Narrating the Self in the Mass Age: Olha Kobylianska in the European *Fin-de-Siècle* and Its Aftermath, 1886-1936

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

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The Dissertation of Yuliya Volodymyrivna Ladygina is approved, and is acceptable in quality and form for publication in microfilm and electronically:


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Abstract of the Dissertation

Narrating the Self in the Mass Age: Olha Kobylianska in the European *Fin-de-Siècle* and Its Aftermath, 1886-1936

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This dissertation focuses on the literary oeuvre of Olha Kobylianska (1863-1942) – one of the most sophisticated Ukrainian prose writers in contemporary Ukrainian literature, and one of the most paradoxical intellectuals in the European *fin-de-siècle*, who started as a German writer, but eventually devoted her life’s work to modernizing Ukrainian literature. The study investigates the complex evolution and the dialogical nature of the multiplicity of socio-political discourses – particularly feminism, populism, socialism, Nietzscheanism, elitism,
Marxism, Bolshevism, nationalism, and Fascism – in Kobylianska’s writings. Building upon contemporary literary and social theories – in particular, works by Freud, Bakhtin, Hroch, and Hermans – this dissertation argues that Kobylianska’s complex dialogue with the diverse socio-cultural and political movements that sprang up in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century is representative of her socio-historical milieu. By placing Kobylianska’s writings within the matrix of the European fin-de-siècle and interwar period, the study thus not only re-defines Kobylianska’s engagement with the political, social, artistic, and philosophical contexts of her tumultuous times, but also provides insight into the struggle of the fin-de-siècle generation of European intellectuals to articulate and assert an individual voice amidst the multiplicity of mass ideologies of their time.
Introduction: Olha Kobylianska – a Spectral-Syncretic Thinker

Background and Context

The radical change in the public spirit of fin-de-siècle Europe has become the catalyst for a range of ground-breaking innovations in science, social theory, politics, and art without which the intellectual life in the West would be vastly different today. Yet it is not only the theoretical daring, political explosiveness, and artistic audacity that Western intellectuals have inherited from the fin-de-siècle generation of European intellectuals, but also their profound uncertainty toward the multitude of social and political movements that sprang up in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century, when old and new attitudes interacted with unmatched fecundity. The Western intellectual tradition has not yet overcome the unsettling ambivalence of the fin-de-siècle generation of European intellectuals toward liberalism, whose celebration of equality it criticized but could not renounce; its excitement over radical change, revolution, and war, whose necessity it asserted, but whose brutality it eventually despised; its sense of the cultural and political apocalypse, which it both welcomed and repressed; and, most importantly, its continuous oscillation between the individual and the mass, between the I and the we, which it found impossible to escape. All these tensions, which have come to define the European fin-de-siècle, remain central to Western intellectual thought today.
At the turn of the twentieth century, these tensions were felt, perhaps, most sharply by intellectuals of the so-called “non-historical” European ethnic groups, who had to navigate multiple and often rival cultural and socio-political projects.¹ Caught between the bourgeois West and the agrarian East, these intellectuals experienced the confrontation of progress and traditionalism, of democracy and monarchy, of religion and secularism, of multiculturalism and ethnocentrism, of capitalism and feudal economy, every day. The case of the Ukrainian fin-de-siècle intellectuals particularly stands out, for Ukraine’s exceptional geopolitical circumstances exacerbated these tensions – in the nineteenth century, Ukraine, literally a borderland, was split between Austria and Russia, and in the mid-1910s, when Europe erupted in war, the region was turned into one of the war’s main battlefields and thus was entangled in critical historical events that were to define the course of twentieth-century history in the West. At that historical moment, Ukraine was clearly the place in Europe, where tensions between the diverse mass movements – monarchism, nationalism, socialism, Marxism, Bolshevism, and Fascism, to name only a few – and consequent tensions between the individual and the array of mass ideologies, between the I and the multiple possibilities of the we, were felt with the utmost intensity. The fact that Ukrainians were one of the few ethnic groups in Europe who envisioned themselves as nations but failed to assert their national statehood in the aftermath of WWI – Ukraine’s territory was split among Russia,

¹ Myroslav Hroch delineates the nonhistorical, or nondominant, ethnic groups as nations which, as opposed to the nation-states, lacked their own nobility, possessed no state, and had a scares or interrupted literary tradition in their own language; Social Preconditions of National Revival in Eastern Europe (1985), xiii.
Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania – might be but a logical outcome of the irresolute, disintegrated, and overly confused nature of Ukraine’s intellectual and political elite at the turn of the twentieth century.2

Of this generation of Ukrainian intellectuals, Olha Kobylianska (1863-1941) is one of the most emblematic figures, one whose writings embody the contradictions of her times in their most exact form. Having completed only four years of elementary school, she became one of the leading Ukrainian novelists of her time, famous for introducing progressive Western ideas – such as social Darwinism, feminism, elitism, irrationalism, psychologism, Nietzscheanism, Caesarism, radical conservatism, and aggressive anti-populism – into contemporary Ukrainian socio-political debates. Educated predominantly in German with minimal Ukrainian, Kobylianska succeeded and was canonized as an original and sophisticated Ukrainian writer. Initially grounded in the Western-European culture of the turn of the century, she consciously chose to devote her life to the development of Ukrainian culture, which at the time was considered marginal, rural, and second-rate. Ironically, although one can hardly exaggerate the mass of words – scholarly and critical, panegyric and polemical, propagandistic and ideological – that has been devoted to Kobylianska and her work, the complexity of her dialogue with diverse socio-cultural movements of the European fin-de-siècle and her original spectral-syncretic fusion of multiple and often rival ideologies that penetrated the Ukrainian intellectual discourse in an

2 For further discussion of Ukraine’s failure to establish an independent nation-state in 1917-1920 see A. Motyl, The Turn to the Right, ch.1.
alternate program of Ukraine’s cultural and socio-political regeneration has been barely acknowledged, let alone properly researched, in past criticism.3

Such a lack of critical attention could be explained, in the first place, by the conflicted initial reception of Kobylianska’s work which has served primarily to obscure the writer’s explosive contribution to the intellectual discourse of her time, and to entangle her life and work into an intricate web of biographical and literary myths. At the turn of the nineteenth century, when Kobylianska first published her major works, the Ukrainian intellectual climate was shaped by a fervent and often belligerent polemic between the dominant populist model that had taken shape in the nineteenth century along with Ukrainian positivist thought and the realist literature of the written popular Ukrainian language, and the emerging modernist aesthetic conviction that explicitly rejected the ideology of Ukrainian populism and its glorification of the uneducated Ukrainian peasant masses.4 Consequently, early reception of Kobylianska’s creative works was sharply defined by two opposing strands in Ukrainian pre-WWI literary scholarship. The modernist critics – such as Lesia Ukrainka, Mykola Yevshan, Luka Lutsiv, Ostap Lutsky, and Hnat Khotkevych – focused mostly on Kobylianska’s thematic and aesthetic innovations, rightfully recognizing her as a

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3 The most complete and comprehensive bibliography on Kobylianska, Olha Kobylianska v krytyci i spogadah, was edited by F. Pohrebennyk in 1963. This source is, however, incomplete, for it does not include the works or authors considered to be unmentionable by the Soviet regime. This collection is also due for a substantial updated, for an extensive research on Kobylianska has been undertaken by the late Soviet and post-Soviet scholars. Works by V. Aheeva, O. Babyshkin, R. Chopyk, S. Yefremov, I. Franko, P. Fylypovych, T. Hundorova, H. Levchenko, O. Makovej, Y. Mlynechuk, E. Panchuk, S. Pavlychko, M. Pavlyshyn, P. Pohrebnyk, N. Tomashuk, and V. Voznyuk should be mentioned among the most prominent, and often groundbreaking, contributions to the studies of Kobylianska.

4 See S. Pavlychko for further discussion of the cultural debates in the Ukrainian fin-de-siècle, “Modernism vs. Populism in Fin-de-Siècle Ukrainian Literature” in Feminism, 127-130.
founder of Ukrainian intellectual prose and as a psychological writer of vertiginous depth. The populist critics – particularly Natalia Kobrynska, Ivan Franko, Mykhailo Hrushevsky, and Serhij Yefremov – emphasized, in turn, Kobylianska’s genuine tribute to the realist canon, either overlooking the complexity of her artistic and philosophical thought or reproaching her for excessive aestheticism and unconcealed dependence on Western culture. Eventually, the populists won the cultural debate of the Ukrainian *fin-de-siècle*, canonizing Kobylianska as an advocate of the Ukrainian common man and a devoted student of the culture of the Ukrainian peasantry. As a result, Kobylianska’s complex dialogue with the multiplicity of aesthetic and socio-political ideologies of time and her audacious fusion of literature, philosophy, politics, and science, which she, like many other intellectuals of the European *fin-de-siècle*, strove to present as a synthesized totality, have been silenced, and thus never properly researched, for almost a century.

Despite its obvious shortcomings, the populist canon has proved to be long-lasting, giving both the Western diaspora myth and the Soviet myth of Kobylianska their defining contours. Although several western scholars, especially Iurii Mulyk-Lutsyk and Anna-Halja Horbatsch, reanimated the populist image of Kobylianska with vital historical and critical discoveries that actually contested the populist canon, they remained curiously caught in it, dwelling on Kobylianska’s dedication to the advancement of Ukrainian culture and the all-round free development of the Ukrainian people. The post-WWII Ukrainian émigré scholars in the West knew exactly what their new émigré readership
wanted and gave them a Kobylianska they could proudly call “a true Ukrainian” – a devoted patriot committed to Ukraine’s aspirations for cultural and political independence. In the Soviet context, the populist canonization proved to be not only enduring, but also beneficial. Not only did it assure the survival of Kobylianska’s works and archival materials during the Soviet period, but it also allowed for extensive research into her life and works. The three most representative works – Oleh Babyshkin’s Ольга Кобилянська: нарис про життя і творчість (Olha Kobylianska: An Essay About Life and Work, 1963), Nykyfor Tomashuk’s Ольга Кобилянська: Життя і творчість (Olha Kobylianska: Life and Work, 1969), and Слова зворушеного серця (Words of the Touched Heart, 1982), a provocative edition of Kobylianska’s intimate diaries of the 1880s and the early 1890s edited by Pylyp Pohrebennyk – made significant contributions to the discussion of Kobylianska’s artistic and philosophical complexity. At the same time, however, the three scholars clung almost desperately to the use of fictionalized biographies and several highly ambiguous proclamations in support of the Soviet Union, attributed by the Soviet authorities to Kobylianska, to legitimize her belonging to the pantheon of Ukrainian writers of the Soviet people.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, many factual errors and critical shortcomings in the twentieth-century scholarship on Kobylianska were promptly exposed. Yet the post-Soviet quest to reassess, or better recreate, the canon of Ukrainian literature seems to hinder rather than promote the thorough revision of Kobylianska’s work and its long-needed contextualization in the broader
European intellectual setting of her time. Although substantial progress has been made over the past twenty years in reconstructing literary record and in developing new analytical approaches and methodologies, the majority of contemporary scholars, particularly those in Ukraine, tend to manipulate textual and historical materials to adjust them to their own cultural and ideological projects. The recent common obsession with Kobylianska’s feminism and renewed interest in her personal life, particularly in her presumed lesbianism, for instance, noticeably distracts contemporary scholars from re-examining in depth the evolution and the dialogical nature of Kobylianska’s creative dialogue with populism, nationalism, social Darwinism, Nietzscheanism, elitism, Marxism, and Fascism in the context of *fin-de-siècle* and interwar European intellectual history.5 Consequently, despite a number of good studies that have been written on Kobylianska – works by Solomia Pavlychko, Tamara Hundorova, and Mark Pavlyshyn are the most prominent examples – this dissertation is the first comprehensive analysis of what could be called Kobylianska’s spectral-syncretic vision of Ukraine’s cultural and socio-political liberation in the context of *fin-de-siècle* and interwar European intellectual history. In other words, this study examines for the first time a series of core themes in Kobylianska’s intellectual discourse, notably syntheses, the most important of which are: between a conservative view of man constrained by nature and the more progressive belief

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5 In 1996 S. Pavlychko, while analyzing Kobylianska’s personal correspondence with Lesya Ukrainka, another prominent Ukrainian writer of the *fin-de-siècle*, formulated a tentative hypothesis of their queer relationship. Although Pavlychko’s claim became instantly popular, particularly with the feminist scholars, no further biographical or analytical data has been found to support it. For further references, see S. Pavlychko, Feminism, 146-149.
in the possibility of creating a new man; between a deep interest in science, especially in terms of understanding human nature, and a more anti-positivist exploration of the unlimited possibilities of the will; between the faith and service of Christianity and the heroism of Classical thought; and finally between the private property relations more typical of the right and aggressive socialism more typical of the left. This study is also the first scholarly attempt to use Kobylianska’s case to discern insight into a broader picture of the fin-de-siècle generation of European intellectuals and their struggle to navigate the multiple tensions and contradictions of their time.

**Statement and Definitions**

This study has a double agenda: to investigate how Kobylianska’s socio-political views and aesthetic thought formed and evolved over time and in response to changing circumstances; and to examine when, how, and why her individual voice is representative of her socio-historical milieu. To gauge the depth of Kobylianska’s intellectual thought and to highlight the underlying structural affinities between her original fusion of multiple ideologies of her time and other spectral-syncretic ideological models produced by the fin-de-siècle generation of the European intellectuals, I closely examine the intersection between three main aspects of Kobylianska’s work – psychology, aesthetics, and ideology.

By placing Kobylianska’s writings on a public-private continuum, I first analyze how the writer’s psychic life – particularly her reflective properties, the
multidimensionality of the self as she sees it, and her traumatic interpersonal experiences with family, friends, and several prominent Ukrainian intellectuals of her time – has shaped her creative work and socio-political views. Close attention is paid to Kobylianska’s use of personal experiences in constructing the psychological portraits of her fictional characters. Sigmund Freud’s concepts of condensation, displacement, visualization, symbolism, and sublimation, which the Austrian scholar describes in his seminal work *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) as the main unconscious psychic operations of distortion of the latent dream-thought, are central in the present study. Considering that Kobylianska might have been aware of Freud’s research on hysteria, female sexuality, and dreams, these concepts are instrumental not only in discerning similarities between Kobylianska’s personal life and her life in letters, but also in analyzing numerous dream sequences and flash-backs, which the Bukovynian writer uses lavishly to visualize the “inner” personal dimension of her characters. The notion of sublimation, which Freud presents in his later work *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) as the process of transforming socially unacceptable impulses, particularly those of a sexual nature, into acts of higher social valuation, helps in framing my discussion of Kobylianska’s apparent reliance on writing in working out her personal conflicts with her fellow Ukrainian literates and

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6 For further discussion of Freud’s notion of condensation see Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 312-339; for displacement see ibid., 340-344; for visualization, ibid., 64-67, 82-83, and 359; and for symbolism, ibid., 385-438.

7 Although there is no evidence that Kobylianska personally read about Sigmund Freud’s research on hysteria, female sexuality, and dreams, the writer’s diaries suggest that she had been introduced to new developments in psychology and psychoanalysis through her friend Sophia Okunevska, who was studying medicine in Vienna and Zurich in the late 1880s and the 1890s. See, for instance, Kobylianska’s record of her conversations with Okunevka in the Soviet edition of her early diaries *Slova zvorusheno ho sertsia*, 126-127.
in coming to terms with the drudgery of her daily life and the traumatic losses of those she loved.

Mikhail Bakhtin’s concepts of dialogue and dialogical thinking constitute the basic theoretical premise for my analysis of how Kobylianska uses psychology to reinforce her intellectual arguments. Bakhtin develops the ground-breaking idea of dialogical thinking in his seminal work *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1929/1984), where he argues that Dostoevsky created a new form of artistic thought, the polyphonic novel. The Russian literary theorist uses a music concept of polyphony to explain the main attributes of such a novel, namely, its complex composition, where a number of independent and often mutually opposing viewpoints are personified by characters involved in a dialogic relationship. Bakhtin also observes that each character in Dostoevsky is independent and ideologically authoritative – “not an objectified image, but an autonomous discourse” (53) – that is, not the object of the author’s finalizing artistic vision, but the “unfinalizable” subject of his or her authentic ideological position. Further in the study, Bakhtin shifts his focus to dialogical relations that take place not only on the interpersonal level across the boundary of the self and the world, but also on the intrapersonal level as the play of internalized voices in the inner speech of one and the same person. Reflecting on Dostoevsky’s depictions of characters which often converse with the superior part of themselves, with their alter egos, with caricatures of themselves, or even with the imaginary devil, Bakhtin arrives at a new view of the self, where the self is regarded not as a stable and continuous point of consciousness, but as a product
of dialogical relations in a landscape of I-positions. Bakhtin’s understanding of
dialogism and the ever-changing nature of the human mind is instrumental in
illuminating Kobylianska’s unique use of dialogue to construct the psychological
interiors of her characters, which artistically transform her creative world into a
kind of mirror not only of material reality, but also of the complexity in human
cognitive and psychological lives.

To discern the evolution and the dialogical nature of Kobylianska’s
individual voice and explain how it is representative of the general intellectual
tendencies of her time – thus to bridge a Freudian perspective on Kobylianska’s
work with Bakhtinean readings of different mechanisms the Bukovynian writer
uses to animate her ideas – I refer to Hubert Hermans’s theory of the dialogical
self and its relationship to the collective. By translating Bakhtin’s insights into
psychology, Hermans, a Dutch psychologist, argues that Bakhtin’s vision of
dialogical thinking has a potential to advance our understanding of narrative
identity – an identity constructed by integrating one’s life experiences into an
internalized, evolving story of the self, which provides the individual with a sense
of unity and purpose in life.8 In his work, Hermans bridges Bakhtin’s notion of
dialogue with theories of the decentering self, proposed by the classical
American pragmatics (William James, Charles Pierce, and George Herbert
Mead) and the modern French philosophers (Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault,
Jacques Derrida, and François Lyotard) to arrive at a new conception, the
dialogical self theory, in which the fragmented self functions not as a unitary

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8 See D. McAdams, “The Psychology of Life Stories.”
thought process, but as a simultaneous multiplicity of voices that are related to one another in a dialogical way:

The [dialogical] self can be conceived of as a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous I-positions. In this conception, the I has the possibility to move from one spatial position to another in accordance with changes in situations and time. The I fluctuates among different and even opposed positions, and has the capacity imaginatively to endow each position with a voice so that dialogical relations between voices can be established… Each of them has a story to tell about his or her own experiences, from his or her own stance… resulting in a complex narratively structured self. *(Handbook 2)*

Considering the self as a multiplicity of I-positions, Hermans observes that the self is also organically fused with the other, that is, the individual’s immediate social environment. The Dutch scholar points out that through intensive transactional relations such as identification or dissociation the self “becomes infiltrated by the evaluations of the characters involved in collective stories” and, therefore, “assumes the quality of collective position.” This observation leads Hermans to conclude that “the struggle of [identity] synthesis [that is the struggle to construct an individual voice] is always associated with a continuous shifting of the self/non-self boundaries” *(The Dialogical Self 120)*, and thus is always involved in relationships of relative dominance and social power between the self and the perceived other. These theoretical insights are instrumental in my discussion of Kobylianska’s spectral-syncretic synthesis of diverse and often conflicting ideologies of her time – particularly feminism, populism, social-Darwinism, Nietzscheanism, elitism, Marxism, nationalism, and Fascism; and in my examination of how the evolution of Kobylianska’s intellectual discourse
influenced the formation and articulation of her individual voice. Furthermore, Hermans’s theory of the dialogical self, together with several key insights proposed by Freud in his work on group psychology, allows me to discern fluid affinities between Kobylianska’s personal plight and the general struggle of the fin-de-siècle generation of European intellectuals to articulate and assert an individual voice vis-à-vis the multiplicity of mass ideologies of their time – a struggle that continues to define the Western intellectual tradition today.9

**Overview of Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized chronologically into five chapters, each elaborating on one of the five major periods in Kobylianska’s creative career. Yet it is neither a detailed biographical account, nor a complete survey of Kobylianska’s writings. The main focus is placed exclusively on capturing the most distinct stages in the formation of Kobylianska’s identity and her socio-political consciousness, and in examining how the writer, whatever else her concerns might have been, responded to and interacted with the diverse trends in cultural and socio-political discourses of her times through her fiction. To discern the genealogy of Kobylianska’s world views, I consider five central aspects in the writer’s biography: her birthplace Bukovina and its socio-cultural particularities; her social origin and family history; her educational background; her status as a Ukrainian writer and its gradual transformation from marginal to iconic; and finally, her spheres of influence and reception. For my assessment of

9 See Freud’s 1922 study *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*
Kobylianska’s relationship to the *fin-de-siècle* and interwar European intellectual dynamic, I bridge socio-historical contextualization of Kobylianska’s life and work with close readings of her major fictional texts – *Людина* (*A Human Being*, 1894), *Царівна* (*The Princess*, 1896), *Земля* (*The Earth*, 1902), *Ніоба* (*Niobe*, 1907), *Через кладку* (*Over the Bridge*, 1913), *За ситуаціями* (*After Situations*, 1914), *Апостол черні* (*Apostle of the Mob*, 1926), and a number of short stories from the 1890s and 1910s – which include elements of Freudian and Bakhtinian analysis. To that end, I use recovered original manuscripts, publications, and critical reviews, as well as Kobylianska’s personal correspondence, notes, diaries, and autobiographies, many of which are still unpublished.

**Chapter 1** “The Early Signs of Revolt, 1886-1894” examines Kobylianska’s early life and her first attempts at writing, addressing a number of famous myths about her becoming a Ukrainian writer. Kobylianska’s problematic friendship with Natalia Kobrynska, the leading theoretician of the women’s movement in Ukraine, is of particular interest. An investigation of the personal and professional rivalry between the two writers argues that, contrary to the common beliefs, Kobrynska’s intervention held back rather than promoted Kobylianska’s literary career. Here, I also position Kobylianska’s personal conflict with Kobrynska as an initial instigator of Kobylianska’s firm anti-socialist and anti-populist views. The chapter ends with an original reading of Kobylianska’s first published work, *A Human Being* (*Людина*, 1894), which elaborates on Kobylianska’s problematic reception of social Darwinism, positivism, radical socialism, and militant feminism. The reading offers the first comprehensive
analysis of Kobylianska’s particular feminism of “intelligent motherhood,” where
the author mutes her radical protest against the traditional patriarchal subjugation
of women into a liberal compromise, elegantly combining elements of
conservative and revolutionary currents of thought into a sophisticated model,
which I view as Kobylianska’s first attempt at creating a spectral-syncretic
ideology and define as radically conservative.

**Chapter 2** “The Mantle of the Myth Re-maker, 1895-1896” focuses on
Kobylianska’s alternate program of Ukraine’s national liberation presented in her
first novel *The Princess*. The chapter argues that the novel is not only an
important record of Kobylianska’s reflections on the Ukrainian nation-building
effort, but also a significant landmark in European philosophical and critical
thought, for it synthesizes Nietzschean philosophy with Russian intellectual
thought of the nineteenth century – two intellectual strands which are often
viewed as contradictory and irreconcilable. This original fusion, as observed,
constitutes the premise of Kobylianska’s propagation of the individual
emancipation and heightened cultural awareness of national distinctiveness
among the Ukrainian intellectual elite as the principal road to Ukraine’s national
regeneration – a stand that was characteristic of many ethnic variations of *fin-de-
siècle* and interwar nationalism, and to many forms of interwar fascism in
Western and Central Europe.

**Chapter 3** “The Populist Trial, 1897-1902” addresses Kobylianska’s
confrontation with her populist compatriots in the late 1890s. Close readings of
Kobylianska’s “rustic” stories together with a new interpretation of her 1902 epic
novel *The Earth* elaborate on the writer’s sly response to the persistent populist request to pay more attention to peasant themes, where the writer not only exposes the populists’ uncritical glorification of peasants, but also critiques the dominant populist literary models. Particular attention is paid to Kobylianska’s intricate dialogue with the prominent Russian and Europeans critics of nineteenth-century positivism – Fyodor Dostoevsky and Friedrich Nietzsche are the best examples – to elaborate on what made Kobylianska’s village constructed in *The Earth* even more gruesome than that depicted in Emil Zola’s sensational novel of the same title.

**Chapter 4** “The Years of Revision, 1903-1913” closely examines Kobylianska’s work in the pre-WWI decade, which has been often viewed as a period of her creative decline. The chapter contests the general view and discusses the writer’s attempt to re-package her unconventional socio-political views into an alternate aesthetic form, which could be more acceptable, and thus accessible, for the populist camp. The chapter also addresses Kobylianska’s ever-growing concern about the ethnocentric understanding of nationalism among the mainstream Ukrainian intelligentsia, and situates Kobylianska’s revised elitist theory, presented in her three major novels of the period – *Niobe*, *Over the Bridge*, and *After Situations* – in the context of other elitist ideologies of the time, which propelled diverse variations of the two major revolutionary movements, Marxism and Fascism, throughout Europe in the first decades of the twentieth century.
Chapter 5 “A Writer of Her Time, 1914-1936” deals with Kobylianska’s late texts by investigating the radical transformation of the writer’s socio-political views that took place in the aftermath of WWI, and seeking to show how Kobylianska struggled to understand and to affect the cataclysmic developments that she saw underway in the cultural, religious, and political institutions of her day. The chapter opens with a close reading of Kobylianska’s works written and published during or immediately after WWI, providing a detailed examination of Kobylianska’s reflections on her immediate experience of the war and its aftermath, and discerning the motives and circumstances that instigated the writer’s ideological conversion from a committed pro-Austrian loyalist to an enthusiastic advocate of Ukraine’s political unification. A new reading of Kobylianska’s last novel Apostle of the Mob further elaborates on the subject, focusing on its militaristic and proto-fascist themes. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the fervent competition for Kobylianska’s ideological support among diverse Ukrainian political camps in the 1920s and 1930s – a period when the 60-70 year old Kobylianska remained the only major Ukrainian prose writer.

The study ends with a critique of the general tendency to view Kobylianska, and by extension any prominent historical figure, as a stable, unified, and extra-historical personality. Instead it advocates for the acceptance of the dialogical, and thus ever-conflicted and ever-changing, nature of the intelligent self.
Chapter 1: The Early Signs of Revolt, 1884-1894

The question of why Olha Kobylianska, whose education was conducted predominantly in German and was grounded in the Western-European culture of the turn of the century, chose to devote her talent to Ukrainian culture, which at the time was considered marginal and second-rate, remains the most discussed subject in criticism on Kobylianska to date. The most popular narrative of Kobylianska’s cultural choice is a story about her accidental encounter with a devoted Ukrainian patriot Natalia Kobrynska, the leading theoretician of the women's movement in Ukraine, who presumably helped the young Kobylianska to discover her true national identity, and guided her into the realm of Ukrainian culture and literature. The story of a chance national awakening was initiated by Kobylianska herself in her late autobiographies, where, as I shall argue in this chapter, she substantially exaggerates the role played by Kobrynska in the construction of her Ukrainian identity to demean her earlier reliance on German language and culture. Kobylianska’s effort proved fertile, for already in 1923 the émigré editor Vasyl Vernyvolya wrote in his introduction to a new Leipzig edition of Kobylianska’s short story “The Battle” (“Битва,” 1896) that the author could have become a German writer, had it not been for “припадкове знайомство зі свідомими українцями з Галичини [які] відкрили перед Кобилянською новий світ” [a chance encounter with conscious Ukrainians from Galicia who opened a new world for Kobylianska] (4-5), inspiring her to become a Ukrainian writer. In 1928, Pavlo Fyllypovych, a Soviet critic, presented a similar narrative,
highlighting a difficult choice Kobylianska had to make between the thriving German and the impoverished Ukrainian cultures (119). A close reading of Kobylianska’s diaries and personal correspondence of the 1880s and early 1890s demonstrates, however, that compared to the popular stories, Kobylianska’s self-identification with Ukrainian culture was infinitely more complex and explosive. It also reveals that Kobrynska’s renowned patronage and censorship – official and unofficial, in the guise of prudence, good taste, or editorial savvy – held back rather than promoted Kobylianska literary career.

To problematize the existing consensus on Kobrynska’s central role in Kobylianska’s emergence as a writer, this chapter will examine Kobylianska’s early fictional and nonfictional writings, outlining diverse cultural influences on the young Bukovynian writer and highlighting her intense rivalry with Kobrynska. The chapter will offer an overview of Kobylianska’s first unpublished works and a close analysis of her first published story Людина: Повість з жіночого життя (A Human Being: A Story of a Woman’s Life, 1894), which the author presented as a literary and conceptual challenge to Kobrynska. The main focus will be placed on Kobylianska’s first attempt at synthesizing several opposing intellectual thoughts – social Darwinism, Russian radicalism, and Romantic irrationalism, to name a few – in her passionate critique of the dominant feminist discourse of her time, particularly of what she viewed as its premature nature and destructive fanaticism. The chapter will also argue that, although Kobylianska challenged many dominant literary and conceptual conventions, she did not discard tradition
altogether, but rather endeavored to review, rethink, and reassert its value in her original literary treatment of feminist themes.

**Early Years: Multi-Culturalism and Germanic Dominance**

Olha Kobylianska was born on November 27, 1863, in the small town of Gura-Humorului in the Bukovyna province of what was then the Habsburg Empire. Her father Yulian Kobyliansky was a minor administrative worker of Ukrainian noble decent and her mother Maria Werner came from a middle-class Polonized German family. Yulian Kobyliansky was an imperial loyalist, partially Germanized, like most Ukrainian intelligentsia in the nineteenth-century Bukovyna. Yet it did not erase his Ukrainianness, which was a vital part of his culture and daily life. He participated actively in the local Ukrainian community, opposing the pervasive Romanization in Suceava and Kimpolung, where Ukrainians were a minority. He also provided free legal consultations to peasants, organized social and cultural events for the intelligentsia, ran several charities, and raised money to build the first Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church of Saint Demetrius in Kimpolung, which continues to operate to this day. Maria Werner, Kobylianska’s mother, shared her husband’s imperial loyalty and supported his devotion to the Ukrainian community, while remaining faithful to her own Polish cultural heritage – once married, she learned Ukrainian and converted from Roman Catholicism to the Ukrainian Catholic denomination, but continued to use Polish as the main language of communication with children and family. Olha Kobylianska thus was not born or raised a Ukrainian patriot, but
rather grew up within a mixture of Ukrainian, Polish, and German cultures, internalizing all three as important aspects of her identity.

This multicultural dynamic was not simply a result of Kobylianska’s family heritage, but a manifestation of a broader social tendency characteristic of late nineteenth-century Bukovyna. At the time, Bukovyna was the most heterogeneous of the Austrian crownlands, populated by Romanians, Ukrainians, Jews, Germans, Poles, and Hungarians. The cultural diversity of the region forced both local and imperial governments to come up with a working solution to the turbulent nationality question that dominated political debates in Bukovyna in the late nineteenth century. In 1910, a new Austrian constitution and an experimental franchise law gave limited personal autonomy to the six nationalities listed above, guaranteeing their national self-determination. This unprecedented political compromise in the history of the Habsburg Empire was forged to boost imperial loyalty among Bukovynians. Despite numerous tensions that continued to complicate the socio-political relations among diverse ethnic groups in Bukovyna, liberal values propagated by the 1910 constitution were deeply internalized by the Bukovynians. As one contemporary scholar of Ukrainian nationalism observes, the political climate of the 1910s continues to resonate in present-day Bukovyna, making the Chernivtsi region the only part of Ukraine where Ukrainian nationalism coexists with minority nationalisms (Wilson 116). Living in Bukovyna, Kobylianska thus was subjected to the twin pressures of diverse national revivals (Ukrainian and others’) and assimilation to the imperial culture, where German was the dominant language of administrative and cultural exchange. Both of
these tendencies equally influenced the formation of Kobylianska’s identity in the early stages of her life: although the writer grew up trilingual, speaking Ukrainian, Polish, German, and eventually acquired a good command of Romanian, her notes, manuscripts, diaries, correspondence, and autobiographies indicate that German was her dominant language.

Kobylianska was initially schooled in German, receiving four years of formal primary education in a public school in Kimpolung. After finishing the primary school she, like many middle-class European women of her generation, had to rely on self-education through literature, because her parents did not have sufficient means to support the further education of all seven of their children. Although Kobylianska’s five brothers attended gymnasiums and universities, Olha together with her older sister Eugenie read books, mostly German, from local libraries and private collections of family friends to nurture her intellectual growth. The literature available to Kobylianska during her teenage years was more likely to involve romances, adventures, and moral stories than serious philosophical works, as implied by one of Kobylianska’s close girlhood friends in her memoirs:

[At the time, we read a lot of German books together. The city library collection was not very rich, so we read whatever we got our hands on, copying the types, quoting phrases, and even taking the names of the main heroines for ourselves.] (Ustyanovych 213)
Voracious reading and literary discussions of random German classics, popular belles-lettres, and periodicals thus played the key role in the formal and sentimental education of both girls, providing them with virtues and patterns upon which they modeled their own lives.

According to Kobylianska’s diary entries between 1883 and 1891 as well as her later autobiographical comments, her favorite writers in the early stage of her life were Goethe, the key figure in the early nineteenth-century German literature, Heinrich Heine, one of the most significant poets of German Romanticism, and Eugenie Marlitt, the most popular and widely read German novelist of the second half of the nineteenth century. These German cultural icons inspired Kobylianska’s first modest attempts in literature and remained important references throughout her consequent creative career. Encouraged in her literary efforts by her brothers and older sister, the young Kobylianska started writing poetry in German at the age of fourteen. Kobylianska’s early poems, as one critic points out, are written in a style similar to that of the late German Romantics – such as Lenau, Ruckert, and Uhland – and express similar sad, melancholic, and even somewhat mystic comprehension of life (Tomashuk, Zhyttia 11). In 1880, at the age of seventeen, she wrote her first experimental German-language short story “Hortezna: A Sketch of a Girl’s Life” (“Hortezna, oder ein Bild aus einem Mädchenleben”) which, in turn, demonstrates the strong influence of Marlitt. The story’s heroine Hortezna is fashioned after Marlitt’s characters and becomes a prototype of many female protagonists in Kobylianska’s later novels. Fascinated by Marlitt’s prose, Kobylianska wrote
several letters to the German writer expressing her sincere devotion. She even started to translate her favorite novel by Marlitt *Old Mam’selle’s Secret* (*Das Geheimnis der alten Mamsell*, 1868) into Ukrainian, incorporating many of its aspects – its narrative style, irony, rich description of nature, character types, plot schemes, and even core ideas – into her later works.

**Sentimental Education by Eugenie Marlitt: An Asset or a Liability?**

Despite Kobylianska’s continuous reference to Marlitt’s prominence in her work, scholars have sharply criticized and deliberately downplayed Kobylianska’s tribute to the German novelist (Hundorova, *Kich*). To date, there are only a few critical attempts to assess Marlitt’s influence on the Bukovynian writer, which is central in grasping Kobylianska’s original feminist, or rather anti-feminist discourse. Anna-Halja Horbatsch, for instance, argues that through Marlitt’s fiction Kobylianska was introduced to such classical models of domestic fiction as Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* of 1847 (207-215). Tamara Hundorova, in turn, vaguely defines Marlitt’s style of writing as “стиль фемінного кітч” [a style of feminine kitsch], pointing to its traces in Kobylianska’s early works (*Kich* 146). Yet Horbatsch and Hundorova, as well as other critics who openly strive to separate Kobylianska from Marlitt, take as their point of reference the traditional reading of Marlitt’s works as trivial and void of any intrinsic aesthetic value.\(^{10}\) Recent scholarship on Marlitt’s life and work, initiated by the growing interest in feminism and popular literature in the 1970s and 1980s, proves this long-lasting

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\(^{10}\) The best example is B. Potthast’s study “Eugenie Marlitt: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Frauenroman.”
label, however, to be erroneous. Todd Kontje, one of the recent revisionist critics of Marlitt, for instance, emphasizes the important cultural work of Marlitt’s fiction, claiming that “her sudden fall from grace after 1885 had less to do with the intrinsic flaws of her work than changing historical circumstances” (*Women* 200). Such new readings of Marlitt call, in turn, to revisit Kobylianska’s reception of the German writer anew.

Eugenie Marlitt was the most popular and the most highly paid German writer in the 1860s and 1870s. Yet her literary reputation has been gravely wounded by a controversy that broke out in the German press regarding the alleged immorality and shallowness of her works in 1885. Although negative reviews had little effect on Marlitt’s status in the eye of her readers, Olha Kobylianska among them, they led to Marlitt’s marginalization, and prevented critics from any serious treatment of her works in the first half of the twentieth century. Past critics of Kobylianska have demonstrated a similarly cursory treatment of Marlitt’s fiction. Mykhailo Hrushevsky and Ivan Franko, the key figures in Ukraine’s national revival in the early twentieth century, were the first to point out the “detrimental” influence of Marlitt’s sentimental style and conformist subject matter on Kobylianska, resorting to the fixed phrases to denounce Kobylianska’s prose as reactionary. In 1898, Hrushevsky, at the time the head editor of the Lviv journal *Literature and Science Herald* (Пітературно-науковий вістник), criticized Kobylianska’s *The Princess* (Царівна, 1896) for its excessive sentimentality and its Cinderella motif (“Olha” 174-149), the two main flaws that were perceived to be inherent in Marlitt’s fiction (Belgum 262). A few years later,
Franko expressed similarly derogatory attitudes to Marlitt’s style in a letter to Vatroslav Jagic, a renowned Croatian linguist. He admitted that Kobylianska as a writer was influenced by Marlitt, yet he interpreted this influence in the light of the on-going public attacks on Marlitt, hastily calling her writing sentimental and false (50: 281). In the following decade, Franko repeated similar comments in several other reviews to explain the lack of populist motifs in Kobylianska’s early works. His words have been reiterated by most scholars of Kobylianska in the past century. Even Mark Pavlyshyn, the author of the most recent and most compelling review of Kobylianska’s works, evaluates negatively Marlitt’s influence on Kobylianska. He claims that the Bukovynian writer incorporated Marlitt’s sentimental style only in her first fictional work “Hortezna,” abandoning it relatively early, and never employing irony, the most defining feature of Marlitt’s style, in any of her writings (27). A close reading of Kobylianska’s novels and her non-fictional writings proves, however, that Kobylianska continuously relied on Marlitt’s creative formulas throughout her writing career.

Arguably, Kobylianska inherited a number of stylistic and compositional features from the German novelist. Similar to Marlitt’s fiction, most of Kobylianska’s novels champion free-thinkers while condemning religious zealots, create intelligent heroines who meet adversity with a strong will and an independent mind, struggling against the nineteenth-century ideal of women as weak, inactive, and unthinking. Yet in most cases, also similar to Marlitt, Kobylianska mutes her radical protest into a liberal compromise: novels that begin with a firm rejection of the status quo end with qualified support for existing
social hierarchies, and each heroine eventually finds her man and fulfills her
destiny at home. Kobylianska’s novels, like those of Marlitt, are far from being
static Cinderella stories, but feature dynamic transformations of their key
characters, whose personal ability, determination, and moral stamina eventually
bring them victories and triumph over their hostile environments. Moreover,
Marlitt’s educational novels, as Kobylianska describes them in her autobiography
of 1922, provided her with strong female role-models that played a significant
role in the formation of her personality (V 240). At the same time, Kobylianska’s
works are not merely derivative translations of Marlitt into the Ukrainian context.
While using elements of Marlitt’s style and plot composition, and adhering to
Marlitt’s treatment of feminism, Kobylianska addresses in her fiction a number of
current socio-political issues that tormented the Ukrainian community at the turn
of the twentieth century. Her discussion of the emerging and ever-changing
national discourse became the central focus in her fiction, where she exposed its
flaws and developed her own original national narrative, grounded in the works of
many European and Russian thinkers, as well as in her personal observations
and conclusions.

_Ukrainianness: Inheritance or Projection?_

Before Kobylianska’s family moved to Suceava in 1868, a picturesque
town in the South-Eastern Bukovyna, now a territory of Romania, Yulian
Kobyliansky, the writer’s father, was the only person who integrated Ukrainian
language and culture into the family life. As Kobylianska notes in 1921, her
father’s love for his native language, culture, and people was the only reason why the Ukrainian language had survived in their house (V 241). In Suceava, however, Kobylianska quickly entered into a broader Ukrainian community, gathered around the local Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church of Holy Resurrection. As Kobylianska puts it, the household of the local prior Mykola Ustyanovych was “перший правдивий руський дім у який увійшл[a] [вона] й почул[a], крім у рідній хаті, і деїнде руську (так звали тоді українську мову) мову й руські пісні” [the first truly Ruthenian house where she heard Ruthenian (that is what the Ukrainian language was called at the time) language and songs outside her own house and a few other places] (V 229). Although Kobylianska became close friends with the daughter of Mykola Ustyanovych, Olha Ustyanovych, and spent most of her time with the Ustyanovych family, her personal correspondence of this time suggests that German continued to be her main language of communication.

In 1874, the Kobyliansky moved to Kimpolung, another town in Southern Bukovyna, where they also became actively involved in the local Ukrainian community, organizing various charities and cultural events. Here, Kobylianska took some private lessons in Ukrainian, but she gave them up after only a few months of instruction without learning properly how to read or write. In her 1921 autobiography, Kobylianska explains this abrupt end of training by the lack of financial means to continue. Yet based on the writer’s earlier remarks, the skills of reading and writing in Ukrainian must have seemed superfluous at the time: there were no books or periodicals in Ukrainian available to Kobylianska and no
paperwork had to be done in the language. German literature continued to be Kobylianska’s “одиноке джерело, що подавало духовну поживу” [only source that brought spiritual food] (V 232). Only at the age of eighteen, once Kobylianska became friends with Sophia Okunevska, the only daughter of a Ukrainian district doctor Anatasi Okunevsky, who moved to Kimpolung from Galicia in 1881, did Kobylianska renew her study of Ukrainian. Charmed by the vibrant and well-rounded personality of Sophia Okunevska and her enthusiastic devotion to Ukrainian patriotic discourse, Kobylianska ventured to explore her own Ukrainian identity. Sophia Okunevska taught Kobylianska how to read and write in Ukrainian, introducing her for the first time to the key works of Ukrainian literary classics and political thinkers: Shevchenko, the Romantic mid-nineteenth-century poet whose literary heritage is regarded to be the foundation of modern Ukrainian literature; Drahomanov, a prominent historian and an influential political theorist who wrote the first systematic political program for the Ukrainian national movement; Franko, a literary and political giant who founded socialist movement in Galicia; and Pavlyk, an important Galician socialist figure and publicist. Sophia thus introduced Kobylianska to the contemporary political discussions of the Ukrainian national question that brewed in Galicia in the 1870s and 1880s, and were fundamentally different from the pro-Austrian loyalist allegations of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in Bukovyna. Kobylianska also credits Sophia with initiating her into the canonical works of Russian, English, and Scandinavian literatures. It is not surprising that Sophia was the first person to read Kobylianska’s first fictional story “Hortezna.” Sophia encouraged
Kobylianska to continue writing, suggesting that she should consider writing in Ukrainian, for "[це] було б грабунком – додавати там, де вже є і так дуже багато, а забирати звідти, де так мало" [it would be a crime to add where there is already plenty, while taking away from where there is so little] (IL, F14, N787), having in mind German and Ukrainian cultures respectively. Although Kobylianska did not follow her friend's advice right away and continued writing in German throughout the mid-1890s, her personal notes indicate that she started to show more interest in Ukrainian culture and ventured to define her own belonging to it.

Kobylianska’s newfound appreciation of things Ukrainian, particularly literature in the Ukrainian language, was further fanned by lively social encounters at the Okunevsky house. The Okunevsky family was often visited by family and friends, both young and well-establish people, who brought new ideas, new books, and new debates, in which Kobylianska took an active part. The two most discussed topics were Darwinism and its application to the social processes by Herbert Spencer, as well as the role of the intelligentsia in the social reorganization of a nation, which was mostly grounded in the works of Russian radical writers: Belinsky, the founder of Russian literary criticism and a passionate defender of Westernizing tendencies; Dobrolyubov, an influential literary critic who stressed the positive aspects of revolutionary life; Pisarev, a radical writer and social critic who propelled the democratic-revolutionary trend in Russia in the 1860s; Chernyshevsky, the prophet of Russian populist positivism; Lavrov, another prominent theorist of populism; as well as the major Russian
nineteenth-century novelists Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy. The rhetoric of these enthusiastic readings and discussions proved to be contagious. Kobylianska welcomed Spencer’s theory of social evolution by means of individual self-perfection and maximized personal liberty. At the same time, she also adhered to the idea of the writer’s exceptional role as a public figure, whose duty, as perceived by the above Russian thinkers, was to accept full responsibility for leading the people. The tension between Kobylianska’s Western individualism and her conscious recognition of the writer’s socio-political duty ran through her entire career, instigating her to revisit the essential questions of the nineteenth century, in Russian context in particular – who is to be blamed? and what is to be done? Eventually, Kobylianska tampered the dominant positivistic definition of the world through an infusion of German romanticism and Nietzschean thought, finding her solution to the abovementioned questions in the idea of an aesthetic state directed by a proto-Nietzschean intellectual elite with a strong political will. This unusual mixture of the nineteenth-century Russian intellectual thought and Nietzschean philosophy is discussed in the second chapter of this study. It is worth highlighting, however, that although aesthetic elitism was quite popular in Western Europe during the last decades of the nineteenth century, it did not make its way into the mainstream of Ukrainian intellectual discourse, which was mostly dominated by the nineteenth-century Russian positivism and populism, until the 1920s. As a result, Kobylianska’s
elitist views were, for the most part, received negatively, if recognized at all, during the first decades of her creative career.¹¹

_Natalia Kobrynska: A Friend or a Rival?_

During the social encounters at the Okunevskys’ house, Kobylianska met Sophia Okunevska’s cousin Natalia Kobrynska, the leading theoretician of the women’s movement in Ukraine and the biggest female luminary among the Ukrainian intelligentsia in Western Ukraine during the 1880s. Encouraged first by her father Ivan Ozarkevych, a Catholic priest who successfully combined sacerdotal and parliamentary duties, and later by her husband Teophil Kobrynsky, also a priest and a devoted socialist, Kobrynska avidly read progressive Western literature – Buckle, Büchner, Haeckel, Darwin, Renan, Lassalle, Marx, Engels, and Mill, to name a few. Equally influenced by socialism and feminism, Kobrynska tried to balance the two, becoming the first woman in Europe to advocate for their fusion. Kobylianska briefly met Natalia Kobrynska in the summer of 1881, when the latter accompanied the Okunevsky family during their move to Kimpolung. The eighteen-year-old Kobylianska was instantaneously enchanted by Kobrynska and her progressive ideas, particularly her enthusiastic discussion of woman’s role in national regeneration. Their second encounter took place in 1883, after Kobrynska spent almost a year in Vienna, where she took some time to cope with the loss of her husband, who died in March of 1882. Supported by Ukrainian activists in Vienna, Kobrynska

¹¹ For a detail discussion of aesthetic elitism and their dissemination in Western Europe at the turn of the twentieth century see G. Mosse, “Theories of the Elite” in his _The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Century_, 297-312.
returned to Ukraine committed to promoting socialism and feminism by writing and organizing women into a potent social force. Olha Kobylianska became one of the first Ukrainian women whose life Kobrynska set out to change upon her return from Vienna. Over the summer of 1883, Kobrynska developed a curriculum and put together an extensive list of progressive European and Ukrainian texts, which included both scholastic and literary works, to broaden Kobylianska’s education. Kobrynska also recognized Kobylianska’s literary talent and encouraged her to write, promising help and patronage. After Kobrynska returned to Lviv, however, her interest in Kobylianska quickly died out, and she forgot eventually her enthusiastic promises.

Meanwhile, inspired by Kobrynska’s passion and her warm words of support, Kobylianska wrote in 1883-1885 a few short stories that addressed issues of women’s emancipation. In the short story “Fate or Will” (“Schicksal oder Wille,” 1983), for instance, Kobylianska depicts an intelligent and strong willed heroine Jadwiga, who, as opposed to the heroine of “Hortezna,” refuses to be content with the traditional role of housewife. Jadwiga stands up against petty-bourgeois limitations in women’s education and becomes a medical doctor. Her protest and eventual success introduce an important social argument into Kobylianska’s work – the issue of women’s rights to higher education, which is absent in her first story of 1880. “Fate or Will” not only narrates a success story, but also addresses the issue of the women’s intellectual abilities through Jadwiga’s conversations with a male relative who opposed her pursuit of education. On several occasions Kobylianska’s heroine passionately argues
against the popular claim of women's biological incapability, defending women's potential to obtain education and have a career:

– A-a! – відповів Генріх протяжно, саркастично усміхаючись... – Чому жінки позбавлені волі, права? Ну, цілком звичайно: тому, що вони не в сили як слід користуватися тим правом, а крім цього... жінки в своїй діяльності мають стільки обов'язків, що справжня жінка (не ті еманциповані) не буде займатися іншими хворобливими ідеями.
– Добре, – сказала тихо Ядвіга..., – але коли жінка крім своїх обов'язків може виконувати і ще щось, то що тоді? Хіба ту силу треба придушувати тільки через те, що вона ‘без сумніву’ іншим невипідна?

[– A-ah – replied Henry slowly and smiled sarcastically – why are women deprived of freedom and rights? Well, it’s quite obvious: because they are not capable of using those rights. Besides, women have so many duties in their own realm that a real woman (not those emancipationists) will not occupy herself with other sick ideas.
– Well – said Jadwiga quietly – and what if a women can do something other than just her duties? Should that potential then be strangled only because it does not ‘obviously’ suit the others?]
(IL, F14, N181 62-63)

This episode conveys the main premise of the story, where women, as human beings, are said to deserve the very same rights to personal freedom and intellectual development as those enjoyed by men. Several critics claimed that in this story Kobylianska’s treatment of the woman question remains primitive, for although it brings up the question of women’s rights for education and professional growth, it dwells mostly on the question of women’s role in the family (Tomashuk, Zhyttia 13; Pavlyshyn 31-32). The following chapter of this study, which examines Kobylianska’s first novel The Princess, demonstrates, however, that this focus on women’s personal development, which, according to Kobylianska, inevitably leads to the transformation of conventional families into a
more democratic organization, becomes the central concern of Kobylianska’s mature feminist discourse.

Kobylianska’s next short story “Vision” (1885) is an allegorical continuation of the same theme of personal freedom raised in “Hortezna” and “Fate or Will.” Its two main characters, Life and Love, are shackled by the Power of Circumstances and struggle thought “the dark night” to find Freedom. Although the main characters learn that Freedom is also a slave of Circumstances and Human Ignorance – two characters that have strong anti-government and anti-religious implications – their quest gives them hope for a better future. Kobylianska artistically sums up their optimistic vision in the final allegorical proclamations: “Wie weit ist es noch zum hellen Tag, und doch ist die erste Morgenröte schon da!” [It is still far till the bright day, yet the first morning light is already here!] (IL, F14, N1812 6). This closing dictum brings to mind the title of Dobrolyubov’s famous article “Луч света в тёмном царстве,” which literally means “a ray of light in the dark kingdom” but has been translated into English as “The Realm of Darkness” (1860). Dobrolyubov’s article together with several other canonical texts by Russian positivists was a popular reading among Ukrainian intellectuals in the late 1870s and the early 1880s. “The Realm of Darkness” was often evoked in discussions of the woman question, for Dobrolyubov, while reviewing major plays by the Russian dramatist Ostrovsky, developed an argument in favor of improving women’s position in the family. Dobrolyubov exposed in Ostrovsky’s works a world of social evil, denouncing the harsh domestic life and the subjection of women in Moscow merchant families.
He depicted the contemporary middle class Russian family as a “realm of darkness,” where ignorance and tyranny were the reality of everyday life. Although some critics claimed that Dobrolyubov exaggerated in his article, the Russian family as “dark kingdom” had become a major social cliché for generations of Russian intelligentsia. Kobylianska was also influenced by Dobrolyubov and often employed his metaphors of a “dark kingdom” and a “ray of light” in her early texts. In “Vision,” for instance, she uses the first metaphor to portray not only the family, but the entire society as an abyss of darkness, and employs the second metaphor to prophesy the imminent social change.

Kobrynska praised highly Kobylianska’s allegorical “Vision,” calling it progressive for its implied socio-political criticism. Yet, as Kobylianska records in her diary, Kobrynska did not publish the story in her experimental almanac for women The First Garland (Перший віночок, 1887) out of concern that it could be censored for its bold antireligious and anti-government claims, and thus could jeopardize the whole project (Slova 117). Kobrynska’s rejection of “Vision” and several other works by Kobylianska, including She Got Married (Sie Hat Geheiratet, 1886), later known as A Human Being (Людина, 1894), drastically undermined the relationship between the two writers. As Kobylianska’s personal notes of the late 1880s and the early 1890s reveal, the consequent tension between the two writers led to radical changes in Kobylianska’s views, which could not but altered the ideological framework of her later fiction.

12 For further discussion of Dobrolyubov’s influence on the feminist discourse in the late nineteenth century, see R. Stites, The Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia, 34-35.
Feminist despite Kobrynska

Kobylianska’s personal letters and diaries testify that her initial fascination with Kobrynska, as well as her interest in feminism as it was perceived in the Ukrainian community in the 1880s and 1890s, did not last long. Kobrynska, who first encouraged Kobylianska to write and promised to help the young author with publication, mocked crudely Kobylianska’s work in 1883. Without reading Kobylianska’s first short story “Hortezna” to the end, Kobrynska passed it along without proper introduction to Ostap Terletski, a historian and literary critic who was one of the influential leaders of Ukrainian community in Vienna. Not knowing much about the young Bukovynian writer and not realizing that “Hortezna” was her first fictional work, Terletski called Kobylianska “лиш екзотична квітка” [simply an exotic flower] in Ukrainian Literature, a cursory phenomenon, who was out of sync with Ukrainian reality (V 609). Kobylianska found out about this incident by chance and was deeply wounded by what she perceived as Kobrynska’s duplicity. On November 10, 1884, only a year after Kobrynska assured young Kobylianska in her support and patronage, Kobylianska wrote somewhat melodramatically of Kobrynska in her diary:

Наталічно, Наталічко, чому я тебе ненавиджу? Ах! Як я тебе ненавиджу... тому що ти мене скридила! Чому ти не сказала Терлецькому, що то моя перша робота? Чому ти навіть до кінця її не хотіла прочитати? Для того, би Терлецький зганив. А ти ся встидала дальше тим займати... Гарно, уж і забула! А ти не знала як мені в душі виглядало, з яким довір’ям, з яким чувством я мою першу роботу тобі дала... Ви мене висміяли...

13 In a letter to O. Makovej on December 7, 1898, Kobylianska confesses that she cried bitterly when she learned that Terletski mocked her writing with a sarcastic comment, “пачн[а] не мае що робити і пиш[е] за шиromo ромаnsики” [the young lady has nothing better to do, but to write love stories behind the screen], V, 375-376.
Although these passionate words of frustration and disappointment, which Kobylianska wrote at the age of twenty-one, sound young and impulsive, they nevertheless record the beginning of a personal and professional animosity between the two writers, and mark an important threshold in Kobylianska’s ideological evolution.

Kobylianska’s personal notes of 1884 through 1891 capture her growing disappointment not only in Kobrynska, but also in Kobrynska’s discussion of the woman question. Throughout the mid-1880s, Kobylianska repeatedly highlighted her disgust with the dubious nature of Kobrynska and all the Okunevsky-Ozarkevych family, which made her question their social and political views. Thus in the mid-1880s, Kobylianska began to oscillate between two extremes as to the woman question – “я вже живу не для себе, а для жіночого питання” [from now on, I live not for myself but for the woman question] (Slova 117), and revelations such as “жіноче питання… більше не цікавить мене” [the woman question does not interest me anymore] (Slova 44), or “я ненавиджу тих шляхетних захисниць жіночих прав... вони вже мені всі осторожні” [I hate
those noble defenders of women’s rights... they all disgusting me] (Slova 112). As will be demonstrated further, these negative remarks were addressed mostly to Kobrynska and her feminist circle, whose activities in the early 1890s Kobylianska perceived as inconsistent, reductionist, and superfluous (V 257). At the same time, Kobylianska recorded her emerging passion about broader socio-political issues. By 1888, the year the author started working on her first major novel The Princess, her concern with feminist issues expanded into a discussion of the general human condition. On November 24, 1888, she wrote, “Я тепер багато читаю про соціалізм і взагалі про народ; його інтереси цілком збігаються з моїми” [Now I read a lot about socialism and about people in general. The interests of the people fully coincide with mine] (Slova 174). In the early 1890s, Kobylianska abandoned feminist themes altogether, shifting her attention to the program of Ukraine’s national revival. Such prioritizations were symptomatic to the Ukrainian intelligentsia of the time, for nationalism has been inextricably linked with various movements to which Ukrainian intellectuals have committed themselves at the turn of the nineteenth century.

The final split between Kobylianska and Kobrynska took place in 1886, when Kobrynska rejected all Kobylianska’s works – “Vision,” “A Life Sketch from Bukovyna,” and She Got Married – from publication in The First Garland, released in 1887. The editors of the almanac, Natalia Kobrynska and another Ukrainian writer Olena Pchilka, who had first worried about the shortage of material, were faced with a surfeit and had to choose from a wide range of fictional, scholastic, and critical works of predominantly mediocre artistic value.
Surprisingly, despite the obvious superiority in thematic and artistic composition of Kobylianska’s early texts over many of those presented in *The First Garland*, none of them were included in the almanac.¹⁴ To date, there is no clear critical explanation of this fact. Kobylianska’s critics either reiterate Franko’s late apologetic remarks that represent Kobylianska’s early works as immature, or claim that Kobylianska’s new rhetoric, which celebrated individual rebellion against traditions, could not but disturb both editors of the almanac, Kobrynska and Pchilka, who adhered to the dominant populist discourse. Both of these narratives are vague and arbitrary. Kobylianska’s own speculation about Kobrynska’s professional rivalry is much more convincing. As Kobylianska recorded in her diary, Kobrynska found *She Got Married* to be very similar to her own recent story “For a Crust of Bread” (“Задля кусника хліба,” 1883) and offered to make some changes to Kobylianska’s work (*Slova* 125), so that it could fit harmoniously together with her own work in the same volume.¹⁵ Kobylianska interpreted it as an attempt to simplify and distort the integrity of her text. On June 2, 1886, Kobylianska wrote:

Зося сказала мені вчора, що мою новелу візьмуть до друку, але змінить, бо вона подібна до новели, яку написала Кобринська. Я вся стрепенулася з обурення, аж Зося злякалася і почала заспокоювати мене; мовляв, зміни будуть незначні. Я не хочу, щоб мою новелу брали з ласки... Натальця ж сама запрошуvala мене написати її для альманаху... Боже, чого я й

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¹⁴ According to Kobylianska’s 1885-1887 diary entries, she submitted three stories to Kobrynska for review and possible publication in *The First Garland* – “Vision,” “A Life Sketch from Bukovyna,” and *She Got Married*. See *Slova zvorushenoho sertsia*, 111, 112, 114, 117, 124, and 125.

¹⁵ Also see Kobrynska letter to Kobylianska on March 23rd, 1887; qtd. in Tomashuk, *Olha Kobylianska v krytytsi i spohadakh*, 246.
досі не порвала стосунків з Озаркевичами? Тепер я їх усіх терпіти не можу.

[Zosya [Sophia Okunevska] told me that my story will be accepted for publication, but it will be changed, because it is similar to the story that Kobrynska wrote. I was quivering from outrage, so that Zosya got scared and tried to calm me down, saying that the changes would be minor. I do not want them to accept my story out of pity… Natalia herself invited me to write it for the almanac… God, why haven’t I broken all relations with the Ozarkevych family yet? I cannot stand them all now!] (Slova 124)

The emotional charge of this passage conveys both Kobylianska’s irritation and professional pride in her own work – the two main driving forces which would stimulate Kobylianska’s writing in the early 1890s. Kobylianska rejected Kobrynska’s offer, and, consequently, her story was not included in The First Garland. Although Kobrynska’s decision not to publish two similar works, hers and Kobylianska’s, in the same volume was understandable, Kobylianska nonetheless was offended. As she noted in her diary within a few days after the previous entry, she took Kobrynska’s rejection not only as a personal, but also as a professional affront. After this incident, Kobylianska remained courteous with Kobrynska and Okunevska "тільки з вигляду" [only formally] (Slova 125).

Disillusioned first in Kobrynska’s personality, Kobylianska gradually realized the profound differences between her and Kobrynska’s ideological beliefs. While visiting Kobrynska in August of 1889, she wrote, “мої ідеали відрізняються від інших, вони сповнені гарячої любові, поезії і сили… я почуваю себе тут [у Кобринської] чужою і нощу їх схованими в своєму серці” [my ideals differ from those of others; they are filled with passionate love, poetry and power… Here [at Kobrynska’s] I feel like a stranger and keep them hidden in
my heart] (Slova 186). Kobylianska and Kobrynska agreed on the importance of higher education for women and both argued that as human beings women deserved the same rights as those enjoyed by men. Yet they disagreed on the ideological framework in which they imbedded their feminism. Kobrynska, who collaborated closely with Franko and Pavlyk, the leading Ukrainian radicals of the time, adhered to the socialist view of the woman question, according to which emancipation of women could be achieved only in a socially progressive state, and only as a result of the emancipation of the working class. Kobylianska, who was disconnected from the socio-political developments in Galicia and who followed the individualistic philosophy of German Romanticism, on the contrary, rejected socialism, identifying it in the mid-1890s with terrorism, degeneration, and chaos.16 Inspired by avid readings of Russian nineteenth-century anti-socialist realist classics (Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov), Darwinist theoreticians, and Nietzsche, Kobylianska criticized the socialist notion of equality and propagated instead personal intellectual evolution, recognizing knowledge and individual moral self-improvement as the only way to achieve women’s liberation.17

Kobylianska was particularly appalled by the socialist ideas of “free love” and “going to the people,” which determined her somewhat reactionary approach to feminism. According to Kobylianska, these emancipationist doctrines were premature for the Ukrainian context, because, as she continually emphasized in

16 A detailed discussion of Kobylianska’s critique of socialism is presented in second chapter of this study.
17 Here I use G. Morson’s categorization of Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov, presented in his article “Prosaic Bakhtin: Landmarks, Anti-Intelligentsialism, and the Russian Countertradition” in Bakhtin in Contexts, 33-78.
her works, the majority of Ukrainian women lack the proper education and
continued to be dependent on their male relatives or partners. Under this
condition, Kobylanska claimed, feminist extremism – “free love” and “going to the
people” – is detrimental and would only add to the social injustice committed
against women (V 333). Kobylanska expressed her frustration with the
fashionable emancipationist tendencies, which she closely linked to their
fanaticism, in the 1891 letter to Pavlyk:

[I have my own thoughts about our women’s movement. For
instance, I think this movement has an artificial nature, and until we
have more intelligent women, until they understand correctly the
theory behind the woman question, as English, American, and
German women do, our movement will remain artificial. Knowledge
is at the time... our only weapon that can help us get our basic
rights. First, our women have to understand their human rights –
they must know what they want, they must feel it, and until they do,
individual efforts can do little, at best they can bring only transient
achievements.] (V 257)

In this excerpt, Kobylanska openly accuses the newly emerging women’s
movement in Ukraine of doctrinairism and a lack of understanding of the real
situation of the Ukrainian middle-class women. Further in this letter, she firmly
rejects feminist extremism and reemphasizes spiritual and intellectual self-
development as the key goal women should pursue in their fight against social injustice – an intellectual trend that dominated European literature, particularly German, in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Kobylianska reiterated her criticism of the socialist version of feminism in her public speech delivered at the first congress of the Society of Ruthenian Women in Bukovyna in Chernivtsi in October of 1894. In this speech, Kobylianska attacked the circumscribed understanding of feminism among Ukrainian women and firmly spoke against the premature active involvement of women in the public sphere. She argued instead that real progress involves changes in daily living and everyday responsibilities. That is why she projected intelligent motherhood as the most significant function women could perform in any society, securing its biological and cultural regeneration. Kobylianska’s central argument was a Darwinian statement that although women, as human beings, deserved the very same rights for personal development and self-fulfillment as those enjoyed by men, they should not reject their biological gender-identities. She believed that women’s personal development should be employed not to ruin families, but to transform them into a more democratic organization, where women could become sincere loving companions to men and capable mothers to their children, raising them as “тверді, кріпкі і чисті характеристи” [firm, determined, and pure characters] (V 257). This speech has been recognized as Kobylianska’s most complete statement on feminism. It demonstrates that the young writer, contrary to socialist feminists of her time, was interested neither in exposing harsh social conditions that impair the
proliferation of feminism, nor in propagating the main doctrines of feminist discourse of the day, but was rather inclined to investigate how feminist discourse influenced the role of woman in the family at a time when the Ukrainian women’s movement was beginning to organize itself for the first time, equally addressing its positive and negative effects.

One of the best, yet least known, assessments of Kobylianska’s radical departure from the feminists of her time is presented in 1927 by Stepan Smal-Stotsky, a renowned Bukovynian linguist and literary critic who as a co-owner of the newspaper *Bukovyna* (Буковина) played an important role in the popularization of Kobylianska’s fiction in the 1890s. In a critical review of Kobylianska’s works which commemorated the fortieth anniversary of her creative career, Smal-Stotsky highlighted that Kobylianska’s ideal of a woman was fundamentally different from the ideal of an audacious emancipationist, propagated by the mainstream feminists of her time. He claimed that Kobylianska celebrated a kind wife and a good mother, who contributes to the development of national history not with her sex, but with her refined and exemplary personality (278). To support his claim, Smal-Stotsky presented a detailed analysis of several major texts by Kobylianska and quoted from one of her personal letters, where the Bukovynian writer elaborated on her understanding of the pivotal role women play in the development of Ukrainian culture and nationhood:

Для збудовання своєї держави... і жінок нам треба – не ляльок, а героїнь, героїнь в хатнім господарстві, в вихованні дітей, героїнь, що могли б в данній разі і батьків заступити, героїнь, що, покинуті своїми чоловіками, держалися би на п’єдесталі
To create our own state... we also need women – not dolls, but heroines. We need heroines in household management, in raising children; heroines that can substitute fathers, if needed; heroines who, when left by their husbands, could remain on the pedestal of purity and high morals, and who would pursue only one goal – not themselves and their demanding I, but their children.] (279)

Smal-Stotsky’s evaluation together with Kobylianska’s letter confirm that the writer’s rejection of the image of emancipated self-sufficient women, first expressed in the late 1880s, was a firm conviction which she maintained throughout her creative career, propagating somewhat modernized yet traditional roles of women within the family as intelligent mothers and supportive spouses. In this light, there is considerable merit to view Kobylianska as a radical conservative. By radical I mean to indicate that her ideas are indeed highly unconventional and original by any standards. They are intellectually and theoretically, but not politically, radical. In terms of political stance, Kobylianska’s theories are rather conservative and even reactionary, for she rejected what was perceived at the time as a progressive radicalism, striving instead to forge “a new traditional conciseness.” She thus adhered to a specific European tradition that strove not to destroy, but to rethink, reclaim, and reassert the value of tradition itself, something to which she was exposed first through Marlitt and Keller, and later through Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov.

Kobylianska’s diaries and personal correspondence of the 1880s and the early 1890s thus reveal that, although the discussion of feminism played an important role in Kobylianska’s formation as a writer, she eventually withdrew
from women’s societies in the mid-1890s and abandoned feminist discourse altogether, turning her interest to the broader socio-political issues of the Ukrainian national revival (Bohachevsky-Chomiak 107-108). Only her early works from the 1880s, the time when Kobylianska was close to the Okunevsky-Ozarkevych family, directly address the woman question, engaging creatively with the rhetoric of diverse feminist discourses of the time. Consequently, only Kobylianska’s first published story *A Human Being: A Story of a Woman’s Life* (Людина: Повість з жіночого життя 1894), could be recognized as a tendentiously feminist and acutely revealing of the intrinsic nature of Kobylianska’s particular feminist discourse with its radical deviation from the socialist feminism of the time.

**A Human Being: A Failure or an Alternative Feminism**

On November 10, 1884, Kobylianska made a comment in her diary after reading Kobrynska’s newly published story “The Spirit of the Time”:

Вийшла нова Натальчина новела дотепер добра. Але не пише вона так, щоби я її не могла перелетіти. Мене страшенька злість порвала, читаючи ту писанину!.. я ся утримаю і без неї.

[Natalia’s new novel came out. It is rather good. But she doesn’t write so that I cannot surpass her. I got furious while reading that scribble-scrabble! I can make it without her.] (Slowa 70)

In the same dairy entry, Kobylianska recorded her commitment to reading and studying contemporary literature and philosophy, so that she could write a story that would outshine Kobrynska’s work. Within a year, she started writing *Sie Hat Geheiratet* (She Got Married, 1886), addressing the same subject and even
using similar characters and motifs as in Kobrynska’s “The Spirit of the Time” and “For a Crust of Bread,” which project a change in the social position of women as inevitable, decrying the antagonistic upheaval it caused in provincial life. In the early 1960s, Tomashuk analyzed a number of parallels between Kobrynska’s and Kobylianska’s stories and pointed out that although Kobylianska used similar characters and story-lines, the stylistic complexity of her text fundamentally differed from that of Kobrynska. The scholar did not engage in a detailed analysis of Kobylianska’s stylistics, and only briefly mentioned that while Kobrynska constructed her texts as linear narratives of a moralistic story only schematically delineating her characters, Kobylianska worked on the psychology of her protagonist and created a complex narrative style that presented a story through the perception of one character – Olena Laufler. Several other stylistic features that distinguish She Got Married from Kobrynska’s stories also merit brief consideration, for they have come to define Kobylianska’s unique style as innovative and modernist. Following the lead of Turgenev and Dostoevsky who revolutionized a way of visualizing and representing the inner man in fiction, Kobylianska employed dialogues and dialogic internal monologues to reveal Olena’s intense internal struggle with enormous force and acute palpability. The use of dialogue also allowed Kobylianska to individualize the speech of secondary and even episodic characters, creating a multiplicity of impassionate human voices that reflected not only personalities, but also the characters’

18 See O. Kopach’s Language and Style of Olha Kobylianska for a detailed analysis of the linguistic and stylistic development of Kobylianska’s literary writings.
outlook on life. Another important formal stylistic feature, which the author would continuously employ to depict the invisible internal nature of her characters in all her consecutive writings, is a mixture of several prosaic genres, in which the main story is intercut with elements of personal letters, confessions, philosophical contemplations, flash-back memories, and dream narratives. This stylistic complexity and its inextricable link to the complex philosophical subject matter is precisely what made Kobylianska’s work more significant and more sophisticated in terms of style and ideas than any of Kobrynska’s stories. It is not surprising thus that Kobrynska got alarmed, while reviewing *She Got Married* for *The First Garland* in 1886, and eventually rejected Kobylianska’s story for publication.¹⁹

There is popular speculation among scholars that it was Franko who turned Kobylianska’s work down, yet there is barely any factual evidence to back this claim. The only known record of Franko’s commentary on Kobylianska’s *She Got Married* comes up in his article “Manifesto of the Young Muse” (“Маніфест ‘Молодої музи’,” 1907), written twenty years after the publication of *The First Garland*. In the article, Franko only briefly mentions that he found the original version of *A Human Being, She Got Married*, inappropriate for publication in *The First Garland* “задля його солодкаво-сенimentального стилю” [because of its sweet and sentimental Marlitt style] (*Kobylianska v krytytsi* 150). It is known that Kobylianska submitted three stories for *The First Garland* – “Vision,” “A Life Sketch from Bukovyna,” and *She Got Married* – yet Franko’s statement does not specify the exact title of the story he reviewed, thus making it ambiguous which

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¹⁹  See discussion above, 37-39.
of Kobylianska’s works he had in mind. Furthermore, “Manifesto of the Young Muse” was Franko’s apologetic response to the public attacks by Ostap Lutsky, a young and flamboyant member of the modernist circle Young Muse, who blamed Franko for trying “знищити молоду Кобилянську як письменницею” [to destroy young Kobylianska as a writer] (qtd. by Tomashuk in Kobylianska v krytytsi 247).

Franko was forced to explain himself and, most likely, used his previous critical reviews of Kobylianska’s first published works, where he condemned her so-called sentimental Marlitt style (Kobylianska v krytytsi 86, 97, 100), to justify retrospectively the rejection of She Got Married from The First Garland. Surprisingly, in the same apologetic statement Franko highly praised Kobylianska’s A Human Being, the final published version of She Got Married, stating that he was truly amazed with the scope of Kobylianska’s talent demonstrated in her A Human Being and A Fight (Kobylianska v krytytsi 150).

Oleh Babyshkin, a prominent Soviet researcher of Kobylianska’s life and work, was the first to suggest that, if Franko only knew the original edition of A Human Being, the story She Got Married, he would have used the fact that Kobylianska was rewriting the final version of the story under his constructive guidance as an important argument against Lutsky’s accusations of discouraging Kobylianska’s initial literary attempts (Olha Kobylianska 42). Yet Franko, while highlighting several occasions when his word was instrumental in decisions that brought Kobylianska honors and monetary awards, did not seize this opportunity to defend himself.
Therefore, while there is no evidence for either Franko’s role in the evaluation of *She Got Married*, or any plausible tension between him and Kobylianska, Kobylianska’s diaries and correspondence brim with references to Kobrynska’s discontent inflicted by Kobylianska’s artistic challenge to her “The Spirit of the Time” (1884) and “For a Crust of Bread” (1885), which will be examined further in the chapter.\(^{20}\) It is thus possible to assume that Kobrynska, who handled most of the editorial work herself and personally copied all the materials for *The First Garland* before presenting them to Franko for his final review, was mainly responsible for the rejection of Kobylianska’s story.\(^{21}\) The same Kobrynska who mocked and misrepresented Kobylianska’s first work “Hortezna” to Terletski in 1883, most likely, altogether withheld *She Got Married* from Franko in 1886.

Being disheartened with the arrogance of Ukrainian editors, Kobylianska appealed to German critics, “[щоб] чужі сказали чи варта [її праця] що, чи ні” [so that the foreigners would tell her whether her work was of any value] (V 180). After a few minor corrections, Kobylianska sent her work to Fedor Mamroth, an editor of a popular Vienna journal *An der blauen schönen Donau*. The story was not accepted, for it was too long and philosophically too complex for the mainstream readers of the journal. Yet Mamroth wrote a warm letter to Kobylianska, in which he highly praised the story for its “надзвичайно цікаву тему, знамениті епізоди, справедливий погляд на справи і оригінальні

\(^{20}\) See discussion above, 37-39.

\(^{21}\) For further reference, see I. Denysiuk and K. Kril, “Poboryntsia progresu” in *N. Kobrynska: Vybrani tvory*, 5-20.
думки” [extremely interesting theme, outstanding episodes, common sence, and original thoughts] (qtd. by Makovej in Kobylianska v krytytsi 47) and encouraged the author to continue writing, advising “es in immer welchen Verhältnissen und Umständen, die Feder nicht aus der Hand lassen” [under no circumstances to let the quill out of her hands] (V 608). Supported by the Austrian critic, Kobylianska made further corrections, translated the story into Ukrainian, changed its title to A Human Being (Людина), and sent it to the Galician socialist journal Truth (Правда) in 1888. Yet this publication attempt also failed. The editors sent the story back with a note that “авторка не знає української мови” [the author does not know the Ukrainian language] (qtd. by Makovej 47). Only in 1894, after the Ukrainian language of the story was substantially edited, the story was published in the Ukrainian journal Morning Star (Зоря) under the title A Human Being: A Story of a Woman’s Life (Людина: Повість з жіночого життя) and with an ambiguous dedication to Kobrynska.22 As the dedication suggests, Kobylianska thus insisted on her literary and polemical challenge to the famous writer, in which, as will be demonstrated next, she not only proved Kobrynska wrong in evaluating her artistic potential, but also exposed the shallow and artificial nature of the feminist discourse propagated by Kobrynska, proposing an alternate take on feminism in the Ukrainian context.

A Human Being was, however, not only Kobylianska’s literary challenge to Kobrynska, but also an ambitious attempt to conceptualize her own understanding of the woman question, which considerably differed from

22 For a detailed analysis, see N. Tomashuk in Olha Kobylianska v krytytsi i spohadakh, 246-268.
Kobrynska’s, and was rooted in western individualist philosophy rather than in popular socialism. While writing *A Human Being*, Kobylinska studied *The Enfranchisement of Women* (1851) by Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill, *The Mission of Our Century: A Study of the Woman Question* (1878) by Irma von Troll-Borostyani, and some other philosophical works that supported women’s right to professional education, predicting that the emancipation of women would double the mass of mental facilities available for the higher service of humanity. Kobylinska’s writings, both fictional and non-fictional, show that the author was most interested in the Darwinian explanation of women’s natural potential, which inspired her to engage with Darwin’s theory of evolution and its adaptation in social theories, such as the German naturalist Ernst Haeckel’s determinism and British philosopher Herbert Spencer’s synthetic philosophy. There are two documents preserved in Kobylinska’s archives that give evidence of Kobylinska’s meticulous research. The first work, a German nineteen-page conspectus “Etwas über die darwinistische Theorie” [“Notes on Darwin’s Theory”] (IL, F14, N1017), investigates the evolutionary principles shared by Lamarck, Darwin, and Haeckel, who recognized natural forces, but not rational thought or spiritual belief, as the major force behind all human endeavors. The second document is a fourteen-page outline (KMHM, N1992) of a Sergij Podolynsky article “Society and Darwin’s Theory” (“Громадянство і теорія Дарвіна,” 1881) published in the Ukrainian periodical *Community* (Громада). It examines a Marxist reading of Darwinism, where natural selection’s emphasis on the propagation and survival of the fittest is seen as one of the main underpinnings of
a capitalist morality legitimized by selfish struggle for self-preservation and self-promotion. Alongside the Marxists’ use of Darwin’s evolutionary theory to critique capitalism, the second document also analyzes the socialist justification of solidarity as more beneficial for human progress than the selfish individualism propagated by Haeckel. Intertwining several arguments delineated in these two documents with personal reading of the woman question, Kobylianska came up with an original vision of feminism, which she presented in her first published work symbolically titled *A Human Being: A Story of a Woman’s Life*, where the heroine rejects the grand liberal doctrines rooted in determinism as detrimental, choosing a more conservative path to achieve her personal liberation.\(^\text{23}\)

*A Human Being* features a middle-class girl Olena Laufler, who grows up in a small provincial town in a well-off family of His Majesty’s Forest Counselor Mr. Epaminondas Laufler. Olena is an inquisitive girl and reads avidly a variety of books, which bring her under the influence of the progressive ideas of her time. After the Laufler family declares bankruptcy Olena’s parents ask her to put her liberal fancies aside and marry a wealthy Mr. K to save the family from inevitable poverty. Olena despises Mr. K’s self-absorbed and brutish personality and rejects his proposal, refusing to sacrifice her soul to meet the physical needs of her family. However, after six years of hard work on an isolated ranch in a remote village, Olena outgrows the idealist rhetoric of her youth and marries a wealthy Mr. Fels, an attractive local forester, who secures a decent living for her and her family.

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\(^{23}\) For further discussion of the two conspectuses, see M. Pavlyshym’s *Olha Kobylianska: Prochytannia*, 61-64.
Critical literature on Kobylianska has, until recently, treated this story exclusively as a feminist narrative that argues in support of women’s rights to financial independence. Osyp Makovej, Kobylianska’s first editor and a close friend, was the first to point out the story’s successful polemic on women’s right to define themselves, particularly through work, and to develop their own views about their role in a society, traditionally defined by the patriarchal order (Kobylianska v krytytsi 11). Marxist scholars also acknowledged Kobylianska’s tribute to the woman question, appropriating, however, her social commentary to their ideological needs, casting the heroine as a typical victim of the age. A Rumanian Marxist scholar Magdalena Laslo, for instance, recognized A Human Being as the most successful elaboration of the woman question by Kobylianska, where the writer consciously intertwined the woman question with the concrete social and economic conditions of human existence in bourgeois society, exposing them as the main reason of women’s discrimination (Kobylianska v krytytsi 331). Recent feminist readings of A Human Being, in turn, have brought to light previously silenced aspects of the story – Darwinism, female sexuality, and human psychology – celebrating Olena Laufler as the first ‘anti-Marusia’ type in Ukrainian literature, the first female character who has become a body and not an icon, the antithesis of the heroine in Kvitka-Osnovianenko’s story “Marusia” (“Mapyca,” 1834) (Hundorova Famina 96-97; Pavlychko Feminism 128-129). Yet despite a number of valuable observations, these feminist readings remain limiting, for they refrain from the close structural and stylistic analysis, without
which it is hard to grasp the deeper and more complex philosophical subject matter of the story.

The most striking shortcoming in the criticism of *A Human Being* that continuously obfuscates the specifics of Kobylianska’s feminism is a univocal tendency to overemphasize the ending of the story, where the heroine bursts into tears moments before her wedding. This approach overlooks a number of important contextual details, such as the evolutionary nature of Olena’s delayed self-discovery, and reads the story as a narrative of degeneration, failure, and betrayal of feminist ambitions. Tamara Hundorova, for instance, effectively elaborates on Olena’s discovery of her budding physical attraction to Mr. Fels, providing useful psychoanalytical observations of the heroine’s mental struggle of repressing her awakening sexuality. However, she does not imbed these psychological discoveries into the overall discourse of Olena’s evolving views, adhering to the conventional reading of the final cathartic scene, and assessing it as a hysterical breakdown of the heroine, who is gravely traumatized by slipping into the physical reality that ends her dreams (*Femina* 101-102). Halyna Levchenko also interprets Olena’s story as a story of degeneration. She describes *A Human Being* as “відчуйний психологічний експеримент з жінкою-Нарцисом” [an original psychological experiment with a woman-narcissist] who attempts to function in a system of masculine values. This experiment, Levchenko states, goes well at the beginning, yet it eventually degenerates into the heroine’s self-negation (71). Similarly, Vera Ageyeva claims that despite the initial heroic rebellion against patriarchal dogmas, Olena Laufler
fails at the end, by forcing herself into a financially-sound marriage with a person who does not share any of her aspirations (213-214). Mark Pavlyshyn, in turn, approaches Kobylianska’s works anew, deconstructing many of the dominant myths. The scholar, however, also joins the general consensus on the symbolic meaning of the story’s ending. Despite his discussion of Kobylianska’s fascination with evolutionary theory and his detailed analysis of a Darwinian polemic in *A Human Being*, he reads the struggle of the main heroine as futile, concluding that “маючи таку свідомість, вона [Олена] все одно вважає себе змушену одружитись за гроші, щоб врятувати родину від убогості” [despite such a high consciousness, Olena considers herself forced to marry for money and thus save her family from poverty] (65). Evidently, while illuminating the theme of Olena’s budding sexuality, recent critics oppose it to the heroine’s beliefs, reading the two – Olena’s sexual drives and mental aspirations – as antagonistic and fatally irreconcilable aspects, thus insisting on the irresolute ending of Olena’s story. A close reading of *A Human Being*, as well as its contextualization within the complete oeuvre of Kobylianska’s writings, particularly those that address feminism, suggests, however, another possibility, where Olena’s story could be seen as a painful, yet successful negotiation between her instinctual and spiritual ambitions. By examining meaning-generating functions of all constituents of the story – thematic content, style, compositional structure, and extra-contextual elements – this thesis will be explored in the remainder of the chapter.
A Human Being is a hybrid text organized around the two main themes of testing (Prüfung) and becoming (Bildung): its heroine, Olena Laufler, initially an idealist and eccentric, first undergoes several trials, the last of which facilitates a profound transformation of her views, presenting her as a thinking individual capable of deriving knowledge from her own life experiences. This combination of novelistic modes was a challenging novelty for the Ukrainian literary tradition yet a dominant model in European novel, especially in German and Russian literature, which influenced the young Kobylianska.\textsuperscript{24} It allowed the author to accommodate the two main polemical themes of her story – her feminist critique of the conservatives’ anxieties over the New Women and her exposure of what she viewed to be the naïve and rushed nature of the dominant feminist discourse in Ukraine of her time. The first part of the story thus exposes the dependent position of women in a family, which is explained by their lack of education. The second part, where the heroine undergoes several trials that trigger her intellectual growth, denounces, in turn, Ukrainian feminists for their extremism, and argues against the premature implementation of their doctrines in a traditional society, which, according to Kobylianska, leads to personal tragedies, rather than to a reconfiguration of the unjust social order.

Kobylianska uses clear formal markers to set up each argument, starting each of the two parts with an ambivalent German-language epigraph. The first part opens with a quotation from an unspecified source:

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\textsuperscript{24} See M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel" in The Dialogic Imagination, 392-393.
Das Reich der Lüge ist aufrecht, wie es noch niemals gevesen. Die Wahrheit selbst wagt sich, nur in gleißenden Fetzen vermummt, aus ihrem Winkel hervor... (I 45)

[As never before, falsehood triumphs everywhere. Truth dares to creep out of its corner only when it is wrapped in brightly alluring rags.] (tr. by Roma Franko *For a Crust* 160)

In the past criticism, this quotation has been either disregarded or interpreted as a reference to the suffocating social environment, against which Olena Laufler rebels, advocating progressive liberal ideas. The epigraph, however, makes a telling implicit claim – falsehood reigns everywhere – suggesting through its authoritative tone and tendency to generalize a certain degree of deception not only in the beliefs of the antagonistic characters, but also in the heroine’s thoughts and evaluations, which become obvious only at the end of the story.

The second part, where the author complicates the pathos of feminist rhetoric, opens, in turn, with a quotation from *Ever Forward (Allzeit voran, 1872)* by Friedrich Spielhagen, a popular nineteenth-century German novelist, who, like Eugenie Marlitt, underwent a dramatic fall from literary eminence in the late 1880s:

Es Lebt in mir die Liebe zur Freiheit, der feste Entschluß, mich nicht knechten lassen zu wollen, es sei von wem es sei; nimmer mein Haupt zu beugen, wo meine Seele es nicht kann; mein Leben zu leben, wie Ich es verstehe, den Weg zu gehen, den Ich mir vorgezeichnet, und mich durch nichts von diesem Wege abbringen zu lassen; durch keine Schmeichelein, durch keine Drohung, mag er [der Mensch] denn führen, wohin er will...

[Within me lives a love for freedom and a strong determination not to let anyone enslave me; never to bend my head where my soul cannot do the same; to live my life as I understand it; and to follow only that path that I myself have chosen, no matter how difficult it
might be; may he [a human being] go where he wants despite any flattery or threats.] (I 70)

The quotation is brimming with the pathos of nineteenth-century individualism, positioning individual freedom of choice as the main theme of the second chapter. The passage also highlights the importance of harmonious equilibrium between human cognition, symbolically represented by the German “das Haupt” [head], and an internal emotional world, conveyed by the German “die Seele” [soul or psyche]. This pivotal balance between rational and sensual, which has been completely ignored in all critical literature on Kobylianska, underlies, however, the writer’s main argument against what she perceived as detrimental feminist extremism, where women become possessed by ideas that omnipotently define and distort their consciousness and their lives. The argument is the second philosophical theme of A Human Being that challenges Kobrynska’s socialist vision of feminism. The following analysis will examine each part of the story to discern both Kobylianska’s feminist critique of the traditional petty-bourgeois society and her attack on the dominant feminist discourse.

As the first epigraph suggests, the story opens by introducing the social environment of the heroine as “das Reich der Lüge,” which literary means the realm or the kingdom of lies. This metaphor directly alludes to Dobrolyubov’s concept of the “dark kingdom,” which Kobylianska uses in her previous writings to decry the harsh domestic life and the subjection of women in middle-class provincial families. Yet in A Human Being, the Laufler family is not depicted as a hopelessly ignorant and brutish abyss, as the protagonists’ families are in
Kobylianska’s “Fate or Will” and in “A Life Sketch from Bukovyna,” but presented in a more cheerful and ironic manner as a mediocre middle-class family, not especially evil, but deluded and disoriented in their backward provincial setting, where progressive social developments clash with traditional views. Kobylianska artistically conveyed this multileveled and contradictory social reality of the periphery by creating a range of vibrant characters with their distinct voices that clearly delineated not only their personalities, but also their outlook on life. This polyphony allowed Kobylianska to use irony and even parody to undermine the prevailing traditional understanding of the role of women in a family and to argue in support of women’s rights for education and self-expression.

The most vibrant character of the opening sequence is Mrs. Laufler, the heroine’s mother, who epitomizes conservative views on womanhood in the story. Her character has a lot in common with Mrs. Shumska, the main heroine in Kobrynska’s story “The Spirit of the Time.” Like Kobrynska’s heroine, Olena’s mother fears her daughter’s talk about women’s right to education and social mobility. She reveals similar apocalyptic vision of women’s emancipation, associating any deviation from conventional morality with extreme libertinism, promiscuity, and the dissolution of the traditional family. Like Mrs. Shumska, Mrs. Laufler intuitively fears her daughter’s enthusiasm over liberal ideas, seeing it as an obsession, a state of bewilderment, inflicted by “дуже лихий і небезпечний демон, [який] заволодів душею доньки... та й ввів її в країну смішливості і безумства” [a wicked and a dangerous demon [who] has gained control over her daughter’s soul... and carted [her] off... to the land of idiocy and lunacy] (I 48; tr.
by Roma Franko *For a Crust* 163). However, as opposed to Mrs. Shumska who furiously rips up her daughter’s books and protests against her granddaughter’s wish to become a teacher, Mrs. Laufler refuses to force her authority on her daughter, recognizing Olena’s freedom of choice. Therefore, although Kobylianska adapts several motifs from Kobrynska’s story to create a vivid image of conservative mother, her Mrs. Laufler is far from being a mirror replica of Kobrynska’s protagonist. By making Mrs. Laufler a secondary figure and by using her outdated, foolish, and quite ridiculous beliefs only to highlight the progressive views of the main character Olena, Kobylianska emphasizes her limited interest in sympathizing with pathetic conservatives incapable of keeping up with new social phenomena, or in lamenting the doomed destinies of unfortunate provincial girls. Instead, she introduces a new type of female character in Ukrainian literature – an intelligent heroine who meets adversity with a strong will and an independent mind, struggling against the nineteenth-century ideal of women as weak, inactive, and unthinking – openly attacking Kobrynska’s literary treatment of feminist themes.

Hence the heroine of *A Human Being* is presented as a twenty-year-old loving and respectful daughter, yet a spirited and rebellious person, whose liberal views clash with the traditional conception of womanhood. Olena’s progressive understanding of the woman question is conveyed through her dialogues with Stefan Liyevych, a medical student from Vienna University, who appears to be the most cultured and educated character, but eventually turns out to be as flawed as everyone else in the story. During their first conversation Liyevych
brings up the subject of the New Women, making a sharp comment on current upper-middle class women’s education in Ukraine:

Еманципація жінок в Швейцарії або і в інших поступових краях – се точка давно виборена… [А] тут жінки остались ще так позаду за другими народами… Заграбавшись між свої чотири стіни, не завдають вони собі навіть настільки праці, щобі дещо путьного прочитати… [та] очиститись з перестарілих, дурних, просто смішних пересудів. А про якусь основну освіту, про розуміння природознавства та матеріалістичної філософії нема вже й бесіди. Освоєні поверховно з поодинокими галузями наук, з поодинокими фактами всесвітньої історії, думають, що вони справді доволі озброєні супроти вимог життя. І вони задумують з горстю того наукового краму при невідраднім положені, яке тепер займають в суспільності, вести боротьбу о існування!.. В якім глибокім сні остаються ще нині жінки, як мало журяться про свою самостійність! (1 50)

[The emancipation of women in Switzerland and other progressive countries is a struggle won a long time ago… Yet here women remain so far behind other nations… Having buried themselves within four walls, they make no effort to read any sensible information about this matter in order to rid themselves of their outdated, foolish, and quite ridiculous beliefs. And it’s pointless to talk about attaining a solid education, or understanding of natural since and materialistic philosophy. Having superficially familiarized themselves with discrete branches of knowledge with isolated facts about world history, they think they are adequately armed to meet the challenges of life. And, in the difficult position that they occupy in society, they hope to mount a struggle for their existence with just this smattering of knowledge! It fills one with despair to realize how dormant our women are, and how little they concern themselves about their independence!] (tr. by Roma Franko For a Crust 165)

Here Liyevych attacks women, arguing that their ignorance and passivity are to blame for their subjugation. Olena seems to conform to most of his claims, yet his hostility toward women makes her uncomfortable, and she speaks up in their defense. She states that, if at the moment Ukrainian women seem less progressive than European, it is due not to their inherently flawed nature, but
rather to the limitations in their education and upbringing. Eventually, both young people agree that, if women want any positive change in their current social position, they should be more proactive in preparing themselves for the future. Their discussion ends with a statement that reflects Kobylianska’s belief in individual self-improvement as a way to personal liberation – the two characters agree that knowledge must be the main “weapon” in women’s fight against social injustices. Such arguments in support of women’s education and self-development, together with the open critique of women’s apathy and ignorance, have come to define what Bohachevsky-Chomiak singles out as “Kobylianska’s particular brand of feminism” (106) and would consistently reappear in many of Kobylianska’s consequent works.

Olena’s second conversation with Liyevych also contains a powerful philosophical message that evokes several Darwinian theories, rejecting some yet celebrating others to promote respect for the individual female personality in the broader humanistic sense. At the beginning of the conversation, the reader learns that Olena is secretly engaged to Liyevych but the two cannot get married right away because Liyevych still has to finish his studies abroad. While saying goodbye, Liyevych expresses his concerns about Olena’s fidelity, which he grounds in what could be read as a determinist outlook, revealing his general uncertainty in human agency. He points out that Olena is simply “людина” [a human being] – moreover, a female human being – who is conditioned by biological and biographical factors, and thus has no agency over her own life. Ignoring her fiancé’s selfishness and lack of confidence, Olena firmly refutes his
claim, arguing that humans are, on the contrary, driven by their volition and free will. Olena’s rhetoric presents her as a fully formed person with strong liberal ideals, grounded in the progressive natural and social theories of her time, which she is determined to prove with her own life. The remainder of the story concentrates on the testing of Olena’s character, subjecting her to numerous trials in the light of her ideals. She continually struggles against external pressures, internal doubts, and unexpected circumstances – death of her fiancé Liyevych and impoverishment of her family – which eventually help her to assert her own definition of what it really means to be a human being.

Olena’s testing begins with the bankruptcy of her family, when her desperate parents try to force her to marry a well-off court adjunct Mr. K, who can save the whole family from ruin. Naturally, Olena refuses, claiming that her personality is incompatible with Mr. K’s, which, according to her logic, would lead to a more profound ruin than financial instability. She describes him as a cold, calculating, and brutish person who lives only for his own enjoyment and “котрого ‘я’ становить для нього одинокий світ” [whose ‘I’ constitutes the only world he knows.” Olena further exposes his tyrannical nature addressing his maltreatment of his factory workers. And finally, she proclaims him an indulgent, promiscuous egoist who uses women only to quench his lust:

Ніяка жінка не в силі [його] довший час придержати, бо, мовляв, знає на перед про кожду, що потрібував би лише палець надставити, а мав би їх десять нараз. (I 74)

[No woman has the power to hold his interest for a long time, because, as he says, he knows everything about them ahead of time; he knows that all he has to do is to lift a finger and he could
have ten of them at the same time.] (tr. by Roma Franko *For a Crust* 188)

These insightful observations project Olena as an exceptionally smart and analytical character, capable of grasping Mr. K’s circumscribed nature, and of foreseeing an inevitable enslavement and spiritual degeneration in a marriage with such a man. Neither parents nor friends can counter her points, and the heroine comes out victoriously from her first trial, proving that her wit, will, and determination are indeed strong enough to withstand social pressures.

The second testing of Olena’s character begins with her family’s move to a remote farm, where they struggle to meet their material needs. The grievous village life, hard labor and spiritual depravation are suffocating for Olena. As she says, “немає тяжкої кари для молодого живого духу, для бистроумних, енергійних і надто ідеально уложеніх натур – як таке життя” [there is no punishment worse than such a life style for a agile young spirit, for someone who is clever, energetic, and possesses an overly refined mind] (I 82). She realizes that her daily toil will undermine her spirit and that sooner or later she will degenerate into a type of person apathetic to all but physical well-being. Yet Olena keeps her psychic agony mute, protecting her family from unnecessary worries and demonstrating incredible strength of character. Moreover, she continually searches for a way out, working out different strategies to overcome their poverty, and proving to be an excellent farm manager and a responsible head of the family.
The third trial of Olena’s virtues introduces the theme of becoming (Bildung), triggering an intense process of self-discovery and maturation. This trail turns out to be the most challenging experience for Olena, which she nevertheless overcomes victoriously, resolving many of her internal conflicts and proving to be an intelligent woman capable of learning not only from books, but also from daily experiences and personal observations. It is facilitated through the heroine’s irrational passion for an attractive, yet poorly educated forester, Mr. Fels, whom she eventually marries. The theme of Olena’s discovery of her sexuality has been recently addressed by Hundorova and Pavlyshyn, who recognize Olena as the first heroine in Ukrainian literature that dared to talk about her erotic feelings. Both scholars, however, read Olena’s sexuality as a “біологічна пастка” [biological trap], which secures the survival of the species, yet does not ennoble a woman’s soul (Pavlyshyn 67; Tomashuk Zhyttia 99). Surprisingly, while referring to psychoanalytical theory to explain Olena’s emotional breakdown in the final scene, both scholars ignore the revitalizing nature of sexual satisfaction celebrated in psychoanalysis. Although there is no evidence that Kobylianska personally read about Sigmund Freud’s research on hysteria and female sexuality, published within a year of A Human Being, the writer’s diaries suggest that she had been introduced to new developments in psychology and psychoanalysis through her friend Okunevska.25 Moreover, several other prominent nineteenth-century thinkers, who were influential in Kobylianska’s formation as a writer, recognized sexual satisfaction as inextricably

fused with the harmonious development of the human mind, directly connecting sexual deprivation with spiritual degeneration. In fact, Kobylianska refers to one of these writers while setting up Olena’s final trial, providing a curious insight on how the heroine understands sexuality and bodily pleasures.

Before introducing Mr. Fels, Kobylianska describes a scene in which Olena recalls Dmitri Pisarev’s renowned pamphlet *Вес* (*Пчелы*, 1862), where Russia’s prominent materialist philosopher of the time unleashes a vivid social critique through a satirical investigation of the division of labor in a beehive. He sharply condemns the social order that divides its members into exploiters and exploited, equally decrying all segments of the bee-colony – promiscuous bee-queens, lustrous drones, as well as foolish indoctrinated worker-bees, whom he called “plebeian-castrates” (122). Pisarev claims that worker-bees were responsible for their own subjugation, mercilessly denouncing their self-sacrifice and communal commitment, calling this mode of thinking a “destructive stupidity” (119, 128). He further insists that grand communal ideas undermine individual aspiration, condemning those who follow them to the debilitating drudgery in the eternal darkness of the despotic traditional societies. He also argues that only through individual experiences and self-discovery can one grasp the real meaning of what is important in life, and without which no progressive change is possible. Keeping to the overall framework of his naturalistic argument, Pisarev features bodily pleasures and sexual experiences as the most potent stimuli of individualistic views, directly connecting the doomed state of the worker-bees, and all downtrodden in general, to the repression of their sexuality. Yet Pisarev’s
main criticism is targeted not at the worker-bees, but at the so called liberal pseudo-intellectuals or doctrinairians ("доктринеры"), whose knowledge is derived from books and not from real life experiences. These propagators of high-sounding doctrines, Pisarev claims, perceive life as "риторическая фигура лишенная плоти и крови" [a rhetorical figure deprived of flesh and blood] (115-116), and thus generate barren idealistic visions that have no relevance to what is truly important for individual happiness. In the 1880s Pisarev’s Bees was one of the most discussed texts among Ukrainian intellectuals, yet Kobylianska was the first to cite it in a literary work, imbedding her own attack on feminist doctrinism in the broader critique of contemporary idealism, liberalism, and positivism.

Kobylianska’s allusion to Pisarev’s pamphlet elucidates the writer’s own position on Olena’s situation, projected as doomed existence brought up by the heroine’s perverted idealist notions of duty and self-sacrifice. In this light, Mr. Fels, Olena’s husband-to-be, who comes into the story immediately after the reference to Bees and becomes the instigator of Olena’s self-discovery, could be seen as a savior, as Pisarev’s provocateur who brings confusion into Olena’s world, stimulating the revision of her earlier idealist views. Remarkably, in their first scene together Mr. Fels rescues Olena in a carriage wrack, which metaphorically highlights the larger role Mr. Fels is to play in the heroine’s life. Yet Olena does not recognize right away either the liberating aspect of the passion ignited by Mr. Fels, or his noble nature, subjecting herself to a difficult internal turmoil, before she finally admits her love for Fels. Kobylianska depicted
Olена’s internal agony through her intense, self-deprecating speeches, which virtuously express her doubts, reservations, and uncertainty, making the heroine and her internal world highly ambiguous and elusive. These speeches capture a certain duality, a lack of wholeness characteristic of all living human beings, and a mixture of strength and weakness within Olena’s character. Initially Olena acts as if enchanted around Mr. Fels, seized by strange feelings – “лице її спалах[увало] кров’ю, а серце товклося сильно... в очах її горів дивний огонь, ніздрі дрижали...” [blood rushed to her face, her heart began to pound... a strange fire burned in her eyes and her her nostrils quivered” (I 84; tr. by Roma Franko For a Crust 198) – which confuses, yet pleases her. However, the stronger her erotic desire grows, the more frightened she becomes, experiencing the awakening of the tabooed sexual desire as a threat not only to her virginity but also to some of her chaste idealistic beliefs. Olena tries to regain her composure and consciously undermines Mr. Fels’ sexual appeal by dwelling on his lack of scholarly erudition. Yet soon she recognizes that her defensiveness against the natural callings of her body contradicts her own Darwinian views, which, in turn, makes her realize the discrepancy between her personal desires and those noble ideals that had fascinated her from a young age. Eventually, Olena comes up with a rational working solution and decides to resolve her struggle in what Pavlyshyn calls a financially and biologically sound (65-66), if not intellectually-motivated marriage. Yet, the heroine continues to deny her actually quite strong attraction toward Mr. Fels and prefers to perceive her marriage plan as a rational self-sacrifice for the good of her family. Thus she continues to cling
to the idealist framework to justify herself as a heroic liberal, postponing the affirmation of her individual position which has already sprouted out of the conditions of her life, which she has brooded over in the solitude of her village, and has considered in its every aspect.

Olena’s younger sister Iryna strongly objects to this decision and succeeds in making the heroine uncomfortable with the honesty of her intentions concerning Mr. Fels. Iryna, however, is unaware of Olena’s erotic attraction to Mr. Fels and sees only pragmatic financial motivations behind her sister’s marriage plan, which she perceives as Olena’s self-negation and spiritual death. Iryna’s rhetoric resonates with Olena’s own reservation concerning the true motive for her decision. Yet the heroine responds with a powerful polemic, trying to convince her sister as well as her own doubts, that her marriage with Mr. Fels is the right thing to do. First, Olena claims that there is no point in refusing Mr. Fels’s proposal, for “г619/g607 /г615/g607 /г614/g602/g613/g616 /г603 [it would not have any [ideological] goal] – she has never opposed marriage itself. Then she states that, although Mr. Fels is far from being the embodiment of her ideal partner, he, as opposed to Mr. K, is a good man of exceptional kindness and physical strength. Although Olena does not admit yet that she loves Mr. Fels, she gives away her feelings in a curious speculation, where she claims that “його любов не зостанеться на ню без впливу, [бо] любов має те в собі, що наколи походить від симпатичних осіб, викликає настрій, подібний до любові” [his love for her will not leave her untouched, [for] love – when it comes from kind individuals – has the power to elicit feelings akin to love] (I 93; tr. by Roma Franko For a Crust
205). And finally, she acknowledges that Mr. Fels reads eagerly and shows a more sincere interest in and respect for her views, implying that he will be a compliant student, and that she can easily bring his education to the proper level. Iryna, however, does not sense her sister’s emotional ambivalence and harshly condemns Olena’s pursuit as a disgraceful husband-hunt (“лови”), making the heroine feel miserable again – “немов собака, покарана за якусь провину” [like a dog that has been punished for some wrongdoing] (1 92; tr. by Roma Franko For a Crust 204).

In the following sections Kobylianska continually suggests Olena’s genuine attraction to Mr. Fels, intercutting the main narrative of the story with Olena’s internal monologues, philosophical contemplations, and flash-back memories that bring out her heroine’s true feelings. Kobylianska even incorporates a detailed dream sequence, which clearly projects Olena’s bright future with Mr. Fels, to open the final section on the heroine’s self-discovery. Olena’s dream, if read in Freudian terms, offers the reader valuable insight into the heroine’s unconscious. Surprisingly, even recent scholars of Kobylianska who use psychoanalytical theory to approach her works anew ignore this meaning-generating fragment, which clearly support the proposed alternate reading of the story. In the first part of the dream, Olena is frightened by a stormy sea that threatens to swallow her:

"Й здавалось, неначе б величезні, шумлячі морські хвилі чим раз, то ближче і ближче підходили до неї і збивалися над її головою. Бурніли, шуміли гризно, а проміж їх шумом долітав голосний, могучий, лаючий голос, що аж земля задрижала і"
It seemed to her that huge, roaring waves were rushing towards her and were breaking over her head. They raged and blustered violently, and from their midst emerged a voice so loud, powerful, and derisive, that the earth shuddered and strange tremors coursed through her body... her heart was pounding – it was close to breaking. She wanted to yell, to shout... [tr. by Roma Franko For a Crust 214]

Here the sea can be read as an external threat, possibly social pressures or expected financial instability. The intimidating unknown voice, which first is fused with the sea, and thus her fear, can be read as Olena's fear of marriage and her sexuality. Yet when further in the dream the heroine learns that the powerful voice belongs to a strong man, whose characteristics – “високий, відважний, з сяючим чолом” [tall, brave, with shining forehead] – could describe Mr. Fels, her anxiety disappears. The man goes on to pacify the sea and saves Olena from the imminent danger, proving to be courageous, yet warm and caring. The dream ends with a lulling song of the tamed sea – an ancient song of love – and a spectacular image of the sun-lit sky. This highly symbolic dream clearly conveys the powerful desire of Olena’s unconscious to unite with Mr. Fels. If we evoke the epigraph to the second part of the story, which the author presented as Olena’s life motto, particularly the phrase “nimmer mein Haupt zu beugen, wo meine Seele es nicht kann” (never to bend my head, where my soul cannot do the same), and read German “Seele” as “psyche,” reversing the statement – “wo meine Seele beugt, da kann mein Haupt auch” [where my soul [psyche] submits, my head can do the same] – then Olena’s final decision to marry Mr. Fels, which
the author projected as a sun-lit union, appears to be in agreement with both her natural desires and her determination to live according to her own will and inclination. On the ideological level, the dream sequence also highlights Kobylianksa’s emphasis on the irrational dimensions of the human mind – which are, as the author argues in the story, as defining in human life as material conditions – challenging thus the adherers of the positivism conception of human behavior, particularly that presented in Kobrynska’s story “For a Crust of Bread.”

A close analysis of the final scene, where Mr. Fels once again appears as a savior of the heroine, further supports the positive and life-affirming message projected in the dream. The final scene culminates when the heroine bursts into tears moments before Mr. Fels enters her room to escort her to their wedding ceremony. This has been notoriously described as Olena’s hysterical breakdown instigated by the unbearable discrepancy between her individualistic aspirations and what is presumed to be the sad reality of a marriage of convenience. Such reading supports the most common interpretation of *A Human Being* as a story of Olena’s inability to resolve her situation. Critics, however, overlook another important detail immediately preceding Olena’s tears, which suggests a possibility of different reasons for her emotional state, and thus an alternate reading of the whole text. Before the incident, Olena rereads the last letter she received from the deceased Stephan Liyevych, her first fiancé, who unexpectedly dies of typhus in Vienna. The full text of the letter, which documents the last conscious words of Liyevych to Olena, is included in the story, yet, like the aforementioned dream sequence, it has never received any critical attention. Let
us attend to this important fragment, which the author intentionally demarcated, implying its crucial significance.

First of all, it is hard to overlook that Liyevych’s death and his final address call to mind another famous dying scene in Ivan Turgenev’s Отцы и дети (Fathers and Sons, 1861), which Kobylianska acknowledged to be “страх [яка] розумна книжка, [що] як би... якусь одслону з очей здійми[па]” [an extremely intelligent book that opened her eye on many things] (Slova 68). Like Liyevych, Turgenev’s character Bazarov, also a medical student with progressive views, addresses his last conscious words to the woman he loves. Knowing that Olena has read Pisarev’s Bees, it is fair to suggest that she also read his renowned review of Turgenev’s novel, Базаров (Bazarov, 1862), often published in the same collection as Bees in the 1880-1890s, where Pisarev celebrates Turgenev’s character as a radically new hero, insisting that his true strength was revealed only in his final words. Therefore, it would be productive to compare the last conscious words of the two men, Liyevych and Bazarov, to gain insight into the personality of the man Olena once believed to be a “truly whole person” and whose refined nature she opposed to Mr. Fels’ lack of education. Whereas Bazarov courageously faces his death without fooling himself or his loved ones with miraculous possibilities of recovery, claiming that a doctor is not allowed to deny obvious symptoms, Liyevych collapses in sentimental refutations of his condition, complains about his physical pain, and longs for Olena’s nursing services:
I would very much like to have you here with me and to feel your hand on my forehead, my little darling... now when my head is hurting so terribly, you would do anything in your power to ease my pain. I am convinced that you would do everything differently from us doctors, and I am sure it all would go away sooner.] (tr. by Roma Franko For a Crust 217)

This record of Liyevych’ last conscious moments reveals the character’s feeble nature, juxtaposing him to Bazarov, and projecting him instead as “фразер и подражатель” [a ranter and a dilettante], to continue with Pisarev’s rhetoric (Bazarov 45). The thirty-year-old Olena who has undergone intense intellectual self-examination could not overlook the obvious pathetic aspect of this letter, and thus recognize the discrepancy between her earlier naïve admiration of Liyevych and the weak man who could not even die with grace. She tears up the letter, demonstrating her resolve to separate from the deceased Liyevych, erupting with tears only after the arrival of Mr. Fels. In the rhetorical question to herself “do I hate him?” Olena evokes a male figure, yet, considering the context of the letter that she just read, it remains highly uncertain, whom she has in mind. The ambiguity of the object of Olena’s hatred is further complicated by the symbolic significance of the closing scene. When Mr. Fels enters the room, Olena reaches out to him with both of her hands, “немов би просила рятунку” [as if asking for rescue] (I 106; tr. by Roma Franko For a Crust 218). Mr. Fels takes her hands, raises Olena from the ground, and shelters her in his strong embrace, just as he...
does earlier when he prevents Olena from falling out of the jolted carriage, and in Olena’s erotic dream, which also ends with the passionate embrace, implying thus not hatred, but Olena’s sincere attraction and willingness to be dependent.

Although many critics of *A Human Being* interpret Olena’s marriage as a treacherous exchange of her soul for material stability that nullifies her earlier liberal convictions, the passages I have analyzed suggest that, to the contrary, the heroine’s decision is well in line with her Darwinian individualistic views that recognize the importance of sexual satisfaction to a healthy mental life, without which, as Olena herself points out, she is doomed to spiritual degradation.26

Second, Olena’s interest in Pisarev and his materialist philosophy also suggests that she perceives practicality and rational egocentrism as intellectual convictions leading to the complete emancipation of the individual. Furthermore, reading this novel in light of Kobylianska’s reception of contemporaneous philosophy reveals that the heroine – who continuously proves to be not only a thinking individual with a strong analytical mind, but also a sensuous being with a passionate heart – is most likely to flourish, both physically and spiritually, in a loving and caring relationship. Olena Laufler is thus not a victim of the social order, but an insightful, resolute, and resilient person able to distinguish between reality and idealistic doctrines, whose goal is to create an environment where she can pursue her intellectual aspirations. In this light, Kobylianska’s heroine is indeed a radically new type, which challenges traditional heroines in Ukrainian literature, who, according to the writer, only know how to “зітха[ти] до місяченька” [sign in

26 See Olena’s conversations with Liyevych and doctor (I 62-65).
the moonlight] (V 332), while awaiting a perfect suitor to secure their proper position in society. It also troubles the emerging radical type of self-sacrificing heroine, the village teacher or postal worker hailed by socialists like Ivan Franko and Natalia Kobrynska, who devote their lives to the grand populist ideas of ‘saving the people.’ Indeed, Kobylianska’s new type of emancipated heroine advocates an alternate venue for self-liberation, permitting a liberal compromise, which I propose to read not as a treacherous betrayal of feminist views, but as an expression of common sense and healthy pragmatism.

**Conclusion**

By investigating Kobylianska’s personal notes and by placing her fictional writings of the 1880s on a public-private continuum and within the matrix of the Ukrainian debate on social-Darwinism and feminism, this chapter subverts several popular myths about Kobylianska’s becoming a Ukrainian writer and about her passionate devotion to the feminist program proposed by Kobrynska. First, it argues that Kobylianska’s self-identification with Ukrainian culture was not a miraculous revelation inspired by a chance encounter with Ukrainian patriots from Galicia in the early 1880s, but rather an infinitely intricate and explosive process that took root in her childhood during interactions with her Ukrainian father and several prominent Ukrainian families. Second, it challenges the popular belief in Kobrynska’s central role in the promotion of Kobylianska’s literary career and presents their personal conflict as a mainspring for Kobylianska’s strong anti-socialist and anti-populist sentiments, which would
make strong imprints on her socio-political views of the 1890-1930s. Third, it offers the first comprehensive analysis of Kobylianska’s particular feminism of “intelligent motherhood,” where the author mutes her radical protest against the patriarchal subjugation of women into a liberal compromise, elegantly combining elements of conservative and revolutionary currents of thought into a sophisticated model, which I view as Kobylianska’s first attempt at creating a spectral-syncretic ideology and define as a radically conservative endeavor. The proposed reading of Kobylianska’s A Human Being and its comparison to Turgenev’s Fathers and Sons also discerns an interesting continuum in nineteenth-century literature, suggesting that what has been dismissed as overly sentimental in fin-de-siècle literature should be considered part of the development of the late nineteenth-century realist novel. My discussion of Kobylianska’s revision of the nineteenth-century realist novel together with her radical conservatism and ever-growing concern with the socio-political debates of her time are further differentiated and nuanced in the following chapters.
One of the most defining moments in Kobylianska’s writing career took place at the end of 1891, when she move together with her parents and two younger brothers to Chernivtsi, the capital of the Austrian crownland of Bukovyna. At the time, Chernivtsi was one of the most vibrant cultural and political centers in the Austrian Empire and offered many opportunities to the up-coming literati. As Kobylianska wrote in her autobiography of 1927, “тут [вона] увійшла в українську громаду, мала можливість пізнати українську літературу, журнали, зноситися з освідченими українцями, їх жінками, а також з молодіжжю, взагалі входити в ‘серце’ Буковинської України” [here she entered the Ukrainian community, got the opportunity to study Ukrainian literature and periodicals, to interact with educated Ukrainians, their wives, and Ukrainian youth; in short, to enter ‘the heart’ of Ukrainian Bukovyna] (V 223). Kobylianska joined several philanthropic organizations, participated actively in Ukrainian literary circles, and developed personal ties with a number of prominent Ukrainian cultural and social activists, such as Yevhenia Yeroshynska, Mykhailo Pavlyk, Stepan Smal-Stotsky, Vasyl Lukych, Osyp Makovej, Vasyl Stefanyk, Lesia Ukrainka, and Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky, who played an important role in popularizing her works among Ukrainian readers.

Kobylianska’s major fictional work of the period, her first novel *The Princess* (Царівна, 1896), captures this defining moment in the writer’s career. The novel was initially conceived in 1888 as a sequel to *A Human Being* and a
follow-up on Kobylianska’s earlier discussion of individual volition and critical thinking as the main driving forces of all human endeavors. In the early 1890s, however, the writer made two important cultural discoveries – Nietzsche’s philosophical thought and the discussion of the Ukrainian national revival – which fundamentally transformed her original plan for the novel, posing the reconstruction of the Ukrainian national myth as its central concern. Nietzschean criticism of man and appeals to overcome him were extremely congenial to Kobylianska’s contempt for the Ukrainian national movement and its glorification of the common man. Influenced by Russian Radicalism through Turgenev, Pisarev, and Chernyshevsky, Kobylianska saw a typical Ukrainian, similar to a typical Russian, as decried in the works of the aforementioned writers, as a passive and inert creature with an inherent slave morality. The writer was especially critical of the Ukrainian peasantry, whom she saw at the time merely as “гарний матеріал на будучність” [great raw material for the future] (V 239), a Nietzschean bridge for the process of national reconstruction, rejecting thus the dominant populist discourse, which assigned the pivotal role in human progress to the masses. Kobylianska emphasized instead the need of cultural regeneration and the urgency of fostering a solid and highly educated national elite with a strong political will. She thus fused Ukraine’s national liberation with a cultural revolution, which, according to her, was the only way to rescue Ukraine from old myths, old values, and old human types that were unfit for the future. Kobylianska’s powerful socio-political massage was, however, rejected by her contemporaries, who criticized its tribute to Nietzsche and his aristocratism,
which at the time was perceived as either irrelevant, or reactionary, and even detrimental to the Ukrainian socio-political struggle. Early Soviet critics were even more spiteful and pushed Kobylianska’s first novel to the margins of the Ukrainian canon. As a result, for the past hundred years, *The Princess* has, with a few exceptions, been viewed as Kobylianska’s secondary text and a mere sample of her sentimental domestic fiction.

This chapter will challenge traditional readings of *The Princess* and argue it to be a significant landmark in the development of Ukrainian philosophical and critical thought. The chapter will open with a discussion of Kobylianska’s fictional and nonfictional writings of the early 1890s, elaborating on the writer’s reception of Nietzsche. Then, a close reading of *The Princess* will analyze Kobylianska’s original socio-political program, featuring individual emancipation and heightened cultural awareness of national distinctiveness among the intellectual elite as the principal road to Ukraine’s collective liberation. A special focus will be also placed on Kobylianska’s triumphant synthesis of ideas generally considered to be incompatible: Nietzschean aristocratism and the Russian radical thought of the nineteenth century. The chapter will end with a survey of central symbolic connotations in the novel, which offer a curious insight into Kobylianska’s reception of Marxism, social-democratism, populism, and feminism, revealing her uncertainties about these popular mass movements.

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Kobylianska’s Reception of Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche was an unconventional anti-idealistic philosopher and a prolific writer, whose theories of aristocratic radicalism—particularly his ideas of the overman, the will to power, Christianity as a slave morality, a new morality beyond good and evil, the death of God, and eternal recurrence—made a tremendous influence on twentieth-century critical thought. Early on, Nietzsche was influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer and his philosophy of the will founded on the deep pessimistic view of the universe.28 Yet whereas for Schopenhauer ‘the will’ denoted something metaphysical, which led him to recommend the denial of life, for Nietzsche it described a physiological complex of drives and impulses, and he gradually moved to advocate its joyful celebration, developing his famous concept of the overman. Nietzsche introduced the overman in his seminal book Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One (1883-1892), positing him as a goal for humanity to set for itself. Although there is no overall consensus regarding the precise meaning of the overman, it could be roughly delineated as Nietzsche’s vision of a new creative being who could transcend religion, morality, and ordinary society, who could further culture and generate ever new values, and whose life-affirming slogan would be “Become what you are.”29 Nietzsche ties the overman to the death of God, his famous claim that metaphorically implied the crisis of Christianity with its universal moral laws. While highlighting the disintegration of the Christian myth that served as a

28 See A. Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation.
29 In Zarathustra’s prologue in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Nietzsche illaborates on the slogan he introduced earlier in his The Gay Science, aphorism N. 270, 219.
basis for meaning and value in Europe for almost two thousands years, Nietzsche does not dwell long on the apocalyptic aspect of the nineteenth-century cultural crisis, but presents his audience with an alternative. He positions his overman as the creator of new values, which, as opposed to the life-denying Christian value system, should be creative and life-affirming. The life-affirming aspect together with many other important nuances of Nietzsche’s thought was, however, often misinterpreted and vulgarized by Nietzsche’s contemporaries. Moreover, in spite of, or perhaps in some measure because of, lively enthusiasm of some of the early Nietzscheans, the critical reception of Nietzsche’s philosophy was rather unkind at the turn of the twentieth century.

Nietzsche’s works did not reach a wide readership during his active writing career. Yet in 1888, Georg Brandes (1842-1927), an influential Danish critic, managed to arouse considerable excitement about Nietzsche through a series of lectures he gave at the University of Copenhagen. In the early 1890s, many European intellectuals discovered Nietzsche’s appeals for greater individualism and personality development, but their response was rather divergent. Modernist artists and writers hailed Nietzsche as the prophet of a new culture, a new art, a new beauty, and a new kind of human being – courageous, creative, and free. Radical modernist intellectuals used Nietzsche’s ideas as a battering ram to smash “the old tables of values.” His call for revaluation of all values they used as a philosophical rational for self-assertion, artistic creativity, and enjoyment of life. Yet most importantly, Nietzsche’s philosophy inspired them to search for a new ruling idea, a new myth, by which to live. At the same time, conservatives
rejected Nietzsche’s iconoclastic individualism and tried to ban his work as subversive and destructive, associating his ideas with diverse anarchist movements that tormented Europe at the turn of the century. After 1900, Nietzsche’s works became better known throughout Europe, the USA, and Russia, yet readers have responded to them even in more complex and controversial ways, for Nietzsche did not offer a coherent philosophical system, but presented his ideas in a highly metaphorical style, open to multiple interpretations. It is not surprising, therefore, that his striking images and aphorisms were often detached from their texts and grafted on to a wide variety of artistic, literary, and political programs and goals.

Kobylianska was the first Ukrainian intellectual to introduce Nietzsche to Ukrainian readers, incorporating many of his concepts to her own philosophical system. She discovered Nietzsche at the time when Ukrainian society was undergoing the all-pervasive cultural, political, and social crisis that was to explode with the outbreak of World War I. Nietzsche's association of myth with aesthetic creativity, his statement that myth is essential for the health of a culture, as well as his call on the “free spirits” to create this new “ruling idea” by which to live spoke directly to Kobylianska’s dissatisfaction with positivism, rationalism, and socialism. Ultimately, Nietzsche stimulated her break with Ukrainian populism, which glorified peasants as the main potential force to achieve national liberation, calling the Ukrainian intelligentsia “to identify with the folk,” and propagating a “going to the people” ideology (Ivan Franko 45: 148). Nietzsche’s bold statements inspired Kobylianska’s search for a new national myth and a
new ideal hero: a Ukrainian overman, an intellectual leader devoted to his nation, who is also not shy to use a whip on his own people. Nietzsche and nationalism – their very fusion is shocking, for Nietzsche’s apolitical individualism seems to be the polar opposite of nationalist ideologies, which tend to subjugate individual to collective. Yet, as one scholar of Nietzsche’s influence in Eastern Europe points out, “the regressive-progressive influence of Nietzsche’s thinking (use of the past to discredit the present and point to new models for the future) deepened the nationalities’ search for their own cultural roots and ultimately impacted on the national independence movements” throughout Europe at the turn of the century (Rosenthal Soviet Culture 23). Like many European intellectuals who devoted their lives and work to diverse national projects, Kobylianska clearly read Nietzsche as a liberator, conjoining in her bold national program, first presented in The Princess and later developed in all her subsequent works up to and including her last novel Apostle of the Mob of 1936, personal and national emancipation, which she saw as complimentary, not conflicting.

Most likely, Kobylianska first read Nietzsche in 1892, the time when she integrated a few Nietzschean motifs in her final edition of A Human Being and wrote a humorous short story “He and She” (“Він і вона”), directly referring to and

30 O. Kobyliaswnka refers in A Human Being to Nietzsche’s famous dictum on women and whip in a conversation between Olena’s father and his friends, one of whom advises Mr. Laufler to keep the whip handy in dealings with women, I, 59. O. Lubkivska and S. Kryvliuk also discern Nietzschean motif of the “great longing” in A Human Being. See O. Lyubkivska, “Modelli vyjaivu nitsshevs’koi filosofii v ukrains’kij literature,” 144-147; and S. Kryvliuk, Kobylianska i svitova literature; 29.
quoting from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. This hypothesis is supported by Kobylianska’s personal correspondence, where the first reference to Nietzsche also comes up in 1892. A close friend, Sophia Okunevska, wrote to Kobylianska in July of 1892, asking how she liked Nietzsche (IL., F.14, N811), implying that the writer must have read some of his works by then. From this point on, Kobylianska frequently discussed the German philosopher in her letters to Sophia Okunevska, Osyp Makovej, Augusta Kokhanovska, Khrystyna Alchevska, and some other friends, expressing her fascination with “великий пророк” [the great prophet] (Panchuk “Lysty” 132). Kobylianska’s personal letters reveal that besides *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* she also read Nietzsche’s *Twilight of Ideals* (1888), *The Dawn* (1881), *Untimely Meditations* (1876), and several other unidentified works. There are also references to important secondary sources on Nietzsche – George Brandes’ *Essays* (1889) and Hugo Kaatz’ *The Worldview of Friedrich Nietzsche* (*Die Weltanschauung Friedrich Nietzsches*, 1892-1893) – both of which were among the first critical attempts to map out Nietzsche’s philosophy and played a defining role in introducing Nietzsche to the broader audience. These allusions to the German philosopher in Kobylianska’s fiction and personal correspondence suggest that in the 1890s she, as opposed to the majority of the so-called Nietzscheans who derived their cursory knowledge of Nietzsche from secondary sources and often based their readings on

31 See M. Pavlyshyn’s *Olha Kobylianska: Prochytannia* for detailed analysis of the Nietzschean themes in Kobylianska’s “He and She,” 92-108.

32 See M. Pavlyshyn for a detailed survey of Kobylianska’s references to Nietzsche in her correspondence, *Olha Kobylianska: Prochytannia*, 82-89.
exaggerated or vulgarized interpretations of Nietzsche, thoroughly studied Nietzsche’s major works. Therefore, it would be productive to look not only for parallels in imagery and vocabulary, but also for a well-rounded, coherent position vis-à-vis, or even polemics with, Nietzsche’s thought in Kobylianska’s writings of this period.

Critics have long recognized Nietzsche’s influence on Kobylianska. Osyp Makovej, Kobylianska’s close friend and editor, was the first to comment on her reception of Nietzsche, celebrating his “добрий вплив” [positive influence] on the Bukovynian writer. As Makovej states in his 1896 introduction to the first publication of The Princess, Nietzsche “навчив її дивитися на світ і людей з вищого більш ідеального становища; він звернув її увагу на стиль і взагалі..., настроював її сильно і відчужено” [taught her to look at the world and people from a more elevated perspective; he drew her attention to style, and overall taught her to be strong and courageous] (45). Makovej’s positive evaluation is, however, the only enthusiastic comment on Kobylianska’s engagement with Nietzsche that came from her contemporaries. From the late 1890s onward, leading Ukrainian intellectuals fiercely criticized Kobylianska’s passion for Nietzsche, whose affirmation of positive aristocratic hero was explicitly hostile to their populist discourse. Nataliya Kobrynska, Kobylianska’s literary quasi-mentor whose dubious intervention with the writer’s début in Ukrainian literature has been discussed in the previous chapter, was among the first to warn her against Nietzsche. In 1894, Kobrynska wrote to Kobylianska, “не тратьте часу на Нічого [Ніцше]... Світ називає його приступником... Зарозумілість того чоловіка має
буті страшна, а де вже велика зарозумілість, там мало зерен правдивого розуму” [don’t waste your time on Nothing [Nietzsche]… The world calls him a criminal… the arrogance of that man must be terrible, and where there is such arrogance, there are barely any grains of true understanding] (IL., F.14, N756).

Several other famous contemporaries – Ahatangel Krymsky, Lesia Ukrainka, and Ivan Franko, – also endowed Nietzsche with derogative epithets, rejecting him as an “insane” and “scandalous” propagator of “frivolous lifestyle” (Kobylianska v krytytsi 38, 70, 97). The fiercest attack came, however, from Sergej Yefremov, a pro-socialist political activist and literary critic, who condemned Kobylianska’s fanatical attachment to the fashionable philosopher and his dictum “всем людям все позволено” [anything is permitted to the higher people] (80). In the 1902 article “In Search of the New Beauty” (“В поисках новой красоты”), Yefremov decried Kobylianska as an elitist, who inscribed perverted foreign substance into the Ukrainian context after reading too much Nietzsche. He went so far as to deny Kobylianska the title of Ukrainian author altogether (Pavlychko Dyskurs 58).

Such critical hostility to Kobylianska’s reception of Nietzsche could be explained by the lack of proper exposure to the German philosopher among Ukrainian intellectuals in the 1890s. The first phase of Nietzsche’s reception in Ukraine was mostly shaped either through secondary sources or through transmuted adaptations by Polish and Russian pseudo-Nietzscheans who fused their decadent beliefs with exaggerated and often vulgarized interpretations, or
even cheap imitations of Nietzsche. As a result, not only Ukrainian populist critics of the 1890s, but also the leading figures of Ukrainian modernism of the 1910s – Mykola Voronyj, Ostap Lucky, Mykola Yevshan, Mykyta Sribliansky, and Andrij Tobkachevsky – had very cursory and often corrupted knowledge of Nietzsche’s philosophy, reading him either as a reactionary and anti-socialist, or as a scandalous nihilist (Pavlychko Dyskurs 132). Kobylianska’s reception of Nietzsche, as mentioned earlier, was, on the contrary, shaped by systematic studies of Nietzsche’s works in their German originals, which makes her case particularly interesting. Her contemporaries, it seems, were, however, unable to appreciate the writer’s unique engagement with Nietzsche, which, in turn, impaired their reception of her original adaptation of several important Nietzschean concepts for her own philosophical system.

The first critical attempt to analyze Nietzsche’s influence on Kobylianska was proposed by Luka Lutsiv, a prolific scholar of Ukrainian literature. In his 1928 study “О. Кобилянська і Ф. Ніцше” [“Olha Kobylianska and Friedrich Nietzsche”], Lutsiv draws attention to a number of biographical similarities between the German philosopher and Kobylianska, emphasizing that both were influenced by Greek mythology, German Romanticism, and Darwin’s theory of evolution. Lutsiv also puts together a survey of Nietzschean motifs in Kobylianska fiction – eternal reoccurrence, great afternoon, higher people, and overman are a few to name. Yet he claims that the Ukrainian writer simply borrows these motifs and concepts from Nietzsche without correctly understanding their complex meaning (Lutsiv

33 See S. Pavlychko, Dyskurs modernizmu, and B. Rosenthal, Nietzsche in Russia.
176). Sadly, this approach of judging harshly Kobylianska’s reception of Nietzsche dominated the scholarship throughout the twentieth century (Babyshkin Narys 11-12; Lubkivska 146). Only recently, critics made several attempts to approach Kobylianska’s Nietzsche anew. Tamara Hundorova is among the first to present an original Nietzschean reading of Kobylianska’s early works, discerning Nietzschean idea of Apollonian and Dionysian creative impulses in Kobylianska’s program of cultural regeneration (Femina). Mark Pavlyshyn and Svitlana Kyryliuk expand the list of Nietzschean motifs employed in her fiction, reading Kobylianska’s engagement with Nietzsche as a dialog, in which the Ukrainian writer works out her own understanding of Nietzsche’s thought, often polemicizing with the German philosopher (Pavlyshyn 142; Kyryliuk 29). Despite a number of curious observations, recent scholars continue, however, to limit themselves to a discussion of a specific motif or a particular text, ignoring the larger philosophical context of Kobylianska’s works. The remainder of the chapter will propose the first extensive discussion of Nietzsche’s influence on Kobylianska’s elitist political program presented in The Princess, which will be further expounded in chapters three, four, and five.

The Princess: Neither a Cinderella, nor a Feminist

The story of The Princess revolves around a simple and rather conventional plot which resonates with many stories of nineteenth-century domestic fiction. The heroine, Natalka Verkovychivna, is a downtrodden orphan of petit-bourgeois origin who suffers from family despotism in the house of her
greedy and unscrupulous aunt. Throughout the story, the heroine patiently and
diligently struggles against her oppressive aunt and other malicious enemies,
victoriously overcoming numerous emotional and social barriers to achieve a
happy marriage. It is not surprising that at the time of original publication quite a
few critics equated The Princess with the Cinderella story, where Kobylianska’s
heroine is only slightly modernized by her reading of Nietzsche.34 Kobylianska
rejected such, as she put it, old-fashioned and mediocre criticism of her novel,
emphasizing instead its philosophical subject matter. In the 1898 letter to
Makovej, Kobylianska condemned Hrushevsky’s critique, where he decried The
Princess as a sentimental fairy-tale-happy-ending narrative:

Як він міг щось так старосвітське написати? Зробив з Наталки
жінки причинь думаючої, з самого початку думаючої, якогось
роду Aschenbrödel, die unter der bösen Stiefmutter und der
Stiefschwester leidet und auf einen Königsohn wartet… Чи той
панок не читає що іншого, окрім творів малоруської літератури,
що він не знає що тепер суть інші типи жіночі і стремлять і до
чого іншого, як allain zur Ehe?!

[How could he write something like that? Out of Natalka, who is a
thinking individual from the very beginning, he made some kind of a
Cinderella, who suffers under the evil step-mother and step-sisters
while waiting for a prince… Hasn’t that little Mister read anything
but Ukrainian Literature that he doesn’t know that there are different
types of women out there, who strive for more than just a
marriage?!] (V 330)

Further in the letter, Kobylianska argued that in her work plot is of no importance,
and is used only to transform her philosophical system and socio-political critique

34 The Cinderella motif as a working concept was most likely introduced into Ukrainian literary criticism via German
critical reviews of the late nineteenth century domestic fiction, particularly Eugenie Marlitt’s novels, where critics discern a
repetitive pattern similar to the basic plot structure of the famous folk-tale Cinderella popularized in Europe by the German
brothers Grimm in the nineteenth century, thus rejecting them as overly sentimental and fairytale-like narratives.
into a manageable dramatic form, claiming her work to be “kein Buch zur Unterhaltung, [aber] ein Buch zum Denken” [not a book for entertainment, but a book for contemplation] (V 330).

Kobylianska also firmly rejected another “stereotyped” reading, this time initiated by her close friend Makovej, who interpreted The Princess through the prism of naturalist philosophy as a celebration of Natalka’s sexuality. To support his claim, Makovej compared Kobylianska’s work with Gabriele Reuter’s naturalist novel Aus gutter Familie (From a Good Family, 1895) and Anna Radius Zuccari’s moralistic novel Teresa (Theresa, 1886), both of which also feature a life-struggle of subjugated maidens. Kobylianska, however, fervidly argued that her philosophical framework fundamentally differed from that of Reuter and Zuccari, who propagated foreign to her ideas of absolute social and biological determinism. She was outraged that Makovej read her “думающа” [thinking] and willful Natalka as a mirror image of hysterical heroines depicted by Reuter and Zuccari, whose philosophy of life, as Kobylianska put it, could be summed up with a primitive naturalistic dictum “das Weibes Inhalt ist der Mann” [man is the sole meaning of woman’s life] (V 358). Elsewhere, Kobylianska called The Princess “противостояння” [an antithesis] to the Reuter’s work, emphasizing that her heroine had way more far-reaching goals than marriage and sexual satisfaction (Panchuk “Letters” 137). Yet despite Kobylianska’s numerous attempts to draw critical attention to the broader philosophical content of her work, the critics disregarded its socio-political messages, canonizing The Princess as a sample of Kobylianska’s domestic fiction that features a
sentimental story of another failed feminist ambition – a reading that continues to dominate the scholarship on Kobylianska’s life and work even today.\textsuperscript{35}

Recent feminist literary scholarship, one of the most energetic strands in the present-day Ukrainian literary criticism, has revived the studies of Kobylianska and encouraged scholars to approach her early works anew. The researches brought to light many curious details about \textit{The Princess}, which complicate its traditional reading, justly recognizing Kobylianska’s first long work of fiction as “the first and most consistently feminist novel in Ukrainian literature” (Bohachevsky-Chomiak 105). However, a common avid obsession with what the author herself designated in her autobiographies as a brief fancy with the woman question, as well as renewed interest in the writer’s personal life, distract contemporary critics from engaging with other important philosophical aspects of the novel, grounded in an original fusion of Western individualism and the Russian radical thought of the 1860s. One feminist critic, for instance, goes so far in her celebration of the heroine’s triumphant quest for personal autonomy, as to equate \textit{The Princess} with Chernyshevsky’s renowned novel \textit{Что делать?} (\textit{What Is to Be Done?}, 1863) (Bohachevsky-Chomiak 109). Ironically, this comparison claims the same novel, originally decried by socialist critics – Hrushevsky, Franko, and Yefremov are the most prominent figures – as a reactionary, decadent, and almost perverse outburst against progressive ideas,

\textsuperscript{35} N. Tomashuk states in his study \textit{Olha Kobylianska: Zhyttia i tvorchist’} that although the heroine of \textit{The Princess} expresses many progressive views, including those of feminism, at the beginning of the story, she completely abandons them at the end, 52; T. Hundorova reads Natal’ka’s story in her \textit{Famina Melancholica} as a failure to create an overman, 120; and M. Pavlyshyn claims that in \textit{The Princess} Kobylianska argues against Nietzsche’s idea of overman, placing chance as the decisive factor in all human endeavor, \textit{Olha Kobylainska: Prochytannya},142.
to be a creative translation of Chernyshevsky’s socialist utopia; and reads the
same heroine, first interpreted as a pathetic Cinderella-type, as a continuation of
Chernyshevsky’s Vera Pavlovna, the iconic embodiment of the radical socialist
understanding of the New Women. Although a close comparative analysis of the
two texts as well as a survey of Kobylianska’s pronouncements against the
radical heroines of Vera-Pavlovna-type discussed in the previous chapter makes
the absurdity of this reading obvious, it contains, nevertheless, an important
observation - it detects a clear reference to the broad socio-political issues raised
in Kobylianska’s first novel, which in some backward way brings it close to
Chernyshevsky’s work. Similar to What Is to Be Done?, Kobylianska’s novel is
structured around the issue of the reorganization of relations between the sexes,
which is further projected onto the reorganization of all social relations, offering
not only a compelling fictional story, but also a specific program of action.
Kobylianska’s fascination with Nietzsche, however, led her to divergent and
almost opposing conclusions from those proposed by Chernyshevsky, which
partially explains why Kobylianska’s alternative has never been widely
recognized. In The Princess, as will be demonstrated shortly, Kobylianska not
only argues against the socialist understanding of the women’s role in a family
and society, but also unleashes a broader critique of the dominant populist and
positivist beliefs in the utopian social system. Although Kobylianska has never
explicitly acknowledged her polemic with Chernyshevsky, The Princess could
certainly be viewed as an antithesis to the Russian classic, where the author
argues, using Nietzsche’s thought, in support of an alternate strategy for personal and collective liberation.

A discussion of differences between Chernyshevsky’s and Kobylianska’s views as to the role of women in a family and society is, perhaps, an ultimate beginning for our investigation of Kobylianska’s anti-socialist agenda and her alternate formula for Ukraine’s national liberation. In the broadest sense, Chernyshevsky’s novel was “a Bible for all advanced Russian women with aspirations toward independence” (Stites 89), whether they thought and acted as organized feminists or as revolutionaries. It reinforced their ideas on education, economic independence, and on the moral imperative of helping not only women, but also “the people” to struggle for their rights and liberation. It also propagated “free love” – a socialist doctrine of personal emancipation and sexual freedom – advancing a broader program of relations between the sexes and a view of erotic love that would define the unspoken allegiances of generations of revolutionaries. According to Mykhailo Pavlyk, the moderate Galician socialist and literary critic, What Is to Be Done? was one of the most popular novels in Western Ukraine before the turn of the century and exerted a colossal influence on Ukrainian radical intelligentsia (qtd. by Bohachevsky-Chomiak 105). Kobylianska also read the novel, yet her reception was more critical and even more reactionary than that of the majority of Chernyshevsky’s admirers. While agreeing with the Russian publicist on his critique of the oppressive patriarchal order and his argument in support of women’s education, Kobylianska rejected Chernyshevsky’s positivist utopian schemas for personal and collective
liberation, highlighting their disconnect with the real conditions of life, especially in provincial Ukrainian. She seems particularly critical of the fanatical idealism and lack of personal agency of the Chernyshevsky’s progressive heroine, demanding far more than short-term success and temporary sexual satisfaction for her own heroines.

A close comparison of the two novels, *What Is to Be Done?* and *The Princess*, demonstrates that Chernyshevsky, as opposed to Kobylianska, is reluctant to grant agency to his heroine. Although his Vera Pavlovna is able to lead an active engaging life, challenging the traditional social role of woman, her actions are circumscribed by the dominant order, and she remains, as opposed to Kobylianska’s Natalka, immature and dependent on her male companions throughout the novel. Close to the end of the story, Vera Pavlovna, who by that time achieves financial independence and a comfortable social status, and engages in studying medicine under the close supervision of her second husband, shares hope that “через несколько лет [она] уже буд[ет] в самом деле стоять на своих ногах” [in a few years I will indeed stand on my own feet]. The narrator immediately adds a personal comment stating that “полного счастья нет без полной независимости” [there is no complete happiness without complete independence] (Chernyshevsky 299), and thus suggesting that, despite a long and exhaustive struggle for autonomy, Chernyshevsky’s heroine does not become utterly free and ultimately happy, and, therefore, cannot answer the central question of the novel – namely, what can a women do to achieve
personal freedom? – which Kobylianska’s Natalka, as argued, resolves victoriously.

As opposed to Vera Pavlovna, whose limited success is no more than a generous gift from her self-sacrificing husband, Kobylianska’s heroine is also an audacious thinking human being, who uses personal resources to struggle against external and internal pressures. In this light, Kobylianska’s heroine becomes an antithesis to Vera Pavlovna, and other popular types of female characters not only in Russian and Ukrainian, but also in European literatures. By choosing a Nietzschean motto “бути собі самій ціллю” [to be her own goal], Natalka works on her intellectual and spiritual development and achieves what the author presents following Nietzsche as an ultimate goal of a human being. She becomes a “great power in herself,” who not only can support her husband and raise her children as “тверді, кріпкі, чисті характеристи, сильні немов леви” [solid, tough, pure characters, who could be as powerful as lions] (V 155), but who also can stand up on her own in the vanguard of the cultural and socio-political movements, who can “віддатися праці для всіх, боротися за щось найвище, сягаючи далеко поза будучне щастя” [dedicate themselves to the common course and fight for the highest goals that reach beyond the everyday happiness] (I 225). Natalka, therefore, is neither a Cinderella – or as Kobylianska nicely puts it, a pathetic creature who “сидить у парадних строїх з старосвітськими ідеями і зітхає до місяченька” [sits pompously filled with antiquated ideas and sighs to the moon] (V 332) first decried by Kobylianska in A Human Being – nor a coldly rational and calculating Vera-Pavlovna-like egoist.
who uses men to achieve personal goals. She is a thinking individual who realizes that only “праця умислова” [cognitive work] and continuous self-improvement fills human existence with meaning and leads to autonomy, both personal and collective.

Another important conceptual difference between Kobylianska’s and Chernyshevsky’s understandings of feminism lies in their approach to marriage, which some critics, paradoxically, tend to equate (Bohachevsky-Chomiak, 109). Indeed, in both novels marriage is not a final destination, but a means for two people to move forward, beyond the traditional limits placed on men and women through marriage and domesticity. Yet Kobylianska and Chernyshevsky diverge in their philosophical and moralistic discussion of an alternative marriage. Kobylianska despises Chernyshevsky’s call to outsmart the system and to use marriage as an escape strategy, insisting that this often rushed and premature decision impairs individual freedom to almost the same degree as forced marriage does. Kobylianska also rejects Chernyshevsky’s ideas of “free love,” claiming that it would only lead to the debasement of women’s noble nature, and thus to her further subjugation.36 Instead, Kobylianska adheres to Nietzsche’s call to view marriage as a vehicle “not merely to reproduce, but to produce something higher” (Thus Spoke Zarathustra 211) to “build a living monument to [one’s] victory and liberation” (Thus Spoke Zarathustra 69). Consequently, Kobylianska’s model of an alternate marriage – embodied in Natalka’s harmonious union with

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36 Kobylianska’s reception of the socialist notion “free love” has been briefly discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, 43-47.
Dr. Marko, where both partners are featured as mature individuals who share similar views and aspirations, and whose mutual love and understanding promise to bear extraordinary fruits – fundamentally differs from Vera Pavlovna’s industrious use of marriages, founded on the principals of self-indulgence.

Kobylianska develops her counter-argument to Chernyshevsky’s model by expounding on her earlier idea of individual self-improvement as a way to women’s liberation, first introduced in *A Human Being*, which she now reinforces with Nietzschean critic of marriage and traditional womanhood. First, the Ukrainian writer describes a number of dysfunctional families, exposing the destructive nature of prevailing attitudes towards marriage of convenience. One of the most effective examples is the life-story of Natalka’s uncle and aunt. Although they live peacefully, their marriage lacks intimacy and mutual understanding. The aunt’s quasi-rational mind despises love as “поетична недуга” [a poetic sickness] and constructs her own marriage into a dutiful means of procreation and reaffirmation of the status quo:

Я не розумію, що таке любов. Я вийшла заміж, нехоруючи ані трохи на ту поетичну недугу. Я вела порядно своє господарство, виховувала як слід при божій помочі діти, доглядала мужа, але о любові щось майчили, зітхати за любовью? Мені здається, що я муслила б тепер того й соромитися. Це чиста фантазія. Колиб я не була вийшла за твого вуйка, то була вийшла б за другого.

[I do not understand what love is. I got married without having the slightest symptom of that poetic sickness. I properly ran my household, raised kids with God’s help, cared for my husband, but to dream about love, about a sign of love? It seems I should be even ashamed of it now. This is sheer fantasy. If I had not married your uncle, I would have married somebody else.] (I 122)
According to Kobylianska, such loveless marriages drive the two partners insane and produce, if any, only sterile mediocre offspring. Natalka’s cousin Lenochka, for instance, dutifully follows her mother’s steps and rushes into ill-matched yet rationally sound wedlock with an elderly professor Lorden, which soon turns out to be what Nietzsche decries as “the filth of the soul in pair” (Thus Spoke Zarathustra 70). Despite prestigious social status and luxurious lifestyle, Lenochka finds herself in a state of permanent depression caused by her calamitous marriage, perpetually regretting her destroyed youth. A similar outcome is suggested for Vasyl Oriadyn, who also ignores his feelings and yields to the prevailing order by marrying the only daughter of his wealthy Polish supervisor. These three examples of logically-sound yet loveless marriages speak loudly against the rational marriage-as-an-escape-strategy promoted in What Is to Be Done?

Another Chernyshevsky’s philosophical concept that Kobylianska rejects is his doctrine of giving in to one’s passion, harshly criticizing the socialist idea of “free love.” Kobylianska uses the story of Oriadyn’s parents, a Ukrainian nineteen-year-old-maiden of noble descent and an impoverished Gypsy musician, to undermine the popular creed. The two young people are madly in love, yet they fall prey to their unbridled passion and to social disdain, for they are immature and subjugated characters. Oriadyn’s parents are forcibly separated and eventually driven to death, leaving behind their illegitimate son. Contemplating the debilitating outcomes of these two types of corrupted relations – those grounded on pure passion and those based on selfish calculations –
Kobylianska’s heroine arrives to an insightful conclusion aligned with Nietzsche’s claim that only “the victorious one, the self-conqueror, the commander of [one’s] senses, the master of [one’s] virtues” (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 69) can create a harmonious and productive marriage. That is why Natalka cancels her pre-arranged engagement with a well-off elderly Professor Lorden, which could save her from the obscurantist household of her heartless aunt, and rejects Vasyl Oriadyn’s compelling proposal to run away to a remote village, where they could enjoy their “free love.” In both cases, Natalka insists that she is not mature enough and needs to grow spiritually before she can join somebody in wedlock. As opposed to Chernyshevsky’s heroine, who first enters a marriage of convenience to escape her oppressive parents but later abandons her rescuer, giving in to her passions, Natalka marries her ideal soul-mate Dr. Marko – a person who resembles her in philosophy of life, refined sensibilities, and highly developed aesthetic taste – only after a long and painful process of self-overcoming, and only after having achieved spiritual and financial freedom on her own. Although Natalka’s marriage does not stand in direct opposition to the basic principles of religion, morality, and civil order, it is thus more radical than those of Vera Pavlovna, for it depicts, probably for the first time in European literature, a union of two equals, where the heroine enjoys as much intellectual, spiritual, moral, financial, and social power as her male partner.

Kobylianska’s heroine Natalka Verkovychivna is thus neither a Cinderella, nor a revolutionary feminist. She is rather a radical conservative, who could be read as an effective antidote to the pathetic helplessness of the traditional
Cinderella-type on one hand, and to fanatical nihilism of the new radical type coned by Chernyshevsky on the other. Natalka’s rejection of the popular progressive formulas, such as “free love” and “communal projects of the rational organization of labor” propagated by social radicals makes her character profoundly antirevolutionary. Yet her highly unconventional and by all standards original understanding of marriage grounded in equal partnership, as well as her strife to rethink, reclaim, and reassert the traditional role of women in a family and society makes Natalka's, and by extension Kobylianska's, conservatism more radical than any sort of superficial revolutionarism of the 1860s and 1890s. Kobylianska’s heroine is indeed a new female type in the European literature, whose character is mainly based on Nietzsche’s concept of the overman, embodying, as will be demonstrated next, not only Kobylianska’s alternative vision of the New Woman, but also her new myth of liberated Ukraine.

**Philosophical Complexity of The Princess**

The philosophical complexity of *The Princess* is not limited to Kobylianska’s discussion of the woman question and its socialist interpretations. It is defined by an original fusion of Nietzsche’s thought with selected aspects of other intellectual paradigms – Darwin’s theory of evolution, Spencer’s synthetic philosophy, Mill’s position on the woman question, and, most importantly, the Russian radical thought of the 1860s with its strong positivist underpinnings – which the writer uses to construct her own vision of Ukraine’s socio-political future.
The dynamic philosophical fabric of *The Princess* is inextricably linked to its compositional structure. Even the general organization of the novel as a story of becoming (Bildung), which captures the heroine’s gradual maturation and her continual struggle against the pettiness, vulgarity, and pervasive materialism of the society in which she lives, is ripe with powerful philosophical allusions. Kobylianska structures Natalka’s becoming around Nietzsche’s idea of the overman and the three successive metamorphoses of his mind, outlined in the first speech of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as the camel, the lion, and the child (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 25-28). In Kobylianska’s text these stages are designated through Natalka’s symbolic nicknames – Lorelei, Princess, and Lotus Blossom – given by Professor Lorden, Vasyl Oriadyn, and Dr. Marko, respectively. The framework of the three-stage cognitive and spiritual becoming, in turn, offers Kobylianska an opportunity to organize narrative material in a number of dynamic ways, which provide insight into Natalka’s worldviews and psychological struggles. The first two parts of *The Princess*, which focus mostly on the heroine’s self-discovery and self-overcoming, are, for instance, written in the form of a diary from the first-person prospective, which helps not only bring out the compelling human voice of the heroine, but also capture her dynamic dialogue with a variety of alien voices introduced though a number of fragmented flashbacks, dreams, and imagined conversations. Only in the final third part, where Kobylianska strives to offer an unbiased description of the victorious resolution of Natalka’s struggle, she briefly changes the narrative mode to the
third-person objective narration, which helps to enhance the verisimilitude and authenticity of the presented view.

For the most part, Kobylianska thus structures her novel as a complex cyclical progression of Natalka’s internal psychological struggle, presenting events through her inner experiences. Such organizational method, which dwells on the heroine’s feelings and not on events and actions, brings Kobylianska’s work close to Nietzsche’s idea of genealogy and to what has recently been called as his “perspectivist historical method” that dispels the dominant myth of totality, presenting human existence as a myriad of countless lost events without a point of reference, and thus making it open to reinterpretation (Foucault 140, 154-156). Like Nietzsche, Kobylianska rejects conventional history and its search for origin and openly fulminates against positivist trends towards logic and prevailing beliefs in socio-historical determination, insisting instead that human lives are more characterized by choice, volition, and free will. Mocking the traditional approach to evaluating human lives based on the basic facts – birth, marriage, education, and so forth – Kobylianska ironically states in one of her commentaries to The Princess that “[у Наталки] не було історії, бо в неї не було фактів” [Natalka did not have any history because she did not have the facts] (I 377). Rejecting conventional biographical chronologies, the writer also weaves her story seeking events in the most unpromising places; in what traditionally is seen as without history – in Natalka’s sentiments, love, and instincts. This allows Kobylianska to create not only a complex psychological novel, but also, as will be demonstrated shortly, a subversive socio-political
critique of the dominant Ukrainian populist discourse with its pitiful myth of
Ukrainian martyrdom on one hand and its utopian belief in the masses on the
other.

In the very opening scene of The Princess, the author evokes a strong
individualist pathos, presenting a particular historical subject, Natalka
Verkovychivna, who rails against deterministic attempts to explain her future by
her past and dares to question collectivity. The novel starts with Natalka’s diary
entry where she juxtaposes her “I” to collective authority and law, ironic “old
folks” and “books on dreams,” which attempt to proscribe her destiny from day
one: “Я родилася 29-го падолиста. Старі люди і сонники кажуть, що цей день
– день недолі” [I was born on November 29. The old people and dream-books
say that this day is the day of doomed destiny]. This juxtaposition clearly implies
Kobylianska’s irony about the claim that peoples’ origins can adequately
determine their lives or account for their personalities. Further follows a powerful
meditation on the collective “we,” which, according to Kobylianska, rejects
individual agency insisting that “все має своє призначення і так мусить бути!”
[everything is predetermined from the beginning and cannot be otherwise!].
Natalka’s highly charged rhetoric stirs up a similar concern to that of Hannah
Arendt, a renowned political theorist who wrote extensively on the totalizing
nature of the collective “we,” which continually sacrifices individual interests to
the execution of what it assumes to be the law of History or the law of Nature.37

37 For H. Arendt’s discussion of totalizing collectivity, see her book, The Origins of Totalitarianism, 461
The friction between an individual and a collective, between “I” and “not-I,” builds up in the second paragraph, where the heroine is further introduced as a marginal figure, an orphan, who is an object of social abuse in the hostile family of her uncle. Not only does Kobyliasnka show Natalka’s harsh reality, but she also demonstrates the detrimental consequences of this oppressive environment on her world views and self-perception. The mirror scene, where Natalka catches her reflection and sees only what has been mediated through language by her abusive relatives – a grotesque image with eyes too big, face too pale, and hair too red – is particularly revealing. Although the heroine initially accepts this projected image, and her implied subjugated position, a flashback memory of her deceased grandmother who used to have a different opinion helps Natalka, as well as the reader, to sense a contradiction between two images. The heroine’s assertive exclamation at the end of the paragraph, “Я буду дуже, дуже, дуже щаслива!” [I will be very, very, very happy!] (I 110-111), wraps up the opening sequence with its ironic reflections on constricting social dogmas, highlighting Natalka’s heroic defiance, which pushes the heroine beyond her initial self-negation in an attempt to create new values, new myth, and thus new life. In the remainder of the novel, Kobylianska focuses on the dynamics of Natalka’s emotional world and the evolution of her perception, developing a powerful story of the three-stage self-discovery and self-overcoming, which, as argued, is brimming with socio-political symbolism.

Paradoxically, Kobylianska chooses Nietzsche’s apolitical and antinationalist concept of the overman as the central philosophical idea for her
program of national liberation. As the writer’s personal notes suggest, she interprets Nietzsche’s overman as a projection of an ideal human, an ultimate attitude to life, in which regeneration and the new beginning are of the highest value. Realizing that Nietzsche’s concept is only a philosophical metaphor, and thus is open to interpretations, Kobylianska adopts it to her own philosophical ruminations, assigning to the overman a distinct social mission that resonates with many slogans in Russian radical thought of the 1860s. This complex philosophical hybrid of what has been traditionally viewed as two opposing intellectual paradigms – Nietzsche’s apolitical individualism and the nineteenth-century Russian positivism – is best conveyed through Natalka Verkovychivna’s dialogs with Vasyl Oriadyn, the man with whom she is passionately in love in the first two parts of the novel. Kobylianska starts the conversation with a philosophical contemplation, where she compares nations and their collective characters to those of individual humans:

Є люди такі як нації. Властиво, що характери поодиноких людей є аналогічні характерам поодиноких націй… Так напр., є характери, по котрим можна з певністю надіятися, що сповнять щось неожиданно великого, сильного. Є переняті якоюсь красою, що остается завсіди і в різних випадках свіжкою і є свободна від усіх буденних дотиків. Такі є нації. А противно є знов натури, одарені багато, але напосіні наскрізь смутком. Змагають до всього, але на здобувають нічого.

[There are people like nations. I mean, some individual human characters resemble those of individual nations… For instance, from some characters one can expect with confidence great, powerful deeds. Others are filled with special beauty that always remains fresh and unblemished with pettiness of daily existence.]

38 See, for instance, Kobylainska’s brief comment on her reception of Nietzsche written on her brother’s index card preserved in Kyiv Institute of Literature (IL, F14, N 1021) and quoted by M. Pavlyshyn, Olha Kobylanska: Prochytania, 92
There are nations like that. And on the contrary, there are characters incredibly gifted, yet entirely saturated with sorrow. They strive for much, yet don’t get anything.] (I 215)

Developing her thought further, Natalka brings in Nietzschean rhetoric to chastise the plebeian inclinations of the Ukrainian people, who as a nation are “filled with suffering and sorrow,” and waste their vital energy lamenting over a glorious, distant past:

З самого жалю за минувшию ми вже ослабли, а жалібна мелодія, що дзвенить у нашій душі і котру ми так добре розуміємо, заколисала всі наші сили до немочі.

[Through our remorse over the past we have become weak. The melancholy melody that chimes in our soul, and that we understand so well, rocked all our might to sleep.] (I 215)

While highlighting here the dormant nature of the Ukrainian national spirit, Natalka also acknowledges that she herself, as a daughter of Ukrainian people, suffers from such a bleak existence, indirectly suggesting that her own story of emotional, cognitive, and social evolution could be well compared to the complex process of Ukraine’s cultural and socio-political liberation.

In the third dialog with Oriadyn, Natalka presents her interpretation of the powerful catalyst for Ukraine’s nation awakening. She grants the central role in the national regeneration to the educated and spiritually-elevated national elite who, as the heroine states, through the conscious cultivation of personal dignity, continuous extension of knowledge, self-reflection, and character building would not only become “höherer Menschen,” but also contribute to the spiritual rebirth of the whole nation, leading their people to the establishment of a better social order. Oriadyn, however, finds it naive to believe that a few people could make a
substantial difference. He insists that an individual without a collective is no more than “відірваний член, що гине на самоті” [a torn off member that dies in solitude], supporting his argument with a quote from Nietzsche that highlights the supremacy of primitive materialistic drives in human nature, – “Wie sind ein Pöbelmischmasch, daß Heute, und daß will Herr sein!” [We are the mob hodgepodge [herd]: that wants to live with one day and master human destiny] (I 235-236). This perverted understanding of Nietzsche as well as Oriadyn’s positivist denial of individual agency turns him into an anti-hero, into Nietzsche’s “last man,” or, to use a popular radical term, the so called “apostle of stagnation” (Lavrov 138). The textual evidence thus suggests that Oriadyn could be read as an embodiment of the educated yet passive and self-centered Ukrainian elite, whom Kobylianska castigates in her diary on January 13, 1888:

Навколо є стильки добрих і мудрих, чия милосердя широко відоме, чия освіта, становище й сила могли б багато зробити... Та вони думають тільки по-своєму, бо краще за інших засвоїли сухе знання, докази, числа й параграфи, і тому відчувають під ногами твердий ґрунт, а як хтось, кого вони змолоду погано виховали і хто вже не може знайти правду в дорогу, блукає і страждає, то вони, мудрі і добрі, засуджують його, читають йому сурову і гірку моральні... і люб’язно показують на двері.

[There are a great many kind and wise people around, whose charity is well known, whose education, status, and power could do a lot... Yet they have their own thoughts, because they mastered better than others dry knowledge, facts, numbers, and paragraphs, and for this reason feel steady on their feet. And when somebody, whom they raised poorly, cannot find the right way any longer, wonders and suffers, they, wise and kind, judge him, preach harsh and bitter morals to him... and show him to the door.] (Slova 157)

39 W. Kaufmann translates this live as “the mob hodgepodge: that now become master of all human destiny”; Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 287
Arguing with Oriadyn, Natalka outweighs his citation with another quote from Nietzsche, who calls the higher individuals to overcome the mob medley, “das überwundet mir, ihr höheren Menschen” [you higher men, overcome it] (I 236). In response to Oriadyn’s question about where to find these cultivated higher people, Natalka urges Oriadyn first to become a higher person, and then to teach others how to do the same. This polemic conveys Natalka’s, and it could be suggested Kobylianska’s, understanding of the successful national leader, modeled after the Nietzschean overman, featuring individual emancipation and the heightened cultural awareness of the Ukrainian elite as the principal road to collective liberation of the whole nation.

The same passage also illuminates where Kobylianska deviates from Nietzsche, incorporating the nineteenth-century Russian intellectual thought to address the role of an educated individual in a society. Although Natalka’s image of the intellectual national leaders, as well as her own, is grounded in Nietzsche’s overman, the heroine sets assigns them a significant social function, irrelevant to Nietzsche’s individualistic philosophy. She features them as the progenitors of progress, whose onus to conceive, to develop, and to disseminate among the majority critical ideas that promulgate socio-political change recalls Pyotr Lavrov’s theories of the cultivated man and his duty to the society, presented in his Historical Letters of 1870.40 Natalka herself eventually takes on a similar mission, which expands beyond the merely selfish purpose of material existence or a personal quest for power, and is aimed instead at awakening and stimulating

40 P. Lavrov’s Historical Letters were available to Kobylianska through I. Franko’s German translation of 1872.
the less fortunate oppressed compatriots. Like Lavrov’s “invisible heroes of humanity,” Natalka conceives a liberating idea and presents it in her published novel, which promises, as implied, to prepare the ground for major social reforms. Remarkably, the heroine, like many Russian and Ukrainian intellectuals of the time, including Kobylianska, chooses literature as her form of social activism. There is, however, little said about Natalka’s novel in Kobylianska’s work. The heroine refers only a few times to writing the novel, but extensively comments on her frustration and disappointment every time her novel gets rejected by editors before it is finally gets published at the end of the story. As to the content of this internal story, Natalka only once mentions that it depicts “[всю її] душу до ногої” [all her bare soul], capturing her deepest intimate thought, opinions, and feelings (I 380). Considering that The Princess also focuses mostly on the inner experiences of the heroine, one can assume that Kobylianska places as much hope on the positive ramifications of her book, as her heroine does. This curious detail further highlights the crucial significance of the socio-political messages developed in The Princess, the most important of which is Kobylianska’s anti-populist program of national liberation and her new myth of free Ukraine.

**The Princess and Its Symbolism**

As many scholars of Ukrainian Literature acknowledge, nineteenth-century Ukrainian writers, and Kobylianska is no exception, frequently used their heroes,

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41 See I. Berlin’s *Russian Thinkers* for further discussion of Russian intelligentsia, 129.
particularly female protagonists, as type-characters to represent diverse bodies politic and their socio-political dynamics. From the mid nineteenth century onward, Ukrainian writers religiously employed images of vandalized, docile, and self-sacrificing women to symbolize their oppressed nation. In the Ukrainian paradigm, this tradition derives from folk songs and becomes canonized in Shevchenko’s poetry, where Ukraine is often represented through images of orphans, lovelorn girls, or simply poor folks suffering at the hand of the well-off. These heroines are usually unable to have normal human relationships and often die, which, as some scholars argue, symbolizes Ukraine’s political impotence (Grabowicz 61). The most illuminating examples of this literary trend are Kvitka-Osnovyanenko’s “Marusia” (“Маруся,” 1834), and Shevchenko’s poems “The Bewitched Girl” (“Причинна,” 1837), “The Poplar” (“Тополя,” 1839), “The Drowned Girl” (“Утоплена,” 1841), and “Kateryna” (“Катерина,” 1843). In the late nineteenth century, writers have somewhat modified these heroines and their symbolic implication, adjusting to the new dynamic in socio-political sector. The new heroines demonstrated strong intellectual concerns, a need for political involvement, and powerful emotional and sexual desires; yet at the end they were nevertheless driven to madness, sickness, or alienation by the same social order they dared to challenge. These modified heroines, according to one contemporary scholar, signify the arrival of a new spirit and a new hope for change, paradoxically highlighting, however, the inability of their societies to embrace new progressive ideas (Shkandrij 198). Influenced by the nineteenth-century Ukrainian literature, Kobylianska followed their literary tradition of
symbolic over-determination. While instilling socio-political meaning in the symbolic connotations of her characters, the writer, however, not simply re-projected her historical moment, but reconfigured the traditional models of martyrdom, proposing a radically new national myth embodied in the story of her victorious heroine. In the remainder of this chapter, I will focus on Kobylianska’s audacious re-signification of Ukraine’s national myth and elaborate on her artistic treatment of different socio-political debates in Ukraine of her time by closely examining the symbolic implications of the several central characters in her first novel.

**Natalka**

As has been suggested, Natalka Verkovychivna, the central character of *The Princess*, should be read as a symbolic embodiment of Ukrainian society in its pre-revolutionary transition. Kobylianska not only employs a couple of conventional images, but also evokes a number of parallels between Natalka and the Ukrainian people, equating their history and fate with the heroine’s story. Natalka is first introduced as an abused orphan – a conventional image frequently used in the nineteenth-century Ukrainian literature to convey subjugation and socio-political marginality. The original piteous image is further intensified by another popular symbol of a mermaid – a preternatural being restricted to a tight space, time, and function, who cannot lead a normal life. In the first flash back sequence, Natalka’s grandmother calls her a mermaid (“русалонька”). Later, Professor Lorden, one of Natalka’s suitors, calls her
*Lorelei*, evoking the name of the famous mermaid from German folklore popularized by Heinrich Heine, Kobylianska’s favorite poet, which becomes Natalka’s nickname through the first part of the novel that deals with the drudgery of her proscribed life. Curiously, the initial title of the story was also *Lorelei*, which would have been a perfect fit for the original 1888 conception of the story’s feminist rhetoric. In 1895, however, Kobylianska profoundly changed the subject matter of her novel, changed the story’s title to *The Princess*, which clearly foregrounds not the downtrodden, but the victorious character of her Nietzschean heroine.

Accordingly, the new narrative emphasis redefines the symbolic implications of Kobylianska’s re-conceptualized novel, projecting a new socio-political vision. Whereas the Romantics and the late-nineteenth-century populists lament the grim current state of Ukrainian affairs, usually treated as a rigid status quo, Kobylianska proposes a new approach to treat the present as a constant progressive transformation, as a Nietzschean becoming. That is why she does not dwell long on Natalka’s sad life as an orphan, but focuses predominantly on the heroine’s self-exploration and eventual liberation. On the symbolic level, Natalka’s process of self-discovery and spiritual growth could be seen as an embodiment of a radically new socio-political state in Ukraine – a state of national awakening and socio-political transition. In this light, the triumphant resolution of Natalka’s story can be seen as a symbolic displacement of Kobylianska’s program for national liberation, which propagates intellectual development as the only civilized road to Ukraine’s prosperity. This hypothesis is
strongly supported by Natalka’s final statement, where she openly prophecies the
same success for her nation as she achieved in her personal life:

Це було неможливо, щоб для неї і для її народу не вибила також година полудня. Щоби всі їх сила не вистарчила на те, щоби в їх житті не засяяли такі хвилини, котрі свідчили би твердо об їх здібностях до самостійного існування і якість своєрідній красі, що не дається нічим притягнути. Це неможливо, у них мусить настати полудне... Так, полудне наспів ще, помимо всіх лихих і ворожих обставин, що переслідували її і її народ. На світі є ще сила... є ще любов... Вона чує, як у ній ожило одушевлення і чинить її вдвічі сильною. Раз для неї, а другий раз для того її народу.

[It was impossible that the hour of the great noon would not strike for her and her people. That all their might would not suffice to light up the moments that firmly validate their ability for independent existence as well as their unique and unblemished beauty. It is impossible, their noon must come! Yes, noon will come despite all malicious and hostile circumstances that have been haunting her and her people. There is still power in the world...there is still love... She feels its invigorating might arising in her that makes her twice as strong for her and her people.] (I 386-387)

Curiously, Natalka enthusiastically talks here about “independent existence” of her nation – a bold political statement that does not enter the official discourse of Ukrainian politicians until 1900, when Mykola Mikhnoñesky, a prominent Ukrainian political activist who developed the idea of Ukrainian independence, publishes his influential pamphlet “An Independent Ukraine” (“Самостійна Україна”). Considering the parallels between Natalka and the Ukrainian people, which Kobylianska continually evokes throughout the novel, it is thus fair to suggest that the author imbeds her idea of Ukrainian independence together with her program for its achievement in the image and life-story of her heroine, who, as opposed to all previous female characters in the Ukrainian literature,
overcomes victoriously many internal and external obstacles, achieving happiness and personal freedom.

Vasyl Oriadyn

Vasyl Oriadyn, Natalka’s first love, is introduced as an illegitimate son of a nineteen-year-old Ukrainian noble girl and a Gypsy musician. He becomes an orphan in the yearly age and, similar to Natalka, suffers from social injustice. Oriadyn enters the story as an intelligent “син [Наталчого] народу” [son of Natalka’s people] and a passionate defender of liberal ideas, particularly those propagated by socialism. Here is one of the early descriptions of Oriadyn by Natalka:

Він був соціал-демократом, і загорілим поклонником Маркса. Що ожидав спасіння від соціалістів; що признавав одну лише справу, а то справу соціалістів. Все інше, – говорив, – тоне в тій одній великий могучий ідеї.

[He was a social-democrat and a devoted adherent of Marx. The type who was waiting for salvation from socialists, and who recognized only one course, that of socialism. Everything else, he used to say, drowns in that grand and mighty idea.] (I 146)
The description clearly projects Oriadyn as a representative of the flamboyant social-democratic movement, which was officially institutionalized in Galicia as the Ukrainian Social Democratic Workers Party (USDP) three years after the original publication of The Princess. Kobylianska shared their strivings for social reforms and Ukrainian independence, which is reflected in Natalka’s original passion for Oriadyn, yet eventually both, Kobylianska in real life and Natalka
within the story, rejected the mass equalization and determinist tendencies in historical materialism.

Indeed, from this point on, the narrator’s ambiguity about the elemental nature and bewildering power of the new yet fast-spreading radical social-democratic movement continuously builds up. Natalka, who is initially fascinated with Oriadyn’s dictum that “з царством соціалістичних догм зросте правдивий поступ” [the reign of the socialist dogmas will stimulate real progress] (I 147), gradually discovers discrepancies in the socialist program and quickly grows concerned about the totalizing nature of the socialist program, which disregards differences in cognition, education, age, gender, and ethnicity. As the heroine states at some point, “[щодо соціалізму, вона] не мала досі жодного ясного... суду; боялася якогось хаосу в будущності, котрий немов відчувала” [she did not have any clear judgment about socialism; yet she intuitively feared some kind of chaos in the future] (I 147), expressing a suspicion as to the Marxist economic policies of bourgeois property abolition and social redistribution, which contradict her idiosyncratic views. If we continue read Natalka as the embodiment of Ukraine, the conflict of the heroine’s views with Marxism can be then read as a symbolic reference to the profound contradiction between the Marxist economic program and the innate Ukrainian “preponderance of liberty” and “strong sense of private property” (Kostomarov 124-132), which one Ukrainian historian of the time defined as the most distinctive Ukrainian national features.
Natalka, however, is mostly appalled by Oriadyn’s determinist views, which cast the change of material conditions, not the transformation of human mind, as the main precondition for social progress:

Причину соціального перевороту або зміни не слід шукати в людських головах, в їх зростаючому пізнанні ‘вічної’ правди або неправди і справедливості, але попросту в змінах продукування і заміни; не в релігії та філософії, а лише в економії дотичної епохи.

[One should look for the preconditions of social change not in human heads, not in the increasing cognition of the ‘eternal’ truth or untruth and justice; but simply in the change in the modes of production and exchange; not in religion and philosophy, but in the economy of the current epoch only.] (I 147)

This position conflicts with Natalka’s individualist views grounded in Nietzsche’s philosophy. She instinctively concludes that the dogmatic socialist system might turn into “ще грубш[у] і безоглядніш[у] сил[у], як досі” [a more brutal and reckless power than the current regime] (I 146). Curiously, in the 1962 Soviet edition of The Princess the original Ukrainian adjective “грубша” [more brutal] is deliberately substituted with “глибша” [more profound], which drastically alters the meaning of the whole statement, mutilating Natalka’s original angst about socialism into its veneration. Such slyness in manipulating the authorial message and thus the readers’ perception is a revealing example of the philosophical concerns that troubled Natalka, and by implication Kobylianska herself, at the turn of the last century.

Natalka’s apprehension about Oriadyn, his socialism, and Marxism in general, are further intensified by the heroine’s relatives and their suspicions, which, in turn, express the profound ambiguity of the Ukrainian elite as to the
new yet fast-spreading radical movement in Ukraine. Natalka’s uncle, a gymnasium professor, who could be seen as an embodiment of Ukrainian conservative populists, the dominant political group in the western Ukraine in the 1880s, points out, for instance, that Oriadyn made on him “страшно лихе враження” [a exceptionally terrifying impression] (I 149). He describes Oriadyn as one of those awfully-fast multiplying proletarians who make the perfect medium for socialist experiments and offers a brief yet chilling evaluation of what he calls progressive-socialists:

То авантюрики. В них нема віри, нема характеру. Вони не способні віддатися якому-небудь сталому заводові, відправити в тім, як цього вимагає закон. Вони духовні потвори, зроджені нездоровою лектурою... перебирають на себе роль реформаторів і спускаються на чуже добро. Смерті вони не бояться, бо в них нема бога.

[They are cunning venturers. They have no beliefs, no character. They are incapable of committing to a stable course, and maintain it according to lawful regulations. They are spiritual mutants created by false teaching... they claim the role of reformists and go after the goods of others. They are not afraid of death because they have no God.] (I 149-150)

The horrific image of spiritual mutants, who have no beliefs, no character, disdain law and God, and who neither value private property, nor fear death, signals an intense anxiety about socialism in the narrative voice. The presented fragment also suggests the narrator’s strong aspiration to differentiate from the alien phenomenon of progressive-socialism, conveying not only the old professor’s, but also Kobylianska’s own resentment for socialism. The pronoun “they” (Ukrainian “вони”) and its grammatical variations are repeated five times, positioning Oriadyn and those like him as the evil other, foreign to the
conservative Ukrainian mentality, personified in the character of Natalka’s uncle. Similar concern is shared by Natalka’s aunt, a Polonized German, who could be interpreted as an embodiment of the Polish imperial administration in Bukovyna and Galicia. Professor Lorden, a representative of the Ukrainian apolitical conservatives, also adds to the overall angst of the socialist progress by comparing it with the plague—“их поступування заразливе як чума” [their progress is as contagious as plague] (I 150)—paradoxically giving it the very tag that the Bolshevik terror and Stalinist repressions of the 1920s and 1930s, the so-called red plague, would soon acquire.

Particularly interesting are Professor Lorden’s speculations as to what would become of Oriadyn in twenty years, and whether he would abandon with time his noble dictum “дбати про народ” [care for the people] and develop a more selfish agenda (I 151), which amplify Kobylianska’s pungent critique of the Ukrainian radical movement. As the novel gradually reveals, Oriadyn indeed changes his beliefs and grows to see his earlier enthusiasm as fanatical stupidity. “Я вже не той сфанатизований дурак,” [I am not the same fanaticized fool as I once used to be] (I 376), says Oriadyn in one of his last conversations with Natalka. In the pursuit of personal interests, Oriadyn starts treating people as objects, as disposable things—“як шахов[і] фігур[и], котрі укладає він на своїй шахівниці до вподоби” [as chess pieces, which he orchestrates on his own chess board at will].

Oriadyn’s marriage with a Polish well-off maiden he does

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not love is also ripe with symbolic connotations, hinting at treacherous and anti-Ukrainian motifs in the political program of Ukrainian radicals. It is hard not to point out retrospectively that in *The Princess* Kobylianska clearly prognoses the up-coming socio-political catastrophe that would take place two decades later, prophetically forewarning against the brutal and bewildering nature of radical socialism. Like Oriadyn, who married a daughter of an imperial Austro-Hungarian official, the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party would tie Ukraine’s fate to that of Russian Bolshevism during the October Revolution. As we know today, this fusion led to the barbaric collectivization and dekulakization policies of 1929-1933 followed by the Stalinist purges of 1937-1938 that wiped out millions of Ukrainian lives.

**Dr. Marko**

While Vasyl Oriadyn plays an important part in heroine’s transition from the Lorelei to the Princess stage in her spiritual growth, Dr. Marko, a Croatian step-son of Natalka’s benefactor and her husband-to-be, instigates her transition to the Lotus stage. The character of Dr. Marko is constructed as a direct opposite to that of Oriadyn. “Я порівняла його до Ориади, і він видався мені контрастом того” [I compared him to Oriadyn and he appeared to be his contrast], Natalka points out after her first encounter with Dr. Marko, revealing an unflattering first impression of her new acquaintance. Although Natalka initially juxtaposes Dr. Marko’s unappealing appearance to that of attractive, passionate, flamboyant Oriadyn – as she plainly puts it, “нічого геройського не було в нім”
[there was nothing heroic in him] (I 263) – she quickly grows to appreciate Dr. Marko’s refined personality and eventually finds her ideal role model in him.

Further depictions of Dr. Marko bring to mind Kobylianska’s vision of her ultimate intellectual leader, discussed above. On one hand, Dr. Marko is featured as an “aristocrat of spirit,” a “higher man,” as a Nietzschean “seafarer” who travels the world in pursuit of knowledge. In the very first conversation, Natalka acknowledges Dr. Marko’s noble nature:

У ньому відчувався якийсь аристократизм, котрий застерігався за заздалегідь від усякого спільництва з тим, що звуть плебейскістю, сторони́ться від нього і в думанні і в учинках.

[One could sense some kind of aristocracy in him, which precariously guards against any commonality with what is called plebeian, avoids it in thoughts and deed.] (I 263)

Yet on the other hand, Dr. Marko is presented as a quiet, barely noticeable person, whose self-description reminds us not of the ostentatious Nietzschean overman, but of Lavrov’s silent hero of history:

Часописи не будуть про мене згадувати, бо я ані політик, ані літератор. Взагалі я не тішусь ніякою славою і залежно мені завсіди на тім мало, щоби здобути собі ім’я і розголос. Я старався лиш про те, щоби бути цирим дорадником і помічником тим, що зверталися до мене; і бути… гідним сином своєї країни... Тому належу до тих, про котрих не ‘чути’ дуже багато.

[Periodicals will not mention me because I’m neither a politician nor a writer. Generally I do not enjoy any fame and I never cared about getting ‘a name’ and publicity. I tried only to be a truthful counselor and helper to those who came with trust to me; to be... a worthy son of my country...That’s why I belong to those, about whom one does not ‘hear’ much.] (I 279)
As the story unveils, Dr. Marko becomes Natalka’s truthful counselor, methodically supporting and guiding her to the accomplishment of her goals. To accentuate his role in the formation of the heroine’s perception, Kobylianska uses a powerful Nietzschean metaphor of the sea shells, which the German philosopher uses in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to represent new values that replace those of conventional goodness and humility (96). After a prolonged separation, Dr. Marko brings Natalka a collection of colorful sea shells from the distant shores of India, which he picks during his voyage around the world. The symbolic connotation of the Nietzschean metaphor of the sea shells also clearly demarcates Natalka’s transition to the third child-like stage of spiritual development, positioning Dr. Marko’s as a decisive player in this process.

One of the most important cognitive changes that Dr. Marko stimulates in Natalka is a revision of her nationalistic attitudes. Growing up in Western Ukraine, Natalka internalizes the prevailing Ukrainian national sentiment towards the complex relations between Poles and Ukrainian. As she put it:

[Poles are a nation that tyrannized and persecuted the Ukrainian people for centuries, crushed and flogged them, drained their strength and sucked up their blood; humiliated and scorned them, forced its domination and kept them from light and elevation; it is...]

[Поляки – народ], що угнітав і переслідував українців цілими віками, корив, батожив його, розбивав його силу і висисав його кров; понижав його і глумився над ним..., накидаючи насильно своє панування, а до світла і висоти не допускав; [народ, що] орудуючи брудом і підлістю, сам зростав, а тим часом її народ... О боже, боже, де правда!
Dr. Marko exposes Natalka’s “майже односторонні почування” [almost one-sided attitudes] (I 292), insisting that one should be kind in judging other nations, for, as in the presented example, one cannot hold every Pole responsible for what have been committed by the Polish authorities in the past:

У кожного є своє 'я' цілком нове, хоч в де-чім і подібне до своїх предків, задля того не можна ще одним відповідати за всіх або всім за одного.

[Everybody has his or her own unique 'I', although it is partially derived from the ancestors. Yet it is not a proper justification to hold an individual responsible for the collective or the collective for an individual.] (I 269)

He further argues that any blind hatred is a proof of intellectual deficiency, for one is not great enough until one rids her- or himself of hatred and envy, and urges Natalka to look at Poland through a different light, encouraging her to study its literature. It is also Dr. Marko who brings up the notion of self-responsibility, pointing out that Ukrainians are equally responsible for their misery. He claims that instead of simply complaining Ukrainians should prove through work and intellectual achievement that they deserve to be treated differently, evoking the famous Kantian metaphor: “wer sich zum Wurme krummt, darf nicht klagen, dass er zertretten wird [who crawls as a worm, should not complain about being stepped on].” Guided by Dr. Marko’s advice, Natalka learns gradually to be

44 Ibid., 263. This section is also omitted from the 1962 edition. See I, 270.
righteous even with the enemies of her people, sublimating her nationalistic rage into a proud glorification of her own culture through her own published novel.

Dr. Marko’s non-Ukrainian identity carries another important symbolic connotation that continues to puzzle critics. At the time of the original publication of *The Princess*, Natalka’s marriage to a Croatian was interpreted as Kobylianska’s desire to infiltrate foreign matter, and thus to disrupt the cultivation of national consciousness. Critics seemed to overlook, however, the complex dynamic in the couple’s relationship and its symbolic implications. The character of Dr. Marko, who is designated as a European, a Croatian, strongly resonates with a similar controversial figure in Russian Literature – Insarov, a Bulgarian protagonist in the 1869 novel *On the Eve (Накануне)* by Turgenev, whose work Kobylianska highly valued.\(^{45}\) In the 1860 renowned essay “When Will the Real Day Come?” (“Когда же придет настоящий день?”), Nikolai Dobrolyubov, whose critical work was also influential in the formation of Kobylianska’s early socio-political views, gives a sound reading of Insarov’s character and the role of his national identity, which could be helpful in explaining the symbolic connotation of Dr. Marko’s national identity in *The Princess*.\(^{46}\) To set up our discussion, it is important to point out first that Kobylianska’s heroine Natalka Verkovychewna and Turgenev’s protagonist Elena Stakhova carry similar symbolic meaning – both maidens represent their respective nations at two distinct historical moment that could be described as “on the eve” of the great

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45 See chapter 1, 75.
46 See chapter 1, 35-36.
and inevitable socio-political change. There are many similarities between the two characters on the narrative level as well: both heroines share a strong craving for knowledge and cognitive work, develop similar concerns for the oppressed masses, encounter outstanding personalities among their compatriots, and find their ideal love in a foreigner. The two plots differ, however, in their resolutions. Whereas Elena and her Bulgarian fiancé Insarov are unable to marry and die at the end of Turgenev's novel, Natałka and Dr. Marco unite in a harmonious marriage, which promises to be vibrant and fertile. Considering that according to Dobrolyubov Turgenev's ending symbolically demonstrates the Russian author's disappointment in the current status quo of his nation and his disbelief in individual action, one can suggest that the final sequence of The Princess, on the contrary, conveys Kobylianska's celebration of the profound socio-political changes in her social environment together with her strong faith in intellectual leadership and prosperous future of her people.

Accordingly, Dobrolyubov's pungent response to the questions why should Turgenev's Insarov be a Bulgarian, not a Russian, also provides insight into a possible answer to the question why Kobylianska's Dr. Marko is a Croatian and not a Ukrainian. As Dobrolyubov puts it, "болгар, действительно мог быть заменен, пожалуй, и другой национальностью – сербом, чехом, итальянцем, венгром, – но только не русским" [a Bulgarian could be indeed substituted by some different nationality – a Serbian, a Czech, an Italian, a Hungarian – but not by a Russian] (197-198). Despite the fact that Elena and some of her compatriots are full of vital energy and are eager to act, Dobrolyubov continues, Russians
remain timid, uncertain, and disoriented owing to their backward socio-historical circumstances:

Русская жизнь сложилась так хорошо, что в ней все вызывает спокойствие и мирный сон, и всякий бессонный человек кажется, не без основания, беспокойным и совершенно лишним для общества.

[Russian life turned out so well that it stimulates only tranquility and peaceful slumber, and any sleepless person seems, not without reason, restless and quite superfluous to the society.] (201)

Kobylianska not only evokes similar descriptions of Natalka’s environment, which prove the Ukrainian society to be as dormant and oppressive as Turgenev’s Russia, but also comments prolifically on the socio-political apathy among Ukrainian elite in her personal notes.47 Both, Kobylianska’s first novel and her nonfictional writings of the early 1890s, suggest that she agrees with Dobrolyubov’s claim that the “state of cognitive stagnation” rarely produces any confident leaders without a powerful impulse from outside. As implied through Dr. Marko’s symbolic identity, Kobylianska chooses Croatia – a nation whose intellectual elite have succeeded in achieving political autonomy within the Austro-Hungarian Empire in a peaceful manner – as Ukraine’s external impulse and a role model for its socio-political evolution, which in the mid-1890s was still in the inception phase.

**Conclusion**

47 See discussion above, 110-111.
By closely examining Kobylianska’s first novel *The Princess* and her other fictional and nonfictional writings of the early 1890s, this chapter elaborates for the first time on Kobylianska’s ingenious philosophical synthesis of apparently conflicting currents of thought – Nietzschean aristocratism and the nineteenth-century Russian radicalism. The Bukovynian writer fuses the two intellectual strands into a shrewd critique of Marxism, the emerging Ukrainian social-democratic movement, and the on-going populist discussion of Ukraine’s national regeneration. Inspired by Nietzsche, Kobylianska indirectly polemizes with the populist calls on the Ukrainian intelligentsia “to identify with the folk” and “go to the people” by propagating instead the need of a cultural revolution and the urgency of fostering a solid and highly educated national elite with a strong political will. By bridging Nietzsche’s concept of the overman with Pyotr Lavrov’s theory of the intellectual’s duty to his people, the Bukovynian writer constructs an alternate program of Ukraine’s collective liberation. Kobylianska embeds her vision of a new victorious Ukraine into the image and life-story of the main heroine in her first novel *The Princess*. A close reading of the novel clearly demonstrates that Kobylianska’s new hero-type – an alternate Ukrainian overman, or better a Ukrainian overwoman – not only re-conceptualizes the nineteenth-century Ukrainian literary cannon, but also challenges the dominant populist myth of Ukrainian martyrdom and the socialist utopian belief in the political agency of the mob. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, Kobylianska’s 1896 philosophical synthesis of Nietzschean aristocratism and the nineteenth-century Russian radical thought would constitutes the main premise
of her consequent ever-evolving dialogue with the multiplicity of socio-cultural and political discourses of her time – a dialogue that would generate even more complex and multidimensional, but often shocking and scandalous, conceptual and artistic fusions.
Chapter 3: The Populist Trial, 1897-1902


[The critics dwell unnecessarily on the sentence, “I will not kiss the mob on the lips,” disregarding the fact that I do not denigrate that “mob” in any of my works, not even the shortest pieces – neither in “The Peasant,” “At St. John’s Monastery,” “Uncultured,” “In the Fields,” The Earth, “Time,” “Humility,” nor in any other work.] (V 520)

Я люблю народ… і дивлюся на нього тими самими очима, що на деревину, цвіт і на всю живучу часть природи. Одна неестетичність його, будь у словах, будь у поведенні, чи в привичках, разить мене...

[I love the people... I look at them as I look at trees, flowers and the rest of the living part of nature. Only their unaesthetic manners – either in language, behavior, or habits – vex me...] (V 239)

In these quotations, Olha Kobylianska evokes a specific notion of “the people” (народ), which had a strong socio-political connotation in nineteenth-century Ukraine. Following the Russian Populists (народники), Ukrainian intellectuals of the mid-nineteenth century recognized “the people” – that is, the peasantry who made up the overwhelming majority of Ukraine’s vast population – as the makers of history and dedicated themselves to their welfare. By the 1880s, populism was established as a dominant intellectual current in Ukraine. Its ideology was structured around a belief in the values of the Ukrainian peasant community, which, as perceived by Populists, was characterized by a love of freedom and democracy. While Russian Populists focused on social action,
creating revolutionary organizations such as Land and Freedom (Земля и воля, 1876) and The People’s Will (Народная воля, 1979), Ukrainian populists prioritized national enlightenment, bridging their socio-economic doctrines with a strong nationalistic concern for the emancipation of the people from under foreign domination. According to Ghita Ionescu, an American scholar of populism and its national characteristics in Eastern Europe, at the turn of the twentieth century this version of populism, or rather “peasantism,” was prominent in many countries of Eastern Europe, where it evolved as a reaction to both Russian Populism (наровничество) and Western socialism (99).

Lacking political organization and subject to the surveillance of all socio-cultural activities by the authorities, particularly within Russian empire, Ukrainian intellectuals gradually resorted to propagating their views in literature and other cultural productions. As many scholars of Ukrainian studies recognize, by the end of the nineteenth century the populist notion that literature ought to serve the people and raise their level of culture, education as well as political and economic awareness became so firmly instilled in the mind of Ukrainian intellectuals that any deviation from it was often regarded as an act of national betrayal.48 Nechuj-Levytsky, Panas Myrnyj, and Boris Grinchenko were the most prominent Ukrainian populist writers, whose work reflected the prevailing attitude of the time in its most precise form and set up the dominant fictional model, the realist model, which propagated the espousal of peasant language and the

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peasant way of life. In this context, Olha Kobylianska’s intellectual prose of the 1890s – particularly her A Human Being of 1894, The Princess of 1896 and “Valse Mélancolique” of 1897 – was perceived as a treacherous departure from, and even a threat to, the Ukrainian national agenda.49 With a few exceptions, Kobylianska’s contemporaries greeted her early works with scorn, attacking their non-Ukrainianness – at best with respect to language and at worst with respect to themes, ideology, and psychology. These belligerent attacks forced Kobylianska to address peasant themes in her later works, which, as we shall see, were as iconoclastic in terms of the populist culture as her earlier intellectual fiction.

This chapter combines a close reading of Kobylianska’s several canonical texts about the Ukrainian village with their socio-historical contextualization to demonstrate that the main ideological theme in Kobylianska’s rustic prose is not reconciliation with, but sharp critique and demystification of the populist realist literary models and their uncritical glorification of peasants. A close reading and a comparative analysis of Kobylianska’s novel The Earth (Земля, 1902) with Emil Zola’s The Earth (La Terre, 1887) frame the main argument of the chapter, claiming that Kobylianska’s investigation of the inner emotional and cognitive life of her peasant characters is strongly anti-populist on ideological as well as on stylistic level. Bakhtin’s concepts of authorial discourse, dialogic imagination, heteroglossia, and polyphony will be used for this analysis. The chapter begins

49 See, for instance, S. Yefremov’s attack on Kobylianska in his 1902 scandalous article “V poiskah novoj krasoty.”
with a survey of Kobylianska’s short stories about peasants written in the late 1880s and 1890s to help illuminate a logical continuation and even a synthesis of Kobylianska’s earlier propagation of intellectualism and high culture in her fictional works of the late 1890s. The survey also examines style and form development in Kobylianska’s early depictions of peasants, elaborating on how the writer comes up with the complex polyphonic structure for her peasant novel *The Earth*, which made her projected village even more grievous than that depicted in Zola’s sensational novel of the same title.

**Peasant Themes in Kobylianska’s Early Fiction**

There are three distinct chronological modes in Kobylianska’s early depictions of peasants. Each mode has its particular formal structure and reflects a specific stage in Kobylianska’s evolving philosophical and socio-political views, which she addressed in more detail in her longer works of each period – *A Human Being* (1887-1894), *The Princess* (1896), and *The Earth* (1902), respectively. The first mode coincides with the writing of *A Human Being* and is characterized by sharp criticism of Ukrainian pseudo-intellectualism and pseudo-liberalism of the time. Kobylianska juxtaposes her first fictional peasant characters in *A Human Being* and “Nature” (“Природа,” 1887-1897) with the educated middle-class heroines, emphasizing the alienation of the Ukrainian progressive intelligentsia from “the people” onto whom they projected their hopes and dreams about Ukraine’s socio-cultural and political regeneration. Kobylianska places dialogue at the center of her early stories, illuminating the
dramatic difference in culture between the two types of her characters – namely, peasants and intellectuals – through their communion with each other.

The second mode in Kobylianska’s peasant depictions emerges at the time when she worked on *The Princess*, where she fused a Nietzschean affirmation of free will and personal growth with Pyotr Lavrov’s doctrine of the intellectual’s moral debt to “the people.” In these stories – “Time” (“Час,” 1895) and “Uncultured” (“Некультурна,” 1896) – Kobylianska continues to juxtapose intellectual and peasant characters, but strives to work out a new model for their interaction. Instead of judging the peasants’ superstitious views, naïveté, and circumscribed agency, educated characters of a new type seek “to see and understand [the peasant] soul” (Turnerova 299). In these stories, Kobylianska prioritizes dialogical confessions, which bring out the inner man of the peasant characters.

The third mode of peasant portrayals Kobylianska develops in the late 1890s in such stories as “На полях” (“In the Fields,” 1898) and “Під голим небом” (“Under the Open Sky,” 1900), where she abandons sharp juxtapositions, disguising her criticism in the formal structure of her fiction. Rather than relying on the convenient projections of the educated characters or authorial commentaries, Kobylianska animates her new peasant characters, creating vibrant polyphonic narratives. This mode has proved to be the most effective in demystifying and demythologizing the critical understandings sacred to the populist contingent – the idealized nature of the village community and the natural person, the Ukrainian villager.
Kobylianska’s short story “Nature,” written in 1887 but first published in 1895 in German and only in 1897 in Ukrainian, is the most representative work of the first type, which equally exposes both “the simple peasant” and “the delusional intellectual” mind. The story features an encounter between an educated upper-middle class lady and a peasant, a well-off Hutsul lad, which gradually progresses from a courteous dialogue to violent sexual intercourse.¹⁵⁰ This audacious representation of what at the time was perceived as socially deviant behavior, as well as its symbolic implications, projects Kobylianka’s criticism of the complex exchange between the Ukrainian intelligentsia and peasantry in the late 1880s. Critics, however, have avoided discussing the central event of “Nature” for almost a hundred years since its original publication. Kobylianska’s contemporaries – Makovej, Franko, and Ukrainka – focused either on the descriptions of nature, or on the complex psychological portraits of the principal characters, which revealed for the first time Kobylianska’s talent as a psychological writer of vertiginous depth. Soviet critics – Babyshkin, Tomashuk, and Pohrebennyk – also committed the sexual encounter to silence, discussing only the class preference of the heroine. Only in the 1990s, did Ukrainian feminist critics – Pavlychko and Hundorova among the first – begin to draw attention to the sexual exchange between the two characters, talking about eroticism, gender relations, and female sexuality in Kobylianska’s work. Their ground-breaking

¹⁵⁰ Hutsuls are a dominant Ukrainian ethnic group living in the Carpathian Mountains. At the turn of the nineteenth century Hutsuls were predominantly peasants.
research, however, remains limited. Numerous textual references in “Nature” suggest that the heroine is not a victorious conqueror, but a violated victim, which highlights on the symbolic level the socio-political impotence of Ukrainian intelligentsia and their inability to communicate with the majority of Ukrainian population – the peasants. Paradoxically, feminist critics acknowledge that the sexual encounter in the story is an instance of rape, but read it exclusively as a social phenomenon, disregarding the fact that representations of rape have been long used in literature as a convenient albeit troubling rhetorical device for a range of different socio-cultural, political, and economic issues and conflicts (Sielke 5). The following analysis thus will argue against the previous readings of “Nature,” elaborating on how Kobylianska uses rape narrative and its symbolism to construct a vibrant tragicomedy of illusions and failures, which complicated populist consensus on ethnic solidarity and indeed national identity.

The story opens with a narrator’s sketch of the unnamed heroine, a twenty-year-old unmarried daughter of a local lawyer, who is instantly presented as “русинка від голови до ніг” [a Ukrainian from top to bottom] (I 401). In the further description of the heroine’s Ukrainianness – which is mainly reflected in her laziness and “меланхолічний сум” [melancholy sadness] reminiscent of unfortunate Ukrainian people (I 401) – Kobylianska projects ethnicity as a natural, biological, in-born category. The heroine is also described as educated and well-read, yet naïve and oblivious of the real world, from which she has been carefully sheltered as those “сторонні рослини в тепліннях” [exotic plants in the greenhouses] (I 401). This sheltered existence is further tied to the heroine’s
wild imagination, excessive sensitivity, and almost sickly-irrational longing for the unknown, projecting a character, who brings to mind not the victorious type of the New Woman constructed by recent feminist critics, but the very same type of the pseudo-intellectual, which Kobylianska decried in *A Human Being*. Put differently, the heroine, literally a lover of a peasant, could be read as a satirical embodiment of the Ukrainian populist intelligentsia, the so-called Khlopomany (Peasant-lovers), who while still seeing “the people” from outside, idealized them, exalted their virtues, and set out to build an ideal society upon their traditions. This critical parallel is essential in grasping Kobylianska’s hidden criticism of the populist dogmas of her time.

The Hutsul character is introduced through the heroine’s perspective. Although Mark Pavlyshyn evaluates this description as Orientalist and projects it as an expression of Kobylianska’s uncritical predisposition to Ukrainian peasants (71-72), the evolution of the heroine’s discourse and its tragic consequences suggest that Kobylianska strategically employs Orientalist rhetoric with its excessive romanticizing to expose the cultural distance between the Ukrainian populist intelligentsia and “the people.” There are indeed a great many unsubstantiated assumptions as to Slavic phenotype in the heroine’s descriptions in the first part of the story:

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51 See chapter 1, 68-69.
52 In the 1850s and 1860s the Khlopomany movement was founded by a group of young populist descendants from the Polonized nobility, who actively engaged in educational and cultural work among peasants in Galicia and Right Bank Ukraine. This movement had a great influence on the Ukraine national revival movement and was popular through the 1880s, yet starting from the early 1890s it was severely criticized by young progressive intellectuals, who decried its inadequate methods.
The extended enumeration of the Hutsul’s external qualities suggests that the heroine sees him only from the outside – which is also captured in her earlier attempt to paint a portrait of the good-looking peasant – but has little understanding of his internal life. This cultural alienation is further emphasized by the heroine’s open mockery of the Hutsul’s views about “доля” [destiny], “Божа воля” [God’s will], and “нешаслива година” [unlucky hour] (I 410). Yet once the heroine discovers a strong sexual attraction to the peasant, she switches to a different discourse, reminiscent of the 1880s Khlopoman dogmas of ethnic solidarity, which allows her to view the object of her desire as an equal in spite of, and through, the cultural differences. “Я те саме, що ти, і я також русинка” [I am the same as you, I am also a Ukrainian] (I 411), the heroine replies to the Hutsul’s commentary on the fluency of her Ukrainian language. This identification seems to be unexpected and almost forced to the Hutsul. Nevertheless, driven by the budding physical attraction, he accepts the new rhetoric and proceeds to treat the heroine as an equal, raping her on the spot. Such a brutal consequence of the heroine’s excessive romanticizing and naive understanding of equality,
suggest their criticism and a direct commentary on one of the central question of the late nineteenth-century socio-political debates in Ukraine – whether the Ukrainian intellectuals have enough in common with the Hutsul peasants to identify as members of the same ethnic group and pursue a mutual cause of national liberation. Kobylianska does not give any direct answer, but offers a compelling story of a sexual encounter between representatives of the two major Ukrainian classes, intelligentsia and “the people,” commenting on the power relations in Ukrainian society through literary effects.

The highly aestheticized representation of the rape scene and a surprisingly brief description of the heroine in its aftermath suggest that the author has little interest in accurately depicting the true, dehumanizing social experience of sexual violence, but uses the rape narrative as a literary motif to address broader socio-political issues. The most evident commentary on Kobylianska’s reconfiguration of rape in “Nature” is an exposure of the spiritual weakness and political incompetence of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, which, as projected through the story of the unnamed heroine, is not ready either to fight for the well-being of the whole nation, or to secure its own survival. Second, Kobylianska projects the Ukrainian peasantry, represented by the Hutsul character, as indeed a great power, which, however, remains wild, uncontrollable, potentially self-destructive, but, most importantly, completely indifferent to its national identification. The Hutsul’s final confession, tragic yet highly satirical, where Kobylianska exposes his ignorance, superstitious beliefs, and lack of any understanding of the laws and civil code, is saturated with a
sharp critique of “the raw peasant mind.” Finally, the symbol of rape and its effect on both characters suggest that although there is a tremendous need of a cultural revolution in the village, ill-conceived “going to the people” is not the right way to achieve it. As the story implies, and as Kobylianska argues elsewhere, fanatical and often self-sacrificing projects of the Ukrainian intelligentsia contribute to neither educating the underprivileged, nor to forging any ethnic solidarity, but, on the contrary, only promote class antagonism, exacerbating cultural stagnation. Kobylianska’s artistic reconfiguration of rape in “Nature” thus goes far beyond challenging the conservative consensus on gender and sexuality, representing a number of populist myths as utopian.

After “Nature,” Kobylianska returns to the peasant theme only in 1895, when she publishes two short stories “Час” (“Time”) and “Банк Рустикальний” (“Rustic Bank”), which feature peasants as central characters. Nikofor Tomashuk states that these stories together with “Некультурана” (“Uncultured,” 1896) are written in the same manner as “Nature” and employ similar principles in depicting peasants, whom, as Tomashuk claims, Kobylianska continues to juxtapose the educated middle class heroines (Zhyttia 67-68). Over the past fifty years this statement has never been questioned, most likely because of the limitation placed on literary criticism by Soviet regime, under which even the slightest suggestion of Kobylianska’s anti-populism could have led to the official denunciation of the writer. Western critics and recent Ukrainian feminist scholars also overlook this poorly supported statement, concentrating their research on

53 See capter 1, 45-47.
the major works by Kobylianska. A close reading of these stories, however, shows that in the mid-1890s the overall tone of Kobylianska’s depictions of peasants and their interactions with the intelligentsia substantially differ from that of the 1880s: from derogatory and condemnatory they change to kind and sympathetic. The educated middle-class heroines no longer judge peasants, but try to examine their inner life, and their rhetoric acquires somewhat prescriptive qualities. Accordingly, Kobylianska’s new peasant characters are no longer presented as coarse and primitive others, but are rather depicted as complex and vivid beings who, despite their lack of culture, lead vigorously independent mental and moral lives, often of considerable subtlety.

Kobylianska continues to place dialogue in the center of her mid-1890s short fiction, but this dialogue is no longer the threshold to action, as in “Nature,” but is the action itself. As opposed to the previous sharp juxtapositions of peasants and educated heroines, her mid-1890s stories feature peasants as central characters who transform dialogues into passionate dialogic confessions, targeted not simply to expose their prejudices, but to reveal the complexity of their internal lives. The educated characters, in turn, no longer mock or lecture their peasant interlocutors, but rather encourage them to contemplate and explain their own statements, stimulating critical thinking. There are some substantial changes on the stylistic level as well. Instead of tendentious commentaries, Kobylianska employs voice combinations to articulate the subtle influence of the educated heroines on the peasant mind. For instance, in “Time” an educated lady carefully moderates her philosophical discussion with an old
Hutsul woman on personal agency and free will by allowing her words to penetrate the old woman’s speech:

[Стара гуцула] повернула звільна своє лице за мною...
- Чи ви що казали?
- Ні, я щось думала.
- Чого тільки думати? Передумати – не передумав ще ніхто нічого.
- Як то, лелічko?..
- Думати або й не думати, а найгіршого лиха не в силі ніхто віддумати!
- Якого найгіршого лиха?
- Якого? Ну так. Воно від вас далеко; ви ще молоді, наче голубка; але я... се ж причини смерть – найгірше лихо.
- Смерть... Справді її неможна думками відогнати.
- Так і видите... Отже видите. А що значить все проче?
- Смерть то щось таке що мусить бути... Але то не найгірше лихо.
- Ба не лихо! На добре не виходить вона нікому. А втім – чи одно мусить бути, бо Бог так дав.
- Як лелічko?
- Кажу: Бог так хоче...
- Що?
- Так як воно є.
- І чоловік може хотіти...
[Стара жінка] похитала сумно головою.

[The old Hutsul woman slowly turned her face in my direction.
- Did you say something?
- No, I was just thinking.
- What good is in thinking? Nobody has ever thought of everything.
- Why is that, dear?
- To think or not to think does not make any difference, because nobody has ever thought up a solution that can prevent the most terrible evil of all.
- What kind of terrible evil?
- What kind? Well... For you it is still far away; you are still young, like that dove; but I am... Well, death is the most terrible evil of all.
- Death... that is true – thinking cannot turn it away.
- So you see... You do see... And what does everything else matter?
- Death is something bound to happen… Yet it’s not the most terrible evil of all.
- Not evil! It never turns out well for anybody… But then, that’s how it must be, because, after all, it’s God’s will.
- How is that, dear?
- I just said – God wills so…
- Wills what?
- How things are.
- Well, a human being has a will as well…
  The old woman shook her head sadly.] (I 472-473)

Formally, this conversation could be seen as the old woman’s internal dialogue, for there are barely any markers that separate her utterances from those of the lady. This formal feature effectively captures how the educated heroine’s rhetoric penetrates the old woman’s discourse to subvert her primitive beliefs, making the old Hutsul aware of competitive views on the inevitability of death, the existence of human will, and, by implication, the positive ramifications of thinking, which, as further suggested, helps individuals to assert their own voices. Bakhtin’s concept of the intentional authorial dialogization of characters’ utterances can help argue that in this dialogue Kobylianska deliberately employs the dialogic potential of speech rather than direct statements to work against populist fanatical programs of “going to the people,” disguising her criticism in the formal structure of her fiction. This dialogue could also be read as Kobylianska’s model for the alternate interaction of intelligentsia with peasants, which calls on the educated middle-class Ukrainians to engage in the complexity of the peasant world.

Another unprecedented feature in Kobylianska’s depiction of peasants that emerges in “Time” is her open enthusiasm about the potential regeneration of peasant consciousness. Further in the story Kobylianska juxtaposes two peasant
characters with clashing views, the old woman and her daughter Illinka, to project the possibility of the cultural and moral transformation of the peasant mind. Kobylianska positions the intelligentsia, represented by the middle-class heroine, as a decisive instigator of such a change. Registering a sharp visual contrast between the mother with her “мутними очима” [opaque eyes] and “тупим сонним поглядом” [dull, drowsy gaze] and the daughter, whose unusual grace and physical strength remind those of a “тигрица” [tigress], the lady initiates another philosophical discussion to illuminate their opposing views. The Hutsul girl firmly, but respectfully, refutes her mother’s fatalism and forces the old woman to forsake her traditional views and admit that she, Illinka, “має вже свій розум” [has already a mind of her own] (I 474-475). Their polemical dialogue represents a tremendous accomplishment that the educated heroine reaches in her brief interrection with peasants: with minimal words and barely any intervention she inspires the old woman to acknowledge and put up with the free will and independent mind of her daughter. Furthermore, considering that Kobylianska writes this story at the time when she is preoccupied with Nietzsche’s life-affirming philosophy and appropriates his concept of the three-stage transportation of human consciousness to the philosophical context of The Princess, it is fair to look for similar themes in “Time.”54 The two peasant heroines, for instance, could be read as symbolic embodiments of the first two stages in the evolution of the peasant consciousness, where the old woman could be seen as a Nietzschean camel who possesses a sense of duty in bearing

54 See chapter 2 for further discussion, 104.
what she is ordered to bear, and Illinka-the-tigress as a Nietzschean lion who desires to create her own freedom. In the final lines of the story where the educated lady comments on Illinka’s singing, the final transformation of the peasants’ consciousness is projected as inevitable in the near future:

[Иллінчина] пісня розлягалася далеко лісом… І я вдумувалася в [Іллінчин сильний дзвінкій голос] неначе в яку подію... В яркій відчута відгомін. Здавалося що одна стіна скали передавала другій сміливий, покликуючий голос; все даліше і даліше; все вище і вище... Здавалося, що поклик цей полинув кудись далеко – аж у недоглядну далек...

[Illinka’s song was resonating far through the forest... I thought of her powerful clear voice as of an event... The ravines reverberated with its echo. It seemed that this courageous and compelling voice was rebounding from one cliff to another, resonating ever farther and farther, ever higher and higher... It seemed that this calling was flying somewhere very far away – into a mysterious distance...] (I 475)

Such enthusiastic recognition and reinforcement of the possible cultural and moral growth of the peasants is absent in Kobylianska’s earlier stories of the late 1880s. Remarkably, they are also absent in her later writings, which are informed by Kobylianska’s growing conflict with populists, as will be demonstrated shortly. “Time” thus is a product of brief period in Kobylianska’s creative career when she was first exposed to the vivid discussions of Ukraine’s national revival and was fascinated with the populist enthusiastic celebration of peasants’ spiritual, cultural, and political potential.

In the next story “Uncultured,” Kobylianska substantially restrains her admiration, enthusiasm, and sympathy by adding elements of skepticism and doubt to her work. In a letter to Makovej, Kobylianska’s first editor and close
friend of populist conviction, she stresses that the main objective of “Uncultured,” which depicts another unusual Hutsul woman, is “змаювати [всю] красу некультурної з її щасливим незнанням, з її вродженим щастям в душі, якого їй нічим не можна було відібрати” [to portray the beauty of an uncultured being with all her inborn happiness and irrepressible, blissful ignorance] (IL., F14, N166). Yet, as suggested in the title of the story, despite the prominent tones of admiration, Kobylianska juxtaposes her peasant heroine Paraska to culture, education, and, by extension, social progress. A brief remark on Paraska’s character made by the omnipresent narrator in the beginning of the story highlights this tension, making Kobylianska’s representation of the peasant heroine ambiguous:

З її оживлених темних очей б’є безжурність, з кожного руху, з інтонації голосу сила непригнетеного життя, гумору, а заразом – дитяча наївність.

[Her vivid dark eyes radiate joy; her every movement, every fluctuation of her voice express the vigor of her untrammeled life, her humor, and, at the same time, her child-like naïveté.] (Il 333)

Although this commentary starts with an enthusiastic description of Paraska’s optimism, it ends with an abrupt reference to the heroine’s childlike naïveté and blissful ignorance, which dialectically undercut her positive qualities, suggesting a contradiction in her character. This conflicting statement captures the overall tone of the story, which constantly oscillates between humorous presentation and grief-inspiring subject matter, opposing fascination to criticism.

Paraska playfully narrates her life story, which, as it gradually turns out, is filled with nothing but violence and hard works. Despite continual jokes and self-
aggrandizement, all the Hutsul woman can tell about her youth is that she
"робила і служила, гарувала, бо була сила..." [worked and served, labored for
others, for she had the strength...] (II 332). Shockingly, Paraska's most exciting
memory is an instance of attempted rape – Kobylianska once again uses the
trope of sexual violence to make a social commentary, which alludes to her
erlier use of rape rhetoric and its symbolic meaning in “Nature.” Paraska's story
as well as its socio-political message is quite different from that of the heroine in
“Nature.” As opposed to the young lady in the earlier story, Paraska escapes
from her bewildered aggressor, a fellow Hutsul shepherd with whom she used to
work as a seasonal laborer. While the heroine of “Nature” modestly begs her
rapist for mercy, Paraska passionately resists her attacker, yelling out curses and
threats. “Видиш кулак? Видиш?.. А зуби видиш? Я, катюга, пірву тебе, заїм,
розшарпаю, мой, мой, мой!” [Do you see my fist? Do you see it?.. And do you
see the teeth? I will maul you, bastard, I will eat you alive, I will rip you apart! I
will! I will!] (II 335), she screams, while biting, scratching, kicking, and punching
the shepherd, forcing him to acknowledge her will and back off. This unexpected
reversal in the perpetrator's behavior produces a strong rhetorical effect, which is
inversely proportional to the effects, generated by the conventional rape
narratives – rather than distancing the victim and the violator, as it happens in
“Nature,” it asserts their sameness and mutual recognition. As the story
suggests, Paraska manages to avoid violation, because she, as opposed to the
violated heroine in “Nature,” indeed has what it takes to communicate her will:
she speaks the precise socio-cultural language that the assaulting peasant
understands. This implied statement escalates Kobylianska’s earlier criticism of the cultural alienation between the Ukrainian intelligentsia and “the people” presented in “Nature,” restating that although Ukrainian peasantry and intelligentsia might have the same ethnic roots, hence might be united in nature, they operate within the matrix of two distinct and often antagonistic cultures. In addition, the story of the attempted rape also makes an indirect commentary on the uneventful and dull village life, demythologizing populist discourse on the ideal values of the Ukrainian village community.

The other two stories in Paraska’s confession bring out further critical contradictions, which have an anti-populist character. The second story focuses on her loveless marriage, which, if compared with the narrative of attempted rape, draws attention to a certain inconsistency in Paraska’s behavior: the same heroine, who fiercely resists the attractive shepherd, passively agrees to marry an old widower she does not like. Paraska gives an odd answer to this riddle, explaining it as “подійка судільниць” [a predetermination by fates] (II 340), which reveals her fatalist beliefs that delimit her otherwise rational mind and rebellious spirit. Considering Kobylianska’s advocacy of cultural enlightenment, free will, and personal agency, one cannot but acknowledge her irony as to Paraska’s superstitions. Kobylianska’s criticism reaches its crescendo in Paraska’s last story about her night wandering through the woods in search of the “moara dracului” [devil’s mill]. This allegorical narrative could be read as a representation not only of Paraska’s aimless life, but also of the relentlessly dark and dreadful existence of the Ukrainian peasantry who, as Kobylianska highlights from this
point on, despite their many positive qualities often become victims of their own doomed views and superstitious beliefs. Hence, although Kobylianska announces to the populist critics that her story depicts “the beauty of the uncultured being,” her graphic images suggest the opposite, highlighting her critical disposition towards the “twisted peasant mind,” and those who propagate it as a driving force of Ukrainian national regeneration.

Lesia Ukrainka, a daughter of Olena Pchilka and one of the best-known Ukrainian modernist writers, was the first to acknowledge these subversive aspects in Kobylianska’s story and celebrate its groundbreaking ideological significance. In 1900, Ukrainka wrote to Kobylianska:

[You may not believe me, but we desire the green Bukovyna more than any Parisian play, especial after reading your “Uncultured.” What a magnificent story is this “Uncultured”... I did not expect from an Austrian Ukrainian the sincerity and bravery with which you depicted Paraska’s type and life-situations. While reading, I continually exclaimed to myself, Bravo, Ms. Olga! Long live the art! Long live freedom! Your fellow countrymen must have given you a good scolding for “Uncultured.”] (Kobylianska v krytytsi 75)

In this fragment, Ukrainka clearly acknowledges that Kobylianska’s representation of the peasant woman as an irrational, impulsive, and superstitious natural being was an unprecedented act of daring that substantially challenged the mainstream populist canon and position Kobylianska as a
revolutionary modernizer of Ukrainian literature. In the early 1900s, similar commentaries and recognition came from other prominent Ukrainian modernists, such as Stefanyk and Kotsubynsky, who developed similar approaches to depicting peasants, fusing their admiration of the Hutsuls’ authentic spirit with the sharp anti-populist criticism of their primitive mentality and superstitious beliefs.

The third mode in Kobylianska’s representations of peasants emerges in the short story “На полях” (“In the Fields,” 1898) – one of the first fictional adaptations of the tragic homicide, a presumable fratricide, which took place in a well-off peasant family that Kobylianska knew personally, and that she later featured as the central event in her second novel The Earth. “In the Fields,” however, does not mention the homicide, but rather concentrates on the prior history of the family, narrating the agony of the old parents, whose oldest son is recruited into the Austrian military. The main plot revolves around a comic story of how the old peasant couple entrusts a local Jew Benjamin with a large sum of money to pay off officials and keep their son home, but ends up losing both the money and the son. The narrative is structured as a dialogue, yet as opposed to the earlier stories, there are no educated middle-class characters to provide the ideological framework for the text. Kobylianska focuses exclusively on the interaction between her peasant characters, revealing their outlook on life through their communion with one another. This conversation projects the two characters on one hand as honest, caring, and hard-working people, but on the other, as ignorant proprietors who cannot function outside their natural environment, the village. Kobylianska once again undercuts her positive
description of peasants with her ironic exposure of their primitive mentality, fatalist beliefs, and limited personal agency. The story ends with a symbolic lyrical passage, which reiterates Kobylianska's earlier call to bring a ray of light into the darkness of the Ukrainian village, intensifying the story's critique of the peasants' incompetence.

Stefanyk was one of the first to recognize and praise Kobylianska's innovative approach to portraying peasants. He also was the first to point out the overly soft and timid nature of socio-political criticism in Kobylianska's new story. After reading “In the Fields,” Stefanyk writes to Kobylianska on December 16, 1898:

[I read your story “In the Fields.” It is good, because it is written in the precise tone of that blue mist that covers out fields... Yet you bury all the sharp edges that could hurt people in yourself, you bend all the simple lines that escape harmony with your delicate hands. I see a poet in its every line. From your every work, you look at me with sad kindness, as if you were Virgin Mary, whose heart is stabbed with swords, yet whose face radiates love to all.] (221)

In the same letter, Stefanyk urges Kobylianska to be more audacious in her descriptions and offers a brief account of a brutal event he recorded in a neighboring village, which he later adapted into a short story “Новина” (“News,” 1899), as if setting an example for his friend. As will be demonstrated next, Kobylianska takes Stefanyk's advice seriously, making her colors much thicker
and darker in her seminal peasant novel *The Earth*, which in its lyrical power, its narrative conviction, its epic and mythical grandeur, as well as in its immediate social implication was unprecedented in Ukrainian literature.

*The Earth*: Pro et Contra

Kobylianska finished *The Earth* in April of 1901, and in 1902 it was published in the Western Ukrainian literary monthly *Літературно-науковий вісник* (*Literary and Scientific Herald*) by Ivan Franko. Within several months the novel was released as a separate edition. *The Earth* is roughly based on the true events that took place in the fall of 1894 in a Bukovynian village Dymka, where the older of the two sons in a well-off peasant family of Zhyzhiyan was shot dead under mysterious circumstances. The immediate family and the whole village suspected the younger son, yet the official investigation pronounced him not guilty. As Kobylianska’s personal notes reveal, she was deeply moved by this incident and decided to work out her own explanation of what happened in Dymka by writing a novel about the daily toil of Bukovynian peasantry.⁵⁵ According to her letters of the late 1890s to Makovej, Kobylianska did not come up with a clear concept for the novel until the end of 1898 – the very same year when she was accused by the populist critics of a gratuitous and unwholesome preoccupation with the life of the intelligentsia.⁵⁶ This curious detail creates a socio-cultural framework, which allows us to view *The Earth* as Kobylianska’s sly

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⁵⁵ One of the first references to *The Earth* comes up in Kobylianska’s latter to F. Řehof on January 17th, 1898, V, 316.
⁵⁶ See, for instance, O. Kobylianska’s letter to O. Makovej on March 16th, 1898, V, 329-335.
response to the populist attacks, where she addresses the somber and unremitting hardships of the Ukrainian peasants, not to glorify their suffering, as was expected of her, but to complicate the on-going discussion of “the simple peasant mind,” by featuring it as, if not necessarily “simple,” then “too self-centered” and “raw” to be fit for any political struggle.  

Surprisingly, the majority of Kobylianska’s contemporary critics as well as Soviet critics of the 1930s disregarded the strong anti-populist rhetoric in The Earth, seizing instead the opportunity to capitalize on the peasant themes of The Earth and to appropriate them for their own ideological agendas. With a few exceptions, The Earth, for most of the last hundred years, has been viewed as Kobylianska’s reconciliation with populism, and the author has accordingly been regarded as “a defender of the Ukrainian common man, a devoted student of the culture of the Ukrainian peasantry, and a storyteller for whom the plight of the poor and the neglected was a central concern” (Tarnawsky v). Paradoxically, despite its obvious shortcomings, this flawed canonization proved to be beneficial: not only did it assure the survival of Kobylianska’s works and archival materials during the Soviet period, but it also allowed for profound research into her life and works.  

The initial enthusiastic reviews of The Earth by populist critics, particularly those by Franko, allowed Soviet critics to celebrate the novel as a psychological study of the Ukrainian peasantry grounded in their social

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57 See I. Franko’s discussion of the on-going debate about Spencer’s formula of “the simple peasant mind” among Ukrainian political activists in his essay Beyond the Limits of the Possible of 1900 in Towards an Intellectual History of Ukraine, 193-200.

58 O. Babyshkin’s Olha Kobylianska: Narys pro zhyttia i tvorchist’ (1963) and N. Tomashuk’s Olha Kobylianska: Zhyttia i tvorchist’ (1969) are the most representative of the genre.
reality, where Kobylianska presumably decried the detrimental nature of private ownership – a reading epitomized by Olexandr Dovzhenko in his world-famous cinematic adaptation, Земля (Earth, 1930).59 Only in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, were Ukrainian literary scholars able to address Kobylianska’s anti-populism openly. Their reviews, however, continue to be flawed, for, as Mark Pavlyshyn points out, they inherit the main critical framework from previous scholarship and continue reading Kobylianska’s novel as a story of a fratricide, focusing on the psychological and sociological grounds that led to the murderous crime (143-168). Pavlyshyn proves that the instance of fratricide in Kobylianska’s work is only a speculation and justly calls for a reevaluation of the existing criticism on The Earth. The scholar, however, does not offer any new interpretation of the philosophical and socio-political message of the novel, leaving his readers at an impasse: if neither the fratricide nor the exposure of private property and its influence on the peasant psyche is the central focus of the novel, than what is? The following analysis will demonstrate that Kobylianska focuses her novel on “the peasant mind” per se, with all its complex fatalistic, irrational, and superstitious views, challenging uncritical populist glorifications of this mind and its socio-political potential.

The Earth presents a story of a mysterious murder in a well-off peasant family, depicting the family’s dramatic disintegration, which takes place over the time-span of some ten years. The main plot of the story evolves against the

59 See, for instance, F. Pohrebennyk’s review of Kobylianska’s works in his introduction “Olha Kobylianska” to Olha Kobylianska: Tvory v dvokh tomakh, 13.
essential backdrop of country life, which captures every aspect of the countryside, offering a panoramic view of the Ukrainian village populated with diverse characters from different social strata – rich landlords, well-to-do farmers, struggling share-croppers, tenant farmers, smallholders scratching out a laborious living, seasonal migrant workers, household servants, demobilized soldiers, public officials, traveling musicians, sooth-sayers, village teachers, provincial clergy, and tavern-keepers. Yet neither Kobylianska’s descriptions of village life nor her portrayals of peasants have any traces of conventional populist glorification.

On the contrary, just as Stefanyk requested in his 1898 letter, they are so grim as to recall the over-sombre colors of Emil Zola’s peasant novel La Terre (The Earth, 1887). Although there are barely any critical or scholarly references to Kobylianska’s reception of Zola and his naturalism, the similarity between Zola’s La Terre and Kobylianska’s The Earth is so striking as to leave no doubt that the Ukrainian writer, who on several occasions admitted reading Zola “из литературного обов’язку” [out of literary duty] (I 216), not only was familiar with one of the foremost novels among the Rougon-Macquart series, but also used many of its thematic, structural, and even symbolic elements in her own novel. Kobylianska’s tribute to Zola is particularly palpable in her depictions of peasants who, like Zola’s heroes, are featured, almost without exception, as tough, harsh, ungrateful, concerned solely with their short-term interests, superstitious, barely

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60 Populist critic S. Yefremov was one of the first to point out Zola’s influence on Kobylianska’s The Earth in his renown article “V poiskakh novoj krasoty” of 1902.
Christian though perhaps deists, childish, deceitful, stoical, mean, and greedy. Accordingly, violence, instinct, sexual passion, and incest rule in the village of Kobylianska’s creation, where all human relations, like those in Zola’s work, are deformed by perplexed social norms that verge on bestial savagery.

The point of departure in Kobylianska’s novel, as in Zola’s, is elegantly simple: the elderly peasant couple, Ivonika and Marijka Ferodchuk, who have worked hard all their lives to accumulate land but have grown too feeble to continue to look after it properly, hope that their two sons, Mykhailo and Sava, will take care of their land, increasing it by hard work and by successful marriages. Their younger son Sava refuses to obey and starts courting his landless and good-for-nothing cousin Rakhira, which generates a lot of tension between all members of the family. Shortly, the older son Mykhailo, who initially condemns Sava’s pursuit of Rakhira, also falls in love with a poor girl, Anna, whom the parents will not be willing to accept either. Fearing parental disapproval, Mykhailo chooses not to rush his confession about Anna to his parents, trying to exploit their argument with Sava for his own benefit. Consequently, Marijka and Ivan unjustly demonize rebellious Sava, while equally unjustly idealizing Mykhailo. Things become particularly complicated when the parents threaten to leave Sava without an inheritance, instigating a violent conflict between the two brothers. Outraged by the perceived parental unfairness and blinded by the uncontrollable lust for his own cousin and the land he believes he is about to lose, Sava swears to make his relatives pay dearly for such injustice. In a few days, Mykhailo is found murdered in a neighboring forest.
Although the author never discloses the real murderer, the readers – together with the whole village, Anna, Ivonika, and Marijka – are made to believe that Sava is responsible for the crime. Yet, as in the real story of the Zhyzhyian family, the official investigation does not find any supportive evidence and pronounces Sava not guilty. The end of the novel focuses on Anna, who gives birth to twins fathered by Mykhailo. Marijka refuse to recognize them as grandchildren and the two boys shortly die, for Anna has neither the means nor the physical strength to care for the infants. Eventually, Anna marries an older peasant Petro and gives birth to another boy, whom she decides to break free from the oppressive dependence on the land by giving him an education.

This dramatic story of the Fedorchuks’ decline is intertwined with monumental descriptions of nature and various aspects of country life, which intensifies Kobylianska’s representations of the inner emotional and cognitive life of her characters. Such structure recalls the very composition of Zola’s La Terre. The action in Kobylianska’s novel is dominated, as in Zola’s work, by the seasonal cycle of nature, marked by the succession of agricultural activities involved in the task of cultivating the earth, starting with a spring and ending with a fall sowing and, in between, all the manifold seasonal activities of plowing, haymaking, reaping, cattle-raising, and bee-keeping. The seasonal village activities are further measured against the human cycle of birth, marriage, and death, with the accompanying country events of markets, fairs, weddings, religious wakes, and funerals, allegorically projecting village life as cyclic, and thus stagnant, natural existence. Moreover, all this takes place in Kobylianska’s
novel, as in Zola’s, against the essential backdrop of the weather, with its devastating hailstorms and murderous summer heat, pallid springs and gorgeous Indian summers, chill autumn rains and furious winter blizzards. Like Zola, Kobylianska uses lavish descriptions of nature to dramatize the diverse emotional states of her peasant characters, further projecting them as natural, not socio-cultural beings. Kobylianska’s chronology of the seasonal cycle is, however, different from that in Zola’s La Terre. The Bukovynian writer starts her work not with an autumn, but with a spring cultivation of land and ends it not with a joyful spring sowing, as in Zola, but with a description of the wintertime stagnation of all agricultural activities that coincides with the emotional devastation of the old Fedorchuks. By reversing Zola’s chronological order of the seasonal sequence, Kobylianska alters its symbolic connotation, rejecting Zola’s optimistic celebration of natural regeneration.

Kobylianska’s treatment of the earth also differs from Zola’s. As suggested by the identical titles, the earth plays an important role in both novels, where it is featured as the central heroine that dominates all other characters, who are inextricably linked to it through their daily toil. In the final analysis, all the tragic events in both novels are triggered by the characters’ uncontrollable desire to possess land, which is consistently painted in terms of human relationships, because, as both novels suggest, it is more valuable for the peasants than are people. Yet while Zola pictures the earth predominantly in bright colors, associating it either with a desirable woman or with a nourishing mother, Kobylianska projects it as a cruel oppressor or a trap that keeps those bound to it
away from civilized cultural and urban centers, draining all their vital powers and human dignity. This contradiction is registered respectively in the following reflections of Fouan, the unfortunate patriarch of the declining peasant family in *La Terre* (quote 1), Hourdequin, the owner of the largest and the most mechanized farm in the village of Zola’s creation (quote 2), and Ivonika Ferodchuk, the richest peasant landowner in Kobylianska’s *The Earth* (quote 3):

1. [Fouan] had adored his land like a woman, who kills you and for whom one murders. [He had] no love for wife or children, nothing human: just [for] the land! (38)

2. Ah! This earth, how he [Hourdequin] had come to love her! And with a passion beyond the sharp greed of the peasant, with a sentimental, almost intellectual passion, for he felt it to be the common mother, who had given him life, substance, and to whom he would return. (451)


[Ivonika loved the earth. He knew it in all its seasons and in all its moods as well as he knew himself. It reminded him of a person who demanded a sacrifice. And it frightened him… The earth was indeed malicious. It often took nourishment away from everything that grew and lived on it, forcing it all to faint, fade, and eventually petrify.] (II 30)

These three passages not only capture the fundamental difference in representation of the earth in Zola’s and Kobylianska’s works, but also highlight the overall attitudes of the two authors toward the cultivation of land and its effect on those who are linked to it. Although Zola firmly criticizes the peasantry, whose moral filth does not match the goodness of the earth in *La Terre*, he continually
projects the countryside as a more natural and thus a healthier environment than the city throughout the Rougon-Macquart novels.\textsuperscript{61} Kobylianska, by contrast, features a Ukrainian village that resembles Dobrolyubov's dark kingdom, juxtaposing its monotonous and stupefying lifestyle to the invigorating dynamic of urban centers and calling public attention to an urgent need for active socio-political interference in peasant life.\textsuperscript{62} Such radical deviation from Zola's point of view suggests that Kobylianska uses only those formal aspects of \textit{La Terre} that help her either to create a panoramic view of peasant life or to highlight the fundamental relationship between peasants and nature. As to ideological framework, Kobylianska pursues a completely different goal, juxtaposing nature to culture only to prioritize the latter.

Further analysis demonstrates that Kobylianska's novel is clearly not a remake of Zola's masterpiece. The fundamental difference lies in Kobylianska's rejection of the determinist explanations of human behavior, which dominate Zola's fiction, and which populist and Soviet critics tried to discern in her novel.\textsuperscript{63} Kobylianska criticized Zola and other naturalist writers for placing too much emphasis on the objectified descriptions of the external world, particularly on its coarser and more repulsive aspects, and for completely ignoring the internal life of their characters (V 317). The Ukrainian writer firmly believed that people's will

\textsuperscript{61} For further discussion of Zola's positive depictions of countryside in the Rougon-Macquart novels, see W. Berg and L. Martin's \textit{Emile Zola Revisited}, 124.

\textsuperscript{62} The most revealing account of Kobylianska disgust with countryside is presented in her letter to M. Pavlyk in April of 1891, where she complains about her dull and monotonous life in Dymka, which, as she claims, "робить [її] все тупішою" [progressively stupefies her]; КМНМ, F. 67.

\textsuperscript{63} See M. Pavlyshyn's well-researched discussion in his \textit{Olha Kobylianska: Prochytannia}, 158-160.
and their deeper, unconscious desires are far more important in shaping actions, accounting for such human behavior as violence, than heredity or social environment. This is precisely what the epigraph to Kobylianska’s novel highlights: “Es liegt um uns herum gar mancher Abgrund, den das Schicksal grub, doch hier in unserem Herzen ist der tiefste” [There are many abysses that destiny has dug out around us, but the deepest is in our hearts] (II 7). Therefore, while recognizing Zola’s literary genius and adapting many formal aspects of his peasant novel, particularly his rich descriptions of nature and seasonal village life, Kobylianska substantially altered her own narrative by focusing predominantly on the psychological portraits of her characters. As a result, she created not only a striking account of the unremitting hardship of the Bukovynian peasantry but also a study of the inner man of her villagers, which proved to be iconoclastic in the context of the Ukrainian fin-de-siècle populist ideology.

Kobylianska succeeds in conveying the inner life of her characters by animating her peasant heroes and by skillfully manipulating the narrative mode in her novel. The main story of The Earth is presented through a variety of third-person subjective perspectives that switch from one character’s viewpoint to another. On one hand, this approach allows for the in-depth revelation of the protagonists’ personalities; on the other, it presents all events exclusively as perceived or as understood by the characters, making it virtually impossible to discover the truth about Mykhailo’s murder. Such structural composition, which

64 See chapter 1 for a detailed discussion of Kobylianska’s reception of European Darwinism and social determinism, 53-54.
prioritizes the inner personality of each character over the main factual event, brings Kobylianska’s work close to Dostoevsky’s polyphonic fiction, particularly his last work *Brothers Karamazov* (1880), where the author also uses the pretext of a mysterious murder to explore and expose the conflicted psyches of his heroes. Like Dostoevsky, Kobylianska employs dialogues and dialogic internal monologues to reveal the private thoughts and emotions of her characters. The use of dialogue, in turn, allows Kobylianska to individualize the speech of all characters, even secondary and episodic, creating a multiplicity of human voices that reflect not only personalities, but also the characters’ outlook on life. It is precisely these striking perspectives that make Kobylianska’s projected countryside far more grief-inspiring than that depicted in Zola’s *La Terre*.

Kobylianska introduces all her principal characters in the opening wedding scene. Despite a degree of fascination with the picturesque Bukovynian peasants, the scene reflects a sincere concern with their primitive mentality, which is opposed in principle to the ideas of education and progress. This dynamic tension is conveyed through a powerful description of a wedding dance, where Kobylianska is both captivated and repelled by the sweat, the bodily dirt, the dust, the red, glistening faces of the dancers, their violent gestures, and the unbridled, animalistic emotion that controls and motivates their every movement and action. The graphic dance scene is further juxtaposed with a sad conversation between Ivonika and his well-to-do neighbor Dokia, who lament over an unrealized hope to unite their children, and their property, in marriage. While expressing love and sincere concern about the well-being of their children,
both characters reveal a perplexed understanding of happiness, measured exclusively in acres of land. Both parents make it clear that their decisions, which ruin the future of their children, are rooted in prejudices and superstitions, yet neither of them admits personal responsibility in their family misfortunes. Just like the Hutsul character in Kobylianska’s short story “Nature,” they justify all calamities by attributing them to evil spirits, bad fortune, and God’s will. It is hard to overlook the explicit irony in such a discourse, which vividly conveys Kobylianska’s doubt in the peasants’ potential to secure the future of the Ukrainian nation. Kobylianska’s irony particularly stands out in Ivonika’s direct self-identification with Bukovynian peasantry and his broad statements about the peasants’ lack of socio-political agency:

And what about us?.. Even if we say something, nobody looks at us. We cannot do anything. We bow to the lords, kiss their hands on both sides, but when we say something, it remains “plebian.” Nobody would listen to us. As soon as the lord raises his voice, we… get scared… and back off. I know from my own experience that it cannot be otherwise.] (II 27)

Avoiding any direct statements, Kobylianska cunningly uses Ivonika’s own voice to expose his “plebian” morality with its fatalist conception of the world. Moreover, as suggested in Ivonika’s closing statement, he and the rest of the peasant community, with whom the old man identifies by using the collective pronoun
“we,” continually re-project conformist “plebian” views on their children, depriving the future generations of Bukovynian peasants of free will and individual agency.

Further analysis of The Earth demonstrates that Kobylianska places parental circumscribed worldviews and their detrimental influence on the character formation and cultural education of the younger generation of the novel’s peasants at the center of her work, linking Mykhailo, Sava, Anna, Rakhira, and Parasyynka’s failures to their inherited lack of self-confidence and personal agency. While Dokia’s daughter, the sixteen-year-old Parasyynka, is immediately presented as a “німе оруддя іншої волі” [a silent instrument of someone else’s will] (II 20), the other character’s lack of agency becomes evident only later in the novel. Mykhailo’s character weakness comes to light once he joins the military and leaves his natural environment. The fast-paced rhythm of urban life and the demanding and often brutal, reality of military service make Mykhailo aware of his helplessness, leading to psychological distress and an identity crisis:

[Він] розплакувався як дитина... Він не привикав. Він губив себе. У ньому не держалося купи те, що трималося там, на полях, тісно при нім. Він ступав боязко й незукарно, бо не смів ступати своєю ходою, а його рухи були неповоротні й несміливі, бо не були його рухами. Одяг яку носив тепер, відібрала йому всю певність. І звідки мав би її відібрана йому так узяти? З хвилиєю, як покинув свою землю, покинула його і свідомість своєї вартості.

[He was crying as a child... He could not adapt. He was ruining himself. He could not keep together all that that he saw clearly there, in the fields. His steps were hesitant and awkward, because he did not dare to walk with his usual pace; his movements were slow and timid, because they were not his movements. The clothes he was wearing took away his confidence. And where was he}
supposed to derive it from? His self-confidence and belief in personal value left him the moment he left his land.] (II 106)

Kobylianska further conveys Mykhailo's internal anguish through a number of his monologues and conversations with Ivonika. On the one hand, these gruesome confessions bring up a valid point, exposing the brutality of the imperial army, but they simultaneously reveal the fatal weakness of Mykhailo's character, which gradually conquers his exceptional physical strength. The most powerful example is, perhaps, Mykhailo's dialogic address to Ivonika, where the young hero struggles to define his place in the new social context. Curiously, Mykhailo's reflections on "що [то таке] мужик" [what it means to be a peasant] (II 121) are filled with other peoples' words that the hero has recently heard from his father, his superiors, and his fellow soldiers. Mykhailo tries to reject the pathetic image they all force upon him, refusing to recognize himself as an insignificant creature equated with a "проклята собака" [lousy dog] (II 121). Yet despite the explosive potential, the hero's morbid contemplations do not provoke any decisive actions, and the young lad eventually accepts his subjugated social status, following his father's example. "Ані я, ані ти не змінимо сього. Все те старше від нас, і ми того не змінимо, як само воно не зміниться" [Neither you nor I can change it. This is bigger than we. We cannot change it, if it doesn't change on its own] (II 121), says Ivonika, confirming the status quo at the end of Mykhailo's speech and solidifying his son's sense of personal insignificance. Mykhailo's conversation with Ivonika becomes a turning moment in the story, after which the young hero continually fails to assert himself, instigating a number of tragic
events that claim his and his children’s lives. Considering the philosophical and psychological themes that occupied Kobylianska throughout the 1890s, particularly her avid reading of Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, it is fair to suggest that Mykhailo and Ivonika are presented as self-negating heroes or, better yet, anti-heroes: both characters conform to the unfavorable existing state of affairs and prioritize memory and dependence upon the prevailing social norms, valuing endurance and mediocrity but not the independent will and protest needed for social regeneration.

The only character that shows any promise for transcending the oppressive morality of traditional peasant society and generating change is Sava. He is first introduced from Ivonika’s perspective as a rebellious, almost Dionysian character who refuses to live by the wisdom of his parents:

[Sava is not like Mykhailo!.. He is a different branch. He is growing and turning somewhere... but not to the good, not to us... Dancing is the only thing on his mind. If he only could, he would spend all his time wandering with his rifle through the fields and woods... He does not care, if the animals are given water or not... He does not care what the weather is like and if it’s good or bad for the land and crops, or if it might kill the bees — ...as long as he has enough honey to mix with moonshine and drink secretly with God knows whom... At his age, I was working for others, lowering my head to
people and God. But I still hope that he will become smarter with age. I say smarter, because he is already very smart... Incredibly smart! So young, but can outsmart even any sort of marvel...\] (II 23-24)

This highly subjective description presents Sava as a Nietzschean life-asserting dancer, an eternal wanderer, an inventive trickster, and a skilled hunter, suggesting that the young lad is perceived as evil only because his priorities are different from those of Ivonika and Mykhailo. Several later portrayals that focus on Sava’s lack of respect for parents, elders, prevailing social values, and Christian morality further accentuate his rebellious indignation at patriarchal order and the traditional way of life, projecting the young lad as a strong-willed person who strives to construct his own life and assert his own wisdom. A number of positive characteristics which define initial descriptions of Sava – cleverness, courage, firmness, decisiveness, and self-confidence – thus put his character in sharp contrast with Mykhailo’s pathetic image. At the critical moment of the novel when Mykhailo’s weakness of character is exposed, even Ivonika acknowledges that Sava is more resourceful, resilient, and mature than his older brother:

[Михайло] був дитина. Сава не був тащий... Сава був би пішов і служив, і був би зносив тяжке й тверде твердо і уперто... Сава не був би мав таких пригод, як [Михайло], і він не боявся би їх. Сава – залізний. З тіла тонкий, гарний, а проте залізний.

[Mykhailo was a child. Sava wasn’t... If he had joined the military, he would have endured all its challenges and hardship firmly and stubbornly... Sava wouldn’t have had as much trouble as Mykhailo; and he wouldn’t have been scared of them either. Sava is strong as iron. His body might seem slender and fine-lined, but he is strong as iron.] (II 124-125)
Sava’s ultimate expression of stubbornness, iron will, and firm self-affirmation, celebrated in this passage, is artistically represented through his incestuous relationship with his landless cousin Rakhira. Despite the parents’ will, Sava resolutely declares his plans to marry the poor girl, demonstrating the very courage, faithfulness, and commitment that Mykhailo’s relationship with Anna lacks.

Sava’s promising potential to break free from the traditional “peasant mentality” is, however, critically undermined by his unbridled passion, which impedes his personal growth and eventually transmutes him into the same self-negating and self-destructive anti-hero as the rest of the peasant characters. Rakhira turns out to be a mendacious, lustful, and ambitious girl, who “не жаха[ється] ніяких, хоч би й найпідліших, учинків для заспокоєння своїх бажань” [does not hesitate to employ any means, even the basest acts, to satisfy her desires] (II 191), and blatantly uses Sava to take over Ivonika’s land and to achieve favorable social status. By indulging Sava’s every desire, she methodically molds her lover into a natural being, a wild beast, draining the inherent nobility of his soul and filling it with her spite instead:

В її обіймах він неначе змінився. Своїми великими червоними вустами пила з нього всю енергію і силу... Під [її] поглядом... м’як, ослабав і тратив усю волю. Її сміх... виривав його з уського надумування... а слова її все підходили йому під його душевний лад.

[He was a different person in her arms. She drank all his strength and energy with her full red lips... Her gaze made him soft and took all his power and will away. Her laughter... distracted him from all thinking... and her words fit harmoniously with his mental state.] (II 34)
As it turns out farther on in the novel, the “softened” and stupefied Sava quickly absorbs Rakhira’s lust for land, falling prey to the same perplexed views shared by his father, Mykhailo, and the rest of the village community, which he initially rejects. In Sava’s every dialogue with Rakhira, Kobylianska depicts the gradual penetration of the girl’s rhetoric into the hero’s consciousness, illuminating how Sava’s dreams and desires slowly merge with Rakhira’s ambitions, and how the young lad gradually becomes an obedient tool of Rakhira’s will. The best example of such cognitive manipulation is presented in a conversation where Rakhira methodically and cold-bloodedly guides Sava to conceive Mykhailo’s murder:

- Чого ти ніби ждеш [Саво]? Поки Михайло з війська верне?
- Та й я маю ще до війська йти!... Раз не взяли, але другий раз можуть узяти!
- І тебе? Та вже ж Михайла відібрали?
- Так, так, але я мушу за себе служити!... 
- А якби ти ще одного брата мав, мусив би й той йти?
- Авжеж?
- А ти б коле мусив?
- Гадаєш ні? Тоді тим більше!
- Чому тим більше?
- Бо при родичах усе б один лишився! Розумієш?
- Звідки ти се знаєш, хто тобі те казав?...
- Се я знаю! Та й від тата знаю! Те всі знаєть!...
- А як воно буває, як дома лише один син?
- Тоді він може бути увільнений, тоді можна сказати: “Старі слабі, і він мусить лишитися дома, щоби старих доглядати та й господарством правити...”

По якійсь хвилині [вона знову] обізвалася:
- Як Михайло прийде, то ти будеш мусути йти. А заким ти верниш, то він ожениться, і старий дасть йому найліпшу землю....

Замовляй обоє. Так сиділи якийсь час...
- Не бійся! – відповів усміхаючись. Але той усміх споганяв його ніжні дитячі черти до крайності...
- [What are you waiting for, Sava? Are you waiting for Mykhailo to come back from his military service?]
- I will have to go to the military too!... They did not take me once, but they might take me next time!
- You too? But they took Mykhailo already?
- Yes, it is true. But I have to serve too!...
- If you had another brother, would he also have to go to the military?
- Of course!
- Would you have to go then?
- Don’t you think I would? All the more so!
- How so?
- Because one of us would still stay with the old parents! Do you understand?
- How do you know? Who told you that?...
- I know that! I know that from the father! Everyone knows it!...
- And what happens when there is only one son in a family?
- Then he could be exempt from military service. Then one can say, “The old parents are weak and he must stay at home to take care of them and the household.”...

In a few moments she started again:
- When Mykhailo comes back, you would have to go. By the time you come back, he will have gotten married and your father will have given him the best land…

Both sit quietly for some time…
- Don’t worry! – he said with a smile that brutally distorted his tender, child-like features] (II 191-192)

Rakhira clearly controls this conversation. She shrewdly avoids any direct requests but asks a series of provocative questions to make Sava realize his disadvantageous situation and to force him to contemplate the obvious benefits of being the only son in the family. On the formal level, this dialogue is structured in the same way as the conversation between the old Hutsul woman and the unnamed educated heroine in Kobylianska’s 1895 short story “Time.” As in the 1895 story, there are barely any formal markers that separate the utterances of the two conversationalists in the presented exchange. Consequently, Sava’s
dialogue with Rakhira could also be read as the hero’s internal dialogue with an internalized image of the girl who symbolically embodies his basest desires. In *The Earth*, however, Kobylianska uses the dialogical potential of Sava’s speech to pursue a different ideological goal from that in “Time”. While in the 1895 story Kobylianska exploits the formal structures of the Hutsul’s conversation with an educated lady, to suggest the possibility of influencing “the raw peasant mind” in a positive way, in the 1901 novel the Bukovynian writer uses the very same technique to show how easily the peasant mind could be manipulated and subjected to a ruinous and often self-destructive cause.

The symbolic meaning of Sava’s lack of self-control, his unbridled love for Rakhira, and its catastrophic influence on the hero’s character and reputation reinforces Kobylianska’s anti-populist critique, illuminating the author’s thoughts on how easily the celebrated rebellious spirit of the natural people, the Ukrainian villagers, together with their innate thirst for freedom and the ultimate horizons of existence, could be undermined by the cruelly inhibiting horizons of their immediate environment. In Sava’s story of moral and social degeneration, Rakhira is not the only person who abuses his “otherness” and defiant habits for personal gain. At the end of the novel, the whole village community uses the pretext of Sava’s “otherness” and perceived “evilness” to brand him as a murder, and thus create a convenient explanation of Mykhailo’s violent death. Guided by the darkness of their hearts and by perplexed materialist beliefs that accept lust for land as a valid motif for a crime, first Sava’s parents and later the rest of their village blame the young lad for the murder, aggravating the tragedy and
subjecting the only rebellious character to spiritual paralysis and social disdain. Although there is no factual proof of Sava’s guilt (Pavlyshyn 143-169), Ivonika openly states during Mykhailo’s funeral that “йому не треба докозів, як судді, щоби переконатися, хто се вчинив. Само його серце назвало йому ім’я убійника” [he, unlike judges, does not need any proof to know who was responsible, for his own heart named the murder] (II 231), while Maria quietly arrives at the same conclusion – “[вона] інстинктивно відчула, що... її син був убивцею... братовбивцею!” [she intuitively felt that her son was a murderer, a fratricide!] (II 230). Eventually, as suggested in the unfinished second part of the novel, the parental verdict proves to be more powerful and more detrimental than the official resolution of the local court, and the only nonconformist and self-asserting hero swiftly turns into a social outcast and a spiritual cripple. Sava’s dramatic failure to master his own passions and to assert his will is, perhaps, Kobylianska’s most powerful allegorical assertion of her sharp anti-populist critique of the circumscribed socio-cultural and political agency of the Ukrainian peasantry.

In the final analysis, the symbolic disintegration and downfall of the Fedorchuk family could be traced to the main common cause of all tragic events in the novel – not the private property or the inherent vice and impiety of the peasant characters, as many past critics insist, but the peasants’ doomed world views and culture, which, as Kobylianska projects throughout the late 1890s, have grown old and unfit for the future. Such a position is a logical continuation of Kobylianska’s earlier celebration of intellectualism and high culture. The
connection between Kobylianska’s early elitism and her morbid
demythologization of the Ukrainian village is particularly evident in the optimistic
ending of the novel, where the Bukovynian writer links The Earth with the
philosophical messages of her earlier works. After taking her characters and, by
extension, her readers through a number of sordid confessions that expose the
complex yet primitive “peasant mind,” Kobylianska suggests the possibility of a
rigorous regeneration of peasant consciousness, which reiterates her earlier call
to a cultural revolution. In the last chapter of the novel, Kobylianska elaborates
Anna’s hopes for the future of her son, whom the heroine wants to “відірвати від
землі” [tear away from the land] (II 297) and bring up as somebody different, not
like the rest of the villagers. Anna strives to “вивести [його] в люди” [turn him
into a real human being] (II 297-298) by giving him an education. The
authoritative voice in the closing sentence of the novel clearly highlights that only
as an educated person of culture can a peasant productively employ his inherent
“героїчна вдача і глибокий віщий інстинкт” [heroic nature and deep prophetic
instincts] (II 298) to contribute to Ukraine’s socio-political struggle. As opposed to
Ukrainian populists, who celebrated the inborn virtues of the peasant mind, and
to Zola, who believed in the natural regeneration of peasant mentality,
Kobylianska thus insists that pure nature can stimulate neither socio-political nor
cultural progress. Instead, she calls public attention to an urgent need for a fair
reevaluation of the current socio-political aptitude of the Ukrainian peasantry and
those doctrines that view peasants as a repository of culture and primary makers
of history.
Conclusion

The close examination of Kobylianska’s representation of peasants and its gradual evolution in the 1890s clearly demonstrates that the writer does not degrade “the people,” but portrays them exactly as she sees them – as natural beings, authentic in their spirit, yet primitive in their culture. By revisiting the best examples of nineteenth-century realist fiction and by bridging a number of popular aesthetic concepts of her time – realism, naturalism, psychologism, irrationalism, and mysticism are the most prominent themes – Kobylianska crafts a new, sophisticated artistic model with which she challenges the underlying doctrinaireism of the Ukrainian *fin-de-siècle* populist ideology, embedding her socio-cultural and ideological critique into the formal and allegorical structures of her works. Instead of focusing on the material conditions and ethnographic peculiarities of every-day village life, which is a common practice in the nineteenth-century Ukrainian realist tradition, Kobylianska ventures to examine the emotional and cognitive lives of her characters, projecting them as chaotic and thus unfit for any socio-political struggle. As early as in “Nature,” “Time,” and “Uncultured,” Kobylianska begins to outline a very distinct type of self-destructive peasant mind, highlighting the inherent tension between the instinctual will, on one side, and environmental determinism poised in its complex nature, on the other. By placing dialogue in the center of her works, by individualizing her characters’ speech, and by exploiting its dialogical potential, Kobylianska externalizes and extends the inner personal dimension of her peasant characters. Kobylianska’s 1901 novel *The Earth* is perhaps the best example of
how her writing itself comes to enact the structure of the bewildered peasant self, not only on an allegorical plane, but also in a very formal and direct manner. As will be demonstrated further, such complex fusion of psychology, aesthetics, and ideology will define all of Kobylianska’s subsequent works.
Chapter 4: The Years of Revision: 1903-1913

The 1902 publication of Kobylianska’s second novel *The Earth* became an important cultural event in Ukrainian literary circles. It not only stimulated a discussion of Kobylianska’s significance in contemporary Ukrainian literature, but also intensified the ongoing debate about the role of literature in the nation-building process. While Ukrainian intellectuals of the pro-Western camp enthusiastically welcomed Kobylianska’s new work, Ukrainian populists greeted it with scorn, criticizing the writer for her modernist aesthetics and unflattering representations of peasants. Serhii Yefremov’s article “In Search of a New Beauty” (“В поисках новой красоты”), published in the literary monthly *Kievan Past (Киевская старина)* in October of 1902, is the most emblematic populist attack on Kobylianska. Yefremov was among the first to sense the subversive anti-populist rhetoric in *The Earth*, yet his main criticism was aimed at Kobylianska’s stylistic innovations. He accused the Bukovynian writer of aestheticism, mysticism, intellectualism, decadence, and excessive Nietzscheanism – all of which he saw as incompatible with a populist program, and thus unfit, and even “sinful,” for a Ukrainian milieu. As he put it, Kobylianska’s literary style was “вредное, противообщественное, развращающее нетвердые умы направление в литературе” [a harmful and antisocial literary trend prone to corrupting immature minds] (120). Yefremov’s review was clearly not a critical study of Kobylianska’s novel and its socio-political message, but a part of his broader on-going polemic with modernism and
its cult of individualism, in which he saw a threat to cohesion of the Ukrainian national movement.

Kobylianska and her supporters were aware of the broader argument in Yefremov’s article but nevertheless were compelled to refute his accusations. Within a few weeks after Yefremov’s article came out, many prominent Ukrainian intellectuals – including Ivan Franko, Lesia Ukrainka, Hnat Khotkevych, Mykhailo Kotsybynsky, and Vasyl Stefanyk, to name a few – wrote open letters to Kievan Past and other popular journals to challenge Yefremov’s interpretation of Kobylianska and her works. Many also wrote directly to Kobylianska to express their admiration and support. Mykhailo Kosach, Lesia Ukrainka’s older brother who was also a writer and a social activist of the pro-Western socialist orientation, was among the first to assure Kobylianska that she was not alone in her struggle with the provincial mentality of the mainstream Eastern Ukrainian intellectuals. He urged Kobylianska not to take seriously Yefremov’s attack, decrying it as “неправедлива напасть” [an unjust assault], “мерзота” [filth], “брехня” [lie], and “свинство” [piggery] (Kobylianska v krytytsi 88-89). Hnat Khotkevych, a prominent Ukrainian writer, who was also criticized by Yefremov in the abovementioned article, made similar statements first in his personal letter to Kobylianska, and later in his article “Кліка при часописі “Київська старина” і її відношення до О. Кобилянської” (“A Clique at Kievan Past and its Treatment of O. Kobylianska,” December 1902):

[Стаття Єфремова] – се якесь цілковите висміювання, кепкування, вишукування найгірших виразів, підбірання помилок... взагалі, все, що хочете, тільки не стаття. Якийсь
[Yefremov’s article is a complete mockery. It is a ludicrous survey of the worst expressions and mistakes... It is anything but a critical review. Hiding behind the backs of some hardhearted “patriots” this lad dares to use the patronizing tone of a teacher, or even a mentor, with a prominent writer; his article is brimming with pedagogical idioms, such as “let us see if she accomplished her objective,” “she completed her task satisfactorily” (that is, earning a C or a C+), “to approach her work with a yardstick,” or even better, “to plunge into the depth of her talent...” What is this..? Nobody has ever used this type of rhetoric with the worst enemies of Ukraine, let alone its best people.] (Kobylianska v krytytsi 91)

Although this paragraph is somewhat melodramatic, it articulates the widespread indignation among Kobylianska’s supporters with Yefremov’s derisive criticism.

One of the most ardent responses to Yefremov in defense of Kobylianska was, however, Lesia Ukrainka’s open letter to Kievan Past. Unfortunately, the letter was never published and was eventually lost. Ukrainka records in her personal notes, however, that it was well known and widely discussed among Ukrainian intellectuals in January-February of 1903. On February 27 of 1903, Ukrainka claims in a letter to Kobylianska that her critique forced Yefremov to seek indirect reconciliation with Kobylianska. According to Ukrainka, Yefremov sent her three apologetic letters, in which he assured her that he had no intent to disavow Kobylianska as a writer, or to question her significance in Ukrainian literature, but wanted only to share his concerns about Kobylianska’s literary
style and its possible ramifications as to the ideological tasks of contemporary Ukrainian literature. Despite the overall triumphant tone, Ukrainka ends her letter with an alarming remark, where she admits that Yefremov’s article is only the beginning of Kobylianska’s confrontation with the populist camp in Eastern Ukraine and calls on Kobylianska “не… складати зброї і [не] зректися прапора новоромантичного” [not to give up the fight, and not to renounce her Neo-Romantic course] (qtd. in Kosach-Kryvyniuk 671).

Ukrainka’s hidden fears about Kobylianska’s reaction to critical attacks from the populist camp turned out to be well founded. Although Kobylianska claimed that she had read Yefremov’s article “дуже спокійно” [very calmly] and with a clear understanding that his review was not, in any case, “об’єктивна критика” [an objective critique] (V 520), her letters to Makovej over the winter of 1902-1903 reveal a profound distress, if not despair. As Kobylianska suggests in one of these letters, Yefremov made her question not only the artistic merits of her works, but also their relevance to the Ukrainian national cause. Kobylianska was particularly concerned with Yefremov’s accusations of anti-patriotic activities and she immediately set out to prove to Makovej, and by extension to the broader Ukrainian audience, that she was “вже не така зовсім зіпсована людина” [not a complete pervert after all] (V 524). Kobylianska opened her quest to assert herself as a writer committed to the Ukrainian national movement with a public commentary on her aesthetic and ideological future goals in the 1903 autobiography. Her next step was a thorough revision of her literary style. In her post-1902 fiction she abandoned a number of artistic forms that were commonly
associated with modernist aesthetics. Many critics read such a move as Kobylianska’s open reconciliation with populism. Yet Kobylianska’s writings of the 1903-1913 period demonstrate that her anti-populist, or better-put, anti-socialist, views, particularly her celebration of individualism and elitism, remained as firm in her post-1902 fiction as they were in the 1890s. This paradoxical development will be examined in this chapter to argue that the radical stylistic changes in Kobylianska’s post-1902 fiction occur neither because of her conforming to the old platitudes of populist realism, nor because of a declining talent, as some critics also suggested, but rather because of her sly attempt to conceal her elitist vision of Ukraine’s national liberation within a more acceptable literary form.

This chapter, therefore, has a double agenda. First, it will discern Kobylianska’s effort to separate herself from Nietzscheanism, naturalism, decadence, and symbolism, which at the time were synonymous with modernist aesthetics. Second it will elaborate on Kobylianska’s revision and reassertion of her earlier elitist socio-political beliefs, which envisioned an aesthetic state as the ultimate ideal of Ukrainian nation-building effort and, consequently, projected a solid Ukrainian aesthetic elite with a strong political will as the main driving force of Ukraine’s national regeneration. The chapter will open with an analysis of Kobylianska’s autobiography of 1903 and a close reading of her short story “The Thoughts of an Old Man” (“Думи старика,” 1905), which provide telling insights into how Kobylianska initially reacted to Yefremov’s criticism. The main body of the chapter will focus on Kobylianska’s three major novels of the 1903-1913 period – *Niobe* (Нюба, 1905), *Over the Bridge* (Через кла̀дку, 1912), and *After
Situations (За ситуаціями, 1913) – demonstrating that Kobylianska’s rejection of modernism in her 1903 autobiography was no more than a strategic disclaimer, meant to appease the populist critics. To that end, close readings of selected fragments from Niobe, Over the Bridge, and After Situations will offer insight in Kobylianska’s reassessment of her alternate program of national regeneration and its inherently pro-Western platform. The reading will also comment on Kobylianska’s growing concerns about the rapid decline and disintegration of Ukrainian political forces in the 1910s. The chapter will end with a discussion of Kobylianska’s revised elitist theory, situating it in the context of other elitist ideologies of the time, which propelled diverse variations of the two major revolutionary movements, Marxism and fascism, throughout Europe in the first decades of the twentieth century.65

1903 Autobiography: A Life Record or a Strategic Projection?

Kobylianska’s autobiography of 1903 is her second autobiographical sketch. The first autobiography Kobylianska wrote in 1898 in a letter to František Řehoř, a Czech ethnographer, who popularized her works among Czech readers in the late 1890s. In the first version Kobylianska lists several of her latest publications, briefly comments on her education, and sums up in a few words her literary interests, where she sharply distinguishes herself from “золісти” [Zolaiists] and other representatives of the so-called “грубого реалізму” [crude realism] (V

65 Roger Griffin’s concept of generic fascism, defined as a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism, provides a model for the proposed treatment of fascist themes in Kobylianska’s prose of the 1910s and 1920s. For further references, see Griffin’s introduction to Fascism, 1-4.
For further information and critical reviews of her work, Kobylianska suggests contacting Osyp Makovej. The second autobiography is significantly longer and more nuanced. Kobylianska outlines its structure in the opening paragraph:

[It is hard for an author to tell his audience about himself. First and foremost he wonders what would the audience want to know and what would be an interesting narrative to tell. Typically, such a narrative starts with a description of the author’s birth, his parents, his education, the beginning of his literary career, his literary influences, and ends with a statement on the author’s aesthetic preferences, and on the innovative aspects in his works.] (V 213)

This introduction highlights the two major points previously ignored in the 1898 autobiography: what aesthetic movement Kobylianska follows, and what she sees as her major contribution to the Ukrainian intellectual discussions. Curiously, both issues directly address the two central lines of Yefremov’s criticism in the *Kievan Past*. A number of factual inconsistencies between the first and the second autobiographies, as well as a dramatic change in style, rhetoric, and ideological framework, suggest that Kobylianska wrote her second autobiography with a clear agenda in mind, striving to refute Yefremov’s unflattering labels and to project an alternate self-image. A close reading and a comparative analysis of the two autobiographies will shed light on not only what
that projected image might be, but also how much Kobylianska was concerned with her public status in 1903.

The first striking difference between the two autobiographies is the amount of biographical data presented in each text. Kobylianska barely gives any facts in 1898, but dwells at length on her limited access to knowledge in the early stages of her life in 1903. First, Kobylianska claims that when she started experimenting with literature she was only “несвідомим, молодим, диким романтиком” [an unconscious, immature and wild romantic], who did not know “що значить слово література” [what the word literature really meant], and wrote “без ініціативи знадвору, без відповідного товариства, без напливу з якого хочь би і найдрібнішого артистичного світу, що могло б було дати поживу і напрям молодій душі [without any external initiative, any proper intellectual community, or artistic light, which could have nurtured her young soul] (V 214). She further explains her lack of formal education, or what she calls “мішанина барв без системи і без порядку” [an array of colors without any system or order], as the main reason for the lack of populist ideological content in her early writings. Indeed this description reflects well Kobylianska’s situation in the early 1880s, yet it does not quite fit the timeframe she suggests in the 1903 autobiography. By describing her short story “Under an Open Sky” (“Під голим небом,” 1898) as one of her early works (V 216), Kobylianska implies that some of her best pieces – The Princess, “Nature,” “The Battle,” “Uncultured,” and “Valse Mélancolique” – were also immature and insignificant in terms of aesthetic, philosophical, and ideological content. Considering a well-known record of Kobylianska’s meticulous
studies of European and Russian philosophers in the 1890s and a rich scholarship on the aesthetic complexity of her 1890s works, it is fair to suggest that the writer deliberately misrepresents her biographical data in the 1903 autobiography.66

Kobylianska’s manipulations of facts become even more evident, when one compares the lists of selected publications, which she chooses to discuss in each of the two autobiographies. In the 1898 version, written four years prior to the publication of *The Earth* and Yefremov’s “In Search of a New Beauty,” Kobylianska elaborates on *The Princess*, “The Battle,” “Uncultured,” “Valse Mélancolique,” and a number of short stories with unfavorable representations of Ukrainian peasants, claiming them as her favorite, if not her best works. In 1903 the writer, surprisingly, mentions neither *The Princess* nor “Valse Mélancolique” – the most innovative of her stories, which some scholars list among the founding works of Ukrainian modernism.67 Instead she focuses on “Uncultured” and *The Earth*, emphasizing their peasant subject matter, which could be regarded as populist. While talking about her future works, Kobylianska also dwells on themes related to the populist cannon. Her commentary on Petko Todorov, a Bulgarian writer known for his treatment of folk themes in literature, is particularly telling:

В найновішим часі зацікавив мене незвичайно болгарський писатель Петко Ю. Тодоров… він звернув всю увагу мою на народні легенди і казки... Сей молодий артіст вплинув своїми новими, наскрізь оригінальними, дуже цінними поглядами на літературу і штуку, так сильно на мене, що мені хочеться

66 See chapter 1, footnote 3.
67 M. Bohachevsky-Chomiak, T. Hundorova, and S. Pavlychko are only a few scholars to mention here.
Recently I grew very interested in Petko Y. Todorov, a Bulgarian writer... who drew my attention to folk legends and fairytales... His new, thoroughly original, and very valuable views on literature and art influenced me so very strongly that I want to abandon my previous modernist course, and follow instead his path, which seems to me the only artistic possibility for capturing the true essence of the folk art, poetry, and character...] (V 217)

Kobylianska’s projection of folklore and the people as the primary object of her future artistic contemplation, as well as her denunciation of modernist aesthetics as unfit to transmit the complexity of the true character of the people, speak loudly of what might seem her public conformity to a populist aesthetics. Kobylianska’s attempt to re-brand her original interest in modernism as an immature delusion, and to shift public attention to her works that fit better into the populist cannon also suggests that she wanted to be seen not as a modernizer of Ukrainian literature, but rather as a national writer, a writer of the people, with whom she openly identifies in the end of the 1903 autobiography:

В моїй поезії відбивається віковічний смуток угідного народу, що перейшов вже в кров і не уміє з боля виманіковуватися. Може се хиба, але вона характеризує та мій народ, як і мене.

[My poetics reflect the eternal sorrow of an oppressed people, the sorrow, which has passed into our blood and cannot emancipate itself from pain. Perhaps, it is a defect, but it characterizes me in the same way as it characterizes my people.] (V 217)

The fact that Kobylianska was eventually canonized as a committed defender of the Ukrainian common man and a devoted student of the culture of the Ukrainian
peasantry proves that her attempt to appease populist critics was successful. The degree of Kobylianska’s devotion to the peasant culture, as well as the degree to which she abandons modernist techniques in her post-1902 fiction is, however, highly debatable, as her first post-Yefremov fictional work, “The Thoughts of an Old Man,” clearly demonstrates.

“The Thoughts of an Old Man”

Kobylianska finished her short story “The Thoughts of an Old Man” in March of 1903, in three months after she promised Makovej to prove with her next written work that she deserved to be called a devoted Ukrainian patriot. Curiously, it was written around the same time Kobylianska was working on her second autobiography, where she openly conformed to the populist aesthetics. Hence one might expect “The Thoughts of an Old Man” to be as pompous and compliant as her letter to Makovej and autobiography of 1903. A close reading of the story, however, presents a much more complex dynamic, which illuminates another course of action that Kobylianska pursued in response to Yefremov’s critique, indicating that her public conformity to populist rhetoric was far from a sincere conversion.

Past critics have recognized that “The Thoughts of an Old Man” is written in the form of a testament, with clear intertextual references to the Bible and Taras Shevchenko’s canonical poem, “Як умру, то поховайте” (“When I die, bury me,” 1845), commonly known as “A Testament” (“Заповіт”) (Tomashuk Zhyttia 130; Krupa “Zapovit” 21-23; Pavlyshyn 207-210). Indeed, Kobylianska
adapts many compositional and stylistic features from 1 Corinthians and even quotes its section on Christian love (1 Cor. 13: 4-13). The fable in “The Thoughts of an Old Man” resembles, in turn, that of Shevchenko’s poem, where a dying old man shares his age-old wisdom with his family and, by extension, with his people. Kobylianska’s patriotic rhetoric in “The Thoughts of an Old Man” resonates with that of Shevchenko, when she equates family with nation and names historical memory and preservation of traditions among the prime pre-conditions of national progress. Kobylianska articulates this patriotic message in the old man’s ultimate advice to his children: “не страйте з очей те золоте пасьмо, що в’яже... вас до [ваших предків] – і тим до народу [вашого]... щоб історія перед вами не згасла!” [do not lose from your sight the golden thread that links you to your ancestors, and, in that way, to your people... otherwise the history of your future might disappear as well] (III 384, 385, 387). The intertextual allusions to canonical texts, as well as the story’s religious and patriotic pathos convinced Kobylianska’s contemporaries and one recent scholar that the ideological message in “The Thoughts of an Old Man” is as much in sync with mainstream populist narratives as its compositional organization.

Such an interpretation of Kobylianska’s story is, however, problematized by Mark Pavlyshyn’s recent analysis of Nietzschean themes in “The Thoughts of

68 For further discussion, see M. Krupa, “Tretji ‘Zapovit’ ukraïns’koi literatury i kompozytsijno-movlenevi zasoby joho deklaratsii u liryko-folosofs’kij novella Olhy Kobylianskoï “Dumy stryka”.”
69 See G. Grabowicz’s The Poet as Mythmaker: A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Taras Sevcenko for further discussion of the symbolic connotations in Shevchenko individual-family-society continuum, 63-76.
70 See M. Krupa’s commentary on the main message in Kobylianska’s story – her propagation of Christian love, which, according to Krupa, the Bukovynian writer sees as unattainable “без любові до рідного народу” [without the love for native people]; “Zapovit,” 23.
an Old Man,” which in itself could be seen as a radical deviation from the populist tradition.71 Although the Australian scholar does not focus on the ideological aspects of the story, he points out that Kobylianska not only alludes to, but also quotes from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, while elaborating on marriage and its socio-cultural significance in Ukrainian society. As Pavlyshyn argues, the two stories narrated by the old man about his two children resemble the two different marriage scenarios outlined by Nietzsche. The first type – a union of a worthy man with a “beast,” which inevitably leads to the moral and spiritual degradation of the worthy man – Pavlyshyn sees in the sad story of the old man’s son. The young fellow used to be a talented musician and had prospects of becoming a “реформатором [української] народної музики” [reformer of Ukrainian folk music] and to “звернути увагу інших народів на… багацтво [українських] мелодій” [make other nations recognize the richness of Ukrainian melodies], yet he ruined his life by marrying a beautiful woman of little intelligence, whom the old man scornfully likens to an apocalyptic beast with “сім голів, сім уст і сім очей” [seven heads, seven mouths, and seven eyes] (III 381). The harmonious marriage of the old man’s daughter, on the other hand, represents the so-called Nietzschean ideal – a marriage of two self-conquerors of equal intellectual and moral might, who are capable of creating remarkable children.72 Pavlyshyn argues that Kobylianska projects this type of marriage as a desirable scenario for

71 For a detail discussion of the Nietzsche’s reception by the Ukrainian populists, see chapter 2, 84-85.
72 For further reference on Nietzsche’s thought on marriage, see Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 69-71.
her personal relationship with Makovej, which did not come true, since Makovej rejected Kobylianska’s proposal of intimacy.\textsuperscript{73}

The Australian scholar, however, disregards a few important textual details that point to Kobylianska’s criticism of Nietzsche’s ideal marriage and its anti-social nature, and thus tie “The Thoughts of an Old Man” to her earlier reception of Nietzsche’s philosophy. Pavlyshyn, for instance, ignores the fact that although the old man admires the harmony and the intellectual vigor that reign in the family of his daughter, he is deeply concerned with her and her children’s excessive preoccupation with themselves. The old man forewarns his offspring that not only “закони природи” [the laws of nature] and “закони душі” [the laws of human soul], but also “закони суспільства” [the laws of society] define the true happiness of an individual (III 384). Accordingly, as the old man declares at the end of the story, self-perfection should be not a goal in itself, but only a step forward towards a more far-reaching goal – the pursuit of a broader communal, or better national, ideal, conveyed through the Great Commandment of loving one’s neighbor:

\begin{quote}
Діточки!.. Ви так собою зайняті, що забули слова божі: “Любіть ближнього свого, як себе самого.” Ви любите ближніх лише через свою особистість. Ваша особистість заспокоє вам той широкий горизонт, що його Христос отворив любов’ю своєю… будучність ваша… я бачу її [поки що] ім’ю покрит[ою].

[Children!.. You are so preoccupied with yourselves that you have forgotten the words of God, “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” You love your neighbors only through your personality.]
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{73} For detailed discussion of Kobylianska’s relationship with Makovej see M. Pavlyshyn, \textit{Olha Kobylianska: prochytyannia}, 171-227.
Your personality obscures the wider horizon that Jesus opened with his love… your future… as I see, it is covered with mist.] (II 385)

As the passage suggests, Kobylianska treats individual self-perfection as a transitional stage, emphasizing broader socio-political goals of community-building. The implied philosophical fusion of Nietzschean individualism with a distinct social program reiterates Kobylianska’s earlier propagation of a Ukrainian intellectual elite as the main driving force of Ukrainian national regeneration, capturing the story’s continuation of, rather than deviation from, the philosophical and ideological framework initiated in her 1890s works.74

The presented critical tension between the conventional composition and concealed elitist ideology in “The Thoughts of an Old Man” indicates thus that Kobylianska responds to the populist demands by somewhat simplifying the aesthetic composition of her work only to re-package her elitist views into a more acceptable literary form. A similar dynamic can be discerned in all Kobylianska’s major post-1903 novels, where the writer not only maintains her anti-populist discourse, particularly her celebration of individualism and an elitist vision of Ukraine’s national regeneration, but continually builds it up, adjusting to the ever-changing socio-political climate in Europe in the first decades of the twentieth century.

_Niobe_

74 See chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of Kobylianska’s original program of national liberation, presented in her first novel _The Princess_, where the writer fuses Nietzsche’s though with the popular social theories of her time.
Kobylianska started writing her first post-Yefremov novel, Ніоба (Niobe), over the summer of 1904 in Bad Nauheim, a world famous resort town in Germany where she spent a few months recovering after a temporary paralysis that she suffered in October of 1903. The novel was completed in Chernivtsi in October of 1904 and published in issues 89 and 90 of Kievan Past in 1905. According to one biographer, the novel and some personal statements Kobylianska made in her letters to friends and family over the summer and fall of 1904 demonstrate that Kobylianska's trip to Germany not only improved her health, but also boosted her creativity and confidence in her work (Vozniuk 110-111). Although Niobe was mostly treated by Kobylianska's contemporaries as a literary text of little artistic and ideological significance and was, as a result, only cursorily discussed by Soviet and post-Soviet critics, it captures a distinctive development in Kobylianska's national discourse that merits consideration. While shifting her critical attention back to intelligentsia, Kobylianska does not simply revive an ideal type of Ukrainian intellectual from her earlier works, but rather focuses on the mainstream Ukrainian intelligentsia, whose image she paints with the same grievous colors she used for the peasant characters in The Earth, revealing Ukrainian middle-class society at its hypocritical worst.

Niobe has a simple plot but an original compositional structure. As in many earlier works, Kobylianska avoids complex scenarios and positions dialogue as the main action in the novel. The Soviet scholar, Nikofor Tomashuk, argued in his 1963 monograph that the novel's unconventional and rather loose narrative structure, with no finalizing function, as well as the polemical nature and
highly politicized subject matter of all dialogues positions *Niobe* as “a novel of ideas.” Consequently, the Soviet scholar treated dialogue in *Niobe* as purely a dramatic form, a mere exposition, a pedagogical device, used to confront and reduce different opinions to a single ideological common denominator (*Zhyttia* 130). Placing a strong emphasis on dialectics, Tomashuk overlooked, however, the innovative function of Kobylianska’s dialogue, which, as demonstrated in the previous chapters, she notoriously employs to bring out the inner irrational man of her heroes, and to capture the multi-voicedness and vari-voicedness of public discourse. Arguably, all dialogues in *Niobe* focus on the intense emotional and cognitive life of the main characters, suggesting that Kobylianska uses dialogue not to orchestrate tendentious discussions, as Tomashuk observes, but rather to highlight the irrevocable multiplicity and dialogic nature of voices that permeated socio-political discussions in the Ukrainian middle-class circles of her time. The novel, of course, is not lacking in socio-political commentaries, but they come up only in the complex symbolic implications of the main characters and their interactions, as will be demonstrated shortly.

There are two parts in the novel, each depicting a conversation between Anna Yakhnovych, a seventy-year-old widow of a deceased Eastern Catholic priest and a mother of twelve, and her two oldest surviving children – Ostap and Zonya. The first part has fourteen chapters, where Anna and Ostap lead a conventional face-to-face dialogue, taking turns to confess their personal stories and to narrate the life dramas of other members of their family. The second part could be seen as a one-act play, where Anna and her blind grandson lead an
original trio with Zonya’s confessional diary. Although all monologues, soliloquies, and dialogues in Niobe are dialogic in nature, they dwell predominantly on the interiority and individuality of the characters, bringing out their perplexed outlook on life, and highlighting their alienation from one another. Remarkably, while focusing on the inner man in the characters, Kobylianska minimizes the use of dreams and descriptions of nature, which she often employs in pre-Yefremov works to enhance her psychological portraits. There is only one dream sequence and one description of a murky autumn night in Niobe, used to bring out Anna’s superstitious beliefs in the first case, and to intensify the dramatic setting of her struggle with her drunken son, Andryusha, in the second. This stylistic adjustment could be read as a precaution similar to one that Kobylianska takes in “The Thoughts of an Old Man,” to reduce the chance of populist attacks on her so-called symbolism and mysticism.

Although Kobylianska significantly simplifies the plot structure of the novel, she uses an intricate network of intertextual references to frame her work. As the title of the novel, Niobe, implies, Kobylianska equates the story of Anna Yakhnovych and her children, who end up either dead or spiritually crippled, with the fate of the antique heroine, Niobe, and her fourteen misfortunate children, first recorded in Homer’s Iliad. Past critics have acknowledged Kobylianska’s allusion to the classic story and elaborated extensively on the parallel in Anna’s and Niobe’s grieving for their lost children. Yet it has never been recognized that Kobylianska’s adaptation also links Niobe to the foundational work of modern Ukrainian literature, Ivan Kotlyarevsky’s Ενειδα (Eneyida, 1798) – a parody of
Virgil's *The Aeneid*, where Kotlyarevsky transforms the Trojan heroes into Ukrainian Cossacks. On one hand this intertextual allusion could be seen as another protective measure similar to Shevchenko reference in “The Thoughts of an Old Man “to minimize populists’ attacks on Kobylianska’s tributes to modern European literature; but on the other it could be read as a genre reference to *Eneyida’s* parodic nature. In *Niobe* elements of parody could be discerned in Kobylianska’s caricatured transformation of the arrogant and narrow-minded antique heroine into a Ukrainian upper-middle-class matron. This parallel merits particular attention, for it is precisely these symbolic implications that help us grasp Kobylianska’s criticism of the mainstream Ukrainian populist intelligentsia and its inability to form values and aesthetic morals through which Ukrainian people can elaborate their social, cultural, and political unity.

Kobylianska’s indirect allusion to Natalia Kobrynska’s 1884 story “The Spirit of the Time” and its tragicomic protagonist, Mrs. Shumska, bring out similar parodic connotations. Like Kobrynska’s heroine, Anna Yakhnovych who dearly loves her children, but is too rigid to understand the “новосвітськ[i] погляд[и]” [new-age views] (III 61) of her offspring. Anna, like Mrs. Shumska, knows “лише одну церков, одну дорогу, одну ціль… [знає] ‘так’ або 'не так’” [only one church, one path, one goal… she knows only ‘this way’ or ‘no way’] (III 10) and often neglects or intentionally suppresses the individual aspirations of her children. Consequently, as Ostap sadly sums up, Anna creates only spiritual cripples and beasts out of her naturally “гарн[и], розум[и] й спосібні [діти]” [beautiful, smart, and intelligent children] (III 63). In this respect, Anna’s failure as
a parent could be also compared to Ivonika Fedorchuk’s inability to prepare his
two sons for independent life in Kobylianska’s previous novel, *The Earth* (1902) –
another important intertextual reference in *Niobe*. The sum of these immediate
intertextual references thus projects ignorant parenting, dogmatic reinforcement
of traditional hypocritical conventionalities, as well as its detrimental
consequence for children and, by extension, for the future of the whole
community, as the main theme in the first part of *Niobe*.

While addressing issues of parenting and motherhood, Kobylianska
avoids any tendentious authorial claims, allowing her characters, Anna and
Ostap, to voice the major issues in question. The characters evoke some of
Kobylianska’s earlier theories on the role of women in public space, re-projecting
intelligent motherhood as the most significant function women could perform in
any society.75 Ostap also introduces a new argument, calling attention to the
glaring lack of outstanding women in Ukrainian politics and culture, while
elaborating on the new challenges, new objectives, and new duties that
Ukrainian women face in modern times:

75 See chapter 1, 44-47.
[Women have responsibilities not only to themselves and their families, but also to their nations. Look at the women from other nations: where they used to be and what are they doing now. I mean, for instance, their contributions to art, science, literature, and all other fields, which in the past used to be dominated by men, so to say. Or would you rather see our strong and capable women, I would even say extremely capable women, always follow one path? Our time and our circumstances also requires that we nurture different types. In addition to good housewives and good mothers, to whom I give primacy everywhere and at all times, we also need intelligent workers in society, we need women artists and other outstanding women, so-to-say.] (III 62)

This far-reaching directive resonates with Kobylianska’s rhetoric in her 1903 correspondence with Makovej, where she defends her own status as a public figure.76 Within the novel, however, Ostap’s projection remains only a desirable ideal, which none of the female characters are able to achieve. Although Anna’s daughters – Maria, Lidia, and Olena – are of the strong and extremely capable type described by Ostap, Anna and her husband shelter them from high culture and socio-political debates, raising them to be “славні ґаєдині” [good housewives] (III 62). Only Zonya, who is brought up differently by her childless aunt and uncle, strives for and approximates to the projected ideal, but turns out to be unable to assert it in her patriarchal context.

Kobylianska opens her parodic portrayal of Anna’s flawed parenting in the first chapter, where the heroine projects Christianity as the main premise of her moral virtues. The writer directly quotes from Corinthians, (1 Cor. 13), in the epigraph to Niobe, placing a great deal of merit on Christian love. Yet from the

76 See above,180-181.
third paragraph onward it becomes increasingly evident that Anna’s understanding of Christianity is corrupted, and that her love for children does not correlate to the Christian ideal presented in the first epistle to Corinthians. First, while conveying Anna’s anxiety about her move to a big city, Kobylianska highlights the heroine’s hostility towards the non-Eastern Catholic Christian congregations:

[Після переїзду до міста Анна весь час була роздрзнена і без настрою, силкувалася спіймати з-поміж дзвонів дзвін церкви, до якої належала вона, однак дарма. Між дзвони, що утримувала за “свої”, тиснулися до її слуху і дзвони церкви православної, там знов протистанцької, там знов католицького костюму, і накликували на неї почуття, неначе б щось непронесене тиснулося в її душу і випивало супокій.

After moving to the city Anna was constantly irritated and in a bad mood. She tried to distinguish the tolling of the bell of her church in the mixture of tolling bells, but it was in vain. Together with the bell ringing that she recognized as “hers” she heard the bells of an Orthodox church, a Protestant church, and a Catholic church. She felt as if something uninvited was forcing itself on her, bringing disharmony into her soul.] (III 9-10)

The heroine’s anxiety about different religious positions is further connected with her strong tendency toward xenophobia and ethnocentrism, which Anna reveals when she protests Ostap’s decision to marry a Jewish woman, “жидівку, [яку] не могла [ніколи] полюбити, ба навіть і пошанувати [за] свою невістку” [a Jewess she could never love or even respect as her daughter-in-law] (III 10), and when she finds out in the second part of the novel about Zonya’s attraction to a German artist, the so-called “чужинець” [an alien]. Both cases reinforce the aforementioned quotation, illuminating the heroine’s perplexed understanding of
Christianity and her inability to love and respect not only her neighbors, but also her own children.

The destructive influence of Anna’s religious fanaticism on her children and its far-reaching symbolic implications become evident in the second chapter, when Ostap announces to his family his decision to marry a Jewish woman. As in the previous examples, there are no direct authorial claims, and Ostap makes all the logical connections instead, decrying the moral hypocrisy of his parents:

[I... give back all your “religious” upbringing and spiritual virtues, with which you prepared me for life. Your hearts are filled with fanaticism, primitive feelings and parental egoism. You care neither about truth, nor about people... but only about blind and age-old hatred, which does not have a place in my heart... In this matter I cannot have anything in common with you... Moreover, I am a religious atheist... I consider religion to be a splendid illusion, which was designed to keep people under control – nothing more.] (III 14)

It is not hard to pick up the elements of Marx’s 1843 critique of religion in Ostap’s comments on the illusory nature of religion, which project the whole system of Anna’s values, including her parenting principals, as flawed and inherently oppressive.77 Further in the sequence Ostap ties the hypocritical views of his parents to the pitiable state of the Ukrainian intelligentsia. When he incidentally

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77 See K. Marx, Contribution to Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right.
learns that his younger brother does not go to school any longer only because he does not show enough progress to be able to enter a seminary – in other words, to utilize his cognitive abilities for material profit – he transposes Anna’s utilitarian understanding of education on the national level:

Доки русини хотять лише попити, то і не будуть у силі творити інших діл, як попівських. Та хай відтак не жаліються, що їхня доля повна церковно-жалібного співу!

[As long as Ukrainians want only to preach, they will not be in power to do any other deeds but preaching. They should not complain than that their destiny is filled with mournful church music!] (III 15)

This remark introduces the broader question of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and its inability to lead the Ukrainian nation in its complex struggle for self-determination, for, as Kobylianska implies here, they lack motivation, dedication, and proper training. The same theme Kobylianska would revisit anew in her post-WWI novel Apostle of the Mob, where she would first send her main protagonist to get an education in the leading European universities, then place her new leader-type character into seminary, and then enlist him into military to fully prepare him for Ukraine’s political struggles of the 1920s and the 1930s.

In Niobe, from this point on, Konsistently evokes parallels between the Yakhnovych family and the Ukrainian people, projecting all characters of the novel as symbolic, if not typical, representations of the mainstream Ukrainian intelligentsia of the time. Anna’s character, for instance, could be read as an embodiment of the Ukrainian conservative populist intelligentsia, and her children could be seen as representatives of a new generation of Ukrainian intelligentsia.
Anna’s oldest son Ostap, who is the first to enter the story, is initially presented as an intelligent and compassionate radical, and shows promise for transcending the provincial morality of the Ukrainian conservative intelligentsia. His youthful idealism and resolute nature are, however, promptly undermined by his lack of will and consideration. As Ostap acknowledges, his decision to break with the traditional order is instigated not by rational convictions, but by pure passion. Consequently, like some other rebellious yet immature heroes in Kobylianska’s earlier works – Sava in *The Earth* and the old man’s son in “The Thoughts of an Old Man” are the most obvious examples – Ostap fails to negotiate between his instinctual and civic ambitions and becomes a victim of his own illusions and fanaticism. Despite his enthusiasm, love, and commitment, his marriage turns out to be a Nietzschean disaster-union, for, as projected, it was premature and ill-conceived. His life, as a result, turns out to be a failure as well. Ostap’s blind son, also “ill-conceived” outside of wedlock, is a quintessential embodiment of the hero’s meager personal achievements. Naturally, Anna explains her son’s misfortunes as a logical consequence of his rebellion against traditions and parental will. Ostap, however, sees the root of his ruined life elsewhere, claiming that, if only he and his siblings “у молодших літах дісталися під кермо у сильніші руки,” [were guided by stronger hands in their childhood] (III 37), and if only those hands “кожного з них окремо молотом… розпалити, як те залізо, щоб вони кинули навкруги іскрами” [forged each of them individually, until the sparks showered from them, as from the hot iron] (III 63), “з них би були люди вийшли” [they could have had a chance to become human beings] (III 37).
Ostap’s powerful artisan metaphors articulate Kobylianska’s emphasis on early childhood education, character-building, and their decisive role in the formation of exemplary individuals with strong socio-political will. Accordingly, Ostap’s metaphoric argument projects parenting as an intricate and laborious process, which as Ostap observes, Anna and many other Ukrainian parents fail to recognize, annihilating the human in their offspring.

The life stories of Ostap’s siblings who abide by the parental will carry out even a stronger attack on bourgeois conventionalities of marriage, the family, religion, and the great hunger for respectability, exposing outwardly the prosperous bourgeois establishment as merely a disguise for inward decay. Whereas Ostap is only “crippled” by his disappointment and despair of decadent reality, most of his younger siblings degenerate in their provincial setting into a type, designated in the novel as “звіриний” [bestial] – that is, lacking the culture and civic consciousness associated in Kobylianska’s works with the notion of a human being. The story of the uneducated drunkard, Andryusha, stands out the most. As a young lad, Andryusha ventures into the world armed only with a few dogmatic concepts of good and evil – “так або не так” [this way or no way] (III 10) – but learns quickly that everything he is used to believe is a sham, when the girl he fancies rejects him because of his meager social prospects. Unable to cope with humiliation, despair, and ever-growing frustration with human selfishness and lust for material gain, Andryusha takes to the bottle, trying to escape the drabness of the everyday existence. The intensity of Andryusha’s traumatic realization of personal impotency and social worthlessness is
transmitted in his half-conscious drunken confession that takes place on the night of his father's death. Tormented by the conflicted feelings of duty, guilt, and hatred, Andryusha bursts into a horrendous vocalization of his long-repressed feelings, after Anna questions him about the funeral money he spent in a tavern:

Mовчіть стара потворо... Завсіді муєтє разжарювати пекло в моїй груді! Як коли б лише то було важне, що вас обходить, а більше ніщо! Мовчіть, кажу вам!.. Інакше... Бігме... уб’ю вас, як... – Андрюша... кричав [далі] затикаючи собі вуха обома руками – Нічого не передав я..., ніяких грошевій і нічого, бо мусив у корчмі лишити, передав я Лідці лише кілька шматків білля, в яким нині-завтра пребере [батька] до гробу... І знайте-тахи на добре, коли вже вас так припекло, що аж мене на тортури ставите, стара потворо! Гадаєте я не проклинав вас уже нині, коли виїхав з корчи з порожніми руками? Вас і того старця що зветься моїм батьком..? Проклиная за те, що дали мені життя! Нехай вам це бог простить, я вам цього не можу простити, бо в моїй груді не має нічого, крім муки і пекла; це становить моє буття, яким вам маю завдячувати. Ох, коли б вже настала то та хвилина, коли я побачив би вас занімілу й нерухому на марах! Тоді я пішов би спокійно, спокійним кроком до отої там води й напився б її так, щоб застався на її дні аж до судного дня... і всьому настав би кінець. Але так я мушу через вас піддержувати те собаче життя, щоб не ходили ви, жебраючи, від хати до хати за кусником хліба, бо все ваші інші розпанощі діти не хотять про вас нічого знати. І їм вигідніше дбати про себе, як про своїх старих! Пріч від мене, пріч!

[Be quiet, you old monster... Why do you always have to torment my heart?! It seems that only what concerns you is important and nothing else! Be quiet, I tell you!. Other wise... God knows... I will kill you, as a... Andryusha... covered his ears and went on yelling - I did not deliver anything... any money or anything, because I had to leave it all in a tavern. I gave Lidka only a few pieces of ragged underclothes, so she can dress up father for the coffin tomorrow... And if your curiosity, you old monster, is indeed so great that you are willing to torture me... know this once and for all! Don’t you think I cursed you when I was leaving the tavern empty-handed earlier today? You and that old cripple, who calls himself my father? I cursed you both for giving me life! May God forgive you, for I cannot, because I have nothing left in my breast... nothing but hellish pain... This is the life that I owe you... I cannot wait to see
you finally speechless and motionless lying on your death bed…
Then I would be free to go to that basin and would drink enough water to stay on its bottom till Judgment Day… It would be the end to all of this. But because of you I must sustain this dog’s life, to make sure you don’t go from door to door begging for a crust of bread, because all your other sophisticated children could care less about you. They prefer to care for themselves rather than for their elderly! Get away from me! Get away!] (III 52)

This speech captures Andryusha’s psychological struggle, picturing him as torn between the values of society – rootedness and commitment to family; and the values rooted in his own nature – restlessness and egocentric self-affirmation. The character’s bitter commentary as to his siblings also provides a telling insight into the internal dynamic of the Yakhnovych family, projecting it as a dysfunctional and self-negating unit. Both aspects of Andryusha’s confession carry strong symbolic implications, alluding to Kobylianska’s critical view of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and its socio-political impotence, which becomes increasingly darker in the remainder of the novel. Particularly striking here is Kobylianska’s allegorical criticism of the dominant populist positivism and its rejection of human volition and innate strive for freedom, justice, and progress. As implied in Andryushas personal story and the stories of his siblings, such fanatical celebration of materialism and traditional values often drives young and naturally talented people to ruine and self-destruction.

The second part of Niobe focuses on Anna’s distant daughter, Zonya, raised by Anna’s childless sister and her husband, also an Eastern Catholic priest. Apparently, Zonya’s caregivers have a fundamentally different and much more far-reaching approach to raising children than Anna and her husband do.
Although they value practical skills and the ability to run a household as much as Anna does, they prioritize education and the cultivation of aesthetic taste while raising Zonya. As opposed to Anna, Zonya’s uncle believes that “жінка... без тонших почувань – то як арфа без струн” [a woman without more subtle taste is like a harp without strings]. “А почаття” [and taste], as he further observes, “ушляхтнюється не лише самою наукою і знанням, але й артизмом (себто мистецтвом) і красою” [is honed not only by science and knowledge, but also by art and beauty] (III 79). Accordingly, he teaches Zonya foreign languages and exposes her to European literature and art. He also cultivates Zonya’s civic consciousness, emphasizing the special role the intelligentsia plays in the socio-political development of any nation. While assessing uncle’s socio-political beliefs, Zonya calls him “щирый народолюбець” [a sincere lover of people], whose views, however, fundamentally differ from those of the so-called populist Khlopomany (literary, Peasant-lovers) activists. As Zonya observes, her uncle equally criticizes those who completely dissociate themselves from the people, and those who become so “інтимні” [intimate] with the people, “що хіба лише за шию обіймайся та цілуйся” [that only hugging and kissing is lacking [in that relationship]] (III 79). According to the uncle’s logic, the first group does not contribute to the socio-political development of the Ukrainian nation at all, and the second – gives the people neither knowledge nor bread. Zonya internalizes her uncle’s views and grows up to be a highly educated person with a refined aesthetic taste, strong sense of civic duty, and patriotic commitment – in sharp
Contrast to her siblings and the mainstream Ukrainian intelligentsia, their characters represent.

Zonya’s exceptional education and unconventional outlook on life brings her close to the other iconoclastic heroines in Kobylianska’s early fiction – Olena Laufler and Natalka Verkovychivna among others. In *Niobe*, however, Kobylianska focuses neither on the heroine’s becoming nor on her triumph over conservative social norms, but rather on Zonya’s conflict with her narrow-minded surrounding, represented by her mother and her fiancé, Oleksa, an Eastern Catholic priest-to-be. Kobylianska uses an unusual formal composition to dramatize the lack of understanding between the young heroine and her social environment. She structures the second part of the novel as a one-act play with some elements of a Greek tragedy, where Anna and Zonya function as main characters, and Anna’s blind grandson, who observes the heroine’s interaction and periodically comments upon it as it progresses, operates as a chorus. The exchange between Anna and Zonya is, however, orchestrated not as a traditional face-to-face dialogue, but as a complex interplay of two dialogic soliloquies. In an original duo that Anna leads with Zonya’s diary, written specifically for Anna, both heroines address each other, expressing their intimate feelings and private thoughts, but can neither hear, nor respond to each other, for they are separated in time and space. Whereas such displaced communication better facilitates the heroines’ self-expression, it denies the two heroines the opportunity to achieve any understanding or compromise, highlighting the sharp differences in their views.
Anna’s response to Zonya’s aesthetic aspirations and anti-populist views is particularly revealing of Kobylianska’s emphasis on the contrast and collision, rather than on the synthesis, of the heroines’ individual views. Zonya opens her diary with a statement on the innate crudeness and “нестетичність” [lack of any aesthetic refinement] (III 80) of the Ukrainian peasants, which make it impossible for her to relate to the populist projects of “going to the people.” She continues by juxtaposing her cultural ideals to the mainstream fanaticism with the folk and its primitive culture, and declares herself to be, in contrast, “жінка стилю” [a woman of style], who has yet to discover her socio-political mission. It is hard not to recognize in this self-description Kobylianska’s ideal type of an intellectual, a poet of a new humanism, whose aesthetic teaching as well as personal example, could bring about change in society. Anna, however, does not share Zonya’s longing for spirituality, beauty, and sophistication of aesthetic taste, and counters Zonya’s rhetoric with a passionate statement on the socio-cultural potential of the Ukrainian peasantry. Anna’s populist declaration deserves to be quoted at length, for it is one of the most majestic and most artistic descriptions of “the people” in Kobylianska’s oeuvre, which probably is also the main reason why Niobe was favorably received first by the populist, and later by the Soviet critics:

Я не знаю доню, що тобі відповісти, я лише проста жінка, що в своїм житті не побрала багато (ба навіть жодної) науки, і котрій вистачало одно святе письмо. Та... коли б твій освідчений батько жив і ти твою сповідь зложила в його душу, він був би тобі, без сумніву, ось що відповів: “Піди між люди моє гарне, ніжне дитя, помір твої сили і розумові здатності на других - і ти віднайдеш себе... В тобі збудилася тута за власним багатим “я”, і вона мучить тебе, ти будеш тратити дорогий час твоєї молодості на самі мрії і фантастичні питання. Але вважай!
I don’t know, darling, what to answer you. I am an ordinary woman and don’t have much (well, any) education. The Holy Scripture is my only knowledge. If only your educated father was alive and you opened your heart to him, he would certainly tell you these words: “Go into the world, my beautiful and gentle child. Test your power and your mind on others and find out who you really are... You woke up a longing for your own "I" in your heart, and it torments you. You might waste all the precious time of your youth on dreams and phantasmagoric questions, but beware! The best dreams and the deepest longing do not contribute even a hair to the development of the human spirit... As to the people, honor them! Look! When you go into the forest, you won’t find there the same order as in a well-kept and diligently planned garden. Instead you will find there such power and richness, such unconscious poetry and original beauty that one cannot even dream of in a well-kept garden... The same is with our people, darling! Our wild and uncultured people; our neglected and often despised people! Honor the people!” (III 81-82)

Anna’s idealization of peasants is brimming with the same enthusiasm and fascination that permeate Kobylianska’s early peasant stories of the mid-1890s. Considering that Zonya cannot respond to Anna’s statement, it is fair to suggest that Kobylianska brings in Anna’s soliloquy not only to generate a dialectical discussion between the two heroines, but also to present the populist view of the mass man in all its lyrical beauty and might, and thus to emphasize the diversity of socio-political discourses that circulated in the Ukraine of her time. A certain degree of criticism is, nevertheless, present in the heroines’ exchange, yet it is targeted not at their particular views, but at the nature of their interaction per se,
which signals the rapture in the authentic mother-daughter relationship. The dramatic irony of Anna’s and Zonya’s inability to communicate is further intensified by several brief, yet passionate, comments made by Anna’s blind grandson, who despite, or perhaps because of, his physical disability is the only person who clearly understands the disintegration of the Yakhnovych family and, by implication, of the Ukrainian intelligentsia.

Zonya’s confrontation with Oleksa further highlights the ideological tension that, as projected, defined the socio-political situation in Ukraine of the time. The heroine conveys her personal drama by recording a sequence of face-to-face dialogues in her diary. Zonya’s introduction suggests that initially she idealized her fiancé as an exceptional individual and an exemplary representative of the Ukrainian nation. The heroine particularly admires Oleksa’s commitment to the well-being of the common people and even likens him to a saint and an apostle, who has “для кожного пораду і науку – для кожного неначе зокрема до його потреб і життя мав осібні слова” [advice and a lesson for everyone; a special word tuned to the individual needs and life circumstances of everyone who approaches him] (III 85). Surprisingly, although Zonya is herself a faithful patriot, she does not share Oleksa’s enthusiasm about “going to the people” practices. The heroine sympathizes with the suffering of the masses, but cannot “брататися” [fraternize] with peasants, for she is deeply appalled by their crudeness. Consequently, Zonya’s understanding of patriotism and civic duty differs from that of Oleksa. The heroine values the devotion and self-sacrifice of many Ukrainian intellectuals to the populist project of enlightening the masses,
but believes that cultivation of Ukrainian elite and high culture is as important, highlighting the critical tension between the two related yet fundamentally different notions – "народ" [the people] and "нація" [a nation].

Oleksa, in turn, sees Zonya’s elitism and her veneration of European culture as a threat to, if not a betrayal of, the Ukrainian national movement. These contradictions generate a number of debates between the two characters, in which, one can discern Kobylianska’s reflections on her own conflict with the populist camp, particularly her 1902 confrontation with Yefremov.

From early on Oleksa criticizes what he sees as Zonya’s social passivity, and tries to convince her in a classic populist manner that the prime duty of every educated Ukrainian is to bring “світло і культуру” [the light and the culture] to the people (III 85-86). The young girl protests, claiming that although she admires the eagerness of many young educated Ukrainians who want to make a difference in their society, she finds their enthusiasm premature, irrational, and insufficient for any critical change. Zonya shares her concern with the general tendency to “виносити усе на голосний 'ярмарок' і хвалити або ганити” [take everything to the loud marketplace and either praise or denounce it], and declares that sheer excitement and self-aggrandizement would give neither culture, nor a better future for Ukrainian people. Instead she highlights the need of critical thinking and a broader cultural context. She insists that the educated classes must first and foremost perfect their national culture, develop new

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78 At the turn of the twentieth century, the word “народ” [the people] was used specifically to refer to the common people, mostly peasantry in the Ukrainian context; while the word “нація” [nation] was used as a broader concept and encompasses all social strata of a people.
aesthetic standards, and create a new system of values, through which Ukrainian people can define, sustain, and direct their nation-building effort. She sees high culture as a power that can serve a consolidatory, regulatory, and indeed emancipatory function in their society. That is why she castigates the ill-conceived and often fanatical actions of the mainstream Ukrainian populist intelligentsia and calls on them to follow the lead of highly developed European nations, such as Germany, and to take note of their emphasis on high culture and aesthetic state. The heroine’s argument brings to mind Kobylianska’s mid-1890s views on the role of aesthetic education in the formation of exemplary citizens and the role of high culture in the nation-building process. In the early 1900s most of Ukrainian modernists held similar views, arguing that their politically fragmented nation requires a strong tradition of high art (a coherent normative culture) in order to forge a unified consciousness. This is also precisely the view that Yefremov strove to dispute in his 1902 article, fearing that the cultural elitism and the excessive aestheticism of modernist writers can hinder the cohesiveness of the nation-building effort in Ukraine.

Zonya’s conflict with Oleksa is intensified when a German professor of art comes to spend a summer in their neighborhood. The character of the German artist has no name and no personality. It is a collective image, idealized by Zonya as “добрий репрезентант своєї народності” [an exemplary representative of his nation], but estranged and vilified by Anna, Oleksa, and Zonya’s aunt as “чужинець” [alien] who poses an imminent threat. The German professor becomes a catalyst in Zonya’s critical reassessment of Oleksa’s character and
his rigid views, instigating the heroine’s break up with her fiancé. From early on Zonya recognizes an ideal of a cultivated person in the German professor, whose refined beliefs and aesthetic taste create a striking contrast to Oleksa’s excessive rationality and lack of aesthetic sophistication – his so-called “копіто прози” [hoof of prose], as Zonya metaphorically designates her fiancé’s excessive materialism. Oleksa also admits the cultural superiority of the German artist, but, in contrast to Zonya, he develops a sincere hatred of his rival, which brings out his deep sense of self-doubt and inferiority complex.

Driven by jealousy and envy, Oleksa gradually moves from critical attacks on Zonya to a broad criticism of the general fascination with everything non-Ukrainian among Ukrainian intelligentsia. Remarkably, Oleksa’s rhetoric, as well as his logic, reiterates almost literally Yefremov’s critique of the strong pro-Western orientation in Ukrainian modernist culture. This curious detail, as well as the fact that Yefremov himself was a seminary graduate and a devoted populist, gives room to speculate that Oleksa is a parodic caricature of Yefremov, and his argument with Zonya is a direct reference to Kobylianska’s own conflict with the populist critic. See, for instance, the following excerpt:

Чуже втливало і сліпило часто наші душі так, що ми не бачили свого, будь воно найкраще і найліпше; найвластивіших нам барв відрікалися ми задля чужого, і немов загіпнотизовані переходили в табір противника... часто робимо це і насвідомо, лише тому, що є в нас наклін легко пристосовуватися до іншого, і що замало є відваги, чи радше постійної, витривалої сили до гідного культурного існування як менша народність... Ми носимо жилку зради в собі... Ідіть ви всі, неправдиві і "хисткі," ідіть і заставте нас самих! Не число становить міць і силу, лише свідома сила й інтелігенція!
[The foreign often influenced and blinded our souls so much, that we could not see our own, even when it was much better and greater; we often renounced our most characteristic colors for the sake of the foreign, and, as if hypnotized, joined the rival’s camp… Often we do it unconsciously only because we have a strong tendency to adapt to something different and because we have little courage, or better we have little strength and persistence to proper cultural existence as a small nation… We have a strand of treason… Go away all you, false and “shaky,” go away and leave us alone! It’s not the number that constitutes the strengths and power, but only the conscious will and intelligentsia! (III 110-111)

This xenophobic proclamation indirectly underpins Kobylianska’s concern about populist unjustified aggression against internal opposition, and particularly about the populists’ proto-totalitarian campaign to purge Ukrainian culture from everything that does not fit into their understanding of Ukrainianness. The melodramatic tone of the speech, as well as Oleksa’s excessive bewilderment, has a strong parodic subtext. Kobylianska pushes her criticism even further by italicizing, and thus bringing to attention, several key phrases. The first emphasis is on “for the sake of the foreign,” which questions the implied binary opposition between foreign and native, indirectly suggesting that alternate options – translation, adaptation, and mutual enrichment – are also possible in the intercultural exchange. The second highlight targets Oleksa’s emphasis on the subjugated cultural and socio-political position of Ukrainian people as “a small nation,” which he urges his audience to accept as Ukraine’s manifest destiny. This attitude fundamentally differs from Zonya’s and indeed Kobylianska’s ideal of the future flowering and world-recognition of Ukrainian nation, and thus accuses the mainstream populist Ukrainian intelligentsia, Yefremov in particular, of a narrow-minded political vision. The last emphasis is placed on “conscious
political will and strong intelligentsia," which, paradoxically, the hero projects as the key preconditions for Ukrainian national regeneration. On one hand this claim evokes the very premise of Kobylianska’s elitist program of national liberation, but within the context of Oleksa’s speech its far-reaching perspective is undermined, since Oleksa – an indoctrinated, bigoted, and hot-headed character – parades himself as an ideal intellectual leader. Through this semantic oxymoron Kobylianska thus calls attention to the apparent contradiction between the grand ideal and the ill-conceived practical implementation of the populist emancipatory program. The above quotation thus demonstrates that Kobylianska once again employs a complex network of formal and symbolic markers to expose the intrinsically ruinous ego- and ethnocentric understanding of patriotism, which at the time defined the general view of her populist critics, questioning their self-proclaimed authority on Ukraine’s nation-building effort.

This reading of the selected passages from Niobe thus demonstrates that the novel is far more complex than past critics admit. Although it is not quite a “novel of ideas,” it presents a masterful psychological study of the mainstream Ukrainian intelligentsia, which has a strong ideological subtext. By using dialogue, Kobylianska creates a number of powerful psychological portraits, which expose the perplexed worldviews of the Ukrainian populist intelligentsia, particularly their materialism, utilitarian understanding of culture, premature political enthusiasm, and pronounced tendencies toward xenophobia and ethnocentrism. Kobylianska’s criticism of the populist heterophobia is a new development in her anti-populist rhetoric and could be seen as a reaction to
Yefremov’s 1902 belligerent attacks on pro-Western motives in her earlier works, as well as in the emerging Ukrainian modernist culture. In addition to the direct criticism of populist dogmatism, the novel also argues in support of an alternate route for the Ukrainian nation-building effort, reiterating Kobylianska’s earlier elitist views. Although Niobe does not directly denounce the populist “going to the people” program, it emphasizes that “going to the people” by itself cannot generate any significant socio-political change in Ukraine. Kobylianska thus continues to believe in the mid-1910s, as firmly as she did in the early 1890s, that socio-political changes in Ukraine could be achieved only through the regeneration of Ukrainian high culture. As will be demonstrated next, the idea of a cultural revolution and an aesthetic state proposed in Niobe, defined by an intimate fusion of politics and art, becomes even more prominent in Kobylianska’s two other pre-WWI novels on the Ukrainian intelligentsia.

**Over the Bridge**

Через кла́дку (Over the Bridge, 1912) is the longest novel by Kobylianska (over 300 pages), which many critics find too long and too slow (Vernyvolia 15; Tomashuk Zhyttia 167; Babyshkin “Tvorchist'” 51; Hundorova Femina 164). In the 1922 autobiography, however, Kobylianska names Over the Bridge as her favorite work, for it contains rich biographical data and her mature reflections on the contemporary Ukrainian intelligentsia. The writer also claims that all materials presented in the novel, both biographical and critical, were meticulously collected.
over a fifteen-year period, thus emphasizing the historical and the conceptual significance of her work:

\[\text{As to the story } Over \text{ the Bridge, from the time I completed } \text{The Princes I was entertaining the idea of writing a similar novel, but with one difference – the spirit of its heroes should become higher, and their thoughts should go farther and deeper than those of the heroes in the first novel. Slowly I collected materials, preparing myself, so to speak, for this work.] (V 241)\]

These lines also suggest that Kobylianska’s elitist thought, first introduced in 1896 as a synthesis of the Nietzschean concept of the overman with nineteenth-century Russian radical theories of the intellectual’s duty to the society, continues to evolve in Over the Bridge.

Kobylianska made her first attempt to write the novel in 1901. According to her correspondence with Makovej, in 1901 the writer planned to construct the main character of her future novel after Makovej’s image, and thus project him as the embodiment of her intellectual ideal. Particularly telling is Kobylianska’s request for personal information from Makovej on August 12, 1901:

\[\text{Я хочу тепер новелу писати, до котрої поробила нотатки вже... Мені треба кілька характеристичних черт з Вашого життя, коли були молоденьким хлопчиком, а потім – коли були в молодих літках 24-25... Дуже Вас прошу, не відмовте мені просьби. Я маю в душі прегарну думку – поможіть, щоби я її на папір кинула... Я Вам дам працю до прочитання, і коли не схочете – не надрукую... А як праця Вам сподобається, я Вам її присяжу... Не думайте, що хочу писати “Valse mélancolique” або щось подібного... Се що я хочу писати, се буде таке, яке я досі не}\]
I would like to write a novel, for which I have made some notes. I need a few characteristic features from your life, when you were a young boy, and when you were in your mid-20s... Please do not refuse my request. I have a brilliant idea in mind – help me put it on paper... I will let you read the novel, and if you do not approve, I will not publish it. Yet if you like it – I will dedicate my work to you... Please, do not think I am planning on writing another “Valse Mélancolique” or something of that kind... The work I am going to write will be completely new, something I have never written before. I think you will really enjoy it... I would really like to bring you on stage. I will present you in such garments that nobody will recognize you. Please write me as a reward for all the letters I wrote and all the sorrows I had ... And then at least we will leave a novel after us. Nobody will know. This is how the literati bury their wounds; this is how the poets do.] (V 487-488)

Remarkably, this fragment is a part of one of the most intimate letters from Kobylianska to Makovej, written over the summer of 1901, where the writer confesses her love and proposes to live with him without being official married.

According to the archival documents, Makovej did not respond to any of Kobylianska’s letters written in June-July of 1901, and rejected her offer of intimacy in a face-to-face encounter that took place somewhere between July 27 and August 5 of 1901.79 Realizing the impossibility of any future intimate relationship with Makovej, Kobylianska made a bold proposition to feature him in a new novel on the life of Ukrainian intelligentsia in an attempt to rescue their

79 For a detailed discussion of Kobylianska’s intimate correspondence with O. Makovej in 1901 and its influence on their relationship see M. Pavlyshyn’s Olha Kobylianska: prochytannia, 179 - 198
friendship and literary collaboration. A few weeks later Kobylianska sent another request to Makovej, which was less passionate and presented her plans for the future novel in a business-like tone:

It will be as serious a work as The Earth, but only about the life of the intelligentsia... They say it is impossible to write a novel about the life of the Ukrainian intelligentsia. Oh, it is quite possible! One must only open one's eyes, and become more sensitive to people and their feeling... I would like to discern some consequences from your life and your character, and of course, from those of other people. I would like to insert my story into a wide background... I grew a lot from the time when I wrote The Princess and other stories about intelligentsia. I am not afraid any longer to work on serious subjects. It seems I was not progressive enough and did not yet have my eyes open far... But now I want to write about it.]

(V 489-490)

In both letters Kobylianska refer to Makovej's complex personality and his unusual ability to synthesize two fundamentally different identities – one of a cynical materialist, and another of a refined poet – projecting the bridging of the material and the poetic, or, better, the rational and the irrational aspects of life as the main mission for her ideal intellectual type. Makovej, however, did not approve of Kobylianska's idea “to bring him on stage” and to use their relationship as a framework for a novel. He insisted that any public disclosure of
their personal story would inevitably ruin their friendship. Yet, according to their consequent correspondence, Kobylianska had no intention of yielding to Makovej and was forced to postpone the writing of her panoramic semi-biographical novel only by a number of traumatic events – the 1902 confrontation with Yefremov and the 1903 stroke and temporary paralysis are the most obvious causes.

Kobylianska made her second attempt at writing the novel in 1909. As she highlighted in the 1922 autobiography, she did not feel ready for the project at the time, but the premature death of her youngest brother, Volodymyr Kobyliansky, inspired her to commemorate her brother’s life and work in her writing (V 241). Kobylianska finished *Over the Bridge* in less than two years. In January-December of 1912 the novel was published in the Lviv monthly *Literature and Science Herald*, and in 1913 it came out as a separate edition. In February of 1912, after the publication of the first sections of the novel in the *Herald*, Kobylianska sent an angry letter to the journal’s editorial board, complaining about the numerous typos in the printed text of her novel. While demanding a more thorough treatment for her novel, Kobylianska emphasized that *Over the Bridge* was a special work, for it was written “з початтям, що се вже послідня [iі] праця” [with a true belief that it was her last fictional work] (V 614). This remark thus further supports Kobylianska’s claim that *Over the Bridge* is a product of her long-term reflections, where she summed up her thoughts on the two central questions that preoccupied her throughout the 1890s and the 1910s – Ukraine’s national liberation and the role of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in it.
As opposed to the 1901 plan, Kobylianska featured her youngest brother as the main character of the novel, Nestor Obrynsky, who embodies the writer’s ideal of a cultivated intellectual with a strong political will. Many other characters of the novel are also modeled after Kobylianska’s relatives and close friends, which enhances the authenticity and thus the realism of the depicted story. Curiously, a character designed after Osyp Makovej is also included in the novel as a narrator, Bohdan Oles, and the story of Kobylianska’s intimate relationship with Makovej, presented as the story of Bohdan’s courtship with Manya Obrynska, Nestor’s older sister, is used to frame the main plot. Lesia Ukrainka’s commentary highlights the verisimilitude of the depicted characters and events:

Someone dark-haired [this is what Lesia Ukrainka used to call Olha Kobylianska], must have lost a lot of health with her Over the Bridge? To bring out all those memories must have cost a lot… I recognize the St. Anna [Lesia Ukrainka has Kobylianska’s mother in mind here] and your brother Volodymyr… I recognize so much that I cannot be objective about this novel. I cannot critique it. I see it as a chunk of life that one must yet come to terms with. One cannot critique such things.] (Kobylianska v krytytsi 162)

While acknowledging the influence of the autobiographical materials on her reception of Over the Bridge, Lesia Ukrainka, like many consequent critics, also observes that the authenticity of the depicted story does not undercut in any way the aesthetic and philosophical aspects of the novel.
*Over the Bridge* is structured as a memoir, and thus, as a genre, presupposes a mixture of factual and fictional materials. It is written for therapeutic reasons by Bohdan Oles, a well-off thirty-five-year-old government worker, who strives to recreate, reassess, and come to terms with the traumatic events that took place over a fifteen-year period between his first encounter with his wife-to-be, Manya Obrynska, and their eventual marriage. Bohdan’s narrative takes the form of a quest to understand the self in relation to his family, friends, and broader community, where his assessments of others and their outlook on life often become more important than the record of his own internal world. This outline brings up some parallels between Bohdan’s motives to write his memoir, and Kobylianska’s incentive to write a semi-biographical novel about the Ukrainian intelligentsia, where she ventures to renegotiate the relationship between “private” and “public,” and to derive a broader theoretical assessment of the socio-political agency of the contemporary Ukrainian intelligentsia from her personal experiences.

Most past critics consider Bohdan Oles as the key hero of the novel. The very nature of the memoir genre, however, contradicts the general critical consensus on Bohdan’s preeminence in *Over the Bridge*, for conventionally the author of a memoir plays the secondary role of a narrator whose major goal is to provide a record and a commentary on lives and deeds of other people. The opening sentence of the novel also states that the main focus is not on Bohdan,

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80 M. Mohyliansky, O. Babyshkin, N. Tomashuk, M. Komyshanchenko, R. Chopyk, T. Hundorova, and H. Levchenko are only a few to name.
but on men and women he used to know. Accordingly, the story of Bohdan’s
courtship should be also seen as of marginal importance, as merely a
springboard for Kobylianska’s critical reflections. Mykhailo Mochulsky, one of the
first critics of the novel who wrote an introduction to the 1913 edition,
acknowledged in his review the utilitarian function of Bohdan’s character and his
personal story:

Колись писала Кобилянська в гуморесці “Він і вона”: “Баби
мають дивні смак, бабський. Їм ходить лише о те, чи герої
поберуться; це для них головна річ”. Тим-то письменниця
написала історію серця для тих, для яких головна річ подружжя
героїв, а для поважнішої публіки вона дала в дарунок ідеї та
малюнок людської душі.

[Kobylianska once wrote in her story “He and She,” “Women have
bizarre taste – womanish taste. The only thing they care about is
whether the main characters get married or not. This is the most
important issue for them.” That is why the writer developed a love
story for those who see the marriage of the main characters as the
most important moment in a novel. At the same time Kobylianska
presented the more sophisticated audience with a gift of ideas and
portraits of human soul.] (164-165)

Mochulsky, however, did not elaborate any further either on Kobylianska’s socio-
political ideas, or on the aesthetic value of her psychological portraits. Neither did
later scholars of Kobylianska. Even the most extensive monographs barely
provide any analysis of Over the Bridge, focusing, mostly, on the so-called salon-
like (Chopyk 95), or romance-like narrative of Bohdan’s love story (Hundorova
Femina 160), and commenting, as a result, exclusively on Kobylianska’s failure
to achieve her own goal, that is, to create refined characters whose spirit would
“become higher” and whose thoughts would “go farther and deeper” than those
of the heroes in her first novel, *The Princess* (Vernyvolia 15; Tomashuk *Zhyttia* 167; Babyshkin “Tvorchist’” 51; Hundorova *Femina* 164).

As observed, Kobylianska’s commentaries suggest that neither Bohdan Oles, who resembles Osyp Makovej, nor his wife-to-be, Manya Obrynyska, who has a lot in common with Kobylianska, but Nestor Obrynsky, a character modeled after Kobylianska’s deceased brother, and his interactions with others constitute the nexus of Kobylianska’s critical reflections. There are also several textual facts that support such a claim. First of all, Nestor is the only character in the novel whose evolution is discerned from early childhood well into the mature years. According to Kobylianska’s 1901 letters to Makovej, this is precisely the formula she planned to use to capture the complex cognitive and spiritual formation of the intellectual protagonist in her novel on the Ukrainian intelligentsia. Second, although Nestor plays only a marginal role in Bohdan’s love story, he indirectly brings Bohdan, a conservative materialist, and Manya, a committed idealist, together, symbolically bridging the very same two major aspects of life – rational and irrational – which Kobylianska outlines in 1901 as the main mission for her ideal the intellectual hero. Nestor is also the only character who initiates philosophical discussions and critical reflections on questions of patriotism, socio-political activism, and the role of intellectual elite in Ukraine’s national regeneration. Therefore, to grasp Kobylianska’s mature thoughts on the role of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the socio-political regeneration of Ukraine presented in *Over the Bridge*, it makes sense to examine Nestor’s cognitive, emotional, and everyday life.
If one were to describe Nestor’s character in a few sentences, the outcome would be identical to the portrait Volodymyr Vozniuk, a present-day biographer of Kobylianska, gives to the writer’s youngest brother, Volodymyr Kobyliansky:

As a boy he was very inquisitive and was fascinated with nature; he collected insects; later he learned how to play the cello and was very good. He was fond of folklore. He was exceptionally gifted, dedicated, and perhaps even a little too punctual and scrupulous. He was a “straight-A” student first in a public school, then in a gymnasium, and later at Chernivtsi University, where he received a degree in law in 1901. In 1903 he earned a doctoral degree in law and started his internship in the Chernivtsi court. He always lived with his parents... He devoted all his energy first to studies and later to work, neglecting his health and doctors’ advice... In 1908 he was diagnosed with tuberculosis and died soon thereafter.]

(119-120)

In the first part of the novel, where Nestor is introduced as a thirteen-year-old boy, Kobylianska presents several anecdotal stories that bring up his distinctive character features – punctuality, inquisitiveness, dedication, altruism, but, most important, independence. “Я сам” [on my own] is presented as Nestor’s life motto, which defines all his mature beliefs and actions.
In the second part of the novel, where Nestor is depicted as a young scholar, his pronounced sense of individualism and self-reliance particularly stands out in his commentary on political activism. When Bohdan asks Nestor during their incidental encounter after a ten-year separation, whether he belongs to any academic circles, the young man declares that to be a member of any student organization one has to be a “politician” and belong to a “party,” that is, to forgo one’s freedom and individuality – something he is not willing to commit. Nestor explains further that although he would gladly give his life for the Ukrainian people and their well-being, he believes that at the time his life does not have enough value, and that he must “себе самого віднайти” [discover himself] and “свою власну культуру на підставі сили особистості й на рівні вищого її розуміння виробити” [develop his own culture according to his individual potential and at the highest level of its understanding] (IV 107), before he can start any serious political work. He goes on to juxtapose his beliefs with the views of the mainstream Ukrainian intelligentsia, including Bohdan Oles, criticizing their naïve idealism and premature socio-political activism. Earlier in the novel Kobylianska ironically describes this type of intelligentsia as “інтелігент-мужик,” що... не вилупився ще цілком із лушення мужицтва, і тому і діла і поступування його ще отяжілі, безправні і недалекосяжні, що топчеться на одному місті без ширшого горизонту, крім погляду в заплакану

81 In the original Ukrainian text Kobylianska uses the word “мужик,” which literary means “a peasant,” or “a mass man,” and which, in turn, is the key concept in the nineteenth-century populist discourse. Kobylianska, however, often uses the word “мужик” as an antonym to Nietzsche’s idea of the overman, which semantically is closer to Nietzsche’s “plebe” or “herd man.” Although Kobylianska retains a certain degree of populist connotation in her use of “мужик,” in the given context “plebe” would be a more effective translation than “peasant.”
an intelligent plebe, who has not fully shed the plebeian skin, and whose deeds and progress, as a result, remain hampered, disenfranchised, and insular; who has no broader vistas, but a glimpse into the tearful traditional past and a narrow perspective into the future] (IV 62). Nestor sums up his argument, claiming that contemporary politicians purposely manipulate young people and often trick them into commitments that lead to their personal ruin, and that “багато [українського] безголов’я і горя треба приписувати спустошенню через політику” [a lot of Ukrainian] absurdity and sorrow should be ascribed to the impoverishment through politics] (IV 107). Accordingly, to make any significant socio-political changes in Ukraine, Nestor continues, one should “станути понад партії” [stand above parties] (IV 107), asserting one’s individuality and independence of thought. Throughout the argument Nestor thus problematizes the dominant political discourses, evoking Kobylianska’s earlier critique of populism and its detrimental consequences for the young enthusiastic minds. In Over the Bridge Kobylianska pushes her critique, however, even further, attacking not only political parties and their doctrinaire ideologies, but also the Ukrainian intelligentsia and its cultural and socio-political apathy.

In the second conversation with Bohdan, Nestor accuses his fellow academics of abandoning their function as intellectual elite, and of coming down into the marketplace:

Вони всі своїми думками видаються мені перегарячені, а деякі заскору пережиті. Все що роблять, пишуть, говорять, видається мені без якоїсь рівноваги і твердої сили. Все це робиться в
materialism:

better life by separating the good and the beautiful from contemporary Ukrainian society is to create an intellectual elite that could lead Ukraine toward a better life. [Their every thought seems to be superficially experienced and overheated. Everything they do, write, or say seems to be rushed and done without any balance or internal strength. It all seems to be done not for the sake of work and its quality, but purely for self-satisfaction, in a business-like manner. I truly think every individual life could be an artistic creation, yet nowadays it is only a business. We do not see any value in work per se, but only in what we can get for it. The greatest art of our life is to get the greatest possible compensation for the smallest possible contribution. As a result, our lives turn into an eternal race, an eternal hunt. Nevertheless, life is not void of beauty. Yet do they see it? Do they even have time to stop and look? Even in those brief moments when they are on their own, even then they cannot see it. They continuously long for something better, wait for something newer.] (IV 119-120)

Nestor further highlights that the only way to bring any positive change into Ukrainian society is to create an intellectual elite that could lead Ukraine toward a better life by separating the good and the beautiful from contemporary materialism:

У нас кричать усе у всійди – “працювати для народу”. А виходить що ті “виправдовані здобутки” не для цілої нації, а виключно для “музицтва.” Я питаю, чи нам не спинитись у наших змаганнях понад здобутки для музицтва? Не відриватись… від нього, становлячи з себе, себе інтелігентів, окрему верству, котра вимагає й для себе праці, науки, штуки, й інших здобутків культури? Хоч не багато, а ми для того свого народу, мужика, бодай як не вже щось зробили, то робимо. А для інтелігенції? Для нашої інтелігенції ми ще нічого не
зробили. Я мрію про те щоб у нас було як найбільше глибокої поважної інтелігенції. Інтелігенції національно-культурної, а по правді, того всього ми ще й досі поза мужиком не бачимо... В тім велика частина нашої власної хиби. Я питаю, що може для людини кращим ідеалом бути, як не власне — людина? Гарна, трудяча, укінчена людина, в тисячах шляхетних постатей? А між тим яке нутро сучасного [інтелігентного] українця?.. Він не прийшов ще до пізнання своєї власної сили... Тому як годен він масу, себто весь народ організовувати, поки він сам себе не зорганізує? Спершу як одиницю, відрак як масу, а вкінці — націю... Ми вже відкинули бога, але тому що інші поступовіші нації відкинули його також. Одначе між тим коли ті дружі народи дали замість того своєму народові науку, штук, змогу пізнавати себе, свої сили й найвишу культуру, шукають за новою моральню, новими вартостями, стоймо ми ледве на рівні їхньої колишньої найнижчої культури. Чи може ні? Що дали ми нашому мужикові для душі, для підтримування його кращих зворушень серця, розуму? Науку? Культуру? Ет!..

[We all scream everywhere — “work for the people.” Yet all our “laborious accomplishments” are meant not for the whole nation, but exclusively for “the peasants.” I ask, shouldn’t we go beyond the work for the peasants in our struggle? Should not we distinguish ourselves, I mean intelligentsia, in a separate stratum, which requires its own work, science, art, and other cultural achievements? We have done, or at least are doing, something for the peasants. Yet what about our intelligentsia? We have not done anything for our intelligentsia. I wish we had a lot of accomplished intellectuals; as much as possible. A truly national cultural elite. Yet, frankly, our peasants do not let us understand its true value. And that is one of the major reasons of our misery. I wonder... what could be a better ideal for a human than another human? A refined hard-working human in thousands of noble figures? Yet what is the real nature of a contemporary Ukrainian intellectual?.. He haven’t discovered his own power yet... So how can he organize a mass, that is the whole nation, if he still needs to organize himself? First as an individual, then as a mass, and finally — as a nation... We rejected God, but we did it only by following other more advanced nations. Yet while those other nations substituted God for their people with science, art, and an opportunity to discover themselves, their own power, and culture, while they search for a new morality and new values, we barely stand at the lowest level of their past cultural development. Or maybe it is not true? What did we give to our people to stimulate the noble impulses in his soul or mind? Maybe science? Culture? Oh well!..] (IV 121-122)
Both passages clearly juxtapose Nestor’s vision of the intellectual elite and the mainstream populist understandings of the intelligentsia and its socio-political role in Ukrainian society, capturing a fundamental distinction between the two strands of thought. Nestor suggests that the mainstream Ukrainian populist theorists treat elites in a rather utilitarian way, viewing them as merely the servants of their peasant-oriented ideology. He, in turn, argues that national intellectual leaders must remain undefiled by the popular mass movements and must cultivate their own ideology, aesthetic values, and moral standards, which, as he believes, would eventually direct the whole nation to better things. To a world ruled by materialism and bourgeois complacency Nestor thus opposes a world ruled by beauty and aesthetic principle. To the image of “the indoctrinated servant of the people” he opposes an image of the “poet-seer,” who is in a very Nietzschean way beyond good and evil of the marketplace and thus can transcend the present day socio-cultural stagnation. At the same time Nestor fuses his Nietzschean model with a clear socio-political mission – just as Natalka Verkovychivna does in Kobylianska’s first novel *The Princess*, and the old man in “The Thoughts of an Old Man” – projecting individual self-perfection as a politically valuable direction, which would eventually lead the whole nation to better things.

In the 1960s Ivan Dzyuba, a distinguished contemporary Ukrainian literary critic, was probably the first to recognize Nestor and his socio-political ideas as...
українського соціально-політичного побуту” [a new phenomenon in the Ukrainian prose and a fresh product of the Ukrainian socio-political life of the time] (27). Owing to the constraints imposed by Soviet ideology, Dzyuba, however, had no choice but to present in the best Marxist tradition “служіння народу” [service to the people] and “обов'язок інтелігенції до трудового люду” [the intellectual’s duty to the working class] as Kobylianska’s central ideological directive in Over the Bridge, and to marginalize, accordingly, her emphasis on consolidation and regeneration of an intellectual elite as simply a minor transient step in this process (25). A close reading of the novel suggests, however, the opposite. Nestor, who gradually becomes the embodiment of his own intellectual ideal, proves with his last breath, in the best Bazarov tradition, that continual self-perfection and hard work “for the sake of work and its quality” bring much more far-reaching results than any passionate oration in the middle of the marketplace. In his last days, fatally ill with tuberculosis, Nestor continues working, dividing time equally between writing his magnum opus and helping Ukrainian peasants to settle their matters in court. In the somewhat utopian ending of the novel, his dedication and work ethic earn admiration among his friends and acquaintances, inspiring them to rethink their own attitude to life and their role in society. In his death Nestor thus becomes a Nietzschean herald of a new age, whose personal example sets in motion the unification of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, symbolically represented through the marriage between Bohdan

82 Yevgeny Bazarov, a challenger of Russian Orthodox conservatism and Western liberalism, is the main character in Kobylianska’s favorite novel by Turgenev, Fathers and Sons (1862). For further information on Kobylianska’s tribute to Turgenev’s novel, see chapter 1, 75.
Oles, an intelligent plebe, and Manya Obrynska, an intellectual aristocrat, which, in turn, promises to bring further positive ramifications – a powerful motif that was explored in the nineteenth-century domestic fiction of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, George Sand, and Eugenie Marlitt.

Recent critics often read the happy-end resolution of Kobylianska’s 1912 novel as a “псевдосинтез” [pseudo-synthesis], where the intelligent plebe forces the intellectual aristocrat to renounce her modernist views and emancipationist aspiration (Hundorova *Femina* 177). Kobylianska’s celebration of traditional family values is further interpreted as a sign of the writer’s reconciliation with, and conformity to populism (Hundorova *Femina* 178; Chopyk 89-90). Dwelling on the presumably implied gender inversion of the main characters in *Over the Bridge*, one feminist critic ventures to explain the ostensible shift in Kobylianska’s socio-political views through the writer’s own identity crisis, and consequently reads the novel as a “істричний текст” [hysterical text] that requires a psychoanalytical interpretation (Hundorova *Femina* 170). Considering Kobylianska’s decade-long effort to make her fiction more accessible to mainstream Ukrainian readers, one should not discard, however, a possibility that the writer might have used a conventional gendering formula, where a man is associated with authority, to conceal her hidden elitist argument rather than to confirm to the populist conservatism.

A closely look at Kobylianska’s discussion of feminism in *Over the Bridge* reveals, for instance, that her views remained tuned to her earlier propagation of
modernized yet somewhat traditional roles of women within the family. Like some other heroines in Kobylianska’s earlier intellectual novels whom the writer models after canonical characters created by Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, George Sand, and Eugenie Marlitt – Olena Laufler and Natalka Verkovychivna, to name a few – Manya Obrynska starts as an ambitious idealist who strives for a radically new life, but gradually undergoes a complex revision of the value of tradition, arriving at a conclusion that resonates with one of Kobylianska’s major moral and aesthetic principles:

Життя і досвід, а передусім сама ‘модерністичність’ [вчать] придержуватися того з ‘старосвітськості’, що гарне для нашої душі і миля, дарма що воно старосвітське.

[Real life and experience, but, foremost, ‘modernity’ itself, teaches us to keep those traditions, which remain dear to our hearts despite their ‘old-fashioned’ nature.] (IV 339)

These lines appear at the end of the novel, underpinning Kobylianska’s socio-cultural argument: while criticizing the mainstream populist intelligentsia, particularly their conservatism and peasant-oriented ideals, the writer also distinguishes herself from what she calls radical modernists – that is pseudo-Nietzschean nihilists, decadents, symbolists, and futurists – who rejected tradition altogether. She thus reasserts herself as a radical conservative, propagating, on one hand, innovative elitist ideas, but opposing, on the other hand, major left-oriented radical movements, often perceived at the time as progressive. Kobylianska’s criticism of the contemporary Ukrainian intelligentsia reaches its apogee in her next novel, За ситуаціями (After Situations, 1914),

83 For further discussion on Kobylianska’s radically conservative feminist views, see chapter 1, 78-79.
where she attacks the pseudo-progressive camp of the Western-oriented Ukrainian intellectual elite.

*After Situations*

Kobylianska wrote *After Situations* in a relatively short period, and published it within a year after the original publication of *Over the Bridge* in a pro-modernist literary monthly *Ukrainian Hut* (Українська хата) in 1913-1914. The novel features a story of a love triangle that involves a gifted pianist, Aglaia-Felicitas Fedorenko, a university professor of Art History, Ivan Chornaj, and his Germanized younger brother, Johannes Schwarz. All three characters belong to the educated upper-middle class, and could be read as representatives of the new pro-Western generation of the Ukrainian urban intelligentsia, who continually challenge social norms. As often in Kobylianska, a sequence of dialogues between the main characters constitutes the main action of the novel. While placing dialogue in the center, Kobylianska, however, does not focus solely on bringing out the inner man of her characters, as she often does in earlier works, but rather foregrounds socio-political discussions, emphasizing a clear connection between the characters’ self-consciousness and worldviews. The result is an artistic fusion of personal life with the idea, which intimately links lofty ideological thinking of the heroes with their personalities. By employing dialogue to capture her characters’ ideological views and their metamorphoses, Kobylianska also highlights the inter-individual, or better dialogical, nature of ideas, which helps her represent them artistically, that is to transmit ideas
preserving their capacity to signify, while at the same time maintaining a critical distance, neither confirming nor repudiating any of the depicted ideas.

Many critics have recognized questions of nationality, nation, and patriotism as the most discussed topics in *After Situations*, but, arguably, have said barely anything about the novel’s national discourse and its complexity. At best, it has been read as “одним із засобів для структурування аргументу повісті,” [one of the means for structuring the main argument of the novel] (Pavlyshyn 229, 238), which past scholars, both Soviet and post-Soviet, notoriously see in Kobylianska’s discussion of the fatal inability of creative individuals to succeed in a conservative bourgeois society (Izotov 89-91; Babyshkin *Narys* 166; Tomashuk *Zhyttia* 167), concentrating exclusively on Aglaia’s personal struggle for self-assertion. Such a reading clearly equates Aglaia with Kobylianska’s other emancipationist heroines, projecting feminism as the central ideological theme in *After Situations*. A close analysis of the novel and its contextualization in Kobylianska’s complete oeuvre demonstrate, however, that the character of Aglaia-Felicitas fundamentally differs from those of Olena Laufler in *A Human Being* (1894), Natalka Verkovychivna in *The Princess* (1896), and Manya Obrynska in *Over the Bridge* (1912). It also reveals that Aglaia’s individual story, as well as the stories of the two other main characters, are in no way stories of “becoming”, but are stories of “being,” and are used mostly to provide a conventional framework for Kobylianska’s philosophical and socio-political reflections, among which questions of patriotism and Ukraine’s national liberation are of primary concern.
One of the most telling aspects of *After Situations*, which gives insight in the complexity and subversiveness of its ideological discourse, is the absence – atypical for Kobylianska’s intellectual prose – of any positive, let alone heroic and messianic, characters. Although Aglaia, Professor Chornaj, and Schwarz demonstrate a number of character features, which Kobylianska deliberately ascribes to her ideal of an intellectual leader – refined education, aesthetic sophistication, rebellious nature, and strong will are only a few to name – all of them lack what is projected in Kobylianska’s artistic world as the most essential quality of an intellectual leader, that is, a sincere commitment to a broader social agenda.84 Preoccupied with personal gains and pleasures, all three characters continually chase after new experiences or, as the title of the novel suggests, after new “ситуації” [situations], but end trapped by tragic consequences because of their general lack of consideration for others. By the end of the novel Aglaia, Professor Chornaj, and Schwarz turn out to be pathetic and self-negating anti-heroes, which clearly suggests Kobylianska’s criticism of the new generation of the pro-modernist, but often pseudo-progressive Ukrainian intelligentsia.

*After Situations* is divided into three parts, each deconstructing the initially positive image of one of the three main characters. The first part focuses on Aglaia-Felicitas Fedorenko. The heroine’s name, literally the first words of the novel, immediately stand out, calling attention to its oxymoronic nature, which suggests a certain contradiction, and even paradox, in Aglaia’s character. Aglaia-Felicitas is a combination of two mythical names: Aglaia, associated in Greek

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84 For broader discussion on Kobylianska’s ideal intellectual hero, see chapter 2, 80-83.
mythology with the youngest of the Three Graces, also known as the goddess of beauty, splendor, glory, magnificence, and adornment; and Felicitas, associated in Roman mythology with the goddess of good luck and fortune. The name symbolically forecasts a successful and happy life for the heroine, as Professor Chornaj and Johannes Schwarz point out on several occasions throughout the novel. The optimistic symbolism of the name is, however, substantially undercut by the heroine’s peasant last name, Fedorenko. If one compares it to its regional variation, Fedorchuk, which Kobylianska uses for the main peasant characters in her somber peasant novel *The Earth* (1902), a degree of implied mediocrity, narrow-mindedness, and even fatalism would become apparent. Kobylianska builds up the paradoxical aura around the heroine further by juxtaposing Aglaia’s phenomenal talent for music with the poor quality of her “підлий” [cheap] instrument, primitive education, and chaotic upbringing. Kobylianska devotes the opening section of the novel to sketching out the perplexed dynamics in the Fedorenko family, projecting Aglaia’s mother as a self-centered materialist who “робил[а] для дітей якнайменше, щоб зать тим більше побільшили маєток” [did as little as possible for her children, concentrating instead on increasing the estate] (V 7), and her father as a self-absorbed loner who “так мало цікавився [дітьми], як горобцями на даху” [was interested in his children as little as in sparrows under his roof] (V 8). Considering Kobylianska’s views on early children’s education,⁸⁵ it is not hard to predict the life story of a naturally talented heroine, who grows up “в домі дикої хаотичності, противних полюсів, вічних

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⁸⁵ See chapter 1, 44-46.
суперечок, торг, хороб, акторства, нещастя… і т. ін.” [in a house of wild chaos, conflicting views, continuous quarrels, bargaining, illnesses, pretense, ignorance… and so on] (V 12). Such a scenario brings to mind some other life stories depicted in Kobylianska’s earlier works – those of the young Yakhnovyches in Niobe and the two Fedorchuk brothers in The Earth, all of whom were initially strong, smart, and inquisitive children, but being neglected by their parents grew up into wild, impulsive, and often easily manipulated people. Lacking any guidance as a child, Aglaia also turns into a confused, imbalanced, and self-negating character. Even in music, despite all her phenomenal talent and exceptional taste, she becomes neither a creator, nor a reformer, but only a performer of someone else’s music, that is, an executor of someone else’s will. The allegory of “playing to someone else’s tune” reveals Aglaia’s submissive character, juxtaposing rather than equating her with Kobylianska’s previous self-asserting heroines – Olena Laufler, Natalka Verkovychivna, Zonya Yakhnovych, and Manya Obrynska.

Kobylianska further conveys Aglaia’s narrow-mindedness through a story of her character’s temporary conversion to Russophilism, a popular at the turn of the nineteenth century movement in Western Ukraine that espoused pan-Slavic ideas and sought the protection of the Russian tsar.86 The heroine is first presented as an ethnic Ukrainian with some either Romanian or Armenian heritage. At first, she, however, seems to care little about national identity or any

86 For further reference on the Russophile movement in Western Ukraine, which is also known as Moscophilism, see O. Subtelny, The History of Ukraine, 317-322, 329, 334; R. Magocsi, The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism, 88; and A. Motyl, The Turn to the Right, 6-7.
other socio-political matters, and devotes all her time to music and fashion instead. This attitude gradually changes, when Aglaia falls in love with Andrij, a student of philosophy, who exposes her to a number of popular social discourses, including Russophilism. Without giving much thought to Andrij’s reasoning, the heroine eagerly adopts his position and becomes a passionate advocate of Russophilism. Later in the novel, when Professor Chornaj asks Aglaia to explain her ideological position, the heroine finds it difficult to articulate any meaningful line of reasoning and instinctively bursts into passionate generalizations to fend off Professor Chornaj’s implied criticism:

[I simply do not want to belong to that inert, uncultured, coarse mass, which recently started calling itself Ukrainian, which cries, begs, argues, curses using simple vulgar words, cannot raise its head, when needed, and cannot make any heroic sacrifices; in a word, a mass, which would most likely remain a petty bourgeois for good.] (V 23)

Although this utterance is vivid and powerful, it is not an argument, but only an opinion, which points to the irrational nature of Aglaia’s conviction and her identity crisis. Professor Chornaj challenges Aglaia’s views further with two simple questions – by what right she, an ethnic Ukrainian who speaks perfect Ukrainian, calls herself a Russian; and whether she ever visited Russia to speak so authoritatively about its so-called “здоровий елемент” [health element] and potential for progress. The young girl is so confused that she does not find any
better solution than to run away from Professor Chornaj and thus escape his pursuit. Aglaia’s inability to defend her ideological position suggests that her Russophilism is grounded not in critical reflections, but rather, as implied further in the novel, in her erotic memories of Andrij, who dies from tuberculosis shortly after their engagement. Consequently, when with time a new and much stronger feeling takes over Aglaia’s imagination, the heroine has no difficulties adjusting her views to those of her new passion, Professor Chornaj, morphing into an avid defender of Ukrainian language and culture. Remarkably, the heroine herself acknowledges the importance of the erotic element in her decision making, while narrating the evolution of her worldviews to Johannes Schwarz – “під впливом гарного вченого чоловіка вона станула нараз на той ґрунт, котрого колись (також під впливом міжчини) відчуралася [under the influence of a handsome and educated man she returned to the path that she once abandoned (under the influence of another man)]” (V 91) – which further exposes her uncritical and superfluous mode of thinking.

Kobylianska’s discussion of Russophile ideology is particularly interesting, if one considers that the writer’s father, Yulian Kobyliansky, was a traditionalist Russophile (Vozniuk 125-126), and that the writer, although she respected her father’s views, never shared his political outlook. In After Situations Kobylianska combines Russophilia with the image of Aglaia’s deceased fiancé, Andrij, turning it into an expression of his intellectual face. In a few brief scenes that address Russophilia as an ideology, Kobylianska avoids any direct commentary on its political platform, focusing instead on highlighting its socio-political significance in
the Western Ukrainian context of her time. She ascribes Russophile views to several characters, including Professor Chornaj, who advocated Russophile ideology in his student years and changed his views only after meticulous studies and numerous trips to Russia, and Johannes Schwarz, who was involved in a Russian cause but deviated from it after rediscovering his innate Ukrainianness. Although Professor Chornaj and Schwarz’s Russophile views are never nuanced in the novel, the reference to their evolution reflects an important socio-historical development: while highlighting the widespread popularity of the Russophilia among Western Ukrainian intellectuals at the turn of the century, it also registers its reassessment and gradual decline in the 1910s. Further in the novel, while exposing Aglaia’s Russophile views, Kobylianska continues to preserve their capacity to signify as an idea, aiming her criticism not so much at Aglaia’s views per se, but at their superficial, immature, and inconsistent nature. Mark Pavlyshyn suggests that the pathos of the heroine’s later discovered Ukrainophile discourse encourages the reader to identify with Aglaia-Felicitas “у її більш “українських” хвилинах і сприймати як симптом слабкості колоніально пригнобленої української культури її... захоплення мітом Росії” [in her “Ukrainian” moments and to read her fascination with the Russian myth as a symptom of the weakness of colonized Ukrainian culture] (239-240). The scholar, however, does not register that pathos is a recurrent rhetorical device, which Kobylianska consistently uses to individualize Aglaia’s speech, and to highlight her emotional, rather than cognitive reasoning. Consequently, Aglaia’s passionate delivery of her Ukrainophile declarations should be read not as a
marker of Kobylianska’s affirmation of the Ukrainophilism, but rather as an indicator of the superfluous nature of the heroine’s views, which she is likely to abandon as soon as she falls for a person with different socio-political convictions.

Similarly Kobylianska preserves her critical distance, while addressing Ukrainophilism, which she links to the character of Professor Chornaj, concealing her ideological commentary into the symbology of the hero and his actions. Professor Chornaj is first introduced as an exceptional character defined by three equally important factors, namely, social status, class, and nationality – “професор, великий пан, українець” [a professor, a great lord, and a Ukrainian] (V 32). As a professor, he is “чоловік науки і праці” [a man of scholarship and work] (V 39): he teaches art history at a prestigious Austrian university, undertakes research trips, and is respected among scholars. As a well-off aristocrat, the character enjoys a degree of financial freedom, which allows him to engage periodically in minor philanthropic projects, such as soliciting jobs for his students and sponsoring their education. As a Ukrainian, he is depicted as a sincere patriot committed to the proliferation of the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian culture. While reflecting on the tight inter-connectedness of these major aspects of Professor Chornaj’s personality, Aglaia grows to idealize him as an exemplary representative of the Ukrainian nation and an ideal role model, projecting his ideological views, that is Ukrainophilism, in favorable light. Aglaia’s initial impression, as well as the pathos of Professor Chornaj’s Ukrainophile rhetoric, should not, however, be read as Kobylianska glorification
of Ukrainophilism as an idea, for further in the novel the hero’s idealized character and, by extension, his ideology are undermined through a closer look at his personality.

Professor Chornaj’s heroic character and his Ukrainophile pathos are first challenged in a brief episode with one of his female students, most likely an ethnic Ukrainian, who mispronounces some German words, and as a result is mocked by the whole class. Surprisingly, instead of standing up for the helpless girl, Professor Chornaj reacts by stopping his lecture and leaving the auditorium. On one hand this gesture asserts discontent, yet on the other, it suggests fear of potential tension and complications that can jeopardize the character’s reputation, questioning the degree of his commitment to the Ukrainian cause. Further deconstruction of Professor Chornaj’s is propelled by his prodigal brother, Johannes Schwarz. In one of the first conversations with Aglaia, Schwarz contests the respectful social status of his brother by a general attack on academia:

Я знаю надто добре [каже Шварц], що п’ять восьми офіційних науковців є ошуканцями, дві восьми – дурнями, одна шіснадцята – циніками, а решта... з позатиканими горлями. Я погорджую ними..., бо знання без змоги вчинити щось є якоюсь неплідною дурницею. Ті вчені, вони знають пояснити чому ’у’ а не ’ї’, але зрозуміти що є звірина..., що таке людина, вони не розуміють. Вони бояться того, чого не мають і не знають – фантазії.

[I know too well, Schwarz says, that five eighths of all official scholars are liars, two eighths – fools, one sixteenth – cynics, and the rest have... plugged throats. I despise them..., for knowledge without the ability to act on it is a barren nonsense. Those scholars know why ‘u’ instead of ‘y’ but do not understand what is a beast,..]
and what is a human being. They fear fantasy – something they do not have and do not know.] (V 70)

This sardonic commentary is an exaggeration, yet it brings up a number of valid points as to the limited agency of Ukrainian scholars in Austrian academia, as well as in the broader imperial context. When Aglaia mentions Professor Chornaj, Schwarz ironically points out that, although his brother might have excelled academically, his voice, like the voices of many Ukrainian academics, is silenced, and thus has little effect on the Ukrainian socio-political dynamics. There is a clear connection here with Nestor Obrynsky’s criticism in Over the Bridge: whereas Nestor decries the loud orations of his academic colleagues, Schwarz highlights their silence, suggesting the very same ineffectiveness of the mainstream educated Ukrainian elite.

Further in the novel, during the first face-to-face confrontation with Professor Chornaj, Schwarz brings up similar points, accusing his brother of conservatism, cowardice, and lack of compassion. He backs up his argument with a story from a distant past when Professor Chornaj refused to help Schwarz, his younger brother, who was wrongfully accused of treason, fearing it might damage his good name, or as Kobylianska puts it, “полиш[ити]… чорну пляму” [leave a black stain] (V 124), on it. Schwarz wraps up his accusations with a prophetic speculation that sooner or later the same fear of public disdain would push Professor Chornaj to turn his back on Aglaia as well, for his conservatism can never recognize, accept, let alone support and defend, the eccentric nature of the young girl. Indeed, at the end of the novel, when Professor Chornaj finds
Aglaia trapped and compromised by Schwarz, he firmly dissociates himself from the girl, just as he did in the situations with his student and brother, protecting his good reputation. Such a dramatic de-glorification of Professor Chornaj’s character reveals Kobylianska’s indirect criticism of the Ukrainophile activists, who advocated pro-Ukrainian sentiments, yet remained apolitical and conformist to the imperial status quo. Remarkably, the writer neither asserts nor repudiates Ukrainophilism as an idea, but rather exposes its main traits, both positive and negative, in an artistic way fusing them with Professor Chornaj’s personality.

The third central character in After Situations, Johannes Schwarz, undergoes similar de-glorification. From the start he is presented as an advocate of Nietzscheanism, at the time a popular pro-modernist ideology in Eastern Europe, or, better, “a surrogate religion,” (Rosenthal Nietzsche in Russia 7) as one critic call it, which underpins a degree of ambivalence in his character. Nietzscheanism was roughly rooted in Nietzsche’s thought, particularly in what was perceived as the nihilistic aspects of his philosophy, and mandated a very specific set of values and attitudes. On one hand these values included individualism, heroism, courage, adventurousness, struggle, pride, sensuality, self-expression, self-affirmation, affirmation of life, defiance of death, iconoclasm, and contempt for the mob, for bourgeois society, for tradition, and for custom. On the other hand, however, the same values also encompassed selfishness, hedonism, immorality, promiscuity, ruthlessness, oppression of the weak, and
lust for power. The character of Johannes Schwarz artistically represents both sets of values. Initially Kobylianska focuses on his positive feature and introduces him as a Nietzschean hero – a man of many trades, sophisticated taste, polymath knowledge, strong will, and self-assertive character. Several brief stories about his rebellious youth and unjust expulsion from family, church, and native country, as well as his sincere and passionate longing for his lost Ukrainian identity incite Aglaia, and by extension the reader, to sympathize with Schwarz, and even admire his strong personality. Yet once Kobylianska digs more deeply into the young man’s personality, the first positive impression quickly dissolves, revealing his demonic nature.

An episodic story of Schwarz’ civil wife, who has no name and thus no personality of her own within the novel, is one of the most powerful exposures of his hedonism, ruthlessness, and worship of power for its own sake. As it turns out, Schwarz kidnapped and seduced the young girl. Once he quenched his lust, he started experimenting with hypnotizing her, putting up hypnotism shows, and making money from her public humiliation. When the girl finally dies from psychological traumas, Schwarz comments coldly that “для неї майже ліпше що вмерла” [it is for her own best that she died] (V 89). This story is a turning point in Kobylianska’s representation of Schwarz, after which the author focuses predominantly on Schwarz’ obsessive preoccupation with his skills to use and

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87 For further information on Nietzscheanism in Eastern Europe, particularly in Russian, see B. Rosenthal’s introductions to her Nietzsche in Russia, 3-48; and her New Myth, New World: From Nietzsche to Stalinism, 1-25.
88 In the third part of the novel, Kobylianska persistently employs the word “демон” [demon], while referring to Schwarz; After Situations, 105, 107, 109, 126, 130, 136, 138, 141, 143.
guide people through manipulation, deception, and, if necessary, force. Fascinated with Aglaia’s talent for music, Schwarz, for instance, devises a plan to seduce the girl, hoping to take her to California and put on many of her performances there. Although his plan falls apart, it instigates a major scandal, which culminates in a dramatic de-glorification of all three characters: Professor Chornaj turns out to be a conformist coward, Aglaia a pathetic fool, and Schwarz a self-centered tyrant. Considering that Kobylianska positions Schwarz as an artistic representation of Nietzscheanism by fusing the movement’s core values with the character’s mode of thinking and acting, it is not hard to deduce Kobylianska’s implied criticism of the popular pro-modernist pseudo-Nietzschean movement and its antisocial, and often openly militant, ideology.

The tragic ending of the novel, Aglaia’s death and Professor Chornaj’s despair, turns out to be even darker than that of Kobylianska’s first dystopian novel, *The Earth* (1902), targeted at the demystification the Ukrainian peasantry. Whereas in *The Earth* Kobylianska leaves her reader with a hope for regeneration of the Ukrainian village, *After Situations* ends with a pessimistic message, which could be read as Kobylianska’s prophetic diagnosis of the pre-World War I Ukrainian intelligentsia. This diagnosis is best articulated through the symbolic implication of Professor Chornaj’s eventual realization that all of them – he, Aglaia, and Schwarz – are equally responsible for the dramatic ruin of their lives, for “всі троє були напомацьки активні... і відокремлені в суммі між собою” [they all were active, but blind-folded... split, and divided]. While acknowledging some agency and the will of the characters – and by extension of
the new generation of the pro-modernist Ukrainian intelligentsia they represent – this statement exposes their lack of broader, community-oriented ideals and compassion for others as their main vice, which, as implied, is prone to disaster. Remarkably, however, although *After Situations* ends on the pessimistic note, it is not a decadent or nihilist text. On the contrary, in the context of Kobylianska’s generally optimistic, if not utopian, intellectual prose, *After Situations* functions as a powerful and though-provoking dystopian juxtaposition, calling on the educated Ukrainian public to distinguish between the self-centered patriotic pathos and a nation-oriented socio-political goal.

**Conclusion**

Close readings of Kobylianska’s major post-Yefremov works demonstrate that, although the writer makes significant formal and stylistic changes in her prose, she continues to propagate an elitist vision of national regeneration in the pre-WWI decade, challenging the dominant populist discourse. One of the most pronounced points of conflict between Kobylianska’s vision and the populist program of Ukraine’s national liberation is defined by the role the two bodies of thought ascribed to an intellectual leader. Whereas Ukrainian populists in typical Marxist fashion contained elites as an educated minority destined to serve the interests of the underprivileged masses, that is, as part of the ideological superstructure, Kobylianska placed the intellectual elite at the center of her thought, in which a class of highly educated and cultured leaders determined not only their own ideology but also the course of Ukrainian politics and society. As
early as in *The Princess* (1896), but even more in *Niobe* (1905), *Over the Bridge* (1912), and *After Situations* (1913), the Bukovynian writer adopted some aspects of the Nietzschean overman to her vision of an ideal intellectual leader, which was received with disdain by the populist camp but celebrated by the pro-Western Ukrainian modernists. Kobylianska’s model, however, was not an elite executive of power, which was popular among many members of the European radical modernist intelligentsia (Mosse *The Culture* 298-305), but an intellectual aesthetic elite. While emphasizing the significance of high culture and aesthetic education in the formation of any nation, Kobylianska also rejected the popular modernist motto of art for art’s sake, re-assigning a concrete program of national regeneration to her post-Yefremov and pre-WWI intellectual hero. Her adoption of the populist myth of national rebirth, or what Roger Griffin calls a palingenetic myth (4), opened some points of reconciliation with populists. At the same time, such a synthesis of proto-Nietzschean elitist thought with the populist ultranational agenda placed Kobylianska’s program of Ukraine’s national liberation in the fascist ideological framework, which became more influential than Marxism in post-WWI Europe.

If one were to apply Roger Griffin’s and George Mosse’s descriptions of generic fascism (Griffin 1-12; Mosse “Introduction” 14-26) to Kobylianska’s vision of Ukraine’s national liberation in the pre-WWI decade, it would become apparent that the socio-political program propagated by the Bukovynian writer had much in common with European proto-fascist intellectual thought of the *fin-de-siècle*. Besides the most obvious similarities – the call for national spiritual renewal and
the propagation of a strong charismatic intellectual leader – Kobylianska, like many proto-fascist thinkers, firmly rejected all forms of rationalism. Already in the early 1890s, Kobylianska saw the most distinctive human faculty not in the reason, as her populist compatriots did, but in the instinctual forces and in the capacity to be inspired to heroic action and self-sacrifice through the power of belief, myth, and symbol, such as the family, the nation, the leader, the regeneration of culture. Kobylianska’s anti-rationalism was closely connected to her anti-conservatism – another feature of generic fascism. Although the writer supported many traditional beliefs, particularly those related to the family, she never sought to turn the clock back and continually stressed the forward-looking movement. Her criticism of crowds and the old-fashioned provincial intelligentsia that clung tenaciously to conservative ideals was particularly harsh in the pre-Yefremov period. In the 1903-1913 decade, Kobylianska was forced to disguise her anti-rational and anti-conservative sentiments, which, however, could be discerned in her deconstructions of such characters as Anna Yakhnovych, Mrs. Oles, and Professor Chornaj.

Kobylianska’s firm repudiation of ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and any other type of heterophobia, was probably the major conceptual aspect that set her views apart from the popular proto-fascist ideologies of the time and that eventually complicated her relations with the Ukrainian ultra-nationalists in the 1920s. In the post-WWI fiction, which will be examined next, Kobylianska’s elitist views – as well as her use of the proto-religious language of spirit, belief, sacrifice, and redemption and her exposure of doubt, skepticism, materialism,
and hedonism, projected as the malaise of Ukraine’s contemporary society – become more nuanced and pronounced, which grounds her works even firmer in the inter-war fascist ideology.
Chapter 5: The Writer of Her Time, 1914-1943

The First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the social and political changes they instigated drove the *fin-de-siècle* generation of the European intellectuals, Olha Kobylianska as one of them, to a thorough revision of their pre-war beliefs and aspirations. The revision, in turn, inspired an outpouring of writings on ideology, culture, aesthetics, and the role of the intellectual in the reconstruction of Europe. As paradoxical as it may seem, the catastrophic events of 1914-1918 provided an experience, an object of reflection, and a mixture of powerful emotions, which became the catalysts for creating new perspectives for socio-political changes in the 1920s and 1930s. In the Ukrainian context, the revisionist tendency was particularly explosive. In the atmosphere of political chaos that followed Ukraine’s unsuccessful attempt to assert its national statehood in 1917-1920, many Ukrainian intellectuals came to conclude that socialism, democracy, and lack of political will were to blame for Ukraine’s political fiasco. In their place, the leading Ukrainian cultural and political activists began to emphasize faith, authority, solidarity, discipline, and strong political leadership as essential to the successful achievement of Ukraine’s national goal – an independent and united Ukrainian state – instigating what came to be known as a radical turn to the right in Ukrainian politics of the 1920s and 1930s.89

Olha Kobylianska was one of the few Ukrainian pre-WWI canonical prose writers who survived the war and took an active part in the post-WWI debates on

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89 A. Motyl offers an excellent discussion of this ideological shift in his seminal book *The Turn to the Right.*
Ukrainian culture and politics. Although Kobylianska did not share the initial enthusiasm and exhilaration of aspiring European writers and artists who felt that they were about to witness the dawn of the new age in August of 1914, she promptly responded with powerful fictionalized accounts of the nightmarish events of WWI, the brutality of which she experienced firsthand during the three Russian occupations of Bukovyna in 1914, 1915, and 1916-1917. As Kobylianska’s works of 1915-1917 and the so-called ‘second wave’ of the 1920s and 1930s demonstrate, she used her immediate experiences of war as the prelude to later, more sustained reflections on WWI and its aftermath. One of the most striking features of Kobylianska’s writings of this period, which will be examined in this chapter and embedded in the broader European context, is a complex synthesis of arguments and counter-arguments that defied the theories of pacifists and warmongers alike and made for an unexpected result – a fundamentally new image of a virile intellectual elite, a vision that was influenced by the destructive ideologies of the 1920-1930s.

To set up the discussion of Kobylianska’s new post-WWI conceptual synthesis that fuses together elements of right and left, conservative and revolutionary currents of interwar European intellectual thought, the chapter will open with close readings of Kobylianska’s several short stories written and published in 1914-1923, which capture the writer’s ideological transformation from a committed pacifist and pro-Austrian loyalist to an enthusiastic advocate of

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90 See, for instance T. Cross’s discussion in his introduction to An International Anthology of Writers, Poets, and Playwrights: The Lost Voices of World War I, 1-10.
belligerent measures to achieve Ukraine’s political unification and national independence. A close reading of *Apostle of the Mob* (Апостол черні, 1936) – Kobylianska’s last work, which continues to perplex critics by its pronounced emphasis on aggressive masculinity and militarism, unprecedented in the writer’s earlier works – will further examine the new developments in Kobylianska’s discussion of Ukraine’s ideal intellectual leader, elaborating on its unconcealed tribute to interwar fascist aesthetics. The chapter will also offer a brief discussion of the fervent competition for Kobylianska’s ideological support among diverse Ukrainian political camps in the 1920-1930s – a period when the 60-70 year old writer remained the only major living classic of the pre-WWI generation – to explain better how Kobylianska’s late works were shaped by and enlisted in the Ukrainian as well as the European politics of her time.

**WWI Short Fiction: A Reality Check**

One of the recent revisionist scholars of Kobylianska’s late works suggests that Kobylianska’s WWI short stories constitute one artistic and ideological whole and should be read as one coherent entity – “як роман у новелах” [as a novel in novellas] (Melnychuk 109) – unified by its pronounced anti-war theme. Indeed, the WWI stories stand out clearly as a unique thematic cycle with a powerful anti-war rhetoric in Kobylianska’s literary oeuvre. Yet such a conclusion seems to be insufficient in light of the three marked sequences within this body of Kobylianska’s works, each of which has its distinct thematic and ideological composition. There is significant evidence in Kobylianska’s first
WWI stories – specifically, “The Forest Mother” ("Лісова мати"), “The Miracle” ("Чудо"), and its sequence “Sincere Love” ("Щира Любов") – to suggest that in the first months of WWI the writer focus predominantly on the upheaval of pro-Austrian patriotism among Bukovynian Ukrainians, treating the war as mere historical background. The 1915-1917 stories – particularly, “To Meet Their Fate” ("Назустріч долі"), “Judas” ("Юда"), and “A Letter from a Convicted Soldier to His Wife” ("Лист засудженого вояка до своєї жінки") – on the contrary, offer direct commentaries on the brutalization of WWI and reveal a complex mixture of anguish, despair, and disorientation experienced by Bukovynian Ukrainians, particularly the peasant masses, during the war. The 1922-1931 stories – “He Lost His Mind” ("Зійшов з розуму"), “The She-Wolf” ("Вовчиха"), “Vasylka” ("Василка"), “Anguish” ("Тура"), and “A Chord of War” ("Воєнний акорд") – in turn, represent the so-called ‘second wave’ reflections on the war and its aftermath and are influenced by the political demands of the early 1920s. The following analysis will focus on the thematic, ideological, and stylistic particularities of each sequence to examine the evolution of Kobylianska’s WWI representations and to discuss the different claims to value that each of these sequences represents for today’s reader, thus problematizing the prevailing reading of Kobylianska’s WWI short stories as a unified and coherent anti-war cycle.91

91 The tradition of reading Kobylianska’s WWI works as a separate cycle with strong anti-war rhetoric was initiated by V. Lesyn in his 1958 article “Antyvoyenni tvory Olhy Kobylianskoi” published in his book Olha Kobylianska: Statti i materialy in Chernivtsi. Consequent Soviet critics, such as N. Tomashuk and F. Pohrybennyk, supported Lesyn’s idea in their
Although the fifty-year-old Kobylianska was seriously ill, financially ruined, spiritually devastated, and deeply depressed when the war broke out, her first WWI short stories – “The Forest Mother,” “The Miracle,” “Sincere Love” – were as intricate and pungent as ever. They offered a number of masterful psychological portraits of Bukovynian peasants and an original commentary on their reception of WWI, illuminating the unique perspective of an educated Ukrainian woman on the common European experience. In 1929, however, Soviet censorship harshly criticized their pro-Austrian rhetoric and banned from publication all three stories, together with several other works of the same period, including Kobylianska’s last novel Apostle of the Mob. As a result, “The Forest Mother,” “The Miracle,” and “Sincere Love” remain unknown to readers and almost completely overlooked by scholars. On those few occasions when the stories do come up in scholarly discussions, their pro-Austrian rhetoric is often read in terms similar to what one could expect from Soviet criticism – either as a mere opportunistic oratory or as a critique of the uneducated peasant.

Considering, however, much convincing contemporary scholarship on Ukrainian important contributions to Kobylianska studies, influencing, in turn, the major post-Soviet scholar of Kobylianska’s late works Y. Melnychuk.

92 Kobylianska’s letter to Khristyia Alchevska written on March 2, 1913, is one of the best known testimonies of her pre-WWI psychological depression, which the writer projects as the main reason of her literary silence. For further biographical discussion of Kobylianska’s life during 1913-1918, see V. Vozniuk, Bukovyn’ski adresy Olhy Kobylianskoi, 147-153.

93 Y. Melnychuk, for instance, reads apologetically Kobylianska’s 1914-1915 pro-Austrian rhetoric as a strategic discourse, as “менше з двох ліх в умах російської інвазії” [a lesser of the two evils under the Russian invasion]. See Y. Melnychuk, Olha Kobylianska v ostatnii period tvorchosti, vid 1914 roku, 6 and 121.

94 M. Pavlyshyn only cursorily mentions the pro-Austrian aspiration of Kobylianska’s peasant heroine in The Forest Mother, interpreting it as an amusing example of the so-called “народна герменевтика” [folkloric hermeneutics] that Bukovynian peasant used to “надавати значення своїм воєнним терпінням” [give meaning to their traumatic experiences of the war], Olha Kobylianska: Prochytannia, 247.
loyalty to the Hapsburg Empire, Kobylianska’s first WWI stories and their pro-
Austrian attitudes seem to be more complex than Soviet, non-Soviet, and post-
Soviet critics acknowledge.95

Today, it is a well-known fact that the Ukrainians of Galicia and Bukovyna were among the most consistent and ardent of Austria’s many nationalities in their loyalty to Austria over the entire period of their association with the Habsburg Empire – from its beginning in 1772 until and even after the empire’s dissolution in 1918. As many contemporary scholars point out, Ukrainian ultra-
loyalty reflected a real appreciation for the concrete religious, cultural, socio-
economic, and political gains achieved by the group under the Austrian rule.96 In 1774, for instance, Emperor Joseph II granted the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church legal equality with the Roman Catholic Church, which instigated positive changes in Ukrainian education, cultural, and eventually political life.97 In 1948, the Austrian government abolished personal serfdom and liberated Ukrainian peasants, which substantially boosted their economic situation. In 1861, Emperor Franz Joseph established a new Austrian parliament and presented Ukrainian secular leaders with an opportunity to integrate into the Austrian intellectual and political elite, which notably accelerated the formation of Ukrainian political thought and the growth of Ukrainian civil society. These reforms together with the

95 See, for instance, R. Magocsi’s well-documented account of Ukrainian loyalty to Austria in his important book *The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism*, 73-82. For further references, see also O. Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, 307-335; and J-P. Himka’s introduction to his *Religion and Nationality in Western Ukraine, 1867-1900*, 3-12.
96 Ibid.
97 See J-P. Himka’s *The Greek Catholic Church and Ukrainian Society in Austrian Galicia* and his *Religion and Nationality in Western Ukraine.*
socio-political and cultural changes they promoted in Western Ukrainian society inspired a significant percentage of Western Ukrainian intelligentsia and even a larger portion of the peasant masses to recognize Austria as “their legitimate homeland” and to regard their Habsburg rulers as “benevolent father figures” (Magocsi 73, 77).

Expressions of Ukrainian gratitude and loyalty were not limited to rhetoric. Throughout the nineteenth century, Galician and Bukovynian Ukrainians consistently proved their readiness to fight for the emperor and his government. The best-known acts of Ukrainian pro-Austrian loyalty were performed during the 1848-1849 revolution and the 1914-1918 World War. The latter example is particularly indicative of Ukrainian devotion to Habsburg rule, for Ukrainian officers and soldiers alike fought bravely in various divisions of imperial army with no noticeable record of desertion and often remained loyal to the Habsburg dynasty even after the dissolution of the empire in 1918, hoping beyond hope that the Habsburg Empire would experience a reincarnation.98

With this socio-cultural and historical context in mind, it becomes apparent that Kobylianska’s pro-Austrian themes in “The Forest Mother” and “Sincere Love” merit a revision. The intricate symbolic connotations and stylistic composition of the two stories also suggest that Kobylianska’s attitude to her Habsburgtreu (loyal to the Hapsburgs), or more precisely Kaisertreu (loyal to the emperor) peasant characters is not as straight-forward and reveals more sympathy and fascination than criticism and derision, as it was previously

argued. In “The Forest Mother,” for example, Kobylianska uses several stylistic devices to assert that, although her peasant heroine, an old Hutsul Dokia, might be uneducated and detached from the current political situation in Europe, she possesses exceptional insight and a sense of belonging, which help her relate her own existence to the broader socio-political context at such important historical junctions as the 1898 assassination of the last Hapsburg empress, Elisabeth of Austria, and the 1914 outbreak of WWI. Throughout the story, Kobylianska intercuts realistic depictions of Dokia’s primitive daily life with her intricate internal dialogues and flash-back memories, which present a complex picture of the heroine’s thought-work and emotional life, continually disrupting, and thus subverting, the overall doom-and-gloom tone of the story. Several powerful allegories that Dokia constructs while pondering on her own place in the world complicate further her devotion to the Hapsburg crown, framing it in the so-called socio-organic understanding of a nation as an extended family formed of heterogeneous elements.

Dokia’s socio-organic conception of a nation brings to mind some important studies on group psychology of the time, Le Bon’s work in particular, hinting at what might anachronistically be compared to Freud’s libidian explanation of group psychology. In the 1922 study, Freud positions libido, that is, a totality of “instincts which have to do with all that may be comprised under the word of love,” as the key psychological and emotional bond that keep a group together (Group Psychology 29). Freud places sexual love at the nucleus of his concept of love, but he does not exclude all other manifestations of love – on the
one hand, self-love, and, on the other, love for family, children, friends, humanity in general, as well as devotion to concrete object and abstract ideas – from his discussion. Freud pays particular attention to the importance of the leader, the ideal father-figure, in the psychology of the group. According to Freud, individual members of any socially constructed group are bound to one another by their libidinal ties and self-identification with the group’s leader. In this light, Dokia’s intense and sincere devotion to the Habsburg empress is a clear statement on the old women’s world view and socio-political loyalties. It is also a sly artistic device, which Kobylianska uses to make a political statement in her first creative response to WWI.

Kobylianska opens her story with a somewhat mystical paragraph, setting the main narrative in the far-away wonderland of Bukovyna, populated with “божки” [spirits], “русалки” [mermaids], and enchanted children of the Carpathian Mountains, whose mind is often perplexed by the witchcraft of “чародійне зілля” [magic herbs] (Ale Hospod’ 54). The introduction instantly transposes the reader into the very magic world Kobylianska often evokes in her earlier “rustic” works, which conflate sincere admiration of the Hutsuls’ authentic spirit with the sharp anti-populist criticism of their primitive mentality and superstitious beliefs. These intertextual references could be well interpreted as Kobylianska’s critical commentary on Dokia’s primitive mentality, yet the heroine’s powerful flashbacks to her enlightening experience with a visiting village teacher leaves no

99 See Freud’s discussion in his Group Psychology, 46-68.
100 “Nature,” “Uncultured,” and The Earth are the best examples. See chapter 3.
room for such reading. Immediately after the introduction, the reader meets Dokia who, while gathering wood and contemplating the natural beauty and grandeur of the pristine forest, points out that “бу́в час коли вона всього цього не замічала [i] не розуміла” [there was a time when she [Dokia] did not notice [and] did not understand any of it] (Ale Hospod’ 56), hinting at a critical cognitive transformation that she underwent in the past. Dokia credits a young teacher for educating her on how to see, listen, understand, and relate to the surrounding world, and for encouraging her to think critically and reflect on philosophical questions such as “звідки приходить туга і куди вона іде” [where does longing come from and where does it go] (Ale Hospod’ 56). Later in the story, it also becomes apparent that the teacher’s allegorical parallels between the human condition and the life of the forest formed the foundation of Dokia’s socio-organic conception of the world, which sheds light on the psychological mechanisms of her Habsburgtreu aspiration, presenting it as a well-substantiated and long-term affection.

The most powerful representations of the heroine’s pro-Austrian loyalty come up in the two final scenes of the story, which feature Dokia’s emotional response to the 1898 assassination of Elisabeth of Austria and the 1914 outbreak of WWI respectively. In both cases, Kobylianska’s uses dialogue to capture Dokia’s internal world in its rawest form. The first dialogue takes place between the old Hutsul woman and the local priest, whom she offers all of her savings – five kronen, which at the time was equal to one US dollar – and asks to
hold a service for the repose of the empress’s soul. In this scenario, the priest is only a facilitator of Dokia’s confession:

Oće, pan-oćiku, ja dövo sklapala, dövo šadiša, až poki z togo zložila pëtë levëvi. Ne gñívatešëja, vozjëmëtë, oćiku, vozjëmëtë... Ne pogrëdëtë cimë, vojë z jërogo šërcëja danë. Ùa prižbiraša če na mëjo smërë, xovaša to v mojëj komori. Navište moja ditina pro če ne znala. Moja odnësënka ditina – bëriš če... [Ĉë] dla nejë, cësarewojë, na szhjebu za nejë, za našu mamu! Oj, pan-oćiku!.. Ùona bula mamu našego cëlëgo kraju, i taku mamu vbiti!.. Chi Xristoš ne zïjëde z nëba i ne pëmstisëja za nejë? Vë ñe zrobët.

[Here it is, father. I have been saving and putting away money for a long time; and now I have five kronen. Don’t be angry, take it, father, take it. Don’t despise it, I give it with love. I saved it for my funeral and stored it secretly in my pantry. Even my own child did not know about it. My only child... Take it... This is for her, for the empress, to hold a service for her, for our mother! Oh, father!.. She was the mother of the whole land and such a mother is killed!.. Won’t Jesus come down from heaven and avenge for her? He will do it.] (Ale Hospod’ 61)

The fragmented and somewhat chaotic nature of the speech not only dramatizes the heroine’s distress, but also provides insight into her thought-process, illuminating her deep psychological connection to the assassinated empress, whom she views as an ideal mother, an abstraction for fatherland, peace, and prosperity, and whose loss she symbolically links to her own death. By underlining that she is not the only person who sees the empress as a mother figure, the heroine links her sorrow to the deep mourning experienced by the entire Austro-Hungarian nation, asserting her membership in a broader community. The fact that the priest admires Dokia’s sincere offering, endorses her call for just vengeance, and even relates to her emotional state, further guides the reader to see Dokia not as a “bëdna” [poor], “nëznëchna” [insignificant],
and “схова́на гли́боко в лі́сі” [lost in deep woods] (Ale Hospod’ 61) indoctrinated peasant, but as a compassionate, devoted, and conscious citizen, inspiring empathy rather than reproach.

Dokia’s sense of devotion and duty to the Habsburg crown is further complicated in the closing scene, which brings to mind the canonical story of the Binding of Isaac, reinforcing the over-all tone of fascination with the genuine patriotism of the old Hutsul woman. The sharp cut from the 1898 episode with the priest to the 1914 scene with Dokia’s son Yuri, where the heroine sees her son off as he joins the imperial army, brings the two fragments together, symbolically connecting the assassination of a Habsburg with the outbreak of WWI and presenting Dokia’s son as another sincere and conscious sacrifice the heroine makes to the emperor. Dokia’s last conversation with her son is terse yet emotionally charged. As a number of authorial commentaries suggest, both characters understand the grim prospects of Yuri’s military service, realizing that the on-going conversation might be their last moment together. Yet both demonstrate exemplary composure and self-control, accepting their civic duty with dignity. Dokia’s successful resolution of the painful struggle with her maternal love and her sense of loyalty and civic obligation to the Habsburgs becomes particularly evident when one compares the final scene of “The Forest Mother” to a similar episode in Kobylianska’s 1923 short story “The She-Wolf.” Whereas Zoya Zhmut, the greedy and self-absorbed anti-heroine of the latter story, convulses in lamentations and begs her sons not to go, objecting to their duty to the emperor, Dokia methodically packs her son’s military sack and sees
him off with only a few words of encouragement. Her modest request – “Пиши!” [Write to me!] – highlights her eagerness to stay informed on and connected to the current political situation (Ale Hospod’ 62). The actions of the two heroines after their sons leave the house are even more telling. Whereas Zoya Zhmut, stricken by grief, loses the sense of reality and collapses unconsciously to the ground, Dokia kneels in prayer and addresses the Virgin Mary and the deceased empress, asking the two holy mothers of her people to look after her mobilized son. Symbolically, Zoya’s collapse only further dramatizes her sorrow and inability to control the lives of her sons, while Dokia’s prayer frames the scene of Yurko’s departure as a divine sacrificial ritual, as the last trial of Dokia’s civic loyalty akin to a test of Abraham’s faith in God, celebrating the heroine’s firm patriotism and sincere devotion to the Habsburgs. The motif of the divine test, however, allows Kobylianska not only to particularize, but also to universalize Dokia’s initial response to the outbreak of the war. It clearly relates Dokia’s feelings to the general wholehearted aspirations of the great majority of Habsburg subjects, who, despite the radical ethnic, religious, and class differences that separated them internally before August 1914, united as one nation at the outbreak of the war, believing at the time that giving their lives to their emperor and their country was a right and honorable thing to do.

Kobylianska marks similar veneration and civic commitment in her other work of the same period, explicitly called “Sincere Love.” The short story aims mainly to denounce tsarist imperialist politics during the first Russian invasion in Bukovyna, yet achieves its goal not by describing Russian military brutalities, but
by juxtaposing the emotional attitudes Russian and Austrian soldiers demonstrate toward their respective monarchs. While the Russian soldiers of Kobylianska’s creation express nothing but fearful obedience to their despotic tsar “що жив[e] десь далеко легендою, за муром сторожі, військ... в недоступних кімнатах, повних багатств, сумних подій і кривавих вироків, ніби непрозорою мрякою сповитий” [who is no more but a legend and lives far away behind the walls of guards and armies... in the isolated rooms filled with treasure, sorrow, and blood-stained decrees... and who seems to be cradled in opaque mist] (*Ale Hospod’* 62), her Austrian soldiers admire their emperor with unmatched sincerity. The most powerful scene in the story takes place when the narrator and his interlocutor, a wounded Russian officer, unintentionally witness an Austrian soldier, an ethnic Ukrainian, praying passionately to the portrait of Franz Joseph. Following Kobylianska’s critical commentary on the Russian tsar and his imperialist campaign in Bukovyna, the naïve yet sincere appeal of the Austrian soldier to his emperor – “Ти нас виховав, ми з тобою зросли, нам чужих царів не треба. Поратуй тебе і нас, Господи!” [You raised us; we grew up with you; we do not need any foreign tsars. God save you and us!] (*Ale Hospod’* 62) – accentuates a real appreciation for the economic, political, and cultural achievements Ukrainians attained under Habsburg rule. In the broader context of Kobylianska’s WWI stories, the scene emerges as one of the strongest depiction of the prevailing attitudes shared by the majority of Bukovynian and Galician Ukrainians, who in the first year of WWI considered Austria to be their
legitimate homeland and strove to resolve their national problems within the context of the Habsburg Empire.

Many Soviet, non-Soviet, and post-Soviet scholars alike read Kobylianska’s pro-Austrian rhetoric in “The Forest Mother” and “Sincere Love” as problematic and incompatible with the Ukrainian national project of the day. As a result, a number of apologetic narratives, each tailored to a specific ideological framework, from socialist and ultra-nationalist propaganda to neo-patriotic revisions, have been developed over the past century to justify Kobylianska’s Austrophilism and thus protect her legacy from potential accusations of weak national consciousness.101 However, contemporary scholarship on pre-WWI Ukrainian nationalism and the complex system of multiple loyalties that the Ukrainian subjects of the Habsburg Empire developed over the nineteenth century problematize such theories, suggesting an alternate prospective on Kobylianska’s pro-Austrian attitudes. In the socio-historical setting where one could be simultaneously a Ukrainian patriot and a loyal Habsburg subject, one can read the pronounced Austrophilism of Kobylianska’s early WWI stories as an expression of her loyalty not only to Austria, but also to the Ukrainophile national project that set out to create a unified Ukrainian entity under the benevolent rule of the Habsburgs.102

101 See footnotes 93 and 94.
102 For further references on the pre-WWI national project designed by Galician Ukrainophile activists, see, for instance, R. Magocsi, The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism, 81-82; A. Motyl, The Turn to the Right, 6-7; O. Subtelny, Ukraine: A History, 307-335; and A. Wilson, Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s, 26-38.
As Kobylianska’s consequent WWI stories demonstrate, she maintained pro-Austrian attitudes throughout the early 1920s, yet began questioning the value of multiple loyalties and hybrid identities once the horrors of the war revealed their inherent contradictions. In several stories written in the late 1915—“To Meet Their Fate,” “Judas,” and “A Letter from a Convicted Soldier to His Wife”—Kobylianska brings her Bukovynian characters into contact with German-speaking Austrian authorities or ethnically Ukrainian soldiers of the invading Russian army to reflect on the Ukrainian national project and its possible routes under either Austrian or Russian rule. By illuminating the confusion and consequent incapacity of her Bukovynian characters to understand, let alone to influence, the unfolding events that drastically change their lives, Kobylianska reveals her disillusionment in the success of Ukraine’s national project under any imperial rule, bringing to light her first reflections on Ukraine’s political independence.

“To Meet Their Fate” is the first text of the 1915-1917 cycle. It consists of seven brief episodes, which compose a vivid on-the-spot report of the Russian advance and consequent capture of Chernivtsi. Kobylianska dramatizes her account by depicting the main battle through the perspective of a small peasant girl Nastka, the main character in the story, and by continually contrasting the innocence of childhood with the brutalities of war. Kobylianska uses formal aspects of language extensively to accentuate this juxtaposition. While using rich folkloric elements along with diminutive forms, colloquial expressions, and age-related vocabulary to individualize Nastka’s speech, Kobylianska draws on a
neutral, concise, matter-of-fact journalistic style to report the unfolding historical background events and employs powerful imagery of slaughter to depict combat. In the opening section of the story, for instance, Kobylianska offers a vivid pastoral description of a peaceful peasant estate where little Nastka plays and dreams about future love, marriage, and children, as implied by a folk song she hums while rocking her doll. The second episode, however, brutally disrupts the ideal setting of Nastka’s play and childish dreams with heavy machinegun and artillery fire, which “брийк[ae] кров’ю” [splashes blood], “розкид[ae] кусками людське м’ясо” [scatters chunks of human flesh], and “виклик[ae] пекло, [brings hell] (4 383) into Bukovyna’s pastoral paradise. Throughout the remainder of the story, Kobylianska continually intertwines Nastka’s immediate reactions to the war – usually brief exclamations of distress and inability to comprehend the ongoing battle – with impersonal reports on the horrific bloodshed during the Russian army’s crossing of the Prut River, the most infamous example of which is the heartless execution of the surrendering Ukrainian Cossacks by their Russian superiors. In the most dramatic episode, Kobylianska places little Nastka in the midst of the battle and records her firsthand impressions of the combat, constructing unforgettable images of mass and senseless destruction, which reveal the terrifying, dehumanizing, and demeaning nature of war.

The intrinsic value of “To Meet Their Fate” lies, however, not only in its immediacy and the fact that it has the authoritativeness of the eyewitness, but also in its reflections on events of national importance. The story introduces Kobylianska’s complex discussion of what is often described as “особлива
абсурдність” [the particular absurdity] (Pavlyshyn 245) of the Ukrainian position in WWI, during which Ukrainians were mobilized to two different imperial armies and were often forced to kill each other defending the geopolitical interests of either Austria or Russia, but not Ukraine and its people. Although Kobylianska does not make any direct statements at this point, a distinct dramatic irony permeates the sardonic nickname Nastka gives to the Russian soldier of Ukrainian decent who carries her out from the battle. The little girl instantly classifies him as “ворог” [a foe] because of his Russian military uniform, and does not stop calling him so even after her parents welcome her savior into their house as a fellow Ukrainian. The irony is further intensified in the closing episode where the grown-up characters, the Russian soldier and Nastka’s father, ponder the tragic circumstances of their encounter and the grim paradox of their situation: despite their personal affinity, common language, and shared culture, Nastka’s father and the Russian soldier remain enemies. Past critics have extensively commented on the implicit criticism of the “братовбивчий” [fratricidal] character WWI had for the Ukrainian combatants, yet have not discussed an important observation Kobylianska conveys in the final confession of the two men.103 Despite the overall grim tone, the writer clearly accentuates here one positive outcome of WWI, highlighting that, although the war blew to smithereens the worlds into which the Russian soldier and Nastka’s father were born, it brought the Ukrainian population of the two rival empires together, accelerating,

103 See, for instance, N. Tomashuk, Olha Kobylianska: Zhyttia i tvorchist’, 187; Y. Melnychuk, Olha Kobylianska v ostatnii period tvorchosti, vid 1914 roku, 120; and M. Pavlyshyn, Olha Kobylianska: Prochytannia, 245.
as Kobylianska hopes in August of 1915, their reflections on loyalty, national identity, ethnic solidarity, and the overall role of the Ukrainian people in WWI. As with many previous works, Kobylianska transposes her ideological commentary on the symbolic level of her story. Little Nastka, for instance, could be read, on the one hand, as an allegory for Ukraine’s innocence and helplessness in WWI, and, on the other hand, could also be seen as an embodiment of the future Ukraine, which is yet to emerge in the aftermath of WWI. In this light, the conversation of the two gown-up men, Nastka’s father and the Eastern Ukrainian soldier, on the little girl’s future, particularly the intent of the latter to marry Nastka when she grows up, could be interpreted as Kobylianska’s hope, if not advocacy, of the future reunification of Ukraine.

Remarkably, however, “To Meet Their Fate” is the only case in Kobylianska’s oeuvre where the writer depicts an encounter between a Western Ukrainian and a Russian Ukrainian in a positive light. All her consequent accounts of the similar scenarios bristle with sharp indignation at the harsh treatment Russian forces, Ukrainian Cossacks in particular, inflicted on Bukovynian civilians during the Russian military control over the region, but, even more so, during the Austrian counteroffensive, which began in May of 1915. As Kobylianska’s biographers suggest, such radical change in the writer’s attitude has a historical explanation. During the first months of the Russian occupation of Chernivtsi, Kobylianska was pleasantly surprised and even more so flattered by the numerous visits of Eastern Ukrainians who came to Bukovyna with the Russian military. “Як Магомедани до Мекки” [as Muslims to Mecca], recalls one
of Kobylianska’s friends, “тягнулися наддніпрянці до буковинської письменниці з поклоном і пошаною” [flowed the Upper-Dnieper Ukrainians to pay their respect to the Bukovynian writer] (Kurdoba 235-236) in those days. Naturally, such recognition gave the writer hopes for friendly conduct, if not instant ethnic solidarity, between the local Ukrainians and the Russian Ukrainians of the tsarist army. Yet the newly-established Russian civilian administration promptly unleashed severe persecution against Ukrainian cultural, educational, and religious institutions in the region, which could not but undermine Kobylianska’s initial enthusiasm. 104

The short story “Judas” (“Юда,” 1915), written only three months after “To Meet Their Fate,” captures Kobylianska’s frustration with the Russian military and her firm decision to rekindle pro-Austrian patriotism among her countrymen. As the story’s title implies, “Judas” deals with issues of loyalty, betrayal, and consequent remorse. Like “To Meet Their Fate,” the story depicts an encounter between an old Bukovynian peasant and some Russian soldiers of Ukrainian decent, a squadron of Cossacks to be precise, which, contrary to the positive outcome in the first story, turns out fatal for the old man and his family. The Cossacks brutally beat up the old man to extract intelligence that eventually helps them to exterminate a small unit of Austrian scouts. When the old man learns that his only son is among the killed Austrians and realizes the tragic consequences of his betrayal, he, like the implied Judas Iscariot, is unable to deal with his guilt and hangs himself out of remorse, calling on his countrymen

beforehand to “[ходить] від хати до хати та розка[зува]ти про [нього], про юду, [щоб люди] стерегліся стати такими, як [він]” [go from house to house and tell people about him, the Judas, to warn them against becoming like him] (4 403). The psychological force of the story as well as its didactic nature was immediately appreciated – in 1917 alone the story was published three times.

Whereas “Toward the Fate” and “Judas” expose the inherent contradictions of multiple loyalties by reflecting on situations where uneducated Bukovynian peasants interact with Ukrainian-speaking soldiers of the Russian imperial army, Kobylianska’s story “A Letter from a Convicted Soldier to His Wife” addresses the issue by situating a loyal Bukovynian soldier Vasyl in the German-speaking environment. The story is stylized as a five-page letter that Vasyl writes to his wife after his German-speaking superiors wrongfully accuse him of treason. As one critic rightfully observes, Vasyl’s letter with its elements of confession and testament “не має собі рівного в українській літературі за силою зображення людських почуттів” [is unmatched in Ukrainian literature in its powerful depictions of human emotions] (Tomashuk Zhyttia 183). As in many previous works, however, Kobylianska does not focus solely on the internal turmoil of her character, but uses it as a vehicle to dramatize her observations on war and what it meant to those who experienced it most directly, be it in the trenches, in the military headquarters, or on the home front.

Vasyl, for instance, while explaining his death sentence, comments at length on his experience on the Italian Front, presenting it as a strange combination of tedium and horror that consumed, degraded, and brutalized men:
In this passage, Kobylianska uses simple syntax, parallel constructions, and continuous repetition of negation to intensify Vasyl’s morbid remarks on the traumatic and de-humanizing experience of war, which, as the character points out, transformed them into insensible automatons – mere extensions of the war machines. In this fragment, Kobylianska enters a broader discussion of the terrifying and demeaning war experiences that permeates the war literature of her time and stands in sharp and ironic contrast to the heroic images of war that had circulated before 1914. Marinetti’s glorification of war as “the world’s only hygiene”105 and his call to fuse a man with a machine,106 which Kobylianska

105 In 1909, in “The Founding Manifesto of Futurism,” Marinetti names destruction, militarism, and war as the highest Futurist ideals, calling his followers to exalt violence, cruelty and injustice. See T. Marinetti, Critical Writings, 11-17.

106 In the 1917 “Manifesto of the Futurist Dance,” Marinetti calls dancers to “imitate the movements of the machine with gesture, pay assiduous court to steering wheels, ordinary wheels, pistons, thereby preparing the fusion of a man with a machine, to achieve the metallicity of the Futurist dance.” See T. Marinetti, Critical Writings, 210.
certainly knew, seem particularly absurd in this context. As the presented passage sardonically suggests, the war did merge men with steel and machines, but instead of over-masculine and powerful bodies, it produced pitiful “cogs in a great machine which,” according to another prominent WWI commentator, “sometimes rolled forward, nobody knew where, sometimes rolled backward, nobody knew why” (Toller 82) The underlying drama of Vasyl’s combat experience is further intensified in his recollections of family and loved ones, of household and wheat fields, of work and religious holidays, which accentuate the dehumanizing insanity war. By juxtaposing the two distinct periods in Vasyl’s life, Kobylianska constructs a powerful universalist anti-war statement, linking her personal observation to the general attitude of her contemporaries, most of whom also grew, like Vasyl, to divide their lives into a pre-war phase of innocence and laughter and a post-war period of hopelessness and loss.

Vasyl’s memories of peaceful life, together with his last instructions for his wife also draw attention to the intense struggle on the home front, which, as the character foresees, would force women to assume new social roles after the war. In fact, as the opening account of Vasyl’s nightmare about his wife’s multiple suicide attempts suggests, he is concerned more with the future of his wife and children, and, by extension, with the future of his people, than with his fast-approaching death. Throughout the whole letter, Vasyl methodically reiterates his

107 As O. Ilnytzkyj points out in his seminal work on Ukrainian Futurism, Mykhailo Symenko, the leading figure in Ukrainian Futurism, provoked a grand scandal with his 1914 founding manifesto, which was widely discussed in a number of leading Ukrainian periodicals, which Kobylianska closely followed before the outbreak of WWI. Moreover, Mykyta Sribliansky, one of Kobylianska’s editors and close friends, was one of the fervent discussants of Semenko’s futurist revolt against the Ukrainian aesthetic canon. See O. Ilnytzkyj, Ukrainian Futurism, 1914-1930, 27-33.
appeal to his wife “не згуби[ти] розуму” [not to lose her mind], when she hears about his death, “[як це] діється… на війні з де-якими вояками і офіцерами, коли видять забагато крові, відірвані голови, руки і ноги [as many soldiers and officers do when they see too much blood and too many severed heads and limbs in battles] (4 371). As he explains, a woman’s task is even more important than that of the combatants, for women have to raise children, restore life, and, most importantly, preserve the memory of one of the most disastrous catastrophes in modern history after the war ends. One cannot but notice here a direct reference to Kobylianska’s earlier views on the important role women play in securing the biological and cultural regeneration of a nation, whose significance becomes particularly evident during the war.

The implied concern for the homeland and its future is even more tangible in Vasyl’s woeful comments on the ineffectiveness of his mother tongue, the Ukrainian language, in the Austrian court-marshal. Soviet, non-Soviet, and post-Soviet critics consistently read Vasyl’s revelation as Kobylianska’s criticism of the Austrian authorities and their unjust prosecution of thousands of Ukrainian peasants and low-ranking soldiers whom during WWI they often considered to be Russian spies. Important textual and intertextual details suggest, however, that such a reading might be too narrow. Several of Kobylianska’s WWI stories – “Judas” of 1915 and “Anguish” of 1932, to name a few – demonstrate, for instance, that there were some cases where Galician and Bukovynian Ukrainians

108 Similar appeals are also repeated in the closing episode of the story, 427.
deserved to be punished but were pardoned once they explained their motives and expressed sincere regret for their misconduct. These stories clearly suggest that the Austrian government strove to remain, and often succeeded in remaining, as fair and humane as it was before the war, when its judicial system was considered to be among the most just in the world. Kobylianska promotes similar themes in her other 1931 story “A Chord of War” (“Воєнний акорд”), where a former captain and a court-martial judge of the Austrian imperial army confesses his remorse over the first death sentences he endorsed during the war only because he had neither time nor means to continue the investigation. This broader context of Kobylianska’s WWI stories that positions Vasyl not as a victim of the Austrian court-martial, which is forced to be “невмолимим, скорим як вогневий кріс” [inexorable and quick like a machine gun] (4 374) during the war, but as a victim of the same chaos and socio-political disintegration, which eventual undermined the Austrian government and brought the Habsburg empire down.

Another important detail that past critics continually disregard is the fact that Vasyl’s unjust prosecution leads to some positive outcomes, provoking him to reflect on his particular role in the on-going conflict as well as on the overall contribution of the Ukrainian people to Austrian society. As suggested in Vasyl's reflections, the war not only breaks but also transforms him, re-forging his understanding of ethnic and national identity, and redefining his views on loyalty and motherland, which resonate with some major themes in the on-going political demands of those Western Ukrainians who grew less conciliatory toward
Austrian rule by the end of the war and began to argue that the Ukrainian national project was incongruent with Austria’s imperial interests.\textsuperscript{110} Several years later, in the 1917 short story “A Dream…” (“Сньться…”), but even more so in the 1923 short story “He Lost His Mind” (“Зійшов з розуму”), Kobylianska develops the theme of self-recognition further, demonstrating that, although the process itself might be painful, it promotes the rediscovery of the virtues necessary for the invigoration of Ukrainian national life and gives hope of putting them into practice anew. In the short allegorical story “A Dream…,” Kobylianska comments on the profound transformation that Western Ukrainian society undergoes during the war, and on how Western Ukrainians, both combatants and civilians, began to consider their position in the post-war world. Although in “A Dream…” neither Ukrainian combatants nor civilians are clear about their future, both groups firmly express hopes for the independence of their homeland, as implied in the ultimate goal that the old men set for their offspring – “слід по собі на землі своїй оставити” [to leave their trace on their own land] (4411). The closing episode of Kobylianska’s 1923 short story “He Lost His Mind,” where a dying Ukrainian officer prophesies Ukraine’s political resurrection, captures a similar idea, highlighting once again that WWI, despite all its destruction, helped crystalize previously incoherent national aspirations into a distinct question of Ukraine’s political independence. As will be demonstrated in the following discussion of Kobylianska’s last novel \textit{Apostle of the Mob} of 1936, question of

\textsuperscript{110} Ievhen Petrushevych (1863 - 1940) was one of the first Western Ukrainian political leaders who insisted on Ukraine’s autonomy and demanded Galicia’s separation from the Austrian empire even before the official dissolution of the empire. See more in A. Motyl’s \textit{Turn to the Right}, 26.
Ukraine’s political independence would preoccupy Kobylianska for the rest of her life.

**Apostle of the Mob: Between the Right and the Left**

*Apostle of the Mob* is Kobylianska’s longest work of the post-WWI period, which some scholars consider to be “квітнієнці[я] її роздумів над історичною долею України та місц[ем] інтелігента у цій долі” [a quintessence of her reflections on Ukraine’s historical development and the role of the intellectual in this process] (Krupa Introduction 7), but others read as a hodge-podge of her “складних і болючих ідейно-філософських блукань” [laborious and painful ideological and philosophical roaming] (Tomashuk Zhyttia 200), if not a testimony of her creative and intellectual decline. Such a wide range of critical assessments could be well explained by the fact that the novel was originally published as an abridged version of one of Kobylianska’s many manuscripts produced in the late 1920s and the early 1930s, when the writer desperately tried to sell her unfinished work to different and often rivaling Ukrainian publishing institutions in Canada, the US, Czechoslovakia, Lviv, and Soviet Ukraine. Although several manuscripts of the novel have been recently located in the central archives of the Shevchenko Institute of Literature in Kyiv, no attempt to

111. Similar views are shared by a number of post-Soviet scholars of Kobylianska’s post-WWI works: Y. Melnychuk, Y. Mukosyanchyk, L Zhyzhchenko, O. Khym, O. Slonyovska, L. Matusyak, V. Vozniuk, and to some extent M. Pavlyshyn.
112 This view was first indirectly introduced by M. Rudnycky in his critical review of Kobylianska’s late works in his 1936 study *From Myrny to Khvylovyi*, 234. Similar view was later promoted by several Soviet critics such as O. Babyshkin and F. Pohrebennyk.
113 See V. Vozniuk detailed discussion of Kobylianska’s numerous attempts to sell her novel in the 1920s in his *Bukovyns’ki adresy Olhy Kobylianskoї*, chapter 7
re-edit the novel has been made to date. As a result, several critics, in discussing the book’s formal elements, have rightfully pointed out its numerous structural and stylistic shortcomings, while others who focus exclusively on the ideological fabric of the novel find ways to adjust Kobylianska’s ideas to their own ideological needs. Most past critics seem, however, to agree on two important points: first, they univocally acknowledge that the question of Ukraine’s statehood, whatever its clarity and forcefulness might be, is central in *Apostle of the Mob*; and second, that the novel’s main character Julius Caesarevych, an exemplary WWI officer in search of personal independence amidst the war-torn Europe, represents Kobylianska’s attempt, whether sincere or not, to create a new post-WWI Ukrainian hero.

Kobylianska’s openly patriotic yet somewhat ambiguous rhetoric in *Apostle of the Mob*, which will be examined in the following pages, is directly linked to the specific historical context of Ukraine’s political struggle and to the writer’s personal story of survival in the 1920s and the 1930s. Kobylianska started working on the novel in 1915, shortly after the outbreak of WWI, and completed its first draft, initially titled Цезаревич [Caesarevych], in 1922, when Ukraine was forced to cope with its dramatic political fiasco in asserting its independence in 1917-1920. The initial title clearly suggests that in the early 1920s Kobylianska chose to emphasize the Caesarian aspect in the character of her new hero, which at the time many Ukrainian politicians considered to the

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114 For the latest detailed chronology of the novel, see Y. Melnychuk, *Olha Kobylianska v ostannii period tvorchosti, vid 1914 roku*, 150-153
most important quality for a successful national leader.\textsuperscript{115} In 1922, the Bukovynian writer energetically wrote to a number of public and private organizations in the US, Canada, and Europe to arrange for her novel’s publication. Although Kobylianska received a number of warm letters and even several advance payments for her future novel,\textsuperscript{116} all these efforts eventually came to nothing. The manuscript did not make it either to North America or to Europe that year, for, most likely, it was confiscated by the Rumanian secret police, which in 1922, as Kobylianska later recalls, searched her study and “забрали все, що було в столі і на столі: листи, нотатки літературного характеру, рукописи, уривки з начерків, і одну викінчену новелу, за якою [їй було] дуже жаль” [took everything that was on and in her desk: letters, literary notes, manuscripts, some short sketches, and one completed novella for which [she was] especially sorry] (qtd. in Panchuk \textit{Hirs’ka orlitsia 7}).\textsuperscript{117} As a result, little is known about Kobylianska’s 1922 version of the novel. Kobylianska’s original selection of potential publishing institution suggests, however, that at the time the

\textsuperscript{115} See footnote 92.

\textsuperscript{116} In April of 1922, The Ukrainian National Association of America was first to send Kobylianska 12,000 Romanian lei, which at the time was worth about 70 US dollars. Over the summer of 1922, Kobylianska received another substantial sum of 21,000 Romanian lei, approximately 125 US dollars, from Canada. During the year 1923, Kobylianska also received small sums of money from individual admires in Canada and Western Europe. In January of 1924, The Women Union from Detroit sent her 75 US dollars. For further reference, see V. Vozniuk, \textit{Bukovyns’ki adresy Olhy Kobyliaskoi}, 177-182.

\textsuperscript{117} The exact date of the search is unclear. Using Kobylianska’s 1926 letter to the editorial board of the Kolomya monthly \textit{Жінча дола} (\textit{Woman’s Lot}), N. Tomashuk suggests that it took place in 1924. See N. Tomashuk, \textit{Olha Kobylianska: Zhyttia i tvorchist’}, 200. V. Vozniuk, however, offers a much more convincing argument grounded in a close investigation of further archival materials and Kobylianska’s bipgrafical, claiming that the search could not have taken place any later than September of 1922. See V. Vozniuk, \textit{Bukovyns’ki adresy Olhy Kobyliaskoi}, 168-170.
writer clearly supported the pro-democratic political camps that promoted Ukraine’s political independence and cultural development.

From 1926 onward, the Bukovynian writer, it seems, was much more flexible in her choice of potential publishers and reached out to a number of organizations, which often belonged to rivaling political camps. In 1926, for instance, Kobylianska contacted two Lviv journals, New House (Нова хата) and The Light (Сейм), and the Prague journal New Ukraine (Нова Україна), all of which focused on promoting Ukraine’s political independence and the all-round free development of Ukrainian people. Mykyta Shapoval, a prolific publicist and a prominent leader of the Ukrainian Social-Revolutionaries in exile in Czechoslovakia in the 1920s who at the time was the head editor of New Ukraine, responded enthusiastically to Kobylianska’s inquiry. He praised her work for its patriotic vigor and didactic nature, comparing Apostle of the Mob to Kobylianska’s first novel The Princess, and arrange for its publication in his journal.¹¹⁸ The publication was, however, interrupted, for the journal ceased to exist in 1928. Around the same time, the Soviet Ukrainian authorities, who made a vigorous effort to secure Kobylianska’s ideological support in the late 1920s, also expressed their interest in publishing Kobylianska’s latest novel.¹¹⁹ In 1929, the writer sent a revised version to Kharkiv. The Soviet authorities, however, were not in a hurry to publish a novel that openly propagated Ukraine’s cultural

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¹¹⁸ See, for instance, Shopoval’s letter to Kobylainska on November 24, 1927, in Olha Kobylainska: Al’manakh u pamiatku ii sorokolit’oi pys’mennyc’oi diial’nosti, 1887-1927, 249-252.

¹¹⁹ See V. Vozniuk’s discussion of Kobylianska’s correspondence with M. Bilach, the chief editor of her collected works published in Soviet Kharkiv in 1927-1929, in his Bukovyn’s’ki adresy Olhy Kobylianskoï, 201-221.
and political independence. In 1933, finally realizing that “її повість не зможе друкуватися у В[еликій] У[країні]” [her novel would not be published in Great Ukraine], Kobylianska made further changes and sent her work to Mykhailo Rudnytsky, a prominent literary critic and one of the head editors of the Lviv daily *Action* (*Діло*), the most influential newspaper of national-democratic orientation in Galicia.\(^{120}\) Although Rudnytsky criticized Kobylianska’s work as “повість з дуже слабеньким обсерваційним і психологічним матеріалом” [a novel with very weak observations and psychological material], pointing out that “технічно [она] зовсім не сучасна” [technically it was completely not modern] (Rudnytsky 234), the novel was published in *Action* (*Діло*) after significant editorial reductions, many of which Kobylianska did not approve.\(^{121}\) Such a complicated history of the novel’s publication clearly suggests that in the late 1920s and the early 1930s Kobylianska was mainly preoccupied with publishing her work – thus making it available to broader readership on the one hand, and securing a much needed income for her family on the other – rather than with supporting a particular political camp. At the same time, the novel’s history of publication brings to light the continuous political, psychological, moral, and financial pressures that the 60-70-year-old Kobylianska experienced in the 1920-1930s, making it hard to determine whether her reflections on Ukraine’s political future presented in the 1936 published version of *Apostle of the Mob* are a product of her intellectual

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\(^{120}\) See O. Kobylianska’s letter to K. Strudnytsky on January 9, 1933, in *U pivstoliti zmahannia: Vybrani lysty do Kyryla Strudnytskoho (1891-1941)*, 633.

\(^{121}\) See V. Simovych’ commentaries in his 1942 memoir about Kobylianska, “Budni і heroi Olhy Kobylianskoi,” 5; or O. Kysilevska’s remarks in her 1937 essay “Pislya nedavn’oi hostyny na Bukovyni,” 11.
reasoning and logical revisions of her earlier elitist views, or whether they are
simply a strategic move to sell her work.

Remarkably, however, despite such obvious ethical ambiguities as well as
the novel’s obvious formal and stylistic shortcomings, *Apostle of the Mob*
managed to captivate a significant majority of its original readers. As suggested
in the numerous initial reviews of the novel, Kobylianska’s *Apostle of the Mob*
appealed to its readers because it addressed their unsettling anxieties as to the
on-going political and cultural transformations in Ukraine, but, more importantly,
because it gave them, intentionally or not, hopes and lurid formulas for molding
“нових, характерних, незламних борців за самостійницькі ідеали
українського народу” [new, robust, and adamant fighters for the independence
of the Ukrainian people] (Wilde “Novi knyzhky” 19). It is thus neither the artistic
vigor or its lack, nor the coherence of Kobylianska’s patriotic messages, but the
very nature and the key reasons for the novel’s tremendous success with
Kobylianska’s contemporaries that merit primary examination. To gauge the
depth of the novel’s appeal, the following analysis will examine Kobylianska’s
1936 vision of Ukraine’s intellectual hero, discerning its conceptual and aesthetic
affinities with popular ideological models that dominated Ukrainian and European
socio-political debates in the 1920s and 1930s.

In *Apostle of the Mob*, as in earlier works, Kobylianska synthesizes a
cluster of popular themes and ideas, often considered to be incompatible, to
frame her own vision of Ukraine’s current political situation and its possible future
developments. As with earlier work, Kobylianska once again presents her
ideological commentaries using not only direct utterances of the novel’s characters, but also intricate allegories, displaced intertextual references, and complex formal structures. The novel’s very title and the name of its main character, for instance, inconspicuously present the novel’s main conceptual framework: Julius Caesarevych – the new apostle of Ukraine’s mob. This simplified dictum embodies a powerful allusion to the very philosophical synthesis of Nietzscheism, Christianity, and Caesarism, which many interwar intellectuals recognized as endowed with a unique power to heal the divisions of modern society. Some contemporary theoreticians also position this three-partite conceptual fusion as the main underlying ideological premise that propelled diverse forms of fascism in the interwar period.\(^{122}\) The same three-part ideological fusion could be discerned in the overarching formal structure of the novel, which narrates the story of its main character’s becoming. Similar to Natalka Verkovychivna in Kobylianska’s 1896 novel *The Princess*, Mykyta Shapoval was first to point out, Julius Caesarevych undergoes a three-stage spiritual metamorphosis.\(^{123}\) The complex process of Julius’s spiritual becoming, however, is modeled not after the Nietzschean camel-lion-child conceptual paradigm, as in Natalka’s case,\(^{124}\) but after its interwar modification. As many typical fictional heroes, particularly fascist heroes, of the interwar period, Kobylianska’s protagonist, a young lad of noble descent infused with

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123 See footnote 121.

124 See chapter 2, 104-105.
Nietzschean will, undergoes a spiritual trial, during which he sacrifices his personal interests for the sake of communal good, and from which he emerges as the “new triumphant man” destined to transform his nation, if not the world, into a new victorious culture.\footnote{See G. Mosse’s discussion of the new fascist man in his *The Fascist Revolution*, 32-33 and 110-111.} A number of ideological themes and aesthetic features which stand at the center of *Apostle of the Mob* – its celebration of the beautiful male body modeled on the harmonious form of Greek sculpture, its propagation of aggressive masculinity, its continuous tension between ideal manliness and family life, its clear distinction between friend and foe, its preoccupation with racial ancestry, and its general attempt to reconcile traditional values with progress – also link Kobylianska’s last novel to the prominent fascist ideologies of the day.\footnote{See, for instance, G. Mosse’s discussion of fascist aesthetics in his *The Fascist Revolution*, 45-55.}

Kobylianska’s representation of Julius Caesarevych, who embodies the writer’s final attempt at constructing a new type of Ukrainian intellectual hero, is, perhaps, her most obvious tribute to the fascist aesthetics of the interwar period. The character is introduced as a good-looking, well-disciplined, and well-educated seventeen-year-old lad of unusual physical strength and with a healthy dose of ambition. In the opening sections which depict Julius’s father Maximux Caesarevych and reflect on Julius’s childhood, Kobylianska accentuates the hero’s racial ancestry and targeted cultural education, positioning the two as defining aspects in the formation of Julius’s national identity.\footnote{M. Pavlyshyn problematizes questions of blood and culture in Kobylianska’s discussion of national identity and its formation in *Apostle of the Mob* by pointing out that its two heroines, Eve Zakharij and Dora Walde, are guided mostly by...} Born into a family
of Ukrainian patriots whose ancestors were highly esteemed military officers and Orthodox priests, and raised deliberately “для України” [for Ukraine] (10) and its future, Julius is exceptionally firm in his national self-identification and often dreams of becoming “борцем України” [a fighter for Ukraine] (21) and its national independence. Remarkably, Julius models his self-image as a future political fighter after “великі мужі грецьких та римських часів” [the great men of Greek and Roman times] and prominent figures of French Revolution and Republic (21). The latter are of particular interest, for the seventeen-year-old hero often compares French intellectuals and revolutionary leaders of the 1790s with the Ukrainian intelligentsia of his time, recognizing the urgent need of similar resolute and authoritative leadership for pre-WWI Ukraine. Such remarks could not but appeal to Kobylianska’s post-WWI readers in Western Ukraine, whose concern with reorienting Ukrainian politics and organizing the chaotic crowd of “the people” into a disciplined mass movement through the awakening of their national consciousness, was similar to those of French revolutionaries,128 as well as to those of interwar fascists,129 who, one recent scholar argues, also admired irrational forces in their choice of national identity. The scholar, however, disregards the fact that the heroines have hybrid Polish-Ukrainian ethnic heritage and that both make situational decisions as to their official national belonging without completely renouncing their hybrid ethnic ancestry. Pavlyshyn also overlooks the fact that national self-identification is never an issue with characters of pure ethnic heritage, be they Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, or Armenians. See M. Pavlyshyn, Olha Kobylianska: Prochytannia, 257-258.

128 See A. Motyl, Turn to the Right, 2.
129 D. Dontsov, the main theoretician of Ukrainian integral nationalism and the leading propagator of a militant and anti-democratic nationalism bordering on fascism, often evokes the French Revolution, its leaders, and their political ardor in his seminal work Nationalism (1926). See, for instance, excerpts from his Nationalism in Towards and Intellectual History of Ukraine, 263, 267.
the French Revolution and its attempt to integrate the masses into the drama of national politics.130

Julius’s reflections on strong political rule, which bring him close to the authoritative, if not fascist, ideologies of the day, come especially forcefully in the hero’s vivid dream about Gaius Julius Caesar. As a narrative digression, the dream serves a dual function: on one hand, it expands on Julius’s socio-political views, intensifying the overall tone of the character’s youthful patriotic rhetoric; but on the other, it also presents as a displaced temporal prolepsis, projecting a narrative direction for Julius’s consequent spiritual and intellectual journey. The dream, for instance, contains a number of intricate allegories, which offer telling political messages. The image of Gaius Julius Caesar, the dream’s main character who guides Julius in the world of dreams, clearly emulates the charismatic strongman and his rule by force, projecting Caesarism, as the form of political rule the young hero admires the most. The pro-military theme is further promoted in the dream through Caesar’s instructions to Julius Caesarevych. One can read, for instance, Caesar’s advice to stay away from a plow as a displaced rejection of the populist gentle politics of cultivating the masses, popular with the pro-democratic intellectuals in pre-WWI Ukraine. A bow with a quiver of arrows, which in the dream Julius receives from Caesar, is, in turn, a clear allusion to Homer’s epic hero Odysseus and his political strength, and could be thus interpreted as another affirmation of anti-democratic politics. Caesar’s closing oration about blood sacrifice, which, the Roman hero contends, Julius’s land

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130 For further discussion, see G. Mosse, “Fascism and the French Revolution” in The Fascist Revolution, 69-93.
must receive “щоб роди[ти]... [бо] з крови постає і вмирає життя, а спсення [його землі] вимагає життя” [to bear any fruits, for life arises and dies in blood; and life is what is needed for the salvation of his land] (20), further celebrates violence, aggressive masculinity, and military prominence in politics, providing a powerful closure to the dream narrative. Julius’s dream, however, not only reveals the young man’s fascination with modern Caesarism, which was particularly popular in interwar fascism,131 but also offers an ambitious narrative forecast. By positioning Julius as the chosen hero who is destined to save his Ukraine from political ruin and cultural decline, the dream sets up readers’ expectations, making them wonder whether the character is truly fit for such a quest – the central questions of the novel which Kobylianska does not answer directly, leaving it up to her readers to pass the final judgment.

Although Kobylianska portrays Julius as an exceptional and admirable youth, which is particularly emphasized in a scene where Julius steps in front of the stampeding horses to save three people in a carriage – a local Ukrainian priest Zachary, his fifteen-year-old daughter Eve, and a coachman – from imminent death, she refrains from idealizing her hero. Throughout the first two thirds of the novel, Kobylianska continuously dwells on Julius’s youthful indecisiveness, internal self-doubt, and lack of self-control, presenting him not as ideal, but as a very human and down-to-earth character. Contrary to the claims of

131 See, for instance, O. Spengler’s “The Prussian Spirit: Salvation of the White Race” or O. Mosley’s “Christ, Nietzsche, and Caesar” in Fascism ed. by R. Griffin, 112-114 and 173-174 respectively.
one recent critic, the writer, however, does not focus on Julius’s character flaws per se and shows little interest in passing any moral judgment about her hero. Instead, she positions Julius’s flaws as triggers of his spiritual and intellectual transformations, which bring to minds Nietzschean themes of self-discovery, spiritual evolution, and willful overcoming. Julius’s youthful “непевність щодо форм діяльності, корисних для нації” [uncertainty as to the forms of activity which would benefit his nation] (Pavlyshyn 255), for instance, turns out to be the main reason for the young man’s year-long mind-altering travel around Europe. Not only does Julius, now a Nietzschean seafarer, perfect his German, English, French, and Russian languages during his trip, he also makes a number of astounding cultural and socio-political discoveries, which inspire him to revisit his earlier “комплекс національної меншовартості” [national inferiority complex] (Pavlyshyn 255) and channel its powerful psychic energies towards a critical examination of Ukraine’s diverse social groups and their potential to organize themselves into a coherent national movement. Because of his initial indecisiveness, the hero undergoes a cognitive transformation, from which he emerges, as suggested in the scenes following Julius’s return from Europe, with firm convictions and clear goals for the future.

132 See M. Pavlyshyn, Olha Kovbyluanska: A Reading, 254-255.
133 The sea and the seafarer are among the most recurrent metaphors in Nietzsche’s Thus Spoke Zarathustra. When Zarathustra reaches the Blessed Islands, he calls the sea an embodiment of the overman (85) and the seafarers “bold searchers and researchers” (155) driven by a desire to embark on “dangerous seas” and thus discover the implied terra incognita of a still unimaginable human future.
Kobylianska presents Julius’s newly-acquired fortitude and self-confidence in his dynamic conversation with father Zachary, “ідеальний душпастир” [an ideal priest] (46), whose life Julius once saved. To accentuate the power of Julius’s new political views, which continue to revolve around the same pro-military and elitist themes that dominate his youthful socio-political reflections, Kobylianska juxtaposes them with the meek pro-democratic beliefs of father Zachary. As becomes apparent from Zachary’s initial comments on his parishioners, the old priest’s political stance has a doctrinaire and somewhat ludicrous nature. While considering the mob – that is, the peasantry who at the time made up the overwhelming majority of Ukraine’s population – as an uncultured, coarse, and primitive mass, father Zachary paradoxically believes in “the people’s” potential to grow into a powerful political force, projecting them as “[ідеальний] матеріал, з якого повинен витворитися [український] народ” [the ideal matter from which the Ukrainian nation would arise] (50). Accordingly, father Zachary promotes the populist politics of cultivating the people by teaching them how to “любити і шанувати один одного, триматись з собою, любити землю і поборювати брехню, хоч би яку дрібненьку” [love and respect one another, keep together, love their land, and fight against even the slightest lie] (46). Although Julius reveres father Zachary’s dedication and self-sacrifice, the young man openly questions the futility of “зерна [знання], які [отець Захарій] засіває” [those seeds of knowledge that father Zachary plants] among his parishioners, doubting the old man’s irrational claims that “[з них] мусить колись само зійти” [they would sprout on their own one day] (51). Starting a some-what
Socratic argument by asking father Zacharias a series of provocative questions, Julius asserts himself as an insightful thinker and an outstanding orator, forcing the old priest, but even more the reader, to reexamine critically Zachary’s narrow political views.

By observing, for instance, how the very people who “йшли наче насліпо за [отцем Захарієм] у важних моментах” [blindly follow father Zachary in important matters] (46) often cheat their priest in daily matters, Julius points out the ineffectiveness of father Zachary’s nation-building methods, indirectly critiquing the implied populist dogmas. His indirect commentary on Zachary’s ultimate political mission “вихов[увати] кільканадцять таких, з яких вийдуть зразки культури” [to nurture a dozen of those who would effectively represent their culture] (46), where he observes, as many of Kobylianska’s earlier intellectual heroes do, that much broader measures must be taken to lead Ukrainian “буденність” [mediocrity] to greatness (49), pushes his critique of the populist political discourse even further. Condemning in such a manner the narrow-mindedness of the populist political agenda and the general political apathy of the Ukrainian populist intelligentsia, Julius emphasizes instead an urgent need for a highly cultured and iron-willed intellectual elite to organize and lead the primitive Ukrainian mass to a better political future. Remarkably, by the end of the conversation, father Zachary whole-heartedly agrees with the young man, recognizing “з якимось внутрішнім вдоволенням” [with some internal satisfaction] that the young man has marvelous skills of persuasion and could become “неабияким проповідником” [an outstanding preacher] (50) one day. In
this scene, Julius clearly establishes himself as a new type of character – not as irresolute and self-doubting youth, but as an insightful, strong-willed, and assertive man.

Despite such a prominent change in Julius’s character, the young man is, according to Zachary and Julius himself, not quite ready to become an effective leader of his people at this stage of his life. Julius admits that he is still “загордий” [too proud], занеподатливий [too unyielding], and does not love the people with that Christian love that “змиває ближнім ноги та служить їм [щиро]” [washes neighbors’ feet and serves them sincerely], while father Zachary claims that Julius is still too young and lacks experience (50-51). As soon becomes evident, Julius’s lack of self-control – which, as suggested, the hero inherits from his paternal grandfather, also named Julius Caesarevych, who committed suicide after losing a big sum of money playing cards – is a far more perilous flaw that delays the hero’s rise to socio-political prominence. As with other character flaws, Kobylianska uses Julius’ss inability to control his passions to set up another life-altering experience: Julius’ss spontaneous fornication with the priest’s only daughter Eve triggers another spiritual transformation of the hero, highlighting the importance of continuous self-perfection.

The story of Julius and Eve’s sexual encounter merits particular attention, for it introduces the Christian aspect of the novel’s underlying proto-fascist philosophical synthesis that fuses element of the Classical and the Christian
traditions with the Nietzschean concept of man of vigor and self-help. Kobylianska uses the names of her characters, Eva and Julius, to bridge symbolically the faith and service of Christianity with the heroism of Classical thought. The complicated relationship between the two characters and their eventual break-up suggest, however, that Kobylianska treats the fusion of Christianity and Classicism as deeply problematic. Although there is no direct description of Julius’s sexual intercourse with Eve, intricate allusions which saturate the scenes leading to and immediately following the implied act leave no doubt as to its occurrence. The abundant references to the biblical story of original sin and Adam and Eve’s discovery of bodily pleasures stand out the most. The man’s seductress, for instance, is named Eve; the rendezvous of the two lovers takes place in a pristine forest described as “рай” [paradise]; and a ripe apple and a venomous snake come up in the story minutes before the implied sexual act. While clearly accentuating the sexual nature of Julius and Eve’s encounter, biblical references also suggest that the two young people are innocent in their act because they, as descendants of the first man and woman, are destined to do so. Consequently, Julius’s implied innocence invites the reader to focus not on his sexual transgression per se, but on the fact of his union with Eve and on how he deals with the new difficult situation that arises in its aftermath. It is notable that Julius, by contrast with the original biblical sinner Adam, neither hides his sin nor blames it on others. Instead, he immediately

134 See G. Mosse on Christianity and fascism, particularly its Italian version, in his The Fascist Revolution, 73-74 and 130-133.
faces father Zachary, confesses his transgression, claims full responsibility, asks
to marry Eve, and declares that to atone for his moral crime against Zachary’s
family, he would study theology instead of philology and would devote his life to
the priesthood, as father Zachary always wanted him to do. On the one hand, the
scene of Julius’s confession, which takes place during a raging storm, introduces
themes of ancestral sin, fall from grace, remorse, repentance, and redemption.
Yet despite Zachary’s forgiveness and everybody’s excitement about the future
wedding, the scene does not give any promise for Julius’s redemption and
spiritual renewal, projecting the hero’s promise to Eve’s family as yet another
trial.

The main aspect of what should be Julius’s subsequent theological
education is a discovery of the very Christian love towards the mob, which he
lacks during his student years. The young man’s budding love of the people and
his resolve to serve them are powerfully presented in a conversation with Eve
that takes place upon the girl’s return from Europe where she studies medicine
for a year. When Eve makes spiteful remarks about the horrendous cultural
primitivism of the Ukrainian masses, Julius urges the girl not to distance herself
from the peasants, but to look closely into their huts, for, he argues, every hut is
“окремий маленький світ” [a small universe] (161) that offers the only possible
entry into the broader Ukrainian community. Developing his idea about the duty
of every educated man “служити своїй народності” [to serve his or her people]
(160), Julius urges Eve to follow the example of all those foreign students they
meet in Switzerland, who come to study there only “[п]ертаються до своїх
These words, which echo father Zachary’s limited ideal for the individual’s contribution to the Ukrainian cause, clearly signify Julius’s ideological diversion into the very narrow thinking that he rejected earlier as inadequate for Ukraine’s current socio-political needs. Eve, who at this point embodies the new type of progressive Ukrainian woman, also rightfully reads Julius’s statement as a sign of his extreme self-abnegation. She urges her fiancé to abandon priesthood – an occupation that the hero himself finds unfit for his personality – and pursue a career that would suit his character and intellectual aptitude and through which, consequently, he would be better able to contribute to the development of his nation. This episode clearly captures the very tension between Julius’s ideal to serve the higher national cause and his duties to family life, a tension that was common to all interwar fascism (Mosse *The Fascist Revolution* 50). When Julius, being a man of his word, refuses to break his promise to Father Zachary and follow his own interests in public service, Eve steps up to rescue Julius from the
doomed situation and calls off their engagement, liberating Julius from his obligations toward her family. Eve’s symbolic rejection becomes the most powerful external stimulus that finally purges Julius of his youthful hesitations and inspires to embrace the cause of something far greater than himself and his local community – the cause of Ukraine’s political independence and cultural greatness.

Unrestrained by any family obligations, Julius reJOINs the military, entering his final stage of cognitive and spiritual transformation from which he emerges as a new type of hero – “апостол меча” [apostle of the sword] (213). Julius’s new hero image is clearly modeled upon the vibrant image of the medieval bishop who used to advance, sword in hand, against his enemies. Its ideological framework, however, continues to be informed by Nietzschean phylosophy and fascist political thought, combining the Christian ideal of service and self-surrender with the modern ideal of force and virility. Even before Julius’s break-up with Eve, the hero, for instance, repeatedly justifies chauvinism as “відпорн[ий] засіб... у боротьбі за незалежність і у відповідь на шовінізм противника” [an appropriate means in the struggle for independence and as an apt response to the chauvinism of the enemy] (163), grounding his views, as implied, in an original fusion of social Darwinism with Nietzsche’s concept of rebellion that dominated political discourse in fin-de-siècle Europe. Later in the novel, Julius quotes Helmuth Karl von Moltke, a prominent German Field Marshal and one of the greatest military strategists of the late nineteenth century, to extol his aggressive militarism:
Military service is a big burden, which brings to mind the worst periods of ancient slavery; without such a burden, however, European society would fall prey to various barbaric elements... The moral influence of a military regime on the people's character has such immense value that one can never exaggerate it.] (213)

This reference to the popular discussions on the prominence of the military in modern politics, together with Julius’s earlier comments on chauvinism openly celebrates struggle and triumph, projecting violence as a necessary and even ethical act that cannot be expelled from history. The military, Julius implies here, not only protects communities from external enemies, but also plays an important role in organizing people with a common cause into a disciplined formation with hierarchical command structures. The military analogy also positions a virile man – the very hero Julius becomes by the end of the novel – as the principal driving force of history and one of the main symbols of a nation’s strength, harmony, and progress. Remarkably, this image stands in a sharp contrast with Kobylianska’s powerful anti-war critique presented in her 1917 short story “A Letter from a Convicted Soldier to His Wife,” where a soldier sentenced to death dramatically conveys the dehumanizing experiences of the war. Such drastic differences in Kobylianska’s attitude to war suggest that, although it is unlikely that Kobylianska, who experienced the brutalities of WWI first-hand, would turn into a passionate advocate of military action, she had a clear understanding of the
political situation in Europe in the early 1930s and consciously chose to advocate organization, authority, and strong military leadership as a necessary precaution to avoid the mass slaughter of Ukrainians in the future.

The pronounced emphasis on virile and dynamic masculinity with its promise to bring order and cure the ailing world – which, as argued, informs the main aesthetic and ideological principles in *Apostle of the Mob* – is further amplified through Kobylianska’s representations of women, whom she projects not necessarily as inferior to men, but as politically passive in their roles of mothers, wives, and caregivers. Eve Zachary, Julius’s first fiancé, and Dora Mohylenko-Walde, the hero’s eventual wife, are the two heroines, whose images, arguably, embody two different ideals of the new Ukrainian woman: progressive and radically conservative. Although Eve and Dora have fundamentally different personalities, they share a number of characteristics that link them to Kobylianska’s earlier heroines – Olena Laufler, Natalka Verkovychivna, Zonya Yakhnenko, and Manya Obrynska. Both women are presented as intelligent heroines who meet adversity with a strong will and an independent mind. They struggle against the nineteenth-century conservative ideal of women as weak, inactive, and unthinking. While the degree and nature of the heroines’ social revolt substantially differ, both Eve and Dora eventually transform their protests into a liberal compromise, fulfilling their destiny at home and in small-scale community work. Julius’s father Maximus Caesarevych projects the novel’s concept of an ideal woman in his reflection on the future social roles of his three daughters, where the old watchmaker Maximus compares women to “механічн[i]
While promoting virile men as “engines,” and thus as the main driving force of history, Maximus’ allegory also projects women as vital supporting historical actors, whose responsibility is to secure the homefront and thus assist men in their political struggles. Julius expresses similar thoughts when he shares his views on radical feminism with Eve:

[What do I honestly think about “emancipation”? A man is a man, and a woman is a woman... I detest this question. This emancipation can potentially go too far and damage society. Let women study, let them work, but let them not destroy the so-called home fire and replace it with restaurants and other places of entertainment.] (136-137)

Here, the hero’s position on the woman question strongly resonates with Kobylianska’s 1896 public speech on feminism and her 1927 assessment of what a new Ukrainian woman should be. In both statements, the Bukovynian writer openly propagates somewhat modernized yet traditional roles of women within the family as intelligent mothers and supportive spouses, clearly promoting sexual division of labor. While celebrating the new triumphant Ukrainian man, an unprecedented image in Kobylianska’s previous works, the writer makes no

135 See chapter 1, 78-79.
attempt in her last novel to re-invent the Ukrainian woman in concert with her new Ukrainian man. Rather, her familiar conventions remain intact. Such a clear differentiation between the new Ukrainian man and the new Ukrainian woman presented the Ukrainian public with a certain open-endedness, which offered a new vision of an intellectual elite but co-opted a traditional reality. It was surely one of the main attractions of Kobylianska’s novel, which most critics rightfully recognized as stylistically the weakest text by Kobylianska, that it promised, on the one hand, a spiritual revolution, and on the other, addressed those needs that seemed essential to the preservation of Ukrainian civil society.

In the final scenes of the novel, Julius Caesarevych thus emerges as a radically new type, a disciplined, intelligent, and virile man, whom Kobylianska’s contemporaries eagerly read as a new ideal and a new model for emulation. In many ways, Julius replicates Kobylianska’s earlier intellectual heroes in his Nietzschean striving for self-perfection, in his determination and strong will, and, most importantly, in his sincere dedication to Ukraine’s cultural and political progress. Kobylianska’s emphasis on aggressive masculinity and political militarism, however, sets her “apostle of the sword” firmly apart from Natalka Verkovychivna and Nestor Obrynsky, Kobylianska’s earlier versions of ideal intellectual heroes. These themes clearly embed her post-WWI hero in the ideological framework of the popular proto-fascist philosophical cluster of Christianity, Nietzscheanism, and Caesarism. Although it is hard to say whether the Bukovynian writer herself saw Julius as an ideal, she clearly presented her new hero as an exceptional individual symbolic of what the new leadership elite,
in fact, a new Ukrainian people should be to secure Ukraine’s socio-political survival in the turbulent 1930s. As suggested by the initial reviews of Kobylianska’s last novel, contemporaries saw Julius as a realistic character symbolic of what other individuals could become, defining *Apostle of the Mob* as one of the most relevant works of their time\(^\text{136}\) and celebrating Kobylianska as a true “апостол ідей” [apostle of ideas], who “не тільки держить крок з життям, але ще й випереджує його” [does not simply keeps up with life, but is often far ahead of it] (qtd. in Melnychuk 155).\(^\text{137}\) Indeed, Kobylianska knew exactly what her new interwar readership in the Western Ukraine wanted and gave them a compelling hero – a virile, robust, and resolute intellectual, whose image continues to be appealing because it represents a romantic ideal to which many contemporary Ukrainians are still attached and a longing for which they continue to share.\(^\text{138}\)

**Conclusion**

Kobylianska’s unconcealed tribute to interwar fascist ideology and her newly acquired appreciation for fascist aesthetics, which greatly informed her last novel *Apostle of the Mob*, by no means meant blind acceptance of fascist ideological tenets. Rather, as a writer notorious for fusing diverse and often

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\(^{136}\) See Y. Melnychuk’s discussion of the immediate reception of Kobylianska’s *Apostle of the Mob* in her *Olha Kobylianska v ostannii period tvorchosti, vid 1914 roku*, 155.


\(^{138}\) See reviews by Y. Melnychuk, Y. Mukosyanchyk, L Zhyzhchenko, O. Khymyn, O. Slonyovska, L. Matusyak, and M. Krupa.
incompatible ideas into her fictional commentaries on Ukraine’s cultural and socio-political revival, Kobylianska borrowed from interwar fascism only what she believed to be applicable to Ukraine’s political struggle in the 1930s. Naturally, the writer underwent ideological shifts in the process. Yet for a devoted patriot, whose major goal was the all-around free development of the Ukrainian people, and for a pragmatist, who in the 1920-1930s was preoccupied with securing her personal survival and the well-being of her family, such shifts posed few problems. In fact, Kobylianska considered them indicative of a faculty to think creatively and remain in dynamic contact with current events. For that reason, the Bukovynian writer stayed in contact with representative of all major Ukrainian post-WWI political camps and seized on every opportunity, regardless of from which ideological camp it came, to promote her work and thus to reach out to the broadest possible audience. Over the two post-WW decades, for instance, Kobylianska’s works were published in Chernivtsi, Lviv, Kolomyia, Uzhhorod, Vienna, Leipzig, Prague, Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Moscow by diverse and often rival political organizations – from ultra-nationalist and monarchist to Bolshevist and liberal-democratic.

In some respects, however, Kobylianska remained uncompromising. As the present analysis of Kobylianska’s WWI and post-WWI fiction demonstrates, the writer’s dedication to the elitist conception of Ukraine’s ideal socio-political organization, her celebration of Western culture, German in particular, and her firm repudiation of ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and any other type of heterophobia were immune to all changes in the political climate. More
importantly, however, Kobylianska remained true to her method of synthesizing elements of diverse and often opposing currents of philosophical and political thought in asserting her own individual voice vis-à-vis the multiplicity of mass ideologies of her time.
**Conclusion**

In 1933, in the twilight of Kobylianska’s creative career, the Bukovynian writer firmly describes her work as apolitical and strictly regional, claiming that “в політичному… житті [вона] ніколи не брала участі.., [бо вона] на політиці мало визна[ється і] скиг[ить виключно] українській культурі по своїй змозі і силі” [she never took any part in… political life..., for she knows little about politics, and only serves Ukrainian culture with all her power and skills] (V 658). A close examination of the intersection between psychology, aesthetics, and ideology in Kobylianska’s fictional and non-fictional writings together with their contextualization in fin-de-siècle and interwar European intellectual history demonstrates, however, that the writer dramatically underestimates the depth of her own engagement with the political, social, artistic, and philosophical contexts of her tumultuous times. By combining contemporary literary and social theories with close textual analysis I have sought to show in this dissertation that Kobylianska’s multidimensional aesthetic and socio-political views share a number of conceptual and structural affinities with other philosophical and ideological models generated by the fin-de-siècle generation of the European intellectuals.

The most significant trends that define Kobylianska’s intellectual life and fuse simultaneously her personal plight with the general struggle of the fin-de-siècle generation of European intellectuals to articulate an individual voice are her continuous oscillation between the individual and the mass and her
audacious experimenting with synthesizing diverse and often conflicting ideologies of her time – particularly feminism, populism, social Darwinism, Nietzscheanism, elitism, Marxism, nationalism, and Fascism. Both trends inform Kobylianska’s original spectral-syncretic vision of Ukraine’s cultural and socio-political liberation, in which the writer, as this dissertation has shown, follows the common tendency in fin-de-siècle and interwar European intellectual history, combining elements of right and left, traditional and revolutionary currents of thought. Among the most important syntheses that Kobylianska offers her readers are: a conservative view of man constrained by nature with the more progressive belief in the possibility of creating a new man; a profound interest in science, especially in terms of understanding human nature, with a more anti-positivist exploration of the unlimited possibilities of the will; the faith of Christianity with the heroism of Classical thought; and finally a capitalist understanding of private property relations with aggressive socialism.

An investigation of how Kobylianska’s psychic life – particularly her reflective properties, the multidimensionality of the self as she saw it, and her traumatic interpersonal experiences with family, friends, and several prominent Ukrainian intellectuals of her time – has shaped her creative work and socio-political views has also shown that Kobylianska’s intellectual evolution was far from a smooth and coherent process. Like many intellectuals of her time, Kobylianska was constantly pushed to review, rethink, and reassert her views in response to rapidly changing cultural, social, economic, and political circumstances. A detailed textual analysis of Kobyliasnka’s works has shown,
however, that despite continuous revisions, the writer remained uncompromising on a cluster of key philosophical principles, which she internalized while growing up in the multi-cultural setting of Austrian Bukovyna, where diverse cultures and ideologies continually overlapped, connected, and clashed along borders that were both physical and psychological. Kobylianska’s celebration of Western culture, German in particular, and her firm repudiation of ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and any other type of heterophobia proved, for instance, to be immune to all changes in her cultural and socio-political environment. More importantly, however, throughout her creative career, Kobylianska remained true to her distinct method of synthesizing elements of diverse currents of philosophical and political thought in asserting her own individual voice vis-à-vis the multiplicity of mass ideologies of her time.

As has been noted in chapter 1 “The Early Signs of Revolt, 1886-1894,” the writer emerged on the Ukrainian literary stage as an audacious and creative thinker, who shrewdly muted her radical revolt against the traditional patriarchal dogmas into a sophisticated liberal compromise, crafting her first spectral-syncretic intellectual model. While agreeing with the leading Ukrainian theoreticians of feminism on the importance of higher education for women, Kobylianska firmly rejected the socialist ideological framework of Ukrainian feminism. Inspired by avid readings of Russian nineteenth-century anti-socialist realist classics (Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Chekhov), Darwinist theoreticians, and Nietzsche, Kobylianska criticized the socialist notion of equality and propagated instead a personal intellectual evolution, recognizing
knowledge and individual moral self-improvement as the only way to achieve women’s liberation. Kobylianska also criticized the socialist ideal of an audacious and self-sufficient emancipationist and socialist concept of “free love,” advocating instead somewhat modernized yet traditional roles of women within the family as intelligent mothers and supportive spouses. Such a fusion of highly unconventional and original ideas in terms of their intellectual and theoretical vigor with a politically conservative and even reactionary determination to rethink, reclaim, and reassert the value of tradition gives considerable merit to viewing Kobylianska’s intellectual model as radically conservative. As shown in this dissertation, this definition captures Kobylianska’s continuous oscillation between different and often conflicting aesthetic, ideological, and philosophical currents of thought.

In chapter 2 “The Mantle of the Myth Re-maker, 1895-1896” I showed that Kobylianska became even more daring with radical conservative intellectual model in the aftermath of the writer’s simultaneous exposure to Nietzschean thought and the Ukrainian national discourse of the 1890s. A close reading of Kobylianska’s first novel The Princess and her other fictional and nonfictional writings of the mid 1890s has demonstrated that the Bukovynian writer continued to bridge conflicting intellectual strands – this time Nietzschean aristocratism and nineteenth-century Russian radicalism – to enhance her critique of Marxism, the emerging Ukrainian social-democratic movement, and the on-going populist discussion of Ukraine’s national regeneration. Inspired by Nietzsche, Kobylianska indirectly polemicized with the populist calls on the Ukrainian intelligentsia “to
identify with the folk” and “go to the people” by propagating instead the need of a cultural revolution and the urgency of fostering a solid and highly educated national elite with a strong political will. As chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this dissertation have shown, Kobylianska’s 1896 philosophical synthesis of Nietzschean thought and the nineteenth-century Russian radicalism constituted the main premise of her consequent ever-evolving dialogue with the multiplicity of socio-cultural and political discourses of her time – a dialogue that generated even more complex and multidimensional, but often shocking and scandalous, conceptual and artistic fusions.

As I illustrated in chapter 3 “The Populist Trial, 1897-1902,” although Kobylianska fundamentally changed in the late 1890s her strategy in promoting the need of a cultural revolution in Ukraine, she remained uncompromising in her attempts to carry out broader philosophical and ideological syntheses. Yielding to the persistent pressure to pay more attention to peasant themes that came from the Ukrainian populist camp, Kobylianska crafted a series of “rustic” stories and a powerful epic novel *The Earth*, where she mercilessly exposed the populist uncritical glorification of Ukrainian peasants. Instead of focusing on the material conditions and ethnographic peculiarities of every-day village life, which was a common practice in the nineteenth-century Ukrainian populist tradition, Kobylianska ventured to depict the emotional and cognitive lives of her peasant characters, projecting them as primitive, chaotic, often self-destructive, and thus unfit for any socio-political struggle. By placing dialogue at the center of her “rustic” works, by individualizing her characters’ speech, and by exploiting its
dialogical potential, Kobylianska externalized the inner personal dimension of her peasant characters, ruthless and chaotic in their nature, projecting her village in *The Earth* as even more gruesome than that depicted in Emil Zola’s sensational novel of the same title.

In chapter 4 “The Years of Revision, 1903-1913,” in turn, I demonstrated that in the pre-WWI period, at the time when the discussion of Ukraine’s national liberation reached its apogee, Kobylianska made a substantial effort to re-package her radically conservative socio-political views into an alternate aesthetic form, which she hoped would be more acceptable, and thus accessible, to the populist camp. The ever-growing concern about the ethnocentric understanding of nationalism among the mainstream Ukrainian intelligentsia and the generally disintegrated nature of Ukraine’s national project forced Kobylianska to revise her elitist theory and present it in a more dramatic form – a dystopian intellectual novel. On one hand, Kobylianska continued to view the intellectual elite as a class of highly educated and cultured leaders who are empowered to determine not only their own ideology but also the course of Ukrainian politics and society, as suggested in her 1912 novel *Over the Bridge*, while on the other hand, she made it very clear in her 1913 novel *After Situations* that unless the Ukrainian intelligentsia was re-educated and solidified, the Ukrainian national project was doomed to failure, showing that she prophetically foresaw Ukraine’s dramatic political fiasco during the WWI.

In chapter 5 “A Writer of Her Time, 1914-1936” I explicated perhaps the most daring and explosive aesthetic and ideological synthesis in Kobylianska’s
literary oeuvre, which she produced in response to the cataclysmic developments that she saw underway in the cultural, religious, and political institutions of her day. A close reading of Kobylianska’s works written and published during or immediately after WWI, together with a close analysis of her last novel *Apostle of the Mob*, has illuminated the motives and circumstances that instigated the writer’s ideological conversion from a committed pro-Austrian loyalist to an enthusiastic supporter of Ukraine’s political unification and a proto-fascist advocate of a strong political rule. By bridging elements of populist doctrine and Nietzschean aristocratism, Christian servitude and the heroism of Classical thought, scientific insight into human nature and anti-positivist celebration of human will and its unlimited possibilities, Kobylianska created a new type of compelling hero – a virile, robust, and resolute intellectual – whose internal struggles embodied the contradictions of the intellectual setting in the interwar Europe in their most exact form.

In this dissertation, I have thus argued against the general tendency to view Kobylianska, or any prominent historical figure for that matter, as a stable, unified, and extra-historical personality, advocating instead for the acceptance of the dialogical, and thus ever-conflicted and ever-changing nature of the intellectual self. It is my hope that this study will encourage new research into Kobylianska’s life and work and will stimulate further work on the complete translation of her major novels into English. I also hope that this dissertation will be an entrance point for readers and scholars not only in German and Ukrainian letters, but also in social sciences, literary theory, and intellectual history, into the
stories of other *fin-de-siècle* and interwar Ukrainian intellectuals who offer a rich perspective on the common European experience of one of the most defining moments in contemporary European history.
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