

\_\_\_\_\_ **THE MUSIC OF SATAN AND THE BEDEVILED WORLD**

**An Essay on Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky**

By Bohdan Rubchak

Photographs show a tall, elegant, fastidious man in a stiff collar, with a carefully curled mustache and a painstakingly shaped tuft of hair under his lower lip. One observes in that trim, impeccably groomed figure a certain reserve, a distance, perhaps even a stiffness much more real than the obvious artificiality of pose in photographs from the turn of the century. Memoirs about Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky draw a similar portrait. Courteous and friendly to everybody, but especially to people of the “lower classes,” showing at times much warmth and sincerity, Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky nevertheless always seemed to be alone. Hlib Lazarevsky gives us the following sketch of the writer:

Tall. Slim, with slightly stooped shoulders. A bald or shaved head, against which lay a pair of small, flat ears. A pale face, as if powdered, with regular features and dark eyes, whose glance was sometimes sad ... and at other times kindled by self-assured, even somewhat arrogant and contemptuous sparks.<sup>1</sup>

The great poet Pavlo Tychyna described his first meeting with Kotsiubynsky at a concert in Chernihiv, when Tychyna himself was still a student. Kotsiubynsky chatted and joked with the young poet, warmly encouraging his talent. But when the music began, Tychyna stole a glance at Kotsiubynsky: “He alone sat perfectly tuned, conscious of his worth.”<sup>2</sup> And the sadness that Lazarevsky observed seldom left his eyes. As Maksim Gorky noted in his obituary of Kotsiubynsky, he always took it for granted that all people are lonely, and that death marks the dimensions of human existence more distinctly than life.<sup>3</sup>

Kotsiubynsky’s reserve and his profound sense of loneliness on the one hand and, on the other, his constant desire to break through the transparent but diamond-hard wall that seemed to enclose him and to meet the world and other people halfway form the most obvious ambiguity among the many that surround his person and shape the foundation of his work. His calm and dignified exterior seemed to conceal conflicting currents of tremendous power, and similar currents are hidden under the seemingly calm style of his work — a style always balanced but balanced precariously, often on the brink of exploding with an uncontrolled torrent of passionate, furious words.

Is it not such barely tolerable inner storms that drove Kotsiubynsky to search for something diametrically opposite to his highly cultured, carefully attired, and impeccably mannered persona? Moving through the Gogolesque provincialism of Chernihiv, he seemed to seek his other self in the exotic Moldavian and Tatar peasants, in the precarious ways of life of assassins, henchmen, or revolutionary conspirators, and, finally, in his lasting love affair with the wild, irresponsible, and romantic Hutsuls. Perhaps the openly passionate spirits of the Hutsuls represented for him an externalization of his own secretly passionate nature, thus promising an emotional and creative catharsis, and some miraculous rebirth.

A conflict between a sense of duty, bordering on self-sacrifice, and the barely repressed longing to escape the demands of other people into the unbounded freedom of poetic reverie rent Kotsiubynsky's life and provided a dialectical pattern for many of his stories. A sense of guilt, expressed implicitly in his work and explicitly in his correspondence, accompanied his days and many a sleepless night. He felt compelled, on the one hand, to punish himself for each moment devoted to the weaving of reveries in patterns of words at the expense of other people's needs; on the other hand, he felt driven to expiate each unit of creative energy that he "wasted" on his family, on social obligations, and on political activity. He regretted the long hours that he had to sacrifice to a variety of dull jobs, which provided financial support for the large number of people whom he encouraged to depend upon him. Kotsiubynsky's waverings between the life of writing and the life of action, incidentally, reflect with a unique intensity the situation of Ukrainian literature of his time, when writers considered it their historical destiny to become political and social leaders, and consequently felt guilty about the time spent at their manuscripts. More distantly, such hesitations echo the entire European literary scene, struggling as it was between the Ivory Tower of Art and the noisy streets of social and political commitment.

Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky was born on 17 September 1864 in Zamostia, a suburb of the city of Vinnytsia. His father was a minor government official in the bureaucracy of the Empire. In the words of Kotsiubynsky himself, his father was "of a sanguine disposition, full of eternal dreams that never came true, a temperamental but good man."<sup>4</sup> He was not, however, a dependable provider, although there were quite a few people for whom to provide: he moved from job to job, and from town to town, until—discouraged by the string of failures that was his life—he left his family in 1882 and soon afterward died of alcoholism. About his mother Kotsiubynsky wrote:

she is of a complex, subtle, and profound spiritual structure: a good woman, uncommonly loving and capable of great self-sacrifice.... I grew up under the influence of my mother, to whom I have always been closer than to my father. Everybody says that we are similar not only in appearance, but also in character and tastes.<sup>5</sup>

Shortly before her husband abandoned the family, Kotsiubynsky's mother went blind, and Mykhailo cared for her throughout her life.

In spite of frequent relocations, Kotsiubynsky managed to receive a fairly decent education. He initially had a private tutor and later entered a grammar school in the town of Bar. A childhood friend has left us the following description of the boy: "[he] was ... always neat and immaculately dressed. He was a

good pupil and was very attentive and diligent.”<sup>6</sup> In 1876, Kotsiubynsky enrolled in a high school level theological seminary in Sharhorod, from which he transferred in 1881 to a similar school in Kamianets-Podilsky.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, priests’ and teachers’ seminaries and secondary schools throughout the Empire, particularly in Ukraine, were hornets’ nests of clandestine revolutionary activity. The educational establishment in Kamianets-Podilsky seems to have been no exception. Kotsiubynsky joined student protests against the oppressive policies of the government toward the lower classes of society, and although his involvement was marginal, his name was entered on the “black lists” of the tsarist police, and police surveillance of his person continued off and on throughout his life. He became even more of a “suspect character” when, between 1892 and 1897, he engaged in political activity as a member of the Brotherhood of the Followers of Taras, a clandestine organization that stood for Ukrainian autonomy and radical economic reforms.

His mother’s blindness and the separation of his parents put the brunt of responsibility for the welfare of the six-member family on Kotsiubynsky’s shoulders. Forced to leave school, and with no hopes of further schooling, Kotsiubynsky dutifully set about to educate himself. His erudition in literature and psychology grew from year to year, and he occasionally liked to flaunt his unusually wide reading. He was particularly interested in the French and Scandinavian literatures because, in his opinion, they provided a wider scope than Slavic writing.<sup>7</sup> Of Russian writers, his favorite was Dostoevsky, but some influences of Turgenev and Chekhov are evident in his mature work. As for Ukrainian literature, he knew it thoroughly. After his formative years as a writer, his sympathies shifted to the side of his contemporaries who opposed the older “epic” novel: Ivan Franko, Lesia Ukrainka, Vasyl Stefanyk, Olha Kobylanska, Volodymyr Samiilenko, and Marko Cheremshyna. The pervasive influence of Franko’s prose on Kotsiubynsky’s work becomes obvious at the first reading of the two writers. Of the older “epic” novels, some echoes of Panas Myrny’s *The Trollop* can be found in his older stories.

After leaving school in 1882, Kotsiubynsky settled in Vinnytsia, and eked out a living as a private tutor in the city itself and among the country gentry in neighboring villages. It was then that he began to think seriously about writing. His first story, “Andrii Soloveiko, or Learning as Light and Ignorance as Darkness” (1884), shows a young beginner, well read in the nineteenth-century Ukrainian prose of the “realist ethnographic” tradition, but without exceptional promise. All of Kotsiubynsky’s early output, in fact, is purely derivative and “literary.” The main reason for this seems to be his earnest effort to approach “real life” (especially in the sphere of the intellectuals’ responsibilities toward the peasants) not on the basis of personal observation but along the conventionalized, standardized tracks of the nineteenth-century Ukrainian novel. It was not for him to express his youthful energy in rebellion; such rebellion had to mature in an ordered, dialectical development. Searching for his native forms of expression, which refused (or were not allowed) to reveal themselves in a sudden eruption of epiphany, young Kotsiubynsky tried his hand in various areas: lyrical poetry, children’s verse, historiography (he began a study of the intellectual history of seventeenth-century Ukraine), ethnography, newspaper reporting, and even art (some of his drawings were published in a children’s magazine). Perhaps because of his tremendous sense of discipline, he devoted much energy to translation in those early years. It was not, however, a desire for success (success, even a modest literary career, was

a futile dream in his circumstances), but an inbred sense of duty toward his calling that kept young Kotsiubynsky chained to his writing table after twelve-hour days at his tutoring jobs or later at an office, trying one thing and another, crossing out, throwing away, starting over, and patiently searching.

Perhaps feeling uneasy over those long evenings spent writing, Kotsiubynsky would sporadically return to his role as a man of action. After he had abandoned his early attempts at direct revolutionary activity, he tried to work from inside the system. In 1888, he got himself elected to the city council of Vinnytsia, but with the termination of his office in 1890, he never again returned to official politics, feeling an almost physical revulsion for the people engaged in it. At about that time, however, the name of Vitalii Borovyk, a leader of the previously mentioned Brotherhood of the Followers of Taras, begins to crop up in Kotsiubynsky's correspondence. Between 1892 and 1897, he was deeply involved in the clandestine activities of that underground movement, agitating for Ukrainian independence among workers of the phylloxera commission, with which he travelled at the time. The stories "Kho" (1894) and "The Emissary from the Black King" (1897) echo the ideology of that organization.

Kotsiubynsky's last attempt at public service took place in 1906, when he let himself be elected head of the Chernihiv branch of the influential cultural and educational organization Prosvita ("Enlightenment"), which undertook semi-clandestine patriotic activities throughout Ukraine, establishing illegal Ukrainian-language libraries, reading rooms, and even village schools. The dutiful Kotsiubynsky took that post extremely seriously, devoting to it every free moment of his time. But, as began to happen more and more frequently in his life, bitter disappointment followed on the heels of feverish activity. Because of adverse conditions within the Empire, the Ukrainian liberal intelligentsia was becoming demoralized and afraid. Kotsiubynsky grew to hate such lassitude and timidity in his countrymen: with each passing day, they failed more and more to measure up to the high standards that he imposed on himself, on his nation, and on humanity. "Having left my study for the wide world," he wrote to a friend, "I keep being capsized by underwater rocks that I did not notice earlier."<sup>8</sup> The wide world as such, however, seemed to hide mysterious dangers under beautiful surfaces, which were intent on frustrating the poet's dream of perfection. The writing table, on the other hand, presented its own dangers of escapism and cowardice, of blindness and betrayal.

Although Kotsiubynsky harbored ambiguous emotions toward the world of political and social action, there are no ambiguities in his unmitigated hatred of the corrupt world of tsarist bureaucracy in which he had to make a living. It is small wonder that in all of his writings, the world of greed and gain symbolizes the enemy of the poetic and of the heroic, which themselves are sometimes opposed to each other in his later stories. In order to understand Kotsiubynsky's concept of the world of gain as being contrary to everything that is dignified and decent in human life, one need only glance at the numerous humiliating letters which that proud man was forced to write to employers who owed him money, to prospective employers, or to casual acquaintances who might have heard of an available job.

In 1892, Kotsiubynsky's literary friends found him summer employment with a government commission investigating phylloxera, a plague that decimated the lucrative vineyards in the south of the Empire, particularly in the Bessarabian strip of Moldavia and in the Crimea. For the next five years,

Kotsiubynsky would leave Ukraine for the south in March and return in October or November. He had great moral qualms about the work of the commission, as it destroyed the contaminated vineyards without compensating the poor vine growers. That situation, a glaring result of the inefficiency of the Empire, and the liberal intellectual's worry over it are strikingly embodied in Kotsiubynsky's story "For the Common Good," published in 1896. Kotsiubynsky wrote ten stories inspired by his travels with the commission; some of them belong to his very best work.

In 1897 Kotsiubynsky finally landed a permanent position as a "superior clerk" at the Statistical Bureau of the County Council of Chernihiv. He remained in Chernihiv for the rest of his life. The work at the Statistical Bureau was unbearably dull and exacting; it sapped Kotsiubynsky's energy, his health, and his will to live. To this was added his increasing hatred of the shallowness, the crassness, and unscrupulousness of the administration, of his superiors, and even of his fellow workers. In letter after letter, he complained that the Statistical Bureau did not leave him enough energy for writing. And yet he was quite good at his job.

Never did Kotsiubynsky forgive the world the sin of sapping the poet's lifeblood in exchange for a crust of bread. Although in his writing the spheres of poetic reverie and social action constantly vie for supremacy *within* authentic existence, the sphere of gain — which becomes the bedeviled Gogolian world of greed — is always *outside* of authentic existence, standing against it in mortal enmity. There was an island of authentic existence, however, that Kotsiubynsky found in that sea of pettiness and mediocrity which was his daily work. He befriended a young co-worker, a Russian woman of great culture and sensitivity by the name of Aleksandra Aplaksina. His letters to her, even in the brutally censored state in which they have come down to us, reveal more of his thoughts and emotions than all of his other correspondence, including that addressed to his wife.

Kotsiubynsky's responsibilities were compounded by his marriage in 1896 to Vira Deisha, a high school teacher of French and somewhat of a progressive activist. At the end of that year, their first son was born, followed later by another son and two daughters. His new family, however, did not terminate his financial obligations toward his blind mother and his younger brothers and sisters.

The strain of hard work, of constant anxiety, and (perhaps most important) of unmitigated inner struggles and spiritual self-denials began to show its detrimental effect on Kotsiubynsky's health as middle age approached. Overworked by nervous tension, his tired heart threatened to give way. In 1906, on the advice of physicians, Kotsiubynsky took a six-month tour of Western Europe. Three years later he made a pilgrimage to the Isle of Capri, which was subsequently to become for him a sort of sacred land. (In the late story "The Dream" [1911], Capri becomes the landscape of the poet-hero's dreams, violently contrasting with his dull and provincial waking life.) Kotsiubynsky wrote to his wife from Capri:

This is a paradise on earth.... The landscapes are incredibly beautiful.... There is no dust to be seen anywhere, and the cleanliness is so ideal, even in the streets, that it amazes me. The air is so fragrant with mountain grass that it intoxicates me. Most important, it is quiet here. As if people did not exist.<sup>9</sup>

We note the three most important features of “paradise,” as envisaged by Kotsiubynsky: the intoxicating proximity of nature, particularly of mountains; the quiet that gives the welcome illusion of nonexistence of people; and cleanliness. These qualifications are so frequently repeated in Kotsiubynsky’s work that they become *leitmotifs*. In many of his stories, Kotsiubynsky writes almost obsessively about cleanliness; it is virtually “next to godliness,” whereas disorder and untidy appearance, let alone bodily dirt, are sure signs of moral degeneration or downright depravity.

In 1910, Kotsiubynsky spent his second summer on Capri, and he returned to the island for a third visit in the autumn and winter of 1911. Toward the end of his life, he began to equate his trips to Capri with his poetic inspiration, and his artistic productivity seemed to grow more and more dependent upon such journeys. His enthusiasm for the beauty of the island knew no bounds. Kotsiubynsky describes the sense of liberation that the island afforded him in a letter to Mykhailo Zhuk:

Somehow your whole organism becomes filled with the aroma of the sea, of flowers; you are so imbued with beauty that you forget that you are a person, a fairly impure being, and think of yourself as a fragrant plant.<sup>10</sup>

The colorful peasants also fascinated him; he found them to be a basically pagan people, an integral part of the nature that surrounded them, for whom the metaphysical was contained in the immanence of the earth and for whom religious celebrations were nothing but a game, a profound love of theater. It is difficult to miss here an analogy to the Hutsuls, as Kotsiubynsky saw and described them.

Kotsiubynsky’s love for the peasants of Capri did not always extend to the people from other walks of life whom he met on the island. During his first stay on Capri, he became acquainted with the Russian writer Maksim Gorky, who made the island his permanent residence in exile, and the two men became friends. Gorky insisted that Kotsiubynsky meet all the Russian émigrés and tourists, a motley lot who constantly passed through Gorky’s villa. Kotsiubynsky soon grew weary of the conversational bouts about God and country that Russian intellectuals stage with such gusto. I suspect that he also grew weary of their literary chatter and that it soon became for him a caricature of literature. “... I do my best to run away from all this,” he wrote to his wife, “in order to spend more time with nature.”<sup>11</sup> A year later he complained to her:

Acquaintanceships tire me. Yesterday, for example, Gorky and his wife came to my room, dragged me out to the seashore, then hauled me by force to their house for dinner.... I am simply afraid of such guardianship.<sup>12</sup>

He believed, doubtless, that such “guardianship” was both tiring and humiliating. An interesting example of what Kotsiubynsky must have endured at Gorky’s is the insultingly patronizing tone of a well-intentioned letter that a second-rate reviewer and editor, Amfiteatrov, a frequent guest at the villa, wrote to Gorky on the Russian translation of Kotsiubynsky’s short stories:

What a nice writer that *khokhol*<sup>13</sup> Kotsiubynsky is.... One notes the soft tones of Turgenev's tutelage, although he has read some Knut Hamsun, too. He is terribly nice!<sup>14</sup>

In the fall of 1910, upon his return from Capri, Kotsiubynsky visited the Carpathian Mountains, about which he had read and thought so much. In his mind, the Carpathian Mountains were a darker, a more mysterious, and more demonic magic land than the sunny, joyous, harmonious Capri. In an important letter to Gorky, he vividly conveys his fascination with the region and its people:

If you only knew what a captivating, almost fairy-tale corner of the world this is, with its dark-green mountains and eternally whispering mountain streams. It is pure and fresh, as if it were born yesterday. The costumes, the customs, the whole structure of life of these nomad Hutsuls, who spend their summers on mountain peaks, are so unique and beautiful that one feels as if one had been transported to some new and unknown world.<sup>15</sup>

Kotsiubynsky describes the Hutsuls in another letter written to Gorky during his second visit to the Carpathian Mountains in the summer of 1912:

The Hutsul is a profound pagan; he spends all his life battling evil spirits that dwell in forests, mountains, and waters. He uses Christianity only to decorate his pagan cult.<sup>16</sup>

In the summer of 1912, after *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* had already been published, Kotsiubynsky returned to the Carpathian Mountains for the third time in order to gather material for a new novel that he planned to write. During each stay in the mountains, he worked hard, interviewing old Hutsuls, writing down their songs, attending folk festivals and celebrations, and filling his notebooks with legends and myths. He took exhausting trips to the mountain pasturelands and isolated villages, not giving a thought to his failing heart.

While Kotsiubynsky complained (more and more frequently with the passage of time) about his talent drying up, about not having enough energy to write, and about having written nothing of significance, his fame steadily grew throughout Ukraine, and his work gained recognition abroad. Beginning in 1906, translations of his stories appeared in German, Hungarian, Romanian, Estonian, and Latvian. In 1909, a small collection of his works was published in Swedish, and a year later in Czech. The year 1911 was particularly generous to Kotsiubynsky. A number of his stories were translated into Polish, and a two-volume Russian translation was published by Gorky's publishing concern, Znanie. Encouraged by Kotsiubynsky's success at home and abroad, the Kievian Organization for the Aid of Literature and Art awarded him a modest yearly stipend, which enabled him to leave his odious post at the Statistical Bureau to devote his full time to writing. Such a generous gesture on the part of his people deeply moved Kotsiubynsky, and he henceforth felt accountable to them for every moment of his time. None of this, however, allayed his insecurity as a writer. *Shadows*, for example, made him quite unhappy; he complained that the planned short story had grown into a verbose, swollen work,



that one day he would have to sit down and rewrite it, that it was finally nothing but a bagatelle, a mere surface sketch of the mysterious and profound life of the Hutsuls.

During his last stay in the Carpathian Mountains, in the summer of 1912, Kotsiubynsky's health began to deteriorate at an alarming rate. Doubtless, his sudden release from the despised job and the resulting fever of work contributed to that sharp decline. He returned to Chernihiv by an effort of sheer willpower and a few months later entered the clinic at the University of Kiev. In the beginning of 1913, now hopelessly ill, he was sent home. In the last weeks of his life, he still dreamed of writing his "major" novel about the Hutsuls. He remarked in a letter to Hnatiuk:

It is time for me, I think, to turn into wood or dust. Well, that is all right by me. I am only sorry that all the material on the Hutsuls will be wasted. But then, perhaps we shall get together again and laugh at our present prognoses.<sup>17</sup>

Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky died on 12 April 1913 at his home in Chernihiv.

Although Kotsiubynsky's anxious self-criticism often resembled self-flagellation, it was not unreasonable of him to refuse to have most of his early efforts published in his lifetime. Much in them shows a young writer's desire to write at all costs, except at the risk of journeying into his own self. He dutifully followed the example of the "masterpieces" of nineteenth-century Ukrainian prose — models which in the light of his subsequent work proved to be only too distant to the nature of his own inspiration.

As we have seen, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the political situation in Ukraine demanded that the writer assume the role of civic leader and educator. Critics tirelessly pointed to the example of Taras Shevchenko, forgetting that his genius for spiritual leadership was so organically a part of his creative personality that he himself was unaware of his role in the historical destiny of his nation until the very end of his life. Writers did their best to produce reading material "for the people," with the noble and necessary intention of raising their readers' level of culture, education, national consciousness, and political and economic awareness. Fairly late in his career, Kotsiubynsky himself was criticized by Panas Myrny for wasting too much effort on Moldavians, Tatars, and sundry foreigners, when Ukrainians had enough problems of their own.<sup>18</sup>

The writers' anxieties about social responsibility and their adherence to cultural traditions were minor problems, however, in view of the outer controls of Russian censorship, which increased as the century drew to a close. Besides their vigilance in matters of political orthodoxy, the censors did everything in their power to keep Ukrainian literature at an "ethnographic," "peasant," or "folksy" level. To avoid such humiliating confrontations with the authorities, central-Ukrainian writers published a great number of their works in Western Ukraine; the controls of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were incomparably more civilized than those across its eastern border. In addition to these obvious reasons, Kotsiubynsky preferred to send his works to Lviv, rather than to Kiev, because, as his career progressed, he became more and more attracted to the Western Ukrainian writers of his generation, particularly to innovators like Stefanyk, Kobyljanska, and Cheremshyna.

Kotsiubynsky's early work is marred by a number of serious flaws. For example, having taken the "educational value" of literature with a much more naive seriousness than his seasoned masters had done, he would suddenly

interrupt his narrative to preach a sermon on ignorance as the basis of all other vices. Such digressions stemmed from young Kotsiubynsky's simplistic approach to the serious social problems of his time. His first surviving story, "Andrii Soloveiko, or Learning as Light and Ignorance as Darkness" (written in 1884 but published forty years later), is a good example of this. The author presents a young villager who, destroyed by his oppressive environment, turns to petty crime. Having been caught and exiled from the village by the ignorant (and therefore cruel) peasants, the hero finds himself in the city, is adopted by a liberal intellectual who insists on giving him an education, becomes a teacher (and therefore an excellent man), and returns to the village to show the light of learning to his recent tormentors. We see that the hero thirsts for a *something else*, but we also note that such an alternative actuality is still inauthentically imagined by the young writer.

The long story "A Common-Law Marriage" (1891) also suffers from the deficiencies characteristic of the author's early work. But it is incomparably better than anything he had done until then and may be considered his true beginning in literature: here he touches upon complex philosophical and psychological issues that would find their flowering in his "exotic" stories and their fruition in *Shadows*.

The most interesting thing about "A Common-Law Marriage" is certainly not its trite plot but the rather subtle characterization of Oleksandra, which reveals for the first time Kotsiubynsky's talent as a psychological writer of vertiginous depths. Oleksandra has a restless, poetic nature. Throughout the story, she is shown to be extraordinarily fond of words. At the same time, however, she is enmeshed in the nets of the world. She does not hesitate to use deceit to get what she wants, she loves luxury, and is slovenly, unclean, and careless about her household duties. Perhaps in spite of Kotsiubynsky's overt intention, the reader is left with much sympathy for Oleksandra—certainly more than for the passive, vacuous Nastia.

The thematic structure that supported many of Kotsiubynsky's later works began to emerge in this story, although it seems that Kotsiubynsky himself did not yet know how to organize and align its various components. Nastia is an objectlike "angel" whose only function is to catalyze Hnat's innate aspirations to *something else*—to beauty and purity, to peace as the absence of contradiction, and, finally, to the "music" that is implied in his last name, Muzyka. Oleksandra, on the other hand, has something of black magic about her—magic that conquers nature in the name of greed—which would be artistically developed in the brilliant characterization of Iura and Palahna in *Shadows*. But she also has about her a touch of the poet—not an ethereal, but an earthly poet. In *Shadows*, this will be the domain of Marichka, who will assume at the same time Nastia's role of inspirer, but as an active and not a passive muse. We see that at this level of his development Kotsiubynsky did not yet separate, let alone polarize, the realms of white and black magic, or what shall be called in the remainder of this essay personal myth and public myth. A public myth is defined here as a received, permanently structured set of signs pointing to a preternatural reality and answering to the prejudices of the masses, with which the world controls individual freedom. A personal myth—the ultimate embodiment of freedom and hence the exact opposite of the public myth—is the vague aura of limitless poetic reverie grounded in archetypal remnants within the individual consciousness, which seeks, and

sometimes does not find, its unique expression in the permanent medium of language.

The gift of the creating word, which Oleksandra seems to possess on a primitive level, implies restlessness, the clash of contradictions, and a longing for the ultimate horizons of existence; it would always remain for Kotsiubynsky a dangerous gift. But in his mature work, the creating word would be surrounded by subtle ambiguities, while in "A Common-Law Marriage," it was still impatiently relegated to the negative aspects of life. Although in his later stories the creating word would by no means lose for him its mysterious hazards, he assumed all risks of this implication. We should keep in mind, by the way, that the risks of the creating word were Kotsiubynsky's personal risks. The creating word—his own word—not only reveals and embodies the ultimate horizons of existence (which for Kotsiubynsky seems to be frightening enough in itself), but also saps the writer's own lived time, which, as Kotsiubynsky frequently stated, should be devoted to action within the world of actuality. On the other hand, the creating word, in its all-consuming jealousy, does not permit the worship of any other gods. And so the writer who writes, even more than the dreamer who does not (but who worships the word nevertheless), becomes a traitor over and over again, as if he were caught in a mirrored hall of infinite infidelities.

Thus the characters of "A Common-Law Marriage" point to the development of Kotsiubynsky's later heroes, who would remain in the center of opposing forces radiating from *the* world and from *his* world. Because of a catalyzing agent (nature, music, woman), the heavy film of actuality begins to dissolve before the hero's eyes in order to afford him a glimpse of the profoundest depths of existence; then it closes upon itself again and forever. What is even more tragic is that the actions of the hero are not chosen in freedom but are governed by fate. Kotsiubynsky implies, in a romantic tradition, that certain individuals are chosen to be cursed with an unquenchable longing for the ultimate horizons of existence. Like Shelley and other romantics, Kotsiubynsky regards them as "poets," even if they do not actually write verse. Once their longing, awakened by an outside catalyst, emerges to the surface of their consciousness, they are doomed to enter a vicious circle that will open only onto their death. Slowly the world of actuality, which they attempted to renounce, veils their personal myth with the public myth of its own "normality." Having lost both their vision and their ability to subsist blindly and mutely in the actual world, such heroes desperately attempt, and absurdly fail, to return to the fold of society. What is more, their own vision may reappear as a caricature of itself, as an antagonist who now has joined forces with the black magic—the public myth—of the world. In *Shadows*, Marichka, Ivan's inspiration, comes back to haunt him as a wood nymph.

The ultimate horizons of existence cannot be divorced from existence itself, since they emerge from it and become its possible-impossible extremities. The vision of Kotsiubynsky's heroes, therefore, never floats in supra-terrestrial regions of mysticism but remains rooted in the soil which has not been spoiled by human dirt. Even the "radical" dream world of the hero of the late story "The Dream" (1911) is implicitly based on the landscapes of Capri. Following the romantics, Kotsiubynsky is consistent in showing that every transcendent act of the imagination must begin and end in the immanence of nature. The opposing energies that clash in Kotsiubynsky's stories, moreover, play themselves out not only within nature but against the accurately

observed and meticulously described background of daily life, be it the familiarity of the mundane existence in a Ukrainian provincial town or the otherness of the exotic, colorful life in a Moldavian, Tatar, or Hutsul village. Such settings, obviously, transcend the function of background. As early as "A Common-Law Marriage," the setting not only sets the psychological mood but almost speaks *for* the characters, saying practically everything that the story wants to say. This is particularly evident in Kotsiubynsky's later "exotic" stories.

In those stories with "exotic" settings, based on Kotsiubynsky's travels through the Bessarabian part of Moldavia and in the Crimea with the phylloxera commission, the beginnings of psychological exploration seen in the best of his early works are deepened and advanced; simultaneously, however, the surface is greatly expanded and enriched. Since surface and depth in a literary work imply each other, Kotsiubynsky experiments with the possibilities of indirect rendition of the characters' psychological states by word paintings of their environments, embodied in a style of heightened musical organization. His detailed descriptions of deliberately localized, meticulously grounded landscapes of Bessarabian Moldavia, the Crimea, and later Capri and the Carpathian Mountains—renditions embodied in striking metaphors—put the reader vicariously in the midst of those exotic landscapes. In an important ambiguity, however, those landscapes *are* distant and exotic, removing the action of the given story from the reader's own daily affairs. Such distancing of the settings on the one hand and their painstakingly accurate localization on the other force the reader to observe the vague but nevertheless excruciatingly intense desires of Kotsiubynsky's heroes from an unexpected point of view. This distanced point of view, however, does not alienate the heroes, but, on the contrary, draws the heroes' psyches much more closely to the reader's own experiences than a commonly shared world would—not by identification but by analogy. At the same time, the yearning for distance and otherness, both in the author and in the reader, is at least partially sublimated by the imaginative figuration of an exotic location. Such dialectics between sameness and difference are particularly evident in the late story "The Dream," in which the actual landscapes of Capri are used as building material for the hero's dreams.

Much has been said about Kotsiubynsky's masterful use of color in his mature work, particularly in the "exotic" stories.<sup>19</sup> Kotsiubynsky himself invited such observations. For example, he gave many of his stories subtitles borrowed from the more casual genres of the pictorial arts: "sketch," "water-color," "small picture" (*obrazok*), and "miniature." Such confounding of genres and even of modes of artistic expression in a single work was in vogue throughout the nineteenth century. However, Kotsiubynsky's systematic justification of the given subtitle, taken from the pictorial arts by the structure and devices of the text itself, goes far beyond mere imitation, let alone empty catering to literary fashions. The painter Stepan Butnyk recalls conversations with Kotsiubynsky on the importance of "painting" in literature. A writer, Kotsiubynsky explained to Butnyk, should "use" colors as carefully and as personally as a painter develops them on his palette; he should not only know how to evoke in words the subtlest, the most nuanced shades that have no name in any language, but also be able to create harmonious color schemes and to put them at the service of the psychological tone of a given moment in the story.<sup>20</sup>

The “painterly” outlines—shimmering and vague—of Kotsiubynsky’s landscapes are rendered with a great deal of help from music, the other nonverbal art always present in his work. Moreover, while the element of painting in Kotsiubynsky’s style pretends, sometimes with too much eagerness, to serve the visible aspect of reality, the insistent musicality of his style evokes the world’s invisible phase, underlying and predicating the visible. Like the pre-Socratics, Kotsiubynsky believes music to be the ordering and unifying energy of the universe, and therefore the highest embodiment of man’s longing for the ultimate horizons of existence. The “music of the spheres” is the organizing force of the universe; the music of language is the organizing force of a literary work. As the “painterly” and musical effects are heightened in Kotsiubynsky’s “exotic” stories, the need for a conventional plot structure decreases; what holds the story together is not its narrative line but the structural factors inherent in its visual effects, as they relate to each other in careful and intricate musical arrangements.

The “exotic” stories continue Kotsiubynsky’s basic thematic concerns. The picturesque and “romantic” Bessarabian peasants, for example, reflect his growing concern with the primitive mentality that is opposed in principle to the ideas of education and progress. In “Pe cuptior” (Moldavian for “On the Oven”), he describes the village dance; he is both fascinated and repelled by the sweat, the bodily dirt, the dust, the workmanlike seriousness of the dancers, their red, glistening faces, the movement of controlled ritualistic gestures, and the unbridled, animalistic emotion that constantly runs under those gestures and motivates them. The elegant, fastidious Kotsiubynsky hesitantly approaches the sphere of elemental passions; never, not even in *Shadows*, does he dare to give himself over to that sphere completely, since for him lust is an offshoot of the black magic of the world. But, on the other hand, the dreamer in him knows that within the primitive sensuality of young peasant bodies, the deep music of the great god Pan sounds with its secret, atavistic energy. As the dreamer in Kotsiubynsky becomes increasingly disenchanted with the “virtues” of progress, he begins a cautious investigation of more hazardous but perhaps more authentic alternatives.

Kotsiubynsky passes harsh judgment on the superstitions and prejudices of peasant communities and their public myths, as opposed to the personal myths of his dreamer-heroes. We see such censure in the entirely successful “exotic” story “The Witch” (1898, which remained unpublished during the author’s lifetime). The plot revolves around an unattractive and lonely Bessarabian girl who wanders about in her father’s vineyards, pretending to be a beautiful princess. True to her dream, she proceeds to fall in love with the handsomest boy in the village. In her reveries she becomes someone else, an idealized double of her own humble self, an Other. Thus begins Kotsiubynsky’s important psychological concern, which we shall meet quite frequently in his later stories: the interiorization of the Other within a single individual. Because of her lonely habits and her “otherness”—the “otherness” of the dreamer, which the collective treats as treason—the village avails itself of a public myth to brand her as a witch. It is only after a series of “tests,” including a public examination of her naked body for a “tail,” that she is allowed to shed her dreams and to return to the collective. The need for humility, even for self-abasement, which the girl experiences, along with the limitless possibilities of her reveries, hints at the spiritual dilemma that afflicts all dreamer-heroes in Kotsiubynsky’s work; when crisis strikes, she desperately

wants to surrender her dreadful "otherness" and return to a society in which there is room for witches but no room for dreamers. What is more, she begins to identify herself with the image that the public myth has bestowed upon her, and she begs to be allowed to grovel at the feet of the world in order to convince herself of her own "normality."

Kotsiubynsky, in tune with the anthropologists of his time, regards public myth as a means of the primitive society to enforce the standards of the "normal" and the "average," supposedly established by the "ancestors." He disagrees with the anthropologists, however, as to the commonweal of such controls: he castigates the public myth as a weapon of the collective in its relentless effort to discipline and subdue the "otherness" of the dreamer. Small wonder that he often paints the collective itself as a threatening beast.

The central and by far the best story of the "exotic" group is "On the Rock" (1902). The action is set among the Crimean Tatars, and the plot, as in "A Common-Law Marriage," is the eternal triangle of husband, wife, and lover. But in this story the plot counts for even less than in Kotsiubynsky's previous work; it simply serves as a containing border around a field in which magnificent images and the slow rhythm of the narration embody the reveries of the hero and heroine. Here we have a continuation and advancement of what has previously been called Kotsiubynsky's writing-for-itself; we shall find its consummation in such later masterpieces as "Intermezzo" (1908) or "On the Island" (1912).

Ali, a young fisherman and stranger in the village, falls in love with Fatima, whom the rich butcher Mamet had bought from her parents and married with her total, animal-like indifference. (Such indifference, as seen also in the story "In Satan's Bonds" [1899], seems to be in Kotsiubynsky's eyes the normal emotional state of the enslaved Tatar woman.) The lovers escape from the village and are mercilessly and methodically hunted by Mamet and his clan. Fatima falls from a rock to her death (as Marichka does in *Shadows*), and Ali dies under Mamet's butcher knife. Beneath the scaffolding of that trite triangle we again encounter Kotsiubynsky's basic thematic structure—the much profounder triangle of the dreamer, his catalyst, and the world. What is even more interesting is that here we have a double direction of the energies flowing between the dreamer and his inspiration: although Fatima is more passive than Ali, he catalyzes her awakening almost as powerfully as she catalyzes his. By giving a part of themselves, they awaken the Other in each other.

The huts of the Tatar village, built of rock and covered by flat, earthen roofs, seem to blend into the dull and deadly landscape around them, a landscape that in *Shadows* becomes the spiritualized, metaphysical wasteland of the *aridnyk*. This is the kingdom of Mamet, the representative of the world. When his wife Fatima runs away from him, he treats the escape of the dreamer as a theft of his goods. Ali, the "thief" of Mamet's "property," has the soul of a poet, and music is the means of his artistic expression. His native element is the limitless expanse of the sea, in opposition to the dry sand of Mamet's village. Ali came to the village by sea, and the sea will accept the return of his corpse. As if foreseeing that her fate (both love and death) will arrive by sea, Fatima is both fascinated and repelled by it.

The sea not only opposes the aridity of Mamet's kingdom, but also acts as the counterpart of the restlessness and constant variability of the mountains which are Fatima's home. The mountains become the central symbolic

landscape in the story; it is to the mountains—the cradle of Fatima's childhood and the center of her being—that she and her lover attempt to escape from Mamet's dead land. Fatima and the reverie of the mountains from which she comes embody for Ali the highest aspirations of his spirit, the final concentration and explosion to which his monotonous music—the music of the sea—has been leading him. "On the Rock" is an excellent example of how Kotsiubynsky uses the setting to tell the story. The three kinds of landscapes are foregrounded throughout the slow narrative in order to embody the three points of the triangle—the dreamer (the sea), his inspiration (the mountains), and the world (stone and sand)—which constitute Kotsiubynsky's basic thematic structure.

In the stories that come after the "exotic" group, Kotsiubynsky again places the deep psychological probing that he had begun in his early work in the foreground. Painting and music indeed remain in the style of his later works, but they become somewhat more subdued: although the carefully observed details of the setting continue to reflect the state of the hero's soul, the stress is now not so much on the outer as on the inner world.

In the frame of the first-person narrative, which becomes increasingly frequent, the hero's consciousness embraces and interiorizes the landscape. The hero as such has changed very little, but some of his features, vaguely detectable in the early stories, have now been brought into sharper focus at the expense of others. We have seen that the lonely fighter for education and progress had been replaced, in the main, by the lonely dreamer, struggling for the vision of his personal myth and desperately attempting to protect it from the vengeful hand of the world. An important variant of the lonely dreamer, moreover, is introduced in a number of the later stories. He is the anonymous revolutionary who has given up not only his personal life but his personal identity for the cause of terrorism, as preached by "The People's Will" and other extreme groups in the underground of the Empire. The tremendous difference between such a hero and the social activist in the early stories is that he not only refuses to bore us with interminable sermons, but does not even mention his cause, and the story concentrates exclusively on the nuanced states of a psyche *in extremis*: The didactic function of literature, so important to the young Kotsiubynsky, had now been left pretty much by the wayside. Needless to say, the milieu of the hero has changed drastically, the exotic settings having been replaced by more familiar environments.

There are two opposite kinds of dreams in Kotsiubynsky's later stories. Dream can be a thirst for the ultimate horizons of existence and therefore can serve as an open alternative to an actuality that has become odious; or it can become enslaving self-delusion, a further narrowing of the already narrow horizons of actuality, an unwitting escape from the dynamism of freedom into a state of petrification that Sartre calls bad faith. The defeated dreamer-hero may finish by begging at the gates of the world, but he will have at least experienced his moment of apotheosis. The self-deceived hero, on the other hand, will begin and end as a slave of the world. He will never experience the moment of his authenticity but will always use his false dream to isolate himself from himself.

*Fata Morgana* (1903, 1910), Kotsiubynsky's largest work, is built around a confrontation between the two kinds of dreamers. Each of the peasant heroes plays out the drama of his own dream against the tragic panorama of public events (peasant unrest around 1902). Some of those dreams are



enslaving delusions; others are liberated acts of intentionality toward the distant horizons of the future. All fail equally, the self-deluded dreamers destroying the self-chosen dreamers, to be destroyed in their turn by the punishing hand of the world.

Andrii Volyk, a peasant whose healthy roots in his native soil have been damaged by false dreams of progress in a corrupt society, deludes himself by reveries of a burned-out factory—a vodka distillery which by its very function symbolizes false dreams—rising from its ashes like the phoenix and providing good jobs for everyone in the neighborhood. Fate sets out to confound Andrii's dreams in a series of cynical paradoxes. The factory is indeed rebuilt, but not by a miracle: a greedy landlord restores it in order to exploit the peasants even more effectively than when he had forced them to till his land. The factory cripples Andrii and eventually costs him his life. Volyk's wife, Malanka, who, possibly by virtue of being a woman, is intimately close to the earth, opposes her husband's sterile dream by her own reverie of seeding and fruition, which Kotsiubynsky renders in her magnificent and justly famous apostrophe to the earth. But her dream, too, has been corrupted by childish greed and a naive faith in the powers that be; any day now, she hopes the landowners will generously distribute the land to the peasants.

The two dreamers use their inauthentic reveries to devour each other even before tragedy strikes, each of them ferociously defending his or her own self-deceptive image of reality, since their very existence depends on such delusions. Their daughter Hafiika and her young friend Marko Hushcha, on the other hand, are constructive dreamers; unlike Andrii and Malanka, they do not wait for the landowners to make them a gift of a bright future but hope to take their lives into their own hands by means of a revolution. To their vision is later joined the reverie of the young farmer Prokip, who dreams of milder social reforms through the establishment of peasants' unions. But although the reveries of the young people are intentional gestures toward the future, they prove to be as futile as those of their parents. While the older generation mistakenly counts on the generosity of the powerful, the young generation, equally blindly, relies on the self-discipline of the downtrodden. The followers of delusion, represented by Andrii Volyk, and the leaders of vision, represented by Prokip, fall side by side, while the revolutionary Marko Hushcha is forced to escape and to leave the village to its own devices. The iron hand of the world has cut down those whose dreams, whether false or authentic, dared to oppose it.

In Kotsiubynsky's important work "The Dream" (1911), the mindlessness of middle-class existence is directly opposed to the inner life of the hero (based on his personal myth), while the question of social struggle is ignored almost altogether. Nevertheless, Kotsiubynsky's thematic triangle—the dreamer, his catalyst, and the world—continues to obtain in the story. Antin is a minor government official whose existence is split between rigid, daily routine and a lush dream life, based on Kotsiubynsky's own experience of the generous nature of the Isle of Capri. Antin's days are dominated by his wife Marta, a loving but hopelessly dull woman who meticulously cares for his creature comforts but is totally incapable of understanding his spiritual needs. His "dream work" is ruled by a golden-haired beauty who is something of a poet as well as a revolutionary, serving as a "kindred spirit," an alternative guide in an alternative reality, a sensitive muse in a thoroughly poeticized landscape.

At the outset of the story, Kotsiubynsky mentions in a deliberately casual aside the crucial fact that Antin is a secret writer. While Marta and her chatty neighbors occasionally enjoy an innocent game of cards, our bitter hero locks himself in his room, smokes furiously, and writes something that no strangers' eyes will ever see. As a frustrated, profoundly lonely writer without an audience, Antin is particularly susceptible to intense, almost vengeful, reveries of the ultimate horizons of existence:

He wanted to experience something, something powerful and beautiful like a storm at sea, like a breath of spring, like a new fairy tale of life. To sing out the unfinished song that lay in his breast with folded wings. He would find new words, not those that rustled underfoot like wilted leaves, but full, rich, and sonorous ones.<sup>21</sup>

In the end, however, this does not work for Antin. Since his echoless writing fails to fulfill him and his daily life offers so little beauty, it is not surprising that he turns to the wordless creation of dreams, which reflect the ephemeral and gratuitous creation of nature.

Almost maliciously, as if to punish her for her inability to fly with him to the land of his reveries, Antin tells Marta his recurring dream, making certain to include both himself as his own uniquely happy Other and his beautiful golden-haired guide, the companion of his joyful otherness, and therefore his true wife. His frequent interjections "Do you understand?" "Have you forgotten?" are meant to act upon his mundane wife as accusations of some profound misdeeds, of which the poor woman cannot possibly be aware. He blames her for having forgotten how to dream, how to be young. He lashes out at the mask of the oppressive world which he has foisted upon his wife, using as his whip the eloquence of his words and fervor of his imagination.

There is a strong hint here of immorality, inadvertently implied by a writer's double life (his daily self and his creating Other). This vicious circle includes the fact that the writer cannot take the people who are close to him into the realm of his imagination (since he jealously guards it from them to begin with), and paradoxically resents the fact that they cannot follow him there. Bitterly, Antin shouts to Marta, "You would like me to be silent forever, like a stone, like yourself."<sup>22</sup> Antin finally achieves the effect that he has consciously or unconsciously desired; Marta begins to feel that she indeed is an intruder in the incomprehensible intimacy between her husband and his ethereal lover and muse, who (as it becomes plain by now) is an implicit substitute for his frustrated writing.

Their sullen and acrid quarrels become increasingly dangerous, since they both feel that not only the peace of their daily existence but their very identities are at stake. Marta intuits with increasing terror the mysterious, magical power of the poetic word that her husband wields. She becomes more and more jealous of her husband's alternative companion. When Antin reminds her for the hundredth time that the strange woman is merely a product of his dream, she replies, profoundly intuiting the powers of her meek husband's daring Other, "I understand that it was a dream.... But you are capable of going ahead and doing whatever you dream."<sup>23</sup> With profound psychological insight, Kotsiubynsky ends the story with Marta's ambiguous resurrection. As the couple's quarrels grow in intensity, she begins to rediscover her own self, to feel young and carefree again. And while she finds her own self not in poetic

discourse but in plain, angry words, Antin seems to be secretly glad to expiate his sin against her and therefore against actuality.

The two beings of the dreamer — himself and his Other — and the constant conflict that is forced upon them by their shared existence are brilliantly embodied in “The Apple Blossom” (1902). (While in “The Dream” Kotsiubynsky does question the various evasions of the writer in the face of the world, his sympathies seem to be on the side of the hero.) “The Apple Blossom” is discussed out of chronological order since it is here that Kotsiubynsky’s interrogation of the writer’s morality is more open and radical and the placement of the author’s sympathy is quite ambiguous. The writer’s art, moreover, is interrogated not on the ground of the need for social action, nor on the ground of the writer’s shoddy environment and petty personal existence, but on the much deeper level of the meaning of death as opposed to creativity.

The difficult theme (treated in our own time by, among many others, Ingmar Bergman in his film *Through a Glass Darkly* and Robert Penn Warren in his most recent novel, *A Place To Come To*) is handled by Kotsiubynsky with admirable subtlety and tact. A novelist is doomed to witness the slow death of his little daughter, vanquished by some horrible respiratory disease. As his heart fills with despair, his mirrorlike, self-reflective consciousness mercilessly records the “aesthetic” aspect of the child’s agony and, more importantly, his own complex attitudes toward it. (He plans to use his observations in a novel, not about the death of a child, but about a sentimentally pathetic love affair.) To this intricate complex of emotions is added the hero’s shameful desire to run away and turn his back on the disturbing and disorderly scene of death. The tragedy of the writer’s self-reflective consciousness is that it bars him from immersing himself in the process of life and thus accepting the natural inevitability of death. It does not allow him to enter into another’s pain, forcing him instead to wallow in his own posed misery caused by the other’s suffering.

When the child finally dies in the early morning hours, the father, bereaved by the death itself and ashamed of his ambivalent attitude toward it, walks out into the awakening orchard and returns with an armful of branches covered with bedewed apple blossoms. The freshly cut branches seem to teach the writer a subtle and difficult lesson about life and death, as well as about art and reality. Neither his dead daughter (having become Other in death) nor the apple blossoms (symbolizing the inexorable cyclical course of nature which includes death within its eternal and impersonal movement of life) care about the cheap spectacle of evasions and breast beatings with which the hero had been entertaining himself through the night.

The self-centered way in which the writer looks upon the world and upon his own self is dissolved and absolved by the knowledge that there exists outside his greedy consciousness the indifference, and hence the ultimate difference, of nature. The seamless, self-enclosed unity of nature precludes reflection; its pulsating rings of eternal recurrence refuse to give him solace in the personal loss that the death of his daughter implies. He realizes that he should open the protective walls of his soul to the temporal waves of nature; he should merge his self with its incessant rhythms. The lesson of such joyful fatalism will help the hero to bridge the abyss between the man and the writer, turning him, possibly, into a better man and a better writer.

In the last sentence of the story, that happy knowledge finally breaks down the prison walls of the hero’s consciousness and gives him the gift of

tears for his dead daughter. And yet the resolution of the story remains uncertain. The ambiguities implied by it seem to stem from Kotsiubynsky's own fear, perhaps not fully realized by himself. It has to do with the writer's total commitment to the idealized realm of the imagination. Kotsiubynsky, like his hero, seems to struggle against the overwhelming temptation to exchange the hazardous *outside* of life and death in the world for the controlled and orderly *inside* of his work. Does not the fear of life, then, cause Kotsiubynsky's hero (and perhaps Kotsiubynsky himself) to use the purity and indifference of nature as an excuse for his escape from daily existence and its messy involvements? Although dream and work, according to Kotsiubynsky, should grow out of nature, is the indifference of nature truly an answer to the dilemmas of human existence? In "The Apple Blossom," he asks this question on a profound level, where easy answers do not help anymore; here it is the struggle itself—in itself yielding magnificent short stories—that hints at an inexpressible answer. The thematic triangle of the dreamer, his catalyst, and the world seems to undergo an interesting transformation in this story: it is the writer's inauthentic creativity that implies the world, while the blossoming apple boughs become a catalyst of a spiritually promising future.

Such profound interrogation of the nature of reality and illusion is again masterfully embodied in three important works: "From the Depth" (1903-1904), "Intermezzo" (1908), and "On the Island" (1912). Although Kotsiubynsky wrote them at various times in his career, they are related both by their form and by similar thematic considerations. Extended prose poems rather than conventional short stories (only "Intermezzo" hints at a plot structure) constructed upon musical shifts of mood within a densely woven web of poetic imagery, they subtly address themselves to problems of action versus reverie; art versus reality; the work that a text performs within temporal duration versus spontaneous, synchronic, effortless, wordless creativity; the writer as a double agent.

Obviously indebted to the symbolism of the German and Scandinavian variety, "From the Depth" is divided into four short parts: "Clouds," "Weariness," "The Lonely One," and "The Dream" (not to be confused with the previously discussed short story of the same name). In "Clouds," the poet's soul attempts to blend with a wandering cloud, since both are possessed by the desire for the ultimate horizons of existence. The narrator's romantic longing becomes even more pronounced in the second part of the work, characteristically called "Weariness," in which he expresses profound grievances against the sky and the earth; he is jealous of their constancy, pitting against it the fluctuating mutability of his own consciousness. No matter what momentary emotions disturb the sky and the earth, they soon return to their mindless essence; the creative individual does not seem to have a permanent form to which he can return. The narrator proceeds to express a seemingly contradictory, but actually identical, grievance against water, which has the gift of nonconscious, instantaneous, and gratuitous improvisation that is the hallmark of all truly liberated creativity. Water, like the ideal of the poetic imagination, not only reflects the world by its otherness, but its very otherness breaks up and reshapes the forms of the world, while at the same time constantly remaining itself.

The third part, "The Lonely One," continues the theme of the artist's alienation from the center of being and his resulting loneliness. But now the narrator finds himself not only outside the community of nature but also

outside human society. No matter what demands are placed upon the poet by the people with whom he lives, he is doomed to remain cold and indifferent to such demands at the deepest level of his being. The poet makes contact with his human environment only because he finds it morally necessary to do so. Neither social commitments nor the much more intimate commitments of life alleviate the poet's accursed state of otherness.

While in the first three parts of "From the Depth" the poet was alienated from nature, from love, and from society, in the last part, "The Dream," he becomes alienated even from himself. The division between the writer and the man, a division that tortured Kotsiubynsky throughout his life, is nowhere expressed more plainly than in this fragment. The narrator dreams that only one-half of his heart is beating in his chest, and that he spends his life wandering through symbolic landscapes in search of the other half. But when he finally finds it, his chest is emptier than before. Is it that he has made his heart whole too late in life, and that the weariness of the search—the winter of old age—has now fallen on him? Or is it that the poet's fate is to remain incomplete, constantly searching for the other half of his heart as a possibility, and that this very search constitutes the heart of his creativity, while the attainment of wholeness and the ensuing semblance of perfection kills it? If this is so, then Kotsiubynsky is again questioning the mindless completeness of nature as a feasible model of human creativity. We may be envious of the organic unity of nature, we may attempt to emulate it, but our reaching of such perfection would be tantamount to spiritual death.

"Intermezzo," the second work in the triptych, is central to our understanding of Kotsiubynsky's deep interest in the exchange between the creative individual and other people. The opening of the story (the bare outline of a plot allows us to call it a story) hints at the flickering line between the "I" and the "non-I." The "non-I," as we have seen in Kotsiubynsky time and again, is divided into the realm of nature and that of the world or of other people, while that world of other people is again subdivided into the black magic of power and the struggle against it. The threat of dissolution of the self in the blind lives of other people causes the narrator to experience an emotion close to panic.

I feel how the lives of others enter mine, as air enters through doors and windows, as rivulets enter a river. I cannot avoid Man, *I cannot be alone*. I must confess that I envy the planets: they have their orbits, and nothing can stand in their path. While on my path I find Man always and everywhere. Yes, you stand in my way, and you believe that you have a right to me.<sup>24</sup>

Such musings continue with the somewhat Sartrean image of the master-slave dialectic contained within the Look: "Everywhere I encounter your look," the narrator says to us, his readers, "your eyes—curious, greedy—crawl into me, and you yourself, in the variety of your colors and forms, pierce my pupils."<sup>25</sup>

When the narrator manages to leave his large city for a rest in the country, he believes that he has returned to his true home. A different otherness now invades his being—the welcome difference of indifferent nature, which makes no claims upon him but organically brackets his personality, together with its cares and worries, and draws his prepersonal self into its own anonymous

rhythms of growth and decay. The very style of the piece, with its magnificent imagery and its emphatically musical prose, is Kotsiubynsky's linguistic embodiment of the narrator's instantaneous reveries inside nature, now turned into writing, not by the narrator but by the author, and thus externalized for the sake of the unknown reader. Images cascade one upon another generously and effortlessly; here wordless reverie almost recreates itself in words, almost writes itself. In this seamless cloth of the universe, where "everything weaves itself," the narrator considers himself rich,

although I do not own anything. Because beyond all programs and political parties the earth belongs to me. It is mine. All of it—huge, magnificent, already created—all of it I contain within myself. *There I create it again, a second time*, and then it seems to me that I have even more right to it.<sup>26</sup>

Because the narrator's prepersonal self has given itself back to nature, from where it originally came, it can now possess nature within itself and recreate it in reveries as effortlessly as water recreates reality in "From the Depth." The wished-for union has finally been achieved. Or has it?

What deep motive lies under the narrator's desire to repossess the earth and to rehearse the *fiat lux* once again in his preconscious being? Is it perhaps the desire to play God, beyond and above other people? The ethical implication behind the narrator's illusion of the unification with nature on the prepersonal level of his self, an issue that tormented the romantics, does not give him the peace that he had the illusion of obtaining. It is through such moral qualms that other people reach him, indirectly and implicitly, within the shell of his reverie of unification with nature. What water can do, man cannot; he is not permitted to return home, to his original innocence. Small wonder that the narrator calls the cuckoo—the elusive wanderer, thief, and prophet—his closest friend.

The unified tapestry of the writing, which weaves itself almost without the intervention of the author's personality, is suddenly rent asunder by rough, intentional human speech. One day in the fields, the narrator encounters a poor peasant whom he calls, rather melodramatically, Man. The abstract "People" in the beginning of the story, from whom the narrator attempted to escape (and whose role has been passed on to the reader by the pronoun "you") have now been made concrete: Man begins to speak. Quietly and simply, with the barely hidden urgency of strong emotion, the peasant relates the grotesquely horrible scenes of his life, while the poet encourages him with the rhythmically repeated phrase: "Speak, speak!" The pearl of the sun, enclosed in the blue shell of the sky, to which the narrator a while ago spoke a magnificent pagan hymn, is now cursed for its indifference to human suffering. Silently, in thought, the narrator urges Man to ignite another sun in the sky:

Speak, speak! Overheat the cupola of the sky with your anger.  
Cover it with the clouds of your grief.... Make the sky and the earth  
fresh again. Extinguish the sun and light another one in the sky.  
Speak, speak!<sup>27</sup>

We see that the peasant is encouraged to perform a *fiat lux* of his own, opposite in intent to that of the artist.

The holiday of language, the celebration of pure writing, cannot continue while the peasant still has reason to say what he says, to use language in such a direct, crude, and angry way. Whether the narrator wishes it or not, he has to return to the city (which has now become his real home again) and resume his intentional acts toward others. Perhaps one day he will be able to come back to his reverie of the essence of nature and to the land of his personal myth in order to reside there until the end of his life, but this will happen only when the cause of Man's anger is vanquished. For the time being, however, the paradise of pure reverie for the narrator (and of pure writing for Kotsiubynsky) has not been wasted. In a sort of catharsis, in a supreme effort of the will toward absolute willessness, it has tuned the narrator's spirit for the task that waits at hand. In the first part of the story (as in the three segments of "From the Depth"), nature had provided a catalyst that opened for the narrator the farthest recesses of his personal myth and made it possible for him to shut out the clamorous demands of the world. In the second part, however, a new catalyst, the voice of Man, has appeared. In a reversal unprecedented in Kotsiubynsky's work, this catalyst inspires in the narrator a new understanding of the Categorical Imperative and hence of the world; the world has called the poet to itself, to fight the world's black magic.

"On the Island," the last item in the triptych of poems in prose discussed here, is also the very last work of Kotsiubynsky's oeuvre. Death, in fact, prevented him from finishing it.<sup>28</sup> The text, as it has come down to us, has nevertheless its own completeness; its provisional closure is not only perfectly adequate for this particular work, but it provides a full-voiced coda to Kotsiubynsky's entire oeuvre and to his creative life. In "On the Island," Kotsiubynsky no longer finds it necessary either to lament man's separation from nature or to fret about the necessity of commitment. He now indulges in poetic reverie without reservation. The text as the activity of writing—or weaving—now becomes emancipated from the world of striving, be it the striving for gain or the striving of revolutionary activity. The point of the world in Kotsiubynsky's thematic triangle ceases to be a threatening force, and the structure comes to rest upon the harmonious relationship between the dreamer and his inspiration.

The seemingly effortless stream of the narrative, the freely flowing generosity of imagery, the primacy of the prepersonal self—all this communicates to us the almost physical pleasure that the author takes in the process of writing, which appears to be as simple as closing one's eyes and "writing" a reverie without words. Although the physical activity of putting words on paper, of composing sentences and paragraphs in temporal duration, is still second-best to instantaneous and synoptic reverie, it attempts to approximate (as it does in "Intermezzo") the silent blending of consciousness with the essence of nature. Writing recreates nature's own seemingly chaotic, capricious acts of creation, which nevertheless emanate from, and are subject to, the ordered rhythms of the eternal return. This does not mean that language undergoes any sort of "minimalization" or "reduction"; the language in "On the Island" is of a particularly dense and rich texture, since it is only thus that it can become transparent for the sake of the mysterious and ineffable energies that flow underneath it. Judging by the provisional closure of the work, moreover, we have reason to believe that such a closely woven poetic reverie now becomes for Kotsiubynsky a matter of life and death.

The single element that threatens the potential communion between the narrator and nature is other people, who here represent but a fleeting shadow, a chance reminder, of the world. In this work, we never get a good look at them, with the exception of the fisherman Giuseppe. People spoil the purity of Capri because of their rootlessness and the disorder of their lives, as opposed to the eternal difference and yet sameness of the island's nature. Here Kotsiubynsky allows himself to say openly what he probably wanted to say, and indeed implied, in much of his later work:

People shamle about this way and that — who knows where and to what purpose — and all of this together is like a puppet theater in which the director has confused the order of the play.<sup>29</sup>

While the narrator, who feels totally united with nature, dreams on the seashore, weaving a network of images, “people come, and with the noise of foreigners drown out the sea.”<sup>30</sup>

The presence of Giuseppe does not spoil the pristine order of the island and the sea, because he and his songs are an integral part of that order. In Giuseppe's presence, the island's self-containment, circumscribed by its shores and by its essential difference from the sea, is cancelled by total openness. In the fisherman's boat, the narrator experiences an Orphic reverie of unification, in which the sky unites with the earth, while he himself is metamorphosed into a bird. His reverie, moreover, reaches beyond his personal childhood and birth to “a former time,” to the mythical childhood of the world:

We are flying. I for one have this impression, caused perhaps by the blueness that surrounds us: it is above us and beneath us, ahead of us and behind us, on all sides. Even the air seems blue. Was I not a bird in a former time?

The oars carry us like wings, the salty wind fills our lungs, the sails of fishing boats — who knows, in the sea or in the sky? — fly out in a flock to meet us, free as birds. I feel that a pair of wings is growing behind my shoulders.... We are flying. Beneath us is a blue depth, above — a kindred height.<sup>31</sup>

We recall that the peasant in “Intermezzo” serves as a rough wedge, brutally driven between the unity of nature and the narrator's consciousness. Man's suffering forces the narrator out of his reverie of unification with nature and into the recognition of a radical difference between nature and himself. No such abrupt shock takes place in “On the Island,” because here the narrator learns a more profound lesson: nature is not the setting for a fleeting, although possibly an intensely symbolic, holiday, nor is it a frame for ephemeral, although possibly intensely poetic, emotions. By the same token, creativity can no longer be treated as a brief respite from more “serious” social and political obligations. It is now Giuseppe, the exotic, laughing son of a sea wave, and not the suffering Ukrainian peasant, who is the shaman of the piece, and perhaps the narrator's imagined, idealized father. As the provisional closure of the story shows, it is within nature and not outside it — certainly not in the nervously, erratically striving society — that the most tragic and at the same time the highest aspirations of the human individual are transmuted into supra-personal, suprahuman symbols by the eternal rhythms of recurrence.



That provisional closure seems to be more appropriate than anything we might expect in the way of Kotsiubynsky's projected conclusion (in which he probably intended once again to remind the narrator of his social obligations). The narrator, musing on a row of agave plants growing outside his window, reminds himself that the agave blooms only once and that the effort that the plant exerts to produce the flower costs it its life.

Doubtless, the apotheosis of the agave plant parallels the end of the writer's career, exemplified by his profoundest piece of work. We might speculate that Kotsiubynsky would want his own career, ridden as it was by doubts and hesitations, to take his life in such a noble and tragic explosion within the forever new and yet forever constant rhythms of nature, instead of his life stopping unfinished, still plagued by a thirst for the possible-impossible horizons of existence.

Early in 1896, Kotsiubynsky wrote his wife-to-be that the customs, rituals, songs, and legends that Ukrainians inherited from their pagan ancestors had a special, mysterious meaning for him, that they reminded him of his own childhood and at the same time echoed the poetry of ancient, prehistoric times.<sup>32</sup> It is as if folk traditions inspired Kotsiubynsky to dream not only of his own early years but of the childhood of the world. In “Our Trip to the Holy Well,” written three years before *Shadows*, we find the following observation on the “shadows of the forgotten ancestors”:

I keep thinking about those wise people who build their churches, monasteries, and chapels in the best, the wildest places. They know what they are doing. They are addressing not so much us as the ancestors who are alive within us, ancestors who for centuries staged their sacred games in woods and groves and burned their sacrifices there.<sup>33</sup>

The narrator himself wants to build “a holy fire” and to draw out of his breast “the sleeping ancestral voice.”<sup>34</sup>

Those sleeping ancestral voices, then, are both around us (when, according to Ukrainian mythology, the dead return to the earth each spring) and within us, on the prepersonal level of the self or, as Jung taught, in our collective unconscious. When he first heard about the Hutsuls, Kotsiubynsky immediately recognized that they were closer to the spirit of their ancestors, by being closer to nature, than highly civilized individuals like himself. Did he believe, moreover, that an artist could do worse than to bring the shadow of somebody like a Hutsul “ancestor” to life in his own psyche? *Shadows* suggests that he did.

Kotsiubynsky finished *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* in Chernihiv on 3 October 1911, and it was published in 1912 (in the January and February issues of the Western Ukrainian monthly *Literaturno-naukovyj vistnyk*). The first critical review of it appeared in May of the same year in the newspaper *Rada*; in June it was published in a Russian translation in the bimonthly journal *Zavety*.

Some critics have held that *Shadows* is a departure from Kotsiubynsky’s usual style and thematic concerns, representing the beginning of a new creative phase which death did not allow him to continue. There is no evidence for such

an assumption; the novel, on the contrary, is a continuation and even a synthesis of the philosophical and psychological interests which occupied Kotsiubynsky throughout his mature career. Some commentators (particularly those in the West) overstress the “pastoral” qualities of the work, while others (largely in the Soviet Union) place too much emphasis on its sociological aspects. As early as 1929, P. Zlatoustov wrote that *Shadows* is intended to depict the poverty, the demoralization of the family, bloody vendettas, superstitions, and savage customs, and that

the reader does not admire those shadows ... but wishes that man might liberate himself as quickly as possible from such spiritual chains, which the forgotten ancestors have twisted around their heirs.<sup>35</sup>

It seems to me that *Shadows* outgrows its “pastoral” and “sociological” aspects, although admittedly it does carry traces of both. The meticulously researched and detailed background should not be taken for more than what it is: a dynamic canvas that serves as a backdrop for Kotsiubynsky’s triangular structure of opposing forces—the poet’s thirst for the ultimate horizons of existence, catalyzed by an outside force of inspiration, versus the cruelly inhibiting horizons of the world.

A schema of the complex synchronic structure of the novel, in which all elements work against or with each other simultaneously, might contain four levels of representation: the realistic-mimetic level; the realistic-legendary level, on which the Hutsul legends and rituals (serving here as specific embodiments of the public myth) involve the daily lives of the villagers; the legendary-mythical level (on which the Hutsul legends of cosmogony and of the elements—especially fire and water—transcend the daily use of black magic, point to powerful universal archetypes, and embody the author’s own complex philosophy of creativity); and the personal-mythical level of Ivan’s poetic reveries. It is interesting that the second and third levels are divided by the symbolism of locale: the black magic of the public myth is exercised in the populated valleys, and the higher myths of the Hutsuls are told by the mysterious guardians of the eternal fire on the high mountain pastures.

The plot of *Shadows*, like the plots of most of Kotsiubynsky’s mature works, is merely a framework designed to contain and guide the rich symbolism of the theme. It is, nevertheless, heavily melodramatic and rather conventional. Some critics have made interesting attempts to find models for it in world literature. Wiśniewska, for instance, usefully discusses the epic progression between the birth and the death of the hero.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, too much has been made of the mere hint in the plot at the model of Romeo and Juliet, a scheme that in *Shadows* soon breaks down under closer scrutiny.<sup>37</sup>

*Shadows* begins with a “sociological” description of poverty. This superficial level, however, is soon transcended to make room for the uncanny. Ivan’s mother suspects her little son of being a changeling, a son of the devil. As in the case of the heroine of “The Witch,” here the collective, with the help of the public myth, attempts to explain Ivan’s otherness, which is beyond the comprehension of ordinary people. The mother’s accusation, in other words, is based on the realistic-legendary level of the schema. Soon, however, Kotsiubynsky enriches that level by a profounder dimension; Ivan’s mother turns

to a public myth to explain to herself her son's early poetic calling (the word "poet" is used here in the romantic sense, as Kotsiubynsky himself uses it throughout his oeuvre).

Ivan's poetic calling is symbolized by his refusal to play on his reed the folk melodies of his people, and by his preference to listen "to the faint and elusive melodies that dwelled within him." It is also important to this discussion that even in his childhood Ivan personalizes nature not according to the established images of public myths but by means of his own poetic metaphors. We see, finally, that Ivan's childhood is spent in apartness; from early childhood on, he is nurtured by nature and does not seem to need people for company.

Even as a child, Ivan is haunted by premonitions of horror, as if receiving supernatural intimations of his fate. Before meeting the Vanisher, for example, he fights through a tangle of roots, bushes, and low trees, the kind of "Gothic" landscape that will serve as a background for his climb to the high upland pasture and, later, for his death. There are even more profound premonitions of horror in Ivan's early youth. The poetic reverie that enriches his perception of the world implies a mysterious, unnamed dread beyond the taboo line of the magic circle around the village: "Waking at night, surrounded by a hostile silence, Ivan would often lie trembling with horror."

It is fitting, considering Kotsiubynsky's philosophy of creativity, that an atmosphere of horror should accompany Ivan on the way to his epiphany as a poet, which occurs at his meeting with the Vanisher. He plays for Ivan melodies of his own invention, which he composed in spite of God, or, more precisely, to spite God. (Kotsiubynsky seems to treat *shcheznyk* and *aridnyk* as two separate beings, although most Hutsul myths identify them as two interchangeable names of the devil.) Kotsiubynsky emphasizes that the Vanisher's melodies cannot be heard by ordinary people; one's psyche, it seems, must be subtly tuned to become aware of them. But although the Vanisher's melodies do not reach ordinary ears, not only are they clearly heard by Ivan, but they are not really new to him. It is of utmost importance that the Vanisher's music simply reveals and gives body to those faint and elusive melodies that have lived in Ivan's breast since his birth but which he could not express on his reed before his meeting with the Vanisher. A sense both of triumph and of tragedy accompanies this revelation. Little Ivan dances an exultant dance to celebrate the Vanisher's joy at having found the goats that God had taken from him and, more important, to express his own joy at having discovered his gift. As for the goats, whose "preternatural" image is intermingled with the "natural" image of gnarled roots and dry branches in Ivan's poetic imagination, their presence in the Hutsul myths of the *aridnyk* is evident, but this does not prevent Kotsiubynsky's image from pointing (on the legendary-mythical level of the schema) to the sphere of Pan and, finally, to the Dionysian symbol of sacrifice and tragedy.

When the Vanisher disappears and his goats turn into gnarled branches, the music of Satan completes its apotheosis in Ivan. He

strained his memory and tried to recreate the sounds, and when he had finally found what he had been seeking for a long time, what had given him no rest, a strange, unfamiliar tune floated through the forest. Joy filled Ivan's heart.

What is a small boy's "long time"? Where is his "long ago"? Is it before his personal birth, when, as the romantics claim, all poetic reverie has its beginning? And what is it exactly that Ivan has been seeking for such a long time? Not only did he find in the music of Satan a confirmation, through embodiment, of his own vague calling, which enabled him to play his own mysterious melodies, but he also discovered his tragic fate of poet as sufferer and ultimately as victim.

Ivan's dance symbolizes an acquiescence to the music of Satan, the conclusion, as it were, of a pact with the devil. This, incidentally, is a frequent motif in Hutsul mythology, at the same time pointing to a wider thematic framework. Art as the dubious gift of the devil appears in Western literature again and again, but it is particularly in Kotsiubynsky's world that to be cursed from birth with the gift of unique songs, and then to have them confirmed by the devil, means to cross the forbidden line and to step on the road to perdition. The set, unilateral public-myth image of Ivan as a changeling and a son of devils now acquires a multivalent symbolic dimension and reaches the level of an ambiguous and unique personal myth.

It is obvious that the Vanisher in *Shadows*, to a much greater extent than his original characterization in the public myths of the Hutsuls, echoes the elusive, "vanishing," and dangerous god Pan. We recall that in early Greek mythology Pan was a primitive god or demon who was worshipped, in the main, by mountain shepherds. His abode was high in the mountains, usually within a rock. In some Hutsul myths, the *aridnyk* also lives in a rock and is called "He who lives in a rock" (*Toi, shcho v skali sydyt*). Pan protected sheepfolds and shepherds from inclement weather, and his favorite animal was the goat (the lower part of his body and his horns were goatlike). Pan made for himself a seven-reed pipe, upon which he played strange, haunting melodies. In keeping with the pagan conception of indifferent, estranged gods, Pan's attitude toward mankind was ambivalent and impossible to predict. A rather benevolent and carefree being, he was nevertheless easily angered and would express his anger by visiting waves of inexplicable terror or panic (hence the derivation of the word) upon people and cattle. He also had the habit of appearing not directly but in visions and dreams. It is difficult to miss here a parallel to the mysterious events in the upland pasture and particularly to Ivan's ineffable feelings of dread.

Although high-born Greeks considered Pan to be a god of peasants—unwashed, hairy, lascivious, goatish, fierce, inconstant, and noisy, as opposed to his adversary, the elegant Apollo—there developed as early as the "Homeric" hymn to Pan another view of that god, reaching the heights of mystical thought. That view seems to have been based on a semantic confusion. The derivation of the name Pan is from *pa-on*, which means "grazer"; however, the anonymous author of the Orphic hymn to Pan, along with other early Greek poets treating the theme, confused Pan with the word "pan," meaning "all." Such etymological misunderstanding, as Patricia Merivale points out, made possible the extension of Pan's physical appearance—particularly the division, at the waist, between man and animal—"to include the heavens, the sea, earth, and fire, and the extension of his function, becoming Supreme Governor of universal Nature, or 'soul' of the world."<sup>38</sup> It follows that Pan's music, once lowly, boisterous, and sensual—the music of the earth and of the people close to it—now became akin to the pre-Socratic conception of the music of the spheres.

In the Renaissance period, Pan became a patron of poets, often replacing Apollo. The romantics, particularly Wordsworth, considered Pan the inspirer of the mysterious echoes that the poet hears in nature; Pan, as Merivale writes, became a symbol of the muted "Orphic" quality and was equated with the "Spirit" or "Idea" that infused natural phenomena.<sup>39</sup> Pan's obverse profile, the irrational force of dreams and visions, also became important to the romantic view of the world. It is this profile of Pan that continued into the symbolist and post-symbolist literature; together with a retinue of fauns and satyrs, he became the rage at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Knut Hamsun, one of Kotsiubynsky's favorite authors, even wrote a short novel entitled *Pan* (1894). Although Hamsun's hero bears little resemblance to Ivan, the work itself is pervaded with the elemental, wild, and menacing spirit of nature.

The Hutsul figure of the Vanisher (or the *aridnyk*) as Satan is mitigated in *Shadows* by the ambivalence of the pagan god Pan, which is made plain in the fire keeper's story about the *aridnyk*. As some Soviet critics have been quick to point out, in Mykola's narrative the *aridnyk*'s positive qualities are stressed and God's superiority over him is played down vis-à-vis the Hutsul legends. Hence it follows that little Ivan concluded a pact with a special type of Mephistopheles who can save a singer's soul through song and yet punish him for that very salvation. The Vanisher becomes, as it were, Kotsiubynsky's ambiguous agent of salvation against the background of a specifically Hutsul Christianity, bedeviled in its own way.

Such bedevilment of Christianity in Carpathian villages is masterfully embodied in the sudden violence after the Hutsul pseudo-Christian (but in its origin, thoroughly pagan) celebration of the feast day. During the bloody battle of the clans, Ivan initially tries his hand at violence, but his new friend, Marichka, not only does not reciprocate his angry gesture, directed at her, but attempts to cheer him up. It is significant that their love is born and grows in the soil soaked with the blood of an absurd family feud, against the lament of the *trembita* mourning his father's death, a lament that ominously foreshadows Ivan's own violent death resulting from the death of his beloved. For young Ivan, however, the memory of his father's death is quickly obliterated by song and love, proclaimed by the silvery sounds of his reed (symbolically opposed to the sinister, dark sounds of the *trembita*). But in the end it is the *trembita* that sounds again as death conquers love. The birth of Ivan's love out of the violence of the collective should be viewed from the standpoint of Kotsiubynsky's constant thematic framework—the clash between poetic reverie, inspired from the outside by a benevolent force, and the harsh power of the world.

The love between Marichka and Ivan is innocent in its paganism, in its *pan-theism*; having learned sex from the animals (from amoral nature), they never descend to the level of the low, immoral, human lust of Iura and Palahna's liaison. The constant companion of Ivan and Marichka's love is song. It soon develops that Marichka is also a poet, and that her gift, too, is mysteriously born; her songs

seemed to have rocked in the cradle or splashed about in the bath with her. They were born in her breast the way wild flowers spring up in a hayfield or firs grow on mountain slopes.

There is, however, an important difference between Ivan's gift and her own—a difference so crucial, in fact, that much of the thematic weight of the novel rests upon it.

Before Ivan met Marichka, his music had been wholly other; high and strange, it had been totally divorced from human existence. Marichka's *kolomyikas*, on the other hand, are earthly and human, but not subservient to the black magic of the world. Her role as Ivan's inspirer is to ground Ivan's music, as it were, by providing it with words that relate to simple, honest, and joyful human life. Note that the inspired lightness of Marichka's art contrasts with the workmanlike heaviness of ordinary peasant performances as Kotsiubynsky described them in some of his other works. It is this latter kind of art that belongs wholly to the world and is enslaved by it. (In "Our Trip to the Holy Well," for example, we find a rather monumental, Rodin-like but basically negative image of a girl singing.)

It is only with Marichka's contribution that Ivan's art becomes complete. Having been born before his personal birth and subsequently shaped by the Vanisher, his music is now humanized and offered to humanity as human art. If we agree that Marichka provides such a human alternative to the *aridnyk's* music, it becomes plain why he so cynically uses anti-Marichka as an instrument of Ivan's punishment. While Marichka sings about daily life and even wittily "signs" her songs within their texts, such mundane events become touched with the *aridnyk's* music (played by Ivan on his reed), and are thus raised to the mysteries of high art. Conversely, Marichka's texts bring the *aridnyk's* mysteries, suggested by Ivan's music, down to the valleys and turn them over to mankind. We see here a symbolic embodiment and a partial resolution of Kotsiubynsky's own struggle with the dichotomy of commitment to the world and to pure art.

Ivan's love is accompanied by premonitions of grief, as was his childhood, and many of Marichka's *kolomyikas* predict the tragedy that awaits the two lovers. But there are also subtler symbols. The most distant background and horizon of the novel's milieu are represented by the mountains. We sense their sometimes joyous, but much more often brooding and foreboding presence even when they are not mentioned directly in the text. The mountains bring green, succulent life to the sheep and to the people, while at the same time threatening men with cold, pure mysticism and violent, inexplicable death. They are the barrier between the permissible and the forbidden. It seems that although the Hutsul's double reality interflows at crucial points of daily life (or of public myth), it is detrimental for him to step over certain boundaries into the reality of higher myths, to cross both the horizontal and the vertical limits that the mountains mark. That taboo line of the magic circle must be observed at all times. Iura, with all his worldly powers, knows this; Ivan, in his poetic *naïveté*, does not. It is from the mountains, then, that the wind carries cold portents to the lovers.

Water—especially the river Cheremosh—is another central symbol, as menacingly present throughout the novel as the forbidding mountains. When Ivan and Marichka first meet as children, Ivan imitates the foolish violence of adults by throwing Marichka's ribbons into the water. The current that carries them away is the same current that later crushes Marichka's beautiful body into a repellent blue sack when she dares to attempt the fording of the forbidden border between life and death, represented by the Cheremosh. As Ivan

leaves for the uplands, the river threatens him: "The frothy Cheremosh angrily shook its gray curls and shone with a malignant green light."

When Ivan leaves Marichka's earthly songs to go to the uplands, his path leads him through the same "Gothic" landscape that served as a background for his meeting with the Vanisher. Instead of the living carpet of flowers upon which he and Marichka lived their love, Ivan must now cross "creeping mountain pines and firs that caught at [his] feet." Hence, the symbols that surround Ivan's departure warn us that a "sociological" explanation of it—Ivan's poverty in the midst of a greedy world—is obviously too easy. Although we should not completely discount the fact that Ivan surrenders Marichka and her songs to earn his bread as a servant (this may also explain Ivan's inherent weakness of character and his slow surrender to the materialistic world after the loss of Marichka), at the same time, Ivan's departure implies matters that are in many ways opposed to the need of earning a living.

Ivan is "called" at the zenith of his maturity to undertake a quest for the distant source of the melodies that torment his soul and (if we are to believe his public-myth image of a changeling) for the origin of his own existence. It is the forbidden horizon of the mountains—with their distance and their height, where his songs were born—that he must conquer. The barrenness of the landscape, the treacherous vegetation in which Ivan's feet become entangled, the enigmatic effects of the mountain wind, the blueness of the upland pasture—all these images contribute to the composition of a mystical landscape in which the quester-hero must face his ultimate test. The physical and metaphysical heights become one, implying and predicating each other. It is as if the artist in Kotsiubynsky himself had decided to set out on the perilous journey in search of the mythical source of his own art.

The shamanlike personage of the chief shepherd (one of Kotsiubynsky's most powerful father figures), the strange young fire keeper Mykola (both of them guardians of the eternal fire), and the shadowy figures of the other shepherds in the upland strengthen our impression that Ivan has undertaken a symbolic journey to a symbolic place. Kotsiubynsky compares the chief shepherd to an ancient pagan priest and calls him the spirit of the upland pastures. The mountain wind and the hallucinations that it brings almost put Ivan in direct contact with his original teacher—here named by the taboo words "He" or "That One"—of whom the chief shepherd and the fire keeper are priest and evangelist. "What's that crying in the wind? It must be the One. May he turn to stone!" It is as if the tortured and torturing weeping of the wind were the absolute essence of the melodies that the Vanisher had taught Ivan.

Ivan begins to realize that he is being challenged to battle with an unknown but supremely powerful adversary, an ultimate power that menaces everything human. Like pagan priests facing their mysterious deities, its shaman (the chief shepherd) and its bard (the fire keeper) must do battle with it year in and year out. But Ivan's battle is different and incomparably more dangerous than that of the other two, since he has been *seen*, pointed out, and chosen (having had his difficult gift bestowed upon him at birth and confirmed at his meeting with the Vanisher). The challenge of the ultimate horizons beyond the pale of good and evil is neither loving nor forgiving, but demands all the spiritual energy that the chosen one can muster for the supreme battle, which he is doomed to lose.

Marichka was able to respond to Ivan's Satan-inspired music, but she could not match him in the creation of it. On the other hand, only she could



humanize his art, could teach the “changeling” how to live and how to forgive. She, therefore, had to be barred from Ivan’s strange quest. While attempting to cross the Cheremosh, she falls, and the menacing waters of the delimiting river swallow her. The destruction of Ivan’s strong ally, his earthly muse, is the *aridnyk*’s decisive victory over his adopted son and challenger. Having unwittingly involved herself with the uncanny, having unwittingly provoked it by her integral humanity, and having fallen, Marichka is forced to become alienated from herself and to oppose her own cherished values and desires. As once she had helped him, so now she becomes the instrument of the uncanny, which turns her into an element of the public myth that punishes the quester-poet for his otherness, as in her life the woman herself had helped and guided him.

The *aridnyk* uses his other profile and his other domain—that of the public myth within the bedeviled world—to deal the mortal blow to his victim. The punishing hand turns the poet’s beloved into her opposite, and she in turn is forced to turn their love into its ugly caricature. But even before Ivan is compelled to face that perverted transfiguration, he must deal with another transformation in the chain of the *aridnyk*’s anti-metaphors; he must behold Marichka’s mangled body, torn limb from limb like a victim of the sacrificial act of *spagramos*. The beautiful, beloved body of Ivan’s earthly muse has been broken on the rack of the cruel nature of those high, forbidden regions, and has been mashed between the millstones of the *aridnyk*’s mysterious mill, which figures so prominently in the Hutsul public myths.

After Marichka’s death, Ivan removes himself from human society; he becomes a wild man, like a werewolf or like someone who has fornicated with a demon. Ivan’s self-brutalization (“self-bestialization”) can be read as the katabasis of a vanquished hero. His defeat is painful indeed. His poetic calling, which once had flourished so happily under Marichka’s earthly care, but which subsequently drove him toward inhuman heights, has now become a gaping wound; he attempts to ease the pain not by his former communion with the essence of nature but by vain endeavors to lose himself in nature’s hostile wilderness. Ivan’s defeat becomes total when he descends below the level of self-brutalization and betrays his own self by attempting to join the low black magic of the greedy world “because it was time to take up farming.”

In a difficult ambiguity, Ivan ultimately betrays the nobility of the force that called him out to his own highest possibilities and then dashed him to the ground. He betrays the heroic nobility of his defeat as well as his secret gift of music. His final punishment is to turn himself, a poet-quester, into an apathetic slave. Although he always was the servant of the *aridnyk* inasmuch as he was possessed by Satan’s high mysteries, he now becomes a possession in the domain of the *aridnyk*’s public myth. It is significant that even while he “farms,” he is compelled to “vanish” into the wilderness once in a while, not to listen to nature’s mysterious melodies, which he would do whenever he thus “vanished” as a child, but to lose himself in the thicket.

As can be seen time and again in Kotsiubynsky’s work, the world does not accept the double traitor (who betrayed the world and then betrayed its adversary), and the black magic of public myths that he attempts to practice soon turns against him. Ivan was never strong and was easily swayed by the pressures of his environment; what lifted him to the sphere of the heroic was his poetic gift. Hence, when he lost his struggle with the *aridnyk*, he was a tragic figure. But now, when nothing is left but his weakness, he becomes a

petty, pathetic victim of the black magic of the world. When Ivan uses the traditional negative spells, pretending to invite the evil forces to his Christmas supper, the negative power of his spells is annulled and the evil forces do ultimately visit him. Anti-Marichka accepts his invitation to the dead, while Iura and Khyma come into his life to represent the magicians and the witches whom he also had pretended to invite to his table.

Iura is a *mol'far*, the most powerful among the great number of Hutsul magicians. Khyma is a "born" witch. They are the priest and priestess of black magic, which is the religion of the greedy world of the valleys. Khyma's powers symbolize reality turning to illusion, or to pseudo-poetry, for purposes of gain. The white magic of poetry, Marichka's innocent poetry, is now perverted for Ivan by Khyma's unclean metaphoric metamorphoses. (Note that the passage dealing with Khyma's transforming herself into a translucent ball, a white dog, a huge frog, even a bolt of linen, is immediately followed by Ivan's lyrical reminiscences of Marichka and her songs.) Iura rivals the *aridnyk* himself in the uncanny powers of his black magic.

People said that he was like a god. Wise and powerful, that thunder-soothsayer and sorcerer held in his strong hands the forces of heaven and earth, life and death, and the health of livestock and mankind. He was feared but needed by all.

Like the magic of Khyma and Palahna, Iura's magic is evil because instead of working with nature, it intrudes upon nature by the force of human will for the sake of gain. (In many of Kotsiubynsky's other works, such "black magic" is embodied in dark metaphors of the city and of industrial progress.) We recall that Ivan's powers had no practical aim; his mysterious music made no demands upon nature, joining it in its purposeless creativity.

Palahna, Ivan's worldly bride, is indeed a representative of the world. She is a type frequently used by Kotsiubynsky as the opposite of the woman of the hero's dreams. Under Palahna's guidance, Ivan half-heartedly immerses himself in the black magic of greed, as opposed to the white magic of music and poetry which he shared with his authentic bride, Marichka. There is no question of love for Ivan in Palahna's domain. The only warmth of companionship that Ivan experiences is with his cattle, in which a trace of nature still lingers. As for Palahna, the only substitute for love that she seems to have known in her life is lust.<sup>40</sup> Iura and Palahna's lust obviously belongs to the black magic of greed and gain; he attempts to seduce her during her own exercise in black magic by casting a hypnotic spell upon her, and finally has his way with her after his dramatic duel with the cloud. As Iura wins his lover by black magic, so he deals with his rival by magical spells: Ivan's bland indifference to his wife's unfaithfulness illustrates his general lethargy after Marichka's death and also implies that he is under Iura's unclean powers.

The ambiguity between mythology and psychology in the case of Iura's voodoo practices and, more important, in the appearance of anti-Marichka, far from being hopelessly paradoxical, is creatively self-fulfilling. Both occurrences may be interpreted as hallucinations, products of Ivan's wounded poetic imagination, which is now gorging itself on public myths. As Kotsiubynsky's other works indicate, a mistreated poetic imagination brings forth unhealthy, lurid shadowgraphs which pervert the poetry of the hero's soul and eventually herald his total collapse. For a subject who knew the heights of poetic reverie,

then, the loss of such lofty vistas, leaving behind only crippled memories, equals the loss of his life force. Hence, one may speculate that for Kotsiubynsky, as earlier for the romantics and the symbolists, and later for Jung, myth and psychology are in a mutually enhancing relationship.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, Ivan not only remains indifferent to Palahna's "epicurean" excuses for her sensual excesses, but tacitly agrees with them:

What's true is true. Our life is brief – it flickers for a while and then goes out.... His star was barely holding up in the sky. For what is our life? A glimmer in the sky, a cherry blossom, fleeting and evanescent.<sup>42</sup>

Although such fatalistic meditations contrast with Marichka's full-blooded love of life, they are linked, nevertheless, with the suprapersonal mysteries of the essence of nature, to which Ivan was introduced in early childhood, and in which the duration of an individual life is taken up and consumed by grander, totalizing movements of temporality. It is, therefore, interesting that Ivan's thoughts on the transitoriness of human life are repeated at the end of *Shadows*, when the funeral orgy rages around Ivan's bier. We should note also that in this work, sensuality and, later, death provoke the kind of thinking that consoled the hero of "The Apple Blossom" on a more positive and much more elevated philosophical level.

Weighted down by such ideas about life and death, Ivan is drawn to water, which once had taken Marichka's ribbons and later took Marichka herself. It is near the water of life, now transformed into the water of death, that anti-Marichka enters his warped and diminished field of vision. Anti-Marichka is doubly distanced from her former self; she is doubly the Other. To begin with, she returns from the land of the dead, those in Ukrainian mythology (as well as in most other national mythologies) who become alienated from the human community and turn against it, as if the very contact with death had changed them into enemies of life. But this alienation is secondary when compared to Marichka's specific alienation as a wood nymph.

Marichka becomes not only the dead non-Marichka but anti-Marichka diametrically opposed to everything that she had been in life. Her smiling dependability and sincerity become grinning treachery; her simple, sunny words of love become dark, catlike moans of lust; her former promises of eternal devotion now serve as cause for her mysterious, sarcastic laughter. She is forced to turn love into its caricature. And even the nature around her changes from the verdant meadows, where she gave herself to Ivan, to the petrified vegetation of nightmares. She has become a perverted metaphor—an anti-metaphor—of herself, even as everything in Ivan's present existence turns, under his hands, into perverted poetry. Her poetic gift, which glorified everything that is good in human life (and perhaps by its very humanity antagonized the *aridnyk*), is now at the service of the black magic of public myths. *Anti-Marichka's kolomyika*—sung in order to betray the human warmth of Marichka's creations and thus to continue the opposition between spectral riches and actual loss—alludes to the desolation of the *aridnyk's* wasteland and enriches the symbol of the desolation of nature in Ivan's present life: "When we were in love, even dry oaks bloomed, but when we parted, living oaks dried up." Ivan is about to be vanquished for the last time. Upon Marichka's bodily death, his soul was murdered, and all that remains now is for his body

to be assassinated by Marichka's violated spirit. His soul stands for his music, and his body represents his pathetic attempts at worldly life, which in themselves are a caricature of the earthly existence that Marichka taught him.

We have seen that throughout Kotsiubynsky's work the gift of poetry is also somewhat of a curse. Although the source of such punishment may be unknown to us, its instrument is the jealous world, which cannot bear the poet's apartness that the accursed gift implies. One may speculate that, in Ivan's case, his punishment is accompanied by the public myth's perversion of the highest myth of poetry, namely, the myth of Orpheus. Rather than the poet attempting to take his beloved out of the land of the dead, it is the woman (made into the enemy by the ruler of that land) who lures the poet more and more irrevocably into it. We note that when Ivan is being thus misled, he is not afraid to look upon Marichka's face—as Orpheus was forbidden to see Euridice's face—but upon anti-Marichka's back, where the ugly hole gapes wide, symbolizing a perversion of the desired body. When Ivan, a fallen poet, is torn on the rocks by an evil female agency, his death may be regarded as a caricature of the noble death of Orpheus.

When Ivan walks behind his treacherous guide, his consciousness becomes split between the pole of the true Marichka and the pole of anti-Marichka, as, according to Jung, consciousness may become split between the dark and the bright feminine principle:

His consciousness was splitting. He sensed Marichka beside him and yet knew that Marichka was gone, that someone else was leading him into the unknown, to the desolate mountain crests, in order to destroy him. Yet he felt good. He followed her laughter and girlish twittering, light, happy, and unafraid the way he once had been.

Anti-Marichka tempts Ivan with the vague and distant memories of his youthful love and with his crippled poetic reveries, distorted now into pathological hallucinations. Anti-Marichka, in short, tempts Ivan with Marichka. She gives him a false sense of happiness, just as Kotsiubynsky's earlier heroes (in *Fata Morgana*, for example) kept up their spirits with a false sense of hope. The added pathetic dimension of Ivan's self-delusion is that it is self-reflective; while he desperately attempts to enjoy Marichka's presence, he knows that it is in fact either a hallucination or the machinations of an evil power. Ivan's awareness of the mockery of his happy past and, at the same time, his inability to walk away from his situation may be the *aridnyk's* cruellest punishment.

The bifurcation of Marichka and anti-Marichka in Ivan's diseased consciousness is continued with the appearance of the *chuhaistyr*, a merry and friendly forest spirit. In the novel, he does not seem to be the *aridnyk's* agent, although Hutsul public myths assign to him the status of a minor devil descended from man. We note that he neither knows of Ivan's grief nor is curious about it, and, more important, he does not respond when Ivan (for the last time in his life) plays the Vanisher's secret melody for him. The *chuhaistyr*, being a minor demon, is not initiated into the highest mysteries of creativity; rather, he fulfills, more or less blindly, his role in the struggle on the lower levels of nature.

The function of the *chuhaistyr* is to point up Ivan's divided loyalties between the pole of Marichka and the pole of anti-Marichka. Ivan's duplicity in his dealings with the *chuhaistyr* reflects his confused loyalties toward the real and the imagined world, toward the curse of the mysterious music of his soul, toward Marichka's healthful earthly legacy, and toward the desperate wish, stemming from his inherent weakness, to join the public myth of society. Finally, it symbolizes the older Kotsiubynsky's despair over the inherent confusion and disorder of existence itself; nothing, as Gogol also believed, is what it seems when poetic reverie becomes perverted by evil. By playing his secret melody for the *chuhaistyr* in order to distract him and thus to save anti-Marichka, Ivan betrays his poetic gift for the last time.

Ivan's exceedingly mild show of surprise at the sudden appearance of the *chuhaistyr* (like his matter-of-fact acceptance of other spirits that so frequently appear to him throughout his life) illustrates the communion between spirits, people, and animals in which the Hutsuls believe. It also implies the Hutsuls' passivity in the face of the mysterious forces that rule the land, a resignation to the obvious "fact" that from his mountain peaks the *aridnyk* governs people by direct intervention and with the help of his agents, as a puppet master pulls the strings of his "actors." The nonhuman and the human fraternity begins at the most basic level of life itself. After the shared dance, "Ivan collapsed beside the *chuhaistyr*. And so they breathed together." There is in this image a sort of communion of man and spirit through nature, a sharing in the basic organismic life which Ivan also shared with his cattle. It is the kind of union with nature that Marichka's presence implied on a much profounder level. Because of his confusion of values, Ivan refused that final offer of "breathing together."

Ivan's fall into the precipice is the ultimate embodiment of his earlier fall. He falls into the abyss, where there is no saving hand to catch him, because the possibility of his salvation has been closed to him from his birth:

He did not know what was below him, but he sensed the cold and malevolent breath of the abyss that had opened its insatiable maw toward him.... Ivan ... suddenly sensed that the abyss was pulling him down. Seizing him by the neck, it bent him backward.

A different breathing, that of death, had joined Ivan's.

The public myth of the greedy and lustful world besets Ivan's bier. At the same time, however, the wild Hutsul death rites serve to embody a deeper significance. An ambiguous synthesis of life and death underlies the coda of *Shadows*; remaining themselves, life and death are joined on some lower level beneath both the personal myth of the poet's limitless and inexpressible vision and the public myth of expressed and established worldly ritual. At that basic level of nature, very close to the "community of breathing," sex begins to stir, as if attempting to include the power of death in the processes of life, to neutralize the linear progress of individual existence in the cyclical movement of birth, vegetation, and decay.

Although such a vulgar assertion of the continuity of life as the Hutsuls' funeral games seems to be at the opposite extreme of the elegantly poetic apple blossoms at the end of Kotsiubynsky's story "The Apple Blossom," the contrasting symbolic ways of expressing such continuity in the two stories are nevertheless similar in their origin. And yet, even as the origin of the symbols

of the apple blossoms and of the funeral games is the same, the latter expression of the continuity of life within the public myth seems to be rather repugnant to Kotsiubynsky.

The descriptions of the funeral games in *Shadows* border on the grotesque, what with the sticky sweat of unwashed bodies mingling its pungent odor with the sweetish smell of the ripe corpse, and the old mourners, themselves close to death, exposing the rotting stumps of teeth in obscene laughter. Kotsiubynsky's ambiguous emotional relationship to that scene is complicated by the description of Ivan's dead face: in it, against the background of the collective, riotous assertion of life, we see the drama of an individual existence (as against the background of a public myth, we see the death of a personal myth). Ivan's life is cursed by an exceptionally intense and high personal myth; therefore, his inevitable betrayal of that myth and his final punishment have to be correspondingly low and ugly. The description of his dead face masterfully embodies that ambiguity, together with the ambiguity between his strength as a dreamer and his weakness as a man.

Ivan's yellow face rested on the linen, having forever closed within itself something that only he knew, and the right eye slyly peered from under a slightly raised eyelid at the brass coins piled on his chest and the candle burning in his folded hands.

Under the cold squall of mysterious forces, a poet's life is indeed as transitory and fragile as the bloom on a cherry tree.

If certain thematic matters in *Shadows* (like the *aridnyk*'s double nature in his relationship with Ivan) seem to remain unresolved, such uncertainties presumably stem from Kotsiubynsky's own hesitations about the poet's encounter with the world. These hesitations, moreover, beget ambiguities not only in *Shadows* but throughout Kotsiubynsky's oeuvre, since (as I have suggested in this essay) *Shadows* sums up Kotsiubynsky's creative philosophy.

With Kotsiubynsky's death, two lives—that of a man and that of a writer—came to an end. Such bifurcation, so characteristic of modern literature as a whole, is particularly radical in the case of Kotsiubynsky. His dutiful behavior, which can be read as a sort of substitute for the parental authority that he had never really known and which he felt compelled to impose upon his youthful self, failed him in the end, as if he secretly wanted to fail there. The only duty that he seemed to observe as an authentic task until the last days of his life was his writing. It is as if he resented the world—the hemisphere of black magic as well as the hemisphere dedicated to the struggle against it—for having prevented him from devoting his total being to the project of literature. Moreover, his dutiful attitude to the task of creativity itself, carried over from his difficult life, put Kotsiubynsky in a constant state of anxiety concerning his drawbacks as an artist: he had not done enough, he had fallen short of his possibilities, he had betrayed his calling. Gorky and many other acquaintances describe his intense attacks of self-disparagement.<sup>43</sup> And Kotsiubynsky's own letters, particularly those to Aplaksina, are even more eloquent on that score:

It is very bad to be a writer. You constantly feel some vague obligations, your observing eyes are constantly open wide, you constantly strain the strings of your heart and tune them for the melodies of nature. And yet it is never enough, you always seem in your own estimation to be impoverished, insufficiently subtle, lazy, careless.... You would want to embrace the whole world and make it a part of your heart, to collect all the colors and all the rays in the world ... and at the same time you feel with sadness that you are a poor, inadequate apparatus, which cannot fulfill its task.<sup>44</sup>

In Kotsiubynsky's complex and subtle consciousness, it is not only the world that is guilty toward the writer. Complicating that inherently romantic conviction in the spirit of modernism, Kotsiubynsky's uncertainties about his own art imply that the writer is also guilty toward the world. To begin with, the writer (particularly if he finds himself in the situation of a Slavic writer, and even more specifically, of a Ukrainian writer) betrays the world of action

by removing himself to the high, cold regions above the valleys of the community. In a letter to Aplaksina, Kotsiubynsky implies that his gift has been bestowed on him by some alien power and that this was *not* a gesture of generosity:

If it were not for some unknown power always pushing me forward, always ordering me: Write!—I would throw down my pen forever and would endeavor to apply my energy to some other occupation.<sup>45</sup>

Kotsiubynsky, in sum, considered every moment away from his desk as a wasted moment, yet every moment spent at his desk he also believed to be lost. His reverie was constantly struggling out of the enmeshment of the world, while the world demanded its own.

Kotsiubynsky further believed that within the domain of creativity the writer is doomed to treason. The realm of authentic art lies for him somewhere far beyond images expressed in words, in some syncretic space of ultimate purity. The writer's act of taking up the pen and placing row upon row of black signs on a sheet of paper (its void laden with the dread of infinite possibilities)—the writer having borrowed those very signs from the established, unwieldy, generalizing structure of language and having arranged them in a tedious temporal duration—is in itself a crude representation of poetic reverie and therefore a sort of betrayal. In Kotsiubynsky's important autobiographical letter to Mykhailo Mochulsky, we find the following significant confession:

When I think about the plot [of a future work] ... I am happy: everything about it seems to be so bright, so fresh, so full and strong that I tremble with excitement. But it is enough for me to sit down at my table and take pen in hand, and everything begins to appear so pale, anemic and colorless. I simply do not have enough words at my disposal to convey all of what a moment ago I had experienced so powerfully. Having finished a work, I feel disgust.... If I could limit the creative process to imagination alone, I would be very happy.<sup>46</sup>

By longing for the ultimate horizons of existence given in pure poetic reverie, in which language itself would fall away as an unnecessary and therefore atrophied appendage of the gratuitously created being, Kotsiubynsky, to his own horror, seemed to attempt to create an alternative "world of Idea," a Mallarméan anti-world of essence, which would ultimately cancel the world of disloyalty, pettiness, dirt, and greed. Kotsiubynsky was indeed convinced that such longings are profoundly evil—perhaps more evil in their mysterious ways *than the evils of the bedeviled world*. In such desires, Kotsiubynsky seems to warn us, one can hear echoes of the music of Satan himself, since the energy that awakens and inspires them wafts from the gray, bare rocks of the Inhuman. It is this energy that prevented Kotsiubynsky's poetically attuned heroes from devoting themselves to life, and hence paralyzed them as useful men of action. And it is this energy that turned Marichka, the truly innocent one, into a victim of an incomprehensible sacrifice.



The only counterbalance to the ultimate moral chaos, with which the energy of pure creativity threatens human existence, is the careful borrowing of some steadying elements from the bedeviled world. The writer must control the dangerous spirit of creativity by the tedious rows of black marks, the very communality of which saves him from taking the ultimate risk of alienation and perhaps madness in completely self-enclosed reverie. The writer must patiently perform his duty of embodying the ineffable music of Satan against Satan's own wishes in elaborate images, careful rhythms, and highly polished phrases; thus, like some modern Racine, he may hope to reveal the various hidden dangers of existence so much more starkly and abruptly for the deliberate device of stylistic distancing. The writer, then, must approach the world and the people in it without falling into its traps.

Kotsiubynsky's deepest regret seems to have been that he was never able to achieve the innocence and serenity of Marichka's simple art: although he could create her, he could not share in the spirit of her creations. In the end, he was not able to resolve the dichotomy between the danger of art and that of life. He believed both the music of Satan and the bedeviled world to be accursed, each of them drawing the traitor-dreamer toward its own abyss. There is nothing for the writer, then (unless he has Marichka's rare natural simplicity), but to remain a permanent quester and a potential traitor, endangering both himself and the beloved people close to him in his precarious spiritual balancing act. The high tension—the “alternating current”—between the two poles of Kotsiubynsky's divided loyalties is the energy that produced most of his works, including *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*. Had he been more at peace with himself, he might have been able to capture in his work the inspiration of Marichka's quatrains. Or, what is more likely, he might have given Ukrainian literature yet another baker's dozen of self-satisfied novels of “epic proportions” on the smug joys of doing the right thing. But it is his very struggle—a mortal struggle on the level of both art and personal experience—that makes Kotsiubynsky so integrally a writer for our time.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>H. Lazarevsky, "Chernihiv za chasiv Mykhaila Kotsiubynskoho," in Potupeiko (ed.), *Spohady pro Mykhaila Kotsiubynskoho*, p. 164. Translations of all quotations, except those from this text of *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, are mine (B.R.).

<sup>2</sup>Pavlo Tychyna, "Pershe znaiomstvo: Chernihiv, 1910 r.," in Potupeiko, p. 174.

<sup>3</sup>M. Gorky, "M. M. Kotsiubynsky," in Potupeiko, pp. 183 and 185.

<sup>4</sup>To Mykhailo Mochulsky, 28 January 1906, Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky, *Tvory v semy tomakh*, 6:48.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>M. Khrashchevsky quoted in Kupiansky, *Litopys zhyttia i tvorchosti Mykhaila Kotsiubynskoho*, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup>To Mochulsky, p. 49.

<sup>8</sup>To Volodymyr Hnatiuk, 19 April 1907, Kotsiubynsky, 6:79.

<sup>9</sup>To Vira Kotsiubynska, 15 June 1909, Kotsiubynsky, 6:124.

<sup>10</sup>To Mykhailo Zhuk, 15 July 1910, Kotsiubynsky, 7:51.

<sup>11</sup>To Kotsiubynska, 26 June 1909, Kotsiubynsky, 6:135.

<sup>12</sup>To Kotsiubynska, 24 June 1910, Kotsiubynsky, 7:34-35.

<sup>13</sup>A pejorative Russian word used for Ukrainians and referring specifically to the tuft of hair worn by Cossacks on top of their shaved scalps.

<sup>14</sup>Quoted in Kupiansky, p. 424.

<sup>15</sup>To Maksim Gorky, 9 August 1910, Kotsiubynsky, 7:69.

<sup>16</sup>To Gorky, 2 July 1911, Kotsiubynsky, 7:126.

<sup>17</sup>To Hnatiuk, 19 February 1913, Kotsiubynsky, 7:303.

<sup>18</sup>Panas Myrny to Ia. Zharko, 6 November 1900, quoted in Kupiansky, p. 139.

<sup>19</sup>For a thorough discussion of Kotsiubynsky and impressionism, see Oleksandra Chernenko, *Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky—Impresionist: Obraz liudyny v tvorchosti pysmennyka*. The author carefully analyzes Kotsiubynsky's debt to Western literature and culture generally, thus correcting many distortions of the scholarship on Kotsiubynsky in Eastern Europe. On Kotsiubynsky's use of color in general and impressionistic techniques in particular, see also Elżbieta Wiśniewska, *O sztuce pisarskiej Mychajła Kociubynskiego*, p. 75ff.

<sup>20</sup>Stepan Butnyk, "Spohady pro Mykhaila Kotsiubynskoho," in Potupeiko, pp. 152-153 *et passim*.

<sup>21</sup>Kotsiubynsky, 3:156.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>24</sup>Kotsiubynsky, 2:297.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 309.

<sup>28</sup>The story was written in the last months of 1912 and was published in the January 1913 issue of *Literaturno-naukovyi vistnyk*, with the remark at the end of the text: "Conclusion follows."

<sup>29</sup>Kotsiubynsky, 3:286.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 289-290.

<sup>32</sup>To Vira Kotsiubynska, 12 January 1896, Kotsiubynsky, 5:61.

<sup>33</sup>Kotsiubynsky, 3:11.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>"Idealizatsiia chy zhakhlyva diisnist," *Chervonyi shliakh*, 4 (1929), p. 165; quoted by Chernenko, p. 107.

<sup>36</sup>Wiśniewska, p. 41.

<sup>37</sup>See, for example, Kolesnyk, *Kotsiubynsky—Khudozhnyk slova*, pp. 401-402. This “epic canvas” of a study, pretending to high seriousness, is occasionally useful but more often superficial and pompous, in the inimitable Soviet style. It enjoys great authority in Soviet scholarship on Kotsiubynsky.

<sup>38</sup>The quotation, together with other material on Pan in this section, is taken from Patricia Merivale, *Pan the Goat-God: His Myth in Modern Times* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969). The quotation appears on p. 9.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>40</sup>Kotsiubynsky paraphrases a remark that he had heard from an old Hutsul and recorded in his notes: “As long as the world stands, there has been no such man whom a single woman could satisfy.” In the novel, he changes this to: “Since time immemorial no woman had ever abided by only one man.” See Kotsiubynsky, 3:345.

<sup>41</sup>For remarks on Kotsiubynsky and Jung see Chernenko, pp. 50, 53-54, 66, 98, 114, 119-120 *et passim*.

<sup>42</sup>The strikingly poetic comparison of life to cherry blossoms is not Kotsiubynsky’s own; he heard it from a Hutsul during one of his visits to the Carpathian Mountains. See Kupiansky, p. 515.

<sup>43</sup>M. Gorky, pp. 182-183.

<sup>44</sup>To Aleksandra Aplaksina, 28 July 1910, Kotsiubynsky, 7:61.

<sup>45</sup>To Aplaksina, 13 July 1910, Kotsiubynsky, 7:60.

<sup>46</sup>To Mykhailo Mochulsky, 30 November 1905, Kotsiubynsky, 6:43.



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Kotsiubynsky, Mykhailo. *Tvory v semy tomakh* [Works in Seven Volumes]. Kiev: Naukova Dumka, 1973-75. The most recent, and also the most complete, of the numerous editions of Kotsiubynsky's writings. The present translation is based on the text in vol. 3, pp. 178-227, and vol. 6, pp. 251-304, contains a detailed bibliography of Kotsiubynsky's writings both in Ukrainian and in translation. The copious notes that Kotsiubynsky took during interviews with Hutsul informants have been published in vol. 3, pp. 341-355, and vol. 4, pp. 299-302. Of special interest are his notes on the Hutsuls' extramarital affairs: although some of them were used in *Shadows*, they were meant to be central to his planned epic novel on the Hutsuls.

Of previous editions, *Tvory v piaty tomakh* [Works in Five Volumes] (Kiev-Kharkiv: Knyhospilka, 1929-30) is valuable for introductions by the critics Pavlo Fylypovych, Ahapii Shamrai, and Mykola Zerov. *Tini zabutykh predkiv* [Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors] (Kiev: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1929) includes a useful introduction and notes by Antin Krushelnytsky and remarkable illustrations by Olena Kulchytska.

### KOTSIUBYNSKY'S SOURCES FOR *SHADOWS OF FORGOTTEN ANCESTORS*

Shukhevych, Volodymyr. *Hutsulshchyna*. Materiialy do ukrainsko-ruskoi etnolohii, vols. 1-5. Lviv: Naukove Tovarystvo imeny Shevchenka, 1899-1908. The fifth volume was published separately as *Hutsulshchyna* (Lviv, 1908). Almost simultaneously with the Ukrainian edition, Shukhevych published a nearly identical Polish version, with all the ethnographic material quoted in careful transliteration: Szuchiewicz, Włodzimierz, *Huculczyzna*, 4 volś. (Lviv: Muzeum imienia Dzieduszyckich, 1902-1908).

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## BACKGROUND, BIOGRAPHY, CRITICISM

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indirectly shows how much the Hutsul myths have in common with all Ukrainian and Slavic mythologies.

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