Encounter with the East

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Бо серед мовчущої тиші нічної
Кується пригода.

For in the sealed-lipped silence of night
Is forged adventure.
(Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 245)

Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's life seems to have been ruled by one supreme dictate—that of the inquisitive, creative, cultivated word. He was a natural, passioned philologist who was blessed with all the talent needed to further, feed, and justify his indomitable philological zeal. He was a man of prodigious memory, which he retained to the end of his life. Even more prodigious was his talent for languages: all sorts of languages, in difficult-to-imagine numbers and variety—certainly sixty of them, if not more, according to his own admission about one year before his death,[1] when his autobiographical musings issued not from hubris, but from a pristine reservoir of humility. The staggering thing about Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's linguistic prowess was, however, his high level of fluency in all those languages that required fluency and the superb degree of his structural, lexical, and stylistic insight into those languages that did not permit mere fluency. The philological *passion* was ever present in Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's life—even in those moments, spells, or entire periods when other interests, and indeed other passions, crowded his heart and mind. Furthermore, in his philology there is a certain universality of meaning of that term, which brings to mind its definition by Vico as "all that depends on the human will," an allusion to the creative power of the *logos* when it is manifested as will. It is in this all-encompassing *logos*, too, that Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj found room for almost thirty years of literary creativity—particularly poetic creativity.

[1] *A. Ju. Kryms'kyj—Ukrajinist i orientalist* (Kiev, 1974), pp. 20–21.

Early in Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's career, this intrusive single-mindedness of an apparently extraliterary philological impulse was not entirely understood, or perhaps only apprehensively contemplated, by Ivan Franko,[2] the otherwise brilliantly insightful literary mentor of the budding philologist's increasingly surefooted tread across and into ever-widening horizons of the *logos*, horizons within which Franko, too, had frequently moved with the unencumbered license of an initiate.

Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj was born on 15 January 1871, in Volodymyr-Volyns'kyj. His father was of remote Baxčysaraj-Tartar origin, while his mother came from a Polish family settled in Lithuania. Early in Ahatanhel's childhood, his father, a secondary school teacher of history and geography, was transferred to Zvenyhorodka, a small town near Kiev. This enabled Ahatanhel to complete his secondary education in Kiev itself and to enter subsequently, with a scholarship, the prestigious Halahan College (1885–1889).

In 1889, Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj entered the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages in Moscow. Graduating in 1892, he remained attached to the institute's chair of Arabic philology, so as to prepare himself for a professorship. In those years (1892–1896), he also completed another course of study at the University of Moscow, in the faculty of philosophy and history. With a new master's degree in hand (1896), he was given the opportunity to go to Syria and Lebanon, where he remained till 1898 in total philological, literary, and ethnographic absorption. Upon his return to Moscow he rejoined the Lazarev Institute, and lectured there in the history of Semitic languages, historical and geographic texts, grammatical texts, the Koran, the history of Arabic literature, and especially Arabic poetry. He was also engaged in the supervision of translations from the Russian language into Arabic and vice versa. From 1901 to 1918, he held the Lazarev Institute's chair of Arabic language and literature. There, too, from 1915 to 1918 he taught Persian language and literature, and for two years he assumed the instruction of the Turkish language, as well. Between 1900 and 1918, he was also the permanent secretary of the Moscow Archaeological Society and simultaneously the editor of its series (*Drevnosti vostočnye*). He returned to Kiev in 1918, where he assumed Kiev University's professorship of world history. There he became one

[2] Ivan Franko, *Tvory*, 20 vols. (Kiev, 1955–56), 20 (*Vybrani lysty*): 494–95.

of the founders of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences and its first permanent secretary (1918–1929), as well as the founder of the Ukrainian Oriental Society and its honorary president.

Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's ascending career and public prominence continued until 1930, when he was subjected to a forced anonymity, a state of affairs that changed only with the outbreak of World War II and the Soviet annexation of the Western Ukraine, due to his apparent usefulness as an academic Soviet good-will emissary to the Western Ukrainian scholarly community that then had begun to gather around the newly Ukrainianized university of Lviv. Soon, however, the German attack on the Soviet Union and the rapidly unfolding German occupation of the Ukraine forced Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj out of Kiev, and in the chaos of the precipitous Soviet withdrawal his death is reported to have occurred on 25 January 1942, in a prison hospital in Kazakhstan. There he lies buried in a communal grave.

The Stalinist postwar years shrouded in silence the achievement and even the very name of Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj, and it was not until after the official policy of "thaw" that his name and work regained at first official tolerance and subsequently, grace.

His works, the scholarly portion of which alone exceeds one thousand titles, are presently becoming accessible through new editions.[3] In particular his literary production, both creative and critical, has found generous space in the five volumes of his works published in Kiev in 1972.[4] Among these, the collection of poems which concerns us here, *The Palm Fronds*, comes to us today with hardly any loss of that suppleness and richness that once quickened the sensibility of one of the most creative and aesthetically finely-honed generations in the recent history of Ukrainian literature.

The world of poetry seems to cultivate its own *hortus conclusus* of titles—iconic titles, as it were, that rewrite their meanings with inherent persistence, not unlike those familiar icons of the countless Madonnas in the meadows and Pantokrators in the almond. Among such titles is Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's *The Palm Fronds*, a collection of lyrical poetry that is a comprehensive expression of his poetic self, and which in its own life as a text grew between its first

[3] *A. Ju. Kryms'kyj: Bibliohrafičnyj pokažčyk (1889–1971)* (Kiev, 1972).
[4] A. Ju. Kryms'kyj, *Tvory v p''jaty tomax* (Kiev, 1972–74).

edition of 1901 and the conclusive, and indeed reclusive, edition of 1919. As a whole, the collection is the image of Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj the poet—or, looked at somewhat more broadly, it is the image of Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj that Ivan Franko might have conceived and programmed in his own mind across the distancings that separated Kryms'kyj's Zvenyhorodka and Kiev, institutional academic Moscow, Syria and Beirut, and again Moscow, from Franko's own world, whose internal expanse was as vast as its external reaches were curtailed. If Ivan Franko had a dream and a blueprint for Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's soul—and on the testimony of his correspondence with the poet-orientalist, Franko *did* have such a blueprint—it was something very close to the idea of *The Palm Fronds*. There is a more directly intrusive reason, also, for Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's title to make us think of Franko and his own collection of poems, *The Wilted Leaves* (Lviv, 1896).

It is unquestionable, and quite naturally part of some final will of form, that precise titles had come to both poets after their collections of poems had already been well defined by their mood, tone, and theme. At that point both poets thought of the organic, vegetal symbol of their respective lives—or, rather, both poets rethought that symbol. The younger poet saw in it his own imaginative self-configuration, as much as he saw in it the older poet's personal, symbolic usage, and so *The Wilted Leaves* became *The Palm Fronds*. For, as Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's subtitle somewhat self-consciously explains, his palm fronds stood for something he chose to call "Exotic Poems," something quite different from the intimately native flora of Ivan Franko.

The iconography of the title imagery of these two Ukrainian poets can be traced back even farther—to the agony of editions and reeditions between 1855 and 1891/92[5] —of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, considering that the young American literature was not only familiar to Ivan Franko in broad terms, but was by his own admission one of the more powerful influences upon his work.[6]

Vegetal symbolic titles,[7] when they emerge from poets' own

[5] This is the so-called "deathbed edition."

[6] The evidence in Franko's *Vybrani lysty* (*Tvory*, 20:20, 23, 582), however, shows that his interest in American literature lay in prose rather than poetry.

[7] In poetry, especially, vegetal titles appear to us almost instantly prima facie as "organic," that is, as having discernible structure dictated from within. Originally, however, such titles, or terms, did not point to any structure. Rather the opposite is true, for their early use was normally for anthologies—themselves no more than

agonized perceptions of their work, are to be taken seriously—even when at the same time they owe their being to that other flora: literary dissemination, with its ambiguity of parentage. This overlapping vegetation symbolism of titles, however, has its limitations, and that is in part expressed already in the prefaces to the three collections. Thus in the preface to the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Walt Whitman makes clear his scorn for "emasculated versifiers" and sees himself as "the athletic spokesman of a virile America." He also insists that he is "the poet of the body and good health," which he goes on repeating "even though, beginning in 1873, his body was wracked with pain and his gait was that of a partial cripple." This is how Edwin Haviland Miller reads Whitman's prefaces, summing them up by saying that "nineteenth-century America, it sometimes seemed, liked to assume the hirsute pose—manly style, manly behavior, muscular Christianity . . . ."[8]

Ivan Franko's preface to the first edition of his *Wilted Leaves* (1896) is, as it were, the obverse of Walt Whitman's coin. "The hero of these poems," he writes, "the one who there reveals his 'I,' is now dead. He was a man of no willpower but of a lively imagination . . . . Once only in his life was he capable of a decisive step, and sent a bullet through his head."[9] Ivan Franko then expresses a half-felt hope that "perhaps the torment and anguish of that sickly soul will eventually cure some sickly soul in our society," and he concludes by reminiscing on Goethe's inscription on a copy of his *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* meant for a friend: "Sei ein Mann und folge mir nicht nach" (Be a man and do not

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gatherings, or gleanings, of flowers. From "anthology" derived the Latin *florilegium*, a term quite intentionally applied to unorganized collections, mostly in prose. Another such term is the Renaissance *floresta*. But there are also such "organic" titles as the sixteenth-century Spanish *Silva de romances*, and *Flor de romances*; or the equally sixteenth-century *Rosa de romances*, *Rosa española*, *Rosa real*, *Rosa gentil*—all "anthologies" by Juan de Timoneda. The unstructured nature of the vegetal "organic" also becomes apparent in late Medieval and Renaissance *millefleurs* tapestries. It is only in the Romantic period, or thereafter, that the organic-as-structured perception of the bunch or bouquet, or even of the anthology, imposes itself in a manner that allows such a prima facie understanding.

[8] *A Century of Whitman Criticism*, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (Bloomington and London, 1971), p. xi.

[9] Franko, *Zibrannja tvoriv u p''jatdesjaty tomax. Xudožni tvory tomy 1–25* (Kiev, 1976–80), 2 (1976): 119.

follow me).[10] In the preface to the second edition of *Wilted Leaves* (1910), Ivan Franko then explains himself further by clarifying the obvious, namely, "that the prose preface to the first edition . . . is no more than a literary fabrication."[11] Thus between Walt Whitman and Ivan Franko we have two rather opposing "literary fabrications."

Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's prefaces to his *Palm Fronds* are perhaps even more self-contradictory in their revelations and obfuscations and, ultimately, in their "literary fabrication." In his "Prelude" ("Zaspiv") to the 1901 edition which appeared in Lviv, Kryms'kyj emphatically, in an overtly stylized fashion, says that he issues his *Palm Fronds* into the world "not for people physically healthy, but for those somewhat sick, with their craving for life and their nerves rent, for those who are both prone to tears and to sweet ennui, who both pray to God and err."[12] He envisions his readers to have the boundlessly naive archegoism of the sick human being "who lies in a sanatorium and rejoices at the news of a fresh, curly bud sprouting on a Himalayan cedar."[13] His poems are for those sickly, lonely ones who with that naive egotism are capable of loving a single sympathetic soul, a family, or all of humanity. But those who are entirely healthy in body and heart, "especially those who rather than breathing in the perfume of exotic flowers and listening to every throb of their own or other nervous hearts, rush bravely into battle for all of downtrodden society"—what should he tell such readers but that "they not even bother to unfurl these Palm Fronds."[14]

Fortunately, this is not the last word in Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's introduction, which by its style and mood is so clearly datable to 1900 that the poet need not have insisted on 1901 as the year in which it was written. Indeed fortunately, the introduction ends with a double quatrain of great delicacy and of truly balming effect, especially in its first quatrain:

[10] Franko, *Tvory* (1976), 2:120.
[11] Franko, *Tvory* (1976), 2:121.
[12] Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja: Ekzotyčni poeziji* (Kiev, 1971), p. 8.
[13] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 8.
[14] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 9.

Срібную лілею буря підотнула;
Пишную корону до землі пригнула.
Пахощі пропали. І блищить сльозина,
Наче дорогая, буйная перлина.[15]

The silver lily the tempest cut down,
The lavish crown bent to the ground
The fragrance ceased, a tear-drop gleamed
Like a costly, wanton pearl.

In their exquisitely stylized manner, such verses are appropriately orientalizing—if not altogether Oriental—as they appear to lead us to some identifiable garden poetry of the caliph-for-a-day, Ibn al-Mu'tazz (d. 908), or to that of the Damascene poet al-Wa'wâ' (d. 999):

نَرْجِسَةٌ لم تَزَلْ محدّقةً لم تَكْتحِلْ قط لَذّةَ الغُمْضِ
أمَالَهَا القَطْرُ فَهْيَ باهتةٌ تَنْظُرُ فِعْلَ السَّمَاءِ بالأَرضِ[16]

A narcissus, its pupils agaze,
never knowing slumber's delight,
Bending under raindrops, pale,
it only sees
the sky's hand upon the earth.

Kryms'kyj's stylistically somewhat tormented introduction not only ends, but also begins with a poem—in the form of an apostrophe to *poesy* or to the muse: "O poetry, my road companion!"[17] This apostrophe-invocation is still highly romantic in the European manner, seemingly untouched by the poet's Oriental experience—if one overlooks the repeated, otherwise puzzling references to "psychopathy" and to the poet's being called *pryčynnyj*, possessed

[15] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 9.

[16] Al-Wa'wâ' al-Dimashqî, *Dîwân*, ed. Sâmî al-Dahhân (Damascus, 1950), pp. 136–37. These lines are also attributed to Ibn al-Mu'tazz (d. 296 H./908 A.D.), in whose *Dîwân* (Beirut, 1961; p. 291) the first hemistich of the first verse figures as نرجسةٌ لا تزالُ محدّقةً, thus distorting the metre *al-munsariḥ*. I. Kračkovskij finds reasons to hesitate before assigning this "fragment" to Ibn al-Mu'tazz: see his *Abû-l-Faradž al-Va'va Damasskij: Materialy dlja xarakterystiki poètičeskogo tvorčestva* (St. Petersburg, 1914), pp. 78–79.

[17] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, pp. 5–6.

of the kind of madness that is provoked by a spell or by unrequited love. But then, such is also the madness of the Arabic *majdhûb*, *majnûn*, and *mutayyam*: the lovelorn poet modelled on the 'Udhrî poetic affectation of Arabic desert poetry of the Omayyad period.

It is in this light, too, that we can begin to understand the Ukrainian poet's reference to "everyday's impurity" (line 5) covered by the lunar mantle of poetry. This impurity will reemerge with much more insistence in the first of the principal cycles of part 1 of the collection, under the telling title of "Sullied Love" ("Nečestyve koxannja"),[18] and will also oblige the poet to add a lengthy footnote within the introduction itself, trying to explain his "Sullied Love" as well as his other cycle "Love as People Know It" ("Koxannja po-ljuds'komu"). The footnote is a quaint protestation against any possible autobiographical interpretation of the manner in which the poet speaks of love both sullied and as people know it. He does not call it a "literary fabrication," however, as did Ivan Franko. Instead, he introduces the persona of an anonymous but famous professor-orientalist whom he had befriended in 1897 in Beirut,[19] and on whom he had observed the complex effects of such love. Through him he realized that "love, when it is untouched by the uncleanliness of sex, even if it be abnormal and unhappy, it no more than breaks the heart, ruins the physical health, and turns a person into a melancholic—but it does not take away one's faith in life, one's energy to live, nor does it kill the soul or the idealistic and poetic impulses . . . . As for ordinary human love, no matter how idyllically and poetically it may begin, it soon loses all its poetry and turns into sexuality. For some time a person may even feel intoxicated and may delude himself with 'Moslem paradisiac revelries'—in the end, however, comes the reaction, the disappointment, loss of faith in one's own self, disgust for the whole world, nostalgia for the by-gone, pure days . . . ."

[18] It is self-understood that chronologically that section antecedes all of the introductions to the collection.

[19] Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's extant correspondence from his sojourn in Beirut speaks rather of his pronounced lack of peers' company. Indeed, Kryms'kyj appears to have steered away from social contacts while in Beirut, devoting himself indefatigably to scholarship and to his literary musings—and also to an illuminatingly perceptive observation of contemporary life and social foibles.

This false elation of "love as people know it" already belongs to a different observation, which the poet made in 1900 while in the Caucasus, where, once again, he witnessed the moral disintegration of an unnamed "protagonist."[20]

Of course one could dismiss Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's "Prelude," as one could dismiss all introductions written by all poets. In the case of our poet, however, we would lose in such a dismissal more than we would gain. Still, what do all these internal convulsions of the young—but not very young—poet mean? After all, Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj was thirty years old when his introduction appeared in print. Furthermore, he had the charming lack of inhibition to allow that introduction to be reprinted in 1919 in his final compilation of poems, when he was already Permanent Secretary of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. To this one could simply reply that in 1919 he still knew, or felt, himself to be a poet, and poets have an uncanny love for words—especially for their own words, which all too often they would not see die at any cost. Otherwise, however, he certainly knew what his subsequent critics appear to have known; but then, as an intimate connoisseur of Arabic and Persian literatures, he also knew more than his critics. Therefore, one is tempted to assume that certain things quite opaque to them should have appeared engagingly clear to him.

Thus already Ivan Franko, in his review of *The Palm Fronds*, while taking some facets of Kryms'kyj's tortured poetic persona seriously, nonetheless introduces a certain tone of irony precisely where he speaks of the purity and sincerity of the poet's feelings.[21] Franko could, of course, just as easily have been speaking of the baring of his own feelings in *Wilted Leaves* and of his own "literary fabrication" in his introduction to that collection. Still, certain of his lines written elsewhere could serve as captions for some of Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's poetry—as well as for some of his own, and, for better or worse, also to the "modernism" of the end of the century which he saw as so vulnerable and very often amusing:

Ах, друже мій, поет сучасний —
Він тим сучасний, що нещасний,
Поет — значйть: вродився хорим,
Болить чужим і власним горем.[22]

[20] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 7.
[21] Franko, *Tvory*, 17 (1955):295.
[22] Franko, *Zibrannja tvoriv*, 3 (1976):108.

O friend, poet contemporary—
He is contemporary as is his luck contrary.
A poet—means: one born to malady,
Hurting with his and with his fellow's misery.

Here Franko touches upon that affected, stylized *malaise* which characterized the mood of *fin de siècle*[23] in European poetry. The problem with Ukrainian poetry of that period was that in it this *fin de siècle* malady was not meant to appear in its rarefied, filtered West European form. On its way to the end of the nineteenth century, it did not pass through Baudelaire or the subsequent Symbolists, and it did not have the tributaries of the other stylized expressions of contemporary sensibility, especially that of *art nouveau*, for these means of stylization could save, or at least ameliorate, all sorts of problematic posturings in West European poetry of that period.

In the Ukrainian case, however, Ivan Franko, in spite of the echo of Walt Whitman in the title of his *Wilted Leaves*, quite self-consciously takes us back to Goethe's *Sturm und Drang* period with its own brand of *Weltschmerz*, which, with its thicker grain of pathos, would not have passed through the filter of the symbolist and post-symbolist *fin de siècle*.

Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj, although his road to a personal notion of style cannot be disassociated entirely from that of Ivan Franko, comes in the affectation and stylization of his sensibility considerably closer to the European mood of *fin de siècle*. There are certain teasing phrasings in Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj, like the very title of his cycles "Sullied Love" and "Love as People Know It," for instance, which spark equally teasing thoughts of a cycle of poems like "Calamus" in Walt Whitman's poetic flora, and which can also generate associative links with Baudelaire's *Fleurs du mal*—even if such an association be in the effect of the title alone. In brief, one does not sense pathos in Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj to the extent one senses stylization, and in this the poet is in step with the aesthetic requirements of his time.

[23] This aspect of Kryms'kyj's self-sense has already been observed by Oleh Babyškin in his sympathetic overview of the poet-scholar's life and work, *Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj* (Kiev, 1967), p. 38.

One must then further remember that Kryms'kyj had given his *Palm Fronds* the subtitle "Exotic Poems," and exoticism once again is a tribute in name to the symbolist notion of stylization—for exoticism is not the raw alien substance, but rather its stylized adaptation to prevailing sensibility. Moreover, that stylization is executed so discreetly that for the most part the alien, would-be-exotic ingredient goes unnoticed, and thus, if any exoticism is left, it is in topography and geography alone. On the other hand, all the references to sullied or sullying love, to the psychopath and the *pryčynnyj*—bewitched poet, or even the peculiar creation of fictitious protagonists of unobtainable and destructive love imaginings—all this is part and parcel of a hidden exoticism, hidden to the extent that only the poet as a highly accomplished adept of classical Arabic literature knows where it truly surfaces, or rather, he does not expect or require his readers to know or sense such things. This attitude on the part of the poet does not produce calculated obscurity; instead, it creates a sense of familiarity and shared topicality and can provoke in the reader even a degree of misled expectation of some "true exoticism" yet to come.

Nevertheless, all the needed "exoticism" of at first Arabic and then increasingly Persian provenance is indeed there, among the fronds. In his first year as an Arabist, Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj must have read exhaustively in the poetry composed in the manner of the pining, lovelorn desert poets of the 'Udhra tribe. Already in the early Omayyad period, poets of that more or less generic grouping were supposedly responsible for the formulation of a code of self-denying, even self-punishing, pure—that is, sexually unfulfilled—love. The symbolizing representative of that school of poets is said to have been a poet of particular ill fortune in love who lost his senses and in mad ecstasy roamed the desert. He became the archetypal *pryčynnyj* among the poets of Arabia.

In subsequent centuries, Islamic-Arabic literary scholars, who frequently were also theologians, created an anthological as well as anecdotal body of literature from and around that 'Udhrî model, which then developed the tendency, particularly at the hands of the litterateurs-theologians amongst them, to structure itself into something resembling a doctrine of love. It was within that doctrine that views like the ones Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj expounds in the lengthy footnote in his "Prelude" were foremost.

It is in the light of this discreetly assimilatory, rather anti-exotic approach to an alien literary source that one has to begin reading *The Palm Fronds* from the very first lines of the poetic "Prelude," which, as we had previously noticed, actually ends with a masterfully disguised quotation from Arabic poetry. One can then also realize that the mixed form of the "Prelude," with its poetic and prose elements strung together into one discourse, is itself highly reminiscent of the Menippean style of classical Arabic essays, diatribes, and tracts, and that in Arabic books on love that style is particularly at home.[24]

So many things in the symbolic view of life and work fall into three parts that Kryms'kyj's decision to subdivide his *Palm Fronds* into three parts will hardly strike us as significant or original. After all, Franko, too, had gathered his *Wilted Leaves* into three bunches, and William Sloane Kennedy claimed to have discovered a tripartite structure even in Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, in the form of three celebrations: of the Body, of Democracy, and of Religion.[25]

Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's collection of poems is different, however. It constitutes what would otherwise be termed his collected poetic works. It is thus a true *dîwân* in a tradition that once again strikes us as Oriental and, if recognized as such, exotic. Its tripartition delineates almost exactly the three decades of the writer's poetic creativity and one should even say vitality. The poet's twenties, thirties, and forties are registered with curious chronological firmness in three respective parts; then, just two years before reaching the age of fifty, the poet fell silent.

It will be mostly the first part of Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's collection that remains of critical concern to Ukrainian literary history and also to the history of European aesthetic trends in which literary Orientalism played an important formative role. The two subsequent additions to the collection are only a testimony to a poetic talent's history of giving way to other intellectual passions, mainly to the passion of philology and then gradually to the

[24] The full text of the most famous Arabic treatise on love, *The Dove's Neckring*, by the eleventh-century Cordovan theologian and philosopher-poet Ibn Ḥazm, written precisely in that style, was published only in 1914 by the Russian scholar D. K. Petrov. Its manuscript, however, had been discovered and described by Dozy as early as 1841 (Leiden Catalogue of Manuscripts).

[25] *Reminiscences of Walt Whitman* (London, 1896), pp. 100–102; see a discussion of that structuring in James E. Miller, Jr., *A Critical Guide to Leaves of Grass* (Chicago and London, 1970), pp. 165–66.

additional passion of history. Thus at first the intensity of poetic passion recedes (in part 2), and then scholarly-philological translation takes the place of the poet's own voice completely (part 3).

Part 1, however, is different. It is Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's true poetic voice even when it appears encumbered by the rigor of translation—indeed, it is most often at its best when submitted to such rigor.

It begins with a series of short poems, of which the first three present a Lebanese idyll and the remaining ten form a sequence of elegiac musings, with the central topic—or, rather, mood—being the poet's sense of loneliness and estrangement. What is most characteristic of these two clusters, however, is that the first derives its lyrical atmosphere and diction—and even much of its topicality—from the *Song of Songs*, whereas the second is in the whole complex of its lyricism intimately Arabic. As a result the reader is introduced into the poetic realm of Lebanon, then known as Syria, in a manner which nearly permits the use of a term as odd as lyrical realism; for in the sense of a lyrical cognition of the aesthetic and emotive reality that Syria and Lebanon represented to Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj, and which they still represent to us today, the symbiosis of the *Song of Songs* and of those lyrical quintessences of the classical Arabic elegiacally toned *nasîb* poetry represents an unquestionable form of reality, the conscious poetic cultivation of which deserves to be called its own realism—meaning, the realism of our imagination.

First the poet presents the idyll—the image of a paradise-like land accessible through poetic reverie. He quotes unabashedly, because to him to quote from the *Song of Songs* is like celebrating a poetic mass: the word remains ritually pure and new. Thus we are meant to recognize Song 4:14–15, and Song 2:12–13. We are meant to breathe in the most wondrous perfume and want never to leave the garden that exudes it. And even when the poet stops quoting for an instant and talks of a girl—very much like a Ukrainian peasant girl—greeting the returning spring, even then the halo of the *Song of Songs* remains, enveloping his every word. He closes the cluster with a return to the imagery and diction of the *Song of Songs* that are once again recognizable and at the same time fresh (5:6), and very Ukrainian in phrasing:

Я всі очі прогляділа, —
Милого нема![26]

My eyes wasted away with looking—
My love is not here!

Now we notice that in this first cluster, which is also a coherent poem, we were given to experience things both divine and human: the reverie of the garden and its loss, when the idyll ended and night and loneliness set in. The poet thus makes us cross the threshold into a realm which, in spite of its beauty—still reminiscent of the first garden—is always sad. That garden is now the intimate form-and-tradition-locked world of the classical Arabic elegiac prelude form, the *nasîb*, which, from being merely an opening section in the oldest form of the complex Bedouin poem, the *qaṣîdah*, had subsequently evolved into an independent, centrally genre-defining element of Arabic poetic lyricism. The individual poetic motifs of Bedouin provenance live on in this seemingly archaizing lyricism, a metaphorized life freed from their original quite strict structural and thematic context. Only the ancient elegiac mood of constant separations, farewells, departures, and of a blanketing sense of loneliness remains intact. Such, then, is also the diapason of mood in Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's second cluster of poems, written in March of 1898 and entitled "Alone in a Foreign Land." It is dedicated to Prince Alexander Gagarin and his wife Mary, whom he had befriended while in Beirut.

In the opening segment he speaks of his inability to remain bent over his Arabic manuscript folios while outside the window the orchard stands in bloom. From the poetry he writes precisely during that period of his stay in Syria, we can easily guess that the folios Kryms'kyj is reading are themselves Arabic poems, the closest blood-relatives to his own verses. However, there is still much in his poetry that is broadly Romantic. Even Schubert's *Lieder* come to mind: *Nun muss ich alles wenden / Der Frühling will nicht enden* sounds like a close paraphrase.

But spring joy brings spring languor, which brings spring sorrow, all of which, in their poetic order, are also thoroughly Arabian: for the time of separation has come and dark brooding has taken over heart and mind. Semiotically it is as if certain Arabic poetic key words had been proffered: *firâq—humûm*:

[26] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 14.

То розлука, зла гадюка, —
Вся причина чорних дум.[27]

It is parting, evil viper,
Reason of all gloomy cares.

In the dedication prefacing this poetic cluster the poet had mentioned "Beirut in Syria"—but he knew that the more precise place of his loneliness and of his lament was the archaic Arabian poet's long-abandoned encampment, from which those whom he loved so passionately have departed. Like that Bedouin poet of Arabia, Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj now stops, too, over the abandoned encampment of his own loneliness and addresses those whose cruelty consists in not being able to unburden him of his present gloom:

Де ви, де ви, милі други?!
Чом тепер вас тут нема!..
А без вас розкішний південь
Задля мене мов тюрма.[28]

Where are you, companions dear,
Why are you no longer here?
For the South's delights to me
Without you are like captivity.

Such lines in Kryms'kyj's verse are only rarely taken from any particular Arabic or Persian poem (the Persian influence upon him, in the creative sense, I would date considerably later than these early sections of his collection). Rather, they belong to an accumulated poetic stock, acquired in a thoroughly learned philological fashion but then released from their philological bondage and allowed to roam freely, and creatively, in a poetic mind itself free and creative. In some cases, however, Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj chooses to translate quite literally—or almost literally—and then he warns us that a given piece is "from the Arabic." There are also those intermediate approaches, where the poet adopts and adapts poetic ideas that, although they remain recognizable, are so completely implanted into a more broadly conceived poem that the poet himself no longer thinks of the source. One such assimilated poetic

[27] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 16.
[28] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 16.

idea, almost a quotation, occurs at the close of the collection's 1901 introduction. Another one is imbedded into, or rather informs, the central poetic idea of poem 6 of "Alone in a Foreign Land." It begins in a tone perhaps closer to the already familiar model of the *Song of Songs*, but then it makes us even think of Goethe's

Kennst du das Land wo die Zitronen blühn,[29]

which enjoyed a puzzling popularity in Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's generation:

Горді пальми. Думні лаври...
Манячливий кипарис.
Океан тропічних квітів...
Ще й цвіте цитринний ліс...

Haughty palm trees, lordly laurels,
Giddy cyprus' reverie,
Ocean of tropical flowers,
Abloom every lemon tree.

In this state of seemingly boundless bliss, the poet chances to look down—and there, next to a palm tree, his eye falls on a modest spike of rye, and the spike, bending mournfully from its stem, whispers to him questioningly:

We both are strangers to this paradise,—
What could have brought us here?

Ми чужі для цього раю, —
Що ж сюди нас принесло?[30]

The history of this poem, however, should transport us away from Kryms'kyj's nostalgic solitude in Lebanon to the nostalgia felt by 'Abd al-Raḥmân I, the founder of the house of Umayya in Arab Spain. For the story goes that the fugitive Syrian prince, having built himself a garden residence, called Ruṣâfa, on the outskirts of his new Cordovan capital, looked out from his pleasure pavillion

[29] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Werke*, 22 vols. (Mainz and Weimar, 1932), 1:107.
[30] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 19.

one day and noticed a newly planted, lonely palm tree. At its sight he was moved by great sadness, and spoke the following lines:

O, palm tree, as I,
You are foreign in the west,
From your stock estranged.

يا نخلُ أنتِ غريبةٌ مثلي في الغرب نائيةٌ عن الأصلِ [31]

In spite of the likelihood that the utterance is apocryphal, in time it became as popular—or as inevitable—in Arabic poetry as nostalgia itself. The Ukrainian orientalist Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj, too, found it and used it, as he felt a bond of kinship growing between himself and that distant Umayyad prince.

The first major cycle of poems in *The Palm Fronds*, the somewhat awkwardly pathetic "Sullied Love," is ushered in with a dedicatory poem addressed to the poet's former teacher, Vs. F. Miller. The language in that short poem is quaint, even perplexing, with its *viglietto dolce*, "feverish anticipation of every single word," "drinking new life from every word," "catching the glance of the eye, sincerely pressing the hand," the asseveration that "you add to my faith in truth and learning."[32] What does all this mean? Well, quite simply, it means that Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj, who in the main part of "Sullied Love" sees his fictitious protagonist as a *majnûn*—or a *pryčynnyj*, that is, as a poet in the 'Udhrî mode—has deliberately altered the rhetoric in his dedicatory poem drastically, for here he assumes the posture of a courtly panegyrist, someone closer in style to al-Mutanabbî when that poet praises, or cajoles, his patron, the Ḥamdānid ruler of tenth-century Aleppo. For al-Mutanabbî's diction, when meant for that patron—and for that patron only, one must say—also abounds in the likes of *viglietto dolce* and asseverations of being the bestower of truth and learning, or their tenth-century equivalents. It is also right to mention here that Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj was somewhat of a flatterer: already Ivan Franko, in his early correspondence with him, had to admonish him

[31] Ibn al-Abbâr (Abû 'Abd Allâh al-Quḍâ'î), *Al-Ḥullah al-Sayrâ'*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1963), 1:37.
[32] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 21.

to abandon all awkward blandishment.[33]

It is in poem 3 of this cycle that the poet turns to the more unmitigated lyrical current of his Arabic poetic inspiration, and all the familiar traits of the 'Udhrî and 'Udhrî-related school emerge clearly delineated. Then, in the third book of the same cycle, he gives us by way of Heinrich Heine a veritable European romantic version of chaste Bedouin love—only here it has already become a ballad, or, rather, Heine's mannered equivalent of a Spanish *romance morisco*.[34] We note only that Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj succeeds fully in capturing both Heine's style and that style's Romance undercurrent. The most recognizably Arabic part of that poem—and one which has a bearing upon the whole cycle—is the characterization of the 'Udhrî lover as a "martyr of love," for it is love as martyrdom which allows this poetry to be absorbed into the mainstream of Arab-Islamic mysticism, something with which Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj was intimately familiar as a scholar as well.

Even though the entire cycle of "Sullied Love" owes much of its affectation and articulation of mood to classical Arabic lyrical models, only poems 3, 16, 17, and 28 are entirely explicit in their "orientalism." There are also two exceptions: the first one is poem 18, which, in a delightfully Ukrainian popular verse form, returns to the atmosphere of the *Song of Songs*; and the second is poem 26, which is no more than a pastoral idyll with rather classicist thematic ingredients, albeit tainted with Schiller's poetic diction.

I shall attempt to illustrate the explicitly Arabic element with a translation of poem 16 ("On an Arabian Theme"):

З червоним блиском місяць згас,
Сховався за горою.
В плащі із зір глухая ніч
Схилилась надо мною.
Усе поснуло. Мовчки я
Сидю у мертвій тиші:
Журливий рій моїх думок
Повітря не колише.
Та впала зірка... Задрижав
На небі слід вогненний.
Замлів я весь... Не зірка то!
То ти летиш до мене!

[33] Franko, *Tvory*, 20 (1956):432.
[34] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, pp. 37–38.

І чую вже я шепіт твій,
І п'ю твоє дихання.
Одна лиш мить... І знов я сам,
І знов саме страждання.[35]

With a red flare the moon went out,
And hid behind the rise.
In starry mantle the still night
Curved over me her spine.
All is asleep. Silent
I sit in the night's deadly hush:
The sombre swarm of thoughts
The air lulls not to rest.
A star fell . . . With a shiver
A fiery trail crossed the sky.
I well-nigh fainted . . . No, not a star,
It is to me you fly!
I hear your whisper now,
I drink your breath.
One twinkling only . . ., then
Again all's loneliness, again all's pain.

The significance of this poem, as it enters the Ukrainian formal context, is that in the Arabic sense of formal parentage it is at the same time one of the most classicist and one of the most paradigmatic examples of a basic lyrical unit. This unit is the already mentioned *nasîb*—here very synthetic but, precisely because of that, unadulterated. It offers an unambiguous lesson in sensibility.

The cycle that follows, "Love as People Know It," was meant by the poet to be seen as an antistrophic response to "Sullied Love": the impure love which expresses itself there in terms akin to mysticism leads in the end to salvation, while the euphoria of unrestrained love here is, in spite of its initial illusion of sacrality, only a fleeting epiphany. For these fleeting moments speaks his poem "Moslem Paradise: Love-Joys and Paradisiac Revelries":

[35] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, pp. 28–29.

Рече пророк: «Люблю молитись,
Люблю жінок кохати
І знаю третю любу втіху:
Вдихати аромати».
І от, коли я п'ю повітря
Пахучеє весняне,
Із грудей рветься щирий голос:
«Я ваш, о мусульмани!»
«Ти й думать одвикнеш!» —
Воркоче мій розум.
А серце співає:
«Чини, як Моха́ммед:
Бували години —
Він янголів слухав;
Бували години —
Гуляв у гаремі».[36]

The prophet speaks: "I like to pray,
I like to love women
And I know one third beloved joy:
Perfumes to inhale."
And so, when I drink the air
Redolent, spring-like,
A pristine voice bursts from my breast:
"I am yours, o Musulmans!"

"You'll lose the custom of thinking!"—
My reason grumbles.
And the heart sings:
"O, do as Mohammad—
There were hours
He listened to the angels;
There were hours
He frolicked in the harem."

The next cycle in the poet's baring, or creating, of his lyrical "persona"—that is what much of this collection ends up being—is that of his "Tunes before Death" ("Peredsmertni melodiji"). At some moments at least the poet must have felt these tunes were his

[36] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 54.

own prolonged swan song. And yet the sap of rebellious, recalcitrant vitality runs through practically every poem of the cycle; or, it would be more correct to say that almost every poem is a polarized agony—that is, combat—and thus a cyclically repetitive gain and loss, loss and gain, of some of the finest poetic energies of the collection as a whole. And one of the poet's best gestures, too, is the dedication of the cycle to Ivan Franko, with poem 3 speaking most directly to the author of *Wilted Leaves.*

The major part of the cycle, beginning with poem 7, is conceived formally as a pastoral "Interlude," with its "prologue," "serenade," "imprisonment," then "*finita la commedia,*" and then the true closure of a "refrain." The construction of this cycle, too, is anchored in more or less direct reliances on Arabic poetic materials that oscillate somewhere between actual translations and freely associative poetic echoes.

In the "Prologue" of this "Interlude" the poet's voice is at first very diffused, almost losing itself in a broadly pastoral genre sensibility, into which it admits remoter resonances from the *Song of Songs* and more immediate ones from seemingly Arab picturesqueness. Only then do clearly recognizable contemporary Arabic folkloric themes, or tunes, appear (poems 10, 12, 13). These are then strengthened in their Arabic authenticity of voice by actual translations of classical Arabic poems and poetic fragments. All these elements, however, are integrated into the cycle's major form-defining mood of the pastoral idyll—an idyll which will yet lead to a closure that strikes deeper, tragic notes.

Thus, following the poet's classical Arabic translations-adaptations, which within the dialogued structure of this Arabized idyll represent the male voice vis-à-vis the female voice of the folkloric elements, we find the poet at first captive of a mood of unrestrained reverie (poem 9):

Я спинився на спочинок
У розкішному гаю.
Сад росистий... Срібні квіти...
І затишно, як в раю.
Сотні мрій мене обсіли
Од такої красоти,
І бажань усяких безліч...
Та в усіх була лиш ти.[37]

[37] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 68.

I stopped to rest
In a luxuriant grove:
Garden dewy, silv'ry flowers,
Undisturbed as paradise . . .
Reveries ahundred from beauty so great
There around me swarmed,
And desires beyond number—
But you were in all.

ولمّا نزلنا منزلاً طَلَّهُ النَّدَى أنيقاً وبُستاناً من النور حاليا
أجدَّ لنا طيبُ المكان وحُسنُـهُ مُنًى فتمنّينا فكنتِ الأمـانـيا [38]

Reverie and bliss, however, turn into self-conscious elegiac illusion, and then into self-delusion. If the classical Arabic poetic fragment at hand does not entirely explain such feelings, the poet-translator does not hesitate to attach two further strophes to the text while yet remaining faithful to the intent of the Arabic poetic motif of *ṭayf al-khayâl*, the nightly phantom apparition, and to the characteristic dialogue style of the *ghazal* as a distinct Arabic poetic form (poem 11):

Ви, може б, мені заказали
Кохану Лейлу видати?
Нехай! Та ніхто не закаже
Тужливії співи складати!
Ви, може б, мені заказали
Із Лейлею мати розмову?
Вві сні вона прийде до мене,
Зустріну я Лейлоньку знову!
В переддосвітню годину
Бачу Лейлу уві сні.
«Мила!! Хочеш дати щастя,
Заборонене мені??»
Каже: «Ні, мене вже кидай,
Набирайся забуття».
«Не покину й не забуду:
Ти ж усе моє життя».[39]

[38] Abû Tammâm Ḥabîb Ibn Aws al-Ṭâ'î, *Al-Ḥamâsah* (Sharḥ al-Tibrîzî), 4 vols. (Cairo, 1879), 3:155. In the al-Marzûqî redaction this poem corresponds to poem 524.

[39] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 69.

Would you forbid me
To see my Layla, my love?
Then do it! Yet no one
Can stop a song's sad rhyme.
Would you forbid me
to talk to my Layla, my love?
Then in a dream she will come
I will see her again!
In a dream before dawn
I see Layla, my love:
"Is it happiness you bring,
Is it the forbidden bliss?"
"Leave me, you must," she says,
"Forget me, you'll learn."
"No, I'll not leave or forget you,
You are my very life."

فإنْ تمنعوا ليلى وحُسنَ حديثها فلن تمنعوا منّى البُكا والقَوافيا
فهلاّ منعتم إذ منعتم حديثَها خَيالاً يُوافينى على النّأيِ هادِيا [40]

The next poem in this pastoral interlude with a tragic proclivity, poem 14, is one of the most elegiacally lyrical Arab voices that Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj chooses to adopt as his own. It is a voice melancholy with a sense of loss and nostalgia—but it is not yet a voice that speaks of death. In this poem, too, Kryms'kyj takes liberties with the underlying text—this time no more than repeating the opening strophe (which corresponds to the opening line of the Arabic original) at the poem's end, turning it into a refrain, or lingering closure. The tone of his diction, on the other hand, had to remain much more subdued in its specifically Ukrainian coloration because of the poem's precise thematic strictures.

Душа̀ летить у рідний край
За табором єменців,
Та тілом я на чужині,
В полоні у мекканців.

[40] Abû Tammâm, *Al-Ḥamâsah*, 3:150 (poem 514 in the redaction of al-Marzûqî).

І от, на диво, уночі
Прийшла до мене мила,
В'язницю замкнену мою
Тихенько одчинила.
Сказала кілька втішних слів
Та скоро й попрощалась, —
Душа моя за нею вслід
Із тіла видиралась.
Дівча! Не думай, мовби я
У цім ворожім краї
Зробився вже хитким-плохим
І мовби смерть лякає.
О ні! Й погрозами мене
Не застрашать мекканы:
Я й досі їм не покорився,
Хоч на ногах кайдани.
А ти... Тобі я покорився:
Тебе кохаю сильно,
Так само, як кохав тоді,
Як був людина вільна...
Душа летить у рідний край
За табором єменців,
Та тілом я на чужині,
В полоні у мекканців.[41]

The soul flies homewards
After a throng of Yemenites,
My body, though, is in a foreign land
Imprisoned by the Mekkans.
How strange that in the night
My love should come to me,
My prison shut and locked
She opened silently.
She spoke her words of comfort
Then hastily said adieu,
And in her trail my soul
Out of my body tore.
Girl, do not deem me here
In this my enemies' land
A faltering weakling who'd
Show fear before death.

[41] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, pp. 70–71.

O no, with threats
The Mekkans scare me not.
Till now I never yielded
Although in chains I walk.
But before you I surrendered:
And you I love so strongly
As ever was my love
When a free man I walked.
The soul flies homewards
After a throng of Yemenites,
My body, though, is in a foreign land
Imprisoned by the Mekkans.

هَوای مع الركب اليمانينَ مُصعِدٌ جَنيبٌ وجُثمـانی بمكّةَ مُوثَقُ
عَجِبتُ لمسراها وأنّی تخلّصَتْ إلَیَّ وبابُ السجن دونی مُغلَقُ
أتَتْنا فَحَيَّت ثم قامَت فودّعَت فلمّا تولّت كادَتِ النّفسُ تَزهَقُ
فلا تحسبی أنّی تخشّعتُ بعدَكمْ لشیءٍ ولا أنّی من الموت أفرَقُ
ولا أنّ نفسی یزدهیها وعیدُكُمْ ولا أنّنی بالمشیِ فی القَید أخرَقُ
ولكنْ عرَتْنی من هَواك صبابةٌ كما كنت ألقَی منك إذ أنا مُطلَقُ[42]

The idyllic "Interlude" wants now to end, and not only formally: *Finita la commedia.* Such is the entirely non-Arabic title of poem 15, in which the poet attempts to face his frailty in an unmitigated way. What had come before were but "sny iz čudovoho Sxodu"—dream visions coming from the wondrous East,[43] to which he now must say adieu in this manner so full of almost studied pathos. What does not allow him to sink fully into the *fin de siècle* ennui, however, is the intrusion into his poetically saturated sensibility of the fiercest of all the heroic postures in pre-Islamic poetry—the testament of al-Shanfarâ, in which that indomitable brigand-poet asks not to be buried, but to be left to the hyenas at the crossroads. Such a heroic bearing on the part of the Arabian poet makes the Ukrainian poet's sensibility react with unequivocal genre-consciousness, and that genre-consciousness must suffice to explain, and justify, his prefacing the extant Arabic text of the poem, which may be no more than a poetic fragment, with an

[42] Abû Tammâm, *Al-Ḥamâsah*, 1:25–28 (poem 6 in the redaction of al-Marzûqî).
[43] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 71.

additional couplet. The addition not only shows how well he understood the true heroic tone of the Arabic original, but it also turns a merely skillful translation into a quite possibly Ukrainian poem. It turns a translation into a highly organic adaptation, which means that it makes the poem as a whole resonate within a poetic tradition that is no longer exclusively Arabian, but Ukrainian as well. The poem now strikes notes which take its Ukrainian reader back to such native grounds as the characteristically epic opening of the otherwise richly lyrical *Lay of the Host of Ihor*, and even more to the equally epic-lyrical *dumy* of the Cossack period. It is here in particular that Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's diction impresses itself upon the entire rendition of the Arabic poem with its intimately Ukrainian, genre-conscious coloration. This tone is sustained throughout, beginning with "nahadaju sobi ja," to "zdijmut' holovu junac'kyju," to "ljaže temna ničen'ka":

Нагадую собі я передсмертний спів
Героя Ша́нфари в руках у ворогів:
«Не ховайте! бо не суджено
Похорон для мене.
Вийде з мене здобич ласая
В дикої гієни.
Здіймуть голову, — юнацькую
Найважнішу силу.
Зволочу́ть її на роздорож...
Викинуть і тіло.
Там не буде вже сподіванки
На життя і радість.
Зверху ляже темна ніченька
І людська ненависть».[44]

Let me recall the hero Shanfarâ
When in foe's hands he sang his song of death:
Do not bury me, for fate
Holds no burial for me,
But leave my corpse as carrion
For ferine hyena.
The youthful head they will take off,
That strength above strengths,
To the crossroads they will drag it,
And leave a headless corpse.[45]

[44] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 72.

[45] Since Kryms'kyj's version intends to be a poem in its own right rather than

Gone will be all musings
Of life and of joy,
Under the cover of dark night
And human spite.

لا تقبُـــروني إنَّ قبرى محرَّمٌ عليكم ولكـــنْ أبشرى أُمَّ عامِرِ
إذَا احتملوا رأسي وفى الرَّأس أكثَرى وغودر عند الملتقَى ثَمَّ ســـائِرِى
هنـــالك لا أرجو حياةً تَسُرُّنى سجيسَ اللَّيـــالى مُبْسَلاً بالجَرائِرِ[46]

If the fierceness of the Arabian brigand-poet makes Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj shudder, the pristineness and nobility of such untamed, archaic passion also fascinates him (poem 17):

Вовчая натура! дикий заповіт!..
Але чути в йому любую принаду...[47]

A wolf's nature! A savage testament! . . .
But in them there's such sweet attraction.

---

merely a faithful translation, it is only of limited importance to note that he actually swerved from the Arabic text in letting al-Shanfarâ's head end up at the "crossroads." Moreover, such a reading seems to reflect more properly the storied tradition that grew around this poem.

[46] Abû Tammâm, *Al-Ḥamâsah*, 2:24–25. It otherwise appears that the characteristically epic two-liner, which Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj so skillfully put before his translation of the al-Shanfarâ poem, is itself an adaptation of the commentary-like preface that the great German translator of the *Ḥamâsah*, Friedrich Rückert, had added to his own version of the same poem. Thus Rückert:

Schanfara von Esd, nachdem er durch seine Kriegsfrevel die Blutrache von allen Seiten gegen sich aufgeregt hatte.

> Nicht begraben sollt ihr mich! nicht soll man euch gestatten
> mein Begräbnis. O Hyäne, komm mich zu bestatten!,
>
> Wenn man hat hinweggenommen meinen Kopf, darinnen
> ist der beste Teil von mir, und wirft den Rest von hinnen.
>
> Hier hoff ich kein Leben weiter, das mich könn't erquicken,
> wo mich so viel Frevel täglich mit Gefahr umstricken.

[*Hamâsa oder die ältesten arabischen Volkslieder, gesammelt von Abu Tammâm*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1846), 1:180].

[47] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 72.

This attraction to the opposite had already moved the Attic Goethe to translate another fierce poem by al-Shanfarâ's fellow-brigand, Ta'abbaṭa Sharran, and the latter poem had then also been translated, by way of Goethe, into Ukrainian by none other than Ivan Franko, who did not hesitate to call it *An Arabian Duma.*[48] This recognition of a community of genre is therefore more than an orientalist poet-scholar's affectation.

Inwardly strengthened by his excursus into the sublimation of the archaic Arabian confrontation with death, Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj allows his poetic sensibility to return to the calmer waters of elegiac musings—thus what remains of poem 17. There, however, the waters darken and deepen, obliterating every vestigial romanticism and all the other possible forms of contemporary affectation. What remains is expressed in the shortest poem of the "Interlude," which bears the title "Refrain." It takes us, as if in a reassertion of another cyclic reenactment, other than its formal function as refrain, to moods of a mystically calm soul, from before the soul knew turmoil and after it had overcome it. The "Refrain" is thus another negation, qualitatively different from the heroic one, of *finita la commedia.* And if the Arabizing echoes have not ceased ringing in this poem altogether, they have grown discreetly faint, or rather, they have blended fully into the concert of the other discreet voices of contemporary symbolism:

Невидимо я полину по землі
Тихим вітром по запашному зіллі;
Ароматом, повним чару,
Обійму тебе, мій царю, —
Горду голову твою
Опов'ю.[49]

[48] Franko, *Tvory* (1976), 3:320–24. Goethe's own version of Ta'abbaṭa Sharran's fierce poem had a rather programmatic role to play in that German poet's characterization of pre-Islamic Arabia and its lore. He included it in his "Noten und Abhandlungen zu besserem Verständnis des West-östlichen Divans" (Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *West-östlicher Divan* [Frankfurt, 1981], pp. 131–35).

[49] Kryms'kyj, *Pal'move hillja*, p. 73.

Unseen, I'll pass lightly overland
A soft breeze over fragrant green;
With witcheries of redolence
I'll embrace you, my sovereign—
Your head so proud
I'll shroud.

Antiquarian as well as literary-historical reasons, and also more specific, orientalist-scholarly ones, would at this point prod us to pursue Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's poetic itinerary across the remainder of *The Palm Fronds*. If we do not give in to such proddings, however, it is because our present interest in Kryms'kyj is neither antiquarian nor biographical—nor even orientalist-scholarly. It is rather in Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj as that Ukrainian poet who has gone through the experience of an encounter of sensibilities with one "oriental" literature in particular, the Arabic one, and has asserted himself as a poet throughout that experience, emerging at the end of the itinerary both enriched and enriching, and above all never having lost himself as poet.

In the subsequent stages of *The Palm Fronds*, the self-assertive timbre of Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj's poetic voice will become ever more muted—to the extent that ultimately we may no longer speak of his poems, or even of his adaptations, so much as of his translations, in which his excellence as poet has already yielded to superior dictates of textual fidelity, and in which the creative poetic impulse has become a technical facility at the service of other impulses.

In a comprehensive sense, however, the Ukrainian poet-scholar has accomplished something unusual both as a scholar and as an orientalist. He has brought into the literature of his native tongue new visions and new sensibilities in such an organic manner as to mute all resistance on both the giving and the receiving side. If already before him Ivan Franko had translated vastly, and also beautifully, from an almost staggering variety of linguistic and cultural spheres, those translations were often self-consciously programmatic and exploratory incursions into the universality of sensibility—but they were not necessarily Ivan Franko's poetic lifeblood or credo. Thus, no matter how charming, and how Ukrainian, one or another individual instance from among Franko's fifty once-removed translations of poems originally Arabic ultimately turn out to be—and one such instance ought to be the poem "Starist'" (Old Age):

Ах, літа-літа
Переможнії!
Як же в суставах
Причинили ви
Тяжку дрож мені!

Що давніше я,
Як молодшим був,
То ходив-ходив
Не втомляючись.

А тепер лежу
Або як хожу,
То дрижу-дрижу
Й не схиляючись.[50]

O, years—years
Overpowering,
How in my joints
You cause
All this trembling!

Though in days gone by,
When much younger yet,
I could walk and walk
And never grow weak,

Here I now do lie . . .
Or when I do walk,
I tremble—I tremble
And then bends the stalk.

—they are not integral to Ukrainian sensibility in a formally innovative and enriching sense, but, rather, they enter that sensibility eclectically, due to their facile, propensive assimilability.

The opening up of the Ukrainian poetic sensibility not just to the new topicality of Arabic, as well as Persian, poetry, but also to the Hermetic sense of form which that poetry presupposes, is the accomplishment of Ahatanhel Kryms'kyj, and in that he stands somewhere very close to Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan.*

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[50] Franko, *Tvory*, 8 (1977): 149.