

WOMEN IN THE WORKS OF N.V. GOGOL

by
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A thesis submitted for the
degree of Master of Arts

An Abstract

Gogol has been described as one of the least romantic writers of the 19th Century, while his female characters are generally considered to be unsuccessful and lifeless. In this thesis the women in Gogol's works are analysed for their symbolic value, as reflections of the writer's attitude towards the opposite sex. Gogol's female characters are divided into three general groups: the Beauties, the Witches and the Contemporary Women. Separate chapters deal with each group and one chapter with the role of women in Gogol's personal life.

The first image of woman created by Gogol was that of the beautiful Alkinoe, a portrait in the exalted style of romantic tradition. By stages, Gogol retreated from this ideal. In this thesis an attempt is made to show the evolution of the image of the Beauty, reflecting Gogol's disillusionment with his own ideal.

Department of Russian and Slavic Studies
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The writer was born on October 30, 1944 in Delmenhorst, Germany. She received her elementary and secondary education in Montreal, Canada. In June of 1966 she received a Bachelor of Arts degree, First Class Honours in Russian, from McGill University. The years 1966 and 1967 were spent working as a Production Assistant in the Russian Section of the International Service of Radio Canada and in 1970 she returned to the Graduate Section of the Department of Russian and Slavic Studies at McGill University. The writer is married and has two children.

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PREFACE

The system of transliteration used throughout this thesis is System III, which is used by The American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies and by the Slavic and East European Journal. The names of Russian literary publications, publishing houses and people appear in their transliterated form and not according to conventional spelling. Hence, Tolstoy is rendered Tolstoj and Pushkin as Puškin. An exception is made for Gogol which appears in its conventional spelling and not in its transliterated form - Gogol'.

All passages quoted from Gogol's works are taken from: N.V. Gogol, Sobranie sočinenij v šest' tomach, ed. by S.I. Mašinskij, N.L. Slonimskij and N.L. Stepanov (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo xudožestvennoj literatury, 1959). All references to the above appear as N.V. Gogol, Ss. Other abbreviations for books referred to in the text are: N.V. Gogol, Soč. - N.V. Gogol, Sočinenija N.V. Gogolja, 10th ed., 7 vols., Vols. I-V edited by N. Tixonravov, Vols. VI and VII by V. Šenrok

(Moscow: Izdanie Knižnogo Magazina V. Dummova, pod
Firmoju "Nasledniki Br. Salaevyx" 1889-1896) and Šenrok,
Materialy for V. Šenrok, Materialy dlja issledovanija
Gogolja, Vols. I-IV (Moscow: Tipografija A.I. Mamontova,
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Смерть и время царят на земле,
Но владыками их не зови.
Всё, кружась погибает во мгле
Неподвижно лишь Солнце Любви.

Вл. Соловьев.

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CHAPTER I

WOMEN IN THE LIFE OF N.V. GOGOL

Before attempting an analysis of Gogol's female characters it is necessary to shed some light on the role of women in his personal life, to make an attempt at defining his personal attitudes towards women, attitudes which quite naturally find their reflection in his literary works.

Gogol was never married and although he formed many platonic friendships with women during his lifetime we can find no irrefutable evidence of any deep romantic involvement; there was no Varin'ka Lopuxina, no Pauline Viardot, no Appolinarija Suslova in Gogol's life. Biographers are divided in their explanation of this particular aspect of Gogol's life. For example, Kuliš and Šenrok,¹ Gogol's first biographers, are at pains to protect Gogol's reputation and explain the lack of romance in Gogol's life by citing his deep attachment to his mother and preoccupation with religion, others such as David Magarshak interpret the affection expressed by Gogol in letters to his male friends as evidence of his homosexual tendencies.² For the freudians, such as

I.D. Ermakov, Gogol's works become a confession of his sexual impotence due to a strong mother fixation.³ Still others see Gogol as a monkish, ascetic figure with a credo of chastity.⁴

The purpose of this chapter, however, lies not in the analysis of the reasons behind the lack of romantic involvement in Gogol's life, but rather the description of the nature of Gogol's relationships with women on the basis of facts available.

Nikolaj Vasil'evič Gogol was born on March 20, (O.S.) 1809 in the town of Soročinsy in the Ukraine.⁵ His eighteen year-old mother, having brought two stillborn children into the world was anxious about the impending birth and had left the family estate, Vasil'evka to be attended by a well-known doctor during the delivery. The child was born weak and sickly, arousing concern about his chances of survival. Illness plagued the young Gogol throughout his infancy and youth causing his parents, especially his mother, Marija Ivanovna to spoil him with tenderness and affection which in turn influenced the development of such negative traits in his character such as extreme selfishness, egocentricity and hypochondria.

The Gogol family was very religious and both parents held the conviction that Providence took a direct participation in their lives. In a letter to Sergej Aksakov, Gogol's mother told the story of how the Virgin Mary had appeared to her husband when he was fourteen years of age and pointed to an infant as the one destined to become his bride.⁶ The infant turned out to be the seven month-old Marija Kosjarevskaja, the daughter of a neighbouring landowner. The marriage took place when Marija Ivanovna was fourteen years of age.

The young Gogol grew up in an extremely religious atmosphere and as he himself admitted, one of his most vivid childhood memories related to his mother's account of the Horrors of Hell and the description of the punishment which awaits sinners on Judgement Day.⁷ The fact that even as a child Gogol was more prone to be affected by his mother's account of the punishment which awaits sinners rather than the blessing which God has in store for those who are admitted to Paradise point to the inherent pessimism in Gogol's character, a tendency to lean towards the morbid rather than towards the brighter aspects of life.

Gogol spent the years 1821-1828 at the Lycée at Nežin, a school for boys of noble birth. His school friends remember him as a sullen withdrawn boy, untidy and sickly who never

excelled in studies but distinguished himself as an excellent actor and mimic in school plays. Being very vulnerable to criticism he developed a sharp, sarcastic tongue and acquired the nickname, "mysterious dwarf." This is how he himself describes his behaviour at school in a letter to his mother.

Truly I am considered a riddle by everyone:
no one has found me out completely...
In one place I am the quietest, the most
modest and polite; in another I am gloomy,
pensive, uncouth, etc. - in a third,
garrulous and annoying in the extreme.
Some think I am smart; others think I am
stupid. Consider me what you like, but
with my real career you will discover my
real character...⁸

The young Gogol seemed to live in a world of his own, nursing various romantic and egocentric notions about himself. His various poses seemed designed to mask his true nature, with which he would shake all of Russia upon his arrival in the capital when he would embark on a glorious career "to serve the Good!"⁹

St. Petersburg failed to live up to Gogol's expectations, no one took notice of the nineteen-year old provincial and after suffering many setbacks in obtaining a position, he pinned his hopes of success and fame on a poem Ganc Kjuxel'garten. The idyll did not produce the effect he expected and with his pride badly damaged, Gogol undertook his famous flight to

Lubeck, appropriating for this purpose funds which his mother had sent to pay for the mortgage on the estate. The explanation for his rash actions were meant to appeal to his mother's romantic and exalted nature.

As you know, I was endowed with moral firmness - something rare in a young man. Who could have expected any weakness of me? But then I saw her ... No, I will not disclose her name ... She is too exalted; not I alone - none can attain her. I would have called her an angel but this term does not suit her. She is a goddess alright, but a goddess slightly clothed in human passions. The striking brilliance of her features becomes instantly engraved in one's heart; her eyes instantly pierce one's soul; no human creature can endure her ardent, all-penetrating radiance. To glance at her only once - this used to be my only desire, and the desire grew stronger and stronger, and was accompanied by a grievous restlessness, the venom of which I cannot express. With horror I looked around and discerned my horrible plight. Absolutely everything in the world had become foreign to me, both life and death were equally unbearable, and my soul could not account for its own phenomena. I saw that I must fly from my own self if I wished to keep alive and have at least the shadow of peace enter my devastated soul.¹⁰

Who was this "goddess" who wreaked such havoc with Gogol's soul, never to reappear again in his correspondence? Gogol's school friends, who had been close to Gogol during the first years in St. Petersburg, claimed to have had no knowledge of any romantic disappointments and consider the

entire incident to have been a figment of Gogol's imagination. There are biographers, however, who take Gogol at his word and who attempt to prove the existence of this "goddess." David Magarshak, for one, considers that Gogol recreated the incident in Nevskij prospekt, written two years later, and that the "goddess" was in reality a prostitute.¹¹ Magarshak points to the similarity in the descriptions of the prostitute from Nevskij prospekt and the "goddess" from Gogol's letter. Gogol could not have described Piskarev's infatuation so vividly, writes Magarshak, had he not experienced an infatuation of a similar nature. We have, however, only to point to V. Vinogradov's chapter on Nevskij prospekt in the book Evoljucija ruskogo naturalizma, in which the author convincingly draws parallels between De Quincey's heroine from Confessions of an English Opium Eater and the prostitute from Nevskij prospekt¹² to find a more likely inspiration for this character; which leads one to assume that perhaps the "goddess" herself was inspired by De Quincey's novel.

In a subsequent letter to his mother, Gogol seemingly forgot about his broken heart and gave another justification for his sudden trip to Lubeck. Being very secretive, he did not mention Ganc Kjušel'garten nor his disappointment at the negative criticism his book had received, but attributed the

trip to the advice of doctors to cure a mysterious rash which had covered his hands and face. Marija Ivanovna, simple as she was, accepted neither explanation, and putting two and two together, that is, the rash and the "goddess," assumed that her son had contacted a venereal disease. Her reaction so shook Gogol that he felt forced to put forward still another explanation.

Here you have my confession: only the proud dreams of youth, which, however, flowed from a pure source, from the sole burning wish to be useful, without being restrained, however, by common sense have lead me too far. But I am ready to answer before the face of God if I have performed even a single feat of depravity, and my morals here were incomparably purer than when I was staying at school or at home.¹³

Thus the "goddess" becomes another excuse, another invention of a fertile imagination, designed to shroud and to dramatize his disappointment with St. Petersburg, a city which had failed to recognize his exceptional talents.

The last sentence of the passage quoted above, "... my morals here were incomparably purer than when I was staying at school or at home" would appear to be one of Gogol's typical exaggerations, although it is taken at its word by Šenrok who, however, chooses not to delve into these and other "ticklish details of adolescent life"¹⁴ such as various

racy allusions in Gogol's letters to his school friends. In general, Šenrok's biography of Gogol attempts to present the writer in the best possible manner, glossing over Gogol's faults and stressing the positive aspects of his personality. "We on our part", writes Šenrok, "do not take it upon ourself to dwell on these somewhat ambiguous circumstances of licentious behaviour at the Gymnasium in Nežin...".¹⁵ It is difficult to come to any conclusions as to the nature of this "licentious behaviour" since Šenrok limits himself to vague allusions without presenting any facts.

In what concerns Gogol's morals at home, Šenrok concedes that there was one unwholesome element in the otherwise "healthy and pure" atmosphere of Vasil'evka, - the devki [young servant girls]. In a letter to his mother, in which Gogol gives detailed instructions on how to bring up his sister, Olga, Gogol exhorts his mother never to let Olga enter the devič'ja [maids' room]. When his sister entered school, he insisted that she be spared the company of a female servant. He even went as far as to ask his mother to forbid Olga from ever talking to servant girls.¹⁶ David Magarshak is quick to assume that Gogol was debauched by these girls as a child.¹⁷ Gogol's advice to his mother can, however, lend itself to another explanation. Why not

assume that Gogol overheard some foolish conversation or was witness to some indiscretion which prompted him to attempt to shield his sister from what he considered to be an evil influence? There is no conclusive evidence to show that Gogol had been sexually initiated in Vasil'evka or at Nežin. In fact, there is little information available concerning Gogol's sex-life. Annenkov, in his memoirs, states that Gogol had occasionally accompanied him to brothels, while Gogol himself told Dr. Tarasenkov who cared for him during the last few days of the writer's life, that he had indeed experienced sexual relations with the opposite sex but had found little pleasure or need in them.¹⁸

Apart from the reference to the exalted goddess who can be assumed was but a figment of Gogol's imagination, there is no record of any romantic attachments during the writer's first stay in St. Petersburg, 1828-1836. In fact, Gogol was very shy and withdrawn with people whom he did not know intimately, particularly women. Yet there was much of the poseur in the young Gogol. Having acquired a certain degree of fame after the publication of Večera na xutore bliz Dikan'ki he gained entrance to several literary salons in the capital. In a letter to Danilevskij, he writes: "We meet almost every evening, Žukovskij, Puškin and I."¹⁹ In the same letter to Danilevskij, who was in love and living

in the Caucasus at the time, he boasts about his large circle of female friends.

I asked the local actresses to point out the best; [Danilevskij had asked Gogol to send him some sheets of music] but "Sylphide" Urusova [a lady-in-waiting to the Empress] and "Lastočka" Rossetti [maiden name of Alexandra Osipovna Smirnova] demanded that I give them, without fail, the name of the magnanimous mortal for whom I exert myself.²⁰

From the above quotation one would gain the impression that Gogol was a habitué of aristocratic salons and theatre dressing rooms. In her diary Alexandra Smirnova paints a completely different picture of the young Gogol.

Le Hohol est recalcitrant; il ne voulait pas venir chez moi avec Pletneff; il est timide et j'avais l'envie de lui parler de la Petite-Russie. Enfin Svertchok [Puškin] et Byk [Žukovskij] l'ont amené chez moi. Je les ai surpris en lui recitant des vers petits-russiens. Cela ma ravie de parler de l'Oukraine; alors il s'est animé.²¹

After Gogol's second visit to her salon, Alexandra Osipovna Smirnova makes the following entry into her diary.

Joukovsky est triomphant d'avoir empoigné le hohol recalcitrant, parce qu'il a vu que cela m'a fait tant de plaisir de parler de la Petite Russie... Ils ont tant taquiné Gogol sur sa timidité et sa sauvagerie, qu'ils ont fini par le mettre a son aise, et il avait l'air content d'être venu me voir "s konvoem." [under convoy] ²²

What a different image of the young Gogol emerges from Smirnova's diary as compared to Gogol's letter to Danilevskij: we see a shy self-conscious young man, lost in St. Petersburg society, a young man who was afraid of going to Smirnova's salon and had to be taken there "under convoy." Had Smirnova not been able of putting Gogol at ease by speaking of the Ukraine and of subjects familiar to him there might have been a scene similar to the conversation between Špon'ka and Marija Gavrilovna.

Gogol's shyness and awkwardness in the aristocratic milieu of St. Petersburg can be explained by his youth and inexperience, however, in later years, given fame and worldly experience he still did not acquire self-confidence and ease in female company. Referring to Aksakov's memoirs we learn that Gogol was often rude and behaved strangely with people he did not know well, being able to relax only with intimate friends. When it came to entertaining women, he became lost, probably because he did not know how to amuse them in conversation, or rather because he had the wrong ideas of what they would find amusing.²³ Consider the following vignette from Gogol's life.

Aksakov writes about how Gogol had invited his wife and daughter as well as several other ladies to have tea with him at Pogodin's house in Moscow. The Aksakov women thought

that Gogol was very funny in his role of host and it was even pitiful to watch him as he used all the powers available to him to entertain the ladies present. Gogol began the conversation by discussing the latest gossip and having quickly exhausted the topic began saying things such as, "It would be nice if suddenly a choir of singers would jump out from behind this tree and begin to sing,"²⁴ and other statements in the same vein. Aksakov's wife and daughter who had the privilege of seeing the "real" Gogol could not help but notice the forced tone of the conversation and the obvious relief expressed by the host when the guests departed.

It is rather amusing to note that Gogol could wax very warm and eloquent when writing to female friends from far away places, as if the distance separating them somehow lifted the unease which he felt in their presence.

I was dull and cold with you because I felt your superiority, because it seemed to me that I could not talk to you in the ordinary banal language which we throw around in large handfuls every day. I wanted to talk to you in the simple language of the heart but my indirect utterances could not express the language of the heart and this is why it seemed to me that I was duller and colder with you than with anyone else. But I looked at you with veneration, like a pious pilgrim looks upon holy places and I was satisfied that in the depths of my heart I brought to you a sacrifice without uttering a word. I don't know why you have become closer to me

now and why my thoughts strive to you not
timidly but freely and joyously as if
towards home, as if to Rome, which is the
same as home to me.²⁵

This is the closest that Gogol ever came to expressing love for a woman, however it would be more accurate to interpret the above quotation as an apology for "cold" behaviour.

Gogol did form several life-long friendships with women. He often wrote to the old Countess Šeremet'eva, whom he considered to be his spiritual mother, and he carried on a lively correspondence with the Balabin family, particularly with the young Marija Balabin, his former pupil. During a stay at Baden Baden in 1836 Gogol met again with the Balabin family and so enjoyed the ladies' company that he prolonged his stay from the expected three days to three weeks. Henri Troyat writes that Gogol found women, especially aristocratic ladies from conservative circles, willing and receptive pupils for his preachings.²⁶ With these women Gogol could act out the role of famous writer and spiritual teacher. As Gogol grew older he began to see himself more and more as a prophet, inspired by God to save the world from its own folly. This is how he describes the change in himself in a letter to Alexandra Smirnova.

After I left Russia a great change took place in me. The soul occupied me completely, and I saw clearly that without the aspiration of my soul to its better perfection I did not have the power to direct any of my ability or any aspect of intellect towards the good and profit of my fellow man, and without this mental education any work of mine would only be temporarily brilliant, but vain in its essence. How God lead me to this idea, how my soul was educated unseen by anyone - God alone knows completely.²⁷

Gogol's friendship with Alexandra Smirnova, the former belle of St. Petersburg society, developed when they were both living in Europe. In Gogol's eyes she had become a kind of Mary Magdalene figure; she was in her early thirties (middle aged by the standards of the time), tired of her successes at court and bored with her marriage to a man whom she did not love. Her interest began to turn to spiritual things and it was Gogol who guided her along the path to salvation. She in turn trusted and confided in him, ascribing to him great psychological insight. When she arrived in Rome with her children in 1842, Gogol not only guided her through the streets of Rome but also began her religious education, exhorting her to become a true Christian. When she left Rome in April 1843, he felt very alone and followed her to Nice where he continued her religious education. Gogol came to Smirnova's villa every day and read to her from

various religious books such as the Imitation of Christ by Thomas a Kempis. She, in turn, had to learn psalms by heart and recite them to her teacher who became very angry if she made mistakes. Alexandra Smirnova at first attributed Gogol's frequent visits to his love for her and when she confronted him with this supposition he became very angry and stopped visiting her for three days. He had no doubt been offended that she had given such a banal explanation to his missionary zeal.

Gogol's relationship with another aristocratic lady, Anna Viel'gorskaja resembled his friendship with Alexandra Smirnova, except that it ended in a marriage proposal which the family rejected immediately, shocked no doubt at Gogol's audacity in proposing to a young girl so high above him on the social scale.

Gogol became acquainted with the Viel'gorskij family during his first years in St. Petersburg and won a special place in the old Countess' heart after he cared for her dying son in Rome during the last few weeks of the young man's illness. When Gogol returned to St. Petersburg in 1848 he met again with the Viel'gorskij family and became impressed with Anna in whom he admired "not an analytical mind but a higher power to reason."²⁸ The relationship which grew up between them was again one of teacher and

pupil. Being very religiously inclined Anna was a receptive pupil to Gogol's teachings. "You, dear Nikolaj Vasil'evič", she wrote to him, "have an aim in life which satisfies you entirely and occupies your time. But what am I to choose?"²⁹ With his usual generosity with advice Gogol's letters to Anna Viel'gorskaja are full of instructions and exhortations.

Don't forget to read the history of the Russian Church along with Russian history; without it much of our history is obscure. The entire works of Filaret Rižskij has come out - five books.³⁰

Gogol attempted not only to guide Anna in her religious education but also took it upon himself to instruct her in personal matters.

About your health, here are instructions to you again: for God's sake don't sit in the same place for more than an hour and a half; don't bend over the table - your chest is weak, you ought to know that. Try by all means to go to bed no later than 11:00. Don't dance at all especially wild dances; they agitate your blood, but they do not provide the correct movement which the body requires. And besides, dances do not become you at all - your figure is not graceful and light; you are not pretty. Do you know that for sure? You are pretty only when some noble feeling appears in your face; its clear the features of your face are arranged so as to express spiritual mobility; as soon as you lose this expression, you become homely.³¹

The above quotation shows that Gogol was certainly not physically attracted to Anna nor does it appear that he was in love with her. As in his letters to his sisters, Gogol's attitude towards Anna is tyrannical and callously indifferent to the young lady's feelings. Gogol placed himself into the position of an all-knowing teacher and guide and expected her to submit to his instructions which were so lacking in the most elementary forms of propriety.

Judging from Gogol's correspondence with Anna Viel'gorskaja one can easily agree with Magarshak who considers that Gogol was not offering Anna the conventional type of marriage but rather a spiritual marriage like the one between the fanatically religious Count Alexander Tolstoj and his wife who had forsworn the delights of the flesh. ³²

The confession which Gogol wrote after receiving the Viel'gorskij's refusal does not speak of despair or of a broken heart but only of God's will in bringing them together.

I must be something in relation to you; it
is not in vain that God brings people
together in such a strange way.³³

It was God's will then and not necessarily Gogol's love which prompted the marriage proposal. In fact Gogol does not mention love in his letters to Anna. In the same letter

Gogol does not seem to abandon hope of remaining on friendly terms with Anna, he even suggested that they go to live on her estate together where they could look after the needs of her peasants and get to know each other in order to find out, with God's help, what their relationship ought to be. "Perhaps I should be nothing more than a lap dog obliged to protect the property of his master in some corner."³⁴ If Gogol could suggest such a platonic relationship to Anna, perhaps this is what he was looking for in the last few years before his death - a companion, someone with whom he could share his life.

Gogol's friendships with women were always based on religion, on teacher-pupil relationships and not on physical attraction or love. It is quite probable, as Šenrok contends, that Gogol was never "in love" with a woman in the conventional sense.³⁵ Gogol, in fact, never confessed to being in love, but of holding himself back, through sheer force of character.³⁶ It would be fair to say that people, generally, cannot prevent themselves from falling in love as Gogol claims to have done on two occasions. It would be more probable to assume that Gogol never experienced a true passion for a woman. In the same letter to Danilevskij we can detect a note of regret when he writes:

... I have a firm will which has twice lead me away from the desire to glance into the abyss. You are a lucky fellow - it is your lot to taste the greatest good in life - love. And I ... but it seems we have turned into Byronism.³⁷

Valerij Brjusov contends that Gogol's life was devoid of romantic love not because of a lack of passion but due to an overabundance of it. "And in passion as in all experiences Gogol could only go to the limit,"³⁸ writes Brjusov. Brjusov believed Gogol who wrote that the flame of love would "burn him to ashes" in a moment. It is true that Gogol was prone to exaggeration, that he had a tendency to see things in terms of black and white, that he took his religious feelings to the limit, that he exaggerated the importance of some of his writings, attributing to them vast social importance and even thought that they could change Russian society etc., however, when dealing with such an emotion as love, if we accept Brjusov's premise, it becomes difficult to understand why Gogol did not act with consistency and given full sway to his emotions. It is more likely that Gogol was never in love.

The lack of romantic involvement in Gogol's life has been analysed by psychologists and freudian literary critics as the result of Gogol's sexual impotence stemming from a strong mother fixation. I.D. Ermakov also maintains that

Gogol was an addicted onanist, a practice which lay at the root of his mental anguish and guilt feelings which he experienced, particularly during the later part of his life.³⁹

Following is a short synopsis of Ermakov's interpretation of Gogol's alleged mother fixation complex.⁴⁰ The first object of a child's love is usually the mother. In time, this love is transferred to another woman, and if the mother complex is strong, she will possess many of the mother's characteristics. There are, however, many people who remain faithful to this first love throughout their lives, since they cannot free themselves of their infantile attachment. Hence, a whole series of anxieties, for the most part of a moral nature, are tied in with the sexual impulses which interfere with and hinder the free expression of sexuality. In time, the sexual impulses are reversed and being unable to find a natural outlet, find their expression in a series of seemingly inexplicable occurrences, for which the true meaning can be found only if we take into consideration the subconscious existence of these complexes. Then only can we understand why Gogol never loved or married or why he became attracted to Smirnova, with whom he sought only a spiritual relationship, as with a mother.

Ermakov finds hidden autobiographical elements in all of Gogol's works, citing an overabundance of material rather than a lack of it. The fantastic elements of the story Vij as well as Strašnaja mest' express, according to Ermakov, Gogol's Oedipus complex. The image of Xoma Brut's flying while sitting on the shoulders of the witch represent for the freudian analyst the conception of unhindered sexual expression. The fact that this image often occurs in Russian and Ukrainian fairy tales and that Gogol was influenced by folklore⁴¹ is, however, not taken into consideration by Ermakov. The witch herself is both young and old, changing from a hideous old woman into a beautiful young girl. Ermakov explains the witch's dual aspect to represent Gogol's mother who was only eighteen years of age when she gave birth to Gogol and who retained a youthful appearance. Xoma, with the help of prayers defeats the witch and beats her to death with a piece of wood. The avenger of this murder is not the witch herself but the terrible Vij, an earth covered monster with steel eyelids down to the ground. It is the terrible stare of Vij which kills Xoma. In Ermakov's interpretation Vij becomes a father symbol who sees Xoma-Gogol's sexual development and incestual desires for the witch-mother.

In Strašnaja mest' Ermakov claims that the recreation of Gogol's Oedipus complex is thinly disguised by the transposition of the protagonists in the struggle, the struggle between the father and son (in this case son-in-law) for the daughter can be assumed to be for the mother. The fact that Gogol was willing to treat such topics is taken by Ermakov to mean that he himself was personally tormented by these questions.⁴² Ermakov considers that the Oedipus complex explains why Gogol in his works felt constrained when portraying beautiful women and why he equated sexual attraction for a woman with inevitable punishment.⁴³

If we examine Gogol's relationship with his mother throughout his life, however, we can find no evidence of an abnormal attachment. Gogol's letters to his mother are filled with rhetorical assurances of filial devotion, yet they lack real tenderness which comes across in Gogol's letters to his friends. From his earliest years Gogol was quick to use his mother's devotion to him to his own advantage, skilfully blending descriptions of his poor health with requests for funds. He often showed irritation with her superstitious and suspicious nature, her inability to manage her estate and even her pride in him. He requested that she never speak of him and show his portrait to anyone,

as if she were unworthy to be his mother. On one occasion, in order to forestall a meeting with his mother, whom he had not seen for several years, Gogol sent her letters from Moscow postmarked Trieste and Vienna. The fact that throughout his life Gogol avoided prolonged visits with his mother and seemed to look down at her, do not tie in with Ermakov's theory. From what is known about Gogol's relationship with his mother during his lifetime, there seems to be no concrete evidence of any abnormal affection.

The theory of Gogol's alleged mother fixation rests entirely on the subjective interpretation of the symbolism of Gogol's works. In the interpretation of the symbols in Gogol's works Ermakov does not take into consideration the influence of literary tradition or the influence of other writers. And while fiction presents a certain amount of biographical evidence it cannot be considered as conclusive evidence since modern psychiatry bases its finding on extensive personal interviews and analysis. From the information available on Gogol's relationships with women during his lifetime we can conclude that he did not form romantic attachments, but friendships based on the teacher-pupil relationship. Psychological explanations for these attitudes on the basis of his creative works can only be

considered as hypotheses and conjectures. Whether or not the lack of romantic involvement is reflected in Gogol's works, particularly in his portraits of women, will be discussed at length in the following chapters.

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER II

BEAUTIES

Part I

Gogol's literary works contain numerous portraits of beautiful women, ranging from the absolute beauties such as Alkinoe and Annunciata whose exquisite features place them far above the rest of humanity to the evil, devil-inspired beauty of the pannočka [woman of gentle birth] in Vij.¹ Between the exalted and the fantastic are the robust peasant girls from the collection of Večera na xutore bliz Dikan'ki, the aristocratic Polish lady from Taras Bul'ba, the prostitute from Nevskij prospekt and the Governor's daughter from Mertvye duši. But before attempting the individual analysis of these characters, it is necessary to dwell on Gogol's philosophy concerning feminine beauty as revealed in the essay Ženščina (Woman) and in several letters from Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druž'jami, as well as to draw attention to the influence of the romantic school which made itself felt not only in Gogol's interpretation of feminine beauty, but also in his style of portraiture.

Gogol developed his philosophy on the subject of feminine beauty very early in his literary career. In 1831

the essay Ženščina appeared in Literaturnaja gazeta, an essay which in essence is an exalted hymn to feminine beauty, an echo of the German romantic writers' cult of womanhood. German romanticism placed woman on a pedestal, seeing harmony in woman, that delicate balance between the earthly (body) and the divine (beauty).

Gogol's Ženščina is a dialogue between the Athenian youth Telekles and Plato. When Telekles curses the beauty Alkinoe who has deceived him, Plato replies that Woman must be forgiven everything since she possesses that divine gift of the gods - beauty. "What were you before and what have you become now,"² asks Plato, "since you have seen infinity in the divine features of Alkinoe?"³ Take away Woman, Plato continues, that ray of sunlight in a dark and gloomy world and there will only be darkness. When the magnificent Alkinoe appears at the end of the dialogue, the youth, overwhelmed by her beauty, forgets his former accusations and falls at her feet in mute adoration.

The marble arm, through which shone blue veins, filled with heavenly ambrosia was held freely in the air, the firm arch was entwined with scarlet ribbons; the foot in its uncovered blinding sheen, having shed the jealous footwear stepped forward and seemingly did not touch the despised ground; the high divine bosom and the two half covered clouds of breasts swelled

with anxious sighs; the clothing trembled and fell to the stage in magnificent picturesque lines. It seemed that the thin clear ether in which bathe the dwellers of the heavens which streams with pink and blue flames spilling over in an infinitesimal number of rays which do not even have a name on earth, in which trembles the sweet-smelling sea of inexpressable music - it seemed that this ether took form and stood before them brightening and defying the magnificent form of man.⁴

The description of Alkinoe is a hymn to feminine beauty, yet it is difficult to agree with V. Gippius who considers that Alkinoe's beauty is indeed living.⁵ The image of Alkinoe is totally divorced from flesh and blood: she is an abstraction, an ideal, a description of a Greek statue, beautifully carved, yet, nevertheless, as cold as marble.

Gogol recreated this image of the ideal beauty in the portrait of Annunciata, the heroine of the fragment "Rim". As her prototype Alkinoe, Annunciata plays a static, decorative role in the excerpt, while her description is laden with the same allusions to the grandure of ancient times. In the description of Annunciata Gogol seems to be walking around a statue, pen in hand, describing her from different angles. "If she stands in profile - the profile breathes nobility... if she turns the back of her head with

beautiful hair swept up showing her shining neck and the beauty of shoulders not seen in the world - there she is also a miracle... Everything in her is the crowning glory of creation from her shoulders to the leg breathing of antiquity, to the last toe on her foot."⁶

Originally Gogol planned to make Annunciata the heroine of a novel by the same name. Had Gogol completed the novel we would have been confronted with a somewhat unconventional love intrigue: that is, with a hero who is content to worship the heroine from afar, since the object of his love is too beautiful not to be shared with the world. Any physical contact with such a diety would be sacrilegious. The Prince's attitudes towards love are an echo of Plato's philosophy of love as expressed in Ženščina.

Beauty kindles love, says Plato, the divine love for the idea of the beautiful which the soul once knew and still remembers. True love is not the raging destructive force directed towards the individual, as exemplified by Telekles in whose veins fire flows instead of blood, whose breath is flames, etc. What is love? asks Plato..."It is the homeland of the soul. And when the soul is emersed in the etherial soul of woman, then the soul will find in it its father - the eternal God, its brothers - feelings

inexpressable on earth before."⁸ This kind of love is as abstract as the woman to whom it is directed; it is like the adoration of the artist before the altar of beauty, but not like the earthly love of a man for a woman.

There is another aspect of Gogol's attitude towards feminine beauty which plays a decisive role in his conception of the beautiful heroine. Beauties radiate tremendous power over men. The connotation of power and beauty is found in all of Gogol's beauties, beginning with Alkinoe whose name is derived from the Greek word for strength.⁹ Gogol never abandoned the association between power and beauty. If in 1831 Gogol sees beauty as an inspiration to Man in his search for the Beautiful, in 1947, a moralistic Gogol sees this enormous power dissipated on trivia by women themselves. Women in Russia turn men to corruption, he writes in Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druž'jami: they force men to take bribes, to sell their souls to the devil in order to keep their wives in fashion. Gogol thought that women had the power to change Russian society. In a letter to Alexandra Smirnova, whose husband had been appointed as Governor of Kaluga, he gives his spiritual protégée step-by-step instructions on how to influence society. For example, Gogol naively believed that if the Governor's

wife would appear at receptions wearing the same dress, the women of Kaluga would give up their extravagant ways.¹⁰

In Vybrannye Mesta Gogol considers feminine beauty to be a mystery. God does not gratuitously make some women beautiful; it is not in vain that all men are affected by beauty in the same way. In the past, a beauty's caprice could lead the world into turmoil, but what would happen if this beauty were directed towards the good? How many good deeds could a beauty perform in comparison to other women? A woman's role is, therefore, to be a shining example of goodness, reforming the world by her own example. Thus a paradox develops in Gogol's philosophy. Although she possesses beauty, this powerful force, this gift of God, she does not always fulfill her role on earth as she must, since she either corrupts this gift and ultimately destroys the men who fall prey to her charms or it is the hapless victims, those who have succumbed to beauty, those who do not know how to love, who bring about destruction and are consumed by the flames of passion. In one breath, Gogol seems to be elevating Woman, yet often, even in his most sympathetic, most beautiful heroines he cannot help but point out the potential dangers of the destructive passions unleashed by a woman's beauty.

Gogol's beauties are all described in the exalted style and cliché-ridden imagery of the romantic technique of portraiture which developed a whole series of stereotyped images for describing the physical attributes of the beautiful heroines.¹¹ The imagery seemed designed to enhance the artificial quality of their beauty, drawing away from realistic comparisons into a world of fantasy and contrivance. In the descriptions of the beautiful heroines romantic writers showed a tendency to underplay their earthly attributes and to underscore instead the heroines' ephemeral or fantastic qualities. This approach to portraiture resulted in comparisons with angels, heavenly creatures or works of art. The adulation before feminine beauty, however, often overshadowed the heroines' personalities and in most instances, these characters never came to life.

We can find numerous instances of the above cited tendency in Gogol's portraits of his heroines. The beautiful Annunciata could well have been the model for the statues of "...Diana, the proud Ionna, the tempting Graces and of all women. who have ever been transported onto canvas!"¹² Everything about Annunciata reminds us of those ancient times "when marble came to life."¹³ The prostitute

in Nevskij prospekt is compared to Perrudgio's Bianca, while the Polish lady in Taras Bul'ba is "a work of art to which the artist had put the very last stroke of the brush."¹⁴

Russian writers of the Romantic school in the 1830's always portrayed feminine beauty in the absolute. One of Kukolnik's heroines cannot be called a beauty (krasavica) because this banal term would not be enough; a heroine from a work by Countesse Šaxova is perfection an "ideal."¹⁵ Each of Gogol's beauties is also characterized as being unique. Pidorka in Noč' nakanune Ivana Kupala is a beauty "like you have never seen before."¹⁶ Other beautiful women in comparison to Annunciata are "as night before day."¹⁷ When one looks at Annunciata one begins to comprehend why Italian poets compare beautiful women to the sun - which is complete beauty. Oksana is so beautiful that there never was and never will be another like her in the village.

Both author and hero cannot hide their enthusiastic admiration of feminine beauty. "Ai, ai, ai, how beautiful!"¹⁸ exclaims Piskarev, "O, bella!"¹⁹ shout the carnival goers in Rim who seem more intent on looking at Annunciata than enjoying the carnival. "What a girl!"²⁰ shouts Gric'ko when he sees Paraska sitting on the wagon. Beauties have

a stupendous paralysing effect on men: when the Prince sees Annunciata he stands immobile, "with baited breath,"²¹ Andrij in Taras Bul'ba, when he confronts the beauty, "could not stir a limb, as if sewn up in sack."²² Piskarev lost all sense of reality, it seemed to him that the sidewalk swept by under him.

When describing the feminine body, Gogol follows the set patterns of underlining its transparent and seemingly weightless qualities. The bodies of the water nymphs "seem to be welded from clouds,"²³ the face of the Governor's daughter is like a newly laid egg placed before the light. "It seemed that she looked like some kind of toy carefully carved from ivory; she alone shone whitely and stood out transparently and clearly in the murky and untransparent crowd."²⁴ The clothing of these beauties is again designed to accent their weightlessness, the lightness of the body. Women are clothed in gauze and voile materials, flowing white drapery intended to enhance the contours of the body.

"She sat down, her chest heaved under the thin smoke of gauze; her hand, (Creator what a magnificent hand!) fell on her knees and gripped under it the airy dress and the dress under it began to breathe music..."²⁵

These beauties do not walk but float. Their dainty

feet barely touch the surface of the earth.

Another distinctive feature of the romantic technique of portraiture was the extensive use of colour and colour contrasts, light effects - techniques borrowed from the art of painting. The white cheeks of Paraska are tinted with a delicate poppy colour, while the cheeks of the more aristocratic Polish lady are compared to "the rosy glow of the morning sun on snow."²⁶ The prostitute's "exquisite forehead of blinding whiteness was blessed with beautiful hair like agate."²⁷ Annunciata emerges from the "dusky darkness of a gallery all shimmering all gleaming. The purple cloth of her Albano dress blazes like a gem touched by the sun."²⁸

There is also ample evidence of Gogol's attempts to mould, to give form to his heroines. Eyelashes fall "like arrows,"²⁹ braids are "serpents,"³⁰ breast are compared to "clouds,"³¹ the flowing drapery of gowns does not hide from the author's perceptive eyes the lines of the body underneath.

By combining the various epithets used by Gogol in his portraits of beauties we can form a fairly typical composite picture of a Gogolian beauty. The beauty's skin (with the exception of the Ukrainian maidens whose complexions are

more tawny) is always white, white as snow,"³² "silver,"³³ "marble,"³⁴ "clouds,"³⁵ or "ivory."³⁶ There are foreheads of "blinding whiteness,"³⁷ faces white as "snow glowing in the morning light,"³⁸ white hands with "half transparent fingers."³⁹ The hair of the heroine is usually black. The adjective black is, however, never enough to describe the "thick pitch"⁴⁰ of a heroine's hair. Hair is black like "agate,"⁴¹ like a "raven's wing,"⁴² or "tar."⁴³ Eyebrows are also black, black as "shoe laces,"⁴⁴ as "German velvet."⁴⁵ The beauty's eyes, the mirrors of her soul are often full of inexpressable feelings or they are piercing, having an almost hypnotic effect.

...her raised eyes radiated total emotion -
not a little emotion, nor a hint of emotion,
but full total emotion -⁴⁶

Annunciata's eyes are as "lightening through black clouds," while Piskarev when he looks into the eyes of the prostitute can only exclaim, "O, what heaven, what Paradise! Give me strength, Creator, to endure this!"⁴⁷

As all of Gogol's characters, the beauties suffer from a poverty of inner life. The characteristic feature of Gogol's writing technique is his apparent inability to show emotional development or growth. "Soulless ghosts"⁴⁸ is how Ejxenval'd dismisses the myriad of characters

created by Gogol's imagination. Although Gogol deems it necessary to acquaint the reader with descriptions of his heroines' apparel, furniture, contents of their chests of drawers, we are seldom shown the inner workings of their minds, as these seemingly insignificant details are meant to characterize the people described. Emotions are depicted externally through gestures, verbs of motion or with the usual clichés such as beating hearts, tears, baited breath etc. Gogol himself admitted that he possessed the ability to fathom a character only through his external characteristics; in his Author's Confession he writes: "I could decipher a person only when the tiniest detail of his appearance was presented to me."⁴⁹ Whenever Gogol tried to describe the inner emotional experiences of his heroines, the results were often vague, leaving the impression that the writer himself could not define the feelings.

It is difficult to put into words what the tawny face of the wonderful young girl tried to express: severity could be seen in it and through the severity a kind of mockery.⁵⁰

Her heart was filled with so many feelings one more frustrating than the other, that her face expressed only a strong confusion.⁵¹

Her veins began to quiver and her heart began to beat in such a way as never before, due to any joy or sorrow; it seemed strange

and pleasing to her and she herself
could not explain what was happening
to her.⁵²

The process by which Oksana falls in love with Vakula is described by the heroine's tossing and turning in bed, unable to sleep. In a difficult moment the author is not past literally throwing a kerchief over the heroine's face as if to avoid describing the emotions it mirrors.⁵³

The critic and biographer V. Šenrok believed that the images of the Ukrainian maidens were the only truly sympathetic and realistic portraits of women created by Gogol.⁵⁴ But the poetic feelings expressed by these heroines, which so charmed Šenrok, the warmth radiated in their romantic exchanges, as Setchkarev has shown,⁵⁵ was taken by Gogol from the poetry of the folksong. This becomes apparent in the numerous instances when the heroines' speech suddenly becomes rhythmic.

Ivas', my dear Ivas', my darling. Run to
Petrus', my golden child, like an arrow
from a bow, tell him all: I would love
his brown eyes, I would kiss his dear
white face, but my fate will not have it
so. More than one towel have I drenched
with my burning tears...⁵⁶

Gogol has the tendency to reduce his characters to the simplest form. He is not interested in delving deeply into

the psychology of his heroines. The inner life of the prostitute, for instance, which would have fascinated such a writer as Dostoevskij, does not interest Gogol in the least. The female images which emerge from his pen are effective, picturesque, yet somehow faceless. The external descriptions of his heroines can in certain cases be easily transposed; certainly the substitution of hair like a "raven's wing"⁵⁷ with hair like an "inspired night"⁵⁸ or the blinding whiteness of skin with the shining whiteness of another's skin could be carried out with impunity. What these heroines lack is individuality in their traits, that inner connection between the internal and the external or as Pereverzev correctly observed, Gogol splashes bright colours and yet "the portraits remain pale."⁵⁹

Pereverzev and many other critics⁶⁰ point to the weakness and the lifenessness of Gogol's beauties. To illustrate this point Pereverzev compares the description of Anna Karenina at the ball with the description of Paraska sitting on her father's cart. There is no way, however, to justify the comparison of these two characters since they are drawn on two different planes. As realistic portraits, Gogol's heroines cannot compare with those of Tolstoj since

the main interest of Gogol's heroines lies not in their authenticity but in their symbolic value, in the roles in which they are set by the author.

It is generally recognized that Gogol attached great importance to the names of his characters, being especially fond of resounding symbolic names. In a letter to his school friend Vyssotskij Gogol wrote, "Even though a name does not characterize a person, does not acquaint us with him, nevertheless, I would still be able to get to know their characters through your letter..."⁶¹ (Gogol reprimanded his friend for not giving the names of Vyssotskij's new-found friends in St. Petersburg).

We can easily understand why Gogol chose the names, Annunciata and Alkinoe rather than common Christian names for his two most exalted beauties; these names set the heroines apart from surrounding life, and evoke the grandeur and majesty of Classical civilizations. Taking into consideration Gogol's love of names and the great importance which he assigned to them,⁶² it is quite remarkable that several of his most important beauties remain nameless - the prostitute, the Polish lady, the pannočka from Vij and the Governor's daughter from Mertvye dusi. One can only speculate that Gogol did not want to find concrete name

symbols for these images of feminine beauty: they were for him ephemeral visions, like apparitions in a dream, and their namelessness added to their mystery and detachment from life.

Too many critics (Pereverzev, Txorževskij, Ejxenal'd) dismiss Gogol's beauties as soulless ghosts, mere puppets or chocolate box beauties. If we approach these characters as portraits of living people they are flat and one-dimensional, yet they reveal their real significance and interest only when considered as symbols showing Gogol's quest to solve the mystery of feminine beauty. Taken in this context, terms such as chocolate box beauties appear too tame, too facile, to convey the awesome power which lurks behind the god-like surface of feminine beauty.

Part II

Večera na xutore bliz Dikan'ki were acclaimed by most of Gogol's contemporaries as charming vignettes from Ukrainian life full of gaiety and fun; Puškin praised the stories for their genuine gaiety, Belinskij stressed their nationalism (narodnost') and originality. It was only after Gogol's death that literary critics such as Kuliš⁶³ began to note the exotic elements in Gogol's descriptions of the Ukraine, and to point out the errors in his descriptions of Ukrainian customs, while the symbolists were the first to underline the elements of pessimism and gloom permeating the tales.⁶⁴

The basic theme of the stories is the intrusion of evil into the everyday lives of ordinary people and their struggle to overcome the witches and demons, all of whom seem to be part of the Ukrainian landscape. While presenting the stories in the guise of folk-legends and fairy tales Gogol did not adopt the inherent optimism of folk literature. All too often the forces of evil triumph, while if we look deeper into what seems to be a conventional happy ending, we can discern a false serenity, the author's lack of faith in the ultimate triumph of the good. The plot seems to end well in Soročinskaja Jarmarka, Noč' pered Roždestvom,

Majskaja noč', but the author never fails to insert a melancholic lyrical passage, as if to remind the reader that happiness is but a dream, which will fade all too soon leaving only emptiness or gloom, just as the music of the wedding feast in Soročinskaja Jarmarka fades leaving the deathly wrinkled faces of old women. From the exalted description of the Ukrainian night in Majskaja noč' the reader is jolted back into the world of reality with the description of the drunken Kalennik searching for his hut. Noč' pered Roždestvom does not end with the familiar words "and they lived happily ever after," but with the description of the portrait of the Devil. In Gogol's conception of life, things are not always what they seem to be and his words from Nevskij prospekt, "Everything is delusion, everything is a dream, all is not what it seems!"⁶⁵ can apply as well to Večera na xutore bliz Dikan'ki.

When we approach the portraits of the robust young Ukrainian beauties we must keep in mind this deceptive quality of appearances in Gogol's works, and we must not be taken in by their surface charm. At first it may seem that the author idealizes these beauties who are contrasted to the moral and physical ugliness of older women such as Xivrija or Soloxa, and yet, one cannot escape the impression

that once their beauty fades they will follow the example of the older generation. There are no sympathetic characterizations of older women who all tend to be wanton, shrewish and domineering. Nowhere is this theme more apparent than in Soročinskaja jarmarka when Paraska dons her stepmother's headdress anticipating her new status as a married woman. She resolves that in the future she will not greet her stepmother in the street nor will she bow her head before her. While Paraska is wearing the headdress her courage and self assurance grow and she begins to dance on the very same floor onto which tumbled her stepmother's admirers. By donning the headdress which is the symbol of the stepmother, Paraska is in essence becoming like her. Once her beauty fades as it must, she will become another Xivrja.

In Noč' nakanune Ivana Kupala, Majskaja noč' and Soročinskaja Jarmarka we find the same basic situation: the marriage of an idealized pair of lovers is opposed by either a stepmother, a father who would prefer a rich suitor, or a father who is himself interested in wooing the young girl. To overcome these obstacles the young men must seek the aid of diabolical or supernatural forces. The young beauties' role in the love intrigue is static,

they are but the bait or the catalysts which push the young men into making deals with the devil. They symbolize the power of beauty which evokes this terrible all-consuming passion in the men who love them, a passion which Plato warned Telekles about when he asked him, "Do you know how to love, Telekles?"⁶⁶

In Šoročinskaja jarmarka Gric'ko has only to sell his oxen cheaply to the diabolical gypsy in order to be united with Paraska, while in Noč' nakanune Ivana Kupala this same situation is treated as a horror story; Petrus' not only sells his soul to the devil but has to sacrifice the life of an innocent child. Petrus'' passion destroys him in the end - he turns into a pile of ashes consumed by his love,⁶⁷ while Pidorka is an innocent victim destined to spend the rest of her days in a monastery praying for the expiation of their sins.

Ganna's portrait seems to be drawn with real warmth and even tenderness.

...the door flung open with a creaking noise,
and a young girl, on the eve of her seven-
teenth spring, swathed in dusk crossed the
threshold, timidly looking around and not
letting go of the door handle. In the half
lucid darkness her eyes shone affably
like little stars, her red coral necklace
sparkled and the colour which shyly flushed

her face did not escape from the hawk
eyes of the young man.⁶⁸

Her love for the young man is expressed in rhythmical
phrases, reminiscent of folk-song sentiments.

I love you dark-browed cossack because
you have brown eyes and when you look
at me, my soul seems to smile.⁶⁹

The entire lovers' dialogue is very poetic; they speak
of stars and of Jacob's ladder. The world they live in
seems far removed from the world of reality with the drunk,
Kalennik, the Headman and his female relative. The lovers'
dialogue is closer in tone to the exalted description of
the May night.

But the poetic Ganna seems somehow artificial when
compared to the dead pannočka, the destitute water nymph
who was forced to commit suicide after her father became
charmed by his beautiful new wife, the witch. The pannočka's
feelings are more poignant and have a truer ring than
Ganna's words of love. This lifeless supernatural creature,
this victim of her father's passion leaves a stronger
impression than the idealized Ganna whose poetic romance
with Levko is but a frame for the tragic legend.

The difference between Oksana and the other beauties of Večera na xutore is that she is aware of her beauty and of the power she holds over men. "What happiness I will bring to the one who marries me,"⁷⁰ she says, admiring herself in the mirror. Because of this awareness she does not radiate the innocence of the other beauties; she is haughty, capricious and calculating. "I will let him kiss me, as if unwillingly. That will make him happy."⁷¹

Oksana's portrait is drawn with much more sensuality than those of the other heroines. Gogol describes her naked in bed, tossing and turning unable to sleep for fear that she has lost Vakula. Setchkarev comments that the author used this effect to avert the dangers of monotony,⁷² however, in this instance the sensuality can be subject to a different interpretation. The image of the sensual woman is for Gogol synonymous with that of the temptress, the witch as discussed at length in the following chapter. As Soloxa uses sex to lure men so does Oksana use her beauty to tyrannize Vakula. Oksana's characterization seems at times to be wavering between that of the temptress and the village coquette. In the final edition Gogol toned down previous sensual descriptions of Oksana thus bringing her closer to his descriptions of other pure beauties. Following is

a passage from an earlier edition cited by Stepanov.

Here the blacksmith lost control of himself and with his soul trembling, he put his arms around her full body. His trembling hand felt the young girl's breasts.⁷³

While the other Ukrainian beauties seem devoid of any personality, Oksana's characterization is less than ideal. "What is Oksana?" asks Vakula in a moment of clear-headed thinking, "She will never be a good housekeeper, she is only good at getting dressed up."⁷⁴ Like all the other heroes, Vakula is mesmerized by her beauty, yet unlike the others he realizes his humiliating position, but is powerless to free himself from her spell. "I have to laugh at myself," he concludes, "I think and I can't see what has happened to my brains."⁷⁵

Yet at the last moment Gogol brings Oksana back into the fold of other guileless beauties, although her metamorphosis from capricious coquette to the radiant and timid young girl madly in love with Vakula is rather sudden, it is nevertheless realistically motivated - she falls in love because she is afraid of losing her power over Vakula, afraid of losing such an ardent admirer to another woman.

In the stories comprising Večera na xutore we find

two basic types of beauties. First the idealized guileless beauties such as Ganna, Pidorka, Paraska who are idealized only in so far as their beauty is concerned. It becomes clear that for Gogol, beauty is only skin deep, it is transitory and when it fades, we can find no redeeming characteristics in the images of the older women. This can be interpreted as a basic hostility to the female sex, a hostility which gave way only before the radiant face of divine beauty. The role of these beauties is static, they serve as the foils for men's passions, passions which never lead to any good, which can destroy both lovers.

While in the image of Oksana, we can see traces of woman as a temptress, the beautiful witch in Vij who uses her beauty to subjugate men. At this stage of his literary career, however, Gogol was not willing to relinquish his belief in the inherent innocence of beauty, he could not yet admit that beauty could also be a tool of the Devil. In Večera na xutore, it is passion which is the destructive force and not as yet woman herself.

The heroine of Taras Bul'ba plays a comparatively minor role in the novel which deals primarily with the description of Cossack life in the Ukraine of the 15th or 16th Century. The love intrigue is relegated to the status

of a sub-plot, while the main emphasis falls on the brave deeds, the adventures, the battles waged by the fearless Cossack warriors.

The American critic, Hugh MacLean, points to the immaturity of Gogol's idealization of those hard and cruel times, and to the writer's immaturity in dealing with the love intrigue. "What are these," writes MacLean, "but the normal fantasies of a young boy in the so-called latency period, about the age of ten, when their imaginations are preoccupied with composing glorified images of their approaching maturity and physical strength."⁷⁶ The role of women in these fantasies, continues MacLean, is decidedly minor; she becomes part of the imagined reward, a princess in whose name knights rode off to slay dragons or whose scarves they tied to their banners during jousting matches.⁷⁷ If we accept MacLean's interpretation we must also brand as immature the entire concept of chivalresque love, the courtly romances of the Middle Ages with the brave pure knights and beautiful ladies. It is unfair, however, to interpret the attitudes of past literary tradition using our own contemporary, post-freudian values.

There are parallels between the Polish pannočka and the heroines of the Middle Ages, particularly in the

concept of the necessity to win a lady's love through service, through the accomplishment of brave deeds.

My tsarina, my empress! Andrij muttered overwhelmed. Tell me what you want me to do. Order me to accomplish the most impossible things and I will obey you. If you want me to do what no man alive can do, I shall do it or die trying.⁷⁸

This same attitude can be found in several other works of Gogol. Piskarev, for instance, "gave a knightly oath to fulfill all her [i.e. the prostitute's] commands."⁷⁹ Even the peasant Levko from Majskaja noč is ready to execute any of the water nymph's wishes. "I am ready to do everything for you, my pannočka."⁸⁰

Before agreeing with MacLean about Gogol's immature interpretation of the love intrigue in Taras Bul'ba, we must take into consideration the fact that Gogol, as other Romantic writers, was fascinated by the Middle Ages;⁸¹ it is an established fact that Gogol studied this particular period in history to which he dedicated his first lecture at the University of St. Petersburg, and it would not be beyond the bounds of probability to assume that the medieval attitudes towards love influence his treatment of the theme in Taras Bul'ba.

The nameless Polish lady is another variation of Gogol's

absolute beauties, with the usual black hair and snowy complexion. By virtue of her beauty she becomes a superior being, standing far above Andrij. Her superiority over the young man is graphically illustrated in the scene of their first meeting, when she stands on the balcony laughing at the mud-stained seminarian. Andrij again cuts a ridiculous figure as he meekly allows her to amuse herself by adorning him with her jewelry. Andrij himself is well aware of her superiority as he cries out, "I see that you are a creature all together different from us - the wives and daughters of our boyars [nobles] are unworthy of you. We are unworthy even to serve you - only the heavenly angels are good enough for that."⁸²

Gogol is content to lift his heroine high on the pedestal of ideal beauty, but he is not interested in her personality. Therefore, there is no need to look for any inner motivation for her actions; her role lies solely in the illustration of the power of beauty over men. While it is understandable why the impressionable seminarian fell in love with the beautiful Polish lady we can find no convincing rational explanation for her love for the Cossack when she had "the flower of Polish knighthood"⁸³ at her feet. The whole episode of luring Andrij into the fortress

is somewhat contrived. The author does not bother to explain why the commandant's daughter happened to be on the ramparts of the fortress when she recognized Andrij among the Cossack army. The author makes it easy for the Tartar maid to find Andrij, in the dead of night, among the enemy sleeping peacefully with no apparent sentry. At first, it seems that the Polish lady is more interested in the provisions which Andrij brings rather than in the young man himself. Her sending of the Tartar maid to find Andrij in the hopes of saving her parents from a sure death from starvation seems quite probable when compared to her sudden declaration of love, a love which she herself fails to understand.

Oh, life threw at my feet the scions of nobility the wealthiest lords and counts, foreign barons and the flower of our Polish knighthood. Many of them loved me and I had only to wave my hand at any one of them, the handsomest and the noblest would have considered it supreme happiness to become my husband. But as cruel fate would have it, none of them would ever touch my heart - it had to let pass the finest knights of my own world and go out to a stranger - to the enemy.⁸⁴

But it is futile to look for realism in Gogol's portrayal of love. Far from attempting to rationalize this strange

mutual attraction, Gogol revels in it, constantly stressing the unusualness, the strangeness of their love. As Valerij Briusov has shown, Gogol was not interested in the ordinary - he either sublimated or debased emotions to the extreme.⁸⁵ Love in Taras Bul'ba is treated as a tragic act of fate, while the lovers are helpless before this tragic all-consuming flame. The experience Gogol portrayed was to be completely unique:

Filled with feelings which cannot be experienced on earth, Andrij kissed these fragrant lips which pressed against his cheek, and the fragrant lips were not without response. They (lips) also shared his feelings and in this spontaneous kiss there was felt that which is given a man to feel but once in his life.⁸⁶

The variants to this passage found in the earlier editions of Taras Bul'ba stress even more forcefully the uniqueness, the exaltedness of Andrij's feelings.

That was felt [by Andrij] which is given but once to a man to feel, and even then perhaps to one man out of a thousand (variant million).⁸⁷

The final version of this excerpt shows how Gogol tried to subdue his hyperbolical description of Andrij's feelings when he kissed the pannočka, but it would be naive to assume,

as MacLean does,⁸⁸ that Gogol believed literally in what he wrote above. If the woman is a semi-goddess, an incarnation of divine beauty, it follows that any physical contact with her must be exceptional.

The Soviet critic Stepanov, sees the Polish lady as a representative of the repressive Polish aristocracy locked in a class struggle with the democratic Ukrainian Cossacks.⁸⁹ He accuses Andrij of individualistic adventurism⁹⁰ and blames the beauty for corrupting the morals of a budding fighter against Polish repression. Yet, one cannot find any guile or desire to ensnare the young man on the part of the pannočka. Gogol certainly does not portray her as such; her motives for bringing him into the castle are quite charitable - to save the life of her parents. Gogol points out that the pannočka did not realize the position in which she placed the young man until he was already behind the city walls.

It struck her suddenly that the Cossack was destined for different things. His father, his brothers, his entire country loomed behind him as grim avengers.⁹¹

"You must not love me!" she tells him, "I know your place and your duty: your father, your comrades and your native

land call out to you - and we, we are your enemies."92

Andrij's answer reveals Gogol's conception of love. "And who says the Ukraine is my country? A man's country is something sought by the heart, the thing that is dearest to him.....my country....you are my country!"93

But the world has no room for such a passion which disregards the rules of society. Andrij has not the will-power of Gogol, who can prevent himself from falling in love, from looking "into the abyss."94 Although Andrij is not consumed by his passion, nor does he turn into a pile of ashes, he is killed by his own father while murmuring the name of the Polish pannočka.

The entire situation of lovers in opposing camps, as in Romeo and Juliet is a well-worn literary theme. In Gogol's interpretation of this situation, the responsibility for Andrij's death does not fall onto the opposing forces; the author implies that the harsh but just Taras Bul'ba fulfilled his paternal duty when he murdered his son. Gogol sees love not as a pure, all-absolving force, but as a tragic, basically destructive power, which blinds Andrij and leads him away from his duty. In Gogol's treatment of this theme, it is unmistakably the woman who is the cause, albeit unwillingly, of the hero's death and degradation.

The antithesis to the sensitive Andrij can be found in the image of his father, Taras Bul'ba, whose strength lies in his refusal to be subjugated by a woman. Taras' words to his son, "Women will lead you to no good,"⁹⁵ have an oracle-like connotation. Taras has lived by this motto: he abandoned his own wife "after the first heat of passion,"⁹⁶ he lived with her only for short periods preferring the adventures of the steppes to the comforts of home, he never showed tenderness towards his wife - keeping her in constant fear and submission with blows and insults. Taras Bul'ba's strength lies in his refusal to be subjugated by a woman's beauty.

We find the mirror image of this attitude towards women in Danilo Burul'baš⁹⁷ from Strašnaja mest'. Danilo is also the epitome of a true Cossack and he constantly reminds Katerina to know her place, to keep out of his Cossack affairs. When Katerina is frightened by the sounds coming from the Wizard's castle, Danilo shouts, "Shut up, baba [woman]. Whoever becomes embroiled with you will himself become a baba....Would there be much use if we began to listen to our wives? Isn't that right men?"⁹⁸ "Wife!" shouts Danilo as Katerina attempts to interfere in his quarrel with her father, "you know that I do not like this.

Look after your own woman's affairs."⁹⁹ Danilo seals his fate when he gives in to his wife's entreaties to stop fighting and apologizes to the older man. Yet, he immediately realizes that he has not acted in true Cossack fashion; he has allowed himself to be ruled by his wife.

If we analyse the motives for Katerina's constant and fatal interference in the affairs of men, we find that they are all basically good. She appeals to her husband to stop fighting not for her own sake or for her father's but for the child's.

But look at your son, Danilo, look at your son! Who will warm the poor child? Who will caress him? Who will teach him to fly on the black steed, to fight for freedom and our faith, to drink and carouse in Cossack fashion?¹⁰⁰

She frees her father from prison only after he appeals to her to give him one last opportunity to save his soul.

I saved his soul, she said quietly - I performed a good deed. But my husband...¹⁰¹

A. Bem ascribes Katerina's interference on behalf of her father to her subconscious incestuous love for him,¹⁰² basing his assumption on the phrase, "Poor Katerina! she does not know much of what her soul knows."¹⁰³ The above quotation, however, can lend itself to another interpretation.

The sentence clearly refers to the fact that Katerina does not know of all the terrible deeds performed by her father. She does not know, for instance, that he murdered her mother. Had she been aware of this fact, she would not have welcomed him into her own home. Katerina remains faithful to her husband throughout the story; awake, asleep, and even in her madness we can find no traces of any incestual feelings. During her madness she projects her subconscious desires:¹⁰⁴ she says that her child is not dead, just asleep; her husband is not dead, he was buried alive. In her madness she wishes her father's death and perishes herself while attempting to kill him.

Katerina is another of Gogol's images of suffering innocence. Even the name Katerina signifies purity.¹⁰⁵ As St. Katherine of Alexandria died a martyr's death because she refused to accept the advances of the Roman, Maximum,¹⁰⁶ so also perishes Katerina because she refuses to accept the Wizard's love. But pure of heart as she is, it is, nevertheless, her interference which brings about the terrible chain of events predicted in the legend.

In Ermakov's interpretation of Strašnaja mest',¹⁰⁷ the entire story becomes Gogol's confession of his mother fixation. Ermakov interprets the image of the Wizard as

the symbol of Gogol's incestuous desires towards Katerina, his mother, while the terrible punishment, dead men knowing a dead man's bones is analysed as Gogol's masochistic craving for punishment. As shown in the first chapter, the theory of Gogol's Oedipus complex does not stand up when examined in the light of the apparent writer's attitude towards his mother in life. The psycho-analytical approach to Gogol's works tends to deny the tremendous creative powers of his rich imagination - an imagination which magnified everything, which thrived on absolutes. If in Taras Bul'ba Gogol showed absolute love, in Strašnaja mest' we find absolute horror and the image of an absolute villain. The Wizard is totally divorced from orthodox Cossack society: he scorns their food, he fights on the side of the hated Poles, he murders not only his wife, daughter, grandson and son-in-law, but also a holy hermit for good measure. The Wizard is the personification of absolute evil, an Antichrist, while his unnatural love for Katerina is only part of his total perversity.

In Nevskij prospekt Gogol retreats from the image of the pure hearted beauty, victim of men's passions and created an image of corrupt beauty in the service of the Devil.

The underlying theme of Nevskij prospekt is the discord between the ideal and reality. Reality is seen by Gogol as a farce mocking the higher aspirations of man - aspirations which are unattainable on earth. This gulf between the ideal and reality is symbolized in the image of the prostitute, who is actually two women: one being the idealized beauty, existing only in Piskarev's enflamed imagination and the other an ordinary prostitute, with an atrophied sense of morality, who is quite content to pursue her "profession" and who even considers herself to be above honest working women such as seamstresses and washerwomen.

Piskarev, the sensitive artist, the worshipper of beauty cannot reconcile the coexistence of beauty and corruption and retreats into the fantasy world of his dreams. In his first vision of the prostitute he sees her as a lady of society, "a divinity in a crowded ball room"¹⁰⁸ with a throng of admirers at her feet. Everything about her is full of purity and integrity but the dream fades just as she is about to explain her presence in the brothel. Purity and simplicity are stressed in the second vision. This time the setting is a simple country cottage, where she sits by the window wearing a modest dress and a hair

bracelet round her wrist (no doubt a symbol of chastity). "Do not despise me!" the vision cries out to Piskarev, "I am not what you take me for!"¹⁰⁹ In the final vision she appears as his wife and transforms his dingy room into a paradise. When the chivalrous Piskarev decides to rescue the real woman from her life of sin, "to return to the world one of its most beautiful ornaments,"¹¹⁰ his illusions are at last shattered when the beauty utters, "I've just awoken, they brought me home at seven o'clock in the morning, I was completely drunk."¹¹¹ The simple prostitute cannot even comprehend what is it that Piskarev wants from her; she is used to men like Pirogov, men who treat women solely as tools for their sensual pleasure. There can be no disappointment for Pirogov, no disillusionment with that "rather interesting little creature"¹¹² the German blonde, whom he failed to lure, for there are plenty of others who will make him forget that rather unpleasant incident. Pirogov, however, does not possess the sensitive nature of the artist, he is incapable of perceiving the infinite in woman's beauty.

"Oh, how revolting is reality! What is it compared to dreams?"¹¹³ Gogol comes to the conclusion that the ideal woman can only exist in dreams. The beauties who walk the

surface of the earth are not what they seem; they can be tools of the devil, thrown into the world with demonic laughter to "destroy the harmony of life."¹¹⁴ Thus with Nevskij prospekt, Gogol retreated from the Romantic conception of woman as the harmonious embodiment of the divine and the corporal.

Gogol himself could not reconcile ideal beauty with sensuality. The ideal woman was to be worshipped but never touched. From the very beginning Piskarev does not see a living woman in the prostitute. Piskarev is attracted to her beauty not as a man, but as an artist; he admires only the esthetical aspects of her beauty. Gogol constantly stresses the purity of Piskarev's intentions pointing out that the artist's admiration is higher, somehow more noble than the normal physical attraction for the opposite sex.

...he was not enflamed by the flame of
earthly passion, no, in this instance
he was clean and sinfree as a virginal
youth..."¹¹⁵

Just to touch her hand and nothing more!
No other desires, they would all be
bold."¹¹⁶

The Prince from the fragment Rim echoes Piskarev's

purity of intentions, as he resolves to find the magnificent Annunciata "not in order to love her, no - ... Not to kiss her, I want only to look at her."¹¹⁷

This concept of pure love, pure admiration for a woman's beauty can be found in the works of other romantic writers,¹¹⁸ however, rather than ascribing this attitude to any trend in literature we can assume that it reflects Gogol's own predisposition towards sexual abstinence.¹¹⁹

The Governor's daughter in Mertvyje duši is not treated by Gogol as an independent character, but as a fleeting symbol of pure beauty.

The pretty head with the delicate features with the delicate figure disappeared like something resembling a vision and there remained only the road, the carriage and the troika.....¹²⁰

The incident with the collision of the two carriages prompts the author to insert a lyrical digression comparing the sudden appearance and disappearance of the blonde with those rare moments in life when man is granted a glimpse of pure beauty.

The Governor's daughter is at the peak of perfection; at sixteen, she is barely out of some school for girls and as yet unsullied by the ways of the world. Her description,

which would be a cliché were it not for the comparison of her face with a newly laid egg held up to the light between the swarthy fingers of a country housekeeper,¹²¹ accents her virginity, her lack of development as a woman.

Čičikov is not a poet and, therefore, incapable of appreciating this rare vision of pure beauty. It is the dowry which inspires his imagination, it is the dowry which he begins to court. Čičikov, the experienced man of the world projects Gogol's pessimism as far as the woman in the Governor's daughter is concerned. "Not a bad little wench,"¹²² is Čičikov's appraisal of the vision. "Anything could be made of her - she could be a miracle.... she could also become junk, and she will become junk."¹²³ It becomes quickly apparent that any idealization of the Governor's daughter is directed towards the vision of pure beauty and not towards the woman who embodies it. Gogol holds no illusions concerning her future and in a few sentences cynically draws the fate which is in store for her.

In one year they will fill her up with everything womanly (bab'em), that her own father will not recognize her. She will become puffed up, affected, she will begin to memorize instructions, she will begin to break her head trying to think up, with whom, how and how long she must speak, how and at whom to look at. Every minute she will be afraid of not saying more than is necessary. In

the end she will become confused herself
and will finish by lying all her life,
and she will become - the Devil knows
what!¹²⁴

The basically corrupt female nature is then incapable of living up to the high standards of conduct which Gogol exacts from the ideal beauty. In the struggle between the earthly and the divine, there is no hope for the Governor's daughter, her fate is sealed and she is destined to become another Lady Agreeable in All Respects.

Gogol had ample opportunity to use Čičikov's attempt to swindle the Government through his acquisition of the dead souls as the reason for his hero's hasty retreat from the town of N. Čičikov's debacle is, however, precipitated by the women of the town who disregard his manipulations and accuse him instead of attempting to elope with the Governor's daughter. Thus, we are confronted with yet another example of Gogol's recurring theme of the danger which surrounds the beautiful woman.

Although they are eclipsed by the far more interesting and original satirical characters, the images of beautiful women occupy an important position in Gogol's works. Taken as a group, these beauties show an evolution of Gogol's attitude towards feminine beauty; his retreat from the

Romantic cult of womanhood and the gradual emergence of hostility towards the female sex.

Gogol never ceased to idealize the beautiful form of woman, as he never ceased to be moved by beauty in whatever form it presented itself, but it was exclusively the outer form which was sung by the writer and never the inner nature of woman. If the "divinities", Alkinoe and Annunciata were admired by Gogol it was because they lacked all inner life and were cleansed of all sensuality, while remaining the embodiments of the beautiful form of woman.

In Večera na xutore bliz Dikan'ki and in Taras Bul'ba Gogol could not as yet reconcile the coexistence of beauty and corruption, although the association of the beautiful woman with doom can be traced from the earliest of his works. In the works cited above it was the passion evoked by feminine beauty which was the destructive, all-consuming force and only in Vij, part of the Mirgorod collection do we find the fusion of the image of the evil temptress with that of the beauty. In Nevskij prospekt and in Mertvye duši Gogol relegates the ideal beauty to the realm of dreams and visions which can never be realized on earth. The words from Nevskij prospekt, "It would be better, beauty, if you did not exist in this world but were the creation of an

inspired artist"¹²⁵ are in essence the crystallization of Gogol's attitude towards the beautiful woman. Piskarev has taken the prostitute for the woman of his dreams while in reality she is nothing but another of the Devil's clever disguises.

Part III

Pul'xerija Ivanovna

Although Pul'xerija Ivanovna, the heroine of Starosvetskie pomeščiki is an old woman, having none of the physical attributes of Gogol's beauties, she can, nevertheless, be analysed in context with the beauties by virtue of her name. The name Pul'xerija is derived from the Latin word for beauty - pulcher.¹²⁶ Taking into account the symbolic value of names in Gogol's works, one cannot agree with the critic Poggioli who writes: "The names of the old-fashioned landowners are, however, so vulgar and coarse as to suggest not merely the plain and the ordinary, but rather the bizarre and the grotesque."¹²⁷ Pul'xerija is perhaps a bizarre name, especially for an old Ukrainian woman, yet the failure to recognize its symbolic value can lead to the misinterpretation of the underlying theme of the story.

According to Driessen, Pul'xerija Ivanovna occupies a unique place in Gogol's works because she is the only woman who is completely lovable and with whom the concept of passion cannot be connected.¹²⁸ The image of the beauty in Gogol's works is always connected with passion but then

this association is buried in the detailed descriptions of the old couple's bucolic way of life. The author informs the reader at the very outset of the story that there was a time, long ago, when Pul'xerija Ivanovna was very beautiful and that Afanasij Ivanovič, then a dashing but poor army officer, had been so passionately in love with her that he eloped with her against her parents' wishes. The author adds, as if in passing, that all these "unusual" events took place so long ago that they have long been forgotten, or at least are never talked about by the old pair.

Many critics, among them Čiževskij, Driessen, Belinskij, consider that in Starosvetskie pomeščiki Gogol portrayed the triumph of habit over passionate love. Čiževskij interprets the story as an ideological idyll in which Gogol stresses the positive personal features of the old world landowners - their gentleness, cordiality towards friends, their hospitality - and above all, their love which is faithful until death. "In the story the calm and unobtrusive love is contrasted with romantic love this being passionate..... and fickle."¹²⁹ According to Driessen, Gogol underscores the theme that time heals all wounds, that habit triumphs over passion by the insertion of the anecdote about the

young man who having lost his beloved attempts to take his own life several times only to marry a pretty young woman a year later. "What grief is not dulled by time? What passion will survive the unequal battle with time?"¹³⁰ Because Gogol tended to depict passion as the "product of the evil spirit which moves the world,"¹³¹ we cannot conclude that Gogol therefore idealized habit or the passionless relationship of the old couple. Some critics such as Piskanov¹³² have been completely taken in by Gogol's imitation (or is it parody) of Karamzin's sentimental style.

Poor old woman! ... she thought only of
her companion with whom she had spent her
life and whom she left orphaned and
homeless.¹³³

Although in actual fact Afanasij Ivanovič was certainly not homeless after her death.

... tears, like a stream, a continuous
fountain poured, and poured.¹³⁴

If Karamzin used this sentimental style to sing the praises of virtue, friendship and sentimental love, this same style only produces a comical effect when used to depict the senile Afanasij Ivanovič, crying over some particular dish which Pul'xerija Ivanovna liked to prepare.

It is clear that Gogol is describing the simple, food-orientated life of the old pair from a position of superiority.

I sometimes like to descend for a minute [italics mine] into the atmosphere of this unusual solitary life, where not one desire flies over the fence surrounding the little garden.¹³⁵

All this has an indiscernible charm for me, perhaps because it is far away and because anything from which we are separated is pleasing to us.¹³⁶

It must be noted that Gogol, as a young man, intensely disliked the plain and uneventful life in the country and one of his fears during his Nežin days was to remain in the obscurity of his country estate. Even though he missed the country while he lived in St. Petersburg, he could never be persuaded to live there for more than several months at a time.

Characteristically, Gogol hyperbolized the simplicity, the uneventfulness of life in the country by basing the lives of his heroes almost entirely on oral gratification. Both partners are completely absorbed in the process of eating - she in the preparation of food and he in its consumption. Their daily routine consists entirely of various

meals and snacks. The sterility of this seemingly busy life is brought out by Gogol in his description of a conversation, (often repeated) between the old pair.

- What if, Pul'xerija Ivanovna, said he, - our house would burn down, where would we go?
- God forbid! Pul'xerija Ivanovna would say, making the sign of the cross.
- Well supposing that our house burnt down, where we go then?
- God knows what you are saying Afanasij Ivanovič! How could it be that our house would burn down; God would not allow it.
- Well and if it did burn down?
- Well, then we would go live in the kitchen. You would occupy the room of the housekeeper then.

And what if the kitchen burnt down? and so on.¹³⁷

Belinskij, who called the old fashioned landowners "parodies of humanity" stressed, nevertheless, that Gogol showed their humanity through their faithfulness to one another. According to Belinskij, habit was the quality which drew the sympathy of the reader.¹³⁸ And yet it is the habit-love of the old fashioned landowners which actually dehumanizes them, makes them into automated puppets rather

than human beings.

Habit is not exclusively a human trait. In a strange reversal of positions Gogol endows Pul'xerija Ivanovna's little gray cat with higher human ideals than those of her masters for the cat chooses to live by the romantic rule that "poverty with love is better than palaces."¹³⁹

Pul'xerija Ivanovna cannot understand the ingratitude of her cat who can trade a life of plenty with her mistress for one of privation. An analogy can be drawn here between the cat and the young Pul'xerija Ivanovna who ran away from her rich parents to marry the poor Afanasij Ivanovič. But all that took place so long ago that the old woman has forgotten the power of passion. The brief moment of youth, beauty, passion seems but an instant when compared to the vast, seemingly infinite time span of passionless routine existence.

At the time when Gogol introduces us to his heroine she is no longer an individual but rather one of the component parts of a whole way of life. The married couple is even described as if they were one entity.

The light wrinkles on their faces were distributed so agreeably that an artist would surely have stolen them.¹⁴⁰

The author does not even allot separate paragraphs for the descriptions of his heroes but rather jumps back and forth from one to the other as if he were describing one being. Even in the descriptions of their separate activities the feeling is conveyed that it is all part of the same routine. This comfortable routine of life is what is missed by the old man when his wife dies. At the time of her death he remains strangely feelingless and it is only when he returns to the house to find the chair in which Pul'xerija Ivanovna used to sit empty that he bursts into a torrent of tears. He mourns the loss of his wife not as an individual but rather he is sorry for himself, for the disruption in the routine which has grown comfortable.

Therefore, if Gogol showed the fickleness of passionate love in the anecdote about the young man and his attempted suicides one must not be taken in by the false sentimentalization of the faithful, though sterile relationship of the old fashioned landowners. In a letter to his school friend Danilevskij Gogol compared married love to the poetry of Puškin and to a "whole sea of pleasures, of which more and more are discovered every day... It is like an artist in love with the creation of a great master, from which he can no longer tear away his gaze and finds in it every day new and charming features and features of enormous genius,

wondering at himself for not having noticed them previously."¹⁴¹
 This is certainly not the image of married love as portrayed in Starosvetskie pomeščiki, where the theme is the death of passionate love not through some tragic act of fate or from an overabundance of passion but from habit.

Hugh MacLean considers Starosvetskie pomeščiki a pivotal point in Gogol's treatment of the love theme, "where the crucial transition takes place between the early Gogol who loves or rather tries to love" (hence the attempts to portray the ideal beauty) "and the mature Gogol for whom the world is an absurd and dreary place manipulated by the devil."¹⁴² In Starosvetskie pomeščiki we find the condemnation of both passionate love and habit love. The "quiet sea of pleasures" turn out to be purely gastrominic.

Even though Gogol draws the portrait of Pul'xerija Ivanovna with certain sympathy he is by no means idealizing her, for the writer only seemed capable of placing women on pedestals when they were endowed with that "supreme gift of the gods,"¹⁴³ beauty. Time, all-ravaging time has turned Pul'xerija Ivanovna into a pleasant but rather limited old woman for whom the name Pul'xerija is certainly not suited, but serves only as a reminder of that which is so fleeting in human existence.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 The pannočka from Vij will be discussed in Chapter III.
- 2 Gogol, Soč., II, 63.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid., 64-65.
- 5 Vasily Gippius, Gogol (1924; rpt. Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1971), 41.
- 6 Gogol, Ss., III, 194.
- 7 Gogol, Soč., 64.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Charlotte M. Yonge, History of Christian Names (London: Parker, Son and Bourn, 1863), 197.
- 10 N.V. Gogol, Povesti/Perepiska s druž'jami (Berlin: Izd. I.P. Ladyžnikova, 1922), 262.
- 11 M.G. Davidovič, "Ženkij portret u russkix romantikov pervoj poloviny XIX veka", in Russkij romantizm, ed., A.I. Beleckij (Leningrad: "Academia," 1927). The main principals of the romantic style of portraiture are taken from the above work and applied to the portraits of Gogol's beauties.
- 12 Gogol, Ss., III, 195.
- 13 Ibid., 194.
- 14 Gogol, Ss., II, 87.
- 15 Davidovič, 89-90.
- 16 Gogol, Ss., I, 46.
- 17 Gogol, Ss., III, 225.

- 18 Ibid., 23.
- 19 Gogol, Ss., III, 225.
- 20 Gogol, Ss., I, 17.
- 21 Gogol, Ss., III, 226.
- 22 Gogol, Ss., II, 47.
- 23 Gogol, Ss., I, 82.
- 24 Gogol, Ss., V, 176.
- 25 Gogol, Ss., III, 23.
- 26 Gogol, Ss., II, 47.
- 27 Gogol, Ss., III, 16.
- 28 Ibid., 195.
- 29 Gogol, Ss., II, 175.
- 30 Gogol, Ss., I, 111.
- 31 Gogol, Soč., I, 65.
- 32 Gogol, Ss., II, 47.
- 33 Ibid., 175.
- 34 Gogol, Soč., I, 64.
- 35 Gogol, Ss., I, 82.
- 36 Gogol, Ss., V, 176.
- 37 Gogol, Ss., III, 16.
- 38 Gogol, Ss., II, 47.
- 39 Gogol, Ss., III, 52.
- 40 Ibid., 194.

- 41 Ibid., 16.
- 42 Gogol, Ss., I, 46.
- 43 Gogol, Ss., III, 194.
- 44 Gogol, Ss., I, 46.
- 45 Ibid., 150.
- 46 Gogol, Ss., II, 87.
- 47 Gogol, Ss., III, 23.
- 48 U. Ejxenval'd, "Gogol" in Silueti russkix pisatelej, III (Moscow: Mir, 1917), 104.
- 49 Gogol, Ss., VI, 234.
- 50 Gogol, Ss., I, 112.
- 51 Ibid., 147.
- 52 Ibid., 14.
- 53 "And her eyes were suddenly filled with tears; quickly she seized the scarf embroidered in silk, threw it over her face and in a minute it became all damp; and she sat for a long time with her head thrown back ... and not taking the scarf from her face so that he could not see her shattering grief." Gogol, Ss., II, 90.
- 54 V.I. Šenrok, Materialy, II, 86.
- 55 V. Setchkarev, Gogol: His Life and Work, trans. by R. Kramer (New York University Press, 1965), 103.
- 56 Gogol, Ss., I, 48.
- 57 Ibid., 46.
- 58 Gogol, Soč., I, 65.
- 59 V.F. Pereverzev, Tvorčestvo Gogolja (Moscow: Sovremennye problemy, 1917), 175.

- 60 Ejxenval'd, Txorževskij, Xrapčenko, Stepanov.
- 61 Gogol, Ss., VII, 267.
- 62 A. Belyj, Masterstvo Gogolja (1934; rpt. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1962), 215-216.
- 63 Gippius, 38.
- 64 A. Belyj refuses even to accept the existence of humour in the Večera collection.
- 65 Gogol, Ss., III, 42.
- 66 Gogol, Soč., I, 62.
- 67 The image of being consumed by love is a recurring theme in Gogol's works. Mikita in Vij also turns into a pile of ashes.
- 68 Gogol, Ss., I, 59.
- 69 Ibid., 60.
- 70 Ibid., 111.
- 71 Ibid., 131.
- 72 Setchkarev, 109.
- 73 Cited by N.V. Stepanov, N.V. Gogol': Tvorčeskij put' (Moscow: Gosizdat Xud.Lit., 1959), 70.
- 74 Gogol, Ss., I, 121.
- 75 Ibid., 120.
- 76 Hugh MacLean, "Gogol's Retreat from Love: Towards an Interpretation of Mirgorod," American Contributions to the Fourth International Congress of Slavistics: Moscow, September, 1958 (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1958), 232.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 Gogol, Ss., II, 89.

79 Gogol, Ss., III, 17.

80 L.J. Kent compares Levko's words to similar sentiments expressed by Adamis de Gaul, a hero of the chivalrous literature of the Middle Ages.

L.J. Kent, "The Subconscious and Literature" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1965), 66.

81 N. Kotljarevskij, N.V. Gogol: Očerki iz istorii ruskoj povesti i dramy, 3rd ed. (St. Petersburg, Tipografija M.M. Stasjuleviča, 1911), 200.

82 Gogol, Ss., II, 89-90.

83 Ibid., 91.

84 Ibid.

85 V. Brjusov, Ispepelennyj: K xarakteristike Gogolja, Doklad pročitannyj na toržestvennom zasedanii o-va ljubitelej rossijskoj slovesnosti, 27, aprelja, 1909 g. (Moscow: "Skorpion," 1909), 11.

86 Gogol, Ss., II, 93.

87 N. Tixonravov, "Taras Bul'ba N.V. Gogolja: Glavy Neizoannoj Redakcii," in Russkaja starina, (March, 1887), 718.

88 MacLean writes: "The variants to this passage in Gogol's manuscript provide additional revelations of his distorted attitude toward sexual fulfillment." MacLean contends, basing his ideas on the phrase, "perhaps to one man in a thousand," that Gogol actually believed in the "utter uniqueness and rarity of sexual ecstasy in human beings."

89 N.L. Stepanov, N.V. Gogol: Tvorčeskij put' (Moscow: Gosizdat Xud. Lit., 1959), 202.

90 Ibid., 186.

91 Gogol, Ss., II, 90.

92 Ibid., 92.

93 Ibid.

94 Ed. Carl R. Proffer, Letters of Nikolai Gogol, trans. by C.R. Proffer and Vera Krivoshein (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press, 1967), 42.

95 Gogol, Ss., II, 80.

96 Ibid., 40.

97 In the first draft of Strašnaja mest' the surname of Danilo was Bul'baška which has the same root as Bul'ba. This fact points to the similarity in the concept of these two Cossacks.

98 Gogol, Ss., II, 154.

99 Ibid., 158.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid., 170.

102 A. Bem, Dramatizacija bređa: O Dostoevskom (1928; rpt., Ann Arbor: University Microfilms Inc., N.D.), 112.

103 Gogol, Ss., II, 166.

104 I.D. Ermakov, Očerki po analizu tvorčestva Gogolja (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1924), 94.

105 Yonge, 268.

106 Ibid.

107 Ermakov, 79-98.

108 Gogol, Ss., III, 20.

109 Ibid., 27.

110 Ibid., 17.

111 Ibid., 29.

- 112 Ibid., 31.
- 113 Ibid., 25.
- 114 Ibid., 20.
- 115 Ibid., 17.
- 116 Ibid., 23.
- 117 Gogol, Ss., III, 227.
- 118 Werther, for instance, in The Sorrows of Young Werther expresses sentiments similar to those of the Prince and Piskarev. "She is sacred to me. All lust is stilled in her presence. It is as if every nerve in my body were possessed by my soul." J.W. Goethe, The Sorrows of Young Werther, trans. by C. Hutter (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1962), 51.
- 119 Above, p. 9.
- 120 Gogol, Ss., V, 95.
- 121 Ibid., 93-94.
- 122 Ibid., 96.
- 123 Ibid.
- 124 Ibid.
- 125 Gogol, Ss., III, 27.
- 126 N.A. Petrovskij, Slovar' russkix ličnyx imen (Moscow: Izd. "Sovetskaja Enciklopedija," 1966), 185.
- 127 Renato Poggioli, "Gogol's Old Fashioned Landowners: An Inverted Eclogue," in Indiana Slavic Studies, III (1963), 57.
- 128 F.C. Driessen, Gogol as a Short Story Writer, trans. by Ian F. Findlay (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965), 128.
- 129 D. Čiževskij, "Neizvestnyj Gogol," Novyj Žurnal (1951), 134.

- 130 Gogol, Ss., II, 26.
- 131 Ibid., 7.
- 132 N. Piskanov, "Ukrainsie povesti Gogolja," O Klassikax: Sbornik Statej (1933; rpt. Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press, 1963), 124.
- 133 Gogol, Ss., II, 25.
- 134 Ibid., 28.
- 135 Ibid., 7.
- 136 Ibid., 8.
- 137 Ibid., 17.
- 138 V. Belinskij, N.V. Gogol v ruskoj kritike i vospominanijax sovremennikov (Moscow: Gosizdat Det. Lit., 1951), 51.
- 139 Gogol, Ss., II, 23.
- 140 Ibid., 9.
- 141 Carl R. Proffer, Letters of Nikolai Gogol, trans. by Carl R. Proffer and Vera Krivoshein (Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press, 1967), 42.
- 142 MacLean, 226.
- 143 Gogol, Soč., I, 64.

CHAPTER III

WITCHES AND OTHER FANTASTIC WOMEN

Gogol began his literary career at a time when there was a tremendous interest in the national folkloric heritage of Russia. The interest in folklore was stimulated, to a large extent, by the Romantic school of literature. The theory of Romanticism took for granted the interweaving of the fantastic and the real which served not only as literary embellishment but also symbolized the harmony between the past and the present. While Voltaire and the rationalists fought against superstitions, the followers of the romantic school of literature declared, as Goethe did, that superstition was the poetry of life.¹ Thus, in its quest for the fantastic and the supernatural romanticism first turned to the Middle Ages (Goethe studied Maleus Maleficarum, a book about witchcraft and demonology written in the Middle Ages) and then to the analysis of national folkloric heritages.²

While early Russian romanticism was characterized by a lack of true national spirit and by the blatant imitation of European writers, by the middle of the 1820's enough

ethnographic and folkloric material had been gathered to allow writers to draw from this rich source. The interest in folklore (both Russian and Ukrainian) was accompanied by the publication of various collections of national folkloric material such as Kirš Danilov's Ancient Russian Poems or Maximovič's collections of Ukrainian songs. Gogol himself also gathered folkloric and ethnographic information which included fairy tales, folksongs, descriptions of national customs and dress etc. While writing Večera na xutore, Gogol's letters to his mother and relatives in the Ukraine are full of requests for information about the Ukraine's cultural heritage.

We have superstitions in some of our villages, all sorts of stories told by common people about spirits and unholy creatures. Please do me a favour and transmit one of them to me.³

The various folkloric themes, the influence of fairy tales on Gogol's works has been thoroughly studied by Čaplenko, Neverova and others.⁴ Topics such as the Devil wandering around the world looking for his lost possessions, the search for the flower of the bracken, treasure turning to dust, witches riding on men's backs etc., all originate in folk literature.⁵ The influence of non-Russian writers

on Gogol's fantastic stories such as Tieck, Hoffman, Washington Irving has also been thoroughly analysed by critics.⁶ As shown by Vasilii Gippius, we can find numerous instances of material borrowed directly from folkloric sources or from the works of European writers, but what is interesting in Gogol's treatment of the fantastic and the supernatural is the particular slant and the personal interpretation which Gogol gives to the various borrowed motifs.⁷ Gogol's persistent return to the theme of the intrusion of sinister forces into man's life, his heightening of the fairy tale conflict between the Church on one hand and the Devil on the other indicate to Gippius that therein lies the explanation of Gogol's "xvostiki duševnogo sostojanija"⁸ (tell-tale signs of the condition of his soul).

Gogol's works are all coloured by the author's highly personal approach to the Devil. The Devil in Gogol's stories is rarely the mildly irritating creature found in the Ukrainian vertep or folk theatre tradition. Satan and his followers are forces to be reckoned with in Gogol's works. D.S. Merežkovskij, author of Gogol' i čort writes: "In Gogol's religious understanding the devil is a mystical and a real being, who embodies the negation of

God, the eternal evil."⁹ Merežkovskij goes on to characterize Gogol's entire works as his struggle with the Devil.

Gogol saw the Devil at work in the world and he feared him as an active and real force in life. He had nursed a morbid fear of Satan from his early childhood days.¹⁰ In later life, he told his friend Mme. Smirnova that "gossip is made by the devil,"¹¹ he counselled his poet friend Jazykov to write poetry about "the enemy of the human race."¹² Even on his death bed Gogol cried out - "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner, bind Satan again."¹³

This fear and belief in the Devil as a very real and active force in life is what makes Gogol's cult of demonism different from the then prevalent fantastic trend in literature. The fantastic in Gogol's works is not an end in itself; the fantastic creations of Gogol's imagination always mirror the inner corruption of life, the pošlust of reality. In Vij, for instance, Gogol claims to have related a Ukrainian folk tale exactly as he heard it.¹⁴ Parallels have in fact been found between Vij and various Ukrainian folk tales and while we can trace many borrowed motifs, what we are really confronted with is the author's highly personalized fantasy world. The fairy tale form

tends to deform reality completely, while in Vij (as in many other stories) the action oscillates between the day world of reality and the fantasy world of the night.¹⁵ In Gogol's fantastic works it is the world of reality which is the sham whereas the true meaning of things is revealed in the world of fantasy. The real essence of the pannočka in Vij becomes apparent only in the fantasy world; in the day world of reality, she only masquerades as a pure beauty.

Most of Gogol's fantastic creatures are often not frightening in themselves; their true horror lies in the fact that they unmask the pošlůst of everyday life. Even in his descriptions of the devils and witches he does not strive to make them seem supernatural but rather draws comparisons which seem to point back to the world of reality. The witches in Propavšaja gramota are painted "like the pannočki at the village fair,"¹⁶ the Devil in Noč'pered Roždestvom is compared to a civil servant or a German while the episode of the Devil courting Soloxa invites Gogol's digression on man's vanity and desire to imitate one another.

... the devil... took her under the arm and began to whisper in her ear that which is usually whispered to all females. Strange

things occur in the world, where everything tries to copy and ape one another.¹⁷

If in the works of Žukovskij, the čertopisec [devil portrayer] as he liked to be called, the fantastic is only picturesque, in Gogol's case he approaches the witches, demons and other fantastic creatures not as a romantic but rather as a "frightened cathoľić seeing in them the conquering procession of opposing forces."¹⁸ Gogol's Devil not only lights the street lamp on Nevskij prospekt whose light hides and distorts reality, he also infiltrates every corner of the world, leaving nothing sacred.

In Nevskij prospekt, as in many other works, Gogol repeatedly warns against the acceptance of the illusion of reality at its face value; while in his approach to women we can find the recurring allusion to the fact that all women are somehow witches, and not what they seem to be. Prpriščin's cry, "Woman is in love with the devil.... and she will marry him. She surely will,"¹⁹ cannot be dismissed as purely the ravings of a mad man.

When Kovalev looses his nose, who is to blame but the widow, Mme. Podtočina, whom the major accuses of having cast a spell on him in revenge for his procrastination in marrying her daughter. In Noč'pered Roždestvom, for instance,

the zasedatel' [assessor] will not let one witch slip by him because he knows exactly how many piglets are born to each sow belonging to each baba in the marketplace. In Vij the comical dialogue between Xoma's two drunken friends is but another variation of this recurring theme. In giving advice on how to disarm a witch, one drunk tells another that one must only spit on her tail. "I know all this already;" he continues, "All women who sit in the marketplace are witches."²⁰ Gogol purposely blurs the line separating reality and fantasy until the reader accepts both reality and fantasy as one, and can therefore accept the Devil and his followers as active citizens of the world.

The image of the evil witch, as reflected in fairy tales, dates back to prehistoric times, having its roots in the superstitions and fears of primitive peoples. Witches, fairies and other fantastic creatures, symbolizing the forces of good and evil, are an integral part of all fairy tales, while the legendary Baba Yaga is the image of the witch most often found in Russian fairy tales. She is depicted as an ugly old woman with a very long hook nose who lives in a hut which stands on chicken legs in the depths of the forest. This image occurs but once in Gogol's works, in Noč nakanune Ivana Kupala where the witch has all the traditional attributes of the Baba Yaga.

...an aold woman with a face as wrinkled
as a baked apple, all bent into an arc;
the nose and chin like tongs used to
crack nuts.²¹

The other witches, as the witches' coven in Propavšaja gramota seem to belong to the world of reality rather than to the realm of fantasy. Most of Gogol's witches have a dual role: they pose as ordinary women hiding their diabolical natures (the pannočka in Vij, Soloxa in Noč'pered Roždestvom, the stepmother in Majskaja noč'). Other characters such as Xivrja, for instance, can also be categorized as witches although the author only alludes to their sinister role in life. At first Xivrja seems to be another example of the typical shrewish wife found in the Ukrainian vertep tradition: she rules her husband with an iron fist while she herself is unfaithful to him.

A. Belyj has shown two colour motifs running through Soročinskaja Jarmarka - red being the colour of the Devil and his lost shirt while white is the symbol of the positive characters such as the young man who wears a white shirt.²² Xivrja definitely belongs to the Devil's camp. In her description Gogol uses the colour red several times. She is wearing a green jacket onto which are sewn "only red

little tails,"²³ her face is also red and "so unpleasing and so wild that everyone hurries to turn their alarmed gaze on to the gay face of the daughter."²⁴

Xivrja's negative characteristics, her shrewishness, her wantonness, the fact that she is an evil stepmother who stands in the way of the young people's wedding are further accentuated by constant allusions that Xivrja possesses witchlike characteristics. For example: "the devil is sitting in front,"²⁵ says Gricko referring to Xivrja. "... and her tongue, that hundred-year-old witch, will it not ache to say these words?"²⁶ "These are the jokes of the hundred-year-old witch who we insulted on the bridge with the boys."²⁷ "Eh, if I were the czar or some important gentleman I would hang all fools who allow themselves to be saddled by women."²⁸ "The devil sits in the old woman."²⁹

While Xivrja is not outrightly called a witch by Gogol there is no doubt in the readers' mind that she is helping the Devil sow confusion in the world.

Soloxa, from Noč'pered Roždestvom, is actually the development of the aging village coquette such as Xivrja, except in this case, Gogol goes beyond allusions and makes his heroine a real witch who flies around the skies stealing stars and carrying on an affair with the Devil.

Although she is a witch, there is no mystery about Soloxa, she is just another inhabitant of the village. Rather than attempting to underscore her fantastic characteristics Gogol makes her as realistic a character as possible.

She is described as "not good looking but not bad either,"³⁰ but has the ability to charm the most stable of cossacks. As if in passing, Gogol comments that these same cossacks had little use for beauty anyways. Thus her power over men lies solely in the fact that she satisfies men's lust. She outwits her lovers by making them all think that each is the only one to enjoy her favours.

Outwardly, Soloxa is not perceptibly different from any other woman in the village; she goes to church on feast days wearing her best apparel, but it is in God's house that she uses her evil influence.

And if Soloxa goes to church on a feast day wearing a bright skirt with a cotton apron with a blue overskirt with golden whiskers sewn in the back, and stands right in front of the altar, the deacon will most assuredly begin to cough and would squint his eyes unwillingly in her direction; the headman would stroke his whiskers and would wind his scalplock behind his ear and would say to the man

standing next to him: "Eh, what a great baba, a devil of a baba."31

The confusion which Soloxa causes in church is much more frightening than the fact that she flies around on a broomstick. She is a witch because she is wanton, because she can cause the quarrels between her own son and Čub in an effort to gain complete control of the rich Cossack.

If she were but the Devil's mistress content to steal the stars from the night sky she would only cause minor irritation to the village folk. It is her role as an active disseminator of evil in the village which qualifies her as the Devil's mistress. Gogol portrays Soloxa realistically, to show the Devil at work in the world.

Gogol laughs at the villagers who have missed the point completely: they suspect that Soloxa is a witch but their reasoning is completely nonsensical. An old woman claims that the boy, Kiziko Lupenko, saw that Soloxa had a tail, that only last Thursday she ran across the street as a black cat or that a pig ran into the priest's wife's house, crowed like a cock and ran out wearing father Kondrat's hat. In Gogol's understanding, there is no need to look for witches in fantastic tales about strange and

mysterious happenings when we have only to look around us to see the Devil at work.

The witch in Majskaja noč' is a traditional image of the evil stepmother so often found in fairy tales. The witch has a dual role in life: by day she poses as an ordinary woman, she is even young and beautiful and uses her beauty to charm her husband. "Rosy cheeked and white was the young wife."³² In this brief description we find Gogol's typical epithets for innocence - beauty, white skin. She reveals her diabolical nature at night when she turns into a vicious black cat with steel claws. To this day the black cat is considered to be an evil omen. Gogol, in particular, was afraid of cats which he associated with the Devil.....In her memoirs Smirnova recalls how Gogol recounted the story of how, as a young boy, he had killed a kitten, an act which he could only explain by the inexplicable fear which the cat had instilled in him.³³

The pannočka discovers that her stepmother is a witch only after she cuts off the mysterious cat's paw and finds that on the following morning her stepmother's hand is bandaged. Her father, however, is so charmed by the witch's beauty that he turns his own daughter out of the

house and thereby causes her suicide.

When the stepmother is dragged away into the pond by the water nymphs she again becomes outwardly indiscernible by assuming the same form as the drowned maidens and it is only after careful scrutiny that Levko tells which water nymph is the witch.

Levko began to notice that her body was not so transparent as the others: inside it had something black..... Witch! he cried out...³⁴

Majskaja Noč' contains the first instance of the recurring theme that the Devil can hide behind the mask of beauty. This theme which occurs again in Nevskij prospekt reached its full development in Vij. If the theme of Večera na xutore was the intrusion of evil into the daily lives of ordinary people, in Vij, as in Nevskij prospekt the theme is the penetration of beauty by evil.³⁵

The problem of beauty in Vij can best be understood if we compare the image of the beautiful pannočka with Alkinoe from Ženščina. The pannočka's beauty exerts the same force and power as Alkinoe's, the only difference being that this beauty is not divine but diabolical. The episode of unmasking the witch is of particular significance, for Gogol seems to be tearing down his own idol. The

metamorphosis begins as Xoma beats the witch with a piece of wood. (Probably a reference to the practice of exorcizing the Devil through physical punishment).

She let out wild screams; at first they were angry and menacing, later they became weaker, more pleasing and cleaner and then silently they hardly rang out like delicate silver bells which penetrated the soul; and unwittingly the thought ran through his mind; is it really an old woman.³⁶

When Xoma looks at the fallen witch he sees instead a young and innocent-looking beauty whose eyes shine "like the golden spires of Kiev churches."³⁷ The pannočka lies on the ground with eyes full of tears - a typical attitude of pure romantic beauties.³⁸

The same romantic cliché epithets abound in the description of the dead pannočka as she lies dead in the church. We find the same "harmonious beauty,"³⁹ a lovely forehead "fair as snow"⁴⁰ with brows "dark as night in the midst of sunshine,"⁴¹ eyelashes fall "like arrows,"⁴² the lips are "rubies."⁴³ Yet, when Xoma looks more closely into the face of the dead pannočka, he finds something terribly penetrating in her beauty. The rubies of the lips look like blood surging from the heart, her beauty becomes terrifying. When she rises from her coffin in

search of Xoma her inner viciousness is reflected in her appearance , "She turned livid all over like one who had been dead for several days."⁴⁴ Throughout the various metamorphoses the demonic nature of the pannočka remains unchanged - the beauty is but a mask.

What is of particular importance in the image of the witch in Vij is the gradual change from the old woman into a beautiful young girl. This changeover takes place not only in the story itself, but also in its process of creation. In the first draft to Vij, it only seemed to Xoma that the old witch looked young, when Mirgorod was published in 1835 Xoma noticed young features in the old woman's face and only in 1842, after the author carried out the final revision to the text does the image of the old witch and the young beauty merge into one.⁴⁵

This gradual metamorphosis of the witch in Gogol's creative process illustrates how the theme of beauty as a tool of the Devil grew in importance for the writer and at the same time it represents Gogol's gradual acceptance of the Devil as the true ruler of the world, where even the sacred face of beauty, embodied in the form of woman, is not spared contamination.

In his descriptions of old or ugly women Gogol exhibits an air of emotional detachment which is totally lacking in his approach to the pannočka and the rusalka, or mermaid, in Vij. Gogol is not emotionally involved when describing such characters as Xivrja or Soloxa, he can let loose the full power of his comic verve, he can treat their love scenes in the farcial manner of vertep tradition. Gogol treats Xoma's first encounter with the witch in a comical vein.

- What is it granny, what do you want?
 said the philosopher.
 But the old woman came right at him
 with outstretched arms.
 Eh-e! thought the philosopher. - But
 no, my little dove! You are too old.
 He moved a little further away but
 the old woman unceremoniously came
 up to him again.
 - Listen granny! said the philosopher,
 - we are in a time of fast; and I am
 such a person who would not break
 my fast for a thousand gold pieces.⁴⁶

When the witch becomes young and beautiful, however, she evokes strange fears in Xoma, fears which he cannot understand.

Xoma began to shake like a leaf on a tree: pity and a kind of strange excitement and shyness, unknown to him, overtook him; he began to run as fast as he could. Along

the way his heart beat anxiously and he could not explain to himself what was the strange new feeling which had overtaken him.⁴⁷

Xoma is generally not afraid of women. When he arrives in Kiev after running away from the witch he quickly finds a compliant young widow, while later in the course of the story, we find that he is so persistent in examining the material of a young girl's blouse that he is chased away with a spade. Gogol seems to have purposely chosen a normal virile young man for his hero to show what awesome power is exerted by the witch's beauty. (Xoma is no Špon'ka or Podkolecin). Yet one must agree with Driessen who, in analysing the deviations from the folkloric patterns found in Vij, points to the emotional enrichment of the fairy tale form and analyses Xoma's trepidation and anxiety before the beautiful witch as an expression of Gogol's sexual aversion and tendency to devalue women.⁴⁸

Vij contains a strong undercurrent of eroticism. Eroticism as such is not foreign to the fairy tale form, yet in Vij, apart from the episodes involving Xoma and the village women, it has an unhealthy, even sado-masochistic tinge. The highly emotionally charged episode involving

Xoma Brut and the rusalka is of particular interest since besides representing a deviation from the folkloric parallels to Vij, it shows Gogol's highly personal interpretation of this legendary figure.⁴⁹

In fact, the episode involving the vision of the rusalka has no bearing on the development of the plot, but reveals the author's attitude towards sex. There can be no doubt in the reader's mind after reading the description of the rusalka and the description of the "oppressive" and "sweet" feelings experienced by Xoma during the vision that Gogol was truly frightened by this temptress of his own creation and that he identified sexual desire with sin and doom.

In folk mythology, the rusalki are depicted as the spirits of young girls who had drowned themselves. They are usually clothed in long flowing shifts and have transparent pale skin and often green hair which, as superstition has it, must be kept wet. They are a menace to those who wander in the woods at night for they have the ability to charm people with their songs and then drag them away into the water to be tickled to death. They were said to be of a particular menace during Witsuntide when they would kill cattle or undo a woman's work if she had spun cloth on that

particular day.⁵⁰ Gogol's rusalka is, however, much more eerie than the creations of folk imagination, she becomes the embodiment of demonic sensuality.

He felt an oppressive, unpleasant and at the same time, sweet feeling that swelled up in his heart..... He saw a waternymph swim up out of the reeds; a back, a leg darted by, arched, elastic, made of nothing but luster and trembling. She turned to him - and there in her face with bright sharp flashing eyes, with a song that penetrates the soul, she approaches him, now on the surface and quivering with glittering laughter speeds away, and now she lies on her back, and her breasts like little clouds, like unpolished porcelain translucent in the sun at the edges of their white gently elastic circumference, the water covered them with little beads. All of her trembles, she laughs in the water.⁵¹

One cannot agree with Merežovskij, who sees the translucent form of the rusalka in the same light as spiritualized flesh, the opposite to the Christian concept of bodiless spirituality.⁵² The rusalka is much more than just another pagan statue figure, and while Merežovskij's description can apply to Alkinoe or Annunciata, the rusalka can be better described as flesh possessed by the Devil, which becomes frightening and sensual rather than abstractly beautiful.

... the maiden shone through the water as if through a glass shift; her lips smiled wonderfully, her cheeks aflame, the eyes penetrate the soul... she would be consumed by love, she would kiss one to death...⁵³

The essential difference between this rusalka and the water nymphs in Majskaja noč' whose bodies seem to be "welded from clouds,"⁵⁴ whose skin shines like "glitter of the moon"⁵⁵ is the fact that while the water nymphs are pure and almost bodiless, the image of the rusalka is both sinister and extremely sensual.

There is much of the voyeur in Gogol's descriptions of the feminine body. Ermakov characterizes Gogol's penchant for descriptions of breasts and legs as a distinctly infantile, immature approach to the opposite sex.⁵⁶ Puškin's lyrical digression in Evgenij Onegin about woman's feet⁵⁷ seems wholesome in comparison to the various descriptive passages found in Gogol's works. In Zapiski sumašedšego, for instance, Popriščin's longings for the Department Head's daughter contributes in no small extent to his madness.

To look at the little stool, onto which she places her little foot when she gets out of bed, how she puts on her stocking, white as snow.... ai! ai! ai! nothing, nothing, silence!⁵⁸

One may even go so far as to say that had not Akakij Akakievič stopped to gaze at the poster showing a pretty lady straightening her stocking that he might not have had his overcoat stolen. Whereas in Vij, the pannočka's legs have such a hypnotic effect on the dog boy, Mikita, that he willingly submits to the witch and lets her ride on his back.

Once the pannočka came to the stable where he [Mikita] was cleaning a horse. "Mikita, let me put my foot on you." And he, the fool, was glad of it: he says, "Not only your foot, but sit on me yourself." The pannočka lifted her white foot and as he saw her naked full white leg then they say he became charmed. - He, fool, bent his back and grabbed her naked legs with both hands and began to gallop like a horse around the entire field and where he went he could not say; except that he came back half dead and from then on he dried up completely like a piece of wood; and when they came to the stable instead of him they found only a pile of ashes and an empty bucket: he burnt up completely, burnt up by himself.⁵⁹

The image of being consumed by passion which occurs in several of Gogol's works is of extreme importance since it reflects Gogol's personal attitude towards passion. In a letter to Danilevskij, (who was in love at the time) in which Gogol tells his friend why he himself held himself back from

falling in love, Gogol uses the same imagery.

"I understand very well and sympathize with the state of your soul, although I myself, thanks to fate, have not had the experience. I say thanks because the flame would reduce me to dust in one instant."⁶⁰

Thus, for Gogol, passion is synonymous with destruction.

In works such as Taras Bul'ba, and Noč'nakanune Ivana Kupala, for instance, the image of the woman remains pure, and it is the heroes' passion which represents the destructive element. Whereas in Vij, it is the woman capable of arousing such a destructive passion who is to blame for the heroes' doom. In Vij, woman becomes a sensual predatory being, and it is she in the form of the rusalka who is to blame for the feelings which she arouses in Xoma. If in Žensčina Plato asked the question, "Do you know how to love, Teleklese,"⁶¹ no such question arises in Vij. Passion is no longer the destructive force, but rather woman and her diabolical beauty who arouses desires which according to Gogol are sinful, or, at least, can reduce men to a pile of ashes.

This equation of passion and destruction explains why Gogol cleansed the portraits of his divine beauties, such

as Alkinoe and Annunciata of all sensuality and underscored the fact that the admiration they aroused in men was spiritual rather than sensual. The witches on the other hand, the female embodiments of the Devil, are sensual and actively pursue men, destroying those who fall prey to their charms. If Gogol tried, unsuccessfully, to create the image of an absolute, though actually sexless woman, it was because he had always striven towards the divine and the godly, while his main preoccupation in life had really been with the Devil whom he continually makes the true hero of his stories. Amfiteatrov-Kadašev explains Gogol's constant preoccupation with the Devil as the result of the author's lack of faith in the power of love: there is no caritas in Gogol's works,⁶² no sympathy for woman, but only a detached admiration for the beauty of form, or passion. These two extremes in the author's approach to his female characters explain why there is no real living woman in Gogol's works and why we find heroines who are in essence statues of absolute beauty or the embodiments of demonic sensuality.

FOOTNOTES

¹ S. Šambinago, "Gogol i Goja," Trilogija romantiizma (Moscow: "Pol'za," 1911), 9.

² Ibid., 10, Note.

³ Gogol, Ss., VI, 283.

⁴ V. Čaplenko, "Fol'klor v tvorčestve Gogolja;" Literaturnaja Učeba, No. 1 (1936).

K. Neverova "Motivy ukrainskoj demonologii v Večeraxta Mirgorodi", Zapiski Naukovogo Tov. v Kiivi, V, 1909.

⁵ V. Gippius, Gogol (1967; rpt. Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1971), 35.

⁶ Charles G. Passage, The Russian Hoffmanists (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1963).

⁷ Gippius, 35.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ D.S. Merežkovskij, Gogol i Čort (Moscow: "Scorpion," 1906), 1.

¹⁰ Above, p. 3.

¹¹ Amfiteatrov-Kadašev, "Gogol", Očerki isstorii russkoj literatury (Prague: Slavjanskoe izdatel'stvo, 1922), 86.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 87.

¹⁴ In the author's footnote to Vij, Gogol wrote: "Vij is the colossal creation of the folk imagination... The entire story is a folk legend. I did not want to change it in any way and I am telling it in almost the same simple form as I heard it." Gogol, Ss., II, 154.

15 F.C. Driessen, Gogol as a Short Story Writer, trans. by Ian F. Findlay (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965), 140.

16 Gogol, Ss., I, 95.

17 Ibid., 108.

18 Šambinago, 20.

19 Gogol, Ss., III, 187.

20 Gogol, Ss., II, 194.

21 Gogol, Ss., I, 50.

22 A. Belyj, Masterstvo Gogolja (1934; rpt. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1962), 145.

23 Gogol, Ss., I, 16.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 17.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., 25.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 38.

30 Ibid., 115.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., 62.

33 A.O. Smirnova-Rosset, Avtobiografija (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1931), 309-310.

34 Gogol, Ss., I, 83.

35 Gippius, 49.

36 Gogol, Ss., II, 164.

37 Ibid.

38 M.G. Davidovič, "Ženski portret u russkix romantikov prvoj poloviny XIX veka," in Russkij romantizm ed. A.I. Beleckij, (Leningrad: "Academia," 1927), 92-93.

39 Gogol, Ss., I, 175.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., 184.

45 Gippius, 49-50.

46 Gogol, Ss., II, 162.

47 Ibid., 64-65.

48 Driessen, 161.

49 Ibid., 155.

50 W.R.S. Ralston, The Songs of the Russian People: As Illustrative of the Slavonic Mythology and Slavic Social Life (London: Ellis & Green, 1872), 140-41.

51 Gogol, Ss., II, 163.

52 Merežkovskij, 91.

53 Gogol, Ss., II, 165.

54 Gogol, I, 8.

55 Ibid.

56 D.I. Ermakov, Očerki po analizu tvorčestva Gogolja (Moscow-Petrograd: Gosizdat, 1924), 57.

57 Ax, nožki, nožki! gde vy nyne?
Gde mnete vešnie cvety? etc.

A.S. Puškin, Sobranie sočinenij, IV (Moscow: Gos. Izdat. Xud. Lit., 1960), 23-24.

58 Gogol, Ss., III, 179.

59 Gogol, Ss., II, 179.

60 Carl R. Proffer, ed., Letters of Nikolai Gogol, trans. by Carl R. Proffer and Vera Krivoshein (Ann Arbour: U. of Michigan Press, 1967), 44.

61 Gogol, Soč, I, 64.

62 Amfiteatrov-Kadašev, 92.

CHAPTER IV
THE CONTEMPORARY WOMAN

According to Avtorskaja Ispoved', Gogol divided his works into two distinct periods with Revizor at the center. Gogol considered that works written before Revizor were immature, created during youth, "a time when no questions come to mind."¹ The author dismissed the humour of his early works such as Večera na Xutore as his own personal need "to amuse himself with guileless, carefree scenes."² It must be noted, however, that at the time Gogol wrote Večera, he considered that his goal in life was not in literature but in the faithful service to the State. Having become quickly disenchanted with the life of a minor beaurocrat, Gogol planned to leave his mark in the world by becoming a historian and writing a colossal history of the Western world, a plan which was never fulfilled. In 1835, he lost the position of professor of Medieval history at the University of St. Petersburg and found a ready substitute for the professor's podium in the theatre; the theatre then became "the pulpit from which to preach a living lesson to the entire world."³ Only with the creation of Revizor, in 1836, did Gogol begin to connect the concept of his

personal mission in life with his literary career. Only after Revizor did Gogol begin to envisage his mission not in the service to the State or in anything else but in the role of comic writer who could exert a beneficial influence on society.

The change of Gogol's style and choice of subject material in Revizor and in works written after Revizor can be attributed to his reappraisal of his literary career. In the post-Revizor period Gogol retreats from historical, legendary and fantastic themes and deals instead with contemporary Russian society.⁴

Gogol firmly believed in the thesis that virtue could be taught. He was of the opinion that if a wrongdoer's sins were pointed out to him the sinner would repent, since man sins not out of depravity but out of ignorance.⁵

No Man is not unfeeling, Man will become purified only if he is shown things as they are.⁶

Laughter, but not the carefree laughter of Večera became the tool by which Gogol set out to reform Man. Laughter, as Gogol wrote in Teatral'nyj Raz'ezd, was the positive hero of Revizor.⁷ Gogol further defined this particular kind of laughter as laughter "which arises from the bright side of human nature, which deepens the subject, makes that seem bright which would otherwise slip away,

without whose piercing force the smallness and the emptiness of life would not frighten man to such an extent."⁸ This type of laughter was to bring about the desired moral effect - reform Man.

To make sure that the negative aspects of reality would not slip away, Gogol seemed to be looking at Man, and not at all of Man, but only at his negative characteristics through a kind of "magnifying glass."⁹ Thus Gogol's characters cannot be considered as realistic portraits, but rather as hyperbolical exaggerations of certain aspects of Man which Gogol strove to expose, or as Vasiliij Gippius wrote: "they are artistic caricatures which strengthen living types as transformed in the author's personal consciousness."¹⁰

Many of Gogol's contemporaries failed to understand the writer's messianic role and criticized Revizor as a vulgar farce as well as for the absence of the traditional love intrigue and positive characters.¹¹ Defending his position in Teatral'nyj Raz'ezd Gogol wrote: "Everything has long changed in the world. ... Have not rank, capital, advantageous marriage now more electricity in them than love?... How empty these theatre lovers with their cardboard love."¹²

Instead of the traditional love interest, in Revizor, Gogol presents a parody of the theatre love intrigue where two declarations of love, to two different women (mother and daughter), two marriage proposals, and an engagement all take place in the bounds of one half act. The mayor's wife, Anna Andreevna, comes upon Xlestakov on his knees before her daughter Marija Antonovna. She promptly scolds the daughter and sends her out of the room only to have the young man drop to his knees before her and ask for her hand in marriage. When the mayor's wife protests that she is so to speak already married, he spouts clichés about "love being indiscriminant." In turn, the daughter discovers Xlestakov on his knees before her mother and she is again scolded for not having proper manners and for entering the room without knocking.

Anna Andreevna - You always have wind in your head: you take an example from the daughter of Ljapkin-Tjapkin. Why must you follow their example. You must not follow their example. You have other examples before you - your mother is before you. This is the kind of example you must follow.¹³

Undaunted by the ridiculous situation, Xlestakov begs

the astounded Anna Andreevna for her daughter's hand in marriage, asking her to bless his constant love.

In portraying the relationship of mother and daughter, Gogol has stressed a strong current of rivalry between them. (There is even no parental love in the play). The mother, in particular, treats her daughter as a rival and is constantly vying with her for the attentionsoof the important guest.

Anna Andreevna - Why should he look at you? And for what reason should he look at you?

Marija Antonovna - Truly, mother, he kept looking. And when he began to talk about literature, he glanced at me, and later when he was telling us about how he played whist with the Ambassador and then also he looked at me.

Anna Andreevna - Well, maybe, he looked at you once and then only just. "Ah," he said to himself - "I might as well look at her."¹⁴

Even after Xlestakov's engagement to Marija Antonovna, the mother informs friends that the young man had proposed to her daughter only out of respect for her own fine breeding and excellent qualities.

There is not an ounce of motherly feelings in Anna Andreevna and in this she resembles the wanton witch,

Soloxa, from Noč'pered Roždestvom who also places her desire to ensnare men above the natural maternal feelings.

The only time the mother and daughter are not arguing and bickering is when they are both engaged in gossiping or discussing men.

Anna Andreevna - Let's go, Mašen'ka! I'll tell you what I noticed about the guest, about which I can only tell you when we are alone.¹⁵

As all the other characters in the play, Anna Andreevna believes only that which she wishes to believe and lives in a world of her own illusions, considering herself to be a ravishing beauty and a lady of high refinement who has been forced to waste her life in the country. She does not look upon Xlestakov's impending marriage from the point of view of securing her daughter's happiness, but rather as a means to achieve her own ambitions; to move to the capital and to have the first house in St. Petersburg.

Despite the fact that Gogol exaggerated the woman's stupidity to the point of the absurd, he nevertheless succeeded in catching the genuine ring in the rhythm and tone of the woman's conversations, especially in the bickering arguments about clothes and what dresses to

wear on what particular occasion. It is the vibrancy of their language which makes the mother and daughter in Revizor more credible characters than the idealized beauties who almost never speak. Through the one-sided approach to the female characters of the play, Gogol draws attention to the pettiness, lack of meaningful interests and preoccupation with romance of provincial ladies of his time and exposes these faults in all their hilarity.

It must be remembered that during Gogol's times girls were brought up to think that marriage was the ultimate goal in life and their whole education and upbringing was focussed on this particular aspect of their lives. Girls' education was based on French, piano and sewing, or as Gogol wrote in Mertvye Duši, some schools based their programmes on piano, French and sewing while still others on sewing, piano and French. These subjects were considered necessary to prepare young girls for their future roles as wives and mothers. Gogol, however, even though he had taught at university, was not a supporter of academic education for women, and was of the opinion that women's education should be based exclusively on household management and religion.¹⁶

In Revizor Gogol parodied the conventional love intrigue, while in Ženit'ba he attacks the institutionalized ritual of courtship and marriage. Gogol began working on the play in 1833 under the title Ženixi (The Suitors). The development and characters of the early version were quite different from the final version: the action took place at a country fair, the bride and suitors were all landowners or minor provincial officials. The plot, as can be discerned from existing fragments of the first version, revolves around the eagerness of the prospective bride to find a husband and her reluctance in choosing any one particular suitor since she finds them all to her liking. After the final revision of the play in 1835, Gogol changed the setting from the country to the city, introduced Kočkarev and Podkolecin and rewrote the image of the bride. Avdot'ja Gavrilovna, the heroine of Ženixi is a much more vulgar characterization than the coy Agaf'ja Tixonovna of Ženit'ba. Avdot'ja Gavrilovna resembles the shrewish Xivrja and Soloxa from Večera na Xutore who also display an avid interest in men. She is not at least embarrassed by the ritual of the smotriny (old Russian custom whereby groom visits bride's home to get acquainted with the bride and her relatives) and displays far more interest in the suitors than

is considered decent.

Uh! It's frightening when you think: the groom will arrive! My heart begins to beat. ...well never mind, let him come: it won't be frightening.¹⁷

Even the suitors remark that Avdotja Gavrilovna's behaviour is somewhat loose. In Agaf'ja Tixonovna's characterization these traits are considerably softened, although she too displays too much interest in the physical attributes and in the number of suitors.

Agaf'ja Tixonovna - Well and who else? There are only five and you said six.

Fekla (Matchmaker) - Don't tell me that it is still too little for you? Look at her how she gets excited, and just a little while before you were frightened.¹⁸

Agaf'ja Tixonovna's shyness and coyness is but an act, a conventional attitude which must be adopted, but it does not shroud her eagerness to marry.

The heroine's main prerequisite for the groom is that he be a nobleman and not of merchant stock as she herself. Her ideas on marriage are a reflection of the attitudes of the merchant class of which Gogol wrote briefly in Nevskij prospekt.

[Young people]...finally reached the point when they

married merchants' daughters who could play the piano and who had a hundred thousand or some amount close to it in capital and a crowd of bearded relatives. They could not attain this honour, however, until they had worked up to the rank of at least colonel because Russian beards (derogatory term for merchants), in spite of the fact that they still reek of cabbage, in no way wish to give their daughters in marriage to anyone except generals or in the very least to colonels.¹⁹

When confronted with suitors who are all noblemen, Agaf'ja Tixonovna still cannot decide.

It is so difficult to decide that I can't even say how difficult! If the lips of Nikandor Ivanovič were paired with the nose of Ivan Kuzmič and some of the unconstrained way of behaviour of Baltazar Baltazarovič and added to it some of the corpulence of Ivan Pavlovič - I would then make up my mind immediately. While now, try and think! My head has simply begun to ache! I think it would be best to draw lots....I will write them all on a piece of paper, roll them up, and let be what will be. How unhappy the situation of a maiden, especially of one in love!²⁰

The last sentence of the above excerpt shows how ridiculous the term love sounds when there is not object of this love. Clearly, the young woman is not drawn to any one of the suitors in particular, she could marry a fantasy but none of the real men. Love is in fact what is missing in the play, that element which no one takes into consideration. Each suitor is looking for some particular assets in the bride and in each case they miss the point of

marriage completely. Jaičnica is interested in her property - he has a list of items promised in the dowry and is more concerned about the foundations of the house than in the bride. Annučkin wants to know whether Agaf'ja Tixonovna speaks the French language which for him is the most important asset in a wife. Ževakin and Podkolecin are driven by sensual attraction, but not an attraction for the heroine in particular. Podkolecin cannot wait to get married when Kočkarev excites his imagination with erotic images of marital bliss, yet he cools to the idea of marriage when his imagination is not excited. All the protagonists in the play fail to understand that love is free and cannot be artificially induced.²¹ The tragic humour of this situation is that people truly seek to find happiness in this surrogate of love.

When dealing with the subject of marriage we find an often repeated motif in Gogol's works, that is, a reluctant bridegroom and a willing bride.²² In Gogol's appraisal of the courtship-marriage ritual it is the female who takes the initiative directly, or through a female relative or matchmaker. The heroes, on the other hand, in spite of the fact that they are not totally unappreciative of female charms show a marked reluctance and even fear, at the thought of marriage.

If Gogol's divine beauties had a tremendous paralysing effect on the men who admired them, it was because their beauty inspired them with awe and almost religious adoration. These heroines were more abstract than real flesh and blood figures, they belonged to the past, to Ancient Greece, as Alkinoe or to the Middle Ages as the Polish pannočka. The contemporary woman, on the other hand, as personified in the various Mar'ja Gavrilovnas and Agaf'ja Tixonovnas inspires only inexplicable fear and a fascetious disdain in the reluctant bridegrooms. When Špon'ka's aunt informs him that it is time he were married he replies: "...I've never been married... I don't know what to do with a wife."²³ In the final scene of the play, when Podkolecin begins to reflect upon the marital bliss that awaits him he suddenly realizes that he is frightened and so great is his fear that he jumps out of the window a few minutes before the marriage ceremony. Even Kovalev, the dandy and womaniser is nothing but a sham who basically has a disdain for women seeking their admiration only to boost his own ego.

... and taking out his snuffbox he deliberately kept stuffing his nose with snuff at both entrances for a great while, saying to himself: "there, I'm putting on a show especially for you, stupid females! And I won't marry your

daughter all the same. Flirt with her -
by all means, but nothing more.²⁴

In each case the heroes are portrayed as decidedly non-aggressive even effeminate men. Podkolecin has no initiative and must be taught and prodded like a child by the energetic Kočkarev. The loss of Kovalev's nose can be interpreted as an emasculating phenomenon which is how Kovalev feels about the situation. Having lost his nose, Kovalev thinks that he can no longer appeal to women.

... Podtočina, Pelageja Grigorievna, the staff-officer's wife, and her daughter is very pretty, also, she has very pretty friends, and consider it yourself, how can I now.... I cannot visit them anymore.²⁵

In the story of Ivan Ivanovic Špon'ka i ego tetuška it is Vasilisa Kašparovna who is the more masculine of the two and Gogol goes to great lengths to underscore all her masculine characteristics.

...dragoons boots and a mustache would suit her better than the dark brown dress and the red cashmere shawl which she wore on Sundays and on her Feast Day.²⁶

The author also enumerates such virtues as her ability

to row a boat and to subdue the drunken miller, while in contrast, Špon'ka's activities seem to be divided between polishing buttons and reading a book on the meaning of dreams.

In his own meek way Špon'ka finds the prospective bride quite attractive and even admires the little freckles which cover her face, yet just as Podkolecin, he finds it incredibly difficult to engage in the simplest form of conversation. Špon'ka's conversation with Mar'ja Gavrilovna as well as Podkolecin's tête-à-tête with Agaf'ja Tixonovna create the impression that men and women belong to two different races making communication incredibly difficult. Špon'ka waits fifteen minutes before uttering a single sentence which is:

"There are many flies during the summer."²⁷

During the entire conversation Špon'ka acts out the female role - he is very nervous, blushes and lowers his eyes, while it seems that the prospective bride "did not notice this at all and sat calmly on the couch studiously looking at the windows and walls and following the cat with her eyes who was running under the chairs in a cowardly manner."²⁸

The extent of Špon'ka's anxiety is underscored in his fantastic dream which is interpreted by freudian literary critics as Gogol's confession of his own impotence complex. Driessen explains the reluctant bridegroom phenomenon in Gogol's works as the author's "playing with his own anxieties."²⁹ The fear of marriage of Gogol's heroes does, however, lend itself to another interpretation. The heroes' reluctance to wed can also be explained as the reflection of Gogol's personal aversion to the shop atmosphere surrounding marriage, where just as in Špon'ka's dream, the image of the wife is associated with goods to be measured, bought and sold over the counter. Špon'ka's horror, comical as it may be, is nevertheless well founded for it serves as a condemnation of the then accepted practice of arranging marriages for social or economic considerations. Love does not exist in the world created by Gogol: Špon'ka, Kovalev, Podkolecin seem never to have heard of love, and the vague sensual attraction for the opposite sex cannot be described as love. It is not without significance that in the story of Špon'ka, the prospective bride, Mar'ja Gavrilovna, remains almost faceless: we learn only that she had small freckles on her face and that her eyebrows were exactly like those of

Vasilisa Kašparovna, while the real bride, a certain piece of land coveted by the aunt, is given a much fuller description.

...beyond the wood there is a wide meadow which is twenty desjatins [measure of area - 2 3/4 acres] and has so much grass which can be sold every year for more than one hundred rubles, especially, as they say there will be a cavalry regiment stationed in Gadič.³⁰

Gogol's sympathy is clearly with Špon'ka, the meek creature, manipulated by a whole crew of aggressive females. Marriage, which in Podkolecin's words is "for an entire lifetime, be as it is, to tie yourself and then afterwards no excuses, no repentance, nothing, nothing, all is done, all is arranged,"³¹ is an awesome and frightening contract which, according to Gogol, had to be entered into only after much thought and deliberation becoming an obscenity if entered into for the wrong reasons.

Gogol seemed to be against marriage. He had always initially opposed his sisters' marriages, ostensibly because he had not been informed of the proposals until they had been formally accepted and because his sisters and his mother had not sought his counsel. If in his youth he had compared married love to the poetry of Puškin, in his

moralistic stage he had defined the roles of husband and wife as both being "prisoners of existing laws."³² From the following quotation of Gogol's letter to his mother it can be taken that Gogol considered marriage to be a source of evil.

....as I remember how many formerly good people have become thieves and robbers, the oppressors of the downtrodden, only to be able to educate their children.³³

Time and again, in Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druž'jami and in Mervye Duši, as well as in his personal correspondence, Gogol repeats his theory that wives are directly responsible for their husbands' sins. Gogol is far more ready to forgive bribery and corruption committed by men and places the responsibility for these sins squarely onto the shoulders of the wives.

For you know why you take a bride and play the hypocrite: in order to pay for the wife's shawl or robes of some sort, the devil take them, whatever they are called. And why? So that some trollop, Spiridonovna, would not say that the Postmaster's wife had on a better dress, and because of her you throw away one thousand rubles.³⁴

In Gogol's understanding it was the Devil who ruled the world and ruled it through women who in Gogol's works

always have an inexplicable hold over men. It is not only the beautiful Oksana or Pidorka who can subjugate men and make them deal with the Devil, but even the ridiculous ladies of the town of N from Mertvyje duši who are in essence variations to the image of the witch-baba found in Gogol's early works.³⁵ It is understandable then why Gogol's heroes are afraid of women, why they shun marriage. It is because they share Gogol's belief that "Woman is in love with the Devil."³⁶

Nowhere are Gogol's talents for mimicry and irony so well put to use than in the dialogue between the Agreeable Lady and the Lady Agreeable in All Respects from Mertvyje duši. The author chooses the cliché "agreeable" which, in his use of the term, means quite the contrary.

Gogol magnifies to the point of the absurd such negative female traits as the love of gossip, overemphasis of the importance of clothing and the general frivolity and pettiness of interests of which women as so often accused by men. Yet underneath the women's seemingly harmless stupidity, Gogol unmasks the power which the women hold in the town of N, that microcosm of the world.

Throughout the comic disagreement concerning the Governor's daughter, who is a symbol of purity and beauty,

one can discern the vicious savagery of their attacks.

- She is a statue, pale as death. She is chalk, chalk, purest chalk.
- She puts on rouge in a godless manner. Rouge as thick as your finger and it even breaks off in pieces.³⁷

The ladies of the town of N who at the ball, are described as a fighting army competing for the attentions of Čičikov, suddenly project an aura of solidarity when their hero shuns their advances in favour of the "madonna"³⁸ figure. If the witches of Propavšaja gramota only remind the author of painted pannočki at a fair, the ladies of the town of N constitute the real witches coven and are far more dangerous than the fantastic card playing witches in the earlier work. Čičikov seals his own fate when he underestimates the power of the women and shows his preference for the angelic young beauty.

When writing about the past, be it legendary or historical, Gogol sublimated the physical beauty of his heroines, whereas in works dealing with contemporary Russia the portraits of women are also hyperbolized but instead of heavenly beauties we are confronted with grotesque parodies of women. Andrej Belyj who divides Gogol's works into three periods writes: "In the second phase the images of

the first phase are doubled; the etherial water nymphs correspond to the etherial ladies; but the etherial quality of the first is serious, while in the second case it is only irony."³⁹ In the descriptions of the ladies of the town of N at the ball Gogol constantly stresses their lightness and weightlessness while creating quite the opposite effect.

The light head-dress was held only on the ears and it seemed as if it were saying, "Ei, I'll fly away only unfortunately I won't lift the beauty with me."⁴⁰

Waists were drawn in and had the tightest and most appealing forms for the eyes (it must be noted that, in general, all the ladies of the town of N were somewhat corpulent, but they laced themselves in so artfully and had such appealing manners that the stoutness could not be noticed at all).⁴¹

If in the descriptions of the bodies of the various beauties Gogol stressed the translucent, etherial qualities, when describing the ladies of the town of N it is only the clothing which is light and seemingly weightless, yet it does not mask the solid mass of flesh underneath. The ladies delude themselves into thinking that they are light etherial creatures while the author only pretends to be deceived by their masquerade.

Long gloves were not worn right up to the sleeves but intentionally left uncovered the exciting parts of the arms above the elbow which in many ladies breathed with envious plumpness; in some cases the doe-skinned gloves had even burst at the seams...⁴²

In his description of the society ladies, Gogol uses the romantic clichés which are exaggerated to the absurd. There are dresses "more like air than dresses",⁴³ smiles which make one feel "higher than the admiralty tower".⁴⁴ In other instances Gogol chooses objects of comparison which contrary to the romantic style of portraiture point to the fact that the ladies are very much part of the gray reality and not above it. Hats are "lighter than pastry",⁴⁵ waists are as thin as "bottlenecks".⁴⁶

If the pure beauties inspired men to perform chivalrous deeds, the ladies of the town of N are no exception to this rule, except that the "knightly deeds" are of a rather low nature.

As far as the occupation of front row seats there also occurred many powerful scenes which sometimes instilled the husbands with completely knightly, magnanimous concepts of protection. Duels, did not take place between them, naturally, because they were all government officials, but instead they all tried to undermine each other whenever possible, which sometimes becomes more difficult than a duel.⁴⁷

The parody of the romantic style of portraiture, the tone of mock respect which Gogol uses when describing contemporary women is not meant to disguise the low esteem in which he holds them. This lack of esteem and sympathy for the contemporary woman is, however, coupled with the realization of the power which women have over men and the firm belief that woman, as Eve, is to blame for the corruption in contemporary Russian society. Just as the pure beauties who immobilized men by their beauty and the witch in Vij who could saddle men and force them to fly around the night skies, so do the contemporary women have a firm hold on men. They achieve their aggressive aims through marriage, that institution which in Gogol's understanding must be feared and avoided lest it should turn an honest man into a thief and a robber.

The contemporary woman is in essence the projection of the Soloxa type witch and while the latter flies around the night skies with Devil, the former also serves the Devil by gossiping and influencing her husband into forfeiting his soul. Although Gogol laughs his revealing laugh which illuminates various feminine foibles, this laughter is intermingled with fear and distrust.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Gogol, Ss., VI, 227.
- 2 Ibid., 226.
- 3 V. Gippius, Gogol (1924; rpt. Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1971), 110.
- 4 Ibid., 87.
- 5 V. Setchkarev, Gogol: His Life and Works (New York: New York University Press, 1965), 236.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Gogol, Ss., IV, 268.
- 8 Ibid., 269.
- 9 V.V. Rozanov, O Gogole (1906; rpt. Letchworth-Herts-England: Prideaux Press, 1970), 14.
- 10 Gippius, 108.
- 11 Bulgarin, writing in Biblioteka dlja čtenija called Revizor a crude farce, considering the intrigue to be empty and the characters - puppets - devoid of all human qualities except for the gift of speech.
S.M. Petrov, ed., Istorija ruskoj literatury XIX veka, I (Moscow: Prosveščenie, 1970), 370-371.
- 12 Gogol, Ss., IV, 240-241.
- 13 Ibid., 76.
- 14 Ibid., 52.
- 15 Ibid., 55.
- 16 Šenrok, Materialy, I, 219.
- 17 Ibid., II, 329.

- 18 Gogol, Ss., IV, 114.
- 19 Gogol, Ss., III, 32.
- 20 Gogol, Ss., IV, 129-130.
- 21 S.K. Šambinago, "Izobraženje ljubvi u Gogolja," in Trilogija Romantizma (Moscow: "Pol'za," 1911), 76.
- 22 Leo Stilman, "Nevesty, ženixi i svaxi," in Vozdušnye puti, ed., R.N. Grynberg, (New York: Aerial Ways, No. 4, 1965), 198.
- 23 Gogol, Ss., I, 215.
- 24 Gogol, Ss., III, 69.
- 25 Ibid., 56.
- 26 Gogol, Ss., I, 202.
- 27 Ibid., 214.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Gogol, Ss., I, 203.
- 30 Gogol, Ss., IV, 152.
- 31 Šambinago, 89.
- 32 Ibid., 87.
- 33 Gogol, Ss., V, 182.
- 34 Andrej Belyj, Masterstvo Gogolja (1934; rpt. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms Inc., 1962), 17.
- 35 Gogol, Ss., III, 189.
- 36 Gogol, Ss., V, 169.
- 37 Ibid., 173.
- 38 Belyj, 16-17.

- 39 Gogol, Ss., V, 169.
40 Ibid., 169-170.
41 Ibid., 170.
42 Gogol, Ss., III, 179.
43 Gogol, Ss., II, 11.
44 Gogol, Ss., III, 51.
45 Gogol, Ss., II, 10.
46 Gogol, Ss., V, 164.

CONCLUSION

Many critics have accused Gogol of failing to create realistic portraits of women. Ivan Txorževskij, for instance, considers that there is no realistic portrait of a Russian woman in Gogol's works. "There are a few lively caricatures," Txorževskij writes, "Soloxa, the mother and daughter from Revizor, the matchmaker and bride from Ženit'ba. There are unheard of beauties, - Annunciata and Ulin'ka; but there is no woman."¹ If Gogol's characters are measured against those created by Russian realistic writers, such as Tolstoj for instance, there can be no doubt that Gogol's characters do not project the same aura of authenticity. Gogol was not a realistic writer; his talent lay not in the realistic creation of life but in his ability to create characters which are, in essence, hyperbolical exaggerations of a few simple traits in the human personality. Hyperboly, as Rozanov and Brjusov have shown, is the mainstay of Gogol's technique of portraiture.² If a heroine is beautiful, she is a beauty as yet unseen on earth, if a man is a villain, as the Wizard in Stašnaja mest', he has absolutely no redeeming characteristics. Gogol simplifies his characters to such an extent that they

cannot be called complete human beings but rather, personifications of certain aspects of the human personality as seen through the prism of Gogol's personal consciousness.³ Therefore, Gogol's female characters can only be considered as projections of the author's personal attitudes towards women.

Andrej Belyj divides Gogol's female characters into two basic types - the beauty and the witch; "two various aspects of the living woman which does not exist in Gogol's works." "The witch drinking blood from the throat (Večer nakanune Ivana Kupala) corresponds to Agaf'ja Fedoseevna biting off the Assessor's ear in Povest' o tom kak possorilis' Ivan Ivanovič s Ivanom Nikiforovičem; the translucent virgins and the witch-baba of the first phase are two different aspects of the real woman which he did not create; in the second phase, these two aspects in the biography of the same basic types are shown through the difference in their ages; towards the age of fifty Agaf'ja Tixonovna will become Agaf'ja Fedoseevna."⁴

One cannot completely agree with Belyj who makes such a clear distinction between these two basic types of women created by Gogol for in many instances the distinction becomes hazy. In fact, one can trace Gogol's disenchantment

with the image of the ideal beauty and show the decline, or rather the process through which the writer came to the realization that the ideal woman can exist only in dreams. There is a definite evolution in Gogol's attitude towards the image of the beautiful woman, an attitude which from one of almost religious adoration turned into the realization that youth and beauty (perhaps the only qualities which Gogol admired in women) are fleeting transitory moments which vanish all too soon, turning such a pure madonna figure as the Governor's daughter into another variation of the Agreeable Lady.

Even in the description of the prototype of all Gogolian beauties, Alkinoe, who stands out as a personification of the romantic concept of the harmony between the earthly and the divine, one can discern an innuendo of mistrust, a subtle hint that her female nature is not as beautiful and pure as her outer form. In the article, Žensčina, Telekles accuses Alkinoe of being untrue to him and it is important to note that the philosopher Plato does not refute Telekles' accusations, but states only that Woman must be forgiven everything since she possesses that divine gift of the gods - beauty. Plato goes on to admonish Telekles for not knowing how to love, for confusing passion

with love. Passion is an emotion which Gogol always connected with the images of beautiful women and passion in Gogol's understanding is a terrible destructive force, "a product of the evil spirit which moves the world."⁵ In a letter to his friend, Danilevskij, Gogol equated passionate love with "looking into an abyss",⁶ with being consumed and turning into a pile of ashes. Almost all of Gogol's heroes who succumb to a woman's charms are literally consumed or perish in other ways.⁷

In Večera na Xutore and in Taras Bul'ba Gogol absolves the heroines from blame for the tragic dénouements which are the direct results of passion; there are even three stories⁸ in which the union of the two lovers is treated as the best possible solution to the intrigue. But Gogol's following collection of stories, Mirgorod, represents the writer's disenchantment with love as a positive force. Hugh MacLean, in fact, cites Starosvetskie pomeščiki as the demarcation point between the young Gogol "who loves, or rather, yearns to love and the late, mature Gogol for whom the world is an absurd and dreary place peopled by puppets and manipulated by the Devil."⁹ In Starosvetskie pomeščiki Gogol rejects love as a life-asserting force in human existence - he depicts passionate love as fickle and

inadequate while married love, that "quiet sea of pleasures"¹⁰ turns out to nothing more than habit. And Pul'xerija Ivanovna who was once a ravishing beauty turns into a senile old woman whose life revolves around the salting of mushrooms and the preparation of jams.

Negating love, there seems to be no bright light left in the world created by Gogol and in the following story from the Mirgorod collection, Vij, Gogol unmask his image of the pure beauty, revealing her to be another of the Devil's clever disguises. The old witch, the pure young beauty and the seductress all turn out to be one and the same person and it is she who is responsible for the death which befalls men who allow themselves to be saddled by her. The young-old pannočka is in this instance described as the Devil's agent who arouses "devilishly sweet sensations"¹¹ in Xoma. For the first time it is the woman and not passion who is responsible for the hero's tragic death.

The aura of fear and anxiety which surround the image of the temptress-witch are analysed by freudian critics as the re-enactment of Gogol's "oedipal terrors."¹² The retribution which inevitably follows the heroes who succumb to female charms is analysed as Gogol's extension

of the paternal taboo in relation to the mother figure to include all women.¹³ There can be no doubt that Gogol did in fact suffer from some sort of sexual anxieties. Gogol's confession to Dr. Tarasenkov¹⁴ about not enjoying or feeling any necessity to participate in sexual relations with the opposite sex is in itself an indication of unusual if not abnormal attitudes. However, the various hypotheses concerning Gogol's alleged Oedipus complex cannot be accepted as conclusive evidence since they are based almost entirely on the subjective interpretation of the symbolism of Gogol's artistic creations.

MacLean considers that Gogol's earlier romantic works represent more mature forms of libidinal expression than the post Mirgorod works in which Gogol began to abandon the love theme as the focal point of his works.¹⁵ While modern literary critics lean heavily on psychoanalysis in the interpretation of Gogol, nineteenth century critics such as Merežkovskij, for instance, couched their analyses in religious terminology. Merežkovskij, who interprets Gogol's entire works as the writer's struggle with the Devil,¹⁶ sees the decline of the image of the pure beauty as Gogol's realization that there is nothing pure on earth, that Satan has infiltrated even the sacred face of Beauty.

Piskarev's anguished cry in Nevskij prospekt, "It would be better, beauty, if you did not exist in this world but were the creation of an inspired artist"¹⁷ can be taken as Gogol's capitulation to the Devil.

In works written after the Arabesque collection, Gogol no longer attempts to treat love as a life asserting force. In Revizor and Zenit'ba Gogol sees marriage as it exists in the world as a cover for lust, greed or the desire to better one's social position. The women who inhabit this world, the various Anna Andreevnas and Agaf'ja Fedoseevnas are neither beauties nor witches but rather caricatures of petty feminine foibles. Even these subwomen are endowed with a tremendous influence over men. The ladies of the town of N are too ridiculous to inspire men with passion, yet they are, according to Gogol, mainly responsible for their husbands' corruption - it is because of their materialistic appetites that Russia is filled with corrupt bureaucrats. In essence they are also the mistresses of the "petty devil of pošlust..."¹⁸

Gogol never fully abandoned the image of the absolute beauty - the image reappears in Rim in the image of Annunciata and in Mertvyje duši as the angelic Governor's daughter. Rim, however, remains an unfinished fragment which

Gogol abandoned while the Governor's daughter is treated as a vision which the author realizes cannot survive on earth. These images can be taken to represent Gogol's dream vision of the ideal woman whom he attempts to cleanse of all sensuality and to underscore instead the purely esthetic quality of their beauty. Gogol seemed to equate the only pure kind of love for a woman with the admiration of an artist for a work of art.

I want to see her not to love her, no -
 I want only to look at her, to look at
 all of her, to look at her eyes, look
 at her arms, fingers, her shining hair.
 I would not want to kiss her, only to
 look at her. And then? It is as it
 must be, it is a law of nature: she
 does not have the right to hide or take
 away her beauty.¹⁹

Gogol's lofty admiration of the purely esthetical aspects of Woman's beauty is most certainly lacking in human warmth and tenderness. Thus, Gogol's women are capable of arousing lofty admiration (*Annunciata*), passion which leads to disaster (Polish pannočka), inexplicable fears and anxieties (pannočka from Vij and Mar'ja Gavrilovna from Špon'ka) or the lowest forms of sensual attraction (*Agaf'ja Tixonovna*). Gogol did not portray the normal earthly love which can exist between a man and a

woman. Having no faith in love himself, he could not even believe in the existence of his own vision of the ideal woman.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Ivan Txorževskij, Russkaja literatura (Paris: Vozroždenie, 1946), 179.

² V.V. Rozanov, O Gogole (1906; rpt. Letchworth-Herts-England: Prideaux Press, 1970).

Valerij Brjusov, Ispepelennyj: K xarakteristike Gogolja (Moscow: "Skorpion," 1903).

³ V. Gippius, Gogol (1936; rpt. Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1971), 108.

⁴ Andrej Belyj, Masterstvo Gogolja (1934; rpt.: Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc., 1962), 16-17.

⁵ Gogol, Ss., II, 7.

⁶ C.R. Proffer, ed., Letters of Nikolai Gogol, trans. by C.R. Proffer and V. Krivoshein (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), 40.

⁷ Petrus' from Večer nakanune Ivana Kupala and Mikita from Vij are consumed and turn into a pile of ashes. Andriij from Taras Bul'ba is killed by his own father, while Piskarev from Nevskij prospekt commits suicide.

⁸ The love intrigue terminates happily in Soročinskaja jarmarka, Majskaja noč' and in Noč' nakanune Ivana Kupala.

⁹ Hugh MacLean, "Gogol's Retreat from Love: Towards an Interpretation of Mirgorod," American Contributions to the Fourth International Congress of Slavistics: Moscow, Sept. 1958 (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1958), 226.

¹⁰ Proffer, 42.

¹¹ Gogol, Ss., II, 163.

¹² MacLean, 235.

¹³ Ibid.

- 14 Šenrok, Materialy, II, 855.
- 15 MacLean, 231.
- 16 D.S. Merežkovskij, Gogol i Čort (Moscow: "Scorpion," 1906), 1.
- 17 Gogol, Ss., III, 27.
- 18 Amfiteatrov-Kadašev, "Gogol," in Očerki istorii ruskoj literatury (Prague: Slavjanskoe izdatel'stvo, 1927), 92.
- 19 Gogol, Ss., III, 227.

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