



HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

Title	The Melancholy of Gender
Author(s)	Hundorova, Tamara
Citation	Acta Slavica Iaponica, 22, 165-176
Issue Date	2005
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/39446
Type	departmental bulletin paper
File Information	ASI22_008.pdf



THE MELANCHOLY OF GENDER

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WOMEN'S "MINOR" LITERATURE

The Ukrainian feminist writer Olha Kobylans'ka (1863-1942), who lived almost all of her life in Bukovyna, occupies a well-established place in three different literary canons that were created in Ukrainian literature during the first half of the twentieth century, namely the modernist, populist and socialist canons. This does not mean that Kobylans'ka's writing was neutral and transparent, and thus suitable to any ideological and critical interpretation. It only signifies the ambivalent, multi-leveled character of women's writing interpreted in each canon according to its own ideological and aesthetic paradigm.

At the dawn of the twentieth century Kobylans'ka's symbolically-styled stories stimulated a discussion about the fate of modernist high culture in Ukraine.¹ The populist critic Serhii Iefremov accused her of emulating Nietzsche's cult, expressing an aristocratic spirit, and abandoning populist themes.² The young modernist critics, namely Ostap Lutsky and Mykola Ievshan, praised her modern symbolism and individualism.³ The social-realist critics of the official Union of Ukrainian Writers appreciated Kobylans'ka only as an author depicting the hard life of the Bukovinian people working the land. Soviet literary criticism completely neglected Kobylans'ka's neo-romantic collisions between nature and culture, aristocratism and populism, paternalism and individualism in the process of a subject's identification.

To explain these critical polarities is a phenomenon of women's literature. By the notion of women's literature we mean the social, cultural and aesthetic functioning of texts written by women. In general, women's literary works look marginal in relation to "the imagery of succession, of paternity, of hierarchy"⁴ represented by the male-dominated literary tradition. The paternalist models usually define the character of literary imagination. To enter into literature as an author a woman must redefine both the literary tradition and the character of representation of social, cultural and gender identities in literature.

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- 1 See Гундорова Т. Rites de passage: народження «нової жінки» // *Femina melancholica*. Стаття і культура в гендерній утопії Ольги Кобилянської. Київ: Критика, 2002. С. 18-47.
 - 2 Ефремов С. В поисках новой красоты // С. Ефремов. Літературно-критичні статті. Київ, 1993. С. 94.
 - 3 За красою. Альманах в честь Ольги Кобилянської. Чернівці, 1905. С. 3; Євшан М. Проблеми творчості // Українська хата. 1910. Ч. 1. С. 27; Шаповал М. Альманах на 40-ліття письменницької діяльності Ольги Кобилянської. 1928. С. 250.
 - 4 Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), p. 162.

Generally speaking, “the female writer’s battle for self-creation involves her in a revisionary process.”⁵

Kobylians’ka became a key figure in the most influential debates of her time concerning modernism and feminism. One of her first novels, *The Queen* (*Tsarivna*, 1896), written under the influence of the feminist ideal of emancipation and reflecting on Nietzsche’s idea of high culture, elicited a specific response from patronizing male critics. Reviews by Osyp Makovei, Mykhailo Hrushevs’kyi and Ahatanhel Kryms’kyi turned into discussions not only about the representation of women’s lives in literature but of the character of a female heroine itself and of its relation to the author.

For many literary critics of different orientations Kobylians’ka was a marginal person, whose Ukrainian language and creative ideas were influenced by German language and German culture. It is worth noting that for more than half of her life (1863-1918), Bukovyna was a part of Austro-Hungarian empire, whose peoples spoke many languages including Ukrainian, German, Yiddish, and Romany. Kobylians’ka’s *nimechchyna* (the mark of the German on her writing) is emblematic of her ambivalent literary identity, especially of her “foreignness” in the Ukrainian literary process.

For Ukrainian literature at the end of the nineteenth century, Kobylians’ka became an “exotic flower” and an “aristocrat.” Writing at first in two languages – German and Ukrainian (Kobylians’ka was educated mostly by reading German authors) – she empathized with the style and ideas of the modern German authors and was in sympathy with them, even later, when she consciously dedicated herself to writing exclusively in Ukrainian. Her remarks on modern trends in contemporary German literature confirmed her deep involvement with those literary ideas. It is also worth noting that her most provocative stories, *Pryroda* [Nature] and *Nekul’turna* [The Uneducated], were first published in 1895-98 by Karl Kautsky in *Die Neue Zeit*. Later, her German-language collection of stories *Kleinrussische Novellen* (1901) appeared. The place of Kobylians’ka helped her to reveal in her works the transgression of the boundaries of language, nationality and gender. As Lesia Ukrainka stressed, in defense of her friend, this ability to absorb German cultural influences, for instance, the paradoxical style of Nietzsche’s philosophy, had not spoiled Kobylians’ka’s writing, but made her an interesting Ukrainian writer.

Due to its culturally multinational position, Bukovyna was a place in Ukraine where modern consciousness and de-marginalization could reveal themselves. Ivan Franko noted that Kobylians’ka was a “child of ‘green’ Bukovyna, that part of a cultural and territorial region where the most modern ways of thinking and expression were engrafting themselves upon a local Romanian-Ukrainian cultural backwardness.”⁶ In Franko’s positivist point of view,

5 Sandra M. Gilbert, Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 49.

6 Франко І. Зібрання творів у 50-ти томах. Київ: Наукова думка, 1986. Т. 50. С. 281.

these modern shapes were the “sick” flowers of European culture. Lesia Ukrainka, one of the leading Ukrainian writers of the beginning of twentieth century and a close friend of Kobylans’ka, by contrast, was the first to raise the question of a “minor literature” in Ukrainian culture and viewed Bukovyna as a locus of such a “minor” literature. To her mind, Bukovyna was a world cut-off from outside influences; consequently, it was free, for a long time, of the populist influences of Ukrainian authors.⁷ In her view, it was a place where modern neo-romanticism, pioneered by Kobylans’ka and mirroring world literary shapes, arose and flourished.

Indeed, Bukovyna may be viewed as an area, in which both the undermining of national tradition and the melancholic attempt to maintain it took place. Both as a local and a female, Kobylans’ka responded to a situation of “minor literature” and created a modernist laboratory in Ukrainian literature. We could use a notion of “minor literature” in terms of the cultural and lingual inversion of “great (or established) literature.” We use the term (coined by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari) “minor literature” to designate “the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature.”⁸

In the category of “cultural re-territorialization” conceptualized by the “minor literature,” Kobylans’ka created a new paradigm of Ukrainian culture that went beyond the “organic-native” concept of the “great (established) literature” of populist writers. She reset her writing and imparted to it the force of a German literary experience, on the one hand, and a strong women’s subjectivity, on the other.

Her own linguistic choice is also symbolic and ambivalent. Kobylans’ka chose Ukrainian as her spoken language and mother tongue, although her mother was a Pole who started to speak Ukrainian after she married a Ukrainian, Kobylans’ka’s father. In addition to Ukrainian, German was the other language spoken in the family. Thus, the ambivalence of the notion of a “mother tongue” may be considered as paradigmatic in Kobylans’ka’s writing. It refers to a concept of the melancholy of gender, by which I mean the restructurization of a female identity in patriarchal society and culture.

One can say that because of her double-marginalized nature as a women writer and a writer influenced by the German language, Kobylans’ka was the first to actualize in Ukrainian culture the concept of the modern, transcending social, national and gender boundaries. The melancholy of gender – which she viewed, primarily, as a constructive and cultural, rather than as an essentialist biological phenomenon – might serve as a metaphor of this transgression.

7 Леся Українка. Зібрання творів у 12-ти томах. Київ: Наукова думка, 1979. Т. 8. С. 63.

8 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature*, Translation by Dana Polan (Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 18.

THE FEMINIZATION OF CULTURE

Concerning femininity, the melancholy of gender signifies the process of gender identification and the alienation of a "new woman" from her mother,⁹ that of her identification with reproductive woman's nature. Motherhood exists on the borderline between nature and culture, and the fantastic relationship of primary narcissism is idealized in our representation of motherhood. The desire for return to the mother psychoanalytically implies longing for a space imagined as harmonious, continuous, without breaks or separations. This glorification of motherhood, nevertheless, functions inside a patriarchal social order. We could say that gender identification implies not only breaking the given symbolic order, which is equated with the Law of the Father, but also redefining the alterity constituted by the maternal body.

Kobylians'ka's protest against treating woman's nature as, exclusively, reproductive and childbearing implies a reversing of the so-called "essentialist" notion of sexual and socio-cultural identity. Kobylians'ka proclaims a modern culture-building ideal of female identity. Her new woman struggles for independence and self-realization and becomes a cultural hero; thus she shapes a new model of high culture and transcends the boundaries of so-called "natural" (or maternal) national, cultural and gender identities. As her emancipated heroine says, "The people need more than happy families, locked in happy masters's rooms, even more than an ideal of speaking only *mother tongue*."¹⁰

The modern national culture in Kobylians'ka's works becomes gender-oriented, especially, feminized. This view was framed by the crisis of gender that became a highly topical subject at the end of nineteenth century, primarily in German, Russian and Scandinavian literatures. One may recall Strindberg, Nietzsche, Pszybyszewskyj, Otto Vaininger, Leo Tolstoy, and others in whose works this crisis was reflected.

Modernity as a mode of cultural and psychological life has an aristocratic, aesthetic and feminist connotation in Kobylians'ka's writing. Osyp Makovei pointed out in his review of her novel *Tsarivna* that the author presented in this work a female "cordial aristocratism" as a sign of the modern time in contrast to the lack of two aristocratic (rational and sensual) characteristics in the men. Makovei, with whom Kobylians'ka was in love and whom she tried to remodel as a Nietzschean "laughing lion," spoke ironically of an attempt by her heroine to seek, in life, an "artificial" ideal of a "superman."¹¹

A cult figure for early Ukrainian modernists, Olha Kobylians'ka attained this position not only because of her aesthetic ideas and modernist style but

9 See: Kelly Oliver, ed., *Ethics, Politics, and Difference in Julia Kristeva's Writing* (New York-London: Routledge, 1993), 262 pp.

10 Кобилянська О. Ідеї // Твори в трьох томах. Київ, 1956. Т. 2. С. 705.

11 Маковей О. Ольга Кобилянська (Літературно-критична студія) // Ольга Кобилянська в критиці та спогадах. Київ, 1963. С. 609.

also because of the process of representing the cultural and sexual de-territorialization of the subject. The Ukrainian writer was involved in depicting the shifting boundaries of different cultures and opposing genders. She dared to reflect an ambivalent, even perverted subjectivity in her writing. Although she was afraid of being accused of female subjectivity and old-maid hysteria, her letters and diaries show that she had allowed some of her most intimate experiences and feelings to penetrate into the texts. In the bourgeois surroundings of such cities as Kimpolung and Chernivtsi, where she lived, as a daughter in a patriarchal family (almost his entire life her father was an official of the state court who served in small Bukovynian villages), she led, as she herself noted, a life "without events." She replaced it with an intensive life of thought and feeling reflected in her works and diaries, which resonated with the main ethical and philosophical ideas of the time.

At the beginning of the twentieth century most European authors consciously or unconsciously were inspired (either in opposition or affirmation) by Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas and his style. Kobylans'ka was among those who were especially attracted to Nietzsche's concept of the future, his notion of the "superman" and his idea of "high culture." But she called Nietzsche's attitude toward women Asiatic and old-fashioned (*starosvits'ki*). Kobylans'ka's response to Nietzsche concerned first of all his perception of women, their role in culture and the idea of femininity. While referring to and quoting the German philosopher, she at the same time transcended his idea of the "superman" that stressed the Dionysian essence of Eternal Recurrence.¹² The Dionysian concept of "high culture" was appropriated and transformed by Kobylans'ka into an Apollonian idea of *individualization* that obtained in her writing female characteristics. In some sense, Kobylans'ka's "queen," the heroine of her novel *Tsarivna* became a sister of Zarathustra. Thus the woman in Kobylans'ka's works exchanged her procreative function for an educational function, and played the role of a cultural and educational bearer of high culture.

THE SUBVERSION OF THE PATRIARCHAL IDEAL

I want also to discuss the process of Kobylans'ka's subversion of the patriarchal ideal and her concept of femininity, which Kobylans'ka proposed as a key of high culture. I shall also try to connect the melancholic character of gender identity in Kobylans'ka's writing to her national and cultural utopian thinking. The text I shall primarily deal with is Kobylans'ka's later novel *Cherez kladku* (*Across the Footbridge*, 1912).

The main crux of this novel, symbolically speaking, shows the union of the Ukrainian "aristocracy" (elite identity) with Ukrainian "*muzhytstvo*" (ple-

12 Concerning Nietzsche's interpretation of female sexuality as a biological procreative function see: Linda Singer, "Nietzschean Mythologies: The Inversion of Values and the War Against Women," in Kelly Oliver and Marilyn Pearsall, eds., *Feminist Interpretation of Friedrich Nietzsche* (Pennsylvania University Press, 1998), p. 175.

beian social and cultural identity). The term “*muzhytstvo*” was in Kobylans’ka’s works rather ambivalent. It meant both the “male” and the “plebeian” character of a person. This notion further implies in her writing the non-aesthetic, non-rational and non-aristocratic identities (either gender, national or lower social group). In this sense, Kobylans’ka reshaped the idealized patriarchal concept of the “*narod*” [people], essential for Ukrainian populist ideology.

Thus Ukrainian populism becomes gender-denominated. The author, giving, in her novel, the narrative voice to the male character (Bohdan Oles’), legitimized, it would seem, through him the point of view of “*muzhytstvo*” and dealt with it as the masculine phenomenon. As Bohdan Oles’ introduces himself, he is “neither a decadent, nor a modernist, but a *muzhyk*.”¹³

It is significant that Kobylans’ka’s anti-populist stance was close to the concept of the modern Ukrainian nation of Iulian Bachyns’kyi, whose “Ukraina irredenta” was viewed as a manifesto of modern Ukrainian self-consciousness. Bachyns’kyi stressed that the “Ruthenian-muzhyk is the soil in which all ideals of the Ukrainian intelligentsia are rooted.” And yet the “*muzhyk* is capable of descending to the level a proletarian.” He asked, “What is the future of Ukrainian people?”¹⁴ This dilemma in the social-cultural development of the modern Ukrainian nation merged in Kobylans’ka’s writing with the crisis of gender. This situation dealt with the creation and education of a Ukrainian intelligentsia, especially their cultural self-consciousness. It is interesting that in the 1960s the novel *Cherez kladku* was regarded by Ivan Dziuba to be an ideal depiction of the self-consciousness of the Ukrainian intelligentsia.¹⁵

Kobylans’ka’s reference to modernity as femininity and aristocracy was not unique. A “femme fatale” of the late nineteenth century Lou Andreas-Salome, for example, considered femininity metaphysically and in her essay *Der Mensch als Weib* (1899) interpreted it as a phenomenon of female self-sufficiency. She called it ancestral aristocracy. This concept did not refer to the biological essence of the woman but to femininity as an ontological and existential mode of being. The relation of masculinity to femininity, in her comparison, depends on the difference between ancestral aristocracy and bourgeois parvenu, whose future is secured, though his desire always outruns his capabilities.¹⁶

Paradoxically, in Kobylans’ka it is the *muzhyk* in both the sense of a “male” and a person of the lower class (*narod*) who is closer to Earth and Nature than a woman and who is identified with cyclical and orgiastic processes. We see this in her famous novel *Zemlia* (*The Earth*, 1902) or the story *Pryroda* (*Nature*, 1887).

13 Кобилянська О. Твори в п’яти томах. Київ: Держлітвидав України, 1963. Т. 4. С. 168.

14 Бачинський Ю. Україна irredenta // Українська суспільно-політична думка в 20 столітті. Документи і матеріали. Упор. Т. Гунчак, Р. Солчаник. Сучасність, 1983. Т. 1. С. 27.

15 Кілька зіставлень. Читаючи Кобилянську // Сучасність. 1969. Ч. 5. С. 65.

16 Biddy Martin, *Woman and Modernity. (Life)Styles of Lou Andreas-Salome* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 151.

Inverting the traditional identification of women with Nature and its procreative function, she reinterprets the notion of woman as an individual. For Kobylans'ka, woman is both the bearer of cultural intention and a spiritual herald of the future. She calls her mother who gave birth to six children "*tykha myslytel'ka*" [the quiet thinker] and praises her as a spiritual and educational center of the family, thus rejecting her role only as a child-bearer. On the other hand, in the wider sense of romantic "Naturphilosophie," Kobylans'ka had a longing for Nature (and its maternal image) and often called herself a *muzhyk* (or a *Bukovynian muzhyk*) implying by this term her identification with and her belonging to the world of spiritualized bisexual nature.¹⁷ It is worth mentioning that Kobylans'ka ecstatically loved the Carpathian mountains, and the Bukovynian landscape symbolized for her a maternal image.

In her early novel *Tsarivna* Kobylans'ka created an image of a highly spiritual and culturally developed individual, embodying this modern Ukrainian type in a feminine personality (Natalka Verkovych). In opposition to that female narcissistic aristocrat, the author showed the culturally and morally unreliable male character of her compatriot Vasyl' Oriadyn; his Ukrainian-Gypsy origins provoke inconstancy in his values and behavior. A female-male friendship, which refers to a high culture ideal, on the other hand, is resolved in this work by an outsider, Ivan Marko, a Croat by nationality. The "foreigner" (usually German) often serves in Kobylans'ka's works as an emblematic figure representing and belonging to high European culture. A male compatriot, on the contrary, is incapable of receiving high cultural impulse being marked by plebeian pragmatism. As one of her contemporaries Mykhailo Mohylians'kyi pointed out, Kobylans'ka presented in her novels a Ukrainian ("Ruthenian") "who wants to be a European" but, rooted in provinciality, cannot reach this ideal.¹⁸

Thus in her earlier works, such as *Tsarivna*, the image of the stronger, culturally developed and spiritually educated Apollonian woman predominated and embodied the desire of high culture. The feminist inversion of gender roles helped Kobylans'ka to revise patriarchal populist ideology and its patriarchal character. However, despite Kobylans'ka's insistence that she show in her "Queen" a "thinking woman," not a "doll," many critics noticed the traditional depiction and passivity of her central female character. The main mood of her heroine was melancholy and mourning after her dead mother. Natalka's longing for self-realization was supported by the idealization of motherhood.

Although in this feminist novel the patriarchal social order seemed destroyed, the maternal image remains untouched and glorified. In her later works, such as *Cherez kladku*, Kobylans'ka revealed her dissatisfaction with the feminist ideas and analyzed gender identification in its relation to the patriarchal power of both a father and a mother. The writer presented strongly gender-polarized characters and attempted to bridge the gap between the female aris-

17 Кобилянська О. Твори в п'яти томах. Т. 5. С. 316, 348.

18 Ольга Кобилянська в критиці та спогадах. С. 172.

tocracy of spirit and the natural, earthbound “male” (*muzhyk*). In the novel, this marriage of cultural forces and utopian gender union is, by no means, based on gender equality. The resolution of this union relies upon the suppression of aristocratic femininity. The male-plebian instinct appears stronger and more powerful than the educational idea of femininity. “I am more an admirer of a woman’s virgin lips than of her parliamentary speeches,”¹⁹ the *muzhyk*-Oles’ states.

THE MELANCHOLIC GENDER INVERSION

The revision of patriarchal symbolism in Kobyliańska’s novel refers to a new situation of transgender identification. *Cherez kladku* reflects the author’s deepest grief and mourning caused by the death of her brother Volodymyr, who died in 1909. He became the main prototype of Nestor, one of the male characters in the novel who together with his sister Mania (a representative of Kobyliańska herself) had to symbolize high modern cultural types. In her letter to Oleksandr Barvins’kyi, Kobyliańska confessed that her suffering was very strong because she had viewed her brother as her defender who could in the future replace her old father (at that time an 83 year-old patriarch).²⁰

As we know from her diaries, young Kobyliańska felt alienated from her father and, as she always stressed, was very close to her mother. We could say that she lived in her mother’s melancholic culture. The father, on the contrary, represented to her male authority and she saw in him the mirrored gender difference between male and female. “Every man looks to me like my father, I have neither faith nor love for him”; “it seems to me that he illuminates the nature of all men, all together, the contemptible history of their nature. It nauseates me, I flinch in disgust, writing about this, my lips curl in derision.”²¹ Although later she became more tolerant toward her father she, nevertheless, always mentioned his rigidity. “To scrub floors or to write – it makes no difference to him. These things do not have any values for him,” – Kobyliańska wrote in her letter to Makovei.²²

There are two types of male characters that she created in her writing. One recalls the father whom she tried to feminize, like the uncle in *Tsarivna*, or Mykhailo in *Zemlia*, and the other – the ideal type of a physically strong man of “pure male nature,” as she called him. We could recall Freud, who said, that the ideal image of the man is very often a person with whom a narcissistic woman wants to identify herself, in cases when the process of sexual sublimation is not successful. It is worth noting that such an Apollonian man of “pure male nature” is that one who performs an act of castration in one of

19 Кобилянська О. Твори в п’яти томах. Т. 4. С. 210-211.

20 Ibid. Т. 5. С. 609-610.

21 Ольга Кобилянська. Слова зворушеного серця. Щоденники. Автобіографії. Листи. Статті та спогади. Київ: Дніпро, 1982. С. 159.

22 Кобилянська О. Твори в п’яти томах. Т. 5. С. 389.

Kobylians'ka's last stories *The Virgin, our Lady, have mercy on us!* (*Presviataia Bohorodytse, pomylui nas!*).

In the novel *Cherez kladku* Kobylians'ka linked the death of her beloved brother to the imagined death of the Father who stood for powerful patriarchal law. The feminized brother, on the contrary, was a person who she believed should be the father's cultural and symbolic substitute. The male protagonist of the novel *Nestor* reincarnates the image of her brother who had been "the most genuine and cordial friend of my soul and my adviser and in the future – my defender, the father."²³

Psychoanalytically, the text reveals both the renunciation and internalization of the loss of the brother who became incorporated into and took the place of the father serving as the image of woman's super-ego.

Not the separation from the mother, but the loss of the patriarchal ego ideal gives a melancholic atmosphere to the novel. Immersed in melancholy, the symbolic image of the brother who functions as a super-ego in Kobylians'ka's novel is not only feminized but obtains androgynous features. This marks his belonging to a sphere of the female-like high culture. The other male protagonist – Bohdan Oles', who calls himself a "*muzhyk*," reveals, on the other hand, a purely masculine essence. His plebeian character is the symbolic heritage of his Father with whom he wants to fight.

The melancholic prohibitive function of the ego ideal, as Judith Butler has argued, "works to inhibit or, indeed, repress the expression of desire for the lost parent, but also founds an interior 'space' in which that love can be *preserved*."²⁴ It could be preserved through the identification with the sex of the parent lost, the brother.

THE CULTURAL FAMILIAL UTOPIA

The entire text of Kobylians'ka is saturated with an atmosphere of philia – the platonic sibling love shared between sister and brother.²⁵ The first title of the novel *Cherez kladku* had been *Pavuchok* (*The Little Spider*) – this image referred to a prophetic dream relating to Mania's brother's early death and their sibling love-*philia*. But Kobylians'ka changed this title in the process of her work and finally called the novel *Across the Footbridge*. This title signified the cultural utopian ideal of the writer – the building of a new national society, in which the reconciliation of oppositions between male and female, spiritual aristocracy and lower plebeian should meet. This ideal cultural synthesis changed the mystical symbolism of the earlier version and strengthened the familial love concept, reworking it into a Platonic cultural utopia of the ideal gender

23 Ibid. C. 611-612.

24 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York-London: Routledge, 1990), p. 63.

25 See: Luciano P.R. Santiago, *The Children of Oedipus. Brother-Sister Incest in Psychiatry, Literature, History and Mythology* (New York: Libra Publishers, 1973).

community. It was Plato who based his utopian Republic ideal on universal siblinghood and hinted that friendship is the basis of a politic itself.

Lesia Ukrainka felt the idealistic mood of the novel *Cherez kladku* and read it not as a cultural utopia but as a clearly autobiographic story. "It seems to me, – she wrote, – that I know this story and everything that happened in it."²⁶ In her early writings Kobylans'ka formulated the ideal of platonic philia between women and considered this concept as a basic postulate of ideal female communication and community.²⁷ Her friendship with Lesia Ukrainka reflected this ideal of platonic philia. The mother's archetype served as a vehicle of this ideal. For both Kobylans'ka and Lesia Ukrainka the maternal archetype reminded them of Kobylans'ka's mother Maria, whom they both idealized.

One can say that Kobylans'ka was trapped in melancholic identification with an idealized image of her mother. The very idea of familial love (philia) was connected to the maternal image and that gave a melancholic atmosphere to her high cultural ideal. It is also interesting to consider the struggle of the writer to overcome the power of motherhood in her later works. Kobylans'ka depicted a mother's egotism in *Vovchykha* (1923), reevaluating the role of biological maternity and exchanging it with a cultural mission.

It might be that Kobylans'ka's view of a special cultural and educational mission for women was influenced by the German writer and editor of the newspaper, *Die Frau*, Helen Lange. In the 1890s Lange insisted that women should use their own unique nature in order to support the cultural evolution of humanity that, as she outlined, "had had until now a one-sided male quality."²⁸ For her, maternity was the source of this unique female nature that could balance the rational, pragmatic and impersonal attitudes of men's society.

This educational and ideal view of women's nature also opposed Scandinavian writer Laura Marholm's thesis that a *raison d'être* of female life is women's sexuality, because the essence of women's being is to have a man (*Das Weibes Inhalt ist der Mann*) and motherhood should be a mode of women's self recognition.²⁹ Kobylans'ka rejected Marholm's thought and insisted that her Natalka (*Tsariivna*) is not a hysterical old maid type who is seeking a man but is a "thinking" person.³⁰ As she has written, alongside of the traditional populist images of Marus', Hannus' and Katrus', her heroines represent in Ukrainian literature a new modern type of female character.³¹

In her early writing Kobylans'ka created images of the melancholic woman, and melancholy became a main source of gender identification for her heroines. Generally speaking, at the turn of nineteenth century melancholia en-

26 Леся Українка. Зібрання творів у 12-ти томах. Т. 12. С. 457.

27 See more: Гундорова Т. Жіночий платонічний роман: у пошуках ідеальної комунікації // *Femina melancholica*. С.48-85.

28 Helene Lange, "Altes und Neues zur Frauenfrage," *Die Frau*, 2/9 June 1895.

29 Laura Marholm, *Der Buch der Frauen* (1895), p. 44.

30 Кобилянська О. Твори в п'яти томах. Т. 5. С.386.

31 Ibid. Т. 5. С.322.

compassed the situation of an emerging female subjectivity. Melancholy, Freud stated in his late work, *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), describes normative female subjectivity. But Freud also noticed that it reflects “the common ideal of a family, a class or a nation,” binding the narcissistic and personal homosexual libido, which in this way was turned back into the ego. “The dissatisfaction due to the non-fulfillment of this ideal liberates homosexual libido, which is transformed into a sense of guilt (dread of the community).”³² The concept of melancholia, developed by Freud, becomes basic for contemporary gender studies concerning the definition of subjectivities exceeding any gendered distinctions.

The death of her brother, whom Kobylians’ka posited as her ego-ideal, strengthened the narcissistic discourse in her writing. The implicit author identifies herself with the male character and seeks an androgynous unity of the male and female. In the novel *Cherez kladku* Kobylians’ka created not a feminized, but androgynous model of human identity using the images of the sister and the brother. This androgynous model implied the prohibition of sibling love, which gives a melancholic character to the story.

Not only a spiritual connection but a physical semblance between the sister and the brother is underlined in Kobylians’ka’s novel. *O my God, they are so similar!* – Bohdan Oles’ reflects, looking at Nestor and recalling at the same time his sister Mania. “Those eyes, their eyes and mouth – this is so striking.” And later: “has she come to me inside of him?”³³

THE RECURRENCE OF THE FATHER

It seems that Bohdan destroyed his Father’s image, but he is dependent on his mother, from whom he cannot separate himself. Rejecting identification with his mother, Bohdan turned to the ambivalent sister-and-brother androgyny. The feminine image of high culture unites sister and brother in one body, and Bohdan, who intends to find a bridge between the high and low cultural banks of Ukrainian society, uses the androgynous image to cross this bridge.

It is also interesting that by reducing Dionysus’s creative instinct and replacing him with Apollo’s culture-building impulse, Kobylians’ka narrowed the sexual pathos of this love story, replacing it with melancholy. Mania’s first emotional love toward Bohdan passes and later becomes a calm rational consideration. Bohdan’s feelings also pass from romantic love for this young girl to a homosexual interest in her young brother Nestor and ultimately to his heterosexual, mostly spiritual love. Thus the love story is transformed into a melancholic narrative.

32 S. Freud, *On Narcissism: An Introduction. A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud*. Ed. by John Rockman. With An Appendix by Charles Brenner (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), p. 123.

33 Кобилянська О. Твори в п’яти томах. Т. 4. С. 94.

By means of love story Kobylians'ka attempted to model the new type of a modern Ukrainian man, transforming an intelligent-*muzhyk* into an intelligent-European. This collision relates both to the creation of a modern Ukrainian nation and to a crisis in masculinity reflected in the literature of the turn of nineteenth century. The changing of the world, in which men dominate while women are present only at the margins, the process of industrialization and feminization of the society led to the refashioning of the "old" patriarchal concept of masculinity. Kobylians'ka's cultural utopia reflects this process of gender refashioning and shows that in this effort for union masculinity annihilates feminine high culture. The intelligent Mania turns into a submissive female and potential mother. This is a victory of the masculine and the patriarchal, although the hero is aware of this: "I am not satisfied with my father, my iron mother, our society, but mostly with myself. Have I become a *European* Ukrainian?"³⁴ – Bohdan asks himself.

By the end of the story, Bohdan has married Mania and grasped her femininity. She has accepted the *starosvitchynu* [old-fashioned ways] of his mother. Kobylians'ka's cultural and gender utopia has ended. And it becomes clear that the circle of gender and cultural inversions does not lead to high culture ideal, but revitalizes the patriarchal shadow of the Father. Lesia Ukrainka noticed this failure in her creative sister: "The happy end of that 'white dream,' she writes, makes me sad, because *I don't know* it."³⁵

Olha Kobylians'ka's writing clearly demonstrates the ambivalence of the re-structuring of the multileveled patriarchal ideal. This process refers not only to the subversion of the patriarchal social order but to a gender crisis and to the formulation of modern Ukrainian culture. The melancholic conception of gender serves in this case as a tool for the creation of subjectivities beyond any strictly gendered distinctions. It also reveals modern types of either feminized or androgynous cultural utopias in the works of the Ukrainian women writer Olha Kobylians'ka.

34 *Кобилянська О.* Твори в п'яти томах. Т. 4. С. 62.

35 *Леся Українка.* Зібрання творів у 12-ти томах. Т. 12. С. 457.