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Source: *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 86, No. 3 (Jul., 2008), pp. 420-442

Published by: the [Modern Humanities Research Association](#) and [University College London, School of Slavonic and East European Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25479211>

Accessed: 15/06/2014 10:55

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The Uses of Nietzsche: Ol'ha Kobylians'ka's Reading of *Zarathustra*¹

MARKO PAVLYSHYN

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Nietzsche was read, read selectively, and misread; his works were plundered for slogans, and ideas and terms introduced by him became the stuff of intellectual fashion.² In Eastern Europe especially, both enthusiastic and unfavourable responses to Nietzsche enriched debates on modernization and on spiritual and national revival.³ The purpose of the following observations is to clarify how the critic of the European cultural tradition was understood and used by Ol'ha Kobylians'ka (1863–1942), a canonical figure in the history of modern Ukrainian letters. Kobylians'ka, the author of eight novels and numerous short prose works, lived in Northern Bukovina, an ethnically and culturally mixed territory that during her lifetime was part, successively, of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Romania and the Ukrainian SSR. Growing up in a middle-class family where Ukrainian, Polish and German were spoken, Kobylians'ka wrote initially in German. It was her works in Ukrainian, however, that achieved critical recognition, and Kobylians'ka came to identify herself with Ukrainian literature and the Ukrainian

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¹ I acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of the management and staff of the Manuscripts Section of the T. H. Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (hereafter, IL) and the Chernivtsi State Literary and Memorial Museum of O. Iu. Kobylians'ka (hereafter, LMMK), as well as the support of two Australian foundations: the Ukrainian Studies Support Fund of the Association of Ukrainians in Victoria and the Ukrainian Studies Foundation in Australia.

² See, for example, Bruno Hillebrand, 'Frühe Nietzsche-Rezeption in Deutschland', in Hillebrand (ed.), *Nietzsche und die deutsche Literatur: I. Texte zur Nietzsche-Rezeption 1873–1963*, Tübingen, 1978, pp. 1–55; Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (ed.), *Nietzsche in Russia*, Princeton, NJ, 1986; László Péter and Robert B. Pynsent (eds), *Intellectuals and the Future in the Habsburg Monarchy 1890–1914*, London, 1988; Christopher E. Forth, *Zarathustra in Paris: The Nietzsche Vogue in France*, DeKalb, IL, 2001, and Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890–1990*, Berkeley, CA, 1992.

³ Alice Freifeld, 'Nietzscheanism and Anti-Nietzscheanism in East Europe', in Alice Freifeld, Peter Bergmann and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (eds), *East Europe Reads Nietzsche*, Boulder, CO, 1998, pp. 1–19. See also, in the same collection, Andrzej Walicki, 'Nietzsche in Poland (Before 1918)', pp. 43–84 and Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, 'Nietzsche, Nationality, Nationalism', pp. 181–206.

nation-building project.⁴ Her early works, especially the novel *Tsarivna* (*The Princess*, 1896), were widely debated and both praised and blamed for manifesting what were deemed to be their 'modernist' attributes: celebration of the 'higher human being' (I, 298);⁵ a focus on aesthetic form at the expense of political and social advocacy; interest in characters of exceptional moral and intellectual qualities rather than ordinary people and their hardships; and an enthusiastic response to the intellectual currents of the day, especially feminism, Darwinism and Nietzscheanism.⁶

Kobylians'ka pioneered the reception of Friedrich Nietzsche in Ukrainian letters in the 1890s. The avowedly modernist literary grouping Moloda Muza (Young Muse) in western Ukraine and the writers associated with the Kyiv journal *Ukrains'ka khata* followed suit,⁷ as did, notwithstanding his socialist convictions, the prose writer Volodymyr Vynnychenko.⁸ The connection between Kobylians'ka's works and Nietzsche's texts was remarked upon in early critical encounters with *The Princess*: approvingly by Kobylians'ka's friend and publisher Osyp Makovei;⁹ less so by Kobylians'ka's fellow authors Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi and Lesia Ukrainka,¹⁰ who were uneasy, respectively, about Nietzsche's misogyny and his concept of the *Übermensch*;¹¹ and quite disparagingly by the leading representative of positivist and populist criticism, Serhii Iefremov.¹² Ivan Franko, the doyen of Ukrainian literature at

⁴ See Marko Pavlyshyn, 'Choice of Context, Negotiation of Identity: Olha Kobylyanska', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies*, 16, 2002, 1–2, pp. 183–208 (pp. 207–08).

⁵ *Tvory v p'iaty tomakh*, Kyiv, 1962–63 (hereafter, *Tvory*). Volume and page numbers in parentheses refer to the text of this edition. All translations from the Ukrainian are the author's.

⁶ Many of the key contributions to the debate are collected in F. P. Pohrebennyk et al. (eds), *Ol'ha Kobylians'ka v krytytsi i spohadakh*, Kyiv, 1963 (hereafter, *Ol'ha Kobylians'ka v krytytsi i spohadakh*). Supportive responses from the modernist camp also included Mykola Ievshan, 'Ol'ha Kobylians'ka' [1909] in Ievshan, *Krytyka, literaturoznavstvo, estetyka*, ed. Nataliia Shumylo, Kyiv, 1998, pp. 199–205.

⁷ George S. N. Luckyj, *Ukrainian Literature in the Twentieth Century: A Reader's Guide*, Toronto, 1992, pp. 7–9. The influence of and resistance to Nietzsche in Ukrainian writing in the twentieth century is one of the leading motifs of Solomiia Pavlychko's book *Dyskurs modernizmu v ukrains'kii literaturi*, Kyiv, 1997.

⁸ Volodymyr Panchenko, *Tvorchist' Volodymyra Vynnychenka 1902–1920 rr. u henetychnykh i typolohichnykh zviazkakh z ievropeiskymy literaturamy*, Doctor of Philological Sciences dissertation, Kyiv Taras Shevchenko National University, 1998 <<http://www.library.kr.ua/books/panchenko/index.shtml>> [accessed 28 January 2006].

⁹ Osyp Makovei, [Introduction, 1896], in Ol'ha Kobylians'ka, *Tsarivna*, 3rd edn., Saddle River, NJ, 1954, pp. 5–12 (p. 7).

¹⁰ Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi, "'Tsarivna": Opovidannia Ol'hy Kobylians'koi' [1896], in *Ol'ha Kobylians'ka v krytytsi i spohadakh*, pp. 36–38 (hereafter, Kryms'kyi), p. 38; Lesia Ukrainka, letter to Kobylians'ka dated 20 May 1899, *Ol'ha Kobylians'ka v krytytsi i spohadakh*, pp. 69–70 (p. 70).

¹¹ In preference to the words 'overman' or 'superman' that are often used to translate *Übermensch*, the term is used here in the original German, except in quotations from translations of Nietzsche, where the translators' usage is retained.

¹² 'V poiskakh novoi krasoty (Zametki chitatelia)' [1902], in Serhii Iefremov, *Literaturno-krytychni statii*, ed. Eleonora Solovei, Kyiv, 1993, pp. 48–120.

the turn of the century, privately expressed doubt about the depth of Kobyl'ians'ka's penetration into Nietzsche's thought,¹³ inaugurating a tradition of judging the adequacy of Kobyl'ians'ka's grasp of Nietzsche against the criterion of the critic's own conception of the 'real' Nietzsche¹⁴ — a fraught and uncertain enterprise, considering the complexity and ambiguity of Nietzsche's *oeuvre*. Soviet literary scholars, bound by the convention of disparaging the 'people-hating views of the reactionary German philosopher Nietzsche', acknowledged Kobyl'ians'ka's reception of the thinker, but presented it as short-lived and insubstantial.¹⁵ In contrast, Tamara Hundorova assumed the influence of Nietzsche to be so pervasive that Nietzscheanism may be regarded as 'that field of reception on which, and in relation to which, all modern European literature, including the Ukrainian, unfolds',¹⁶ justifying an interpretive strategy that seeks analogies between intellectual and aesthetic structures in Kobyl'ians'ka and ideas present in the corpus of Nietzsche's works as a whole. The present enquiry, on the other hand, examines Ol'ha Kobyl'ians'ka's direct references and allusions to Nietzsche in her early works. Analysis of the short prose text 'Vin i vona' ('He and She', 1892) and *The Princess*, where Nietzsche is more frequently invoked than in Kobyl'ians'ka's other works, yields the conclusion that Kobyl'ians'ka's enthusiastic, even profligate quotations from, and references to Nietzsche signal only qualified adherence to an identifiably Nietzschean programme; more significantly, they facilitate a polemical encounter with aspects of the Nietzschean legacy and the development of social and psychological arguments of Kobyl'ians'ka's own.

Nietzsche frequently figured in Kobyl'ians'ka's correspondence of the 1890s.¹⁷ It is possible to conjecture which of Nietzsche's texts

¹³ In a letter to the Vienna scholar of Slavic philology Vatroslav Jagić recommending Kobyl'ians'ka for the award of a literary scholarship, Franko wrote, 'by accident — or perhaps this was the manifestation of some deeper spiritual connection — the works of [the Danish writer Jens Peter] Jacobsen and Nietzsche fell into her hands. Her understanding of them was not deep'. Ivan Franko, letter to Jagić dated 8 November 1905, *Ol'ha Kobyl'ians'ka v krytytsi i spohadakh*, pp. 100–02 (p. 100).

¹⁴ See, for example, Luka Lutsiv, 'O. Kobyl'ians'ka i F. Nitshe' [1928] in Lutsiv, *Literatura i zhyttia: Literaturni otsinky*, Jersey City, NJ [1975] (hereafter 'O. Kobyl'ians'ka i F. Nitshe'), pp. 151–78. Lutsiv was of the view that 'the author of *The Princess* uses individual phrases from the forge of Nietzsche's aphorisms, often without grasping their true meaning' ('O. Kobyl'ians'ka i F. Nitshe', p. 176). See also Oksana Lubkiv'ska, 'Modeli vyjavu nitssheans'koi filosofii v ukrains'kii literaturi', *Suchasnist'*, 1995, 4, pp. 144–47.

¹⁵ M. P. Komyshanchenko, 'Ol'ha Kobyl'ians'ka', in *Tvory*, 1, pp. 5–42 (p. 18); see also Oleh Babyshkin, *Ol'ha Kobyl'ians'ka: Narys pro zhyttia i tvorchist'*, Lviv, 1963, p. 12.

¹⁶ Tamara Hundorova, *Femina melancholica: Stat' i kul'tura v gendernii utopii Ol'hy Kobyl'ians'koi*, Kyiv, 2002 (hereafter, *Femina melancholica*), p. 12.

¹⁷ See letters to Kobyl'ians'ka from her friend Sofiia Okunev'ska (IL, Folio 14, 811, 5 July 1892; LMMK, 22 September 1893; IL, Folio 14, 1148, 16 July 1894; IL, Folio 14, 814, undated [1894?]) and from the feminist writer and activist Nataliia Kobryn'ska (IL, Folio 14, 756, 17 February 1894), as well as from Kobyl'ians'ka to her friend Avhusta Kokhanov'ska dated 15 March 1895 (E. M. Panchuk, 'Lysty Ol'hy Kobyl'ians'koi do Avhusty Kokhanov'skoi [1887–1899]', *Ukrains'ke literaturoznavstvo*, 10, 1970, pp. 129–47 (hereafter, Panchuk), p. 132.

Kobylians'ka had read before writing the final, published version of *The Princess*. By 1892, when she wrote 'He and She', Kobylians'ka was sufficiently well acquainted with *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, 1883–84) to pepper the dialogue with direct quotations from Nietzsche's book. It would also appear that she knew *Götzen-Dämmerung, oder: Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophiert* (*Twilight of the Idols, or How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, 1889) in time to include a quotation from this text in *The Princess* (I, 243–44). The argument and vocabulary of Kobylians'ka's short novel *Liudyna* (*A Human Being*, 1894) suggest that she may also have had an acquaintance with *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Ein Buch für freie Geister* (*Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, 1878).¹⁸ In 1895, the year when she submitted the manuscript of *The Princess*, Kobylians'ka read Georg Brandes's book *Menschen und Werke* (*People and Works*, 1894), which included a long and informative essay on Nietzsche.¹⁹ In 1897 she was in possession of a work by Hugo Kaatz purporting to paraphrase and 'present in consistent form Nietzsche's world view'.²⁰ In 1898 Kobylians'ka sent Makovei some remarks on Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* (*Untimely Observations*, 1873–74), observing that '[Nietzsche] is so noble, and there is so much ancient beauty in

¹⁸ Marko Pavlyshyn, 'Diary, Autobiography and Autobiographical Fiction: Reading Ol'ha Kobylians'ka', *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 2000, pp. 43–58 (pp. 54–55).

¹⁹ It is difficult to conjecture whether Kobylians'ka had read Brandes's book when she made the final changes to the manuscript of *The Princess*. Save for 'eight or ten sheets', the manuscript was sent to the publishers in June 1895. It had been delayed because of last-minute modifications that necessitated changing the title from *Bez podii* (*Uneventful*) to *Tsarivna* (Letter to Osyp Makovei dated 20 June 1895 [v, 275–76]). Kobylians'ka wrote to Makovei that she would send him Brandes's *Menschen und Werke* when she had finished reading it (Letter to Makovei dated 25 November 1895 [v, 289–90]). Certainly, the elements of Nietzsche's thought that Brandes emphasized are echoed in *The Princess*: the critique of European culture and the image of the 'Bildungsphilister' (educated philistine); the critique of religion; the relationship between the exceptional human being and the undistinguished masses; the idea of the human being as a creature capable of self-control, which in turn makes possible control over external circumstances and over others; and the idea of a superior form of humanity, the *Übermensch* (Georg Brandes, 'Friedrich Nietzsche: Eine Abhandlung ueber aristokratischen Radicalismus', in Brandes, *Menschen und Werke: Essays* [1894], 3rd edn., Frankfurt am Main, 1900, pp. 137–225). Even Kobylians'ka's disagreements with Nietzsche, discussed below, converged with those of the Danish critic: her dissent from Nietzsche's critique of Christianity and her unease with the notion of the *Übermensch* (compare Brandes's observation that Nietzsche had produced a caricature of Christianity in the spirit of the eighteenth century [p. 177] and his view of the *Übermensch* as the fruit of 'fantasies about the future expressed in full seriousness' and of 'dogmatic conviction' [p. 182]).

²⁰ Hugo Kaatz, *Die Weltanschauung Friedrich Nietzsches*, 2 vols, Dresden, 1892–93, 1, pp. vii–viii. In the endnotes and index of the fifth volume of *Tvory* the author is erroneously called Friedrich Kaatz (5, pp. 691, 754). Kobylians'ka's letter recommending that Makovei read parts of Kaatz's book is published as part of a letter dated 9 May 1897 (v, 297–98), but is in fact a separate undated letter (IL, Folio 14, 135).

him, so much firmness and clarity that one involuntarily becomes absorbed by it all'.²¹

The motifs of Nietzsche's thought that impressed Kobylians'ka included, above all, the *Übermensch*, a notion that she grasped, not unlike some twentieth-century students of his work, as both a projected ideal human type embodying certain virtues, and as an attitude toward life that values transformation and new beginning.²² Secondly, Kobylians'ka was in sympathy with Nietzsche's imperative of self-overcoming. Thirdly, she found evocative Nietzsche's image of midday that signified the achievement of human maturity and the fulfilment of human potential. Fourthly, she was persuaded by the Nietzschean distinction between people yearning to transform themselves in the spirit of the *Übermensch* and those — the 'crowd' as embodied in bourgeois society — who are untouched by any such imperative and therefore bereft of dignity and worth. Finally, as a writer who advocated women's emancipation, Kobylians'ka acknowledged Nietzsche's strident misogyny but, like some contemporary and later feminist students of Nietzsche,²³ read the challenge of human self-transformation in the spirit of the *Übermensch* as applying especially to women.

While the consequences of Kobylians'ka's encounter with Nietzsche continued to resonate in all of her works, after the turn of the century her willingness to acknowledge a connection to the German thinker declined.²⁴ Perhaps, as a writer who had achieved eminence, she preferred no longer to invoke authorities to legitimate her ideas. Perhaps she did not wish to continue aggravating such critics as Iefremov. Whatever the cause, by 1921 Kobylians'ka was playing down her debt to Nietzsche.²⁵

* * *

Kobylians'ka purported to attach no particular weight to the prose text 'He and She', which she labelled a 'humoresque', enjoining Makovei 'not to promise [him]self anything from this little note' (v, 278). Her modesty was exaggerated: the work was an efficiently constructed,

²¹ IL, Folio 14, 138; the text in italics is in German in the manuscript.

²² See Bernd Magnus, 'Overman: An Attitude or an Ideal?', in David Goicoechea (ed.), *The Great Year of Zarathustra (1881–1981)*, Lanham, MD, 1983, pp. 142–61.

²³ Carol Diethe, *Nietzsche's Women: Beyond the Whip*, Berlin, 1996, pp. 137–65; Tasmin Lorraine, 'Nietzsche and Feminism: Transvaluing Women in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*', in Kelly Oliver and Marilyn Pearsall (eds), *Feminist Interpretations of Friedrich Nietzsche*, University Park, PA, 1998, pp. 119–29 (p. 120).

²⁴ According to Lutsiv, the last direct quotation from Nietzsche in a literary work by Kobylians'ka is to be found in the dialogue 'Balakanka pro rus'ku zhinku' ('A Chat about Ruthenian [West Ukrainian] Women'), written in 1902 and published in 1905 ('O. Kobylians'ka i F. Nitsshe', p. 157).

²⁵ See 'Pro sebe samu (avtobiohrafiia v lystakh do prof. d-ra Stepana Smal'-Stots'koho)', *Tvory*, 5, pp. 225–43 (p. 240).

original and witty contribution to an ongoing Europe-wide debate about gender relations. Furthermore, the text boldly announced that it utilizes Nietzsche, not as an authority, but as a springboard for an independent discussion of social and psychological questions.

There is no narrator in 'He and She'. The text comprises alternating inner monologues by the two main characters, each of whom has a name that ironically undermines its bearer: the Ukrainian Sofia Dobrianovych and the German Ernest Ritter. (English equivalents might be, respectively, Wisdom Goodson and Serious Knight.) As the two characters come to know each other, their inner monologues bring to the reader's attention inequalities between men and women in society at large and between Germans and Ukrainians in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in particular. He, an arrogant medical practitioner, is no less aloof toward women than he is toward his Slavic fellow citizens. She, a Ukrainian patriot and a moderate feminist, accepts the Nietzschean division of the human world into 'free spirits' and the 'crowd'. They disapprove of each other until they fall in love and resolve to marry. Each continues fundamentally to misunderstand the other. He imagines love as a relationship of mutual 'ownership', a metaphor that she rejects as incompatible with the dignity of a woman (I, 456). She, on the other hand, demands from him a love that is both noble and permanent — a wish that he equates with an expectation, in his view absurd and therefore to be ignored, that he model himself on what he (incorrectly, from the perspective of the text) understands by the term *Übermensch*.

Kobylians'ka's discussion with Nietzsche takes shape in the course of the characters' self-presentation (which is also their self-unmasking). Both are members of the Central European middle class of the late nineteenth century and respond to its assumptions concerning relationships between the sexes: that marriage is the normal situation for adult people, but not one that is always achieved; that marriage should unite people of approximately equal material and cultural standing, and yet should be the expression of a spontaneous and mutual psycho-erotic attraction; and that at least the formal initiative in establishing a marriage rests with the man. Kobylians'ka does not question these assumptions either here or in any of her other published works (though in some of her letters she adopts a different position).²⁶

References to Nietzsche serve a double role in the dialogue. First, as the characters invoke Nietzschean concepts to interpret and comment

²⁶ In 1901 Kobylians'ka entertained the possibility that she and Makovei might live together without marriage. See Marko Pavlyshyn, "'Meni ne soromno otvoryty ust pro moï chuvstva': Neopublikovani lysty Kobylians'koï do Makoveia', *Suchasnist'*, 2003, 2, pp. 127–43.

upon their experiences, their mistakes and misreadings contribute to their satirical unmasking. Secondly, the evolution of the plot offers a correction (grounded in what the text offers to the reader as experience and common sense) to the central Nietzschean idea articulated in the dialogue: that the individual human being has the potential for self-perfection and self-elevation in the spirit of the *Übermensch*. The substance of the correction (which continued to be a motif of Kobylans'ka's imaginative writing for the following two decades) lies in the fact that the human beings to be transformed are people entangled in the exigencies of social life and limited, even determined, by their bodies. Thus the *Übermensch* is presented to the reader as an ideal that is more or less compromised: more, because it is located in a realm of dreams incapable of realization; less, because it is nevertheless capable of inspiring at least some individuals to endeavour to improve themselves and their world.

Usually the reader of a literary text by Kobylans'ka is invited either to enter into emotional solidarity with characters, or to condemn them. There is no doubt that the reader of *The Princess* should approve of Nataalka Verkovichivna and disapprove of Oriadyn. In 'He and She' the situation is different. Both characters earn negative judgements, and the reader is challenged to work out how these judgements contribute to the definition of a world view endorsed by the text. Ernest is presented to the reader as an educated but superficial reader of Nietzsche, who is ready to quote *Zarathustra* out of context in ways that support his prejudices or confer importance on banal situations in his life. But Ernest has no sense of *Zarathustra* as proclaiming a vision of the human being transformed. For example, propelled along a chain of associations from the fact that Sofiia is a Slav to recollections of Tolstoi, Ernest asks himself the not uninteresting question, 'I wonder whose world will triumph — his [Tolstoi's], or Nietzsche's?' (I, 411). But he does not proceed to consider the relative prospects of the human being as unconstricted by custom and free to structure life as an expression of his or her own will, on the one hand, and the human being as altruist, inspired by the collectivist, Christian and self-limiting vision of Tolstoi, on the other. Concluding arbitrarily and without argument that the Tolstoian world will be the likely victor, Ernest moves on to the next link of his associative chain, speculating whether Sofiia is acquainted with Tolstoi's story 'Kreutzerova sonata' ('The Kreutzer Sonata', 1890). His curiosity is prurient: familiarity with this text, notorious for what some saw as its advocacy of free love, would indicate that Sofiia is sexually well informed, confirming the stereotype of the licentiousness of women of exotic cultures (a stereotype, as postcolonial criticism has reminded us, that expresses an expectation of easy sexual

success and reflects the power of the political dominator over the dominated),²⁷

The theme of domination over women, predictably, brings to Ernest's mind the notorious passage in *Zarathustra* where an old woman instructs the prophet, 'You are going to women? Do not forget the whip.'²⁸ Again, Ernest does not reflect on the meaning of the phrase in the context of the world view elaborated in Nietzsche's text. Instead, he is curious to discover how Sofiia, in whom by this time he has an erotic interest, reacts to Nietzsche's misogyny. He knows that Sofiia harbours feminist sentiments and speculates that for this reason she 'should not find him [Nietzsche] inspiring' (I, 411).

Ernest uses quotations from Nietzsche as paraphrases of his own, often less than elevated, sentiments. When Sophia falls ill and Ernest treats her, he fears jealously that he may cure her for the benefit of a competing suitor. 'Yes, I am the god in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* that sees with pity' (I, 450), he laments. In *Zarathustra* the god who looks upon human beings with pity is doomed to death,²⁹ in keeping with Nietzsche's thesis that the ascendancy of altruism in the civilization of Christian Europe has as one of its consequences the catastrophic desacralization of life. Ernest invokes the pitying god, Nietzsche's metaphor for the fatal flaw of a civilization, to articulate nothing more weighty than a fear of failure in his private life. A similar deflation befalls Zarathustra's phrase, 'Lightning of my wisdom! put out their eyes! [the eyes of the people of the present]'.³⁰ Nietzsche's metaphor illuminates the nature of Zarathustra's wisdom: it does not accrue gradually, but gathers 'like a cloud' in order suddenly to overwhelm — 'blind' — people with its force. Ernest, on the other hand, uses the phrase to wish an evil outcome upon a Polish lady who publicly expressed her low opinion of Germans: 'I said to my heart, as Zarathustra says somewhere, "Lightning of my wisdom, burn out her eyes!"' (I, 454).

More telling than such instances of the trivialization of various of Nietzsche's utterances is Ernest's reception of the sentiment, 'Der Mensch ist etwas, das überwunden werden soll' ('the human being is something that shall be overcome') that serves as the German-language epigraph of 'He and She' (I, 436) and is invoked several times in the

²⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York, 1978, pp. 186–90, 207–08.

²⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York, 1995 (hereafter, *Zarathustra*), p. 67.

²⁹ See the words of the 'ugliest man' to Zarathustra: 'But he *had* to die: he saw with eyes that saw everything; [...] His pity knew no shame [...]. The god who saw everything, *even man* — this god had to die!' (ibid., pp. 266–67).

³⁰ Ibid., p. 289.

text. In *Zarathustra*, the sentence occurs no fewer than nine times³¹ and constitutes a direct statement of the thesis that the condition of being human is merely preliminary to the transformation — potential, but not predetermined — that leads to the condition of the *Übermensch*. As Ernest uses the phrase, it has the opposite meaning: the physical drives of the human being must be held in check so that conventional social structures can be maintained. Finally convinced that he desires Sofia, Ernest reflects, 'I cannot live without her! O Zarathustra, Zarathustra! "The human being is something that must be overcome," you say. I *feel* that you are right. The human being is something to be overcome; I simply do not know whether it is to be overcome completely' (I, 454). For Nietzsche, overcoming the human being means achieving freedom and self-realization. For Ernest it means psycho-sexual self-control in the interests of maintaining the social status quo; the only question that arises for him is whether this self-control must be maintained with full rigour, or whether there might be some concessions to such passions as a self-indulgent man like himself might appreciate. Ernest remains dismissive of any idea of self-improvement, taking comfort in the expectation that marriage will soon dispel Sofia's hopes for his transformation: 'She would have me become some kind of "higher" man — an *Übermensch*! Never mind, she is my betrothed. Her parents have been informed, and I am now going to her place for tea' (I, 456).

To sum up: Ernest is a character in whose hands a potentially liberating text becomes a source of phrases for the expression of trivial thoughts and feelings, and for the articulation of a conservative social outlook. In the Nietzschean scheme of things human, Ernest's enthusiastic embrace of prevailing social mores, for all his sense of superiority, identifies him rather with the crowd than with the elite. Does the satire directed against Ernest, unmasked as the man of the crowd, signify approval of Nietzsche's advocacy of the *Übermensch*? Analysis of Sofia's monologues shows that there is no simple answer to this question. On the one hand, the vision of the *Übermensch* and the pathos of the transformation of the human command the approval of the implied author. On the other, the models of human nature and of society that the text supports compel the reader to be sceptical of this vision.

The features of Sofia by means of which the text guides the reader to a negative judgement of her are, at first, her narcissism and, later, her abandonment of her once loudly proclaimed principles under pressure from both her physical self and her social environment. Her efforts to identify herself with the Nietzschean 'higher person' are

³¹ Ibid., p. 12 and, with minor variations in wording, pp. 37, 37–38, 48, 57, 198, 199, 205 and 267.

driven by fashion, rather than conviction. Her Nietzschean ideals are but weakly espoused and easily jettisoned.

Sofia's variety of narcissism is not uncommon in Kobylans'ka's works: she loves to observe herself in the role of victim. Tamara Hundorova has drawn attention to the sado-masochistic element in many of Kobylans'ka's women characters: aware of their subservience to men and alert to the fact that men, often culturally less developed than themselves, wield power over them, they derive pleasure and even excitement from this sense of subservience.³² One could argue that the efforts of these characters are often directed, not toward overcoming their abject condition, but toward perpetuating it, for their seeming powerlessness conceals an element of power over those, usually men, who appear at first glance to have power over them. So it is with Sofia: she cherishes her identity as a threatened, downtrodden woman, afflicted with illness and the closeness of death. At the same time, she congratulates herself upon her sensitivity, sophistication, susceptibility to nervous trauma, and distance from the 'crowd'. In all these respects, Sofia models herself on the lifestyle fashion of the *fin de siècle* exemplified in Gustav Klimt's portraits of neurasthenic, exhausted, aristocratic ladies. She quotes Nietzsche as a prelude to uttering a sentiment in the funereal taste of the *fin de siècle*: "The human being is something that has to be overcome," says Zarathustra. I don't know; I think so often about this sentence, and then I usually tell myself, "I will be overcome by death" (I, 440).

Sofia's inconsistency is further underscored for the reader by the fact that, relishing the role of one exposed to death, she equally enjoys imagining herself as an altruistic enlightener: 'I have been thinking of my people and their destiny, of . . . God knows, what else I have been thinking of. I wanted to translate Goethe's *Wahlverwandschaften* [*Elective Affinities*, 1809], and on one occasion the thought came to me that I should translate Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*' (I, 440). But this commitment to the general good is suspect: the reader is led to conjecture that Sofia cherishes her image of herself as enjoying access to demanding texts of German classical and contemporary culture, and therefore to a prestige-conferring cultural milieu, more than she yearns to elevate the cultural level of the broad mass of society. Like Ernest, Sofia uses Nietzsche in ways that reflect her moods and interests, rather than entering into an engagement with Nietzsche's thought.

Sofia also has recourse to Nietzsche for defining the terms of her not altogether consistent feminism. She rejects the idea of marriage as a relationship of mutual ownership, believing that the parties to a

³² *Femina melancholica*, pp. 121–22.

marriage should strive to be for each other 'always and to the greatest possible extent worthy of respect' (I, 439), a state of affairs that, in her view, will be possible with the coming of 'Nietzsche's *Übermenschen*, superior people, those laughing lions of his' (I, 439). The text guides the reader to recognize that Sofiia's feminist utterances, reinforced by references to Nietzsche, are not so much expressions of firmly held views as rhetorical gestures intended to impress Ernest. As her erotic interest in him grows, she begins to attribute positive qualities to him, including ones that she believes merit approval in a Nietzschean system of values. Previously she had accused him of *neintelihtnist* — a lack of intellectual, but also emotional, refinement. Now he seems to her 'highly intelligent and not without dignity'; his bearing appears to announce, in the spirit of Nietzschean elitism, 'I go my own way and care nothing for the crowd' (I, 439); and, her earlier professions of dedication to the ideal of women's autonomy notwithstanding, she is ready to submit to him ('pered nym ia pokorylas' by', I, 453). Having claimed to seek in marriage both personal independence and the satisfaction of her desires, social as well as sexual, Sofiia settles for the latter at the expense of the former with an ease that signifies the shallowness of her commitment to principles.

In 'He and She', then, Kobylans'ka uses Nietzsche as a source of concepts useful for the clarification of her own thoughts and judgments. Some people, the text argues, recognize Nietzsche's ideas as potentially liberating. But the words that carry these ideas are easily reduced to slogans and attached to private agendas. Even where the ideas are not disfigured, the educated people who claim knowledge of Nietzsche seldom take seriously the transformative promise of *Zarathustra*, yielding rather to the immediate gratifications available to them as privileged members of society. The ideal of the *Übermensch* may be an attractive mental model, but it persuades nobody to challenge social conventions, especially when these are reinforced by erotic attraction. Thus, the *Übermensch* in 'He and She' is presented to the reader not as a revelation, but as a project whose end result would be desirable, were it only achievable. Kobylans'ka has none of Nietzsche's unqualified affirmation of life as a self-justifying value whose realization has been blocked throughout much of European history by a conspiracy of civilization and religion. For Kobylans'ka in 'He and She', human life is not thinkable except as the legacy of a particular — in this instance, European bourgeois — civilization. Life is also irredeemably implicated in the body that seduces the spirit and restricts the full development of the individual. Tamara Hundorova saw in 'He and She' a narrative of 'the hero's taming and changing a woman for himself'.³³ It might be more accurate to read the 'humoresque' as

³³ Ibid., p. 159.

depicting a man and a woman, both of them unable or unwilling to change, despite their rhetoric. It is life — a conspiracy of the biological and the social dimensions of the human being — that tames each of the antiheroes. It is true that the heroine, Sofia, wished to be transformed — yet life, in the guise of an erotic entanglement, intervened to prevent this.

* * *

As in 'He and She', the presence of Nietzsche is announced in the novel *The Princess* through numerous quotations and allusions. Kobyliański began writing *The Princess* in 1888. A version titled *L'oreliai* (*Lorelei*) was ready in 1891. Kobyliański changed a subsequent title, *Bez podii* (*Uneventful*) to *The Princess* in mid-1895, following final changes in the text (I, 488), and the novel was published in several instalments of the newspaper *Bukovyna* between May and August 1896. Written in the first person, the novel takes the form of a diary in which the main character, Natalka Verkovychivna, records her reflections and feelings, as well as reporting the events and significant conversations of her life. The action takes place in an unnamed small town surrounded by mountains. The setting is identified in passing as Kobyliański's native Bukovina. Natalka, aged nineteen when her narrative begins, is an orphan in the care of her uncle and his wife Pavlyna. Aggrieved by the unsympathetic treatment she receives from her middle-class guardians, Natalka falls in love with Vasyl' Oriadyn, also an orphan and, like Natalka, attracted to ideas and debate. He is set apart both by his socialist views and his parentage (he is the offspring of a marriage between the daughter of an Orthodox priest and a Roma musician). Departing unexpectedly to pursue a course of study, Oriadyn disappoints Natalka by failing to maintain contact with her, by succumbing to the vice of gambling, and by discarding his once loudly proclaimed social principles. Pressed by her guardians, Natalka accepts the marriage proposal of Lorden, a man deeply unsympathetic to her. Oriadyn returns and, though in a material position to propose to Natalka, chooses not to do so. Natalka finds paid work as the companion of a rich elderly lady, Pani (Mrs) Marko. Having achieved financial independence, Natalka is able to leave her guardians and break her engagement with Lorden. Oriadyn now proposes marriage to Natalka, but she no longer admires him sufficiently to accept. Ivan, the son of Pani Marko, proves to be a man who respects women and acknowledges their rights. Natalka marries him, achieving a state of being that she finds both emotionally and culturally satisfactory.

The text presents for the reader's analysis a special case: the story of a woman marked by intelligence, dignity and a craving for personal development who achieves autonomy, the opportunity for spiritual

growth, and happiness, in contrast to the tragic failure of a similar woman in Kobylians'ka's earlier novel, *Liudyna* (*A Human Being*). Like 'He and She', *The Princess* uses ideas, terms, images and whole passages from Nietzsche, not to confirm a version of the philosopher's world view, but to help Kobylians'ka formulate her own positions. In *The Princess* the idea of the self-realization of human beings, especially women, is presented as an instance of striving for the condition of the *Übermensch*. But — and here Kobylians'ka disagrees with Nietzsche — the wish for self-transformation that some see as the essence of the *Übermensch*³⁴ is not sufficient for such self-realization to occur within the society that Kobylians'ka's text posits as real. *The Princess*, while acknowledging the attractiveness of the project, insists on taking cognizance of two factors that obstruct its realization: inertia and accident, both of them, the text argues, significant features of life in general and of human relationships in particular.

Two aspects of Natalka's striving for self-realization have a Nietzschean dimension. She struggles, first, against a philistine social environment in order to free herself from the power of petty and malicious people. Secondly, she combats her biological self, taking control of the passions ignited by her love for Oriadyn in order to remain open to a more perfect form of self-realization if and when the opportunity for it arises.

Natalka's battle with her philistine environment takes the form of resistance to the mockery and taunts of Pavlyna and the rest of her guardians' family. Against their opportunism, malice and vacuity the text ranges Natalka's intellectual energy and curiosity. 'I wish I could study every single thing to its foundations', she confesses in one of the novel's first sentences (I, 109). She reads, writes, and delights in conversation on abstract and general topics, manifesting a cultural superiority that exasperates the denizens of her household.

The critique of philistines and the contrast between the refined, sensitive individual and the brutish, materialistic majority are familiar literary motifs that were well known to Kobylians'ka from her reading of German Romantic literature, especially the poetry of Heinrich Heine.³⁵ Kobylians'ka's criticism of the philistine draws upon this Romantic tradition and shows little indebtedness to Nietzsche's

³⁴ See, for example, Bernd Magnus, 'Nietzsche's Philosophy in 1888: *The Will to Power* and the *Übermensch*', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 24, 1986, 1, pp. 79–118 (p. 95).

³⁵ 'I used to read Heine constantly', Kobylians'ka wrote in her autobiography of 1903 (v, 215; see also v, 219). She favourably compared a poem by Makovei to Heine's 'Ein Fichtenbaum steht einsam' (v, 380). *The Princess* contains a number of references to Heine. Alluding to Heine's 'Die Loreley' (1823), an elderly governess employed by Oriadyn's family compares Natalka to 'that golden-haired water nymph L'oreliai from the banks of the Rhine' (I, 133). To Natalka's chagrin, Lorden repeatedly refers to her as his Lorelei.

invective against the submissive, timid, charitable carriers of the slave morality that the philosopher decried in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (*On the Genealogy of Morals*, 1887) as the heritage of Christianity. The philistines in *The Princess* are remote from any altruistic ethics. Indeed, they have a developed instinct for inflicting pain on those weaker than themselves. Their actions are motivated by the pursuit of advantage in the competition for material resources and by a Darwinist urge to ensure the survival and propagation of their family within the existing social environment. Thus Munio, Nataalka's cousin, views the profession of a teacher as the source of a good income easily augmented by bribes (I, 117) and the institution of marriage as a pathway to wealth (I, 118). Facing the imperative of securing an advantageous marriage for her daughter Lena, Pavlyna must represent Nataalka, whom she sees as Lena's competitor, as lacking health and vitality: her face is 'chalk-like', and the colour of her lips has 'an unhealthy redness; but her face contains not a drop of blood' (I, 113). Philistinism is represented in *The Princess* as an expression not of slavery, but of power. It is non-philistines such as Nataalka who are at risk of enslavement by the philistines, and a culturally and spiritually more complete human being must make concerted efforts to break free of philistine dominion.

The satirical representation of Pavlyna, Nataalka's uncle and her cousins implies the positive norms relative to which they are found wanting. The moral universe imagined in *The Princess* values respect for each human being, unfeigned love for one's neighbour, the instinctive performance of good deeds, the equal treatment of people similar to, and different from, oneself, and the absence of any desire to dominate, exploit, or cause harm to others. The system of values underpinning moral judgements in *The Princess* is, therefore, traditional: it is inherited from Christianity and refined by the European Enlightenment. Like Kobylans'ka's other works, *The Princess* endorses this system of values, noting approvingly, for example, that Nataalka's grandmother was 'kind and generous to all without discrimination' (I, 132), while condemning the amoral self-assertive vitality of the philistines as precivilizational, inhuman, and even animal-like: Nataalka believes that she has been doomed to live 'among ignoble, dull souls, — no! among hyenas that have neither feelings nor any of the nobler stirrings of the heart' (I, 126).

Clearly, then, the social analysis conducted by *The Princess* does not follow a Nietzschean prototype. But the representation of the process by which Nataalka overcomes the limitations imposed by her environment involves the affirmation of some Nietzschean judgements. In her struggle to survive Nataalka develops the courage to assert her own will and obtains power over her own life. The condition to which she aspires is symbolized for her by the Nietzschean image of 'midday',

defined in *Zarathustra* as a time when the human being achieves maturity, fullness of knowledge and self-knowledge, and certainty as to goals:

And that is the great noon when man stands in the middle of his way between beast and overman and celebrates his way to the evening as his highest hope: for it is the way to a new morning.

Then will he who goes under bless himself for being one who goes over and beyond; and the sun of his knowledge will stand at high noon for him.³⁶

In *The Princess* the image of midday signifies both an apogee (Natalka achieves her desired state of freedom), and a commencement (she begins living the fullness of her being). Early in the novel, inspired by Heine's poem 'Die Loreley', she dreams of the enthralling uncertainty of the future: 'Somewhere in the distance before me lies the *poludnevnyi* land. [Like German *Mittag*, in the western Ukrainian literary idiom of Kobylans'ka's day *poluden'* signified both midday and the south.] As a child I had heard of its beauty. It is radiant and golden, like the sun; it beckons with its green palms and the azure vault of its skies' (I, 127). The southern land, Italy, warm, endowed with the high accomplishments of Renaissance art, distant and beckoning, was a commonplace of German Romantic writing.³⁷ The land of the midday, on the other hand, is the locus of Nietzschean self-fulfilment, self-knowledge and self-affirmation.

Natalka's struggle to achieve 'midday' runs parallel to the tribulations of her relationship with Oriadyn. At the start of her evolution Natalka admires Oriadyn, the Byronic rebel who believes himself (wrongly, from the perspective endorsed by the novel) to be on the verge of his 'midday' (I, 160). Natalka believes that, like her, Oriadyn may be driven by a 'yearning to become different again' (I, 144). Yet she draws back from the intimacy and commitment that would be implied by a kiss (I, 164), for this would mean premature satisfaction, the closure of possibility, and the negation of the self as a person able to be 'different again'. Natalka repeatedly emphasizes the supreme value that openness to the future represents for her: 'I do not at all desire any "conclusion" so soon in my young life' (I, 241); 'I fear any "conclusion"; I think that if it were to come the doors to all spheres of thought would be closed to me forever; no, my nature is not inclined to that' (I, 312); she writes of 'the melancholy of all closure' (I, 312).

Between Oriadyn's departure and his return, the two protagonists exchange roles. Oriadyn, affecting a Nietzschean contempt for those

³⁶ *Zarathustra*, pp. 78–79.

³⁷ See, for example, Linda Maria Pütter, *Reisen durchs Museum: Bildungserlebnisse deutscher Schriftsteller in Italien (1770–1830)*, Hildesheim, 1998.

who surround him (he addresses them as ‘you who have never been human’ (1, 198), now sees the human being as biologically determined, rather than free to exercise will: ‘in great measure we are the slaves of our inborn inclinations’ (1, 216). It is now Natalka who demands for herself ‘space, Oriadyn, or so-called freedom’ (1, 218). She accepts neither herself, nor her environment as they are. ‘I love struggle’ (1, 219), she proclaims, and later, “‘Human beings renounce the great life when they renounce struggle’”, the modern philosopher Nietzsche says somewhere’ (1, 235).³⁸ These Nietzschean sentiments, which echo the refrain of ‘He and She’, ‘The human being is something that must be overcome’, find their most extensive articulation in the following diary entry:

To be free enough to be a goal unto oneself!

Above all, to be a goal unto oneself, to labour at one’s own spirit, like a bee; to enrich and enlarge it, so that it becomes radiant, beautiful, exhilarating, so that it gleams in a thousand colours!

Above all, to be a goal unto oneself and to hone oneself, day by day and year by year. To sculpt and polish oneself, so that all becomes complex, refined and pleasing. So that there remains no disharmony for eye or heart or any of the senses. So that the craving for beauty is satisfied.

To be, above all, a goal unto oneself, and after that either to become something forever great for one person, or to dedicate oneself to working for all. To struggle for what is highest and reaches furthest beyond everyday life . . .

Such is my ideal.

A human being who is free and possesses reason — that is my ideal. (1, 227)

While Oriadyn declines into pessimistic determinism, Natalka constructs for herself the image of a transformed Oriadyn, far removed from the Oriadyn who has betrayed her and his revolutionary ideals and has lapsed into nihilist inactivity: ‘I imagine him great and full of character; [. . .] he works, and not only for his own benefit. [. . .] The beauty of his soul should flood over mine; I need to bathe in the wealth of his soul. [. . .] I love him as he should become; as he is now I cannot love him faithfully’ (1, 229). She wants Oriadyn to be worthy of comparison with the eagle (1, 234), one of Zarathustra’s beasts. He, on the other hand, is ready to associate himself only with what Zarathustra contemptuously calls ‘the mob hodgepodge’ (*das Pöbelmischmasch*). Quoting in German from *Zarathustra*, though not accurately, Oriadyn delivers himself of the pessimistic sentiment, ‘Wir sind ein

³⁸ The sentence quoted by Natalka is not to be found in Nietzsche’s works, but the metaphor of struggle is frequently encountered. Zarathustra, for example, exhorts his listeners, ‘To you I do not recommend work but struggle. To you I do not recommend peace but victory. Let your work be a struggle’ (*Zarathustra*, p. 47).

Pöbelmischmasch, das Heute, und das will Herr sein!' (We are a mob hodgepodge, [we of] today, and this is what wants to be master! I, 236). The passage from Nietzsche on which Oriadyn's self-criticism is based is the following:

What is womanish, what derives from the servile, and especially the mob hodgepodge: *that* would now become master of all human destiny. O nausea! Nausea! Nausea! *That* asks and asks and never grows weary: 'How is man to be preserved best, longest, most agreeably?' With that — they are the masters of today.

Overcome these masters of today, O my brothers — these small people, *they* are the overman's greatest danger.³⁹

Natalka responds to Oriadyn by paraphrasing the last paragraph of this passage: 'I shall reply to you using the words of that same prophet: "*That is what you must overcome for me, you 'higher people'!*"' (I, 236).⁴⁰ Even as Oriadyn withdraws from any commitment to overcome himself, Natalka expresses her expectation that he will work to achieve 'midday' for the national collective to which they both belong: 'Oriadyn, I believe in your capacities! Spare a thought, finally, for our people, that poor people of ours! [. . .] In its life there is still no midday' (I, 237–38). Baffled by Natalka's new expectations, Oriadyn explains them in the most banal of terms, suspecting that Natalka has lost interest in him because of an attraction to another man. Later, reflecting alone on this conversation, Natalka draws on Nietzsche to interpret it:

The German 'prophet' Fr. Nietzsche asks somewhere in one of his works,

Your value: 'Are you real? Or just an actor? A representative? Or that which is represented? Are you, in the end, perhaps, an imitation actor?'

Relationship to reality: 'Do you wish to go alongside others? Or to go ahead? Or to go by yourself? You must know what you want, and *that* you want it.' (I, 243–44)

The quotation — in fact, two approximate quotations from Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols*⁴¹ — becomes in the context of *The Princess* a set of rhetorical questions about Natalka and Oriadyn. On the basis of the available evidence, the reader must answer that Natalka is real and no actor; she wants to go ahead, and not only by herself, but with others. Oriadyn, on the other hand, is an actor. He does not go forward, and what he does he does for his own sake. Yet, despite Oriadyn's failure to satisfy Natalka's high demands, he remains for her an object of erotic interest. She refuses to relinquish

³⁹ Ibid., p. 287.

⁴⁰ The text in italics is in German in the manuscript.

⁴¹ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols or How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, trans. Duncan Large, Oxford, 1998, pp. 9–10.

her idealized image of him altogether, for to do so would be to eliminate him prematurely as a potential participant in her future and to impose upon herself the 'closure' that she fears. Only Oriadyn's engagement to another woman forces her to regard the relationship as having ended.

Natalka's long association with Oriadyn may be viewed as a central part of her self-education in the spirit of Nietzsche. Through her encounter with Oriadyn Natalka comes to know, and to control, her physical, desiring self. She is stimulated to resist the will of others and to assert her own. Distancing herself from Oriadyn, she practises the 'overcoming of the human being' that opens up possibilities for the fulfilment symbolized by midday.

Natalka's 'midday', the state of happiness in her life with which the novel concludes, is represented laconically. The reader discovers little about the events leading to Natalka's marriage with Ivan Marko and finds out about her married life from a brief report by Natalka's uncle to his wife Pavlyna. It appears that Natalka's husband gives her every support in her pursuit of her literary career, and that 'this work is the pinnacle of her happiness' (I, 396). Ivan makes efforts to ensure that she 'is happy', while she for her part concedes, 'You know how to love' (I, 397), suggesting that her happiness is the result, not only of freedom achieved through work and struggle, but also of erotic fulfilment. Like all utopias, this 'midday' is stable. Having reached it, Natalka leaves behind uncertainties and conflicts, and the repeated need to clarify her relationships with others that characterized her earlier life. Time as process has ended, and time as midday has commenced.

The utopianism of the ending is limited by two considerations. First, Natalka's 'midday' is an emphatically individual condition. Natalka's personal wish, articulated in her conversations with Oriadyn, that her nation enjoy a political and cultural midday, remains unrealized, and there is no certainty that it will be realized in the future: "'Dear uncle," she said after a moment, "my 'midday' has arrived. It will come for our people as well, will it not?"' (I, 397). Secondly, even the individual achievement of 'midday' is given only to the few — to people who deserve appellations like the one that Ivan Marko gives Natalka: 'Princess'. The contrast between the titles of Kobylians'ka's first two published novels, *A Human Being* and *The Princess*, suggests that the destiny of the heroine of *A Human Being* — disappointment, frustration and spiritual defeat — is a destiny more general than the fulfilment enjoyed by Natalka.

Does Zarathustra's call to create a new and better human being — a call with which Natalka is shown to be deeply in sympathy — receive the endorsement of the implied author? The answer must be, 'in part'. On the one hand, the novel mobilizes the reader's sympathy for

Natalka, whose struggle with herself and the world is guided by an ideal recognizable as Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, though for Natalka this ideal is collective as much as it is individual. The novel also agitates against philistinism as a form of human existence bereft of any conception of the *Übermensch*, and against Oriadyn as a man representative of those who lack the resolution to respond to the challenge of the *Übermensch*. Given that these strategies in large part determine the pathos of the novel, it is legitimate to consider *The Princess* a work that commends Nietzschean imperatives to the reader.

On the other hand, the novel insists that in society as it is currently constituted no amount of exercising the individual will can guarantee self-fulfilment. On the contrary: the happy end of *The Princess* is possible only as the consequence of fortunate circumstance. 'I have been lucky!' (I, 227), Natalka writes in her diary on receiving the job that frees her of the need to marry Lorden. Similarly, it is luck that after Oriadyn Ivan Marko, and not some less worthy man, comes into her life. Almost all of Kobyliański's works articulate the thesis that accident plays a decisive role in life — in particular, the accident that leads to happiness or unhappiness in love. In this respect Kobyliański's position differs fundamentally from that of Nietzsche, who in *Ecce homo* defined the 'great midday' as the moment when humanity 'looks back and far forward, when it emerges from the dominion of accidents and priests'.⁴² Through her own efforts Natalka succeeds in freeing herself from the power of 'priests' (the authority of social convention), but it is accident that grants her happiness in the end. Thus, the fall of events contradicts the positivist principle that the young heroine had confidently proclaimed in the second paragraph of the novel: 'every phenomenon has its causes and effects' (I, 109).⁴³ It is possible that Kobyliański had the importance of chance in human life in mind when she suggested that *The Princess* be seen 'as a counterpoint' to the novel *Aus guter Familie* (*From a Good Family*, 1895) by the popular German writer Gabriele Reuter (1852–1941).⁴⁴ Reuter's novel presented itself to the reader as a case study in social and psychological determinism: the central character Agate fails to secure a conventional bourgeois marriage;

⁴² Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, and *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York, 1989 (hereafter, *Genealogy* and *Ecce Homo*), p. 291.

⁴³ Critics early noted the dependence of the novel's ending upon accident. Vira Lebedova wrote in 1899 that 'those who are not understood by people at large must perish in vain, unless a kindly fate sends into the path of their lives such good spirits as Mrs Marko and her son. But this is pure accident'. Lebedova, 'Zhinochi typy v nainovishii ukrains'ko-rus'kii literaturi', in *Ol'ha Kobyliański ka v krytytsi ta spohadakh*, pp. 71–73 (p. 72). See also Mahdalena Laslo, 'Tema emansypatsii zhinky u tvorchosti O. Kobyliański koi' [1960], in *Ol'ha Kobyliański ka v krytytsi ta spohadakh*, pp. 324–40 (p. 332).

⁴⁴ Kobyliański's letter of 7 July 1896 to Avhusta Kokhanov's'ka, Panchuk, p. 137.

frustrated socially and sexually, she succumbs to hysteria.⁴⁵ Both novels focus on women seeking to survive in a flawed society, but whereas Reuter's Agate becomes society's victim, Nataalka frees herself from its constraints. Determined by the iron laws of causality, Agate perishes; Nataalka survives and flourishes because of accident.

A second difference between the argument of *The Princess* and Nietzsche's positions concerns the pathway linking the *Übermensch* to existing social realities. Nietzsche's human being could become nobler and worthier if freed from domination by the usurped power of a flawed civilization. Yet Nietzsche provides no project for the transition of European society from its inadequate present to a utopian future, and the challenge of the *Übermensch* thus exists outside the contexts of time and culture.⁴⁶ Kobylans'ka is unable to acquiesce in such a model. Society with its rules and customs remains mighty in *The Princess* and throughout Kobylans'ka's works. It can be overcome only with the assistance of accident. Furthermore, in Nietzsche the condition of fulfilment, self-understanding and power over oneself signalled by the term 'midday' occurs within an individual. In *The Princess*, on the other hand, 'midday' cannot be limited to the individual: Nataalka's cultural and creative potential can unfold fully only if (by fortunate accident) she attains a harmonious psychoerotic link with another person. Ideally, 'midday' should be shared by many (for Nataalka, by the nation).

Third, Kobylans'ka and Nietzsche differ over the role played in their world views by the sense of rancour and frustration that the German philosopher labelled *ressentiment*:

The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of natures that are denied the true reaction, that of deeds, and compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge. While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is 'outside', what is 'different', what is 'not itself'.⁴⁷

In contrast to Nietzsche's condemnation of *ressentiment* as the source of a life-denying morality, in *The Princess* the reader encounters nothing less than the rehabilitation of *ressentiment*. When acts of resistance to philistine tyranny are impossible, Nataalka has recourse to imagined

⁴⁵ For readings of Reuter's novel, see Lynne Tatlock, 'Introduction', in Gabriele Reuter, *From a Good Family*, trans. Lynne Tatlock, Rochester, NY, 1999, pp. ix–xlviii, and Faranak Alimadad-Mensch, *Gabriele Reuter: Porträt einer Schriftstellerin*, Bern, 1984.

⁴⁶ Late-twentieth-century exegetes of Nietzsche have been alert to the problem of continuity that arises from Zarathustra's vagueness concerning the stages of transition toward the condition of *Übermensch*. See Stanley Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment: Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 50–51.

⁴⁷ *Genealogy and Ecce Homo*, pp. 36–37.

revenge. *Ressentiment* is an excusable and inevitable response, *The Princess* suggests, to the state of abjection (*upokorennia*) that Natalka experiences in her dealings with her guardians' family and with society as a whole. Commanded in public by Pavlyna to carry out menial and degrading tasks, she complains, 'Never did I so deeply experience humiliation . . . never did it hurt as much as now' (I, 163). She feels no less humiliated by the various oppressions inflicted upon women by men in middle-class nineteenth-century society — for example, when Lorden expects to marry her without enquiring into her feelings, when a stranger proposes to her ('A feeling of hatred and outrage against all men enveloped me', I, 300), or when another unknown man suggestively offers to see her home ('Outrage caused her whole body to tremble', I, 382). The pathos of the text urges sympathy with Natalka; her resentment against powerful persecutors is presented not as a sign of inner slavery, but as the justified response of a human being craving freedom and dignity. Indeed, Natalka derives satisfaction from her capacity to cope with humiliation, treating it as a sign of her elect status. Emblematic of this elevation of suffering is the image of Natalka silently and stoically receiving Pavlyna's reproaches: 'With tightly pursed lips and painfully tensed eyebrows I stood, as before, beside the window, gazing into the night' (I, 187).

The dignity of suffering the pain of abjection, a Christian notion abhorred by Nietzsche, is symbolically represented in *The Princess* through the picture of Christ on the Mount of Olives that hangs in Natalka's bedroom. In the Gospels Christ ascends the Mount with his Apostles, then prays alone, accepting in advance the suffering of the Crucifixion, should it be willed by the Father.⁴⁸ In Kobylans'ka's novel the scene is emblematic of the nobility of suffering and offers an interpretive key to Natalka's early life story: Natalka's painful submission to the will of others carried with it a dignity equal to the dignity of her struggle against oppression. In her case as in that of Christ, abjection will be followed by triumphant transformation.

As early as 1897, Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi observed in Natalka 'the image of a long-suffering "Christian" fighter for her rights' where he would have preferred 'an impatient, energetic "pagan"'.⁴⁹ Kobylans'ka, however, inserted an explicit defence of Christ into *The Princess*. In a dream Natalka sees Christ illuminated from the East by the rising sun. From the West are audible 'noise, shouts, laughter — mainly laughter' (I, 315). Christ says to Natalka, 'There is laughter in the West. They are laughing at my Father and me. But they must laugh, for it is a time of

⁴⁸ Matthew 26:39, Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42.

⁴⁹ Kryms'kyi, p. 36.

laughter and exhaustion. It is a time when life tires them and brings forth hopelessness. I await the coming of a fresh and pure power, and what do you seek? . . . Justice? Love? Wait, let this laughter cease and the sun rise anew' (1, 315). Nietzschean terminology is invoked here for a purpose contrary to Nietzsche's. Laughter for Nietzsche is a sign of enlightenment and empowerment, and of contempt for the force of custom. It is a weapon with which to battle the civilizational enervation that is the heritage of a life-denying Christianity. In *The Princess* all is reversed. Laughter, signifying mockery of the values represented by Christ, is a sign of weakness and exhaustion. Not this laughter, but the sunrise announced by Christ carries the promise of justice and love; not the paralysing scepticism of an Oriadyn, but Nataalka's Christlike and liberating transformation of suffering.

The paradoxical proximity of submission and elevation also characterizes the treatment in *The Princess* of the question of nation and nation-building. Nataalka believes the Ukrainian people to suffer abjection and powerlessness much as she herself does:

I hate that tone of constant melancholy as much as I hate [...] the sad and wan smile on the pale face of our people. We have grown weak from our nostalgia for the past, and the mournful melody that rings in our soul and that we understand so well has sapped our strength to the point of impotence. Is this not so? Ah, I concluded bitterly, it is true: I, too, am a daughter of the Ukrainian-Rus' people. (1, 215)

Nataalka hopes, but is not confident, that this will change:

When I became an adult I hoped that we could become a cultured [*intelihentnyi*] people, free and indefatigable in moral power; that we, too, could arrive at our 'midday'. Of course, all individuals (I thought) would have to steel their strength and overcome themselves in order to comprehend the life of the master and abhor the features of the slave. I often dreamt of that. This was, and still is, a failing of mine. If my imagination reached beyond the boundaries of possibility, perhaps it did so through no fault of its own. (1, 373)

From the perspective of the implied author, Nataalka is right to suspect that her hopes for national transformation are the fruit of dreams: the Nietzschean terms 'midday' and 'life of the master' correspond to nothing more concrete than attitudes and sentiments that Nataalka utters and urges upon the unresponsive Oriadyn. They are mere words and do not 'reach beyond' the boundaries of possibility; indeed, they signify a failure to consider pragmatically what the possibilities for socially transformative action might be. They do not correspond to goals or strategies; in short, they imply no political vision for collective transformation.

Kobylians'ka's early works 'He and She' and *The Princess*, then, accept the Nietzschean precept that human beings are capable of, and should seek, a transformation of themselves into self-affirming beings characterized by intensified knowledge and freedom. But they refuse to be comforted by the vision of such a transformation unless it is accompanied by a proposal for its activation in society, and unless it involves as part of the project of human fulfilment a privileged and elevating relationship with another person. Neither of these conditions can be met within any model of reality that Kobylians'ka's works admit as plausible, except through the agency of chance. The Nietzschean ideal of the *Übermensch* is thus relegated to the status of a seductive mirage, trumped by the force of circumstances. The state of freedom and fulfilment that the *Übermensch* symbolizes is achievable, even within the confines of an oppressive society, but only through a causality that does not depend on the will and action of the individual.

In all, the two texts by Kobylians'ka that most forthrightly announce themselves to be in dialogue with Nietzsche confirm the novelist's much later assessment of her relationship to the thinker: 'it is true that he impressed me with his depth and some of his thoughts [and this had consequences] for the future', she wrote in 1922, 'but it would be wrong to say that I submitted so very much to the influence of this modish philosopher' (v, 240).