

## The Sky Blue Blacksmith: Genre and Motif in Berdnyk

There is no doubt that Oles' Berdnyk is both a provocative and challenging writer both in his fictional and non-fictional writings. He has a rich and complex style with a myriad of themes that lend themselves to many interpretations. For example, Iohanes Hrynioch, in his analysis of Berdnyk's works, especially of the letter that Berdnyk sent in the spring of 1979 to Pope Paul II, calls Berdnyk a "utopian and a new charismatic figure to appear on the horizon at the time when Ukraine is about to celebrate its two thousandth anniversary of Christianity."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Hrynioch points out that Berdnyk's work holds great promise for study from the "philosophical, sociological, or possibly, also theological, in its widest sense, point of view."<sup>2</sup> And it is this last field that Hrynioch, himself a theologian, probes, basing his statements on Berdnyk's letter to the Pope. The resulting study explicates Berdnyk's credo and finds him to be a believing Christian (although coming out of an atheistic background), for whom Christ is the central figure not only in the affairs of men on earth but also of men's future in the cosmos.<sup>3</sup> However, Hrynioch notes that although "Oles' Berdnyk's image of the cosmos is dominated by Christian teachings on the creation of the universe, nevertheless, that image undeniably contains influences from various religions of the world, myths and legends, ancient literatures and philosophical systems."<sup>4</sup> Then, he points to still more aspects that exist in Berdnyk's work and are waiting to be explored. In fact, Hrynioch admits that in following the theological thread in Berdnyk's work in order to form a coherent and consistent image of the universe, one can become quite enmeshed because Berdnyk's poetical imagery, symbols, personifications, and various ideas, drawn from many fields of human knowledge, to a great degree complicate the task of reconstructing a clear image of the universe,<sup>5</sup> not only in the letter that Hrynioch studies, but also in the rest of Berdnyk's work.

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<sup>1</sup> Iohanes Hrynioch, *Oles Berdnyk — somniator vel charismaticus in aspectu secundi millennii christianitatis in Ucraina* (Romae: Ed. Bohoslovia, 1980), p. 3. This is the Latin version of the Ukrainian title, both of which are used on the title page.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

In fact, these very same ideas may be studied from a very different perspective and may yield a different vision, as for example in Smyrniw's study of "The Theme of Man — Godhood in Oles' Berdnyk's Science Fiction."<sup>6</sup> Unlike Hrynioch, Smyrniw has turned to Berdnyk's science fiction only to find that the center is not Christ but man; man in search of his self as created in the image of God, probing for a new evolutionary step to give him not just the image, but also the properties and powers of god — or at the least of a superman, but going beyond the Nietzschean kind. In fact, he even surpasses Siegel and Shuster's comic book creation, as can be clearly seen in the novel *Zoriany Korsar*, (The Astral Corsair), when the corsair swoops down through the atmosphere coming directly from one of the planets, without aid of any flying vehicle, special protective clothing, or oxygen-giving apparatus, and fishes out of the night-darkened water at the bottom of a cliff Gladys, his beloved, to face her murderer. He has the power to fly through the air like the cartoon Superman dressed merely in "sky blue sports clothes,"<sup>7</sup> and can travel light years to arrive only minutes after responding to Gladys' call for help. When he faces his arch-enemy, Kareos, he protects his life from destruction by surrounding himself with a "ruby-like circle of such brightness that the ruler cried out from the pain in his eyes. The weapon fell from his hands. The corsair stood motionless with a peculiar smile on his face."<sup>8</sup>

by surrounding himself with a "ruby-like circle of such brightness that the ruler cried out from the pain in his eyes. The weapon fell from his hands. The corsair stood motionless with a peculiar smile on his face."<sup>8</sup>

For the young reader this is an exciting adventure — the familiar climax of the hero rescuing the damsel in distress and vanquishing the villain, and like a true hero allowing the villain to live, for it is beneath him to destroy, because he is aware that other villains will follow. Instead, he tells Kareos to "live and choke on [his own] wickedness."<sup>9</sup> But for adults who want to search for philosophical, theological, and teleological themes this moment will already be an anti-climax. It is in the philosophical and teleological teaching by Aeras of the corsair, who becomes his first disciple, in the prison and in the founding of the Asteroid of Freedom, where Aeras' philosophy and breakthrough into the next step in evolution takes place. This is what stirs the adult reader to meditation on the possibility of man's almightiness and omniscience. Smyrniw follows Berdnyk's theleological ideas and evolutionary experiments throughout his science fiction, showing the author's ever increasing sophistication, complexity, and scientific approach in dealing with these themes, as well as his "serious concern about the ultimate results and the final consequences of scientific and evolutionary processes."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Walter Smyrniw, "The Theme of Man-godhood" in Oles' Berdnyk's Science Fiction, *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 10, No. 1 (1981), 3-19.

<sup>7</sup> *Oles' Berdnyk, Zoriany Korsar* (Kiev: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1971), p. 253.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Smyrniw*, p. 10.

Yet Berdnyk's fiction, specifically science fiction, does not consist only of this dichotomy of adventure and philosophy, although both are major elements of Berdnyk's science fiction. He is a far more complex and complicated author than would seem to be possible for a science fiction writer, who has not only developed his prophetic and evolutionary theory and explained its workings on a scientific basis but who also fills his works with a myriad of genres, leitmotifs, themes, ideas, styles — all interwoven into a rich literary tapestry, as I have previously tried to show in my analysis of his novel *Zoriany Korsar*.<sup>11</sup> This study will examine just two of the literary elements — Berdnyk's use of different genres and motifs, with which he forges his vision and conveys ideas. This issue of various genres side by side and an organic integration of motifs, especially involving the azure colour to serve as a messenger of his ideas, reveals Berdnyk's mastery of the craft of fiction, as well as its depth and complexity already glimpsed from the previous two studies mentioned.

As can be observed, Berdnyk not only makes use of the science fiction genre utilizing the hard science fiction module with its use of gadgetry, as in the second part of the trilogy, when he tells the story of the robot UR, but also soft science fiction with its philosophical, sociological, theological, and psychological preoccupations. He also turns to the alternative module when he creates worlds in the universe functioning on different scientific principles from ours, like the flowers do on the Planet of the Flowers with their common biomagnetic field and multifaceted communication system; Berdnyk also introduces into our earthly world alternative systems like that used by Katia in the novel *Okotsvit* (Eyeflower). In her original form she is not a little girl but a ball of sky blue fire or a sky blue flower with an eye in the center, who can transform herself into one of these three stages at will.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Oira-Khan, a little girl, when engulfed by a flower . . . emerges as a black lion in the novel *Iliuzionist*. (The Illusionist).<sup>13</sup> These are not merely tricks, but an example of a more advanced evolutionary being that can rearrange its molecules to any desired shape. For as Bova explains to Halia, "many worlds exist parallel to ours. We cannot feel, or see them, but they exist, nevertheless."<sup>14</sup>

Yet Berdnyk does not stop at this; for even when he has exploited the science fiction modules in one novel to their fullest, as he does in the *Zoriany Korsar*, he also interpolates fantasy and mythology by introducing a prophesying papyrus similar to Kubrick's device in *2001*, and to the detective genre by introducing Hryhir Bova in the second volume of the novel. But it's not just a simple detective story, where Hryhir's assignment is to find out about the disappearance of an embezzler by making love to his daughter. This same Hryhir, through the medium of

<sup>11</sup> Olena H. Saciuk, "The Forbidden Vision of Oles' Berdnyk," *Scope of the Fantastic*, Vol. 1, ed. Robert Collins. A collection of papers presented at the First International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, to be published by Greenwood Press.

<sup>12</sup> Oles' Berdnyk, *Okotsvit* (Kiev: Veselka, 1970).

<sup>13</sup> Oles' Berdnyk, *Iliuzionist* [Illusionist or Magician] (1970) in *Zoloti Vorota* (Paris: Smoloskyp, 1975), p. 72.

<sup>14</sup> *Zoriany Korsar*, p. 183.

dreams, time travels to a former life on a different planet. The dream is a tunnel, a flashback into a different reality and a different time. Moreover, embedded in the detective-time travelling texture of the second volume of the novel, we have another admixture of genres: the ghost-historical genre. The disappeared embezzler is taken into the ghost world of his Ukrainian Kozak ancestors, where he is given a lesson in Ukrainian history. This historical element also comes in the first volume. There, by way both of the medium of the dream and of hypnosis, another character, the scientist Horenytsa, travels into Ukraine's historical past to witness battles between the Kozaks and the Tartars. Both Bova, the detective, and Horenytsa, the scientist, are examples of Berdnyk's use of mythical approach by borrowing and adapting the Eastern concepts of reincarnation and transmigration of souls.

While dipping into the Western and Eastern mythological constructs, Berdnyk also brings in the Gothic genre. It is interesting that the climax of the *Zoriany Korsar* takes place in a Gothic setting due, ironically enough, to the use of a time machine on a science fiction construct. The time machine transports Bova, the criminologist, to the past, to a dark, musky, nineteenth century monastery filled with religious persecution, madness, and confrontation between the forces of good and evil. Bova, symbolizing the contemporary world, is both physically and symbolically dropped into the past, confronted by an evil antagonist, Ariman, from the future and saved by the Corsair, a man beyond any time and on a higher evolutionary rung than any of the other characters. Thus the Gothic setting is used to heighten the drama, add suspense, and also provide the appropriate symbolic framework for the theme.

But even while using the Gothic genre, Berdnyk introduces, in the words of the monk, who is Bova's guide into the past, the genre which predominates in many of his other works; the monk promises Bova that "I'll send you a fairytale."<sup>15</sup> In the latter part of *Zoriany Korsar*, the symbolic meaning of these words is not explored as it is earlier in the novel, and as in many of the other novels. Not only does Berdnyk use the word "fairytale" for symbolic purposes, which will be discussed later, but Berdnyk also uses the genre for its characters, setting, mood, plot, and motifs. Moreover, Berdnyk unabashedly inserts fairytale elements in the midst of a science fiction situation, for example when he has UR and the two young boys Iks and Igreg<sup>16</sup> travel to the planet Aoda, where they witness a technologically highly developed civilization which revolves around a synthesizer that provides the population with all their needs. There the lovely young Isvari, who is the only one left of the thinking population, alone with the synthesizer, like a princess in the tower waiting for her Prince Charming to take her away, thanks the earthlings for responding to the call of distress and begs them to take her back to earth. En route she

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369.

<sup>16</sup> Literally meaning x and y, as they are named by the robot UR, whose name stands for Universal Robot.

falls in love with the robot, who, back on earth, is changed by science from robot to human being because he wants to experience love and return Isvari's affections, a situation not unlike the Frog Prince or the Beast in the fairytale *Beauty and the Beast*.

These are indirect fairytale elements, but in the Novel *Okotsvit*, for example, the extraterrestrial beings, who come to earth into the 20th century reality, take their shapes from Ukrainian fairytales. Even though Katia has a science fiction shape, that of a skyblue ball of energy, she can be likened, to such fairytale beings as sprites which come at night, just as she does when she does good or plays practical tricks on the sleeping and superstitious Ukrainian villagers. But it is Katia's companion who is unequivocally a fairytale character out of the Ukrainian folktale tradition: the witch who lives in a small fairytale house standing on "chicken legs". When the schoolboy Slavko meets with Katia, or Nanti, as she is called on her planet, in her flower form, he tells her that it's strange for a flower to have an eye and to talk, to which Nanti responds,

— And in a fairytale?

— But that's in a fairytale . . .

— And aren't you in a fairytale now?

— You're right — said the boy, reflecting on her words. — If I try and tell somebody — no one will believe me . . .

— Maybe they'll believe, — protested the little flower. — The fairytale lies dormant in the hearts of many people . . .<sup>17</sup>

In fact, this idea about the importance of the fairytale as a medium for communication and a way to a better world is the predominant theme in the entire novel. These ideas are brought out through a dialectic between Nanti and her "grandmother" (the good witch) and the inquisitive, bright, adolescent Slavko. Himself won over by their logic, Slavko, in turn, tries to convince his earthly schoolmate Lina, as well as his unbelieving parents and very supportive real-life grandmother, who believes in Slavko's vision not because of her belief in outer space or in the magical, but because of her superstition. The science fiction and the fairytale genres and concepts become totally entwined in the novel. The dialectic of UFO's is presented on the same level as Nanti becoming a seeing-eye flower or the appearance of a fairytale house. These outer space visitors look like fairytale characters, and they also accept Slavko, the schoolboy, into their confidence not only on the basis of their telepathic powers, but also on the condition that he fulfill a task just as the hero of every folktale or fairytale must fulfill a task. In Slavko's case it is to tell a fairytale. After his incredible experience, the boy himself fails to understand why these outerspace visitors did not go to "scientists, academicians . . ." They could have appeared before astronomers, before physicists or some other specialists, could explain — everything, where from, where to, and why . . ."<sup>18</sup> Bit by bit Slavko, later joined by Lina, gets the answer to his question which is that

<sup>17</sup> *Okotsvit*, p. 51.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

“there is no greater power than a fiery loving heart, the kind that is enamoured of the fairytale.”<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, observes the outer space visitor, adults have stopped believing in fairytales, so they become blind to beauty and to the unusual, while “one can place more hope in a child’s heart, which believes in the fairytale. — It does not doubt the most extraordinary.”<sup>20</sup> The important thing, reminds the witchlike grandmother, is that Slavko “believed, desired and came here [meaning the forest where the UFO’s landed] — and saw. Why bring the fairytale to someone who is not searching for it?”<sup>21</sup>

Later on when Katia (Nanti), in the shape of a girl, goes boating with Slavko, she propels the boat without the use of a motor. To Slavko’s questions, she replies:

- Is only a motor capable of moving?
- Well — you need some kind of energy . . . [replied Slavko]
- And desire? That’s the most powerful energy . . . If a being wants something to come true very, very much — everything will come true . . .<sup>22</sup>

These examples show how Berdnyk explains science fiction phenomena in terms of the fairytale (to be taken symbolically rather than literally), his belief that children are more perceptive of truth than adults, and that desire or faith has as much power as any machine — clear echoes of the Biblical ethos of Christ’s parables in the New Testament.

Thus we can see that the fairytale’s importance in Berdnyk’s writing is not only due to being a source of plot and structure, that is, as a genre, as in Isvari’s case (princess in the tower) in the first volume of the *Zoriany Korsar*, but even more so for its symbolic, mythical, and philosophical allusions, which Berdnyk combines to create his own value system. It is a very humanistic value system built on beauty, kindness, faith, freedom, and a childlike but not childish capacity for wonder, while at the same time extrapolating mankind’s next evolutionary jump. The Astral Corsair himself is one example of such a jump, Nanti is another. When an astronomer asks her how she came to earth she explains, “Direct flight. Like in a fairytale. You wish to fly — you fly. The being turns into concentration of energy, designates the destination in space, and flies .”<sup>23</sup>

In fact, Berdnyk uses the “kazka” (fairytale) motif as a magic key that allows Earthlings like Slavko and Lina from *Okotsvit*, and another set of children, Paulyk,

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48. There is a problem in translating the word “kazka” to the word “fairytale” in English. Somehow “kazka” in Ukrainian seems almost a magical word itself, a dimension that the word “fairytale” does not have in English. The closest word that has that type of double connotation is the word “magic,” when one, for example, describes something beautiful, incredible, yet real by saying “it was pure magic” but does not mean to imply that magic tricks were involved.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

Marijka, and Torasyk in *Iliuzionist*, to understand and communicate with non-Earthlings, to believe in them, to travel in space, and at the end to come back to Earth with a mission to perform. The outerspace travelers always come from a planet which they describe as perfect as a "kazka" (fairytale), therefore, not just a mere utopia but a magical place. In fact, when Slavko finally does get to the planet of the Fairytale, from which Nanti had come to Earth to seek help, he finds that there too he has to do battle, followed by danger and death. Berdnyk consistently creates his evil forces in the shape of roots with seeming hydra heads, as on the Planet of the Flowers in *Zoriany Korsar* or the carnivorous plant and fire-breathing dragon in *Okotsvit*. These creatures are more characteristic of Greek mythology and fairytales than of science fiction.

It is this facing of danger or test by fire, and the ability to change shape, which are necessary prerequisites both for the triumph of the fairytale hero and of Berdnyk's Earthling children, who travel into outer space. This generic feature of the two elements is to be found in each fairytale when the young hero sets forth on his quest and, on the way, must undergo various tests of wit and courage; through the help of magical helpers, the hero changes shape to overcome obstacles. Berdnyk also introduces such helpers for his child heroes, but these are from outer space and the change in shape the children must undergo is required by their travel through space. Marijka observes this change in herself. "Eyes. Where are they? All of me opened up [like a flower]. I am — an eye. I am a song. I am a flower. I am hues of color . . . I'm the breeze of a spring day. . . ." <sup>24</sup> The motifs of the eye and the flower seen here reappear in other works by Berdnyk sometimes imbedded in science fiction and sometimes in the fairytale.

Like fairytale heroes, Berdnyk's child heroes come back wiser with a treasure which they found far from home. But unlike fairytale heroes, they bring no material treasure to their homeland on Earth; they come with a mission still to be performed, and not just to live happily ever after. Berdnyk has converted his child heroes into messiahs who return to Earth "in order to bring it the happiness of the Eternal Game.<sup>25</sup> [They are to] stop the river of blood, show those who can see the worlds of love and 'kazka' (fairytale)," which they themselves have seen.<sup>26</sup>

Thus Berdnyk uses in the novels *Okotsvit* and *Iliuzionist* the two poles between which he strings out his themes: the world of the fairytale and that of science fiction. The world of the fairytale has its own structure, challenge, unlikely candidates who become heroes and find strange worlds, and return like the youngest prince to inherit the kingdom. In Berdnyk's works they inherit the Earth as well as the utopian planet or refuge in outer space, which provides a model for the ideal

<sup>24</sup> *Iliuzionist*, p. 141.

<sup>25</sup> Berdnyk's Eternal Game uses children's play as an allegory of their behavior as builders of a new world.

<sup>26</sup> *Iliuzionist*, p. 147.

Earth. This outer space world, both in scientific and fairytale terms, has gone through an evolutionary jump to attain a higher form to be imitated by Earthlings.

Even while Berdnyk bonds the fairytale and science fiction genres together to provide both the settings and the evolutionary foundation for his prophetic vision, as when, through the omniscient narrator's voice, he promises his youthful readers at the end of the short story *Marsians'ki "Zaitsi"* (Martian Stowaways) that the "most fairytale-like experience will come true! Without fail! . . . You will enter on the threshold of the Cosmic Era,"<sup>27</sup> he adds other elements. He adds the element of allegory and harks back to the genre of the medieval heroic legends. When the children come back from outer space, they become "The Knights of Freedom,"<sup>28</sup> who will do battle with the earthly "dragon" of hate, ugliness, disbelief, and tyranny.

But before they can become these knights who will go on a crusade and bring back the "Holy Grail" from outer space, these children first sit at the feet of outer space visitors to listen and absorb their wisdom. They continue on their mission only after the aliens return to their planet. This clearly is an allegorical picture from the Bible combining two parts: that of Jesus having taught his disciples through the use of parables, and of Jesus saying that only children or those who are like children shall enter the kingdom of Heaven. Thus Berdnyk, consciously or not, has built his cosmic age ethos on a combination of the Medieval chivalric values and purpose in life and imbedded it into the image of Christ indicating that children will be the inheritors of his kingdom.

That paradise, in Berdnyk's case, will not be Heaven but a cosmic Earth transformed by the fairytale. To take his works as only science fiction fairytales for children is to miss Berdnyk's prophetic vision. He brings his vision to children via child heroes, but this same theme and zeal are to be found in his science fiction writings for adults. Moreover, this vision and the identical use of imagery and motifs spills over into his essays which he addresses to Ukrainians, often calling them "children of Cosmic Ukraine." For example, in the introduction to his charter of the Ukrainian Spiritual Republic (Cosmic Ukraine), Berdnyk proposes the birth of such a Cosmic Ukraine, and in answer to his own question of whether the creation of this Ukraine is not an illusion, not a "fairytale," he answers:

Yes, it's a "kazka" [fairytale]. It's a cosmic legend.

But earthly "reality" — is only the shadow of the "kazka's" unseen reality. That is why we solemnly and unwaveringly have chosen the path of legend and call to all nations to follow us into the Life of Freedom.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Oles' Berdnyk, *Marsians'ki "Zaitsi"* [Martian Stowaways] (Kiev: Derzh vyd. dyt. lit. URSR, 1962), p. 74.

<sup>28</sup> *Iliuzionist*, p. 147.

<sup>29</sup> Oles' Berdnyk, "Za Ukrain's'ku Dukhovu Republiku" [For Ukraine's Spiritual Republic] (July 7, 1975) in *Ukraina Sichi Vohniano: Esei i lysty*. [Ukraine of the Sich of Fire: Essays and Letters], rpt. of Samvydav ("Samizdat") publ. from Soviet Ukraine (Paris: Smoloskyp, 1977), p. 25.



From this, it can be observed how fiction has become intertwined with non-fiction, the same way that Berdnyk has intertwined the various genres and recurring motifs to carry his themes until, in his most recent writings, the two fused genres of the fairy/folktale and science fiction have become *the* vision, the theme, the message, the ideal.

Just as the genres used by Berdnyk become the function of the theme and vice versa (so that they become fused into one — hence the form is content), so Berdnyk uses his motifs. Like the various genres, they are used by Berdnyk in such an organic way that they are not merely a device or a mechanical situation or a repeated design, but an intrinsic element of the theme and vision.

Some of Berdnyk's motifs are magical in nature, as the Black Papyrus and the Chalice in *Zoriany Korsar*; some are a combination of magic and science fiction, as the eye flower in *Okotsvit* or the eye and flower mentioned separately, as was noted above, in such works as *Iliuzionist*, for example. Fasting is a prelude to a new evolutionary change. But just as the fusion of the two genres of fairytale and science fiction becomes the vision of the future, so the use of the recurring motif of the azure or sky-blue colour becomes Berdnyk's dominant motif, a sort of imagistic clarion call.

Sky blue is a motif that is interwoven into the entire fabric of Berdnyk's fiction at all levels. It is found in the setting both of our Earth sky and of outer space, as well as in the changing domes of the outer space vehicles. Once on the Planet Mountain, the children find sky blue buildings.<sup>30</sup> In *Zoriany Korsar*, UR finds the planet called the Sky Blue Petal, where flowers have evolved into a higher form. Thus you have both motifs of the flower and of the colour. Sky blue is the colour of Oira-Khan's costume, when this visitor from outer space becomes an Earthly magician in the novel *Iliuzionist*; it is the colour worn by the Astral Corsair in *Zoriany Korsar*. The flower's colour in *Okotsvit* is azure, and when she changes shape, she becomes a "pearly sky blue ball of fire."<sup>31</sup> Hence, the colour in the setting and in the costumes of the characters identifies them as belonging to or being part of Berdnyk's vision (just as the colour white was used to identify the hero in Western fiction).

Moreover, this colour can bring calm, so that it is what is ordered for the disturbed girl on the System Ara, and consequently the bio-guard switches on an azure-green colour in *Zoriany Korsar*. When Bova is courting Halia, he visualizes his goal as the "need to melt the sky blue icicles in her eyes."<sup>32</sup> Here the colour becomes part of an emotional system and the azure colour is the key to unlocking it.

<sup>30</sup> *Okotsvit*, p. 150.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>32</sup> *Zoriany Korsar*, p. 163.

Sky blue is also the key colour to be found on the road to a new world. Berdnyk integrates it into a poem written by Bova in *Zoriany Korsar*, as a means of animating those whose spirits have flagged, who have become "old in spirit," and encourages them to stop and recall "the heroic past [a reference to Ukraine's past], /recall the fairytale azure/ of your beautiful kingdom. . . ."33 It is the colour that illuminates the utopic future, as Gladys found out when she went to the Astral Corsair's Asteroid of Freedom. She asks herself in this paradise, "What else could anyone want? And goes on to answer "To feel forever fully a part of the Great Sea, Limitless Sky, beam of Sky Blue Light, which shines like a twinkling, lighted butterfly in the depths of the Ocean of Being."34 Sky blue is also the colour that is present in some form for those who have been initiated, who have become a part of the cosmic or astral brotherhood.

As the children return from their space voyage to Earth, in *Okotsvit*, the last image in the novel is that of the eye flower, as its petals opened wider and wider and the children beheld the "light coloured azure eye. The eye of the fairytale flower. . . ."35

It is also the last image that Bova and his friends see. The battle won against Ariman, the Astral Corsair in *Zoriany Korsar* fades from the monastery's church, and when his form is gone, only sky-blue sparks and the echo of his last words remain: to do battle with the bondage of time and to follow him into Astral brotherhood. And the children in the *Iliuzionist* are told to look up into the sky, where they've been, and where their future could be, at that third planet from the left "twinkling with a sky blue fire."36

But one need not travel to the stars for that sky blue fire, bliss, inspiration. It can start right here on earth, when one follows Berdnyk to become not only a blacksmith forging a vision out of elements of fiction, but also a sky blue or azure blacksmith, who forges his own future by tempering one's willpower in fire. Then one can proclaim, as Berdnyk does in his poem:

I am the azure blacksmith,  
And I have my own smithy.  
I forge not iron, nor steel —  
But I forge my own soul . . . 37.

Looking then just at these two elements the use of multiple genres and the use of motifs, particularly involving the sky blue or azure colour to embody his themes

33 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 188.

35 *Okotsvit*, p. 172.

36 *Iliuzionist*, p. 163.

37 Oles' Berdnyk, "Blakytnyi Koval' " in *Blakytnyi koval' : poezii* [The Azure Blacksmith: Poems] (Paris: Smoloskyp, 1975), p. 11. The translation of the stanza is mine.

— one can appreciate the complexity and richness of Berdnyk's fiction. This study has revealed only a shimmer of this author's azure literary treasures.

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UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA PRESS  
1984

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