged with the electricity of the forthcoming events. His main idea is so rich in its abundancy that it reaches beyond the horizon to unite with the sun rays, as a maiden unites with a passionate youth. In *The Old-World Landowners* "not a single desire flies over the fence of the courtyard," in Ośmachka's book "the favored idea has no room in the world and must reach beyond the horizon."

After this introduction Ośmachka swiftly moves the action of his plot and characters. The dialog between Varka and her father, included in chapter IX, is the fulfillment of the desire that "reaches beyond the circle of the horizon": Varka decides to leave her home in order to find refuge in a monastery from ill luck resulting from the Kharlampiĭ Proń — Hordiĭ Lundyk affair. The decision of Varka's father to leave his home to join the underground revolutionary movement will also reach far beyond the desires of an average country priest. In a sudden and psycholog-

ically not quite motivated determination (neo-romanticist Ośmachka is not concerned about realistic motivation) father and daughter leave their home. The pastor's homestead is deserted.

Chapter X of *The Best Man* is devoted to a description of what happened on the homestead after its owners abandoned it. It also includes several Gogolian aspects, which in Ośmachka's version are completely rearranged. The "heirs" of the pastor, his two servants and three neighbors who claim their "rights" to the pastor's possessions, each one in a different manner, can to a certain extent be paralleled with the "heirs" of the old-world landowners, the prikashchik, the housekeeper, the voĭt and the distant relative. But while Gogol scarcely mentions the destruction of the estate, and the culprits of this illegal performance are devoid of any individual features, being only mere shadows who are to contribute to the completeness of the ruin of the ill-fated estate, Ośmachka gives an extraordinarily colorful picture which is among the best portions of his book, and is a masterpiece by itself.

Under his pen the pastor's "heirs" are real living people, endowed with individual features, easily perceptible to the reader because of skillfully portrayed naturalistic details, typical of the Ukrainian peasants so well known to Ośmachka, and yet, they are not quite realistic personages because of their symbolic connotations.[19]

To complete this comparative analysis of Ośmachka's work with Gogol's *The Old-World Landowners*, a few words should be devoted to the animal personage which are one of the components of life on the homestead and participate in the lot of their masters. Ośmachka obviously enjoys portraying them, particularly the two dogs, Pirat and Khapko, and also shows some points of similarity with their canine brothers in Gogol's works: "Another dog, white with yellow spots, Khapko, Pirat's companion, was lying at the dog house though he was not tied, with his legs streched out, like a drunken Cossack from a never-written book by Gogol, from whom the gypsies had already stolen his horse and

turned his pockets inside out and taken his sabre from the scabbard and thrust it in a green water-melon in order to laugh at and ridicule the orthodox and brave brotherhood."[20] This picture resembles a passage in *Dead Souls,* containing a description of the canine chorus during the night when Chichikov arrives at Korobochka's estate. The manifold array of the dog voices "crowned a bass, perhaps an old fellow or simply one endowed with a robust dog nature, because he rattled in his throat like a contrabass, when the concert is at the highest point of performance, when the tenors rise on their tiptoes, spurred by a desire to bring out a high note, and everybody who is there strives for the top, throwing back the head, and he is the only one who having put his unshaved chin into the necktie, and having squatted almost to the earth, lets out from over his note, from which all the glasses are trembing and rattling."[21]

The similarity between the two quoted passages lies first of all in the purpose of the poets and in their manner of expression. The intention of both is to describe the intensity, in Ośmachka's case — the intensity of sound sleep, in Gogol's work — the intensity of barking. Not by coincidence, both writers, in order to portray their objects more vividly, have recourse to the world of human phenomena, and by "humanizing" their dogs, and in abundance of expression both slide into a digression, filled with many details that do not have an immediate connection with the object of comparison. The purpose and the result in both cases is a goodhearted humor, relieving tension in the atmosphere of sadness and confusion.

Surprisingly, the dog Khapko has one more predecessor among Gogol's creatures, which appears to be a little grey cat, a pet of Pulkheriïa Ivanovna in *The Old-World Landowners.* Both animals are the victims of confusion resulting from unfortunate circumstances. The grey cat loses her balance and becomes wild in a foreboding of the death of her mistress. Khapko, also agreeble and soft-mannered animal, becomes wild in the unbearable atmosphere of destruction and grief in the abandoned pastor's homestead. He

catches and mercilessly preys on a little cockerel, a pet of the maid Duńka, and responds angrily when Duńka tries to defend the poor victim.

These two scenes, of the bewildered cat and of the bewildered dog, are in accord with the general character of both works, interwoven with lyrical and humorous digressions, which make rather vague boundaries between joy and sorrow, when moods move freely, like lights and shadows during a sunny summer day. A crude scene showing how "Khapko was finishing eating the cockerel, with his breast stained with blood and with many little feathers stuck to it . . . " is immediately followed by a closing lyrical refrain: "O, how I loved you, the pastor's homestead, in the Ukraine . . . You have already disappeared, but my imagination stubbornly keeps you intact in order to bring more grief to the entirely orphaned heart . . . Only from behind your hedges, from hehind your orchards I heard the maiden voices that waked in my childish soul those feelings which I, when already grown up, took into life, like a foolish rich man who went to the market with golden money . . . And who having walked there and not found the goods he wanted to buy, comes back to the dwelling of his solitude with the conviction that he will never find what he desired for his life . . . And all his capital will live with him, unspent, and will add more bitterness to the already bitter existence on earth . . .

Oh, how I loved you, the pastors' homesteads, that have already disappeared from the face of the earth . . ." [22]

The above quoted lyrical refrain has also its origin in Gogol's lyrical meditation: "Even now I can't forget two elderly people from the past century who, alas, don't live any more, but my soul is still overtaken with sorrow, and my feelings flinch strangely when I imagine that some day I shall come to their former, and today deserted dwelling, and that there I shall see a heap of fallen-down huts, a dried-up pond, a ditch, overgrown with grass in that place where a low little house once stood — and where nothing else remained. I feel sad in anticipation of it!" [23]

In comparison with these Gogolian lines, Ośmachka's refrain is, like the previously quoted introductions, more elaborate, more poetic and refined, and here too, as in the introduction, the points of similarity appear in syntax, in rhythm, and in the generally sentimental mood.

V

Another area where Ośmachka walks in Gogol's footsteps is the grotesque parody which constitutes the very essence in Gogol's literary production. The origin of Gogolian satiric aspects is usually traced back to Ukrainian traditions, especially to the folk and puppet theatre, and the Ukrainian literature of the first quarter of the 19th century. From these sources Gogol derived a harsh and crude version of Ukrainian humor, known in literature as seminarian ("bursatskyĭ") humor, and introduced to Ukrainian literature by Ivan Kotlĭarevskyĭ. The main characteristics of the Kotlĭarevskyĭ-style, "kotlĭarevshchina," adopted by Gogol, lie in the peasant-like language, and in the way of portraying peasants as naive and primitive people.[24] Gogol's "kotlĭarevshchina" characteristic of his first stories, developed in his later work into a unique world of the grotesque parody that is the true domain in which his greatness is shown.

The "kotliarevshchina" style of Gogol was clearly echoed in Ośmachka's works, in spite of his talent's being basically not satirical. Ośmachka never produced any satirical fork as such; however, in many instances he displayed a keen sense of humor, especially in the episodes of his own invention. The best sample of his humor is shown in chapter X of *The Best Man*. It is saturated with goodhearted humorous aspects alternating with a crude naturalistic parody in Gogolian fashion. The objects of Ośmachka's satiric treatment here are the subsidiary characters: Duńka, the maid; the old coachman ("did" 'grandpa') Harbuz; the woman neighbor, Hapka Kazelynkova; and Oliĭan, the village small merchant, and his wife Oliĭanykha. Ośmachka is at his best when, divorced from outside influences, he creates images

of his own invention. Such a successful creation among the comic personages of this chapter is old man Harbuz, in spite of the small space assigned to him. He is occasionally shown here and there in the book, but because of his name[25] he conquers the reader's attention by suggesting anticipation of amusing moments. The action given to him is not of great importance, and actually he is not comic; nevertheless he induces a farm smile with the serenity and self-assurance that radiate from his modest figure: "... barefoot, with the rolled-up white linen trousers tied with a green belt around his waist..." He is tranquil and natural as any element of the landscape he belongs to, together with a calf and cows, and the dog he takes care of.

Harbuz's companions in this chapter are portrayed in a different manner. They are already product of "kotlïarevshchina" — "gogolevshchina" style. They are presented in thick lines, as primitive, crude and naive people, with awkward gestures and a language replete with cumbersome, sometimes, vulgar words. Such is Duńka, the maid, and Hapka Kazalynkova and her little boy, and Oliïan with his wife Oliïanykha. In their appearance and in the way they act they have their prototypes in Gogol's works. Nevertheless, all these characters, in spite of the lines of caricature, are in harmonious accord with the manner of the book, and especially with this chapter which under satiric grotesqueness contains deep symbolic significance.[26]

More puzzling to the reader might be the peasant characters in Ośmachka's two following books, *Plan do dvoru* and *Red Assassins*. Both deal with communist genocide in Ukraine during the bloody period of collectivisation in the 1930's, when the peasants were its immediate victims, as was also Ośmachka himself. Several scenes of communist terror to which the peasants were exposed are presented in those books. Naturally, the idyllic tone and carefree humor of *The Best Man* fade away. What remains, however, from Ośmachka's previous methods, is the bold lines of "kotlïarevshchina" style in the portrayal of peasant characters. As a result, almost all peasants here apear to be unattractive in

their physical apearance, primitive and clumsy in the way they act and speak. Such are Lukĭan Koshelyk, "Aunt"[27] Lepestyna and her old father from *Plan do dvoru,* Hapusia and her father Shelestian from *Red Assassins.* Even the basically positive type, old Ovsiĭ Brus from *Red Assassins,* portrayed after the author's father, is also not devoid of some crude features. Such are the peasants in collective scenes in both novelettes. Even some satiric episodes, introduced in an obvious attempt to relieve the dreary atmosphere of confusion and sadness, are cumbersome, and their humor is coarse, as, for example, in the peasants' conversation before the meeting in *Plan do dvoru* (pp. 42-49) and in another peasants' conversation preceding old Brus's funeral in *Red Assassins* (pp. 159-168).

The aspects of caricature, adapted in those two books seem not to have a definite purpose; the peasant characters endowed with these features are neither real people, because of their one-sided and only negative portrayal, nor symbols, like satiric heroes in Gogol's works, or subsidiary personages in chapter X of *The Best Man.* They are in contrast to the heroes in the plot, or to any non-peasant personages, or even to the most negative communist characters in Ośmachka's books, who are not caricatured and use a regular, sometimes even bookish language, and act in the manner of ordinary people.

What has led Ośmachka's pen to adopt the above described manner of parody in his two last novelettes? One of his remarks, that "peasants are not capable of thinking, and when they start to think they begin to suffer,"[28] would not adequately answer this question. Perhaps some resentment, disgust, or ineptitude to invent his own and more proper devices, or some other inner impulses, unknown to the reader, were involved in this problem.

Several other aspects of Gogol's grotesqueness attracted Ośmachka's attention. One of them is the way of selecting names for characters. In this area Gogol displayed an array of spectacular names puzzling the reader with an accumulation of unusual sounds, endowed with satirical semantic,

and frequently, with downright absurdity.[29] He selected his extraordinary nomenclature carefully and with a definite purpose. His primary aim was to produce humorous effects, but after broadening his scope, he elevated comic elements above the level of sheer fun and used them as a means of creating the atmosphere of absurdity. He gave those funny-sounding and trivial names to all types of his personages, the heroes, the subsidiary characters, and most frequently, to the peripheral characters who never appear in the plot. Manipulating with those never appearing, "ghost" characters, rattling with the triviality of their names, Gogol achieved true originality in inventing new ways of expression in the area of parody and grotesqueness.

Adhering to the means of the grotesque style of Gogol, Ośmachka also adopts the device of giving unusual names to personages, although without attaining the same full richness and diversity. As in adopting the other Gogolian patterns, he also here takes those aspects that fit his own purposes. As the heroes of his novelettes are not satiric, he endows with trivial and grotesque names only the subsidiary, mostly peasant characters, or personages reflecting some inferious features in one or another way: Harbuz, Marta Posmitiukha, Hapka Kazelynkova (*The Best Man*); Shelestian, Kopytko, Klunok, Koshelyk, Dula, M a g u l a Hataĭashka, Lepestyna (*Plan do bvoru*); Partsiunia, Kazko, Motuzka, Mades (*Red Assassins*).

Ośmachka's peripheral characters and their names, in the way he uses them, look like pure Gogolian clichés, echoing to some extent the names of Sobakevich's dead serfs in *Deal Souls*. They appear in old Koretska's story (*The Best Man*) about the women, seduced and drowned, and the men killed by the satanic M a r k u r a Pupań: Shurubeĭlivna, Kundelka, Siromanchykha, Mokienchykha; Slyńko Potap, Kandziuba Kuźma, Platin P y r k h a v k a, Yavtukh Yadukha, Samiilo Zapara, Varlam, Yakiv Katsalepa, Mosiĭ Morhavka, Okhrim Verlo; (pp. 21-23). Unusual also are the names of the other people never-appearing in the book: Hnatko Shcheńiuk (a drunk peasant in Proń's

story), Pelhusiĭ Perepichka (a priest and school principal in Lundyk's story), Kovbasivna (a woman in about-quoted Duńka's story), Markhela (a priest in a story about Varka's childhood).

A list from *Plan do dvoru* complements the above quotednames: Polikarp Skakun, Khivria K u n d o s i v n a, (a deceased woman), Kalyna Sherepa (her foster daughter), Larivon Hatipur, Trokhym Skolotian, Lovhyn Kahamlyk, Lavryk Chichitka, Lykholaĭ, Mykola Repiakh, Vuzlyk, Tykhon Kudkudakalo, Kryvyĭ Matiubura, Arseń Horobchyk, Kirpen; from *Red Assassins*: Verbokrut, Perederiĭ, Demian Klishch, Salyvon . . .

The colorful system of Ukrainian names was the main source of Gogol's and Ośmachka's "nomenclatorian orgies;"[30] for Gogol it was his native region of Poltava, for Ośmachka, the region of Kiev. By enriching the selection of peculiar names with names of his own invention, Gogol contributed considerably to the achieving of humorous effects. Ośmachka, evidently, was also aiming at the same effects; however, his names in their context rather puzzle than amuse and thus contribute to the oddity and confusion of the situations.

VI

The true value and originality of *The Best Man* lies in its symbolism because it endows the book with an extra dimension. Some of Ośmachka's symbols in this novelette originate in Gogol's *The Terrible Vengeance,* but they are rearranged and adjusted to the author's own ideas and patterns, as was the case with the other aspects. The central idea of *The Terrible Vengeance,* fratricide and national apostasy, is reflected in the subsidiary images of *The Best Man,* while Ośmachka's major characters symbolize the burning problems which tormented his and his generation's consciousness. These problems were the wasted and lost historical opportunities for the national and political renaissaince of the Ukraine, and what was the cause of its downfall. A direct line from the hero of *The Terrible Vengeance,* the "koldun," 'wizard') goes to Markura Pupań, an out-

side-of-the plot character, appearing only in old Koretska's story about the events that occurred a generation earlier, and who, like "koldun", is an embodiment of evil, a source of calamities, and 'Antichrist' (antisichrist in Ośmachka's dialect)[31] and a traitor to the people. The colorful story told about him contains features resembling Gogol's dark, mysterious romanticism. With the death of old Koretska in whose consciousness the fantastic world of Markura Pupań was alive, romantic aspects and symbolic images of Gogol disappear from *The Best Man.* Divorcing himself from Gogolian patterns, he creates a plot of his own invention and symbols related to the problems of historic period in which he lived.

Koretska's death has a special significance in the structure and the symbolic content of the book. It is like a dividing line between the two worlds of the old and the young generation. Her death symbolizes the recession of the old-world colorful Ukraine with her good-natured people, her folk traditions and ancient poetic legends that were brought to an end by World War I, two years after the plot of this book started. Even the fact that her death was caused by Kharlampiĭ Proń, and her dream about Markura, echoing the dream of Katarina about "koldun" from *The Terrible Vengeance,* that she has the night before she dies, convey a special symbolic meaning. Those two men, the outsiders to the people, Markura, in the service of a wealthy renegade landowner as an overseer, and Proń, a renegade landowner, who are not accidentally connected with Koretska's death, represent the evil forces which contributed to the destruction of the national culture and hindered the political renaissance of the Ukraine.[32] And not accidentally those two men are shown as contributors to the destruction of the family life and the home of the pastor Diïakovskyĭ, Markura by seducing and drowning the pastor's wife, Proń by clashing with Hordiĭ and making him appear to be the killer of Koretska, since the pastor Diïakovskyĭ symbolizes a leader of national rebirth, and his home — the center of this cause. At first a successful priest and a happy

family man, Diĭakovskyĭ deteriorates morally after his wife's tragic death. He is no longer capable of any action but sipping vodka. He fails in his attempts to catch Markura, the killer of his wife. Overcome by despair and apathy, he is not even able to read the Bible. He opens it and falls asleep on its first page. He fails again, when cheated by the police inspector, as he attempts to defend himself by throwing the Bible at his cheater. The police inspector jumps aside and the Bible hits the wall and falls down unopened. Diĭakovskyĭ seems to recuperate only after years when his daughter Varka comes back home, and after the plans of Varka's marriage are canceled, leaves his place to become an underground revolutionary leader.

The image of Diĭakovskyĭ and the events around him contain several symbolic hints. He represents the Ukrainian national and political leaders of any historical period with their weaknesses resented by Ośmachka, especially their lack of proper leadership and ability to withstand historical adversities.[33] Idealistic and committed to his cause, Diĭakovskyĭ has no strength to defend himself against the enemies who defeat him by violence (Markura Pupań), or fraud (police inspector). In Diĭakovskyĭ's addiction to drinking might be included an allegorical allusion to Bohdan Khmelnyskyĭ, derived from Taras Shevchenko, who in his poems called Khmelnyskyĭ "drunk Bohdan" in reproach for his treaty with Moscow in Pereĭaslav, 1654. Also the episode showing Diĭakovskyĭ's inaptitude to read and use the Bible as a source of spiritual strenghth, has a symbolic meaning. The Bible might represent the spiritual heritage of the nation, its traditions and ideals. Like any weak leader, when defeated, Diĭakovskyĭ is not able to benefit from spiritual sources of regeneration. His attempt to use the Bible as a weapon against the cheater might contain an allusion to Bohdan Khmelnyskyĭ's counterattack against Moscow after he became aware of his historic error, but the rights of the treaty of Pereĭaslav, which Khmelnyskyĭ wanted to defend, were annihilated by violence and fraud, and that is why the Bible remained unopened when used

against the cheating police inspector. In Diïakovskyï's becoming an underground leader might be included a hint about some Ukrainian leaders who after defeat in 1917-1920 left their country and went abroad to continue their struggle in underground organizations.

The events on Diïakovskyï's deserted homestead, portrayed in chapter X, also include symbolic connotations, which are shown in the way the "heirs" to the pastor's goods claim what was left by him. The old coachman, Harbuz, and Duńka, the maid, take only that which was given to them by the pastor: Harbuz takes the cows, and Duńka only a bundle filled with worthless objects, among which a big pestle and a clay pot occupy the central part. She locks the door of the pastor's house and takes the key in the hope that the things inside will be saved for the pastor's successors. As her load is too heavy, she leaves the Bible, taken from the pastor's home, on an outside bench and puts on it a pair of old boots. The boots and a thick book catch the greedy eye of Hapka Kazelynkova, and only a fiery intervention of the tranquil man Harbuz saves the Bible from the profane hands. Harbuz smells the book, crosses himself, and takes it to a safer place in his home. Duńka still has a modest wish to take a little crested cockerel, but unforeseen obstacles stand in her way. Before she catches the bird, she has to defend the pastor's house against unexpected invaders, Oliïan and Oliïanykha. Oliïan, a limping village merchant, banged on the locked door with a block on which Harbuz used to chop wood. He gives up only under the force of Duńka's violent intervention. But a real danger comes from another invader, Hapka Kazelynkova, who has caught Duńka's beloved cockerel. Duńka "jumped on her like a mad cat and grabbed away the unwary bird . . ." [34] Left alone she succumbs to the mournful meditations about the sad lot of the deserted pastor's house. The little cockerel, startled by her moans, leaps from her lap and finds a tragic end in the teeth of the dog Khapko.

This rather detailed outline brings up points with clear symbolic hints. Using the allegoric form[35] of humor-

ous grotesque parody, Ośmachka found an artistic outlet for the problems he and his generation resented.[36] He obviously had in mind some social group that, in one way or another, were "heirs" to the "goods" left in the Ukraine after lost wars for national liberation, 1917-1920, or in any other historical period. In his portrayal, they were primitive, ignorant and not mature enough to meet historic challenges (symbolized by Duńka's taking a bundle with odd objects and leaving the Bible together with a pair of old boots; and by Harbuz's smelling the Bible because of his inability to read it). Nevertheless, they were not devoid of positive qualities. With their previous work they contributed to the welfare of the country and wanted to preserve for posterity some aspects of the national heritage which has not been yet destroyed (Harbuz and Duńka working on pastor's homestead and defending his abandoned goods against the aggressors). But even dedicated and active fighters were exposed to the danger of losing their cause, if preoccupied with unrealistic idealism, and were unaware of a ruthless attacker who robbed their colorful ideas and capitalized on them for his own purpose (Duńka with her little cockerel, and the dog).

The "illegal heirs", the greedy neighbors, who unscrupulously tried to benefit from the deserted home, were in abundance during the Revolution, or at any time of national disaster, and Ośmachka knew such national "outsiders" who profited materially from the ruin of the nation, and who, like Hapka Kazelynkova tried to take everything, or, who like limping Oliian, brutally attacked the door of the deserted home with the "Tartars' " weapon.[37]

The pessimistic symbolism of the grotesque subsidiary characters is, however, relieved in the image of the heroes of the book, Hordiĭ and Varka. The most presious treasure of the pastor's home, a young virgin, Diĭakovskyĭ's daughter Varka, is saved for a worthy partner and heir, Hordiĭ Lundyk, and united with him in love. These images inspiring hope for life and a better future are emphasized in the

closing passage, where the young couple is heading "for a great journey, leaving behind them the places of their greatest sorrow and of their greatest emotional fulfillment." The sun, piercing victoriously a big cloud over their heads, serves as another symbol of hope.

VII

As is indicated in the preceding chapters, Gogol's influence on Ośmachka is reflected above all in the novelette *The Best Man,* in which he adopts some Gogolian devices in structure and style. In structural devices, he either rearranges Gogolian hints or ideas to his own version, or works them out to complete scenes of action. His affinity to Gogol is shown primarily in ornate, lyrical, or rhetorical passages, in long baroque-like sentences, glittering with unusual metaphors and poetic words, put into rhythmical movements. His fondness of elaborate style is also shown in the manner he gives the titles to the chapters in the novelette *Plan do dvoru;* here complete sentences, instead of one-word-title, seem to be rather unusual for a contemporary writer writing on contemporary subject. Much more frequently Ośmachka's meditations and descriptions of nature are strongly redolent of Gogol's stylistic expressiveness, in which he favors Gogolian grandeur of multi-color and multi-sound images enhanced by hyperbolic, elaborate comparisons.

Hyperbolism, so essential in Gogol's works, under Ośmachka's pen adds to the dynamic qualities of his literary style, and to the broadening of his sometimes eccentric, or even surrealistic images, particularly in his poetry. Besides some ornate passages, already quoted in chapter IV, a colorful episode from *The Best Man* about a song of grief sung by the "witch" Varka during a moonlight summer night, also shows Ośmachka's enchantment with Gogol's stylistic exuberance. Varka's song, striking in vain the immense arch of indifferent starry skies, is compared to an eagle in captivity: "Thus does an eagle, thrown

into a cage, at first hit with his chest, his head and paws against the rusty bars, but stained by blood and exhausted, fall down motionless in the expectation that his heart, striving for freedom, will throw him again into a deadly uneven struggle against the cold iron of captivity . . . ." (*Starshyĭ boĭaryn,* 9). The above quoted comparison resembles Gogol's description of the stormy Dniepr waves beating the rocky bank and receding with a humbling roar to which the despair of a Cossack mother is compared: "Thus does Cossack's old mother groan when she sees off her son who is leaving for the army. Unhampered and courageous, he rides on his black horse, with his hands akimbo and his hat tilted on one side; and she, weeping bitterly, runs after him, catches his stirrups, catches the horse-bit, and wrings her hands and bursts into hot tears . . ." (*Terrible Vengeance,* 329). The similarity between those two comparisons is obvious. In both of them the additional image to which the main idea is compared is an image in itself by its concreteness. This procedure is typical of the fashion in which Gogol sometimes develops his comparisons into lengthily elaborated digressions.

The Gogolian manner of accumulating many details,[38] diverting attention from the main line of narrative, is also frequently evident in Ośmachka's books. He, like Gogol, has a keen eye for small, insignificant, sometimes prosaic or even ugly details and objects, and although he does not use them to the extent of matching Gogol's "grandeur in portraying the trivial" (velichie v izobrazenii melocheĭ — Belyĭ, 23), he introduces them extensively in all his works. But, whereas in *The Best Man* those concrete details are in harmony with the poetic aura of this book, in Ośmachka's other novelettes, and in his poems likewise, from which the other Gogolian devices almost disappear, they puzzle rather than please. Like already discussed peripheral characters (Chapter V), they have a special purpose. The attention given to characters not appearing in the plot, and to unimportant, superfluous details, is used by Ośmachka, in the Gogolian manner, for blurring the clarity of structural

lines and destroying the conventional images of symmetry.

Also the way of portraying people in which mostly external, physical features are described has some points of similarity between the two writers. This physiological rather than psychological approach, as it was called by his critics, is shown in Gogol's way of creating the characters of grotesqueness and parody. Ośmachka's physiological manner is shown in the way he portrays female characters, mostly very young maidens, and in the way he describes primarily physical aspects of love.

As a whole, Ośmachka's literary style in almost all his works is, like that of Gogol, a blend of symbolism and naturalism and juxtaposition of contrasting elements: poetic-prosaic, beautiful-ugly, tragic-comic. The technique of both writers, and principally that of Gogol, with its sharp contrasts, distortions and asymmetry, its preoccupation with fragments, the use of empty spots (peripheral characters) in the search for one more dimension, resembles modern art revolting against stilted aesthetic forms and aiming at reflecting the atmosphere of the absurd. For Gogol, it is a denial of the outworn sentimental pseudoclassical trends in Russian literature, for Ośmachka — denial of ethnographic realism with its sentimental manner of portraying peasants in Ukrainian literature.

Several factors contributed to Ośmachka's adherence to certain aspects dominant in Gogol's style. He admired the genius of Gogol, considering him a truly Ukrainian writer. Then too, the roots of both writers originated in the same ground of national traditions which were in one way or another reflected in their literary production and in their way of thinking. Not of least importance may be the psychological texture of both writers that predisposed them to a similar perception and evaluation of the phenomena of life. Highly individualistic, both were in constant conflict with the reality of life which they saw through projection of their own subjective truth. As a result the whole world loomed as a gigantic injustice, distorted and deprived of harmonic unity.

However, in spite of many similarities between Ośmachka's literary expression and that of Gogol, there are also basic differences. The true originality of Ośmachka is shown in his poetry, but even in his literary prose, in which he, in search of an adequate literary manner, purposefully or unconsciously follows in Gogol's footsteps, he is original in his own way. Mirsky's words, referring to Gogol's adaptation of some motifs and manners from his precursors and contemporaries, may be used to a certain extent in evaluating Ośmachka's borrowings from Gogol: "Many of the elements of Gogol's art may be traced back to these sources. And they are not merely borrowings and reminiscences of motives; most of them have a profound effect on his very manner and technique. Yet they are only constituent details in a whole of more than expectable originality."

The differences appear, first of all, in the plots of Ośmachka's works, and in his heroes. The framework of his narrative is usually based upon a distinct plot, which is the essential part of the whole structure, whereas the plot in Gogol's works is frequently of secondary importance. Moreover, in creating his heroes Ośmachka proceeds along the lines of his own invention. Gogol's true domain is a world of weird, dehumanized and depersonalized individuals, incapable of any positive or definite action. After crossing the climactic line of plot, they go to the hazy nowhere and disappear in a dark world of nothingness, or death. Gogol's attempt to create positive heroes, as images of moral ideals, ended in failure. On the other hand, Ośmachka's heroes are positive, strong men, capable of dashing action and struggle. In his novelettes, they head for a better future, after achieving victory over their adversaries,[39] or as in his poems, they die heroically in defense of their ideals.

These differences, like the similarities, between the two writers might also originate in psychological, or on the other hand in nonpsychological factors. Gogol's caricatures and characters of parody are interpreted by some of his

critics as reflections of his confused mind.[40] In the line of this interpretation Ośmachka's dashing heroes might be explained as an externalization of his unquenched thirst for greatness. But a psychological, particularly psychoanalytical,[41] approach not always gives a final explanation of literary phenomena. Gogol's pessimism (his "laugh through tears") and his lack of hope for a better world with higher and firmer values, embodied in his unsuccessful and ridiculed heroes, besides having a psychological origin, may also have been inspired by some sociological aspects, symptomatic of the historic decline of his native country, gradually merging with the Russian empire. Thus his impotent heroes might be interpreted not only as symbols reflecting his personal inferiority complex, but also the inferiority of the leading class in the Ukraine that deteriorated in the stagnant quiescence of an Afanasiĭ Ivanovich and Pulkheriĭa Ivanovna, and that limited their warlike instincts to the problems of the two Ivans.

Consumed by a futile attempt to attain absolute moral values in the world, society, and himself, and adjust his pen to moral preaching, Gogol tried to find spiritual strength in the Christian faith, which, however, appeared to him in its gloomiest aspect of fear of condemnation. Prayers, ascetism and self-mortification, by which he tried to make atonement for his allegedly "sinful" works and to find refuge from the anguish that tormented his mind, resulted in the gradual destruction of his body, in the burning of the second part of *Dead Souls,* and in mental disorder.

Ośmachka's hope for a brighter future inseminated in him by a brief period of national renaissance in his country, (1917-1920), despite its tragic outcome, and hopeful images contained in his novelettes suggest the optimistic way of his thinking; however, he was not inclined toward shallow optimism for its own sake. On the contrary, his philosophy is deeply pessimistic, resembling in some points the ideas of contemporary existentialism, though independent of any branch of the existentialist schools. It may have originated

in his personal experience of witnessing the total destruction of his home, family, personal life and country by the communists (this motif constantly recurrs in his works), but more probably it came in natural development of thoughts dealing with the problems of man's existence on earth, and going far beyond the border of categories of time and distance. His is cosmic pessimism which is powerfully expressed in his poetry. Whereas man comes to the world from dark eternity, during his life on earth he is constantly accompanied by fear of death, which bring him dissolution into the same unknown black abyss of eternity. There is nothing between man and eternity but an unknown power that cannot be comprehended or judged. Man stands alone in the silence of cosmic solitude, feeling immortality in his heart and fearing the nothingness of empty eternity. Christ died to give mankind a dream of eternal paradise, stronger than the fear of death, but the Christian religion with its fundamental dogma of a loving God as a source of universal harmony was but an alien feeling to Ośmachka and brought no relief to his cosmic despair, since "fear, not God, goes side by side with man . . ."[42] His attitude toward God was not that of a humble Christian submissiveness toward the Almighty, but of a reproach for the inevitability of a death to which all living are destined. He tried to overcome his cosmic despair not by prayer but through surrealistic "conversations with mute eternity" to which he sent his creative work "to brighten the dark space of billions of years."[43]

Gogol and Ośmachka — two native sons of the same country, two extraordinarily original writers of similar aspirations and similar stylistic manner, are different in their literary achievement and in the philosophical texture of their works. Gogol, whose literary production laid the cornerstone for the golden age of Russian literature and opened for him the gates to the hall of world fame, renounced his work at the end of his life as an instrument of the evil spirit. Ośmachka, on the other hand, who approached his literary work with almost religious fervor and who remained

creative even in the last days of his life, is assured in indelible place only in the pages of Ukrainian literature. The philosophy of life of these two writers and their world outlook, in spite of being so different as the ideals of the historical epochs in which they lived, are not completely dissimilar. Beyond both of them loom, as the ultimate stimuli, feelings of insecurity, confusion, anguish and fear.

NOTES

1 The well-established views of Gogol as a forerunner of Russian realism, which is still persistently kept by the Soviet critics and historians of literature, has been revised by critics of the previous and present century (Rozanov, Gippius, Belyĭ, Mirskiĭ, Slonimskiĭ, Nabokov, etc.).

2 Orlov: Russkiĭ ĭazyk v literaturnom otnoshenii. Rodnoĭ ĭazyk v shkole. 1925, No. 9, p. 36.
L. A. Bulakhovskiĭ, Russkiĭ literaturnyĭ ĭazyk pervoĭ poloviny XIX veka. Kiev, 1956, p. 138.

3 This quotation is taken from book by Krutikova, p. 546.

4 T. Ośmachka, Iz-pid svitu. ('From under the World'). New York, 1954, p. 238.
All quotations from Ośmachka's and Gogol's works are translated by the author of this article.

5 Maria Andriana Keĭvan, U samotniĭ mandrivtsi do vichnosty. Samostiĭna, Ukraĭina 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, Chicago, 1964.

6 List of books by Ośmachka:
Krucha, 1922. Colection of poems.
Skytski vohni, 1925. Collection of poems.
Klekit, 1928. Collection of poems.
Suchasnykam, 1943. Collection of poems.
Poet, 1947. A poem.
Kytytsi chasu, 1953. Collection of poems.
Novelettes:
Starshyĭ boĭaryn (The Best Man), 1946.
Plan do dvoru, 1951.
Rotonda dushohubtsiv (Red Assassins), 1959.

7 D. S. Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature. New York, 1961.

8 Vladimir Nabokov, Gogol, p. 59.

9 N. V. Gogol, Mertvye dushy, Izd. Akademii Nauk SSSR, Moskva, 1960, p. 318.

10 A. Belyĭ states that when among Russian aristocrats, Gogol always felt himself a stranger. He explains that

his insincere behavior towards his contemporaries, "which made Pushkin not trust the 'kxokxol'" (Russian contemptible name for Ukrainians), had its reason in his apostasy. (Masterstvo Gogolia, Leningrad, 1934, pp. 30, 56).

11 Mrs. Keĭvan, his doctor and close friend, expresses her astonishment about this incredible phenomenon: "One can wonder how a man handicapped with this kind of mental illness was able to present such a great contribution to Ukrainian literature. (See Note 5).

12 Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie — Soviet State police in 1930's.

13 Joseph T. Shipley, Dictionary of World Literature, Philosophical Library, New York, pp. 266-267.

14 Starshyĭ boĭaryn, pp. 8-12.

15 The problem of love and sex in Gogol's works has been a subject of several studies. According to D. S. Mirsky's interpretation: "Woman was to him a terrible, fascinating, but unapproachable obsession, and he is known never to have loved. This makes the woman of his imagination either strange, inhuman visions of form and color that are redeemed from melodramatic banality only by the elemental force of the rethoric they are enshrined in, or entirely unsexed, even dehumanized caricatures." (A History of Russian Literature, p. 155).

16 N. V. Gogol, Mirgorod, t. II. Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR. Moskva, 1960, pp. 9-10.

17 Starshyĭ boĭaryn, 61.

18 Punctuation marks in Ošmachka's original text are often misleading. He puts periods instead of commas to separate dependent clauses. This has been changed in English translation by the author of this essay.

19 Concerning this problem see chapter VI.

20 Starsyĭ boĭaryn, 44.

21 Mertvye dushy, Sobranie khudozhestvennykh sochinenii, t. V, Akademia Nauk SSSR, Moskva, 1960, 62.

22 Starshyĭ boĭaryn, 76.

23 N. V. Gogol, Mirgorod, p. 11.

24 "Gogol's humor is deeply original and colorful in its originality. Its source came from his native Ukrainian ground; not accidentally, there are many similarities between Gogol, Narezhnyĭ and Kvitka-Osnovianenko...

Gogol, who in this respect had precursors, used the seminarian way of speaking ("rechevuĭu seminarskuĭu manehu") as particularly suitable material." (A. A. Bulakhovskiĭ. Russkiĭ literaturnyĭ ĭazyk pervoĭ poloviny XIX veka. 1957, pp. 413, 284). The problem of whether this harsh version of the humor of "kotliarevshchina", and of the Ukrainian puppet theatre and Cossack humor, displayed, for instance, so lavishly in the famous Cossacks' letter to the Sultan of Turkey, or even more, in the Cossack names, can be called the Ukrainian national humor, deserves close scrutiny.

25 Harbus — 'pumpkin' is rather unusual to be adopted as a surname.

26 See Chapter VI.

27 The way of calling married middle-aged women in Ukrainian villages.

28 Plan do dvoru, 100.

29 Several critics have delt with the interpretation of Gogol's nomenclature (Gippius, Belyĭ, Gukovskiĭ, Nabokov). The most complete study on this subject is *Die Technik der Personendarstellung bei Nikolai Vasilevich Gogol* by Wolfgang Kasack. Wiesbaden, 1957.

30 Wolfgang Kasack, 14: "Derartige Namen, die im Ukrainishen möglich, in einigen Fallen sogar häufig anzutreffen sind, lassen sich auf die bei den Ukrainern verbreitete Vorliebe für Spitznamen zurückzuführen, die auch den Ausganspunkt für Gogolsnamentechnik bilden dürfte."
It should also be mentioned that such names as those below are not rare among contemporary Ukrainian names, no matter from what part of the Ukraine they come, and likewise could be effectively used for the purpose discussed above. I have at random selected several names of Ukrainians who live in this country: Netudykhatka, Ukradyha, Huba, Hubal, Katsalapa, Kutsonoha, Vepryk, Riznyk, Kotsur, Kapusta, Pyrizhok, Kovbasa, Lohaza, Lemekha, Kucherepa, Kitsala, Kharabura, Sharabura, Mandyvoshka, Smitiukh, etc.

31 "Antinarod" ('antipeople') in Belyĭ's interpretation, Masterstvo Gogolia, 67-68.

32 The motif of national apostasy and betrayal of the people recurrs in Ośmachka's two next novelettes,

Plan do dvoru and *Red Assassins,* personified by collaborators with communist officials.

33 An open accusation of some renowned Ukrainian leaders was strongly expressed in Ośmachka's last book, *Red Assassins,* 275-280.

34 *The Best Man,* 75.

35 In some distant respects echoing T. Shevchenko's allegoric poem "Velykyĭ Lokh" ('The Big Cellar').

36 "... the grotesque represents the means of coping with the anxieties of an epoch..." (Jennings, Lee Byron. The Ludicrous Demon: Aspects of the Grotesque in German Post-Romantic Prose. Los Angeles, 1963).

37 Ośmachka compares the log with which Oliian hit the door of the pastor's house to the weapon used by the Tartars when they besieged Kiev, 1240, (Starshyĭ boĭaryn, 73).

38 "... Strange mounds of detail heaped on detail, resulting in an unconnected chaos of things..." (Mirsky, 156).

39 This is true even of Ivan Brus in Red Assassins, who by simulating insanity escapes torture and death in a communist prison.

40 "His characters were not realistic caricatures of the world without, but introspective caricatures of the fauna of his own mind. They were exteriorizations of his own "ugliness" and "vices." (Mirsky, 152).

41 Freudian psychoanalysis, much favored by Western critics in the interpretation of Gogol's works, and questioned by several critics (Belyĭ, Zenkovskiĭ, etc.), seems to be as exaggerated and one-sided as the strictly sociological method of Soviet critics.

42 From under the World, 181.

43 Ibid. 194.

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