

OLE'S' BERDNYK'S VEXATIOUS
SCIENCE FICTION

by

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In the West Oles' Berdnyk attained notoriety and some recognition only after he had been denounced in the Soviet press, harrassed by the KGB and expelled from the Ukrainian Writers' Union in May 1973. Berdnyk was an unnoticed author primarily due to his devotion to a literary genre which has been completely ignored in Western studies of Soviet Ukrainian literature. In the Ukraine, however, Berdnyk had proven himself a popular and prolific writer. Between 1957 and 1971 he published seventeen science fiction novels and a number of short stories.

Although Berdnyk's works are popular in the Ukraine and in the other Republics of the Soviet Union they will not likely elevate him to the stature of great writers. Nevertheless Oles' Berdnyk deserves some recognition not only as a politically controversial figure, but also as a courageous author who was not afraid to introduce several new notions into the realm of Ukrainian science fiction.

During the past few years the Ukrainian emigre press has hailed Berdnyk as a literary dissident and as an outspoken critic of the Soviet reality. While some of Berdnyk's recent actions have obviously brought him into the ranks of Soviet Ukrainian dissidents, this role was nevertheless forced on him by official political measures.

Oles' Berdnyk did not start his literary career by being an outspoken critic of the Soviet regime. It would have been relatively easy for Berdnyk to become a dissident by describing realistically a number of unsavoury features of Soviet life which he had experienced himself. He could have easily become a literary dissident by describing

how he had lived in exile from 1949 to 1955 in the Far North and in Kazakhstan. But Berdnyk had evidently no desire to become a dissident by criticizing the harsh realities of Soviet life, for after his exile he devoted himself entirely to science fiction, a literary genre that is diametrically opposite to all forms of realistic literature. Berdnyk would no doubt have continued writing highly entertaining fantasies if he had been allowed to exercise his imagination freely. But fate was against him, for even by specializing in literary fantasy and by avoiding explicit criticism of the Soviet reality Berdnyk was unable to steer clear of persecutions by the Soviet literary and political authorities. Consequently, he was not only expelled from the Ukrainian Writers' Union, not only prohibited from writing and giving lectures on science fiction, but also denied gainful employment for a two-year period.

Berdnyk found no other recourse but to protest against the many unwarranted and often unsubstantiated charges that were brought against him. In his letters to various Party officials he repudiated the accusations and complained about the mistreatments which he had experienced and protested by way of several hunger-strikes. In spite of the fact that these tactics did not yield the desired results, Berdnyk still continues his courageous and persistent protests against the official censures of his science fantasies. Recently, on June 25, 1976, he wrote an open letter to Leonid Brezhnev wherein he outlined his personal plight and declared that;-

all of my literary and social activities were intended to provide an opportunity for the readers to experience the thoughts, the feelings and the creative notions of a higher cosmic sphere,

to re-awaken in our generation an aspiration to
create on our planet the hitherto nonexistent
Communist reality... 1

In this letter Berdnyk went on to point out that the entire Soviet Union is suffering from the "harshness and gangsterism of the bureaucracy," and pleaded with the Secretary of the Party to have all the restraints lifted in the sphere of art and creative pursuits; he concluded the open letter by asking Leonid Illich: "Who are you - a Friend or an Enemy?"² At present it is obvious that even the direct appeal to Leonid Brezhnev failed to end or even to curtail the persecution and harrassment of Berdnyk.

The campaign against Berdnyk culminated in May 1973, but the denunciations of his writings began much earlier. They started apparently in 1965 after his novel Podvyh Vaivasvaty (The Feat of Vaivasvata) was translated into Russian. As soon as the journal Raduga completed the serialization of the work it was denounced by Literaturnaia gazeta. In an article entitled "White and Black Magic", written by G. Did'ko, an apparent expert in such matters, Berdnyk was not only accused of practicing magic, but also excoriated for "forgetting our materialistic philosophy" and for indulging in "mysticism" and "spiritualism".³ This article set the pattern for the subsequent censures of Berdnyk in the Soviet Ukrainian press. Thus Berdnyk was reproached for propagating "completely immature, and even false maxims",⁴ denounced for preaching "Biblical, Buddhist and Yogic dogmas, and the maxims of various charlatans",⁵ and condemned for "his antisocial acts and deviations from the principles and tasks outlined in the charter of the Writers' Union of USSR".⁶ In spite of such warnings, Berdnyk

continued writing unorthodox science fiction and, what is more surprising, managed to have it published in the Soviet Ukraine.

Although Oles' Berdnyk had been accused of many literary and social misdemeanors, he was most frequently rebuked for imbuing his works with mystical and religious notions. Such charges were, however, never duly substantiated by either thorough reviews, or even extensive quotations from the author's works. This became obvious even to the Soviet literary officials. Hence on reviewing Berdnyk's most recent deviations from Socialist Realism the editors of Literaturna Ukraina stated that

Our criticism has already touched upon O. Berdnyk's Zoranyi korsar, a murky and an erroneous work in the ideological sense, but so far the reader has not been given a detailed and thorough going analysis of this work.

7

There were further denunciations of Zoranyi korsar (The Star Corsair), but the readers were not provided with a detailed review of Berdnyk's most accomplished and most criticised novel prior to his expulsion from the Ukrainian Writers' Union.⁸

From the reading of the novel it is clear that The Star Corsair contains several notions which have no doubt displeased the Soviet literary commissars. But there is no evidence to the effect that Berdnyk is an advocate of religious mysticism which is based on the belief "that it is possible to achieve communion with God through contemplation and love without the medium of human reason."⁹ Although Berdnyk was frequently rebuked in the Soviet press for imbuing his works with mystical and religious notions, The Star Corsair contains quite the contrary evidence. In a passage entitled "Sud nad bohamy" (The Trial

of Gods) Berdnyk's characters rely only on the human faculty of reason in their thorough examination and assessment of the various deities which mankind had worshipped in the past. A most unfavourable verdict is delivered at this trial against Jehovah, Zeus-Jupiter and Brahma. All of these deities are indicted for being cruel, irresponsible and tyrannical.¹⁰ A Baptist minister who is present at the trial protests against this decision and introduces a mystical notion by claiming that "man is incapable of reaching the shores of truth without aid from the Almighty."¹¹ But the minister's arguments are in vain. The court rejects all claims of man's mystical relationship with God and affirms the human ability to penetrate, to comprehend all the secrets of the universe without aid from a divine power.¹² And in another passage of the novel one of Berdnyk's heroes describes his search for truth by saying:

I plunged into the depth of the occult teachings and mysticism. But I soon realized that this path leads to a dead end.... The path of mysticism does not lead to any solution.

13

Repeatedly Berdnyk rejects all notions of religious mysticism in The Star Corsair as well as in his short stories, particularly in "Zoloti vorota" (The Golden Gate). There Berdnyk concludes the following about the history of civilization:

Mysticism, religion and occultism emerge as an instrument of psychological enslavement. The notion of Man's sinfulness is formulated on a global scale and there emerges a cult of a Penal Lord - of a God. Entire generations grow up in psychological enslavement.

14

Moreover, in this story Berdnyk also emphasizes that "all religions, mystical groups, social organizations, despots, states and ideologies

have always encroached on man's soul."¹⁵ From these and similar assertions about religion and mysticism it is quite obvious that Berdnyk is neither an advocate of religious mysticism nor a preacher of Buddhist and Yogic dogmas. But from this it does not follow that Berdnyk is a proponent of atheism, for in "The Golden Gate" he emphasizes that

even godlessness (atheism) is but the reverse side of fideism, theism, and therefore it also forces the human mind to revolve continually in the psychic field of the ancient cult, does not allow a full play of thoughts and actions. 16

It seems that the Soviet literary gendarmes accused Berdnyk of mysticism in order to obscure various other unpalatable concepts contained in The Star Corsair. On reading the work it becomes quite obvious that Berdnyk cannot be even regarded as a mystical writer in the sense that his novel contains vague or obscure fantasies. The main themes of Berdnyk's novels are indeed developed quite lucidly. Even an occasional reader of science fiction can discern without difficulty that The Star Corsair is not a novel about cosmic piracy, but an exposition of various evolutionary developments on earth and on the planets of other galaxies. From the depictions of these evolutions one can readily surmise Berdnyk's Weltanschauung as well as the notions which had provoked the Soviet authorities.

Berdnyk's portrayal of other forms of life and evolutions is at times surprising and amusing. For example, the reader is introduced to a planet inhabited by living entities which are literally flower children, unusual flower children who are capable of synthesizing all necessary nutrients in their bodies by utilizing solar energy and basic

minerals, and who are able to fly through the air as well as communicate by way of telepathy. This society of flying flowers leads a life of great activity. The flowers have developed a sense of common purpose and mutual intellectual activities. As a narrating flower puts it, "an infinite union of love is the essence of our existence".¹⁷ The flowers have realized this objective by creating

a single biomagnetic field, the energy of which belongs to all. That is why every plant, every flower will eventually become a thinking being, once it is suffused by the common source of knowledge.

18

This biomagnetic diffusion of knowledge is not confined to the planet of the flying flowers, for the flowers have discovered the secret of multi-dimensional mobility and are hence capable of reaching other planets and even other galaxies in a matter of seconds.

This evolutionary development may seem strange and even improbable to a reader who is not accustomed to science fiction. But the presentation of this evolution is lucid enough to be comprehensible to all readers. The same holds true for Berdnyk's depiction of the evolutions on other planets. The Star Corsair contains two further accounts of intelligent life forms. One of them entails the evolutionary development on the planet Aoda which was populated by humanoids who were "similar to the people of Earth, but had bright-yellow colour of skin".¹⁹ Unlike the flower society the people of Aoda had a very advanced science and technology and they eventually developed a "Central Synthesizer" which supplied the entire population of the planet with food and with all other necessities of life. Hence there was "no need to sew, to build, to think, to create".²⁰ The builders of the Central Synthesizer had

believed that the machine would free the people from the menial tasks and thus enable them to devote themselves to "cosmic creativity". But this technological innovation produced quite the contrary results. By eliminating the need to struggle the machine also destroyed an essential stimulus in the evolutionary process of the people of Aoda. The elimination of the stimulus led to psychological, social and physiological degeneration:

An involution had taken place. The majority of the people have already lost the ability to speak. They have but one desire; enjoyment, light-hearted contemplation, spontaneous reproduction and vegetative existence. 21

Berdnyk does not suggest in the novel that technological advances will inevitably disrupt or hamper all evolutionary processes. In a further depiction of an evolutionary development Berdnyk shows how the inhabitants of another planet, called Ara, were able to avoid the fate which befell the hedonists of Aoda. The humanoid creatures of Ara were not overcome either by lethargy or by an involution as they advanced through all possible phases of technological and scientific development. Indeed they had managed to advance their knowledge to such an extent that further progress was impossible, as there remained no unexplored frontiers in any of the eight dimensions of their entire galaxy.

On becoming familiar with Berdnyk's depiction of life on other planets one could presume that the Soviet literary authorities denounced the novel in order to discourage the readers from perceiving the depiction of other evolutions as an allegorical satire on the Soviet way of life. Such interpretations of science fiction are apparently in fashion now among the Soviet readers. According to a recent observer of Soviet life,

the former New York Times correspondent, Hedrick Smith, "the science fiction stories of the Strugatsky brothers, Boris and Arkady ... are widely read by the cognoscenti as critical allegories about Soviet Russia set on other planets or in the West".²²

Such an allegorical interpretation of The Star Corsair would be most inappropriate, as the novel lacks the necessary details which could establish a correspondence between the extraterrestrial civilizations and the present Soviet society. In fact Berdnyk avoids detailed descriptions of the evolutionary developments on other planets. Instead he expounds at length the final results and the ultimate purpose of evolutionary patterns.

Berdnyk's preoccupation with the ultimate causality and the final evolutionary results is not confined to The Star Corsair. This concept recurs in the other works frequently enough to be recognized not merely as a leitmotif, but as a distinct trait of Berdnyk's science fiction. Consequently, it is not inappropriate to define Berdnyk's writings as teleological science fiction.

In The Star Corsair the teleological theme is apparent not only in the depiction of the final goals of evolutions, but also in the rejection of the doctrine of mechanism which is based on the theory that all phenomena of the universe and life itself can be explained by the laws of physics and chemistry. Berdnyk's depiction of the evolutionary processes on Aoda and Ara were intended as a refutation of this doctrine. By utilizing chemical and physical resources and their advanced technology the beings of Aoda satisfied the material wants of all, but this eventually led to an involution, to a reduction of intelligent beings to

mere vegetables. The inhabitants of Ara, who had explored and utilized the physical sciences to such an extent that they even attained immortality, also sustained eventually an evolutionary set-back that could not be remedied by physical sciences and mechanistic technology. As the advancement of knowledge came to an end the people lost the desire to live and began to commit suicide. Since such behaviour was not condoned by the government the scientists had to bring back to life all who had killed themselves. The scientists were unable, however, to provide the people with a desire to go on living in their unchanging utopian society. The finality and the ultimate ineffectiveness of science based on mechanistic materialism is emphasized by a scientist of Ara who proposes at the Congress of Thinkers that they explode their galaxy and let nature begin its evolutionary cycle once more, for science is helpless in solving the dilemma which confronts them.²³

Berdnyk's teleological themes are intended to emphasize the limitations of the materialistic philosophy and the inadequacy of the mechanistic doctrine in the explication of the very essence of the vital forces without which even the most advanced civilizations are unable to continue their existence. As Berdnyk's teleological themes tend to discredit the precepts of the materialistic-positivistic philosophy they are obviously incompatible with the official Soviet ideology which is based on dialectic materialism. The teleological traits of Berdnyk's fantasy were likely most offensive to the Soviet political authorities, and the literary dogmatists were, therefore, obliged to censure Berdnyk for writing "a murky and an erroneous work in the ideological sense".²⁴

The literary gendarmes had no alternative but to denounce Berdnyk's deviation from the official ideology, but they were unable to disclose the details of this deviation, for a thorough review of Berdnyk's works would reveal how the author challenges the premise of materialistic philosophy. The literary authorities confined themselves to unsubstantiated denunciations, because thorough reviews of Berdnyk's science fiction would demonstrate not merely how the author's teleology challenges the doctrine of materialism, but also reveal the precepts of vitalism, an integral part of Berdnyk's teleological fiction.

In his depiction of the various evolutions Berdnyk expounds the doctrine of vitalism, which entails the notion that life is caused and sustained by a vital force which is distinct from all chemical and physical processes. In Berdnyk's fantasies the discovery of vitalism comprises the ultimate goal in the evolution of intelligent beings. This is usually realized by individuals who reject all religious and secular dogmas, and by concentrating on their inner nature they realize that, being complex living organisms, they are the focal point of the forces of vitalism. This discovery leads them to the conclusion that "the umbilical cord of matter must be severed, its laws must be disrupted".²⁵ By eliminating their dependency on the material world these individuals direct henceforth their own course of evolution and in a short time they acquire omniscience, omnipotency and an ability to travel through space and time by the sheer use of will power. After the final stages of transfiguration the new beings do not normally intrude into the affairs of subordinate creatures and tend to withdraw into the so-called Neosphere,

a new dimension of existence.

In The Star Corsair the transformation into godhood is realized by a group of dissidents from the planet Ara who had dared to reject the materialistic philosophy and physical sciences. But Berdnyk does not confine this mode of evolution to the beings from another galaxy. In another short story entitled "Apostol bezsmertia" (The Apostle of Immortality) Berdnyk advocates that this transformation may also be achieved by earthlings. Hence he describes how a young Ukrainian mathematician named Hrytsko changes into an immortal being who can derive his energy directly from the sun and who is able to move from the Caucasus to the Carpathian mountains in an instant by using his will power.²⁶

Berdnyk's "Apostle of Immortality" bears much greater resemblance to Nietzsche's Zarathustra than to a typical hero of Soviet literature. The notion of the transformation of man either into a superman, or into a demigod is not at all compatible with the usual role that is assigned to Soviet positive heroes. They must above all exemplify an unquestionable allegiance to the Communist ideology and to the policies of the Party. But on completing their metamorphosis Berdnyk's ideal heroes make no attempt to become members of the Communist Party and manifest an antisocial tendency by seeking the company of their own peers in the universe.

Berdnyk's teleological exposition of vitalism and particularly its culmination in mangodhood is without question incongruous to the Soviet philosophical precepts and social ideals. Hence the Soviet political and literary authorities had no other alternative but to denounce Berdnyk's

provocative science fiction. But from this it does not follow that Berdnyk's writings, especially The Star Corsair, would be entirely palatable to all non-Soviet readers. The members of the major religions of our world would also likely find some notions in Berdnyk's works most provocative and vexatious. Most of the devout believers would no doubt take exception to Berdnyk's "Trial of the Gods" and also to his definition of religion "as an instrument of psychological enslavement". Christians and Jews would likely be most displeased with the reinterpretation of Genesis in The Star Corsair where Berdnyk advocates that the planet Earth and man had been created by the inhabitants of Ara in order to increase their own psychic energy by watching how man struggles through the painful and prolonged evolutionary process. Devout Christians would no doubt be also irked and provoked by the depiction of the Corsair in the image of a saviour of mankind who bestows unto man an extraordinary chalice containing "the wine of immortality".²⁷ And the new commandments which this saviour introduces would surely displease everyone:

Men were told: do not kill! And I say unto you: abandon yesterday's world of slavery and submissiveness where death carouses continually, and become immortal.

.....

You have been told: do not steal! I say unto you: is it possible to steal something in a united world where everything will belong to you and where we shall be merely parts of the boundless whole?

.....

The people have been told repeatedly: do not resist evil! And I appeal to you: turn to ashes this accursed world where evil has made for itself a thousand-year-old nest and has hatched myriads of vipers.

.....

From now on your path leads you to a place where
 there'll be no more hostility and damnation.
 Leave behind in darkness what is dark and you,
 Sons of Light, go to the region of knowledge and
 love.

.....
 Do you hear me, oh Brothers? Henceforth begins
 the time of Love and Freedom!

28

From the ending of The Star Corsair and from such stories as "The Golden Gate" it is possible to surmise the nature of Berdnyk's literary objective. By way of science fiction he aspires to invalidate the existing secular and religious ideologies and doctrines in order to replace them with a new type of cosmic mythology. This very objective as well as the iconoclastic utterances, the apostolic maxims and the new commandments which are often expressed with excessive zeal comprise the most vexatious features of Berdnyk's fantasies.

Berdnyk's type of science fantasy is unprecedented in Ukrainian literature. Such founding writers of Ukrainian science fiction as Iurii Smolych, Petro Lisovyi, Dmytro Buz'ko, and above all Volodymyr Vladko, the dean of Ukrainian science fiction, did not deviate from materialistic philosophy and Party policies. Their works were "imbued with profound patriotism, with fervent belief in the struggle of Soviet science, which has no other objectives than to serve the working masses".²⁹ On becoming acquainted with the representative works in Ukrainian science fiction which conform to the official literary norms one cannot help but agree with the Soviet Ukrainian scholar Mykola Pyvovarov who stated that:

the revolutionary struggle of the working class
 against capitalism, the exalted surges of national
 liberation wars among the enslaved nations, that

were fostered by the ideas of the Great October Revolution became the themes of many science fiction works in Soviet literature. 30

In view of its thematic range Soviet Ukrainian science fiction was for many years almost identical with Socialist Realism. Perhaps the only noticeable difference between these genres was the fact that the positive heroes of science fiction works faced occasionally non-human "enemies of the people", such as, for example, the mechanical robots in Vladko's novel Idut' robotari (The Robots are Coming), or huge mushrooms and immense flying insects which Vladko's heroes encountered on Venus. But these enemies were of course always defeated by the positive heroes and the heroic masses.

Socialist Realism dominated Ukrainian science fiction till the early 1960's. A partial relaxation of Party controls in the field of literature led to several innovations, and Ukrainian science fiction became more entertaining than it had been in the previous decades. But for the most part the new science fiction works were merely exotic adventures or travelogues set on other planets. Berdnyk's early works are also devoid of complex ideas, or controversial philosophical and religious issues. But by mid 1960's Berdnyk's writings started to become more complex and provocative. At present it is not clear what prompted Berdnyk to expound in his later works the notion of vitalism. He may have derived it from Henri Bergson's concept of élan vital (the works of Bergson were translated into Russian in 1913-14). However, it is also possible that Berdnyk based his notion of vitalism on the recent Soviet scientific development known as Kirlian photography

which has revealed an energy source in the form of spectacular bluish auras or coronas on the outer surfaces of all living plants and animals. This phenomenon has been interpreted by some scholars as a manifestation of a vital force of life and designated by such terms as "Odic Force" or "Cosmic Energy". Yet it is also possible that Berdnyk derived his notion of a vital force from Western science fiction. By being not merely a very productive science fiction writer, but also an active literary critic Berdnyk could have read some of the Western works devoted to the theme of vital energy. Albeit the source of Berdnyk's conception of vitalism cannot be ascertained precisely at this time, it is nevertheless quite plain that the philosophy of vitalism enabled Berdnyk to refurbish the rather stagnant Ukrainian Socialist Realism type of science fiction.

Within the context of Ukrainian literature Berdnyk's science fantasy is certainly unique, sensational and provocative. But against the background of Western science fiction it is neither extraordinary nor unprecedented. Unhampered by political or ideological restraints Western authors formulated many unusual and daring conceptions several decades before some of these notions appeared in Berdnyk's writings. For example, Olaf Stapledon outlined in 1937 such teleological notions as cosmic creativity and the ultimate goals of diverse evolutions.³¹ In his novel Star Maker Stapledon utilized not only a teleological approach, but also "used certain ideas and words derived from religion and tried to interpret them in relation to modern needs".³² Moreover, Stapledon introduced the notion of intergalactic space travel by means of psychic energy instead of spacecraft propulsion and depicted various strange

life forms which ranged from the humanoid types to intelligent plant-like creatures, and even beings which established by way of complex symbiosis a powerful cosmic conscience, a kind of cosmic spirit.

Stapledon was not the sole Western writer to utilize religious and philosophical premises in science fiction. A teleological approach as well as the theme of mangodhood appeared in the works of Arthur Clarke in the early 1950's. In his apocalyptic novel Childhood's End Clarke depicts the end of the human race and the transformation of mankind into a cosmic deity called the Overmind. And in recent times even the dabblers in science fiction have no doubt become familiar with Clarke's teleological exposition of man's evolution in the notorious film 2001: A Space Odyssey.

The theme of man's ascent into godhood is still very popular among the readers of science fiction. Childhood's End, for example, has been translated into thirty languages and by 1974 almost twenty million copies of the novel had been sold.³³ This trend has obviously encouraged other writers to expound the theme of mangodhood in their works. This very theme occurs in the recent novels Dune Messiah and The Godmakers, written by Frank Herbert. The Godmakers contains perhaps the most detailed outline of "godmaking" technique which is appropriately designated as "Religious Engineering".

Among the many volumes of science fiction which are published annually in the West one could discern a number of notions that are either offensive, or incompatible with certain political or religious ideologies. But these works are not condemned and the writers of science fiction are not persecuted. This immunity exists perhaps

because in the West science fiction is enjoyed but not taken seriously either by the public or by political and religious authorities.

Quite the contrary attitude prevails in the Soviet Union. Science fiction is treated there with utmost seriousness. Often it is simply regarded as realistic fiction. This peculiar approach to fantasy was adopted in the 1930's and it has been endorsed often as the only correct mode of interpreting science fiction.³⁴ As in the other forms of art abstractions are disapproved of in science fiction works.³⁵ Soviet literary critics have often advocated that the main function of science fiction is to elucidate the achievements of Soviet science, to point out the positive features of the contemporary reality and to provide the reader with an accurate and a realistic projection of the Soviet socialist future.³⁶

While this approach may be expedient in the explication of the Socialist Realism type of science fiction it becomes ludicrous if not entirely absurd when it is applied to Berdnyk's The Star Corsair. The Soviet literary authorities found many of Berdnyk's conceptions offensive because they have interpreted them realistically. For example, Iu. Malanchuk is quite puzzled when he tries to interpret Berdnyk's notion of "cosmic unity" from a realistic premise and queries the author's terminology thus:

What are we to understand under the term "universal unity": the coming together of the Vietnamese and Cambodians slain by American invaders and the flourishing capitalist magnates of the U.S.? The bourgeois and the poverty-stricken unemployed? How are these opposites to be reconciled in a world filled with class contradictions?

In many of his works Berdnyk endeavoured to change the realistic approach to science fiction. To dissuade readers from conceiving his writing as realistic fiction he made frequent allusions in his works to fairy tales. In The Star Corsair he repeatedly uses the word skazka (fairy tale) and likens many of the events to those which occur in fairy tales. Often he employs the term fairy tale in the sub-titles or designates his works as Povist' pro nebuval (A Fantastic Tale), or as Nebuval'shchyna (A Fantastic Story). At times his entire works consist of reinterpretations of well-known fairy tales, as, for example, his Okotsvit: skazkova povist' (Eye Flower: A Fairy Novel).

Berdnyk's designation of his science fiction as fairy tales is most appropriate, for science fiction is essentially a modern variant of the fairy tale. However, to make the new form of fantasy more plausible for the contemporary readers the ancient magical factor of causality had to be replaced with somewhat more sophisticated notions from the sphere of science, philosophy and religion. The very popularity of science fiction attests that modern man has not outgrown the need for fantastic tales. Like the old fairy tales science fiction too can provide exciting entertainment for children and adults, and furthermore, it offers a mode of escapism for those who feel a need to escape from the torpidity of contemporary reality.

Socialist Realism type of science fiction does not, however, offer the reader any kind of escapism either from the Soviet reality or from its socialist ideology. Until recently escapism was an impossibility in Soviet Ukrainian science fiction. Some of Berdnyk's works have for a time provided the readers with a chance to experience literary

escapism. This was a rather unique opportunity to escape not only from the contemporary Soviet reality, but also from the tyranny of Socialist Realism. It seems that it was destined to be a rare and a brief phenomenon, for the recent suppression of Berdnyk's science fiction confirms that the Soviet state will not tolerate either ideological deviations, or escapism even in the realm of fantasy.

Whereas it has proven offensive and provocative to the literary-minded Soviet political and literary authorities Berdnyk's science fiction is in essence quite harmless and it does not endanger in any way the safety and the security of the Soviet Union. After all, no fairy tale about a wicked king or queen has ever led to political upheavals or caused the downfall of a reigning monarch. And science fiction, even vexatious science fiction, also poses no threat to the sovereignty of the Soviet State.

FOOTNOTES

1. "Vidkrytyi lyst O. Berdnyka do L. Brezhneva", Ukrains'kyi holos (Winnipeg, Man.), October 13, 1976.
2. Ibid. Berdnyk's capitalization.
3. G. Did'ko "Belaia i chornaia magiia", Literaturnaia gazeta, October, 12, 1965.
4. Radians'ka Ukraina, March 24, 1967.
5. Literaturna Ukraina, April 21, 1972.
6. Literaturna Ukraina, May 15, 1973.
7. Literaturna Ukraina, October 20, 1972.
8. Literaturna Ukraina, February 6, 1973; see also Radians'ka Ukraina, February 18, 1973; see also Literaturna Ukraina, March 27, 1973; see also Radians'ka Ukraina, April 21, 1973.
9. Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary (New York, 1957).
10. Oles' Berdnyk, Zoranyi korsar (Kiev, 1971), pp.271-78.
11. Ibid., pp.278-79.
12. Ibid., pp.280-81.
13. Ibid., p.228.
14. Oles' Berdnyk, Zoloti vorota: zbirka povistei (Baltimore, 1975), p.17. Berdnyk's capitalization shall be preserved in all subsequent quotations.
15. Ibid., p.15.
16. Ibid., p.17.
17. Berdnyk, Zoranyi korsar, p.91.
18. Ibid., p.90.
19. Ibid., p.95.
20. Ibid., p.98.
21. Ibid., p.99.
22. Hedrick Smith, The Russians (New York, 1976), pp.386-87.

23. Berdnyk, Zorianyi korsar, pp.168-69.
24. Liternaturna Ukraina, October 20, 1972.
25. Berdnyk, Zorianyi korsar, p.229.
26. Berdnyk, "Apostol Bezsmertia", in his Zoloti vorota, pp.49-52.
27. Berdnyk, Zorianyi korsar, p.373.
28. Ibid., pp.373-74.
29. Mykola Pyvovarov, "Vtilennia liuds'koi mrii", in Volodymyr Vladko, Tvory v p'iaty tomakh, I (Kiev, 1970), p.15.
30. Ibid.
31. Olaf Stapledon, Star Maker (Penguin Books, 1973), p.4.
32. Ibid., p. 9. Quoted from the author's preface to the novel.
33. Arthur C. Clarke, Childhood's End (New York, 1976), pp.219-20.
34. A. Bolotnikov, "Realizm i fantastika", Literaturnaia gazeta, April 30, 1935; see also S. Ivanov, "Fantastika i deistvitel'nost' " Oktiabr', 1950, No.2, pp.210-13; see also A. Leites, "Fantastika i real'nost'," Uchitel'skaia gazeta, May 13, 1961; see also Vsevolod Revich, "Realizm fantastiki (polemicheskie zametki)" in Fantastika 1968 (Moscow, 1969), pp.270-98.
35. A. Kazantsev, "Protiv abstraktnosti v nauchnoi fantastike", Kommunisticheskoe vospitanie i sovremennaia literatura dlia detei i iunoshestva (Moscow, 1961), pp.320-30.
36. A. Dneprov, "Nauchnaia fantastika dlia issledovaniia budushchego", Molodoi Kommunist, 1961, No.8, pp.112-29; see also A. Kazantsev, "Budushchee rozhdetsia segodnia", Uchitel'skaia gazeta, December 25, 1962; see also V. Saparin, "Budushchee chelovechestva cherez prizmu fantastiki", Kommunist, 1961, No.12, pp.120-28.
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45

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George Thomas

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Table of Contents

Editorial Note	George Thomas	vi - x
The Theory and Practice of Folklore in Soviet Estonia	Felix Oinas	1 - 17
The Lithuanian Language Under the Soviets	Antanas Klimas	18 - 42
Azarbayjani: A Perspective	Reza Ordoubadian	43 - 61
The Languages of the North- West Caucasus	John Colarusso	62 - 153
The Present Language Situation in the Soviet Union	✓ E. Glyn Lewis	<u>155 - 187</u>
Non-Russian Writers on the All-Union Literary Scene	Norman Shneidman	188 - 212
A Poetic Biography of the Soviet Poet and Publicist Hamid Alimjan (1909-1944)	David Montgomery	213 - 235
Language Planning and Unplanning in the Ukrainian SSR	✓ George Shevelov	236 - 267
Vasil Bykaŭ and the Soviet Byelorussian Novel	Arnold McMillin	268 - 294
Oles' Berdnyk's Vexatious Prose	Walter Smyrniw	295 - 317