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A FEMINIST READING OF LESIA UKRAINKA'S DRAMAS

by Roman Weretelnyk

Thesis presented to the School of Graduate
Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Ph.D. in
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
I. THE MAD DOUBLE (LESIA UKRAINKA AND LIUBOV HOSHCHYNS'KA): <u>THE AZURE ROSE</u>	36
II. A WOMAN'S WAY TO GOD: <u>THE SUPPORTER</u>	74
III. A NOBLEWOMAN IN THE ATTIC: <u>THE NOBLEMAN'S WIFE</u>	108
IV. ROMANTICISM REVISITED: <u>THE FOREST SONG</u>	141
V. CONFRONTING A LEGEND: <u>THE STONE MASTER</u>	178
CONCLUSION	228
WORKS CONSULTED	231

Abstract

A Feminist Reading of Lesia Ukrainka's Dramas

A poet and dramatist known for her innovation in technique and her "exotic" subject matter, Lesia Ukrainka is also a pioneering feminist writer. Yet her feminism, especially pronounced in her dramas, has not been addressed in any study of her works.

Beginning with The Azure Rose (Blakytna troianda), in which she exposes the myths surrounding female madness, and ending with The Stone Master (Kaminnyi hospodar), in which she confronts the patriarchal literary legend of Don Juan, Ukrainka addresses a myriad of issues important to women. Among them are problems concerning religion (The Obsessed, Oderzhyma), politics (The Nobleman's Wife, Boiarynia), and the individual in society (In the Wilderness, U pushchi). Ukrainka approaches each of these problems from her unique point of view, a view strongly coloured by her feminism. In the resulting dramas Ukrainka challenges and redefines many fundamental beliefs of patriarchy, among them traditional interpretations of God, nationhood, and literature.

The purpose of this thesis is to bring to light and to analyze the important feminist aspects of five of Ukrainka's major plays. The study begins with The Azure Rose, in which Ukrainka powerfully confronts the issues of female madness, which patriarchal society had manipulated to the

disadvantage of women both in real life and in literature. Chapter two is centred on The Supporter, the most important of Ukrainka's several plays on religious themes. Here she becomes one of the first women writers to address her misgivings about religious sexism by creating a female Christ-figure.

In chapter three, I examine Ukrainka's mixed feelings toward nationalism, as expressed in The Nobleman's Wife. Chapter four, The Forest Song (Lisova pisnia), generally regarded as Ukrainka's masterpiece, represents Ukrainka's complex vision of Romanticism. By her own admission The Stone Master (chapter five) is Ukrainka's "truest" drama. It is a play in which Ukrainka's concerns as a woman, as an artist, and as a Westerner merge, in an ambitious encounter with a powerful patriarchal universal literary legend.

The study of these plays is intended to show that Ukrainka's feminism is an important and inseparable part of her dramatic art, and further, that studies which have avoided examining this aspect of her drama may distort or misinterpret her work.

Introduction

Lesia Ukrainka once responded to Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi's claim that her impressions of his work were coloured by her being a woman with the following statement:

You see, men's "truth" in its view on some matters is very one-sided, that is why we complement it with our "truth," which perhaps is also one-sided, but it is only from both that something whole and unbiased can emerge.¹

The above is but one of many instances in which Ukrainka clearly stated her belief that gender is an important determinant in the creation of literature and that it is an essential category of literary analysis.

Feminist literary criticism emerged as a reaction to the fact that the dominance of male literature and criticism throughout the centuries denied women a position of importance and worth. Although feminist criticism did not become formalized until the 1970s, its history goes back much further.² Two of the first studies which upheld the

¹ Lesia Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," 16 Nov. 1905, letter 78, Zibrannia tvoriv u dvanadtsiaty tomakh, ed. Ievhen Shabliovs'kyi, 12 vols. (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1975-79) 12: 150.

² For an introduction to feminist criticism see Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory (London: Methuen, 1985), Janet Todd, A Feminist Literary History (Cambridge: Polity P, 1988), Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship, ed. Shari Benstock (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987), and The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (New

feminist principle were by Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir. In A Room of One's Own (1927) Woolf wrote about the male monopoly on literature and literary criticism. Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex (1949) represented a major treatise on the female condition. These two studies became the basis for the work of subsequent generations of feminist critics.

With the 1960s began the age of "women's liberation," the broader social movement from which feminist criticism emerged as an important force. Inspired by Woolf and de Beauvoir, new writers such as Mary Ellmann (Thinking About Women 1968) and Kate Millett (Sexual Politics 1969) opened the door for feminist critics to practice serious literary criticism. At first regarded as an arcane, insignificant approach by the literary and academic establishments, feminist criticism gradually emerged as a major force.

Today feminist criticism is no longer seen as an esoteric approach to literary studies. Its practitioners, an ever-increasing group which now includes men, are found on the faculties of many universities. Most importantly, perhaps, feminist criticism has become a dominant influence on all branches of literary criticism.³ In the words of

York: Pantheon, 1985).

³ Feminist criticism has not yet, however, gained a firm foothold in Slavic Studies.

Peter Conn, "[because of feminist criticism] you no longer read texts the way you once did, even Shakespeare's."⁴

Perhaps the most characteristic aspect of feminist criticism as a theory lies in its plurality of approach. Although feminist critics agree that women's writing is unique and that traditional scholarship has failed to acknowledge the importance of women's writing, they do not agree on much else. Thus some feminist critics study literary texts in search of a philosophical écriture féminine, a writing which is considered feminine irrespective of the gender of its authorship, often through their own adaptations of patriarchal approaches such as deconstruction or psychoanalysis. This highly theorized practice of feminist criticism has become known as French feminist criticism in reference to its place of origin. Its major practitioners are Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva.

Anglo-American feminist criticism predates its French cousin and includes such scholars as Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. These critics see theory, especially psychoanalysis and deconstruction, as harmful to and constraining the reform feminist critics are attempting

⁴ Elizabeth Colbert, "Literary Feminism Comes of Age," The New York Times Magazine 6 Dec. 1987: 117.

to bring about. In their writing they strive to relate women's texts to a socio-historical framework, in the process revealing those forces which have historically dispossessed and excluded women from their rightful place in society.

The focus of these critics has gradually evolved from an interest in the way literary works reflect societal reality in terms of gender to a concern with the way women's texts offer a uniquely feminist response to the realities of society. Thus Anglo-American criticism, unlike its French counterpart, stresses and celebrates the difference of women, and of female authorship.²⁵

Anglo-American feminist critics are driven by the belief that if traditional and modern literary criticism does not take into account the feminist perspective it is both deceiving and incomplete. Their hope is that one day the insights garnered by feminist criticism will affect all

²⁵ In addition to the geographical divisions of feminist criticism, there are political divisions such as the very broad one between Marxist/Cultural materialist English and non-Marxist American feminist critics. As well, feminist criticism has developed a number of subcategories, such as Black feminist criticism and lesbian feminist criticism. Disagreement also still exists among feminist critics as to the viability of men practising feminist criticism.

There are also a number of Canadian practitioners of feminist theory -- such as Mary Nyquist, Shirley Neuman, Smaro Kamboureli and others. They have not, however, as yet developed a distinct school or category of Canadian feminist criticism.

other forms of criticism. In the words of Elaine Showalter:

Perhaps modern criticism. . . will learn some lessons about itself from our anomalous movement, and will begin to question the myths of its own immaculate conception in the realms of pure and and universal thought. At that point too, the power of gender will cease to be the special intellectual property of feminist criticism, and will be seen as a crucial determinant in the history of all forms of reading and writing.⁴

Anglo-American feminist criticism has not developed a uniform theoretical system (the thought of which in itself is disturbing to many of its practitioners) and does not rely on authority figures or important bodies of texts. French feminist criticism, on the other hand, approaches texts through rereadings of the important writings of authority figures such as Freud, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida. Critics who adhere to this approach often regard Anglo-American feminist critics as naive and simplistic in their rejection of theory. Anglo-American critics respond by suggesting that the French approach unnecessarily and

⁴ Elaine Showalter, *Women's Time, Women's Space: Writing the History of feminist criticism*, " Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship, ed. Shari Benstock (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987) 42.

harmfully complicates, negates and can potentially destroy the gains reaped through a social-historical feminist criticism.

What at first seems to be an irreconcilable difference between the two approaches is in reality indicative of the real strength of feminist criticism. It is precisely because of its plurality, its ability to be flexible and adapt itself to many needs that feminist criticism will continue to grow. Because feminist criticism is capable of speaking in many voices it is able to function in conjunction with other critical approaches, such as those based on linguistics, psychology, New Historicism, and Marxism -- but in a challenging and revisionary manner.

As an amalgam of different positions feminist criticism can be very adaptable in its ability to serve a variety of purposes. Such an approach is particularly useful for a study of Lesia Ukrainka's dramas, which are rich in their diversity of concern, and consequently demand a flexibility of approach in their study.

The most solid grounds for a feminist reading of Ukrainka's work are provided by the author herself. Feminism figures strongly in Ukrainka's writing, especially in her mature work as a dramatist.⁷ In her plays Ukrainka

⁷ In addition to being a writer Ukrainka was involved

addresses from her unique and strongly feminist perspective a myriad of issues important to women. Among them are problems concerning religion, politics, and the individual in society. Through her art Ukrainka successfully redefines many patriarchal myths surrounding God, individualism, nationhood, and literature. A feminist reading of Ukrainka's works is thus a natural approach which potentially can yield much new insight into her work.

Ukrainka's innovation within Ukrainian literature in general, and within the Ukrainian theatre in particular, is most often seen in aesthetic terms only. She is credited with introducing into Ukrainian literature the form of the poetic-drama and "world themes," subject matter borrowed from Western literatures. Comments such as those by Mykhailo Drai-Khmara that the author's dramas "appeared . . . somewhat suddenly, unexpectedly," and by Dmytro Čyževs'kyj that she "inaugurated a new era in the history of Ukrainian literature," abound.⁶⁹

with the growing feminist movement in Ukraine at the end of the nineteenth century and personally knew its founders and leaders.

⁶⁹ Mykhailo Drai-Khmara, Lesia Ukrainka: zhyttia i tvorchist', Mykhailo Drai-Khmara: Z literaturno-naukovoi spadshchyny (New York: Naukove tovarystvo im. Shevchenka, 1979) 160-61. Dmytro Čyževs'kyj, A History of Ukrainian Literature (From the 11th to the End of the 19th Century), trans. Dolly Ferguson, Doreen Gorsline, and Ulana Petyk, ed. George S. N. Luckyj (Littleton, Colorado: Ukrainian Academic P, 1975) 617.

Never, however, has Ukrainka's innovation and revolt against the prevailing literary climate of her time been analyzed in terms of gender. Yet, her dramas represented nothing less than a revolutionary challenge to the patriarchal order existing in literature at the time. In their landmark volume The Madwoman in the Attic, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar propose that female textual strategy in the nineteenth century consisted of "assaulting and revising, deconstructing and reconstructing those images of women inherited from male literature. . . ." ⁹ This statement is especially true of the works of Lesia Ukrainka.

Ukrainka's first play, The Azure Rose (Blakytna troianda) is widely regarded as imitative and conventional, and was dismissed by critics as a trifle after it opened in Kiev in 1899. It is telling that the most uncomplimentary review of the play, which appeared in the Kiev newspaper Zhizn' i iskusstvo, ridiculed it for displaying the defects typical of a "lady's play." ¹⁰ Such a comment indicates that critics of the day misread the play, remaining ignorant of and insensitive to its gender-related issues. Feminist

⁹ Sandra M. Gilbert, and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979) 76.

¹⁰ P. Rulin, "Persha drama Lesi Ukrainky," Lesia Ukrainka, Tvory, ed. Borys Iakubs'kyi, 12 vols. (Kiev: Knyhospilka, 1927-30) 5: 12.

criticism, on the other hand, provides the perspective for a valuable re-interpretation of both this play, and Ukrainka's other dramas. Feminist criticism allows us, to paraphrase Elaine Showalter, "to see meaning in what has previously been empty space."¹¹

Ukrainka, personally acquainted with Ukrainian feminists, was supportive to their cause but was never actively involved in the feminist movement. Her mother, Olena Pchilka, an author of children's books, along with Natalia Kobryns'ka, a feminist writer and activist, published First Wreath (Pershyyi vinok, subtitled "the first Ukrainian women's literary almanac") in 1887. The collection contained poetry, prose and criticism written by both western and eastern Ukrainian women, including Ukrainka. Through her mother's circle of friends Ukrainka became acquainted with many feminist leaders of the time, including Kobryns'ka and Ol'ha Kobylians'ka, as well as with the staunch male supporters of feminism, Mykhailo Pavlyk and Ivan Franko.

Most of Ukrainka's critical writing displayed a feminist orientation, as did, for example, her article "New Perspectives and Old Shadows (The New Woman of Western

¹¹ Elaine Showalter, "Literary Criticism," Signs 1.2 (1975) 435.

European Belles-Lettres)," which is devoted to an examination of female protagonists in Western literature. Among the documents seized and held for evidence by the police at the time of her arrest in 1907 were pamphlets on French and German feminism.¹²

As she was in general an intellectual writer, so too was Ukrainka an intellectual feminist. Well-versed in both the literary and philosophical theory of her day, she often immersed her characters in deep philosophical dilemmas. Rather than depicting the plight of the "ordinary" woman and her problems, Ukrainka chose to write about extraordinary women of great willpower and intellect placed in tumultuous, cataclysmic crises and circumstances. Never interested in providing role-models for women, Ukrainka was more concerned with depicting a multi-dimensional portrayal of the female psyche.

Although no longer in fashion, Simone de Beauvoir's idea of socialism as the necessary context for feminism was true for both Ukrainka and fin de siècle Ukrainian

¹² "Protokol zhandarms'koho obshuku na kvartyri Lesi Ukrainky v Kyievi; protokol no. 263," Lesia Ukrainka: Publikatsii, statti, dosliddzennia, ed. P. Fedchenko (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1984) 289. Also, Ukrainka's letters are full of information about women in other countries. She was appalled by the status of Bulgarian, German, and Western Ukrainian (Galician) women. See, for example, Ukrainka, "To Mykhailo Pavlyk," 1 Sep. 1894, letter 135, Zibrannia tvoriv 10: 255.

feminism.¹³ Some leaders of the movement, most notably Mykhailo Pavlyk, saw feminism mainly within the parameters of class struggle. Ukrainka herself, although actively involved in the socialist struggle both organizationally and through her literary work, remained more open-minded in her interpretation of feminism.¹⁴ In the Ukrainian feminist experience, and especially for Ukrainka, there existed yet an additional, and crucial, variable which complicates the socialist-feminist alliance: nationalism. As nineteenth century Ukrainian literature is inseparable from the concept of national rebirth, so too is Ukrainian feminism intertwined with the struggle for national self-determination. Perhaps this uniqueness of Ukrainian feminism can be best understood in today's feminist context by comparing it to black and third-world feminism. As a

¹³ See Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1953).

¹⁴ For an overview of Ukrainka's political involvement see Iurii Lavrinenko, "Ukrains'ka sotsial-demokratiia (hrupa USD) i ii lider Lesia Ukrainka (I)," Suchasnist' 5 (1971): 68-86. Although certain situations and problems in Ukrainka's work show class concerns, for example the poem "Robert Bruce, King of Scots" ("Robert Brius, korol' shotliands'kyi"), some critics have interpreted entire dramas as allegories for Ukrainka's socio-political milieu. Thus Rufin and Priscilla (Rufin i Pristsilla) was supposed to reflect opposing viewpoints within the Ukrainian socialist movement after the revolution of 1905. See Klyment Kvitka, "Na rokovyny smerti Lesi Ukrainky," Spohady pro Lesiu Ukrainku, ed. Anatol' Kostenko, 2nd ed. (Kiev: Dnipro, 1971) 236.

black feminist in the United States today cannot separate racial from feminist concerns, so too Ukrainka, living in the Russian Empire, could not separate her feminism from her national identity. Ukrainka's feminism and nationalism merged easily as, in effect, both were ideologies of liberation. The result was fascinating, for it marked the appearance of a Ukrainian feminist nationalism.¹⁵

Ukrainka was an artist who matured and developed gradually, evolving her technique and outlook. In literary terms this meant a search for unique form. Starting with poetry and pure drama, Ukrainka experimented with poetic dialogues before finally choosing the poetic drama as her most congenial genre. In feminist terms, Ukrainka's dramas also reveal evolution, an evolution which closely resembles the three stages of the development of literary feminism proposed by Elaine Showalter: the imitation of a prevailing dominant tradition; a protest against those standards and values (accompanied by advocacy of minority rights and values, including a demand for autonomy); finally self-discovery, a search for identity, now freed from a dependency on opposition.¹⁶ All of these stages are clearly

¹⁵ For a discussion of feminism in relation to nationalism see Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Feminism in Ukrainian History," Canadian Journal of Ukrainian Studies 7.1 (1982): 16-17.

definable in Ukrainka's dramas. Because of the lack of a historical development of feminism in Ukrainian literature, Ukrainka proceeded through these stages on her own.

Ukrainka's subversion of the patriarchal literary order was profound. It challenged traditional feminine stereotypes involving character, situation, setting, and even plot and story development. It is this radical gender-based subversion of tradition which has helped make Ukrainka the most enigmatic of Ukrainian writers, for although her contributions and uniqueness have been acknowledged, they have never been entirely decoded or understood. One of her finest critics, Drai-Khmara, briefly but accurately noted, "Lesia Ukrainka was little understood, or rather completely misunderstood by her contemporaries."¹⁷ Ukrainka herself was acutely aware that she was misunderstood by her audience, and was greatly pained because of it.¹⁸ Typically, she voiced her concerns artistically, in

¹⁶ Elaine Showalter, A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977) 13.

¹⁷ Drai-Khmara 31.

¹⁸ Ukrainka felt that she needed a "Théâtre libre," an intimate theatre to stage her works like the one Antoine had established in Paris, and like the one Strindberg and August Falck had established in Stockholm. See Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (mother)," 5 Oct. 1897, letter 230, Zibrannia tvoriv 10: 385.

the drama In the Wilderness (U pushchi).

No aspect of Ukrainka's work shows more subversion and deconstruction of the prevailing order than does her portrayal of characters and the situations which they find themselves in. Ukrainka's most profound revision of tradition results from her depiction of women. In his 1883 study of the depiction of Ukrainian women in folk songs entitled "Women's Servitude in Ruthenian Folk Songs" ("Zhinocha nevolia v rus'kykh pisniakh narodnykh"), Ivan Franko found that the plight of women has always been an overriding concern of Ukrainian folklore (and therefore of literature as well).¹⁷ Notable examples of wronged women in Ukrainian literature include Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi's *Natalka*, Hryhorii Kvitka Osnovianenko's *Marusia*, Shevchenko's *Kateryna*, and the heroines of Marko Vovchok's short stories. Their suffering, however, was defined from a masculine, usually sentimental, point of view. The image of the wronged woman in nineteenth-century Ukrainian literature parallels that of her counterparts in other literatures of the time. Summarizing the findings of Gilbert and Gubar, Toril Moi notes that the ideal nineteenth-century woman in

¹⁷ Franko's contribution to the development of Ukrainian feminism was enormous and invaluable. For a detailed discussion of Franko and feminism see Irena Knysh, Ivan Franko ta rivnopravnist' zhinky: U 100-richchia z dnia narodyn (Winnipeg: privately published, 1956).

English literature is seen as a "passive, docile and above all selfless creature," an observation which applies equally well to Ukrainian literature.²⁰ Also well-preserved in Ukrainian literature are the two polarities of female prototype identified by Gilbert and Gubar, those of angel and monster.²¹ In the Ukrainian experience, the emphasis lies heavily on woman as angel-martyr.

Ukrainka's dramas mark the arrival in Ukrainian literature of female characters who are both complex individuals as well as flesh-and-blood women with intellectual, emotional and sexual needs. Ukrainka achieves her multi-faceted portrayals of women through diverse means. In her first play, The Azure Rose, she portrays a complex woman placed in a tragic situation. The protagonist, Liubov, finds herself divided between patriarchal society's expectations and her own desires. The play chastizes a system which demands from women behaviour which denies their freedom and independence. In the play Liubov loves Orest, but is reluctant to submit to her feelings, because she realizes the dangers to her identity through her relationship with a man in a man's world. She chooses to go

²⁰ Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory (London: Methuen, 1985) 60.

²¹ Gilbert and Gubar 76.

mad, through her madness gaining control over her own fate. Through her complexity and range of action within the play, Liubov represents the appearance of the "new woman" on the Ukrainian stage.²²

Ukrainka's characters often surprise through a reversal of expectation. In her delightfully sarcastic dialogue The Farewell (Proshchannia), Ukrainka reverses traditionally expected male-female behaviour.²³ In the dialogue, the man and woman (both of whom are nameless), reverse traditional behaviour patterns. "She" is logical and calm; "He" is irrational and emotional. Ukrainka uses this form of reversal many times throughout her dramas. In The Stone Master (Kaminnyi hospodar) reversal appears in complex philosophical terms. In this play the protagonist, Donna Anna (a woman as protagonist is in itself a subversion of the Don Juan legend), appears as a power-seeking Nietzschean figure who seduces Don Juan and then contributes to his

²² Although Mykhailo Staryts'kyi's The Talent (Talan) was the first Ukrainian play to draw its subject matter from the lives of the intelligentsia, and featured a female protagonist, his heroine remained essentially true to type, that is, a martyr who is unable to take action because of her milieu and circumstances. Ukrainka's Liubov suffers through her own choice, an important distinction.

²³ Humour in Ukrainka's plays, which is ever-present, is seldom, if at all mentioned by critics. Her use of humour represents yet another break with the expected norm. Compare, for example, Marko Vovchok's grimly realistic and humourless stories.

emasculatation.

Ukrainka's reversals of character are not always easily discernible. The Nymph (Mavka) of The Forest Song (Lisova pisnia) in traditional scholarship represents no more than the introduction into Ukrainian literature of a new folkloric creation.²⁴ More consequentially, however, she represents the depiction of a new woman in Ukrainian literature, whose uniqueness is especially noticeable in a comparison with the depiction of nymphs by other authors (Shevchenko's Rusalka for example). The Forest Song can also be read as an allegory of the story of the Garden of Eden, except that in Ukrainka it is the man who, through his art, seduces the woman.

Character reversal sometimes manifests itself through the structure of Ukrainka's plays. In the Wilderness is a play in which Ukrainka depicts the loneliness and isolation of an artist misunderstood and unappreciated by those for whom he creates his art. Critics have understood this play to reflect Ukrainka's own sense of isolation. Why, however, would Ukrainka, a feminist author, present a man as the

²⁴ See P. Ponomar'ov's excellent article on the way Ukrainka's demonological characters in The Forest Song compare with their prototypes in Ukrainian folklore, "Fol'klorni osnovy Lisovoi pisni Lesi Ukrainky, in Materialy do vyvchennia istorii ukrains'koi literatury, ed. Oleksandr Bilets'kyi, 5 vols. (Kiev: Radians'ka shkola, 1961) 4: 201-18.

play's protagonist? A feminist reading of the play is particularly suggestive in that it seems to closely follow Gubar's observation that "in terms of the production of culture, she [woman] is an art object: she is the ivory carving or mud replica, an icon or doll, but she is not the sculptor."²⁵ In the play, Richard (as an artist in society) is disillusioned by his community's lack of appreciation for his art. His personal frustration as an artist (an impotence to create), however, stems from his inability to sculpt his ideal woman, an endeavour doomed to failure. The male artist's inability to create the ideal woman constitutes a reversal of the tradition noted by Gubar.

The accepted protagonist of Rufin and Priscilla is Rufin.²⁶ Yet, a detailed examination of the play shows Priscilla's tragedy to be just as complex and important as Rufin's (as the title of the play itself suggests). The tragedies of both protagonists are presented in a perfectly mirrored fashion. A similar pattern is seen in The Obsessed (Oderzhyma). In this play the woman protagonist, Miriam,

²⁵ Susan Gubar, "'The Blank Page' and the Issues of Female Creativity," The New Feminist Criticism, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon, 1985) 293.

²⁶ For example, see Constantine Bida, "Life and Work," Lesya Ukrainka (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1968) 58-59, and Oleksandr Deich, Lesia Ukrainka: Krytyko-biohrafichnyi narys, Dorohoiu druzhby: Statti, portrety, narysy (Kiev: Dnipro, 1977) 120-21.

loves the Messiah, but cannot believe in his teachings. Just as Christ dies for those whom he loves, so Miriam dies for Him, stoned to death by a mob, and her death it is suggested, equals the Redeemer's. Borys Iakubs'kyi, one of Ukrainka's most astute critics, interprets Miriam's action in the play as the manifestation of a "great, insane, mindless love."²⁷ Constantine Bida echoes Iakubs'kyi's thoughts by terming her love an "obsession."²⁸ Neither critic can accept the struggle of a woman to offer love through choice, as opposed to expectation. Noteworthy, and full of implication, is Ukrainka's choice of resolving this problem by equating Christ-God with a mortal woman. In act I Christ actually asks Miriam, "Do you, a woman, want to equal me. . . ."²⁹ Thus Ukrainka's Miriam anticipated women Christ-figures now popular among women writers.³⁰

In some of Ukrainka's plays the feminine overpowers the masculine. The Azure Rose, The Forest Song, The Stone Master and The Nobleman's Wife (Boiarynia) belong in this

²⁷ Borys Iakubs'kyi, "Poema nadmirnoho indyvidualizmu," Ukrainka, Tvory 5: 110.

²⁸ Bida 49.

²⁹ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 128.

³⁰ See for example Barbara Hill Rigney, Lilith's Daughters: Women and Religion in Contemporary Fiction (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1982).

category. In all four plays women dominate their male partners. It is important to note, however, that these women are not always spiritually or otherwise superior to the men in their lives. In fact, one of the prominent features of Ukrainka's women is their proneness to err. In The Nobleman's Wife, for example, Oksana realizes that she is responsible for her own downfall because of both her blind love for Stepan and her fear of conflict. Instead of blaming her ineffectual husband and the circumstances which contribute to her tragedy, Oksana assumes full responsibility for her actions, and accepts her fate as her punishment. Vulnerability, present in all of Ukrainka's women, and usually expressed against a background of tragic love, contributes to the fullness of their character, as does their susceptibility to corruption and other vices traditionally reserved for men.

Although Ukrainka is, for the most part, interested in philosophical questions, she does include in her plays samplings of the common problems women face. The Lawyer Martian (Advokat Martian) serves as a reminder that although Christianity promises equality of men and women before God, Christian men often do not believe this principle to apply on earth. The same problem is echoed in In the Wilderness. The Nobleman's Wife and The Stone Master serve as reminders of the indignities inflicted upon women in the name of

custom and tradition. The Farewell highlights the sexist implications of courtship.

By ignoring the importance of gender, Ukrainian literary criticism has both failed to embrace the full richness of Ukrainka's work and, even worse, has misinterpreted much of it. Thus although Ukrainka's illness-enforced isolation has been used to explain the underlying feeling of solitude in her work, this loneliness has never been considered as also resulting from her position as a woman writing in a world where women and their problems are not considered important. In her study of Emily Dickinson, Joanne Feit Diehl contends that Dickinson was able to experiment and be creative precisely because she considered herself an outsider, apart from the traditions of her male forebears.³¹ Similarly, from a feminist perspective, Ukrainka's work should be approached more as a subversion of the Ukrainian (and Western) Romantic tradition, rather than an unchallenging adoption of it.

Critics have long argued over Ukrainka's use of "exotic" settings in her dramas. The debate centres on whether Ukrainka, through her (mostly) non-Ukrainian settings, was interested primarily in Ukrainian, or in

³¹ Joanne Feit Diehl, Dickinson and the Romantic Imagination (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981) 7.

"universal" problems. (That the two should be incompatible is an absurd thought in itself.) Although the reasons for Ukrainka's choice of settings were complex (not the least of them being her desire to broaden the horizons of her native literature), her choice has never been examined in terms of gender. In her pioneering study of women and the modern novel, Mary Ellmann finds that the idea of range is considered to be masculine, and confinement feminine, thus women novelists are expected to confine themselves to "hermetically sealed" spaces: in practice, either the bedroom or the salon.³² Although Ukrainka's first play does take place in the parlour, she subsequently develops settings that are anything but closed or finite in range. From a feminist standpoint, Ukrainka's choice of setting represents another example of her challenge to the expected norm.

In his insightful article "Towards a Feminist Reading of Evgenii Onegin," J. Douglas Clayton states that "for Pushkin women are mostly of interest as erotic creatures," and terms it "remarkable that there has been no systematic attempt to examine the role of women and the erotic in Pushkin's work."³³ Similarly, although it is clear that for

³² Mary Ellmann, Thinking About Women (London: Virago, 1979) 87-93.

Ukrainka women were of interest for many reasons other than their role as erotic and sexual beings, their strongly present sexual side is rarely mentioned by literary scholars.³⁴ Ukrainka herself has been made into a virginal figure in the patriarchal literary canon. No biographers mention her own love interests, and critics, who in unison describe the ideal and spiritual forms of love in her work, ignore any discussions of eroticism and sex in her plays. Perhaps to do so would prove threatening to the sanitized image of Ukrainka which male criticism has created. To ignore this aspect of her work, however, is unacceptable. That it has been avoided from a traditional-patriarchal literary point of view indicates that view's lack of objectivity in the treatment of female writers and characters.

Many of Ukrainka's plays reveal complex sexual symbolic systems. In The Nobleman's Wife, Oksana is initially drawn to Stepan because of the ideal love with which he promises

³³ J. Douglas Clayton, "Towards a Feminist Reading of Evgenii Onegin," Canadian Slavonic Papers 29.2-3 (1987): 254.

³⁴ Slobodanka Vladiv's article on The Forest Song, for example, is the only article on that play which mentions the erotic nature of the love depicted within it. See Slobodanka Vladiv, "Lesia Ukrainka's Lisova pisnia as a Variant of the Liebestod Motif," Journal of Ukrainian Studies 10.1 (1985): 25-37.

to cherish her. She prefers his hand, clean and "unbloodied" (and thus virginal) to those of the other young men of Ukraine whose hands are bloodied. They, unlike he, experience life. Once she becomes his wife, Oksana quickly learns that she cannot live with an impotent man. (Stepan is rendered impotent through his own choice.) At the end of the play Oksana compares herself and Stepan to a sword and sheath, which, through lack of use, have rusted together, losing their ability to function. Although some of this imagery may be explained in different terms, its sexual base is unmistakable.

A sexual problem forms the very centre of Rufin and Priscilla. The two protagonists love each other very much. Priscilla is a deeply believing Christian, but Rufin, although he tries to be one, cannot intellectually accept Christianity. Priscilla's dilemma is that she cannot be a wife to Rufin (have sexual relations with him) unless he becomes a Christian (something she knows that he cannot do). Priscilla's tragedy is that she cannot at the same time be both a wife to Rufin and a believer. Thus, a philosophical problem between husband and wife creates the tragedy which manifests itself in sexual terms.

The most complex play in terms of sexual imagery is The Stone Master. Two phallic symbols dominate the play, those being Don Juan's rapier and the crystal mountain which

appears in Anna's recurring dream. Don Juan, who, in the process of the play becomes totally emasculated, depends upon his sword to defend his fragile sense of masculinity. The only way he can equal the Commander, and thereby prove himself deserving of Anna, is by first threatening, and ultimately killing him with his rapier. Feeling challenged by Anna's statement that she has locked herself away in an impregnable castle, Juan responds, "Do I not have a rapier, Anna?" To which she answers in an equally challenging tone, "And so what -- do you think you could depopulate Madrid (with it)?"³⁵ In her dream, Anna imagines herself on the top of a crystal mountain, where no man has access to her. Being on top of this phallic symbol symbolizes power for Anna, and it is from this plateau that she challenges and ultimately subdues Don Juan.

The Forest Song contrasts the worlds of erotic and spiritual love. Mavka, as a creature of nature free from the regulation of society, is a highly erotic figure. From Perelesnyk's temptations of her, and her discussions with her insatiable cousin Rusalka, we see her as such. Even her meeting with Lukash, which begins her initiation into the world of spiritual love, is marked with physical desire.

³⁵ Lesia Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 141.

There is no doubt that their attraction to each other, symbolized by a long and passionate kiss, is highly physical. Lukash seduces Mavka's soul through his music, which he plays through yet another phallic symbol, his flute.

Sexual imagery in Ukrainka's other plays ranges from the depiction of the savage sensuality of the Indian girl in In the Wilderness, who provides a vivid contrast to the Puritans in the play, to the sexual offering of herself by Nerissa to her husband's enemy in The Orgy (Orhiia). A woman sexually submitting to her lover's opponent is a recurring theme in Ukrainka's work, also found in The Stone Master, where Dolores prostitutes herself to obtain Don Juan's pardon.³⁶ It is found in a reversed manner in The Nobleman's Wife, where Stepan in effect becomes a pimp by insisting that Oksana kiss on the lips an old Boiar whom she finds repulsive. The sexual and erotic nature of Ukrainka's female protagonists represents yet another example of her revision of the traditional images of women in Ukrainian literature.

³⁶ Also, see Ukrainka's satirical poem "A Woman's Portrait" ("Zhinochyi Portret," 1906) in which a woman sells herself for love. The "selling" of women by way of marriage often occurs in Ukrainka's works. See, for instance the poem "Samson" ("Sampson") and the short story Regret (Zhal').

Avraam Hozenpud, in his excellent study of Ukrainka entitled Poetychnyi teatr, is one of the few critics who displays sensitivity to feminist concerns. His interpretation of The Stone Master, although not qualifying as a feminist critique of the play, nevertheless discusses the feminist question raised in it. Hozenpud identifies the theme of Ukrainka's play as the battle of the sexes, and notes that the Ukrainian author borrowed the theme directly from Ibsen (adding that it was a popular theme at the time, and was also present in the plays of Strindberg, Hauptmann, and Shaw).³⁷ Hozenpud continues by comparing the "duel" of women over the control of a man in Ukrainka's play with a similar "duel" in Hedda Gabler, concluding that although there are differences, the motif remains fundamentally similar in both plays.³⁸ Although Hozenpud's observations are valuable, they do not address the fundamental issue, that is, how Ukrainka differs from Ibsen and other contemporary male dramatists in approaching the problem from her feminine standpoint.

Amidst the paucity in quality and quantity of research done on Ukrainka recently, two articles stand out because of

³⁷ Avraam Hozenpud, Poetychnyi teatr (Kiev: Mystetstvo, 1947) 226.

³⁸ Hozenpud 227.

their freshness of approach. In the first of these, "Lesia Ukrainka's Blakytna Troianda: Apropos the Theme of Psychic Murder," Irene Makaryk proposes that Ukrainka employed the Strindbergian idea of psychic murder in her first play, but qualifies her finding by saying that Ukrainka shaped, rather than copied, Strindberg's idea for her own purpose.³⁹ The intent of the article is to show that The Azure Rose is a more complex and successful play than most critics realize. In the second article, "Lesia Ukrainka's Lisova pisnia as a Variant of the Liebestod Motif," Slobodanka Vladiv suggests that it is through the presence of the plot motif of love-death or Liebestod in The Forest Song "that the play is most directly identifiable as part of the turn-of-the-century Neo-Romantic paradigm."⁴⁰ Although the insight gained from both these articles is illuminating, neither of them can be considered feminist in approach. Both critics are more interested in discovering new parallels between Ukrainka's dramas and Western literatures, choosing to remain within traditional patriarchal criteria of literary criticism.

Especially disappointing are Soviet critics, who, it

³⁹ Irene R. Makaryk, "Lesia Ukrainka's Blakytna Troianda: Apropos the Theme of Psychic Murder," Studia Ucrainica 2 (1984): 32.

⁴⁰ Vladiv 25.

might be expected, would use a marxist approach to literary criticism in a way which could prove advantageous and insightful for a discussion of Ukrainka as a feminist writer. Instead, we find simplistic analyses focused on the exploitation of women solely in class terms. For example, in his study of The Nobleman's Wife, Oleh Babyshkin concludes that Oksana's tragedy results from the injustices perpetrated on seventeenth-century Russia by the Tsar.⁴¹ Babyshkin falsely claims that Stepan is led to his tragedy through his equally harsh predicament under the Tsar's oppressive rule, and that although the Tsar may have been an evil person, Ukrainka shows her empathy for Russians in the play through the sympathy Oksana shows towards Russian women. (She does so indirectly at best). Babyshkin later assaults the play with the comical statement that Oksana's tragedy is caused by her failure to muster the willpower necessary to fight the evils of tsarism. He concludes by noting that Ukrainka had not properly researched the play, failed to be "totally objective," and was not herself satisfied with it.⁴² It is through such unconvincing rationalizations that Babyshkin justifies his

⁴¹ Oleh Babyshkin, Dramaturhiia Lesi Ukrainky (Kiev: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo obrazotvorchoho mystetstva i muzychnoi literatury, 1963) 225.

⁴² Babyskin 225-27.

negative assessment of The Nobleman's Wife.

No study of Ukrainka as a feminist writer would be complete without a coming to terms with Franko's famous statement that through her literature Ukrainka, "this sickly, weak girl -- is perhaps the only man in all of today's Ukraine."⁴³ The dilemma posed by Franko's statement has two possible resolutions. Either Franko is right, and Ukrainka's writing is "manly," that is, espousing qualities judged to be important by patriarchal standards, which would confirm Hélène Cixous's cautionary note that "writing signed with a woman's name doesn't necessarily make a piece of writing feminine."⁴⁴ Or, he is wrong, in which case he is guilty of a misreading of Ukrainka. As Franko failed to realize the underlying implications of Ukrainka's challenge to patriarchal tradition, his evaluation of her work as "manly," even though it is meant as a compliment, is misguided. It is rooted in the assumption that the highest praise a woman's work can elicit is to have it judged by masculine standards.⁴⁵

⁴³ Ivan Franko, "Lesia Ukrainka," Zibrannia tvoriv u p'iatdesiaty tomakh, ed. Ie. P. Kyryliuk, 50 vols. (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1976-86) 31: 271.

⁴⁴ Hélène Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation," trans. Annette Kuhn, Signs 7.1 (1981): 52.

⁴⁵ Ellmann discusses this question in her book on pp. 32-33. She reduces it to its lowest comic denominator in the statement, "The working rule is simple, basic: there

The assumption behind labeling a female writer as exuding masculine qualities, observes Margaret Atwood, is "that women are by nature soft, weak and not very talented, and that if a woman writer happens to be a good writer, she should be deprived of her identity as a female and provided with higher (male) status."⁴⁶ Furthermore, notes Atwood, "'Maleness' is exemplified by the 'good' male writer; 'femaleness,' since it is seen by such [patriarchal] reviewers as a handicap or deficiency, is held to be transcended or discarded by the 'good' female one. In other words, there is no critical vocabulary for expressing the concept 'good/female.'"⁴⁷

Franko's comments illustrate the crux of the problem critics have created in their approach to Ukrainka: in their search for elements which have traditionally been seen as being important in a patriarchal literary system they have neglected a whole alternate world of insight.

In the chapters that follow I intend to show that although it has not been studied, Ukrainka's feminism is

must always be two literatures like two public toilets, one for Men and one for Women."

⁴⁶ Margaret Atwood, "Paradoxes and Dilemmas, the Woman as Writer: Women in the Canadian Mosaic," Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader, Ed. Mary Eagleton (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) 76.

⁴⁷ Atwood 76.

strongly and integrally a part of her work. I have chosen the feminist approach not because it is fashionable, but because of my firm conviction that feminist criticism provides the best perspective from which to discover what remains undiscovered in Ukrainka's work, and in the process to confront the fallacies which have accumulated about Ukrainka's work throughout the years.

My alignment is not with any single strain of feminist criticism, although in approach my study may perhaps best be classified as being of the Anglo-American variety. As a male critic I have no wish to add a "male perspective" to feminist criticism, knowing, moreover, that my study will inherently reveal some form of bias. In short, my dedication is not to theory or approach, but to the dramas of Lesia Ukrainka.

My study of Ukrainka's dramas consists of five chapters, each devoted to a different aspect of her feminism. Together, these chapters are not meant to be an exhaustive account of Ukrainka's literary feminism but, rather, a selective analysis of her feminism as it appears in her major plays.

In each chapter I discuss a single play. I have limited myself to a study of Ukrainka's dramas because it is here that as a mature writer Ukrainka most strongly articulates her feminism. Similarly, I limit myself to a

reading of those dramas which I believe best reveal Ukrainka's feminism. The discussion of each play is not meant as a comprehensive overview of that individual work, but rather as an analysis from the point of view of a specific feminist concern. Together, the five chapters are intended to suggest the development, as well as both the complexity and the depth, of Ukrainka's literary feminism.

The study begins with The Azure Rose, in which Ukrainka powerfully confronts the issues of female madness, which patriarchal society had manipulated to the disadvantage of women both in real life and in literature. The play is also noteworthy because it is Ukrainka's most profoundly and overtly autobiographical work. It is partly so because The Azure Rose was Ukrainka's first play, in which she did not conceal her own person as she would in later plays.

Chapter two is centred on The Obsessed, the most important of Ukrainka's several plays on religious themes. Here she becomes one of the first women writers to address her misgivings about religious sexism by creating a female Christ-figure. A discussion of this play reveals that Ukrainka's anti-clericalism was largely the result of her mixed feelings as a woman toward religion.

In chapter three, I examine Ukrainka's mixed feelings toward nationalism, as expressed in The Nobleman's Wife. This play, banned by the Soviets, is also misunderstood in

the West. Far from being the anti-Russian statement that some critics believe it to be, it reveals Ukrainka's concept of nationalism, a concept which is built upon strong links between nationhood and womanhood and the common interests of both.

Chapter four, The Forest Song, generally regarded as Ukrainka's masterpiece, represents Ukrainka's complex vision of Romanticism. Appearing as a reaction to traditional Ukrainian Romanticism of the nineteenth century, it is founded upon a gender-based unwillingness to accept Romanticism's creation of the woman-monster. Like Ukrainka's other masterpiece, The Stone Master, The Forest Song challenges patriarchy in both literary and philosophical terms.

By her own admission The Stone Master (chapter five) is Ukrainka's "truest" drama. It is a play in which Ukrainka's concerns as a woman, as an artist, and as a Westerner merge, in an ambitious encounter with a powerful patriarchal universal literary legend. Ukrainka emerges victorious because hers is a worthy contribution to the legend, significant mainly because it is a gender-based confrontation of it. The Stone Master attests to the high degree of artistry Ukrainka developed in expressing her feminism.

A feminist reading of Ukrainka's dramas should not be

understood as a specialized reading with a narrow range of interest. My hope is that such a reading will be seen as providing the missing variable in the study of Ukrainka which can strongly contribute toward a richer and a more complete understanding of her art.

The Mad Double (Lesia Ukrainka and Liubov Hoshchyns'ka):

The Azure Rose

. Literary scholars have almost universally come to regard Ukrainka's first drama, The Azure Rose (Blakytna Troianda), as an imitative, inferior effort, little more than a prelude to her mature works. Few have emphasized the fact that it represents a pioneering foray into the area of psychological drama. None have recognized that Ukrainka's distinctly feminist depiction of female madness presents a powerful challenge to the beliefs and myths surrounding female instability and insanity prevalent in the society, medical opinion, and literature of the time.

Ukrainka set the action of The Azure Rose among the urban intelligentsia of her own time.¹ Orest Hruich, a young writer, is in love with Liubov Hoshchyns'ka, a young woman whose artistic ambitions no one takes seriously. Liubov initially resists Orest's overtures, fearing to become trapped in marriage. Eventually, however, because of her great need to be loved, Liubov succumbs to Orest's protestations of love and agrees to marry him. Their intended union is complicated by everyone's (especially

¹ The Azure Rose was not Ukrainka's only planned drama based on the life of the intelligentsia. Around 1908 Ukrainka prepared the plan for a drama about an urban family (named Bazhaiv). The play's protagonist was to have been Hanna, an artistic, sickly young woman. There is good reason to believe that Ukrainka abandoned the drama because of the negative critical reception of The Azure Rose.

Orest's mother's) belief that Liubov suffers from a hereditary mental illness. They fear that Liubov, like her mother before her, will go mad and will ruin Orest in the process.

After professing her love for Orest, Liubov does go mad, but not for the reasons everyone expects. Rather, her action represents a voluntary descent into madness as a viable alternative to her predicament. Liubov leaves for the Crimea to recover, only to be followed there in a year's time by Orest and his mother, who have decided that he cannot live without her. Faced with no option this time, Liubov commits suicide.

The writing of the play marked an important turning point in both Ukrainka's life and literary career. For the first time she was ready to assert herself as a woman and writer. Abandoning the guidelines which she had followed for years (largely as a result of her mother's influence), Ukrainka created a drama which represented not only a radical new step for the Ukrainian theatre, but also for her own art. The fact that Ukrainian drama remained a conservative genre in comparison with Ukrainian poetry (in which new and innovative work was being done by poets such as Ivan Franko) provided Ukrainka with an opportunity to make an immediate impact on her native literature. Drama also seemed a natural choice at this time for Ukrainka,

especially considering the theme of The Azure Rose, as she had come to admire the work of Henrik Ibsen, himself a "feminist" writer.²

The fact that the play's early reviewers showed no sensitivity to its feminist concerns is perhaps understandable, since there was no precedent for Ukrainka's portrayal of a complex woman on the Ukrainian stage.

² There have been various interpretations of Ukrainka's changeover from poetry to drama. Dmytro Čyževs'kyj, for example, states that she realized her lyric talent was not sufficient for her to develop any further as a poet. Dmytro Čyževs'kyj, A History of Ukrainian Literature (From the 11th to the End of the 19th Century), trans. Dolly Ferguson, Doreen Gorsline, and Ulana Petyk, ed. George S. N. Luckyj (Littleton, Colorado: Ukrainian Academic P, 1975) 615. Čyževs'kyj's observation loses force when one considers Ukrainka's chef-d'oeuvre, The Forest Song (Lisova pisnia), a profoundly lyrical drama. Another view, that of Oleksii Stavyts'kyi, is that Ukrainka was a "natural" dramatist, whose poetry had clearly shown dramatic tendencies. The changeover thus represented a natural evolution of her technique. See Oleksii Stavyts'kyi, Lesia Ukrainka: Etapy tvorchoho shliakhu (Kiev: Dnipro, 1970) 56. Although Stavyts'kyi's observation has merit, Ukrainka's "evolution" from poetry to drama was more of a "revolution." It is more likely that Ukrainka's changeover represented a search for a new form which would correspond to a change in the content and tone of her work. Michelene Wandor considers drama to be more threatening and subversive than other literary genres because of its immediacy and strong impact upon an audience. She considers female dramatists (of whom there are relatively few) to be practicing an especially threatening form of feminist writing. See Michelene Wandor, "The Impact of Feminism on the Theatre," Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader, ed. Mary Eagleton (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) 104-05.

As to Ibsen's "feminism," there is much controversy. He was awarded this title after writing A Doll's House, but he himself insisted that it was not a feminist work.

Indirectly, however, critics revealed their misunderstanding of the feminist aspect of the play through comments such as P. Rulin's that The Azure Rose shows all the faults typical of a "lady's" play.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ P. Rulin, "Persha drama Lesi Ukrainky," *Lesia Ukrainka, Tvory*, ed. Borys Iakubs'kyi, 12 vols. (Kiev: Knyhospilka, 1927-30) 5: 12. Early commentators, unable to grasp the importance of the play's psychological nature, concentrated instead on its challenge to national and class stereotypes. As even the thought of a play in Ukrainian dealing with serious issues was incomprehensible to them, Russian critics found The Azure Rose unacceptable. A. Aleksandrovs'kyi's review of the play in Kievljanin typified critical response: "The heroes of this drama . . . intelligent people . . . speak of important matters -- about love, philosophy, even statistics. Why then, do they speak in Little Russian?" Quoted in Rulin 13-14.

Critics also seemed unable to deal with the play's portrayal of psychological problems. The reviewer for Kievskoe slovo, A. V-N, for example, termed its subject matter "pathological," while Aleksandrovs'kyi commented that "the play shows how risky it is to choose abnormal characters as heroes," and ended his analysis by attributing The Azure Rose's "hopeless pessimism and despair" to its author's "joyless life." Quoted in Rulin 14.

Besieged by intolerant critics such as Aleksandrovs'kyi and V-N, Ukrainka also found little support for her play among friends and colleagues. Neither Mykhailo Staryts'kyi nor Ivan Karpenko-Karyi were admirers of The Azure Rose, and one prominent Galician critic of the day, Aleksandr Kolessa, wrote that Ukrainka "damaged [her] reputation with the play, and must now write another to restore her reputation." See Lesia Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kobylins'ka," 16-17 Oct. 1899, letter 85, Zibrannia tvoriv u dvanadtsiaty tomakh, ed. Ievhen Shabliovs'kyi, 12 vols. (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1975-79) 11: 142. Karpenko-Karyi once advised Ukrainka that her play was too radical, and that she should introduce the intelligentsia onto the Ukrainian stage "in some kind of percentage-proportion to the peasantry," advice to which Ukrainka reacted with "abomination." See Klyment Kvitka, "Na rokovyny smerti," Spohady pro Lesiu Ukrainku, ed. Anatol' Kostenko, 2nd ed. (Kiev: Dnipro, 1971) 228.

After the play's second staging in 1909 (the first had occurred in 1899), the reviewer for the respected journal

Ukrainka attributed critical rejection of The Azure Rose mainly to the critics' not understanding its protagonist, Liubov. In a letter to her mother, Ukrainka wrote that the Ukrainian audience simply may not be ready for Liubov, and expressed the fear that it may never be ready.⁴ Critical misinterpretation throughout the years of both Liubov and The Azure Rose has proven that Ukrainka's fear had been well-founded.

The depiction of maternal hereditary illness, hysteria, and madness, are the three issues whose patriarchal interpretations the author challenges. As Ukrainka was herself a victim of what she protested against in the play, it is also instructive to view the play as, in part, an autobiographical work.

Ukrainka herself favoured autobiographical literature. Writing her friend Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi, she states that "it would be better if it [his work] were autobiographical, because then its subjectivism would be more natural."⁵ To

Rada concluded that The Azure Rose "hasn't become a part of the Ukrainian theatre's repertoire because it is a weak play . . . it lacks action, its characters are rendered unsuccessfully . . . the dialogues are bland. . . . Much of the play is unnatural, insincere. . . ." Rulin 16.

⁴ Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (mother)," 5 Mar. 1898, letter 8, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 23.

⁵ Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," 9 Feb. 1906, letter 80, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 153.

her most intimate confidante, Ol'ha Kobylians'ka, she wrote, "Someone [Ukrainka] will in time tell someone [Kobylians'ka] everything upon meeting, and some of it will perhaps be reflected in someone's [Ukrainka's] works."⁶

Many critics believe the play to be autobiographical. One of Ukrainka's closest acquaintances of her early years, Pleiada member Ivan Steshenko, wrote, "Her personal tragedy reaches great dimensions at this time and reveals itself in 1896 in the play The Azure Rose. The play, of little importance artistically, is of great interest in revealing the characteristics of its author's soul."⁷ Pavlo Rulin speculates that the author's "overly difficult experiences of this time found their strong, painful resonance in The Azure Rose," and were probably the result of "a deep drama of the heart . . . a bitter disenchantment with

⁶ Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kobylians'ka," 1-2 Jan. 1902, letter 187, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 305. Ukrainka referred to both herself and to Kobylians'ka as "someone" in her intimate letters to Kobylians'ka.

⁷ Ivan Steshenko, "Poetychna tvorchist' Lesi Ukrainky," Literaturno-naukovyi visnyk 10 (1913): 37.

⁸ Rulin 20. The view that women's hysteria directly resulted from sexual frustration was a common belief of nineteenth century psychiatry. See Elaine Showalter, The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980. (New York: Penguin, 1987) 130. Ukrainka's early romantic involvements remain unknown. Although O. Morhun stated that in conversations with Ukrainka's sister Ol'ha in 1945, the latter is supposed to have confirmed that her sister had been deeply in love with Nestor Harambashvili, a Georgian student and boarder at the Kosach household,

love."⁶ Rulin warns, however, that "having enumerated the subjective elements of the play in no way should they be over-emphasized; the purely literary and even theatrical motives should not be ignored."⁷ This is an important consideration, as certainly part of the reason Ukrainka wrote a play such as The Azure Rose was to introduce into the Ukrainian theatre techniques and themes she had learned from dramatists such as Ibsen, Strindberg, and Hauptmann.

Too much, however, has been attributed to Ukrainka's borrowing from the dramatists mentioned, and not enough attention has been paid to more immediate reasons for what appears in the play. The Azure Rose's motif of hereditary illness, for example, often serves to prove critics' assertions that Ukrainka's play was strongly influenced by Ibsen's Ghosts.¹⁰ Elaine Showalter, however, in her study of female madness entitled The Female Malady finds that "The rhetoric of heredity, inheritance . . . appears obsessively

another sister, Isydora, categorically dismisses this assertion. See Isydora Kosach-Borysova, "Frahmenty spohadyv," Spohady pro Lesiu Ukrainku 303, 465-66. Critical focus primarily on the romantic aspect of Ukrainka's life, however, diverts attention from other important aspects of it.

⁷ Rulin 20.

¹⁰ See for instance Oleh Babyshkin, Dramaturhiia Lesi Ukrainky (Kiev: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo obrazotvorchoho mystetstva i muzychnoi literatury, 1963) 21.

in the medical literature of the time."¹¹ She furthermore notes that Darwinian psychiatrists commonly believed that "'the greater tendency of mothers to transmit insanity to their female children' was among the chief causes for the predominance of women among asylum patients."¹² The subject of hereditary mental illness thus was a common issue of nineteenth-century psychiatry, and of Darwinism, through whose influence heredity and environment became the new factors through which literary characters were interpreted.

Madness and hereditary illness soon reemerged as a major theme in European literature. Writers as diverse as Zola, Charlotte Brontë, Dostoevsky, and Gabriele D'Annunzio became preoccupied with illness and insanity. Ukrainka, well-acquainted with the works of these authors, as well as with Darwinian theory and with new developments in psychiatry thus had a much larger source-base to draw upon when creating The Azure Rose than just Ibsen's Ghosts, as the play's detractors often claim.

Ukrainka prepared herself for the writing of the play by reading psychology and psychiatry texts, and by observing psychiatric patients.¹³ She also consulted with

¹¹ Showalter 108.

¹² Showalter 123.

¹³ Avraam Hozenpud, Poetychnyi teatr (Kiev: Mystetstvo, 1947) 18.

psychiatrists about the play, and may have even written it partly at the instigation of her uncle, Oleksandr Drahomanov, a neuropathologist practising in a psychiatric institution near Warsaw.¹⁴

Ukrainka was born in 1871 and died in 1913, but for a year exactly the period Showalter defines as "the golden age of hysteria," an illness she terms "the classic female malady."¹⁵ In the nineteenth century hysteria was widely thought to have been caused by the female reproductive system. This was a continuation of the ancient Greek belief that the womb, or hystera, was the cause of female mental disorders.¹⁶ The diagnosis of hysteria in part became the *raison d'être* of the rise of psychoanalysis. Early psychoanalysts, especially Freud, prolonged the belief in the notion of Darwinian psychiatry which held that hysteria had sexual origins, but discounted its social causes.

Nineteenth-century doctors saw their hysteric patients "as their powerful antagonists. . . . personally and morally

¹⁴ Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (mother)," 11 Jul. 1898, letter 8, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 55. In this letter Ukrainka reveals that one of the psychiatrists who had read The Azure Rose liked it. Although Drahomanov asked to see the completed play, there is no record of his reaction to it.

¹⁵ Showalter 18, 129.

¹⁶ Mary Ellmann, Thinking About Women (London: Virago, 1979) 12.

repulsive, idle, intractable, and manipulative. . . . products of bad heredity and bad habits," who expressed "'unnatural' desires for privacy and independence."¹⁷ The main cause of hysteria was thought to be frustrated sexual activity, although the causes of female mental instability in general included "the weakness of the female constitution," uncontrolled sexuality, and women's defiance of their "nature," which occurred when they "attempted to compete with men instead of serving them, and sought alternatives or even additions to their maternal functions." Conclusions such as those by a psychiatrist writing in 1874 that "intellectual training of adolescent girls could produce permanent injury to their reproductive systems and their brains" typify the attitude held by Darwinian psychiatrists toward women.¹⁸

It is little wonder that such a hostile social and medical environment would lead women to believe that they suffered from various mental diseases, the cause of which was their simply being women. In 1895, Doctor Mary Putnam Jacobi wrote "[women] considered [it] natural and almost laudable to break down under all conceivable varieties of strain. . . . Constantly considering their nerves, [because

¹⁷ Showalter 133-34.

¹⁸ Showalter 58, 74, 123-24.

they werel urged to consider them . . . [they] soon became nothing but a bundle of nerves."¹⁹ In the view of physicians, especially susceptible to hysteria were young rebellious women, women who were likely to be "more independent and assertive than 'normal' women, 'exhibiting more than usual force and decision of character, of strong resolution, fearless of danger,'" among whom was an unusually high percentage of writers and artists.²⁰ In this category were women like Virginia Woolf, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, author of the feminist classic The Yellow Wallpaper (1892), and Ukrainka.

Ukrainka first hinted that she was suffering from hysteria in 1894 in a letter to her mother, in which she blamed her physical ailments on her nerves, sarcastically querying "who nowadays has healthy nerves?"²¹ Later that

¹⁹ Quoted in Sandra M. Gilbert, and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979) 54-55.

²⁰ Quoted in Showalter 145. Liubov, despite her diletantism, harbours ambitions of becoming an artist. She tells Orest that she has a desire to "burn out" in a "blaze" rather than "burn" slowly over a "low" flame. Ukrainka, Blakytna troianda, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 19. This comment shows her desire for some great achievement, an achievement not possible because she is a woman. The only real goal for women in The Azure Rose is to become a marriage partner. Orest's artistic ambitions, on the other hand, are never questioned.

²¹ Lesia Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (mother)," 28 Jan. 1894, letter 108, Zibrannia tvoriv 10: 207. From the letter

year Ukrainka wrote that "doctors always assure me that all my troubles . . . stem from my nerves. . . ." ²² She soon began complaining of symptoms such as vertigo, chronic insomnia, and listlessness. It is at this time that Ukrainka developed her healthy dislike of physicians, a dislike revealed in her treatment of the character of Dr. Protsenko in The Azure Rose. Shortly after she completed her play, Ukrainka wrote "my nerves are beginning to get out of control, to the degree that I recently suffered a memory loss. . . ." ²³ Ukrainka believed that it was nerves and hysteria that drove her close friend Halyna Dehen to her death: "she always suffered from nerves," writes Ukrainka, "until her hysteria drove her to suicide. . . ." ²⁴

Thus by the time she had written her first play Ukrainka was well aware of the phenomenon of hysteria, and

it is clear that Ukrainka's family had been worried about her health, both physical and mental. In the same letter, she notes that a doctor's diagnosis of her revealed "great nervousness." This is the first of many letters in which Ukrainka, in great detail, outlines the state of her physical and mental health, doctors' diagnoses of it, and the treatments prescribed her along with their results.

²² Ukrainka, "To Mykhailo Drahomanov," 17 Apr. 1894, letter 120, Zibrannia tvoriv 10: 228.

²³ Ukrainka, "To Liudmyla Drahomanova," 26 Mar.-3 Apr. 1897, letter 216, Zibrannia tvoriv 10: 365.

²⁴ Ukrainka, "To Liudmyla Drahomanova," 26 Mar.-3 Apr. 1897, letter 216, Zibrannia tvoriv 10: 365.

was convinced that she was a victim of it herself. Soon after, she suffered her first nervous breakdown, and spent months in Yalta recovering. From there, she wrote to her father: "[My hysteria] cannot pass that quickly because I have been suffering from it . . . long since it has formally been admitted. . . ." ²⁵ The author's letters would soon be replete with references to attacks of hysteria, of severe pain suffered from nervous complications, of sleepless nights, and of nervous breakdowns, described in phrases such as "the last six months I found myself in a moral hell." ²⁶

Complicating Ukrainka's belief in her illness were deep feelings of loneliness and abnormality, which were compounded by fragile relations with her family. During her first nervous breakdown she found the loneliness unbearable: "this lonely life has become repugnant to me. . . . You lie there, look at the ceiling . . . and the night is so long. . . ." ²⁷ "I think," the playwright wrote to her beloved brother Mykhailo, "that I will return home close to normal, as far as that is possible for me." ²⁸ Commenting on

²⁵ Ukrainka, "To Petro Kosach," 17 Jun. 1898, letter 25, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 53.

²⁶ Ukrainka, "To Mykhailo Pavlyk," 6 Jul. 1901, letter 144, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 250.

²⁷ Ukrainka, "To Liudmyla Drahomanova," 2 Jan. 1898, letter 245, Zibrannia tvoriv 10: 420.

both herself and her family, Ukrainka wrote to her younger sister, Ol'ha, "in many ways I think and feel differently from the rest of our family and your friends, but normal people are not able to see what is as clear as day to abnormal people, like myself."²⁹ Ukrainka thus perceived her illness as both a blessing and a curse, one which denied her personal happiness, but allowed her a deeper perception of life.

Indeed, although she believed that she was ill, the writer reasoned that her condition was abnormal only in relation to society. "I find my role amusing, -- I regard myself quite healthy, yet everyone regards me as being seriously ill," is how she described her condition to her father.³⁰ At other times Ukrainka comforted herself that hers was "a passing pathological state, and that I will one day again 'take my place among the honest folk' . . . and will behave like other people."³¹

In The Azure Rose Liubov bears striking similarities to

²⁹ Ukrainka, "To Mykhailo Kosach," 11 May 1901, letter 131, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 228.

²⁹ Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (sister)," 9 Jun. 1901, letter 135, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 235.

³⁰ Ukrainka, "To Petro Kosach," 14 Jul. 1901, letter 147, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 255.

³¹ Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (sister)," 22 April 1904, letter 56, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 103.

Ukrainka. Like Ukrainka, Liubov reads everything, belongs to a literary society, is self-taught, is not religious, paints, spends sleepless nights writing letters, experiences severe mood swings, mistrusts marriage, and is convinced that she suffers from a mental illness. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in The Madwoman in the Attic, find that it is common for nineteenth-century women writers to project themselves in their work through a mad double.³² This finding is upheld by Showalter, who sees among others, Brontë's madwoman in Jane Eyre as "an alter ego that her upbringing, her religion, and her society have commanded her to incarcerate."³³

Ukrainka's own duality in the perception of her hysteria is mirrored by Liubov's hysteria and resultant madness in the Azure Rose. Liubov's eventual madness is a result of her belief in inheriting this disease from her mother, but is finally achieved through her own choice, and

³² Gilbert and Gubar 85.

³³ Showalter, A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977) 28. It should be mentioned that considerable disagreement exists among feminist critics as to the theory of the heroine as the author's double. For a representation of views in opposition to Showalter and Gilbert and Gubar, see Mary Jacobus, rev. of The Madwoman in the Attic, by Sandra M. Gilbert, and Susan Gubar, Signs 6,3 1981: 520, and Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory (London: Methuen, 1985) 61-64.

not by a loss of control. Ironically Liubov thus transcends the limitations and restrictions placed upon her by society, transforms madness into a strength, and emerges victorious (as I will later show). The play's other characters, lacking Liubov's will to master her destiny, interpret her madness in psychologically traditional terms. Orest's mother, for instance, simply believes that Liubov is mad because her mother was mad, and such diseases are inevitably passed on through heredity. Her view is in agreement with medical opinion of the time, which held that since hysteria, the prime cause of women's mental illness, was caused by disorders of the womb, women were thus the prime carriers and inheritors of madness.³⁴

Also consistent with the medical profession's antagonism to women in the nineteenth century are the diagnosis and comments of Doctor Protsenko, a character regarded by most critics as a insightful, kindly and well-intentioned raisonneur. Rulin, for example, states that Protsenko "is a representative of progressive thought," and Lelia Kulins'ka remarks that the doctor is Liubov's sincere friend.³⁵

³⁴ Ellmann 12.

³⁵ Rulin 25. Lelia Kulins'ka, U sviti idei ta obraziv: Osoblyvosti poetyky dramy Lesi Ukrainky (Kiev: Dnipro, 1971) 86.

However, a closer examination of the text suggests that the doctor is more Liubov's powerful antagonist than he is her friend; his attitude toward her is both condescending and patronizing. Discussing Liubov with her aunt Olimpiada, Protsenko states, "Ah, young ladies, young ladies! A pitiful lot! They read the latest thing and think they are suddenly wise. The way I see it, the less a young lady reads, by God, the better!"³⁶ His other remarks include statements such as, "in my time a young lady would not still be flirting with freedom at the age of twenty-five. . . . 'A woman should fear her husband'. That is truly the best lesson a woman can learn."³⁷ Having offered such personal opinions, the doctor's diagnosis of Liubov is not surprising, "It is all nerves. . . . It is nothing, it frequently happens with young ladies. . . . What can you expect, a young lady lives in freedom, reads, has all kinds of dreams. . . ."³⁸ Protsenko's cures for such ills are simple: "A quiet, orderly life -- is the best cure -- against all real and potential diseases. . . . It is not coincidental that there are fewer diseases of the nerves and of the soul among married people."³⁹ According to the

³⁶ Ukrainka, Blakytna troianda, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 49.

³⁷ Ukrainka, Blakytna troianda, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 49.

³⁸ Ukrainka, Blakytna troianda, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 59.

Doctor, if women do not marry, they become old spinsters:
 "May God be with them, I'm afraid to provoke them, they are,
 you know, genus irritabile."⁴⁰

The Doctor's prescription for treating hysteria consists of "the rest cure," a procedure which subdues and withdraws the individual from society. Charlotte Perkins Gilman who, like Ukrainka, suffered from acute chronic depression, was prescribed the rest cure, with the advice to "lead a thoroughly domestic life, to limit her reading to two hours a day, and to give up writing altogether."⁴¹

I went home, wrote Gilman, and obeyed these directions for some three months, and came so near the borderline of utter mental ruin that I could see over. Then, using the remnants of intelligence that remained. . . . I cast the noted specialist's advice to the winds and went to

³⁹ Ukrainka, Blakytna troianda, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 60.

⁴⁰ Ukrainka, Blakytna troianda, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 60. The choice of this allusion, Ovid's reference to poets, is significant. By incorporating it, Ukrainka touches upon the connections between normalcy and the artist, an idea which she would develop more fully in later works such as In the Wilderness (U Pushchi) and The Orgy (Orhiia). Ukrainka was never a "narrow" feminist, but rather, a writer interested in a wide spectrum of problems. It is her combination of feminism and other concerns (such as nationalism) which makes her unique and particularly noteworthy.

⁴¹ Showalter, The Female Malady 140-41.

work again . . . ultimately recovering some measure of power. Being naturally moved to rejoicing by this narrow escape, I wrote The Yellow Wallpaper, and sent a copy to the physician who so nearly drove me mad.⁴²

Although The Azure Rose did not result from such a dramatic incident, Ukrainka was also repeatedly prescribed the rest cure by various doctors, who forbade her to work and write after her bouts of depression. Ukrainka, like Gilman, rebelled against this treatment, striving to "be well by normal standards, that is, standards of a person, not a vegetable. . . . Because having become used to vegetating, it is possible to really reach the state where even the smallest activity becomes harmful."⁴³ In a lighter moment, Ukrainka observed that her doctor "insists that I in fact, as much as I am able to, approach the ideals of Oblomovian existence."⁴⁴ In the Azure Rose, Liubov is also prescribed the classic rest cure, which consists of confinement, tranquility and orders not to read. She calls this treatment "barbarism, and not a cure!"⁴⁵

⁴² Quoted in Showalter, The Female Malady 141.

⁴³ Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (sister)," 29 Dec. 1902, letter 236, Zibrannia tvoriv: 11: 375.

⁴⁴ Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," 16 Nov. 1905, letter 78, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 42.

Protsenko's presumptions and his views on normalcy contrast with the actual state of affairs. He himself, for instance, while mocking spinsters, is an old, lonely bachelor, and his suggested cure, marriage, does not fare well in the experience of the rest of the characters. Liubov's aunt and Orest's mother, for reasons unexplained, no longer have their husbands present. Orest's and Liubov's tragic courtship is contrasted with the traditional, and in this instance, pathetic, courtship of Milevs'kyi and Sania. Sania, Liubov's friend and seeming-equal, succumbs to social pressure by becoming engaged to the mindless Milevs'kyi, whom she neither respects nor loves. Liubov herself describes marriage as a grave: "Why should one entomb oneself in a crypt?" she asks.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ukrainka, Blakytina troianda, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 88.

⁴⁶ Ukrainka, Blakytina troianda, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 29. The author's dislike of marriage was the result of her anti-clericalism, as well as the result of her personal turbulent experiences of family life. Ukrainka eventually married Klyment Kvitka to silence talk about them. She notified her family only after the wedding, and described the ritual as a "laying down of arms," which was necessary to at least gain "peace from people, if not from anything else." Before the wedding of her sister Ol'ha to Mykhailo Kryvnyiuk (also a friend of Ukrainka's), she advised her sister, "You know my views on church ceremonies in general, and on this one especially, but, if it must take place (because otherwise it will cause a "tragedy" in the family), then it must be made as least unpleasant as possible." Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (sister)," 12-15 Aug. 1907, letter 115, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 210-11, "To Ol'ha Kosach (sister)," 9 Jun. 1901, letter 135, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 236. Like Liubov, Ukrainka was convinced that it would be tragic for her to have

The breakdown of the institution of marriage is symbolized in part by a striking absence of father figures in The Azure Rose. Both Oksana's and Orest's fathers are absent. Orest and Milevs'kyi are weak men, and the play's only authoritarian male figure, Dr. Protsenko, is a childless bachelor. The dysfunction of the family unit is effectively dramatized by the appearance of two orphan beggar-children in act I.⁴⁷

children: "Well, my troubles will stop with my generation. . . ." Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (sister)," 25-28 Nov. 1910, letter 184, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 326. An unsatisfied maternal drive was regarded as one of the prime causes of hysteria according to Darwinian psychiatry. See Showalter, The Female Malady 131. The breakdown of marriage, the hypocrisy of it and of courtship, is the subject of many of Ukrainka's works.

⁴⁷ Liubov mentions her father on only two occasions, but both references are significant. "I think it [her mother's madness] killed him," she says in act I, scene iii, and then later in the same act, she observes that "He didn't raise me, he simply loved me. . . . I raised myself. . . ." Ukrainka, Blakytna troianda, Tvory 3: 16, 27. The first remark conforms to the theory of "psychic murder" in the play, which will be discussed later. The second remark corresponds to Ukrainka's own attitude to her father. Although Kosach loved his daughter very much, he was away for much of the time, and was very traditional in his expectations of her as a woman in society, an attitude against which she rebelled. She remained very fond of him, however, and according to her sister Ol'ha, the two were much alike and understood each other very well. Ol'ha Kosach-Kryvnyiuk, "Z moikh spomyniv," Spohady pro Lesiu Ukrainku 32-34.

Kryvnyiuk also states that shortly after Ukrainka's birth her mother became seriously ill from anemia, and her father, fearful for his young daughter's survival, took leave of his job to care for his daughter. Later in life, Ukrainka was particularly perturbed by having to rely on her father for financial support and assistance. While he

It is against the background of the portrayal of the family unit as a symbol of a promise unfulfilled that a victim of its failure, Liubov, must try to make her way. In her own life, Ukrainka dealt with her problems through

always advised Ukrainka to lead a quiet and restful life (a thought which she scorned), he became sympathetic toward her intentions in later years. "[P]apa is now not only tolerant of my plans, but supportive and sincere [about them]. . . ." Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (sister)," 3 Mar. 1907, letter, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 188.

The Azure Rose is also profoundly "motherless." Barbara Hill Rigney has found that "women writers from Jane Austen to Sylvia Plath and beyond have annihilated, ignored, or rendered ridiculous the mothers of their major characters." Barbara Hill Rigney, Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel: Studies in Brontë, Woolf, Lessing, and Atwood (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1978) 123. In Ukrainka's play, Orest's mother is instrumental in ruining the happiness of both Liubov and Orest, while Liubov convinces herself that she suffers because of her mother's sins. Ukrainka's own relationship with her mother was tenuous. While she was grateful for her mother's literary and financial help, she often felt bitter about their personal relationship. Failing to get her mother's approval of her relationship with Kvitka, Ukrainka wrote: "[I] will not change my relationship with Kl'onia, or perhaps I will strengthen it, in any case, mother's cold approach will not drive us apart. All the same, it pains me, and it is hard to take, and fatally unfortunate, that not one of my friendships, sympathies, or loves, has been able to escape this poisonous jealousy, or whatever it is, from the side of my mother." Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (sister)," 29 Dec. 1902, letter 236, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 376. Ukrainka was particularly pained that her mother had cursed her for going to the bedside of her dying friend, Serhii Merzhyn's'kyi, a visit to which she attributed her daughter's complication of her tuberculosis. It seems as if her mother was searching for sources of blame in order to deal with her own guilt. See Ukrainka's letter to her mother, in which she accuses her of this, "It is difficult for me, that you are always blaming someone." Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (mother)," 6-7 May 1902, letter 216, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 350. Despite her very real bitterness toward her mother, Ukrainka craved her constant reassurance, both in literary and in personal

writing, as a type of therapy.⁴⁸ In her first play, she created a heroine who rejected society and deliberately chose to descend into madness.⁴⁹

Critics have differed widely in their explanation of Liubov's madness. Avraam Hozenpud terms her madness "melodramatic" and argues that it is not properly motivated.⁵⁰ Kulins'ka ascribes Liubov's madness to the logical consequence of her sensitive character.⁵¹ Oleksandr Deich attributes Liubov's "sick soul" "to the decadence of the fin-de-siècle."⁵² Observations such as these that Ukrainka "erred" in portraying madness, that the madness is "melodramatic," and that it "unnecessarily complicates" the play show the critics' lack of sensitivity to, and indeed a

matters, as is evidenced by many letters. In one letter to her mother she writes, "I'll always worry [when you don't write] . . . that you are angry with me, and then my heart becomes so heavy!" Ukrainka: "To Ol'ha Kosach," 29 Mar. 1903, letter 23, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 60.

⁴⁸ Like Gilman, Ukrainka worked her way out of depression through writing, in contradiction to her doctors' advice.

⁴⁹ It is a fascinating thought that Ukrainka may have acted out a secret desire to go mad through her alter-ego, Liubov.

⁵⁰ Hozenpud 19-20.

⁵¹ Kulins'ka 84.

⁵² Oleksandr Deich, Lesia Ukrainka: Krytyko-biohrafichnyi narys, Dorohoiu druzhby: Statti, portrety, narysy (Kiev: Dnipro, 1977) 102.

lack of understanding of a central concern of The Azure Rose.

One recent interpretation of heredity as the motivating factor of Liubov's madness, that of Irene Makaryk, has challenged the prevailing views on the subject. In her article "Lesia Ukrainka's Blakytna Troianda: Apropos the Theme of Psychic Murder," Makaryk makes the crucial distinction that it is Liubov's belief in heredity which causes her madness, and not the effects of heredity itself.⁵³ "Liubov's certainty that she will become mad in fact brings about her madness," writes Makaryk, who then traces Liubov's identification with a vampire image through the play. Liubov believes and fears that if she, like her mother, marries and becomes mad, she will become a burden to her husband and will "sap his strength, his life-blood, like a vampire."⁵⁴

Makaryk attributes the presence of this theme, psychic murder, to Ukrainka's knowledge of the works of Strindberg and Ibsen. Although she provides convincing evidence for this, based on similarities between Strindberg's Miss Julie and The Azure Rose, as with Ukrainka's depiction of

⁵³ Irene R. Makaryk, "Lesia Ukrainka's Blakytna Troianda: Apropos the Theme of Psychic Murder," Studia Ucrainica 2 (1984) 26.

⁵⁴ Makaryk 28.

hysteria, it seems that she was also motivated by personal reasons in her interpretation of "psychic murder." In the play, Liubov's mother is said to have "killed" her husband through her madness. One of the reasons why Liubov hesitates to involve herself with Orest, is, as Makaryk points out, her fear of repeating her mother's act of killing him. In her own life, Ukrainka resented her mother's relationship with her father. In a letter which reveals her concern about the marriage of her youngest brother, Ukrainka wrote to her sister Ol'ha, "I worry, that Mykos' will repeat the story of his father's life, or even worse, that of uncle Hrysha. Things do not go well for the male half of the Kosach clan, they're even worse than for the female half, because our fate is at least not injured by marriage as theirs is."⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (sister)," 3 Oct. 1912, letter 241, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 411. Also, the notion of woman as consuming "vampire" has been regarded as a common male fear. "With her [woman], man senses most definitely the passivity of his flesh. Woman is vampire, she eats and drinks him; her organ feeds gluttonously upon his." Such are the "fancies," according to Simone de Beauvoir, of some sectors of the psychoanalytic community. Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1953) 168-69. Showalter, meanwhile, points to Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret (1861) as a subversively feminist treatment of hereditary insanity in which the heroine Lucy defends herself through violent attacks on men. Showalter, The Female Malady 71. Note that Ukrainka detested the portrayal of the passive heroine in Dumas' La dame aux camélias. Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kobylans'ka," 26 Dec. 1900-2 Jan. 1901, letter 113,

Although in the play it is Liubov's belief in heredity which drives her to madness, the concept of puerperal insanity is by itself a myth created by a patriarchal society and perpetuated by a psychiatric establishment essentially hostile to women. The myth has led to, as Showalter terms it, "one of history's self-fulfilling prophecies."⁵⁶

The real reason for Liubov's insanity, then, should not be attributed to her mother's madness nor even to her belief in the phenomenon of maternal hereditary illness but, rather, to a society which uses medical practices to disorient and thereby decline full rights to women. And it is precisely her exposition of this practice that partly makes Ukrainka's The Azure Rose such a subversively feminist revolt against patriarchal views of inherited hysteria.

In a moment of reflection, Ukrainka wrote to her friend Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi:

Life defeated only that which surrounded me. . . .
I am a stubbornly-flexible person (you will find this type common among women), sceptical of mind, fanatically emotional, to which I have long ago added "a tragic outlook," for it is good for one's

Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 200.

⁵⁶ Showalter, The Female Malady 73.

resolve. . . . [My] "strength", which presently
 so enthralls you, -- may simply be proverbial
 female survivability. . . .⁵⁷

This vivid illustration of Ukrainka's contra spem spero philosophy represents the traditional, somewhat sentimentalized and mythologized view of her as the eternal survivalist. It can also serve to describe Liubov in the play, who, despite severe handicaps, has managed, like Ukrainka to survive in a world she perceives to be hostile to herself. The one area of her life, however, which renders Liubov defenseless, as it had Ukrainka, is her experience with love. In the Azure Rose, it is Liubov's search for happiness through love which gives rise to her eventual madness.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," 27 Oct. 1911, letter 220, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 371.

⁵⁸ Shortly after having written The Azure Rose, Ukrainka met and fell in love with Serhii Merzhyns'kyi. Merzhyns'kyi was impressed with her first play (which no doubt made the play even more special in Ukrainka's own estimation), and encouraged her to translate it into Russian, which she did (the only play she translated into another language). Four years later, Ukrainka found herself by the bedside of the dying Merzhyns'kyi in Mins'k. Little is known about the love affair, other than that it caused a serious rift between Ukrainka and her mother. In later letters to her sister Ol'ha, however, Ukrainka made it clear just how deep her feelings for Merzhyns'kyi were, and displayed profound regret for not acting on them when there was still time.

More than a literal translation of The Azure Rose, Ukrainka's Russian version of it contains many changed lines, most notably Orest's. On the whole, the alterations

Liubov surrounds herself with defenses which insulate her from potential sources of danger. She shuns the frivolity of dances, regards men as "friends" only and, in the words of her aunt Olimpiada, "sits encrypted. . . ." ³⁹ Like Ukrainka, Liubov prefers the discomforts of loneliness to the even greater pains and dangers of involvement. Also like Ukrainka, who expressed the desire for happiness if only in her "dreams," Liubov too wants to be happy: "Love me, I want to be happy!" she tells Orest. ⁴⁰ Liubov, who hitherto had exercised complete command over her life and destiny, falls in love with Orest and experiences an emotion over which she finds she has no control.

The play juxtaposes two types of love, these being "ordinary"-passionate love, and the love of "the azure rose," or courtly love, an ideal form of love which flourished in medieval literature. Ukrainka had long been preoccupied with such a concept of love, and had made it the subject of her long poem "Isolda biloruka" (White-handed Isolde), based on the Tristan and Isolde legend. ⁴¹ In the

strengthen the feminist argument made here.

³⁹ Ukrainka, Blakytina troianda, Tvory 3: 11.

⁴⁰ Ukrainka, "To Mykhailo Pavlyk," 16 Oct. 1898, letter 38, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 71, Blakytina troianda, Tvory 3: 54.

Azure Rose, the protagonists' differing attitudes toward love of "the azure rose" are crucially important. Orest pays homage to the love of "the azure rose" in theory, but sees that it has no place in his life. When Liubov asks him if he believes in such a love, Orest answers "Sometimes I do, sometimes I am afraid to believe in it! . . . I know that it is an unsure, abnormal love, it is a love with no way out. . . ." to which Liubov replies, "It is, however, eternal."⁶²

Orest both does not want to believe in the possibility of a pure ideal love, and fears the commitment and confinement that such a love would require if it were possible. A man of practical concern, he counters Liubov's idealization of Dante's devotion to Beatrice: "Does such love bring happiness?" he asks rhetorically, and quickly answers himself, "Well Dante was not happy; he wrote his *Inferno*."⁶³ For Liubov, ideal love, as represented by Dante's creation of Beatrice and the love of "the azure rose," represents a form of love which she knows exists only

⁶¹ Ukrainka's favourite game as a child had been acting out the heroine's role in medieval romances. Liudmyla Starytska-Cherniakhivs'ka, "Khvylyny zhyttia Lesi Ukrainky," Spohady pro Lesiu Ukrainku 318.

⁶² Ukrainka, Blakytina troianda, Tvory 3: 31.

⁶³ Ukrainka, Blakytina troianda, Tvory 3: 32.

in literature and is therefore unattainable; but it is not subject to taint, and, as a result, is eternal. It is also an intellectualized concept of love expressed through complex ideas rather than emotions. Liubov, like Ukrainka, can reason and understand ideal love, but she fears experiencing "ordinary"-passionate love.

Both the concepts of earthly and ideal love and their opposition and fusion, as expressed through the symbol of the azure rose, are largely derivative of Dante's Comedy. "Modern symbolists," writes Barbara Seward, "with their roots in the nineteenth century but attempting to broaden their romantic base, have taken from Dante . . . [learning] from his method a good deal about the ways and means of uniting personal with public values in a single, multi-leveled symbol."⁶⁴ It is Dante who must be credited with the combination of two hitherto opposing concepts of love. He united the concept of divine, holy love, symbolized in Western Culture by the Virgin Mary and the rose with the theory of medieval courtly love, which is based on passion.

Courtly love, writes Carolyn Heilbrun, is an invention of man which projects onto woman all his most idealistic

⁶⁴ Barbara Seward, The Symbolic Rose (New York: Columbia UP, 1960) 52.

qualities in an attempt to redeem his own lust: "By adoring woman as an ideal, men could cast their own lusts in a better light. The woman in these lyrics does not exist as an individual; still a sexual object, she has been declared an ideal object."⁶⁵ Orest's idealization yet ultimate rejection of the courtly image of love is symbolic of the duality of the image of woman in patriarchal literature and of her real position in society.

Women, wrote Virginia Woolf, have burnt like beacons in all the works of all the poets from the beginning of time. . . . She [woman] pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. . . . Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband. A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant.⁶⁶

Male writers have thus created their ideal of woman, that of

⁶⁵ Carolyn Heilbrun, Towards a Recognition of Androgyny (New York: Knopf, 1973) 21.

⁶⁶ Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (London: Grafton, 1977) 42-43.

an "angel" according to Gilbert and Gubar, or a "lily," according to Kate Millett, of which Dante's Beatrice is a prime example.⁶⁷ As Orest shows and Woolf confirms, however, patriarchy confines this image to the abstract and unthreatening environment of a literary, rather than actual existence.

Liubov, whose own name means "love," is a searcher for love. Her ideal is the love of "the azure rose" -- like Dante's rose, both ideal and earthly.⁶⁸ Apprehensive of Orest's overtures toward her, Liubov is reluctant to trust his idealization of her. Her longing for love of "the azure rose" and unwillingness to experience passionate love by itself can be understood as a protest against men's dishonesty in their relation to women, who while pretending to treat women as higher beings actually look down upon them.⁶⁹ For a brief moment, however, Liubov permits herself

⁶⁷ Gilbert and Gubar 20, Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (New York: Ballantine, 1978) 212.

⁶⁸ Liubov's subconscious, passionate drives are present, symbolized by her installation of a red lampshade -- both rakish and sexual in the light it casts over the whole of the first act.

⁶⁹ Ukrainka herself disliked being placed upon a pedestal by men: "[T]hey look at us either from above, or from below, if only they would only look from an equal position -- but no!" Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kobylans'ka," 29-30 May 1899, letter 72, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 118. Feminists have opposed the idealization of women in literature because of the hypocrisy and sexual politics such depictions imply. See Gilbert and Gubar's, Millett's, and Woolf's views on the

to be persuaded to cast aside her reservations about involvement by Orest's declaration of true love for her, and admits to him, "I love you, and I have loved you for a long time, more than life, more than happiness, more than anything in the world. Love me, I want to be happy!"⁷⁰ Although Liubov may feel a blissful sense of release through her confession to Orest, her action represents a threat to her freedom and sense of control. By her succumbing to Orest's reasoning to "take a risk;" "only a bland and cowardly person is afraid of risk," he tells her, Liubov abandons her promise to herself to be "free and courageous," and surrenders control of her emotions.⁷¹

"[S]he [woman] refuses to play the game [love] because she knows the dice are loaded," is how Simone de Beauvoir describes the risks love relationships hold for women.⁷² Orest's persuasion-seduction of Liubov illustrates and confirms de Beauvoir's statement, for he, despite his suffering in the last act, will recover and start over

subject.

⁷⁰ *Ukrainka, Blakytina troianda, Tvory* 3: 54.

⁷¹ *Ukrainka, Blakytina troianda, Tvory* 3: 54. Liubov is the first of many female protagonists in *Ukrainka's* dramas (including Oksana in *The Nobleman's Wife (Boiarynia)*, and Mavka in *The Forest Song* who is seduced by the promise of love, with tragic results.

⁷² de Beauvoir 612.

again.⁷³ For Liubov, however, the price of love and sexual involvement includes a loss of self-identity which will lead to insanity and eventual death.

Liubov recognizes that her moment of euphoria has caused her to abandon all the defenses that she constructed around herself. Realizing that there can be no return, Liubov is faced with a dilemma, She can accept a traditional relationship with Orest, the "promise" of which is satirized by Ukrainka in act III through the confining sexism shown in Milevs'kyi's and Sania's relationship, or she can, as she does, go mad.

By permitting Liubov to go mad, Ukrainka expresses some

⁷³ Critics from Mykhailo Staryts'kyi through Babyshkin have felt that the last act of the play, in which Orest's illness mirrors Liubov's, is unnecessary. Staryts'kyi even attempted to convince Ukrainka not to include the act in the play's final variant. She herself, however, always maintained that the act was important for the play. Although Orest's experience of depression may be used to show that he suffers just as much as Liubov, his illness is only temporary. Showalter makes the point that feminist authors often "believed that a limited experience of dependency, frustration, and powerlessness -- in short, of womanhood -- was a healthy and instructive one for a hero." Showalter, A Literature of Their Own 150. Orest's madness, then, can be considered his symbolic immersion in feminine experience. Through his "experiencing as a woman," Orest will be more able to understand and feel that although women need love, they hate to be weak. Role reversals as a dramatic device are frequently used by Ukrainka to highlight gender inequality, for example, through Lukash and Mavka in The Forest Song, through Don Juan and Donna Anna in The Stone Host (Kaminnyi hospodar), and through Stepan and Oksana in The Nobleman's Wife.

of the anxiety and frustration she experienced in her own life. Liubov's madness in The Azure Rose, however, is not the traditional melodramatic female madness of weakness that Babyshkin considers it to be. Such madness, as depicted in Marko Kropyvnyts'kyi's Allow the Heart Freedom, it Will Lead to Servitude (Dai sertsiu voliu, zavede v nevoliu)

reinforced on stage the myths surrounding the reasons for female madness as primarily biological and arising out of romantic and sexual causes. Liubov, however, does not go mad because she loses control out of weakness. Rather, being deprived of other viable alternatives, she is paradoxically able to maintain control over her own destiny by going mad. Because of her choice, she will not have to enter into a relationship which she sees will bring about both her own and Orest's, downfall.

Through her madness, Liubov is able to ascend to a higher plateau from which she can restructure her life. Having gone mad, her declaration that "only a sick person is a person!" attests to the control which she has gained through her decision, and reflects Ukrainka's own explanation of her feelings of abnormality.⁷⁴ Liubov also emerges victorious because through her conscious act of madness she takes the question of her sanity out of the

⁷⁴ Ukrainka, Blakytna troianda, Tvory 3: 75.

hands of the Doctor and a hostile society, and regains control over it, thereby winning back her ability to determine her own destiny.

Liubov's madness in The Azure Rose is neither "unmotivated" and "surprising" (as it is described by Rulin), nor is it a portrayal of a traditional theme which Ukrainka "quickly overcame" (as Babyshkin suggests).⁷⁵ It does, however, strongly challenge the mythologized madwoman of both reality and literature. In the play it is made clear that what leads to women's alienation and madness is not their weak nature, as suggested by the medical opinion of the nineteenth century, but rather social systems which "demand adherence to arbitrarily established sex roles, thus denying individual freedom and contributing to psychological fragmentation, alienation, and madness."⁷⁶ Liubov desperately wants both happiness and a loving relationship with Orest, yet she, like other women in the same predicament, cannot hope for either, realizing "the dangers to identity which women experience in sexual relationships with men in a man's world."⁷⁷ Although she suffers from the impositions placed upon her by male society, in the end she

⁷⁵ Rulin 24-25, Babyshkin 31.

⁷⁶ Rigney 119.

⁷⁷ Rigney 121.

refuses to submit to them and rebels successfully, albeit tragically.⁷⁸ Liubov's act of conscious madness represents a significant gain for woman as depicted in Ukrainian literature. Ironically, and tragically -- but not pathetically -- it appropriates for woman a sense of control over a crucial part of her being which was hitherto manipulated to her disadvantage. As Ellen Moers writes, "that women as well as men go mad is a feminist assertion."⁷⁹

In her first play, *Ukrainka* dramatized the difficulties

⁷⁸ *Ukrainka's* portrayal of mental illness is serious and painful, thereby refuting the Romantic notion of a "morbid aesthetic . . . in which sickness was seen as a form of female beauty. . . . From the romantic perspective, the sick woman was not that far off from the ideal woman anyway." Barbara Ehrenreich, and Deirdre English, For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women (Garden City: Anchor) 108.

⁷⁹ Ellen Moers, Literary Women (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976) 132. The following sampling of statements reflects the strong feminist awareness of the linkage between womanhood and madness: "Madness is the impasse confronting those whom cultural conditioning has deprived the very means of self-affirmation." Shoshana Felman, "Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy," Diacritics 5.4 (1975): 2. Women's madness is "an intense experience of female biological, sexual, and cultural castration, and a doomed search for potency." Phyllis Chesler, Women and Madness (New York: Avon, 1972) 31. Madness is "the desperate communication of the powerless." Showalter, The Female Malady 5.

Despite their challenge to traditional psychoanalysis, the "antipsychiatry" of modern theorists such as Michel Foucault (Madness and Civilization) and R. D. Laing (Sanity, Madness, and the Family) does not accept gender as a crucial variable in the study of psychiatry.

women face in their quest for happiness and love, and challenged society's beliefs regarding hysteria and inherited illness, definitions of which had been used to explain female weakness. She also gave a new interpretation to madness, suggesting its use as a mechanism of control and defense.

Ukrainka's resourcefulness in her literary creation is both a tribute to her originality as a writer, as well as a reflection of her experience as a woman in a society which disadvantaged women, injured them, and denied them the potential for full development. The Azure Rose represented the first part of her protest against injustice, a protest continued in each of her subsequent plays.

In later years she would develop her feminism and expand her horizons to include other important issues. Her first play, however, attests to the high degree of awareness she had developed toward her position as a woman struggling against the injustices of a patriarchal society.

A Woman's Way to God: The Obsessed

The Obsessed (Oderzhyma), Ukrainka's first of several plays on religious and biblical themes, marks an important turning point in her development as a dramatist.¹ In form it is the first of her dramatic-poems, the genre in which she would write all of her subsequent plays. In content The Obsessed represents a development away from an emphasis on a heroine's social quest (In The Azure Rose -- Blakytna troianda), to one of a spiritual quest (a quest only hinted at in Ukrainka's first play).²

The Obsessed is unique among Ukrainka's religious plays in that it depicts an episode in the life of Jesus Christ

¹ It is difficult to find an appropriate word in English to convey the meaning the word Oderzhyma has in Ukrainian. The eleven volume dictionary of the Ukrainian language provides the following definitions: 1/ Someone who is under the strong influence of a feeling, idea, passion, mood. 2/ An ill person, in whom, according to backward, superstitious people, an evil spirit has implanted itself. 3/ Someone, who, to extraordinary lengths, has become enraptured or enamoured with something. See Slovnyk ukrains'koi movy, ed. I.K. Bilodid, 11 vols. (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1970-80) 5: 625. It is noteworthy that Ukrainka's description of Miriam as a woman "possessed with a spirit" is rendered in quotation marks, thus suggesting an element of irony. In translating Oderzhyma as The Obsessed therefore, it is prudent to keep in mind the various meanings of "oderzhymist'" and Ukrainka's subtly ironic use of the term.

² Carol P. Christ distinguishes women's social quest from their spiritual quest by terming the former "women's struggle to gain respect, equality, and freedom in society. . . ." and the latter as a woman's "awakening to the depths of her soul and her position in the universe." Carol P. Christ, Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest (Boston: Beacon P, 1980) 8.

(called the Messiah in the play), and is thus a "fictionalized biography" of Christ (where an author's focus is on the historical Jesus).²³ Such appearances of Christ in literature are not, of course, uncommon. What is uncommon, however, is that the play really has two Christ figures, that of Jesus Himself, and that of Miriam, or the "Obsessed with the spirit," as she is also referred to (in the play's title and opening stage direction). That Miriam is in fact a Christ figure can be delineated from her strong identification with Christ as well as from the parallels between her life and philosophy and those of Jesus. She emerges as a character who consciously wants to become and succeeds in becoming a Christ figure.

From a feminist point of view the play is remarkable

²³ See Theodore Ziolkowski, Fictional Transfigurations of Christ (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972) 13. Ziolkowski distinguishes five main currents in literary depictions of Christ. One main group, which he identifies as "fictional transfigurations" of Christ features a fictional narrative "in which the characters and the action, irrespective of meaning or theme, are prefigured to a noticeable extent by figures and events popularly associated with the life of Jesus as it is known from the Gospels." Ziolkowski 6. Such a work is set in modern times, and its hero's life is prefigured by Jesus. (This group is the focus of Ziolkowski's study). Other depictions include the aforementioned "fictionalized biography," where the historical Christ's life is embellished with imaginary episodes, "Jesus redivivus," in which Jesus miraculously appears in modern times, "imitatio Christi," where a hero lives his life as he imagines Jesus would live His if He were alive, and "pseudonyms" of Christ, a vague grouping in which a hero is felt to be "Christlike." Ziolkowski 13-26.

because it represents what is one of modern literature's earliest depictions of a female Christ figure, a figure which has become increasingly popular with feminist writers of the twentieth century.⁴ That Ukrainka was more concerned with Miriam than with Jesus as a Christ figure is evident in the title of the play: initially titled Miriam and the Messiah (which suggests parity), it was renamed The Obsessed.⁵

The Obsessed is divided into four short acts. In act I Miriam encounters the Messiah, who has been wandering in the desert. Miriam, who has a great love for Jesus, is incensed that He is so alone and suffers so much. She hates His enemies, and cannot agree with His teaching to love them. Jesus offers Miriam peace, but she declines, wanting to suffer either for Him or along with Him, just as He suffers for others. Jesus, however, turns away from Miriam because in not doing His will He believes that she does not totally accept His teachings. Act II sees Miriam extending her hate

⁴ Note that Ziolkowski includes no female Christ figures in his study. For a representation of twentieth century female Christ figures see Barbara Hill Rigney, Lilith's Daughters: Women and Religion in Contemporary Fiction (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1982). Both Rigney and Ziolkowski were, of course, unaware of Ukrainka's play.

⁵ See Olena Shpyl'ova, "Dramatychna poema Lesi Ukrainky Oderzhyma, Lesia Ukrainka: Publikatsii, statii, doslidzhennia, eds. Oleh Babyshkin, and Arsen Kaspruk, 3 vols. (Kiev: Akademiia nauk URSR, 1954-60) 2: 337.

to include Jesus' friends (primarily the Apostles), whom she sees as hypocrites unworthy and unappreciative of Him.

In act III Miriam finds herself alone at the foot of the crucified Jesus. She expands her hate to include both the friends who abandoned Him as well as the enemies who crucified Him. At the same time her personal tragedy intensifies because she realizes that Jesus will never know how much she loves Him, and because she has not succeeded in sacrificing herself for Him. In act IV the rumour spreads that Jesus is resurrected. In front of the authorities only Miriam admits to knowing Him while others pretend not to. After she curses and accuses a mob of people for causing Jesus' suffering, the mob stones her to death.⁶

By her own testimony, Ukrainka wrote The Obsessed during the harrowing night of January 18, 1901 in Minsk, at the bedside of her dying friend, Serhii Merzhyns'kyi.⁷ That there is an immediate correspondence between the play and

⁶ Woman as a prophetess/religious figure is an image that would reappear in Ukrainka's dramas. Miriam's fate of being spurned by a mob is not unlike that of Tirtsa in On the Ruins (Na ruinakh) and of Cassandra in Cassandra (Kassandra).

⁷ "I wrote it [The Obsessed]," Ukrainka says in a letter to Ivan Franko, "during a night, after which I will no doubt live long, having survived it. . . . If someone were to ask me how I emerged from all of it alive, I would answer 'J'en fait un drame. . . ." Lesia Ukrainka, "To Ivan Franko," 13-14 Jan. 1903, letter 5, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 18.

the person of Merzhyns'kyi, whom Ukrainka both greatly loved and admired, there is no doubt. In a foreshadowing of Miriam's action toward Christ in The Obsessed, Ukrainka wrote to Ol'ha Kobylans'ka "I will not abandon him [Merzhyns'kyi], as he has been abandoned by his friends."¹⁸ As Miriam comes to hate Christ's supporters in the play for their falseness, so Ukrainka came to hate Merzhyns'kyi's friends who abandoned him when he needed them. In letters to V. Kryzhanivs'ka-Tupchans'ka, Ukrainka wrote: "he [Merzhyns'kyi] hasn't heard a word from them [his friends] for a half year, and feels himself forgotten by them. . . ." Of all of his old friends you alone act toward him like a friend should, others . . . I'd better not speak about them, otherwise you might hear from me many bitter and unsavory words."¹⁹

If Ukrainka saw Merzhyns'kyi as a Christ-like figure because of his suffering and his abandonment by friends, she also equated her own suffering for Merzhyns'kyi in Christ-like terms: "How can one be of help to someone for whom a 'miracle' is necessary? One probably should be the

¹⁸ Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kobylans'ka," 29 Jan. 1901, letter 116, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 206.

¹⁹ Ukrainka, "To Vira Kryzhanivs'ka-Topchans'ka," 11 Feb. 1901, letter 118, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 209, 4 Feb. 1901, letter 121, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 213.

Messiah! . . . ,"¹⁰

Unlike The Azure Rose, however, a play whose central concerns are inseparable from Ukrainka's biography, The Obsessed is more than a representation of the relationship and events that transpired between Merzhyns'kyi and Ukrainka. Although Merzhyns'kyi's suffering and abandonment by his friends may have inspired Ukrainka to write a play about Christ's suffering and abandonment, the play's problems are resolved on an abstract and sophisticated philosophical-theological level which is far removed from biographical reality.¹¹

Not only the problems, but also the personages and verbal echoes of The Obsessed in fact appeared in several of Ukrainka's poems years before the crisis involving Merzhyns'kyi's death.¹² Thus, in "The Sacrifice" ("Zhertva" 1900) an "obsessed" woman appears before the Messiah,

¹⁰ Quoted in Shpyl'ova 331.

¹¹ Although many of Ukrainka's plays have autobiographical elements, her biography never again plays as integral a role in her work as it did in her first play. Prime examples of plays which at the same time are highly autobiographical and philosophically independent of Ukrainka's biography are her two greatest works, The Forest Song (Lisova pisnia) and The Stone master (Kaminnyi hospodar).

¹² Ukrainka, who liked Jewish themes very much, was especially drawn to what she called the "wild poetry" of the Bible. See Ukrainka, "To Mykhailo Drahomanov," 2 Jan. 1892, letter 64, Zibrannia tvoriv 10: 125.

offering Him both myrrh and her tears. The poem asks why the Messiah didn't tell the woman "What is it that you want of me."¹³ Later, Jesus instructs the apostles to "offer that woman peace. . . ."¹⁴ In The Obsessed in an almost identical phrase Jesus asks Miriam "What is it that you want of me, woman?" and then "Woman, I want to offer you peace."¹⁵ Moreover, the theme of opportunism on the part of Christ's supporters is found in "The Sacrifice," as it is in The Obsessed. In the poem the apostles are said "to have taken more from Him than they gave to Him."¹⁶ In the play, after Jesus is unable to awaken the slumbering apostles before He goes to His death, Miriam says "Perhaps later they will gather to say a warm word about Him, for whom they cared so little when He was alive!"¹⁷ The poems "I Saw How You Stooped Downward" ("Ia bachyla iak Ty khylyvs' dodolu" 1900) and "And, Maybe There Will be a Second Miracle" ("To, mozhe stanet'sia i druhe dyvo" 1900) are both about women aiding the Crucified Jesus.

Another theme central to The Obsessed, that of the

¹³ Ukrainka, "Zhertva," Zibrannia tvoriv 1: 210.

¹⁴ Ukrainka, "Zhertva," Zibrannia tvoriv 1: 210.

¹⁵ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 128-29.

¹⁶ Ukrainka, "Zhertva," Zibrannia tvoriv 1: 210.

¹⁷ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 140.

relationship between love and hatred is first found in the poem "To a Friend in Remembrance" ("Tovaryshti na spomyn" 1896): "Only he does not know hate, who has never loved anyone!"¹⁸ In The Obsessed Miriam's intense love of Jesus is in part motivated by her equally intense hatred of His enemies and false friends.

Other poems with strong thematic resemblances to The Obsessed are "The Sinner" ("Hrishnytsia" 1896), "I Know That Much Will Still Rush By" ("O, znaiu ia, bahato shche promchyť" 1896), "I Would Like to Embrace You as If I Were an Ivy" ("Khotila ia b tebe, mov pliusch, obniaty" 1900), and "Always a Thorny Wreath" ("Zavzhdy ternovyi vinets" 1900) in which the conscious "climb up Golgotha" is depicted as the greatest of acts.¹⁹ "Jephtha's Daughter" ("Dochka Iiefaia") shows the importance and necessity of sacrifice and a passionate dislike of passivity.

Despite The Obsessed's overtly religious nature, the play has not been considered a religious play, but rather, it has been interpreted as a political allegory, perhaps because critics were not prepared to seriously consider theological thinking on the part of a woman. As a result

¹⁸ Ukrainka, "Tovaryshti na spomyn," Zibrannia tvoriv 1: 130.

¹⁹ Ukrainka, "Zavzhdy ternovyi vinets," Zibrannia tvoriv 1: 189-90.

critics have both misunderstood The Obsessed and failed to uncover its philosophical depth.

Two schools of thought have emerged in the play's interpretation. One, which can be termed the Soviet view, holds that The Obsessed is a work in which Ukrainka polemicizes with, rejects, and ultimately discredits Christianity as an instrument of class subjugation. A leading proponent of this view, Oleh Babyshkin, regards The Obsessed as Ukrainka's first work "in her consistent and many-sided unmasking of the reactionary essence of Christianity."²⁰ Babyshkin, as do others who support this view, sees Miriam and the Messiah as representing two warring and irreconcilable positions. Babyshkin writes:

The position of Miriam -- is to transform slaves into people, the position of the Messiah -- is to transform people into slaves. . . . The humanism of the Messiah -- is abstract and groundless in nature, through it all sorts of evil and violence, deceit and unfairness are excused. The humanism of Miriam is based on love for all, which moves life forward, a true humanism of the struggle for the well being of free people. The Messiah's

²⁰ Oleh Babyshkin, Dramaturhiia Lesi Ukrainky (Kiev: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo obrazotvorchoho mystetstva i muzychnoi literatury, 1963) 59.

humanism -- is an excuse for slavery, the humanism of Miriam -- is the denial and condemnation of slavery and the spirit of slavery in a person.²¹

Another defender of this view, Olena Shpyl'ova states: "the image of the Messiah embodied the Christian morality of submission, preordinance, and universal forgiveness, all of which the poetess hated. . . . That is why Lesia Ukrainka so strongly condemns Christian morality, which in the work is represented by the Messiah."²²

Shpyl'ova points to the following passage in the play to prove that Christ is a defender of the exploiting class: The Messiah: "You [Miriam] are stubborn, like a slave, who knowing her master's will does not listen. A strict punishment awaits such slaves."²³ Shpyl'ova then argues that "People who have accepted the words of the Messiah have also accepted the existing order as being fair and not subject to change, because it has been created by God."²⁴ Consequently, "To rise up against this order -- means to rise up against God, and the Church."²⁵ Soviet

²¹ Babyshkin 59. Others who espouse this view are Lelia Kulins'ka, Oleksandr Deich, and Oleksii Stavyts'kyi.

²² Shpyl'ova 136.

²³ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 130.

²⁴ Shpyl'ova 351.

critics consider that this is precisely what Ukrainka does in The Obsessed through Miriam's confrontation of the Messiah.

A second school of thought about The Obsessed is based upon the theory, originated by Dmytro Dontsov, that Ukrainka through Miriam casts herself as a disciple of individualism and of the necessity for a prophet-like leader of the Ukrainian nation.²⁶ "The problematics of Ukrainka's dramas," writes Dontsov, "is the problem of the prophet and the mob . . . in pivotal times of the life of a society. . . ."²⁷ Dontsov maintains that through Miriam Ukrainka appropriates the role of prophet: "she was aware of her great prophetic mission amidst a lost generation."²⁸ Although Dontsov's view is motivated by his

²⁵ Shpyl'ova 351.

²⁶ Dmytro Dontsov, who wrote extensively on Lesia Ukrainka, is better known as the controversial chief theoretician of Ukrainian nationalism in western Ukraine after the first World War. His writings exerted tremendous influence over a whole generation, including many emigré literary critics. See Mykhailo Sosnovs'kyi, Dmytro Dontsov: Politychnyi portret (Toronto: Trident International, 1974). An example of an emigré critic developing Dontsov's theory to an extreme is Roman Zadesnians'kyi's Tvorchist' Lesi Ukrainky: Krytychni narysy. (Munich: Ukrains'ka krytychna dumka, n.d.). Zadesnians'kyi's chapter on The Obsessed borders on the racist.

²⁷ Dmytro Dontsov, "Trahediia Oderzhymoi (Oderzhyma Lesi Ukrainky)," Vyzvol'nyi shliakh 3(1955): 13.

²⁸ Dontsov 17.

own nationalism, and thus has little in common with the class-based Soviet view of the play, the two views are remarkably similar in that they both see Miriam as a disciple of hatred towards one's enemies. Whereas Babyskin sees the ruling exploitative class and its Christian apologists as the object of Miriam's scorn, Dontsov takes aim at Ukrainian liberals: "she [Miriam] could not agree with the teachings of humanism, which disarm one because they preach passive love of one's own and tolerance of enemy forces, which was being embraced by that time's Ukrainian officialdom."²⁹ Dontsov ends his argument by dismissing Ukrainka's theological concerns in the play: "The Messiah, the cowardly throng of Jerusalem -- are only symbolic. . . ."³⁰

A somewhat less extreme interpretation of Ukrainka's individualism is put forth by Borys Iakubs'kyi in his introduction to The Obsessed in the Knyhospilka edition of Ukrainka's works. Iakubs'kyi distances himself from Dontsov's Nietzschean view of Ukrainka's messianism, and considers Ukrainka's "excessive" individualism in the play as representing an early stage of her world-view. He interprets Miriam's non-compromising self-sacrifice as

²⁹ Dontsov 17.

³⁰ Dontsov 17.

representing an individualistically-motivated resolution of a frustrating problem: "Miriam the obsessed finds an outlet for her excessive individualism in her self-sacrifice; no other option exists for this excessive individualism."³¹ Iakubs'kyi equates Miriam's individualism with that of Ukrainka and sees Miriam's hatred of Christ's passive supporters mirroring Ukrainka's hatred of the passivity of her contemporaries. Iakubs'kyi concludes his discussion of The Obsessed by stating that Ukrainka would soon start writing works which would more accurately reflect her true position as a writer very much concerned with a more global solution to society's problems.³²

Agreeing with Iakubs'kyi in his qualified interpretation of individualism in The Obsessed are two other distinguished critics of the 1920s, Mykola Zerov and Mykhailo Drai-Khmara. Zerov states that any leader, poet, or thinker necessarily experiences moments when he or she feels removed from the masses and consequently lapses into a mind-frame of individualism. Zerov adds, however, that in no way can Ukrainka's individualism (as it is manifested in the play) be considered an individualism of despair or

³¹ Borys Iakubs'kyi, "Poema nadmirnoho indyvidualizmu (Dramatychna poema Oderzhyma), Ukrainka, Tvory, ed. Borys Iakubs'kyi, 12 vols. (Kiev: Knyhospilka, 1927-30) 5: 115.

³² Iakubs'kyi 114.

anarchy.³³³ Drai-Khmara terms Ukrainka's individualism totally original and completely saturated with social content. . . . When the strong person in Lesia Ukrainka opposes the base and inert society, she does so not out of egotistical, but out of altruistic motives and through it fulfills not individualistic but societal needs. . . . Lesia Ukrainka does not extol her own 'I', does not create her own cult and does not hide in the catacombs, but goes toward life. . . .³³⁴

An important variable in the discussion of The Obsessed, that of the characterization of Miriam as an unstable person, is introduced by Iakubs'kyi and is subscribed to by Drai-Khmara and Zerov. Iakubs'kyi makes the following statements about Miriam:

Miriam . . . has a great and tragic, even insane love for Christ. This great love necessarily demands a sacrifice for the beloved. . . . The theme of the poem is the idea of a great, mad, insane love. . . . the woman Miriam becoming

³³³ Mykola Zerov, Lesia Ukrainka: Krytychno-biohrafichnyi narys (Kiev: Knyhospilka, 1924) 63-64.

³³⁴ Mykhailo Drai-Khmara, Lesia Ukrainka: Zhyttia i tvorchoist', Mykhailo Drai-Khmara: Z literaturno-naukovoi spadshchyny (New York: Naukove tovarystvo im. Shevchenka, 1979) 142.

enraptured by the sermons and miracles of the
 Messiah, has come to love him madly . . . [and] in
 an insane ecstasy gives her life . . . for
 love.³⁵

The identification of Miriam's love for and devotion to
 Christ as an act of madness has several important
 , ramifications. In part it represents patriarchal
 unacceptance of a woman choosing her own way to God.
 Christianity's prescribed roles for the devotion of women
 are well defined, and are modelled on the behaviour of the
 Virgin Mary. Comments Barbara Hill Rigney: "Mary's
 suppliant assent to the sacrifice of her humanity in order
 to become the mother of God sums up the qualities idealized
 for women by Christianity: sacrificial love, sexual purity,
 humility, passivity."³⁶

Although exalted by the Church as the mother of God and
 as an ideal figure, Mary also causes the Church great
 anxiety because of her femaleness. Christianity is
 particularly uncomfortable with woman's sexuality and the
 "otherness" of her body. Tertullian calls the woman's body
 "a temple built over a sewer," and St. Augustine is
 obscenely horrified to contemplate the reality of birth: "We

³⁵ Iakubs'kyi 109-112.

³⁶ Rigney 36.

are born between feces and urine."³⁷ Considering the Church's revulsion with the female body it is no surprise that Church canon declares the concept of the virgin birth of Christ. Simone de Beauvoir adds, "The aversion of Christianity in the matter of the feminine body is such that while it is willing to doom its God to an ignominious death, it spares Him the defilement of being born."³⁸

Christianity's views on female biology are just part of its overall condemnation of women to a status far inferior to that of men. A roll call of misogynistic statements of prominent theologians would be too long to list here. Representative are the comments of one of the Fathers of the Church, Tertullian, who remarks: "Woman, you are the devil's doorway. . . . It is your fault that the Son of God had to die; you should always go in mourning and in rags;" and St. John Chrysostom, greatly venerated in the East: "Among all savage beasts none is so harmful as woman;" Later, St. Thomas Aquinas: "Man is above woman as Christ is above man. It is unchangeable that woman is destined to live under man's influence, and has no authority from her

³⁷ Quoted in Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1953) 167.

³⁸ de Beauvoir 167.

³⁹ Quoted in de Beauvoir 98.

lord."³⁹ Such opinions were not relegated to the realm of theory; canon law profoundly influenced the laws of society and resulted in a situation where (until relatively recent times) women were treated as the property and slaves of their fathers and then, later, of their husbands. "The given," writes Rigney,

is that "sexism permeates almost every facet of the major traditional religions, that religious institutions are completely dominated by men, and that ideological reinforcement of this domination has contributed in no small part to the tragedy that has often been women's history."⁴⁰

Miriam's most serious violation of Church law and belief is her refusal to submit her will to the will of God. Of all the vows that the Church demands of its believers, and especially of women, the most important is the vow of obedience, for Jesus declared "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."⁴¹

Miriam loves the Messiah and is ready to die for Him

⁴⁰ Rigney 3.

⁴¹ Quoted in Fremantle 4. Although Christian doctrine demands obedience from both men and women, it clearly demands more obedience from women than from men by virtue of its insistence on the subordination of women to men.

but just for Him and not for His enemies as well, something He demands of her. Because of Miriam's refusal to love on His terms, Jesus tells her, "He who has denied everything but not himself does not love."⁴² Miriam asks Jesus, "Do I have to love everyone? . . . [To love] You and everyone -- is beyond my power. For what, for what do I have to love them?"⁴³ The Messiah's answer is "Only unbelievers ask 'for what?'"⁴⁴ Miriam, who cannot bring herself to love Christ's enemies, as He tells her she must do, is faced with a choice: either to submit her will to His, or to stand on her principles. In choosing the latter she defies the most sacred of Christian laws.⁴⁵

Miriam, because she attempts to emulate Jesus, is considered to be insane. Men (as shown in Ziolkowski's study), are comfortably accepted in a wide range of literary depictions as being Christ figures.⁴⁶ This is the

⁴² Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 135.

⁴³ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 135. Miriam's is a significant question because it draws attention to the idealistic part of Christianity. To love one's enemies is an enormous -- inhuman request, one with which Miriam cannot agree.

⁴⁴ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 135.

⁴⁵ By being disobedient Miriam actually becomes a rebel-Christ figure. Since Christ Himself was perfectly obedient to His Father, to follow His example means to be just as perfectly obedient to Christ. See Fremantle 6.

culturally based double standard which prevents critics such as Iakubs'kyi from seeing in Miriam's search for God as valid a quest as that which exists for any male Christ figure.

Miriam's categorization as a Christ rather than a Mary figure in The Obsessed may be ascertained in several ways. A strong theme of aloneness and apartness runs throughout the play. Miriam feels tremendous pity for the Messiah because of his solitude and unhappiness: "How he stands alone, God knows! Can no one help Him? Will He always be alone? . . . To give everyone happiness and to be unhappy Himself, unhappy, because He is always alone. Who could rescue Him from His aloneness. . . ?"⁴⁷ Miriam is able to understand the Messiah's suffering while his supporters remain oblivious to it because she, too, sees herself as isolated and alone: "here I sit, as always, alone. . . . And I will always be alone in this and in the next world. Yes, my dark longing will never end and sorrow will always

⁴⁶ Ukrainka's Miriam must not be understood as what Ziolkowski refers to as a "Christomaniac," that is someone who believes that he is Christ but in reality "may simply be sick;" "Christomania" is the only category in Ziolkowski's study reserved for insane male Christ figures. Ziolkowski 141. Miriam doesn't schizophrenically believe herself to be Christ. She consciously and for good reason wants to emulate His life.

⁴⁷ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 127.

burn my heart."⁴⁸

The Messiah, responding to Miriam's question "And what do I lack? Oh Messiah, do You know?!" offers her peace: "Do not worry woman, I want to offer you peace."⁴⁹ Miriam, however, cannot accept Jesus' offer because she believes that if He is not at peace then neither will she be: "But you, Teacher, left behind the peace which was yours in quiet Nazareth."⁵⁰ Through her words Miriam equates her quest, along with its suffering, with the Messiah's, as a conscious choice for a necessary struggle over the comforts of inaction. The Messiah, understanding the implications of Miriam's response, asks, "Do you want to equal . . ." but before He can complete His question Miriam interjects, "No, Messiah, I am not equalling myself to You, no! I know that I am an unfortunate woman."⁵¹

This last dialogue indicates that the Messiah is well aware that Miriam is attempting to identify herself with Him. However, the Messiah cannot accept this notion. He asks: "For what reason do you forsake peace, the only solace of all the unfortunate?"⁵² By answering "Because You do not

⁴⁸ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 140.

⁴⁹ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 127-28.

⁵⁰ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 128.

⁵¹ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 128.

have it, Son of God!" Miriam both confirms her identification with Christ and rejects Jesus' prescribed advice for the "unfortunates."³³ Jesus is then prompted to further chastise Miriam for forgetting her place: "You are stubborn, like a slave, who, knowing her master's will does not listen. A strict punishment awaits such slaves."³⁴

At question in Jesus' chastisement of Miriam is the issue of her belief in God. Jesus expects that if Miriam believes in Himself and in God the Father, she will without qualification accept all of His teaching. The Messiah asks Miriam: "Miriam, say, do you believe in me?" to which she answers, "I believe that You are the Son of God, Messiah, and will give everyone, except me, salvation."³⁵ Christ then asks, "Have you accepted my words?" and Miriam responds, "I shall never forget them."³⁶ Not satisfied with Miriam's answer, Christ asks, "And you will follow them?" in reply to which Miriam offers, "They will follow me wherever I go, beseeching me: 'You are going on an improper course!' And I will step on Your fiery words as if they were a

³³ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 128.

³³ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 128-29.

³⁴ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 130.

³⁵ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 129.

³⁶ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 130.

painful open flame, -- my tracks will be bloody from them."

The Messiah interprets Miriam's words as indicating a lack of faith in Him: "There is little faith in you. If you only possessed a grain of faith. . . ."⁵⁷ Terribly pained by the Messiah's inability to understand her, Miriam replies, "Oh I believe, without a doubt I believe in You, Son of God, only I don't believe in myself! I don't believe that I will be able to accept your words."⁵⁸ Miriam's tragedy is that she deeply loves Christ but cannot accept all of His teachings, which He interprets as a lack of love for Him.

There is nothing more that Miriam would like to do than to offer herself in sacrifice to help her Lord, as He will for all of humankind: "And perhaps with my blood I will be able to redeem. . . . If You would accept from me redemption, so that Your holy blood would not flow!"⁵⁹ After Christ incredulously asks, "You want to

⁵⁷ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 131. That Miriam feels terrible guilt that she will not be able to follow Christ's teaching and live up to His expectations of her is not surprising considering the impossible course the Church sets for women. In the words of Anne Fremantle, it is impossible for women to live up to the image of the Virgin Mary: "Unfortunately, having thus started at the top, woman in Christianity had nowhere to go but down." Fremantle XV.

⁵⁸ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 131.

⁵⁹ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 136. Miriam's desire to die like Christ is also heretical -- since by this act she would supplant Him.

redeem me?" and answers, "It is in vain!" Miriam pleads, "Then allow me at least to die along with You, if not for You!"⁶⁰ After Miriam cries out one last desperate time, "Messiah!" His words to her are: "No, to you I am not the Messiah. You do not know me."⁶¹

Ultimately, Miriam is rejected by the Christ whom she so boundlessly loves. He is a Christ who, despite His deity and love for all people, is constrained by the law of God, which as it is interpreted on earth by the Church, is necessarily confining. It is this conditional acceptance of Miriam by Christ which does not allow her to show her love for Him on her own terms.⁶²

⁶⁰ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 137.

⁶¹ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 137.

⁶² Ukrainka saw one of the basic faults with Christianity as its separation of God-the Master from His people-slaves. In a letter to Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi she wrote: "I do not accept Tolstoy's theory that today's Christianity is an aberration, a disease of this religion. No! In the earliest of documents, in the "Acts of the apostles," in the letters of the apostle Paul, in the authentic fragments of the first Galilean propaganda I see the seed of this slave mentality, this narrow-centered political quietism, which consequently expanded itself in Christianity. Understand it as you wish, but it is not accidental that in the parables and in the Gospel that the word "slave" and the antithesis of "master and slave" are used as the only possible form of relations between a person and God." Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," 9 Feb. 1906, letter 80, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 155. An interesting variation on Miriam as Christ figure is its reverse, Christ as ordinary man. This notion, however, loses merit considering that even though Miriam wants to be a friend to Jesus devoid of any "master-slave" connotations, she still

Miriam's actions are not those of an unstable, insanely infatuated woman, nor are they those of an unbeliever. Unlike Christ's false supporters in the play, Miriam does not expect Christ to offer her happiness and redemption. All she asks is to be able to truly express her love for him: "Where is there greater grief than in not being able to sacrifice oneself for the soul of a friend? . . ."⁶³

The reason why Miriam identifies so strongly with Christ, apart from her philosophical choice to do so, is that she is able to feel Christ's suffering because of its similarities to the sufferings naturally experienced by women. Rigney writes about such a parallel: "That Christ was persecuted and suffered as a martyr, that he performed the social function of the scapegoat and bled for the salvation of humanity, are qualities which lend themselves as literary symbols for the personal and political suffering by women."⁶⁴ Thus Miriam's philosophical sympathy for Christ's solitude and suffering which she compares to her own spiritual loneliness and suffering has more than just abstract-philosophical grounds. It is both rooted in and

patterns her life on His. Jesus remains very much the Biblical Christ rather than a humanized figure in which the man outweighs the God.

⁶³ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 141.

⁶⁴ Rigney 7.

reinforced by the otherness and the suffering of her female experience.

Like Rigney, de Beauvoir sees women's identification with Christ in psychological terms: "In the humiliation of God she sees with wonder the dethronement of Man; inert, passive, covered with wounds . . . she is overwhelmed to see that Man, Man-God, has assumed her role."⁶⁵ Simone de Beauvoir contends that such identification with Christ can lead to deeply-neurotic and destructive behaviour, sometimes manifested through inner experiences and sometimes through concrete action.⁶⁶ It can also, she says, manifest itself as "erotomania": because a neurotic woman sees that Christ has died for her "All she can do is abandon herself to His fires without resistance. . . . in platonic or in sexual

⁶⁵ de Beauvoir 677.

⁶⁶ de Beauvoir. In their attempt to imitate the Redeemer who "saved the flesh by the denigration of His own flesh" mystic women "are not content with abandoning themselves passively to God; they apply themselves actively to self-annihilation by the destruction of their flesh. No doubt ascetism has been practiced by monks and priests, but the mad rage with which woman flouts her flesh assumes special and peculiar forms. . . . through humiliation and suffering she transforms it [her body] into a glory. The mystic will torture her flesh to have the right to claim it; reducing it to abjection, she exalts it as the instrument of salvation." De Beauvoir 675-76. Such excesses include St. Angela drinking with delight the water with which she had washed lepers, and women of the Italian town of Abruzzi lacerating their tongues by licking the stones on the road along the Way of the Cross. de Beauvoir 675.

form. . . . Woman seeks in divine love first of all what the amoureuse seeks in that of man: the exaltation of her narcissism; this sovereign gaze fixed attentively, amorously, upon her is a miraculous godsend."⁶⁷

Women's identification with Christ, de Beauvoir adds, however, does not have to result in neurotic behaviour. It can also take the form of constructive and even visionary acts:

There are women of action like St. Catherine, St. Theresa, Joan of Arc, who know very well what goals they have in mind and who lucidly devise means for attaining them: their visions simply provide objective images for their certitudes, encouraging these women to persist in the paths they have mapped out in detail for themselves.⁶⁸

Miriam is also such a woman, certain and persistent in her chosen path.

Miriam must, however, prove her selflessness to none

⁶⁷ de Beauvoir 674. It is common, theorizes de Beauvoir, for neurotic women to confuse God with the man they are in love with, and even to "deify" such a man. de Beauvoir 670-71. A strong temptation exists for considering Miriam's "obsession" with Christ as reflecting Ukrainka's love of Merzhyn's'kyi. Such, however, is not the case. Ukrainka's play goes well beyond representing a "narcissistic" need on Ukrainka's part to show love for a man whom she considers to be Christ-like.

⁶⁸ de Beauvoir 678.

other than Christ Himself. She tells the Messiah that she has given her soul for Him because of her love for Him. The Messiah asks, "What does it mean, woman, to give one's soul?" to which Miriam replies, "It means -- to be ready to die for love."⁶⁹ The Messiah interprets Miriam's answer as not including enough, when he says, "That would be called sacrificing one's body. There is no soul involved."⁷⁰ What the Messiah really wants is Miriam's total submission and not her sacrifice. He interprets the latter as a manifestation of her narcissism.

On the contrary, Miriam pays a staggering price for her devotion to Jesus because He does not accept the sincerity of her love. Able to accept the damnation of her soul, she cannot live with the thought that Jesus does not believe in her love for Him: "Oh Son of God! Let everything in my life be untrue, but believe me, that I loved You."⁷¹ The Messiah, though, does not believe Miriam. Unlike Jesus's false friends, who "devote themselves" to Him for truly selfish reasons, He cannot see that Miriam loves Him so selflessly.

Miriam's last words before she is stoned to death

⁶⁹ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 134-35.

⁷⁰ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 135.

⁷¹ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 140.

reaffirm her love for the Messiah: "I am now giving for You. . . my life. . . and blood. . . and soul. . . ! Not for happiness. . . not for the Kingdom of God. . . but for love!"⁷² Nowhere is Miriam's identification with Christ stronger than it is here: both truly love and out of this unconditional love both sacrifice themselves for those whom they love. Thus even though Miriam proclaims "He did not spill a drop of blood for me," she nevertheless unreservedly continues to love Him.⁷³ Miriam's "obsession" with Christ is not an irrational act of self-gratification. It is a clear, logical, and forceful identification, and subsequent emulation on Miriam's part of the most noble of all role models -- the selflessly loving Christ. It is, however, an emulation which is not accompanied by a loss of identity. It thus stops short of necessitating a total subordination of Miriam's will to the laws of the Church -- it is a woman's way to God on her own terms.

Ukrainka's play represents an example of what Rigney terms "some of the ways in which contemporary women are perceiving, revising, and exorcizing the archetypal images

⁷² Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 147.

⁷³ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 143. Miriam's statement also distances her from those women whom de Beauvoir classifies as neurotic because of their repayment of Christ's sacrifice for them.

and ideas of traditional religions," Rigney's focus being "not an interpretation of what male theologians think about women, but of what women think about themselves and God."⁷⁴ In The Obsessed, Ukrainka challenges fundamental cornerstones of Christianity such as the concept of the importance of the subjugation of personal will to the will of God (and of the Church). Ukrainka regards such total subjugation as being destructive, and as being a form of enslavement.

In depicting Miriam as a Christ figure Ukrainka permits herself another departure from the patriarchal theological canon. Building upon the "femininity" of the Christ figure which many feminists have recognized, Ukrainka's Miriam contributes to a further feminization of the Christ image. Although Miriam manifestedly represents a rebellion against the Virgin Mary's docility and passivity, she embraces Mary's charity, pity, tenderness, and her role as a protector and mother. These features do not appear as weaknesses in Miriam, but rather, as positive strengths which parallel Miriam's boundless love.

Thus it is Miriam, who despite having been rejected by her beloved Messiah, stands alone at the foot of the cross after Jesus is abandoned by everyone else.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Rigney 3.

In creating an androgynous Christ figure Ukrainka rejects society's insistence on attributing to Christ patriarchal values simply because He was a man. Her "feminization" of the Christ figure represents a major "de-patriarchalization" of God.

A concrete example of this revision is the rejection by Ukrainka of the concept of glory in being God. Miriam questions the revered male concern with glory, and, emphasizes its hollowness. After pondering the good His sacrifices will bring to humanity she asks, "And for the Messiah? -- . . . glory in excelsis? . . . To bring happiness to everyone and to be unhappy Himself, unhappy, because He is eternally alone. Who could rescue Him from His aloneness, His terrible glory?"⁷⁶ Rather than attempting to emulate the male pattern of behaviour which

⁷⁵ Ukrainka's intimation that it is a woman who remains with the Crucified Christ is Scripturally correct. In all four of the Gospels it is women who are with Jesus at the Crucifixion (excepting John). It is also women to whom the Resurrected Jesus appears. See Carol Heilbrun, Toward a Recognition of Androgyny (New York: Knopf, 1973) 20.

⁷⁶ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 127. Phyllis Chesler writes "Women are impaled on the cross of self-sacrifice. Unlike men, they are categorically denied the experience of cultural supremacy. . . . In different ways, some women are driven mad by this fact." Phyllis Chesler, Women and Madness (New York: Avon, 1972) 31. Miriam is definitely not such a woman, a fact which distances her even further from the neurotic mystic women about whom de Beauvoir writes.

extols glory by striving for "supremacy" or by being jealous of it, Miriam argues with the illogic and destructiveness of glory.

Carol Christ writes that a woman's spiritual quest involves her asking questions such as "Who am I? Why am I here? What is my place in the Universe? In answering these questions, a woman must listen to her own voice and come to terms with her own experience. . . . Because she can no longer accept conventional answers to her questions, she opens herself to the radically new."⁷⁷ In no other play does *Ukrainka* pose such questions more emphatically and, as a result, opens herself to the "radical new." In listening to her own voice and experience *Ukrainka* forces herself to confront the greatest authority figure of all -- that of Christ-God. In this confrontation she comes to terms with the way the image of Christ has been used to justify patriarchy. Remarkably, and in spite of the magnitude of the challenge, *Ukrainka* characteristically does not abandon her convictions.

Because Miriam's challenge of the traditional Christ figure is accompanied by tremendous guilt, her triumph is achieved at great personal cost. When the Messiah sees Miriam's anguish because she cannot love Him as she would

⁷⁷ Christ 8-9.

like, He tells her that her soul "cannot be as black" as she imagines it to be.⁷⁸ Miriam answers Him, "Oh no Teacher, it is blacker than the blackness of a burned-out empty shell of a house." Such is the self-image of Miriam's soul, the result of her guilt over her feelings about Christ. At the play's conclusion, Miriam is stoned to death, which in the Israel of Christ's time was the punishment which awaited an adulterous wife. By dying in this manner Miriam not only fulfills her last Christ-like act, dying for her Lord, but is also punished for her deed.⁷⁹

It is only through such intense spiritual experiences, however, argues Rigney, that women can successfully continue their struggle for justice in a holistic sense: "women's spiritual quest provides new visions of individual and shared power that can inspire a transformation of culture and society. . . . By enabling women to recognize the grounding of their lives in the ground of being, women's spiritual quest gives women the strength to create

⁷⁸ Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 131.

⁷⁹ de Beauvoir 85. Miriam's punishment confirms and brings to its conclusion the underlying notion throughout the play that she considers herself to be Christ's lover. By introducing the element of sexuality, Ukrainka confronts the Church's discomfort with and fear of it. The Church's denial of sexuality and its preoccupation with celibacy obscure the fact that there is very good reason to believe that Jesus was Himself married. See Heilbrun 17-18.

alternatives."¹³⁰ Adds Rigney, "political freedom is dependent on spiritual freedom."¹³¹

In light of the complex theological problems raised in The Obsessed it is difficult to understand the play merely as reflecting political or class concerns. Such concerns, if they do exist, are surely minor issues of a much more important discussion which centres on the philosophical considerations of spirituality, love, sacrifice.

The play represents Ukrainka's coming to terms with the superhuman demands of Christianity and with the concept of an unwavering, principled, male God. Her creation of a female Christ figure indicates that much of what Ukrainka cannot accept in Christianity bears a direct relationship to her being a woman. The kinds of problems raised in the play indicate that Ukrainka's disputes with her religion are serious and of a large magnitude. As in other areas of her life, Ukrainka is a Romantic: she expects much from religion, and thus opens herself up to disillusionment.

Despite its severity and harshness, however, Ukrainka's critique of religion is also typically loving. It is a critique which arises out of caring, not out of scorn. Any claim that The Obsessed proves that Ukrainka is anti-

¹³⁰ Christ 131.

¹³¹ Rigney 4

Christian or a disbeliever is totally dispelled by an examination of the intensity and passion with which she comes to terms with her beliefs in the play. Miriam's words can be used to reflect Ukrainka's deep anguish over her own tragic way to God: "It is not that my faith is too small, it is that I believe too much, and this faith of mine will damn me forever."⁸²

⁸² Ukrainka, Oderzhyma, Zibrannia tvoriv 3: 133.

A Noblewoman in the Attic: The Nobleman's Wife

The historical drama The Nobleman's Wife (Boiarynia), seemingly one of the least complex of Ukrainka's plays, has in many ways proven to be her most enigmatic and confounding work. Since the 1920s Soviet critics have ignored the play, having deemed it too dangerous (because of its nationalistic tone) even to be published.¹ The Nobleman's Wife has also remained virtually ignored by emigré Ukrainian scholars, despite its nationalistic tone.² Unfortunately, critics of both ideological persuasions have failed to understand that Ukrainka's play represents significantly more than a manifestation of patriarchal Ukrainian nationalism.

At the heart of the matter lies Ukrainka's understanding of nationalism. By interpreting nationalism in traditional (patriarchal) terms, Soviet critics have narrow-mindedly determined that it seriously and unacceptably challenges the Soviet ideal of Russian-

¹ Oleh Babyshkin's discussion of the play in his study of Ukrainka's dramas remains the only attempt by a post-1920s Soviet critic to comprehensively analyze it. Oleh Babyshkin, Dramaturhiia Lesi Ukrainky (Kiev: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo obrazotvorchoho mystetstva i muzychnoi literatury, 1963).

² Only two major articles on the play have appeared in the West. See Roman Zadesnians'kyi, "Vid uhodnytstva do natsional'noi zrady," in Tvorchist' Lesi Ukrainky: Krytychni narysy (Munich: Ukrain's'ka krytychna dumka, n.d.) 100-21, and Roman Zylavyi, "La révolte contre le despotisme chez Victor Hugo et Lessia Oukraina," in Actes du colloque Lessia Oukraina (Paris: Université ukrainienne libre, 1983) 127-36.

Ukrainian fraternity. Emigré critics, on the other hand, have by-and-large also narrow-mindedly interpreted Ukrainka's "message" in the play to be an affirmation of their own definition of nationalism. In effect, neither side has understood that Ukrainka presents her unique view of nationalism in the play, a view which is strongly coloured by her feminism.

Ukrainka based The Nobleman's Wife on seventeenth-century Ukraine's period of the Ruin and on the hetmanate of Petro Doroshenko, both popular topics for nationally-conscious nineteenth and twentieth-century Ukrainian writers.³ Ukrainka's play is unique among the many treatments of this period of Ukrainian history in that it depicts the tragedy of a politically and nationally-aware woman. Thus, although Ukrainka chose a popular historical theme for her play, she confronts the problem of the Ruin from a feminist perspective.

The play opens with Stepan's visit to his late father's former Cossack friend and ally, Perebiinyi. Stepan, a young

³ Other important works on the Ruin include Shevchenko's poem "The White Cloud took the place of the Black" ("Zastupyla chorna khmara ta biluiu khmaroiu"), Panteleimon Kulish's novel The Black Council (Chorna rada), Mykola Kostomarov's novel The Girl from Chernihiv (Chernigovka), Liudmyla Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka's drama Hetman Doroshenko (Het'man Doroshenko), Vasyl' Pachovs'kyi's play The Sun of the Ruin (Sontse Ruiny), and Ivan Karpenko-Karyi's drama Hanna (Handzia).

Ukrainian nobleman who has chosen to serve the Tsar in Moscow in order to curry support for his native Ukraine, proposes to and then marries Oksana, Perebiinyi's daughter. At first attracted to his peaceful nature, Oksana soon learns that her husband is a coward and careerist. Compounding her disappointment in Stepan is the oppression and indignity forced upon Oksana by her new Muscovite surroundings. Oksana suffers, knowing that while she and Stepan sit in Moscow, Ukraine is being ravaged by strife and civil war. Once a proud and independent woman, Oksana begins to wither emotionally and psychologically. But she cannot leave Stepan because she genuinely loves him. As the curtain falls, it is clear that Oksana will soon die.

Critics offer many reasons for Ukrainka's choice of subject matter in The Nobleman's Wife. Andrii Muzychka, picking up the play's strong motif of nostalgia, speculates that "It is likely that a strong moment of intensely experienced longing [for Ukraine] prompted her to write on this topic. . . ."⁴ Borys Iakubs'kyi surmises that "Ukrainka chose this topic after she was told more than once that she shies away from Ukrainian topics."⁵ Iakubs'kyi

⁴ Andrii Muzychka, Lesia Ukrainka: Ii zhyttia, hromads'ka diial'nist' i poetychna tvorchist' (Odessa: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1925) 88.

⁵ Borys Iakubs'kyi, "Lesia Ukrainka," Lesia Ukrainka, Tvory, ed. Borys Iakubs'kyi, 12 vols. (Kiev: Knyhospilka,

adds that Ukrainka chose a historical subject because her knowledge of current Ukrainian life was limited due to her illness-enforced stays abroad. Mykhailo Drai-Khmara contends that Ukrainka had a definite purpose in writing The Nobleman's Wife. Although agreeing with the view that Ukrainka's sojourns outside of Ukraine limited her knowledge of Ukrainian life, Drai-Khmara believes that she chose a historical subject to elude censorship. Drai-Khmara believes that, driven by a profound dislike of Moscow's domination of Ukraine, Ukrainka chose to hide her message of national awareness under a historical cloak. That she should choose a period as tumultuous as that of the Ruin, states Drai-Khmara, was natural for the author, who, in general took for subjects "not epochs of flowering and glory, but epochs of revolution, bloody overthrows, awful crises, servitude, slavery, and the like."⁶

Although valid, the above reasons for Ukrainka choosing the period of the Ruin for her subject matter in The Nobleman's Wife neglect an important additional reason. For, just as Ukrainka's plays have in common themes drawn

1927-30) 1: LXXV. This view has been upheld by Ukrainka's mother and her close friend Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka. See Mykhailo Drai-Khmara, "Boiarynia," Ukrainka, Tvory 8: 93-94.

⁶ Drai-Khmara 95. Choosing "tumultuous" subject matter is also natural for a dramatist.

from trying historical periods, so too do they depict the exploitation and denigration of women throughout the ages. Thus Ukrainka's depiction of Muscovite oppression of women contributes an additional hue to Ukrainka's portrayal of the cross-cultural and cross-historical subjugation of women.

"If it is true," writes Ivan Franko,

that the level of a nation's culture can be measured by its treatment of women, then it is an unrefutable fact that by this standard, the Ukrainian nation will prove to be highly cultured in a comparison with its neighbours. From time immemorial, all learned people who have closely studied the life of the Ukrainian nation have admitted that Ukrainians have treated their women with far more gentleness, humanity, and have given them more freedom, than have, for example, Russians their women.⁷

Mykola Kostomarov writes, "A Cossack woman had comparatively more freedom [than Muscovite women]: wives of Cossacks were their helpers and even went to battle with them. Among

⁷ Ivan Franko, "Zhinocha nevolia v rus'kykh pisniakh narodnykh," Zibrannia tvoriv u p'iatdesiaty tomakh, ed. Ie. P. Kyryliuk, 50 vols. (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1976-86) 26: 210.

wealthy and aristocratic Muscovites the female sex remained behind closed doors, as in Islamic harems."¹⁶ "All Ukrainian patriots," argues Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "were progressive in their outlook. . . . The recognition of the basic equality of men and women was an integral part of their orientation," but cautions that "Although sexual equality was taken for granted within the Ukrainian patriotic milieu, a patronizing attitude within it toward women can nevertheless be detected."¹⁷

Ukrainka herself shared Franko's and Kostomarov's views of the relatively high level of independence enjoyed by Ukrainian women. Ukrainka's first exposure to a foreign culture occurred in 1894 in Bulgaria, where she was outraged at the way women were treated. In a letter to Mykhailo Pavlyk she wrote:

It is bad to be a woman here, and even worse to be a girl, if one were to live here like all of my girlfriends do [back home], one would quickly become the latest rumour on every tongue. I have already created two scandals here: Rada and I went unaccompanied to the theatre (two girls alone!),

¹⁶ Quoted in Drai-Khmara 106.

¹⁷ Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Feminism in Ukrainian History," Journal of Ukrainian Studies 7.1 (1982): 16-17.

and later I went to see the elections, walking right in where voting was taking place -- which alarmed Lida and her husband! Needless to say I have not abandoned "speaking my mind" here, which to the local men and dandies must seem totally scandalous. . . .¹⁰

Ukrainka was equally upset by the treatment of women in Galicia, as the following letter to Ol'ha Kobylians'ka indicates:

It [their existence] is a sort of bondage, for which I would rather substitute a sentence of hard labour rather than live that way. It is similar, for example, to what I saw in Bulgaria. . . . Please don't think that this is the "proud" Ukrainian in me speaking. I write what I think because I feel that I can speak truthfully to you about these matters.¹¹

Ukrainka was similarly disillusioned by the treatment of women she witnessed during her journeys to Germany and

¹⁰ Ukrainka, "To Mykhailo Pavlyk," 1 Sep. 1894, letter 135, Zibrannia tvoriv u dvanadtsiaty tomakh, ed. Ievhen Shabliovs'kyi, 12 vols. (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1975-79) 10: 255. Rada refers to Ariadna Drahomanovna-Trush, Ukrainka's cousin. Lida refers to Rada's sister, Lidia Drahomanovna-Shyshmanova.

¹¹ Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kobylians'ka," 29-30 May 1899, letter 72, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 119.

Egypt. That she wrote The Nobleman's Wife while convalescing in Egypt suggests that what Ukrainka observed there may have provided the immediate impulse for her writing of the play.¹²

In The Nobleman's Wife, Ukrainka juxtaposes the position of seventeenth-century Russian and Ukrainian women in society. Oksana, the daughter of Perebiinyi, an old Cossack who had opposed the treaty of Pereiaslav, falls in love with Stepan, the son of her father's former ally who had chosen to work along with the Tsar in Moscow.¹³ Oksana prides herself on her freedom: "I am not your property!" she tells Stepan when he attempts to court her in too traditional a manner and adds, "don't think that I'm a light-headed missy, who only thinks of games and courtship. These trying times have taught us girls serious

¹² At the time of her death, Ukrainka was preparing to write a novel about Egyptian women.

¹³ The treaty of Pereiaslav in 1654, negotiated between Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich and Hetman Bohdan Khmel'nytskyi, bound together the future of the Russian and Ukrainian nations. Khmelnyts'kyi's reasons for accepting the treaty, as well as its effects on Ukraine, remain the source of much debate. Soviet historians interpret the treaty as the coming together of two fraternal nations with common interests. Non-Soviet Ukrainian historians maintain that Khmelnyts'kyi's was an act of expediency and desperation which, in the ensuing years, deprived Ukraine of its independence. The treaty has become a major theme in Ukrainian literature, appearing in the works of, among others, Kulish, Shevchenko, and Staryts'kyi.

lessons."¹⁴ To demonstrate her political awareness, Oksana belongs to an all-female sisterhood. Oksana's independence, however, should be understood neither as being representative of the freedom of Cossack women in general, nor as an indication of a higher level of understanding on the part of Cossack men. Oksana's mother, for example, works while her husband plays: "My old one has done well!" says Perebiinyi of his wife, "Look, she's already prepared dinner while we gossiped at the cemetery."¹⁵ Oksana's brother Ivan exhibits similar chauvinism. Not satisfied with the dinner his mother has brought him, he demands that his sister cater to him: "Listen Oksana, -- this meal is cold, bring me a fresher one." Oksana refuses, prompting Ivan to retort "Are you ever proud!" and turning to Stepan, adds, "No doubt up there in Moscow girls do not dare to be so presumptuous?"¹⁶

Ukrainka's freedom-loving Oksana is in part modelled upon the Cossack women she read about in Mykhailo Kostomarov's historical writings about the Ruin. However, Kostomarov's romanticized images of independent Cossack women should be understood as just that. Despite his lofty

¹⁴ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 118-19.

¹⁵ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 111.

¹⁶ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 113.

praise of the Ukrainian nation's treatment of its women, for example, Franko writes:

Zaporozhian Cossacks did not value their wives highly and often left them in order to fight in their numerous wars. To be the wife of a Cossack represented . . . the epitomy of all misfortune, being worse than death itself.¹⁷

Oksana exhibits exactly the fear Franko writes about:

Sometimes, having returned from battle, the warriors dance with us. A warrior will offer his hand to me, to ask me to dance, and I imagine his hand red with blood, with the blood of his brothers. . . . Such dances do not make me happy. . . . I would never accept a ring from the hand of such a Cossack. . . . Pats Stepan's hand. This hand is free of blood.¹⁸

Thus, although genuinely believing in a superior level of independence among Ukrainian women in comparison with foreign women, Ukrainka is careful to counterbalance romanticized history with reality. Oksana's aversion to war and bloodshed in the above passage also represents the typical negative feminine response to gratuitous violence.

¹⁷ Franko 215.

¹⁸ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 119-120.

Male behaviour, as exemplified by the Cossacks in the play, is receptive to violence, and reflects Simone de Beauvoir's statement that patriarchy values the superiority of the sex that kills.¹⁹

The limitations imposed upon Oksana in her native land seem minor in comparison to what she encounters in Moscow. Upon arrival, she is told by her mother-in-law: "Here in Moscow it is not the custom for a woman to live downstairs," the first of a series of new "customs" she is to adhere to.²⁰ Oksana soon finds that in Moscow noblemen's wives cover their faces, young ladies (Stepan's sister) do not walk about alone ("People will say: 'she's out to catch a husband'") or sing in meadows.²¹ Oksana is shocked, when upon seeing Stepan return home with two friends, her panic-stricken mother-in-law exclaims, "Let's run, daughter!" Oksana responds "Why, God bless us, should we run as if from Tartars?" To which Stepan's mother retorts, "it is not the custom here for women to hear their husbands' conversations."²²

¹⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1953) 64.

²⁰ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 123.

²¹ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 125-28.

²² Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 126.

Oksana finds her sister's-in-law courtship ritual baffling. She observes Hanna looking out the window whenever a certain company of soldiers marches by. Hanna confesses to Oksana that she is engaged to one of the young officers. When Oksana asks why the officer never visits, Hanna replies "Even if he would come, how will I see him? I'm in the attic and he would be in the main hall."²³ Pursuing the matter, Oksana asks if Hanna sees him secretly. Hanna answers, "No, I haven't yet lost my shame! . . . Oksana, do you think I am so totally dishonourable?"²⁴ Now thoroughly confused, Oksana asks Hanna where she and her young man have been able to speak. Hanna answers "nowhere," and admits that she has been bethrothed to the officer through a match-maker, "like everyone else," adding, "mother will explain it [the custom] to you, because I don't entirely understand it myself."²⁵

Despite its comic tone, however, Ukrainka's comparison

²³ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 129.

²⁴ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 130.

²⁵ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 130. Besides providing the play with comic relief, this scene is indicative of the way Ukrainka composed her play. Rather than representing something that Ukrainka may have read in Kostomarov, the incident strongly resembles Ukrainka's comic account of Galician men's courtship techniques among Ukrainian women. See Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kobylans'ka," 29-30 May 1899, letter 72, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 119.

of the behaviour of Russian and Ukrainian women is serious and bears a close similarity to Franko's statement that

In our girls there lives a very strong feeling of the freedom of will, so that they do not regard, as do Russian women, that their first responsibility is to subjugate themselves fully to their husbands, in the process abdicating control over their own will.²⁶

In contrast to the comic scene involving Hanna is the scene in which Stepan asks Oksana to participate in another "custom." Having understood that women are not allowed downstairs when their husbands are entertaining fellow boiars, Oksana is surprised when Stepan tells her to hurry to meet his friends:

But your mother tells me that women cannot be among men. Stepan answers: You see, my dear, you'll only be there to greet them, then you'll return to the attic. Oksana: Oh? And how am I to greet them, as we do at home, or perhaps in some other way? Stepan: You will bow, the boiar will kiss you on the lips. . . .²⁷

In disbelief, Oksana asks Stepan whether she has misheard

²⁶ Franko 214.

²⁷ *Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory* 8: 131.

him, to which he answers, "No, my love, it's like that, but there's nothing bad about it, -- it's only a custom!"²²⁸

Significantly, whether entirely accurately or not, Ukrainka chooses to show the effects of oppressive Muscovite customs on Ukrainian and not on Russian women. Hanna is the comic, her mother is the pathetic, and Oksana is the tragic victim. Together, they represent a portrait of the destruction of Ukrainian womanhood by suffocating foreign customs. Thus although Ukrainka's critique of Muscovite aristocratic traditions indirectly strikes a blow for the argument in favour of emancipation of Russian women, or of women in general, it much more directly argues that the repressive Muscovite customs depicted in the play have graver repercussions for Ukrainian women than do their historically native problems. They are particularly unpalatable because they are foreign. In effect, Oksana's, and the other Ukrainian women's suffering at the hands of patriarchal Muscovy is a metaphor for the suffering of the Ukrainian nation under an oppressive foreign rule.

In this metaphor, however, women serve not only a supporting role, as their suffering as a sex is of no less importance than the suffering of a nation. Oleh Babyshkin maintains that although "Boiar customs made women

²²⁸ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 131

slaves . . . they equally choke dignity in the man . . .
 [transforming] a statesman to dance the tropak before a
 drunken Tsar."²⁹ Babyshkin is correct in that Stepan is
 subjected to indignities in Moscow, which range from
 ridiculing himself to forcing his wife to commit humiliating
 acts. The essential difference between Stepan's and
 Oksana's suffering, however, is that his is brought about
 through free choice, whereas her suffering is imposed.

Stepan is convinced that by working with, instead of
 against, his adversary, he will help his native Ukraine as
 his father did before him:

It is not for rewards . . . that my late father
 went to Moscow! He didn't wish to serve foreign
 lords in his native land, choosing instead to
 serve his faith in a foreign land, in order to
 help his wronged brothers even from afar, gaining
 the Tsar's mercy for them. He was too old to take
 up arms to protect the honour of
 Ukraine. . . .³⁰

At this point Ivan interrupts Stepan's speech and asks, "But
 you're young -- why do you not pick up the arms which which
 fell from your father's aging hands?"³¹ Stepan answers by

²⁹ Babyshkin 222.

³⁰ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 115.

alluding to the legend of Cain and Abel:

How can I in Ukraine take up arms in a way such that I don't ever injure my brother? . . . Do the musket and sword have more power than do the pen and an honest word? No, I was taught that this is not the case!³²

Stepan and Ivan thus have the luxury of choice in debating and determining their response to Ukraine's predicament. Oksana has no such option. She is forced to endure the indignities of Moscow not because she feels that despite them she is helping Ukraine, but because, as a woman, her feelings and rights hold no validity or importance.

Oksana's suffering as a result of foreign domination is also a metaphor for her suffering as a woman. In this equation, national discrimination intensifies gender discrimination and vice versa. The linkage of the images of suffering womanhood and suffering nationhood is a strong motif of the play. By a logical extension of this motif, women, doubly oppressed, have more at stake than men do in ending national discrimination. Ironically, their voice in the matter remains both unacknowledged and unheeded.³³

³¹ *Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory* 8: 115.

³² *Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory* 8: 116.

³³ Feminist critics have compared men as colonizers to women as the colonized, a comparison which they have

Significantly, "traditional" causes do not bring about Oksana's tragedy. Such traditional causes are enumerated by Franko in his study of the status of women in Ukrainian folk songs: involuntary betrothal to a wealthy man, an evil mother-in-law, a loveless marriage, marriage to an old man, marriage to a drunkard.³⁴ Franko himself concludes that the most important impediment standing in the way of female equality is the economic threat. A difficult economic situation, he contends, contributes to the breakdown of the family unit, and leads to drunkenness, and the like. With the removal of economic ills, women will become free. The factors mentioned by Franko as contributing to female unhappiness and suffering are precisely those portrayed by Ukrainka's immediate predecessors in the theatre, Mykhailo Staryts'kyi, Marko Kropyvnyts'kyi, and Ivan Karpenko-Karyi.

Ukrainka, however, breaks the monopoly of such patriarchal interpretations of female unhappiness in

extended to literature as well. See Sandra M. Gilbert, and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979) 74. Reflecting such a notion, Ukrainka, in a blurring of gender and nationality-motivated anger, objects to the common practice of editors "reformulating" and "correcting" her work: "Why, for instance, in Russian literature does no editor dare to correct any Andrei Belyi etc., yet everyone 'corrects' me -- am I worse than Andrei Belyi?" Ukrainka, "To N. Kybalchych," 7 May. 1910, letter 176, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 311.

³⁴ Franko 217-27.

Ukrainian literature, and introduces a new variable. Oksana is not forced to marry Stepan. He is neither a drunkard nor particularly rich, nor is his mother evil. In addition, Oksana loves Stepan. Theirs is not an economic catastrophe. Oksana's suffering is brought about because she cares for and wants to affect her nation's future but is denied an opportunity to do so. Ukrainka's heroine is a woman whose fate depends neither upon men's treatment of her nor upon an economic situation, but on her need and desire to take part in political decision-making, a vital sphere of life which is denied to her. It is a suffering brought about by action and not reaction. Oksana's actions represent a feminist assertion through which Ukrainka appropriates participation in national-political matters for women. Exposition of women's frustration in determining their nation's future, however, represents only half of Ukrainka's resolution of the problem in The Nobleman's Wife. The second part of her feminist statement in the play involves Oksana's response to her dilemma.

Mary Ellmann identifies passivity as a well-engrained stereotype of female behaviour.³⁵ Gilbert and Gubar add

³⁵ Mary Ellmann, Thinking About Women (London: Virago, 1979) 79. Ellmann also exposes the stereotype that associates feminine passivity with black apathy. "In both cases, having restricted the participation of the group, the observer finds that inactivity is an innate group

that "it is the surrender of her self -- of her personal comfort, her personal desires, or both -- that is the beautiful angel-woman's key act, while it is precisely this sacrifice which dooms her both to death and to heaven."³⁶ The stereotypes of behaviour identified by these critics exactly describe the expectations placed upon Oksana in The Nobleman's Wife. Her mother-in-law fully accepts the subservient position of women, and explains to Oksana, "if you live among wolves, learn how to howl. . . ."³⁷ Stepan tells her, "I didn't tell you that there would be freedom here. And if we do not bow low here, our people in Ukraine will perish at the hands of the Muscovites warlords. . . ."³⁸ In justifying his position to Oksana, Stepan conveniently forgets that while his brothers are embroiled in a bloody war at home he luxuriates in comfort, even if he is expected to "dance for the Tsar." Oksana, meanwhile, is subjected to gross indignities. Their sacrifices are hardly equal. An intelligent and independent woman, Oksana endures act after act of indignity, and true

characteristic." Ellmann 81. Similarly, historically-perceived Ukrainian passivity and apathy have been used as reasons to disinherit Ukrainians of their nationhood.

³⁶ Gilbert and Gubar 25.

³⁷ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 123.

³⁸ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 132.

to the stereotype of the angel-martyr, suffers passively, all because of her love for Stepan. For despite her search for independence and equality, Oksana, like every other Ukrainka heroine, desperately wants to love and to be loved. Her passivity, however, is not a manifestation of expected female behaviour whereby suffering epitomizes ideal female behaviour (angel-like martyrdom), but a response arising out of her own choice.

Like other Ukrainka heroines, Oksana soon rebels in a unique way. At first she tries to convince Stepan to change. But finally recognizing the futility of this approach, she reaches a crisis point, after which she loses interest in life. She refuses an opportunity to return to Ukraine alone, telling Stepan:

Did I not stand under the [bridal] wreath and give [you] my oath for that? . . . Don't you realize that . . . Even before you said a word to me back in my father's house, my soul was already yours! Do you think that if I left you now, my soul would not be remain here?³⁹

Oksana, as Liubov before her, and as Mavka and Anna after her, demands commitment with love. Stepan, who had promised to love Oksana, now seeing her dying before his eyes, tells

³⁹ Ukrainka Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 143-44.

her: "It is true, flowers do not grow in a dungeon. . . . And I thought. . . . I have destroyed you. . . . I don't want to further ruin your future. . . . I release you from your promise. . . ."40 Stepan's cowardly resolution to Oksana's crisis fatally disappoints her, and is the final and crucial factor in her defeat. The expectation of love and commitment of Ukrainka's heroines is the most vulnerable part of their personas, and also the most frequently disappointed.

Stepan's lack of commitment to Oksana is made to appear even more deplorable when it is contrasted with his sense of honour. When Oksana tries for the last time to convince him to leave Moscow for Ukraine, Stepan answers her:

Would that not be a betrayal of Moscow. . . . An oath, Oksana, is an important thing. The Tsar won't release me from my oath as easily as I have released you from yours. Nor can I repay him for all that I have received from his hand.⁴¹

Babyshkin states that Oksana's tragedy results from a weakness, that being her lack of a will to fight.⁴² Like society as a whole, Babyshkin upholds passivity and devotion

⁴⁰ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 143.

⁴¹ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 144.

⁴² Babyshkin 224.

in women as virtues. Yet, when the need arises, he blames women's suffering precisely on their passivity and devotion. Oksana chooses to give up the battle not out of weakness, but because her feelings of love and commitment, unlike Stepan's, are genuine. She cannot adjust these feelings to the demands of expediency.

Stepan's lack of commitment to Oksana parallels his lack of commitment to Ukraine. Although in theory his concept of helping Ukraine from afar is credible, in practice it is shown to be an empty promise, as empty as are his promises to Oksana. Stepan's devotion to Ukraine is put to the test with the arrival of Iakhnenko, an envoy from Cossacks loyal to the Tsar. Iakhnenko tells Stepan that unless the Tsar puts an end to his warlords' exploitation of the population and sends his allies genuine protection, the rising tide of bloodshed in Ukraine will continue, forcing them to join Doroshenko. Stepan promises to talk to the Tsar, when the latter is "under the influence," but really plans to do no such thing, realizing the danger of being associated with forces contemplating an insurrection (in the process indicating how deeply involved he is in the byzantine politics of the court): "Whole rows of Muscovite spies follow that Iakhnenko around. I know them."⁴³ Stepan

⁴³ *Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory* 8: 140.

also forbids Oksana to write to fellow sisters of her sorority and to her brother Ivan, from whom Iakhnenko has brought news. When Oksana suggests that to aid Doroshenko may be the right thing to do, Stepan is outraged, and reminds her that she, too, once loathed bloodshed:

Come to your senses! You so feared bloodshed, and this war that Doroshenko is waging is, above-all, fratricidal -- he has even enlisted the aid of the Tartars, and pays them with Christian slaves.

Oksana: Tartars there . . . but there are Tartars here also. . . . Am I not here like a Tartar-woman in captivity? . . . And do you not grovel at the feet of your master as if he were the Khan? Prisoners here are impaled and whipped . . . slaves are sold. . . . Are we not among Tartars? . . . Oh husband! . . . This Moscow is repugnant to me!⁴⁴

Pleading, Oksana asks Stepan, "Will we die here in this captivity?" Stepan answers, "I have faith in God. Somehow, things will change. When Ukraine settles down a bit, I will ask the Tsar for permission to visit there, even for a short while."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 138.

⁴⁵ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 139.

"When things settle down" is a phrase used repeatedly by Stepan to avoid confronting the bloody reality of his native land. It is an excuse which symbolizes his escapist-pacifist philosophy. For, unlike Oksana who truly believes in the tragedy of fratricide, Stepan's pacifism represents no more than an abdication of responsibility for the sake of personal benefit. His passivity, however, should not be confused with the evocation of a feminine approach to the problem of war. Rather, he stands for male careerism of the worst sort, a philosophy of greed which easily facilitates his evolution into a renegade. Like the shell-shocked man who becomes impotent as a result of his war experience, Stepan in a reverse manner becomes impotent because of his lack of involvement.⁴⁶

Although Ukrainka primarily vents her anger at Stepan's hypocritical pacifism, she is not entirely sympathetic toward its opposing philosophy, as represented by Ivan, the other young Cossacks, and Doroshenko's revolt. They are portrayed in the play as self-righteous, embodying Barbara Hill Rigney's observation about Virginia Woolf's portrayal of bloodshed as the "quintessence of virility."⁴⁷ Theirs is

⁴⁶ See Elaine Showalter, The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980 (New York: Penguin, 1987) 172-73.

⁴⁷ Barbara Hill Rigney, Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel: Studies in Brontë, Woolf, Lessing, and

a bravado which Oksana finds both destructive and unappealing. She comes to agree with Doroshenko not because of adulation, but because of expediency and logic. Most literary works about the Ruin glorify both Doroshenko and the era's battles. Ukrainka does neither. Oksana's favouring of Doroshenko's revolution over Stepan's pacifism represents the necessary, not the glorious, choice. Her clear-thinking practicality appears in sharp contrast to the illogical behaviour of men in the play, a reversal of a well-entrenched patriarchal stereotype.

Ukrainka's own thoughts about the treaty of Pereiaslav are not widely known, mostly because Soviet editors have not published those letters in which she refers to the treaty. From letters published in the West, however, Ukrainka's negative attitude toward the union of Ukraine and Russia in 1654 is clearly evident. On November 13, 1902, Ukrainka outlined to her brother-in-law Mykhailo Kryvnyiuk some of the contents of a historical brochure she was working on:

I'd make them [Muscovite transgressions] the focus of my study. . . . I'd like to prove factually (using citations from authentic sources, which is entirely possible), how Moscow, with much labour, with truths and untruths, instilled in us the

belief that all wrong is committed without the Tsar's knowledge, and made promises it had no intention of keeping. I'd like to uncover the demoralization which [Moscow] introduced into our nation. . . . I will show how the ruining of the Sich was the last and most significant act in the enserfment of our people. . . . I will show what the promises were, and what the Tsar gave us in reality: hard labour . . . unnecessary wars . . . the yielding of right-bank Ukraine to Poland and, finally serfdom and servitude in the Tsar's army.⁴⁶

To her mother, Ukrainka simply wrote, "It somehow seems to me that fate does not smile upon us in that Muscovy."⁴⁷ In light of her understanding of the treaty of Pereiaslav and its consequences, Babyshkin's statements that Ukrainka "did not from all sides objectively recreate in her drama the political situation [of the Ruin]," and that

the relations of Russia and Ukraine after the treaty of Pereiaslav are shown one-sidedly.

⁴⁶ Ukrainka, "To Mykhailo Kryvnyiuk," 13 Nov. 1902, Ol'ha Kosach-Kryvnyiuk, Lesia Ukrainka: Khronolohiia zhyttia i tvorchosty, ed. Petro Odarchenko (New York: Ukrains'ka vil'na akademiia nauk, 1970) 643-44.

⁴⁷ Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (mother)," 10 March 1890, Lesia Ukrainka: Khronolohiia zhyttia i tvorchosty 110.

Focusing her attention upon the reactionary and antagonistic acts of the Tsar and his boiars, the author, with minor exceptions, failed to see that which united the two fraternal nations, seem redundant.³⁰ Babyshkin's attempt to impose a class-based interpretation of The Nobleman's Wife, a play in which Ukrainka is profoundly subjective in her interpretation of Russian-Ukrainian relations, is absurd. From Ukrainka's letters it is also clear that although her play is historical, it is meant to apply to current Russian-Ukrainian relations. In a letter to her brother Mykhailo, Ukrainka compares contemporary opportunistic activists to their counterparts during the period of the Ruin, criticizing the folly of their philosophy.³¹

³⁰ Babyshkin 221, 225.

³¹ Ukrainka, "To Mykhailo Kosach," 25 February 1891, letter 39, Zibrannia tvoriv 10: 70. This letter also indicates the early date at which Ukrainka was interested in the period of the Ruin. Drai-Khmara goes as far as to suggest that "In the person of Stepan is evident that type of the Ukrainian intelligentsia of the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century who, having lost his sense of nationality, and having distanced himself from the masses, from the people, has gone into a foreign environment, adopted a foreign culture, having renounced his own. In the person of Oksana one can see another type of the intelligentsia, who, having long fought for the principle of national self-determination, who despite having had argued with and protested against it, has fallen into the paws of Muscovite tsarist bureaucracy, no longer having the strength to fight her way back to freedom, and perishes in the foreign land." Drai-Khmara 97.

Drai-Khmara characterizes Ukrainka's understanding of Russian-Ukrainian relations and her disdain of Russian rule as derivative of Kostomarov who, Draï-Khmara adds, profoundly influenced a whole generation: "Ukrainka took from Kostomarov his ideology, that burning nationalism, which characterizes almost all of the works of Ukrainian authors who wrote on the period of the Ruin."⁵² Ukrainka herself, in her letter to Kryvyniuk, acknowledges the influence on her outlook by her uncle, Mykhailo

⁵² Draï-Khmara, Lesia Ukrainka: zhyttia i tvorchist', Mykhailo Draï-Khmara: Z literaturno-naukovoi spadshchyny (New York: Naukove tovarystvo im. Shevchenka, 1979) 236.

⁵³ Drahomanov's influence on Ukrainka cannot be overemphasized. A powerful bond grew between them, such that Drahomanov often referred to his niece as his "spiritual daughter." Ukrainka's respect of Drahomanov bordered on the reverent. Defending herself from accusations that she was his blind follower, Ukrainka, in a letter to Mykhailo Pavlyk, retorted: "I am very honoured to be called my uncle's right hand, I'd be fortunate to be called a finger of his hand, even that would be pretentious on my part. What is sure is that I need him more than he needs me." Ukrainka, "To Mykhailo Pavlyk," 11-12 Mar. 1895, letter 161, Zibrannia tvoriv 10: 291. Ukrainka took much direction from Drahomanov in political and literary matters, especially in his advice to look toward western Europe for new literary models. One of the highlights of Ukrainka's life was her visit in 1895 to Drahomanov's home in Sofia (the two only corresponded before that time), a stay during which he died a half-year later. Critics differ in their assessment of Drahomanov's influence on Ukrainka. Some, like Draï-Khmara, believe Ukrainka to be a life-long disciple of Drahomanovism. Others, including both Soviet and Western Ukrainian nationalist critics, argue that Ukrainka eventually emerged from under the shadow of her uncle's worldview, and formed a critical, if respectful, attitude toward him. Ukrainka herself stated "My uncle wanted both my work and my ideas to grow . . . that I find

Drahomanov.⁵³ By the time she wrote The Nobleman's Wife, however, Ukrainka was a mature artist with her own well-developed worldview, a worldview strongly coloured by her feminism.

Rather than just supporting the combative mentality of Ivan and the unseen Doroshenko forces in the play, Oksana exhibits her own clearly-defined philosophy in the matters of nationhood. Destroyed as she is in the play, Oksana shows the real effects of the political games men play. While Stepan philosophizes and Ivan plays hero, Oksana endures real-life grief, and is the true victim in the play. National discrimination, which for Stepan and Ivan exists in the realm of philosophy, is made immediate through the personalization of Oksana's ordeal. Nowhere is the identification of suffering nationhood with suffering womanhood made any stronger than it is here.

In contrast to the hypocrisy, deceit, torture, bravado, violence and insincerity associated with the men's approach to politics, Oksana's way is simple, logical and caring. Her testament, addressed to Stepan, is not motivated by

my own path, so that I'd become not his epigone, but his spiritual daughter." Quoted in Leonila Mishchenko, "Literaturne otochennia Lesi Ukrainky," Lesia Ukrainka: Publikatsii, statyi, doslidzhennia, eds. Oleh Babyshkin, and Arsen Kaspruk, 3 vols. (Kiev: Akademiia nauk URSR, 1954-60) 3: 279.

revenge or hate, but by conciliation and expediency. She tells him:

Not everyone who fell on the battlefield is dead,
the injured are many . . . help them to get
better, and maybe one day . . . when they're ready
to fight again, they'll mention you with a good
word . . . and if not -- don't regret that you've
helped.⁵⁴

Oksana's final realization in the play is her acknowledgement that she was wrong to remain passive. Reminded by Stepan that she once said that she can accept only "a hand free of blood," Oksana answers, "It is true, I said that. . . . We are worthy of each other."⁵⁵ To emphasize her sentiment, and to symbolize her notion of their marriage, Oksana uses the image of a sword and sheath which have rusted together from inactivity, an image which evokes both connotations of politics/war and gender/sexuality.⁵⁶ Oksana's realization of her own

⁵⁴ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 153-54.

⁵⁵ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 151.

⁵⁶ Ukrainka, Boiarynia, Tvory 8: 151. The sword and sheath together constituted a favourite image of Ukrainka's. It occurs, among other places, in her poems "To a Friend in Remembrance" ("Tovaryshti na spomyn"), "A Winter Night in a Foreign Land" ("Zymova nich na chuzhyni"), and "Epilogue" ("Epiloh").

complicity by not acting is a feminist statement in itself, because through it she acknowledges her duty as a woman to take responsibility for her own political decisions, no matter how severe the impediments to doing so may be. It is a message to women to involve themselves in decisions which profoundly affect their fate, and over which they historically have exercised virtually no control. Implied is the suggestion that if they were involved, the situation that has allowed a society to maltreat its women (as Muscovite society does), would not have occurred.⁵⁷ Oksana's nationalism in The Nobleman's Wife is suggestive of a kind of feminist-humanism proposed by Woolf.⁵⁸ Based on reason, compassion, and a demand of autonomy, it is a viable alternative to patriarchal nationalism. Ukrainka's appropriation of political power, however more differently and humanely defined than patriarchal definitions of the same, is a feminist assertion. At the same time, the play sends a strong message to the Ukrainian nation also not to remain passive in determining its fate, but to take action which will

⁵⁷ Roman Zylavyi intimates that The Nobleman's Wife represents Ukrainka's regret that she was not more directly involved in fighting for Ukrainian independence. See Zylavyi 134.

⁵⁸ Rigney 43.

prevent the hardship to which Ukraine is now subjected. Ukrainka's nationalism thus draws much from her experiences as an oppressed woman, just as her feminism draws upon her experience as an oppressed Ukrainian.

In her pioneering article on Black women's literature, Barbara Smith writes:

A Black feminist approach to literature that embodies the realization that the politics of sex as well as the politics of race and class are crucially interlocking factors in the works of Black women writers is an absolute necessity. Until a Black feminist criticism exists we will not even know what these writers mean.³⁹

By substituting "Ukrainian" for "Black," Smith's comments apply equally well to Ukrainian women's literature.

Ukrainka's The Nobleman's Wife is Ukrainka's treatise on how nationality and gender politics interact to oppress Ukrainian women.

Ukrainka critics of all persuasions have misunderstood the play. They have mistaken Ukrainka's struggle for liberation, both as a woman and as a Ukrainian, as aggressiveness defined in their own patriarchal terms.

³⁹ Barbara Smith, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon, 1985) 170.

Ironically, having concentrated on the play's "anti-Russianness," politically-opposed critics have misinterpreted the play because of their similar patriarchal reading of it, and therefore agree that in it Ukrainka reaffirms their understanding of nationalism. In the process, they have failed to see that the play is no more anti-Russian than it is anti-male. The Nobleman's Wife is, however, both patriotic and feminist, a statement that warns of the tragedies brought about by subjugation, both national and gender-based.

"Lesia Ukrainka," writes Drai-Khmara, "was ever so closely involved with the Ukrainian national movement. She needed it just as much as her ailing lungs needed fresh air."⁶⁰ In The Nobleman's Wife Ukrainka passionately demonstrated her profound need as a woman to have a voice in determining the fate of her nation.

⁶⁰ Drai-Khmara, "Boiarynia", Tvory 8: 97.

Romanticism Revisited: The Forest Song

The Forest Song (Lisova pisnia), Ukrainka's highly poetic creation of a mythical fantastic world is by general consensus considered her chef-d'oeuvre. It is the only drama she wrote that both met with immediate enthusiastic critical response and subsequently remained a favourite of scholars and audiences alike.¹

Her third last play, The Forest Song, represented a bold departure for the author who had determinedly avoided the utilization of Ukrainian folklore in her dramas. Whether the play's folkloric base constitutes Ukrainka's reconciliation with the folkloric tradition of Ukrainian literature, or whether it presents a complex challenge to that tradition remains a contentious issue.

¹ Despite The Forest Song's critical success, Ukrainka never saw it staged. She feared that popular theatre producer M. Sadovs'kyi would significantly alter the play to comply with the demands of the ethnographic theatre in his troupe's proposed staging of it: "I would like to see it [The Forest Song] on the stage, and fear not its failure, but the transformation of my dreams into a theatrical accessory. . . ." See Lesia Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (mother)," 6 June 1912, letter 234, Zibrannia tvoriv u dvanadtsiaty tomakh, ed. Ievhen Shabliovs'kyi, 12 vols. (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1975-1979) 12: 399. Sadovs'kyi, however, intentionally ignored The Forest Song and to undermine its popularity he commissioned the translation into Ukrainian of Lucian Rydel's The Enchanted Circle (Zaczarowane kolo), an inferior play with a similar theme, which he staged continuously for two years. See Dmytro Cyževs'kyj, A History of Ukrainian Literature: From the 11th to the End of the 19th Century, trans. Dolly Ferguson, Doreen Gorsline, and Ulana Petyk, ed. George S. N. Luckyj (Littleton, Colorado: Ukrainian Academic P, 1975) 615.

Critics of the nineteen-twenties considered The Forest Song a neo-Romantic play and compared it with contemporaneous Western European neo-Romantic and Symbolist works in order to prove that Ukrainka's play was a Ukrainian example of these new literary movements.² These critics argued that Ukrainka's utilisation of folklore and her depiction of nature in The Forest Song showed more the influence of Hauptmann and Maeterlinck than they did of Gogol and Shevchenko.

Post-twenties Soviet critics generally attempt to diminish the closeness of The Forest Song to Western Symbolist works and concentrate instead on stressing the importance of the play's folkloric roots.³ As proof that Ukrainka was not influenced by Western writers in the creation of her play these critics frequently cite Ukrainka's own comments that she wrote The Forest Song for nostalgic reasons: "It seems to me that I simply remembered

² Victor Petrov was the first scholar to find close similarities between The Forest Song and Gerhart Hauptmann's The Sunken Bell (Die versunkene Glocke), concluding that Ukrainka wrote her play under Hauptmann's influence. See Victor Petrov, "Lisova pisnia," Lesia Ukrainka, Tvory, ed. Borys Iakubs'kyi, 12 vols. (Kiev: Knyhospilka, 1927-30) 8: 157-76.

³ Note, for example, that The Forest Song was not even considered by Ida Zhuravs'ka in her otherwise comprehensive analysis of foreign influences on Ukrainka's work in Lesia Ukrainka ta zarubizhni literatury (Kiev: Akademiia nauk URSR, 1963).

our native forests and felt a longing for them. . . . This summer, having remembered them, I wrote a 'fairy-drama' in their honour. . . ."4 Implicit in the contemporary Soviet view of the play is the belief that it is an evolutionary work which owes its existence to the rich folkloric and ethnographic tradition of nineteenth-century Ukrainian literature.

Among Western scholars, a variety of opinion exists regarding the The Forest Song's folkloric base and its modernism. Walter Smyrniw regards The Forest Song not so much a Ukrainian parallel of The Sunken Bell as an antithesis of it.⁵ Slobodanka Vladiv sees in Ukrainka's play an evocation of the Liebestod motif prevalent in Western modernism at the turn of the century.⁶ Constantine Bida feels that Ukrainka's play represents a synthesis of her knowledge of Western modernism and of Ukrainian folklore.⁷

⁴ Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," 27 Oct. 1911, letter 220, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 373, "To Ol'ha Kosach (mother)," 2 Jan. 1912, letter 223, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 378.

⁵ Walter Smyrniw, "Man and Superman in Gerhart Hauptmann's Die Versunkene Glocke and Lesia Ukrainka's Lisova Pisnia, Germano-Slavica 4.2 (1982) 69.

⁶ Slobodanka Vladiv, "Lisova Pisnia as a Variant of the Liebestod Motif," Journal of Ukrainian Studies 10.1 (1985) 25-37.

Regardless of their views, scholars have concentrated their efforts on proving that The Forest Song is part of a larger tradition, be it Ukrainian ethnographic or Western modernist. Although both these views allow for Ukrainka's originality, it is an originality circumscribed in scope and significance. Assumptions that the play belongs to a given tradition have precluded an examination of it for its departures from these traditions. From a feminist standpoint, for example, it is instructive to view the play as a departure from the practices of male Romantic writers in their depiction of folklore and nature.

In the play *Mavka*, a forest-nymph, falls in love with Lukash, a young man who has ventured into the forest with his uncle. Mavka becomes enchanted with Lukash's beautiful playing of the flute and joins him on his homestead, where she encounters the pettiness and baseness which typify everyday human life. Mavka suffers, having lost the innocence and freedom of her former existence. Lukash does not return Mavka's love, and through the scheming of his mother, marries a coarse peasant-woman, Kylyna. Crushed, Mavka is given the "power to forget" by the character called "He Who Sits In a Rock," which she initially declines and

⁷ Constantine Bida, "Life and Work", Lesya Ukrainka (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1967) 73-74.

then accepts. Kylyna, jealous of Mavka, has her transformed into a tree through a magic formula, a tree which is eventually destroyed in a purifying fire which finally releases Mavka. Out of revenge, Mavka's demonic friends transform Lukash into a wandering werewolf. At the end of the play Lukash realizes his mistake, and in a dreamy state of bliss sees the ghost of his Mavka one more time, then dies amidst the gentle falling of snow in the forest.

In The Forest Song, Ukrainka challenges patriarchal Romanticism's views of women (as expressed in its image of the woman-monster) through her creation of Mavka (the gentle forest-nymph) and also reassesses traditional patriarchal Romanticism's association of men with art and creation, and women with nature and passivity.

The Forest Song had the longest gestation period of any of Ukrainka's plays. Its seeds may be found in Ukrainka's early childhood, when she first became deeply affected by Ukrainian folklore. Thus began a life-long devotion to folkloric study. As an adult, Ukrainka collected, recorded, and analyzed numerous folk-songs and folkloric

²⁰ Ukrainka once wrote to her future husband Klyment Kvitka that "she was raised on folklore as an Englishman is on the Bible." See Mykhailo Drai-Khmara, Lesia Ukrainka: Zhyttia i tvorchist', Mykhailo Drai-Khmara; Z literaturno-naukovoï spadshchyny (New York: Naukove tovarystvo im. Shevchenka, 1979) 158. Both her mother and her uncle Mykhailo Drahomanov were also serious folklorists, as was

traditions.⁹

One of the earliest images to capture the imagination of the young Ukrainka was that of the forest-nymph, as she indicated in a letter to her mother:

The mavka has been "on my mind" for a long time, from when you told me about mavky when we walked in the forest in Zhaborytsia . . . Later, at Kolodiazhne, I ran into the moonlit forest alone at night (none of you knew this), and there waited for the mavka to appear to me. I also dreamed of her at Nechymne, where we stayed -- do you remember -- at Lev Skulyns'kyi's. . . . It is apparent, that the time would come when I would have to write about her, and for some reason "now is that time" -- I myself don't know why. This image has enchanted me for all time."⁹

Kvitka. Ukrainka was well-acquainted with the major collections of Ukrainian folklore, such as that of Volodymyr Hnatiuk. See vol. 9 of Zibrannia tvoriv for a complete collection of Ukrainka's writings on folklore.

⁹ Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (mother)," 2 Jan. 1912, letter 223, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 378-79. Ukrainka's sister Ol'ha is sure that the lake and forest visible from the hut of Lev Skulyns'kyi's, whom the sisters visited in the summer of 1886, served as the inspiration for the lake and forest of The Forest Song. See Ol'ha Kosach-Kryvnyiuk, "Oznaiomlennia Lesi Ukrainky z narodnoiu tvorchistiu," Spohady pro Lesiu Ukrainku, ed. Anatol' Kostenko, 2nd ed. (Kiev: Dnipro, 1971) 38-39.

Ukrainka's mother recalls that her young daughter was so fascinated by Serbian folk-songs (which she read in translation by Mykhailo-Staryts'kyi) about vily (water-nymphs) that for a time she insisted on being called Vila.¹⁰

A close friend, Liudmyla Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka attributed the "extraordinary growth" of Ukrainka's capacity for fantasy in childhood to the confinement imposed upon her by her illnesses. Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka recounts that Ukrainka was at this time enchanted with the medieval world of romance, and spent many hours acting out scenes from such romances, as well as allowing her imagination free rein while she created stories for her many picture-books.¹¹ "All her childhood passed, as she told me," writes Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka, "in clouds of fantasia."¹² Much later Ukrainka confided to her friend

¹⁰ Olena Pchilka, "Z avtobiohrafii," Spohady pro Lesiu Ukrainku 84. Ukrainka also liked to pretend she was a vila in games with her brother Mykhailo. As gifts for her younger sisters, she fashioned dolls in the likeness of mavky. See Olena Pchilka, "Z dytiachykh rokiv Lesi Ukrainky," Spohady pro Lesiu Ukrainku 42-43. Just prior to writing The Forest Song Ukrainka published a poem entitled "The Water-Nymph Sister" ("Vila-Posestra"). She had begun the poem thirteen years earlier and only wrote the second half of it in 1911. This information suggests that as a mature author Ukrainka remained fascinated by and was compelled to confront the Romantic images of her youth.

¹¹ Liudmyla Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka, "Khvylyny zhyttia Lesi Ukrainky," Spohady Pro Lesiu Ukrainku 398.

Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi: "Do you know that I like fairy-tales very much, and can think up millions of them?"¹²

In addition to her enthusiasm for folk traditions and for fairy-tales such as those of Hans Christian Andersen, Ukrainka was introduced at an early age to, among others, the Romantic works of Shevchenko, Gogol, Mickiewicz. By the time she was twelve, Ukrainka had translated several of Gogol's stories from Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka (Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki) into Ukrainian. By the age of fourteen, she had written "The Water-Nymph" ("Rusalka"), a poem modelled on Shevchenko's poem of the same name.

Ukrainka's early writing reflected both her extensive knowledge of and affinity for Romanticism. Ukrainka's early poetry, writes her sister Ol'ha, "is totally Romantic in character," and even though it is "old-fashioned," it is nevertheless "so well done and warm, that one wonders whether it is worth hoping that its author will transcend her traditional, antiquated path?"¹⁴ But critics were

¹² Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka 398.

¹³ Ukrainka, letter 220, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 373. Ukrainka did write a number of fairy-tales and was seriously interested and involved in producing a children's almanac. The plans, unfortunately, were not realized for a variety of reasons.

¹⁴ Ol'ha Kosach-Kryvnyiuk, "Notatky do biohrafii Lesi Ukrainky," Spohady pro Lesiu Ukrainku 57-58.

harsher in their assessment. Ivan Franko calls "The Water-Nymph" "Thoroughly conventional . . . in the old Romantic mould. . . . A weak echo of Shevchenko's ballads . . . with no real artistry present."¹⁵ Mykhailo Drai-Khmara characterizes Ukrainka's first collection of poetry On the Wings of Song (Na Krylakh pisen') as showing "Little originality. . . . She had not yet developed her own literary technique and made use of those of others, copying her mother, Shevchenko, Musset, Pushkin, Mickiewicz and many others. . . . Under the influence of Shevchenko and Heine, Lesia Ukrainka shows all sorts of hearts, tears, birds, nightingales, moons, flowers, roses, lilies, and other similar sentimental things."¹⁶ Ukrainka herself would soon be embarrassed by her early interpretation of Romanticism; surprised that a colleague had begun to write music for "The Water-Nymph," in a letter to her brother Mykhailo she commented "there you have a Romanticism! I myself have grown out of it."¹⁷

Although Ukrainka soon outstripped her dependence upon

¹⁵ Ivan Franko, "Lesia Ukrainka," Zibrannia tvoriv u p'iatdesiaty tomakh, ed. Ie. P. Kyryliuk, 50 vols. (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1976-86) 31: 56-57.

¹⁶ Drai-Khmara 91.

¹⁷ Ukrainka, "To Mykhailo Kosach," 25 Feb. 1891, letter 39, Zibrannia tvoriv 10: 72.

Romanticism, she remained a strong believer in the Romantic orientation of literature, as the following excerpt from her letter to her brother indicates:

Everyday I have to argue with the "Sichovyky" in favour of neo-Romanticism, for poetry, and yesterday I forced them to admit that in literature portraits and not photographs are important, that without "creation" there is no literature, that a truly realistic description is one which places before the reader's eyes an expressive, impassioned painting.¹⁸

Despite her broad knowledge of world literatures, Ukrainka's favourite authors were Romantics: Byron, Heine, Shevchenko and Panteleimon Kulish.¹⁹ Ukrainka was not,

¹⁸ Ukrainka, "To Mykhailo Kosach," 25 Feb. 1891, letter 39, Zibrannia tvoriv 10: 71-72. Sichovyky were supporters of the journal Sich.

¹⁹ Ukrainka's knowledge of world literatures was very extensive. In 1889 she wrote her brother Mykhailo a letter in which she specified which works of European literature should be translated into Ukrainian by members of the new literary group Pleiada, which she headed. This exhaustive list which numbers over sixty authors and one hundred titles was only part of the literature which Ukrainka knew well, as her later critical articles on English, French, German Scandinavian, Polish and Italian literature would show. Ukrainka, "To Mykhailo Kosach," 8-10 Dec. 1889, Zibrannia tvoriv 10: 43. See also Ukrainka, "Two Directions in Current Italian Literature (Ada Negri and d'Annunzio)" ("Dva napravleniia v noveishei ital'ianskoi literature (Ada Negri i D'Annuntsio),") "New Perspectives and Old Shadows ('The New Woman' of Western-European Belles-Lettres)" ("Novye perspektivy i starye teni ('Novaia zhenshchina'

however, an uncritical follower, as her attitude to Kulish (whom she regarded as her teacher and who, until late childhood exerted the greatest influence over her) illustrates: Ukrainka's attitude to Kulish, writes her husband Klyment Kvitka, "can best be described as piety, mixed with some kind of chronic annoyance and even indignation."²⁰ Ukrainka's attitude toward Heine is also indicative of her approach to Romantic writers. Ukrainka translated over 160 of Heine's poems, in addition to longer works such as "Atta Troll." Heine's influence on her work is evident in many works such as the collection On the Wings of Song, and "An Olden Tale" ("Davnia kazka"). As Osval'd Burhardt shows in his analysis of "An Olden Tale," however, Heine's influence on Ukrainka manifested itself in technique and style, and not in outlook, themes, and subject-matter. He argues that philosophically they were opposites: Heine was the supreme egocentric whereas Ukrainka always felt herself a small part of a much larger world.²¹ Ukrainka's

zapadnoevropeiskoi belletristiki)," "Remarks on New Polish Literature" ("Zametki o noveishei pol'skoi literature,")
"Michael Kramer. Gerhart Hauptmann's Last Drama,"
 ("Mikhaiel' Kramer. Posledniaia drama Gerharta Gaupmana,")
 "Utopia in Belles-Lettres" ("Utopiia v beletrystytsi,")
 "John Milton" ("Dzhon Mil'ton,"). Zibrannia tvoriv 8: 26-214.

²⁰ Klyment Kvitka, "Na rokovyny smerti Lesi Ukrainky," Spohady pro Lesiu Ukrainku 227.

duality in her response to the work of Kulish and Heine can be understood as a metaphor for her love of yet frustration with Romanticism.

Among her Ukrainian contemporaries, Ukrainka most valued the work of Ivan Franko, Ol'ha Kobylians'ka, and Mykhailo Kotsiubyns'kyi, all modernists. She regarded Oleksander Oles's fantastic poem "On the Dnieper" ("Nad Dniprom") "as one of the most important landmarks in the history of Ukrainian literature" precisely for its Romantic form, commenting "It is too bad that this piece did not appear in that period of our literature when the public understood and held Romanticism in higher esteem or was more romantically inclined. . . ." ²² Ukrainka was sure, however, "that Romanticism will return as a serious approach, and then this piece [Oles's poem] will claim the place which it deserves in the opinion of the public." ²³

²¹ Osval'd Burhardt, "Lesia Ukrainka i Haine," Ukrainka, Tvory 4: VII, XIX.

²² Kvitka 226.

²³ Kvitka 226. Oles', who had published "On the Dnieper" in 1911, feared that the appearance of The Forest Song would lessen the impact of his poem. See Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (mother)," Jul. 1912, letter 238, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 405. Having read the poem after writing her play, Ukrainka was similarly concerned that "the impact of The Forest Song will be considerably lessened," and that "maybe someone will think that I wrote The Forest Song after having read this piece to prove that I can write like this." See Kvitka 225-26.

In light of Ukrainka's sense that Romanticism was passé for most people, and because she characterized her mother and her colleagues as "people educated in the realistic school," it is no wonder that she held serious reservations about the way The Forest Song would be received. Adding to her anxiety was the fact that she had written her play in contravention of her mother's counsel that she not write on a fantastic theme.²⁴ It thus came as a great surprise to Ukrainka, when critics, including her mother, raved about the play as they had over no other. Perplexed by her play's critical success, and especially by its appellation as her "chef-d'oeuvre," Ukrainka wondered whether The Forest Song's popularity was due to its "genuine worth," or only to its

²⁴ Ukrainka had previously written a play with a fantastic theme, but had kept its existence secret. Although not rooted in Ukrainian folklore, An Autumn Tale (Osinnia kazka) is a tale of the fantastic based on medieval romances and subtitled "a fantastic drama." She wrote the play in 1905 and edited it extensively, not arriving, however, at a finished version. The play was not published during her lifetime; in fact scholars only learned of its existence in the twenties. It was first published in the 1927-30 Knyhospilka edition of Ukrainka's works. Perhaps Ukrainka kept its existence a secret fearing both her family's and the public's disapproval. In his article on An Autumn Tale, Borys Iakubs'kyi argues that it is unmistakably Romantic. He stresses, however, that the play's style and mood are decisively Romantic, as opposed to neo-Romantic, maintaining that at this time of her literary development Ukrainka had not yet abandoned the influences of Romanticism. See Borys Iakubs'kyi, "Osinnia kazka: dosi nevidoma 'fantastychna drama' Lesi Ukrainky," Ukrainka, Tvory: 6: 16.

"accessibility."²⁵ Ukrainka was surprised at the effect the play had on its readers, including its mystical hold over her husband: "he approaches this poem as a living person, -- it is somehow strange to me. . . ."²⁶ Yet she felt the power of the play as well: "it has given me so many moments of ecstasy, as hardly any other."²⁷

The Forest Song may be viewed as representing Ukrainka's duality in her relationship with the Romantic tradition. Having begun writing in the tradition of Romanticism, Ukrainka later altered her literary course and began to experiment with new themes and techniques, even foregoing the most Romantic of genres, poetry, for drama. Ukrainka's movement away from her Romantic roots was partly motivated by her sense of isolation from a tradition of which she could not fully feel a part. In her fairy-drama Ukrainka returns to her literary roots. Through her portrait of a nymph, and through her return to verse (albeit in a poetic-drama) she revisits the Romantic images which dominated her youth, this time, however, from the perspective of a mature author.

²⁵ Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," 6 June 1912, letter 233, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 396.

²⁶ Ukrainka, letter 223, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 379.

²⁷ Ukrainka, letter 223, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 378.

The Forest Song, although apparently a panoramic vista of Ukrainka's Romantic world, represents at its core a gender-based confrontation of both Ukrainian and Western Romantic views on womanhood. That there is no doubt as to the importance of this aspect of the play is evident in Ukrainka's own observation (commenting on what distinguishes the play from other neo-Romantic works of her contemporaries): "The story of Mavka can only be written by a woman."²⁸

Ukrainka subtitled The Forest Song a "fairy-drama," but thought of it more precisely as a "Märchendrama," thus clearly placing it in the German-Romantic Märchen tradition.²⁹ This favourite narrative form of the German Romantics (exemplified by the tales of Hoffmann and Novalis), writes Lilian Furst, "denoted any tale that entered into the realm of the imagination. Hence their

²⁸ Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (mother)," n.d. July 1912, letter 238, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 405.

²⁹ On several occasions Ukrainka expressed dissatisfaction with this title. "It is actually, 'ein Märchendrama, according to Hauptmann's terminology (this is what he called his Sunken Bell), but I don't know how this could be phrased in Ukrainian," she wrote to Kryms'kyi. Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," letter 220, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 373. "And what a dilemma, that it is impossible to translate into Ukrainian 'Märchendrama' -- 'a fairy-drama' -- it is that, yet it is not," Ukrainka added in a letter to her mother. Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (mother)," letter 223, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 379.

strong preference for this genre with its musical form of composition and its scope for individual phantasy.³⁰ Although in concept The Forest Song takes a German model, in content it is rooted in Ukrainian folklore.³¹ The play's Ukrainian subject, however, is native only to the extent that Ukrainian folklore, with its images of forest-nymphs and water-nymphs, and various demons is part of a broader European folkloric tradition. Ukrainka's Forest Song, with its Western form, and more universal mythical base than some scholars acknowledge, is therefore thematically quite consistent with Ukrainka's other "exotic" subject matter.³²

³⁰ Lilian Furst, Romanticism (London: Methuen, 1976) 58.

³¹ In her study of The Forest Song and The Sunken Bell Mahdalyna Laslo-Kutsiuk finds that each author's unique implementation of his and her own folkloric tradition gives each play its originality. Hence the use of folklore by both authors is not so much a mark of similarity as it is a distinguishing feature of their work. See Mahdalyna Laslo-Kutsiuk, "Lesia Ukrainka i Herhart Hauptman," Velyka tradytsiia: Ukrain's'ka klasychna tradytsiia v porivnial'nomu vysvitlenni (Bucharest: Kryterion, 1979) 253.

³² There is a tendency to attribute the folklore in The Forest Song to Ukrainka's native Volyn' region (primarily because she said that she remembered her Volyn'ian forests when writing the play). There is no reason to believe, however, that Ukrainka restricted herself to Volyn'ian folklore. As Leonila Mishchenko and Ivan Denysiuk have found, forest-nymphs are not part of Volyn'ian folklore. Ukrainka was aware of them through her mother's tales. Leonila Mishchenko, and Ivan Denysiuk, Dyvotsvit: Poetyka i dzherela Lisovoi pisni Lesi Ukrainky (Lviv: Vydavnytstvo L'vivs'koho universytetu, 1963) 27. This information

The play's central character is Mavka, a demonic female variant of a folkloric figure prevalent in the works of many Romantic authors. Mavky, and their cousins rusalky and lisni, are well-known in Ukrainian folklore.³³ They are believed to be either the spirits of unchristened children (mavky) or the souls of drowned girls (rusalky). Although mavky can be male, they are usually female. Hibernating in caves during the winter, these nymphs emerge in the spring, looking for their victims. Although their prey may consist of women, it is mostly young men that they seek out, enticing them into the forest with promises of blissful sexual encounters. Having seduced their prey, they either tickle him to death or suck out his blood, since they are by nature vampires. Generally, however, mavky and rusalky

suggests that in the creation of Mavka, and of the other demons in the play, Ukrainka had in mind a much broader source-base than a regional or even strictly Ukrainian one.

³³ The characteristics of demonological figures which follow are based on the following sources: I. Dzendzelivs'kyi, "Leksyka demonolohii u dramy-feierii Lesi Ukrainky Lisova pisnia," Lesia Ukrainka: Publikatsii, statii, doslidzhennia, ed. O. Zasenka (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1973) 155-177. Filaret Kolessa, "Folkl'ornyi element v poezii T. Shevchenka," Studii nad poetychnoiu tvorchistiu T. Shevchenka (Lviv: Ukrain's'ka Mohylians'ko-Mazepyns'ka akademiia nauk, 1939). P. Ponomar'ov, "Fol'klorni dzherela Lisovoi pisni Lesi Ukrainky," Materialy do vyvchennia istorii ukrains'koi literatury, ed. Oleksandr Bilets'kyi, 5 vols. (Kiev: Radians'ka shkola, 1961) 4: 201-18. Bohdan Rubchak, "Notes on the Text," Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky, Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors, trans. Marco Carynnyk (Littleton, Colorado: Ukrainian Academic P, 1981) 43-75.

avoid contact with humans, and spend most of their time engaged in wild games and dances, sometimes with male demons.

Mavky and Rusalky are specific forms of a broader concept of the female monster, a mythological image of woman that male culture has placed opposite the image of the angel. Unlike the mythological angel-Virgin Mary figure, who exemplifies proper feminine behaviour through passivity and sacrifice, the female monster is active, exhibiting male-like behaviour. The prototype for the female monster is, in part, Eve, who through her demonic sin of temptation causes the fall of Adam, God's creation. Eve, as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest, falls because she wants to be like the Gods, to equal both Adam and Satan.³⁴ In her failed attempt to transcend her inferiority, Eve is punished and transformed from an angelic being into a monstrous creature.

Whereas Satan is a tragic figure who figures prominently in the Romantic imagination as a prototype for the Romantic hero, Eve, despite her similar search and fall, becomes a pathetic figure. The Romantic implications of the story of the fall of Lucifer are that men are encouraged to

³⁴ Sandra M. Gilbert, and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979) 196.

be truth-seekers and demi-gods; theirs is a noble if tragic journey. In literature the Byronic hero represents the ultimate development of such a hero. Women, however, are inferior beings; their attempt to gain knowledge is both futile and pitiable, arousing hate and contempt.

The female monster in literature is like Eve, a seducer and entrapper, a witch or vampire who destroys men. A prime example of such a witch in Slavic folklore and literature is Gogol's female monster in The Long-Eyelashed Gnome (Vii). Appearing in the guise of a beautiful young girl, the witch seeks out a young man, seduces him, has wild sexual encounters with him, then kills him. More common in Ukrainian literature than witches, however, are forest-nymphs and water-nymphs who, like witches, appear as beautiful girls in order to deceive and destroy their prey.

Water-nymphs figure prominently in Shevchenko's ballads. Although Shevchenko is, as George Grabowicz claims, an original mythmaker, his world of nymphs and magic is nevertheless one which is deeply rooted in Ukrainian folklore.³⁵ Like Eve, Shevchenko's water-nymphs are punished for a sin, although in their case it is not their sin which condemns them, but that of their mothers and

³⁵ See George Grabowicz, The Poet as Mythmaker: A Study of Symbolic Meaning in Taras Ševčenko (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982).

fathers. "The Bewitched Woman" ("Prychynna") and "The Water-Nymph" ("Rusalka") both show nymphhood as the tragic fate that awaits women as their punishment for sin and immorality, a fate which is harsher for the victims (women) than it is for the perpetrators (men). Although women are innocent victims in Shevchenko's world, it is their fate ("taka ii dolia") to pay for the sins of others through their transformation into monsterhood, and through banishment to life in hell.³⁶

Ukrainka's "The Water-Nymph," despite similarities in style to Shevchenko's "The Water-Nymph" and "The Bewitched Woman," differs significantly from these poems in its interpretation of the image of a nymph. Whereas Shevchenko's Prychynna is fated to drown and become a nymph out of guilt and shame, as submissive punishment for her sin, Ukrainka's Ksenia becomes a nymph as an escape from reality. Her new demonic life frees her from the pettiness of society and the treachery of love which oppresses her in the real world.

For the heroine of The Forest Song Ukrainka chose a forest-nymph rather than the much more popular, both in folklore and in literature, water-nymph. Mavka, however,

³⁶ From "The Bewitched Woman." Taras Shevchenko, Tvory, ed. Pavlo Zaitsev, 15 vols. (Chicago: Denysiuk, 1959) 1: 134.

shows few of the properties associated with forest-nymphs in folklore. She is of a serious disposition and shows little tolerance for the frolics and games of her demonic friends. Mavka's is not a world of guilt and evil, but rather one of innocence. Neither is Mavka the folkloric trickster and seducer. In contravention of the belief that nymphs seduce young men and then kill them as a form of revenge, it is Mavka who is awakened and "seduced" by the music of Lukash.

Lukash's seduction of Mavka ironically mirrors the folkloric deceit of her prey by a nymph. He appears in the guise of an artist, his beautiful playing of the flute awakening Mavka from a long winter's sleep. Through the phallic symbol of a flute, Lukash begins a symbolic rape of Mavka, as Mavka tells him: "How sweetly it plays, how deeply it cuts, cuts open my white breasts, and takes my heart out!"³⁷ Lukash's role reversal with the forest-nymph continues when he tells her "I will kiss you to death!"³⁸ In the final scene of The Forest Song, Lukash, feeling guilty because he has destroyed Mavka, expects her to play out her revenge upon him: "You have come as a vampire, to drink my blood? Drink it! Drink it! Live through my blood! So it should be, because I have destroyed

³⁷ Ukrainka, Lisova pisnia, Zibrannia tvoriv 5: 219.

³⁸ Ukrainka, Lisova pisnia, Zibrannia tvoriv 5: 234.

you. . . ."³⁹ Mavka answers by telling Lukash "No, my dear, you gave me a soul, as a sharp knife gives the willow branch a voice."⁴⁰ Lukash has misunderstood Mavka from beginning to end. Despite the warnings of his wise uncle Lev, he has entered into the magical world of the forest expecting trickery and deceit, only to find innocence and beauty which he neither recognizes nor understands.

As the exemplar of innocence, Mavka appears in contradiction to the monster image of the nymph in literature and folklore. Her innocence separates her from both the concept of the sinful Eve and from the hellish and guilt-ridden world of Shevchenko's unfortunates.⁴¹ Unlike the nymphs who are condemned to a monstrous existence as far away from the existence of love as is possible, Mavka, like all of Ukrainka's heroines is a seeker of love. By endowing

³⁹ Ukrainka, Lisova pisnia, Zibrannia tvoriv 5: 292.

⁴⁰ Ukrainka, Lisova pisnia, Zibrannia tvoriv 5: 292.

⁴¹ That Mavka is an "anti-Miltonic" Eve and that The Forest Song can be considered an "anti-Miltonic" confrontation of Paradise Lost is a conceivable, if perhaps farfetched idea. Gilbert's and Gubar's thesis that women writers since Mary Shelley through Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot, Christina Rossetti and the Brontës have been confronting Milton, "the inhibiting father -- the patriarch of patriarchs" in their work can be applied to a reading of Ukrainka's play. Gilbert and Gubar 192. Ukrainka knew Milton's poem well, and planned to write a major work on the English poet, which she started but never completed. Ukrainka, "Dzhon Mil'ton," Zibrannia tvoriv 8: 203-14.

Mavka with the power to love, Ukrainka transforms a monstrous image into one of beauty. Conversely, Lukash is symbolically introduced to the suffering which has been reserved for the female by his transformation into a werewolf. Hence the male is sent to hell in The Forest Song to experience the state of helplessness which has hitherto been reserved for the female double victim.

Ukrainka destroys the inhibitive folkloric and Romantic image of the monstrous nymph at the same time as she rejects the patriarchal Romantic cult of the poet as male-genius. Lukash, despite his ability to play beautiful music, is neither a poet nor a seeker. He is an average, even pitiful, man trapped in the quagmire of life's pettiness. His tragedy is that he is unable to appreciate his gift and therefore does not understand how his music has awakened the important emotion of love in Mavka, an emotion she never knew she had. Mavka pleads with Lukash to recognize the beauty within his soul: "Don't disdain the essence of your gift, because it has caused our love to flower! Your gift is a flower more magical than the flower of a fern -- it creates treasures. . . ." ⁴² Realizing that Lukash cannot understand the profundity of his gift, Mavka tells him: "I am sad, that the way in which you live is beneath you." ⁴³

⁴² Ukrainka, Lisova pisnia, Zibrannia tvoriv 5: 249.

As the parody of the Romantic hero, Lukash represents Ukrainka's refutation of her understanding of the highest development of this type, the Nietzschean superman.⁴⁴ Her deflation of the Romantic hero who exercises power over nature is especially striking when Lukash is compared with Heinrich, the strongly Nietzschean hero of Hauptmann's The Sunken Bell. In his study of the two plays, Walter Smyrniw finds that the main difference between the plays is in Ukrainka's development of "a strong antithesis to the Nietzschean superman philosophy," and concludes, "From this it follows that Lisova pisnia is not a thematic variation, but a thematic inversion of Hauptmann's Die versunkene Glocke."⁴⁵

That Ukrainka would choose Hauptmann's play as the focal point on which to base her anti-Nietzschean position

⁴³ Ukrainka, Lisova pisnia, Zibrannia tvoriv 5: 250.

⁴⁴ Ukrainka indicated her staunch anti-Nietzscheanism in her letters and articles, as well as through works like The Forest Song and The Stone Host (Kaminnyi hospodar). To Ol'ha Kobylans'ka she wrote, "I do not share your Nietzscheanism, because this philosopher has never appealed to me as a philosopher: his ideal of the Urbarmensch, the blonde Bestien, does not fascinate me." Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kobylans'ka," 20 May 1899, letter 69, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 111. For Ukrainka's condemnation of Nietzscheanism in the work of Gabriele D'Annunzio see Ukrainka, "Dva napravleniia v noveishei ital'ianskoi literature (Ada Negri i d'Annunzio)," Zibrannia tvoriv 8: 44.

⁴⁵ Smyrniw 69.

is significant. In the German play, Heinrich is inspired to strive for greatness in order to become a superman through his involvement with the nymph Rautendelein. He thus assumes the traditional patriarchal role as the superior artist inspired to greatness by a female muse. "[I]f the Romantics assumed the poet to be a mental 'hero . . .'" writes Joanne Fieht-Diehl, "then the role of the woman was to wait, to taunt the poet with visions of bliss . . . possibly to lead him beyond the confines of the human. . . ." ⁴⁶ In The Forest Song it is Lukash, however, who becomes Mavka's muse and who inspires her to embark upon a search. It is Mavka's tragedy which consequently unravels, and not Lukash's.

Although Mavka and Lukash trade positions with Heinrich and Rautendelein, Mavka is not a female equivalent of a male superman. The crucial difference between Mavka and Heinrich lies in the differing purposes of their search. By leaving his wife and the lowlands, and through Rautendelein's inspiration ascending the mountain to a higher plateau, Heinrich symbolically strives to reach a higher realm than the earth-bound trivial one he leaves behind. Although Mavka is tempted by the character called "He Who Sits In a

⁴⁶ Joanne Fieht-Diehl, Dickinson and the Romantic Imagination (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981) 21.

Rock" to ascend to a higher plateau and achieve serenity through the "ability to forget," she ultimately rejects "His" sanctuary. Mavka's, unlike Heinrich's, is not a solipsistic, vertical search for ascendancy. It is, like that of other Ukrainka heroines, a search for love. It is a process which, as Lisovyyk reminds her, rather than raising her higher, instead humbles the once-proud Mavka: "You have forsaken the heights and tumbled low, into petty paths. Whom do you resemble? A servant-girl, a hireling. . . . Remember what you were like that night when you fell in love: you were like a forest queen . . . to whom fortune extended its hands and brought you gifts!"⁴⁷

Clearly such a fundamental difference in philosophy as is evident between The Sunken Bell and The Forest Song indicates that despite its close similarities in form, Ukrainka's play cannot be considered an adaptation of the German play. In addition, Ukrainka's refutation of Hauptmann's Nietzscheanism suggests that in choosing to partly model herself on Hauptmann Ukrainka was not motivated solely by her admiration for his Märchendrama, but also by a need to polemicize with it.

As a searcher, Mavka embarks upon a voyage which takes her from innocence to experience and knowledge, her quest

⁴⁷ Ukrainka, Lisova pisnia, Zibrannia tvoriv 5: 265.

becoming that of a Bildungsroman protagonist. Lukash's music intrudes upon Mavka's world of innocence. Hearing it, Mavka realizes that despite her happiness and the harmony which exists in her life, she has been missing something. Experiencing feelings of love for the first time, Mavka realizes the void within her and expresses it as a longing for a soul. Mavka, resembling Adam rather than Eve, bites the fruit of knowledge and becomes a seeker. By opening herself to experience Lukash's art, Mavka is inspired to allow her love to grow for him despite his mortal and therefore incompatible nature, a tragic love which eventually causes her death.

In embarking upon her adventure, Mavka does not "betray" herself as Lisovyk, her inhibitive advisor, claims.⁴⁰ Through her realization of the existence of art and love, Mavka loses her innocence and cannot retreat into her past state. She embarks upon her quest believing in the Romantic notion of the transforming powers of love and art. Like other Ukrainka heroines, Mavka soon finds that the fall from innocence to knowledge is a journey of tremendous cost. Ultimately, however, she does not regret her decision. Although disappointed, she is not dissillusioned. That woman like man can initiate a journey of discovery, can

⁴⁰ Ukrainka, Lisova pisnia, Zibrannia Tvoriv 5: 264.

suffer the tragedy of a great fall as the result of that journey, and can emerge wiser at the end of her ordeal is a major development in the evolution of the heroine in Ukrainian literature. Ukrainka's Mavka represents more than just a major transformation of an important folkloric figure.⁴⁷ Her character constitutes a redefinition of an important inhibitive patriarchal myth about women which had been strongly perpetuated in Romantic literature.

In conjunction with her demystification of the female monster, Ukrainka confronts another folkloric stereotype, that of family life in the Ukrainian village. The failure of the family unit in The Forest Song continues the pattern set in The Azure Rose (Blakytna troianda). As in the Azure Rose, the breakdown of the family unit in The Forest Song is most vividly expressed through a lack of father figures. There is no mention of Lukash's father. Uncle Lev and Lukash are both childless. Nor are there effective father-figures in the world of the demons. The play's opening scene portrays two poterchata who sing: "Poor is our home, because we don't have a father. . . ."⁴⁸ Mavka, who

⁴⁷ See for instance the articles of Dzendzelivs'kyi and Ponomar'ov, who although they strongly argue that Mavka is unlike her folkloric and literary prototypes, do not raise the argument beyond the realm of a folkloric discussion.

⁴⁸ Ukrainka, Lisova pisnia, Zibrannia tvoriv 5: 203. Poterchata, like nymphs, are the spirits of unchristened children.

calls a willow tree her "mother," considers no one or no thing her father. The two father-like figures among the demons, Lisovyk and Vodianyk (the forest-demon and water-demon respectively) act as limiting patriarchs toward their charges, Rusalka and Mavka.

In the absence of a patrilineal order no matrilineal order fills the void. Lukash's mother and Kylyna appear as caricatures of the image of the virtuous woman in Ukrainian folklore and literature. Both are scheming, petty, and evil. Kylyna, although a Shevchenkian victim of circumstance, has nothing in common with his heroine of the Kateryna type. Instead, she becomes a monster image, thus trading places with Mavka, the traditional monster who in this play is the paragon of virtue. Kylyna's base, coquettish game to seduce Lukash parallels the trickery traditionally reserved for nymphs in the stalking of their prey. Conversely, Mavka's initial meeting with Lukash is pure and devoid of any of the hypocrisy practiced by Kylyna in her sexist mating-ritual. Lev, the play's *raisonneur*, defends Mavka when Lukash's mother terms her a witch: "Where are there witches in the forest? It is in the village where witches are found. . . ."⁵¹

The reversal of roles between Kylyna and Mavka is made

⁵¹ Ukrainka, Lisova pisnia, Zibrannia tvoriv 5: 246.

complete when Mavka, in her attempt to adapt to Lukash's world, dresses herself in an embroidered outfit. Even Lukash notices the incongruity of the once-proud Mavka, now symbolically restrained, and laughs: "Really, its kind of funny. . . . Dressed so ordinarily, but she speaks to me, as though preaching on a holy day!"⁵² For the embroidered shirt, the symbol of virtue in peasant dress, to be considered a confining uniform is a shocking turn. Ukrainka's deflation of the idealized virtuous peasant woman of the Ukrainian village completes her attack on the polarity of the Romantic images of Ukrainian women as monsters or suffering angels.

The breakdown of the family unit in The Forest Song does not take place for traditional reasons. The absence of a normal functioning family unit in Shevchenko's poetry, finds George Grabowicz, gives rise to a dysfunctioning society: "the family is crippled and shows in microcosm a crippled and abnormal society. "Its dysfunction is dramatically presented in terms of 'crimes against nature' and illegitimacy."⁵³ Among the "crimes against nature" within the Shevchenkian family are frequent occurrences of incest and murder. Victims of these crimes, pokrytky (unwed

⁵² Ukrainka, Lisova pisnia, Zibrannia tvoriv 250.

⁵³ Grabowicz 64.

mothers), their bastard-orphan children, and nymphs, symbolize the tragic cost of the breakdown of the family unit. Full Shevchenkian happiness can only be achieved within a harmoniously functioning family, as Volodymyr Ianiv finds in his study of the family in Shevchenko's work.⁵⁴

Ukrainka shows little of Shevchenko's lament and desire for family as the necessity for a normal state of affairs. Although the family unit in The Forest Song does not function properly, and its victims include Lukash, his mother, Kylyna and her son, Mavka does not suffer because of its dysfunction. In Ukrainka's world, the family is not as essential for happiness as it is in Shevchenko's world.

Apart from her confrontation of the Romantic use of folklore, Ukrainka addresses the Romantic concern for the self's relation to nature. The temptation exists to regard Ukrainka's portrayal of "living nature" in The Forest Song as a typical neo-Romantic remanifestation of the Romantic belief that nature is a "dynamic, organic character with an ever-changing life of its own, as varied in mood as man himself."⁵⁵ Such is the view of Victor Petrov, who writes:

⁵⁴ Volodymyr Ianiv, "Ukrains'ka rodyna v poetychnii tvorchosti Tarasa Shevchenka," Taras Shevchenko: Zbirnyk dopovidei Svitovoho kongresu ukrains'koi vil'noi nauky dlia vshanuvannia smerty patrona NTSH, ed. V. Stetsiuk, and V. Kravtsiv (New York: Naukove tovarystvo im. Shevchenka, 1962) 179.

"Lesia Ukrainka through *Mavka* . . . paints nature in The Forest Song as a live person. . . . Taking her example from the Romantics who viewed nature as a living and organic entity. . . ." ¹⁵⁴ "Nature and its life are beautiful, but man has stood apart from nature, made his own laws in his own world -- a boring, impoverished, and unimaginative world. . . ." is Mykola Zerov's interpretation of Ukrainka's understanding of the place of nature in the play. ¹⁵⁷

The Romantics interpreted nature as a mysterious and hidden force. They believed, writes Čyževs'kyj, that nature was a life force which was "mysterious, hidden, unknowable. . . . 'the night side of life.'" ¹⁵⁸ "The conception of a living nature that was seen as organically related, particularly to the poet, was a general one, for it is literature that stands closest to nature's creative powers too. Nevertheless nature is also a force hostile and destructive toward humans." ¹⁵⁹ A prime example of the

¹⁵⁵ Furst's description of nature as it appears in the early Romantics, such as Thomson and Rousseau. Furst 32-33.

¹⁵⁶ Petrov 158.

¹⁵⁷ Mykola Zerov, Do dzherel; Istorychno-literaturni ta krytychni statki (Cracow: Ukrain's'ke vydavnytstvo, 1943) 182.

¹⁵⁸ Čyževs'kyj 439-41.

¹⁵⁹ Dmitrij Čiževs'kij, Comparative History of Slavic Literatures, trans. Richard Noel Porter, Martin P. Price, ed. Serge A. Zenkovsky (Baltimore: Vanderbilt UP, 1971)

volatility that Čyževs'kyj identifies in Romantic nature is found in the verbal landscapes of Shevchenko, in his howling wind and stormy sea images.

Along with the Romantic identification of the poet with nature runs a competing current of the artist as the magician with power over nature. Such is Novalis's Romantic image of Orpheus in Greek mythology who, through beautiful songs played on his lyre, is able to awaken nature, draw it to life, and ultimately order it. Thus although nature is considered a living creative entity in Romanticism, it must be subdued by the superior poet: "The man who reaches out to Nature to engage his basic physical and spiritual needs finds himself reaching out with the hands of the predator to possess and subdue, to make Nature serve his own needs."¹⁴⁰ Simone de Beauvoir explains man's need to subdue nature as his method of confronting the superiority of the feminine principle: "man is in revolt against the carnal state; he sees himself as a fallen god; his curse is to be fallen from a bright and ordered heaven into the chaotic shadows of his mother's womb."¹⁴¹ In its need to subdue

143.

¹⁴⁰ Albert Gelpi, "Emily Dickinson and the Deerslayer: The Dilemma of the Woman Poet in America," Shakespeare's Sisters: Feminist Essays on Women Poets, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert, and Susan Gubar (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1979) 125.

nature, Romanticism is associated with the broader cross-cultural mythological stereotype which identifies nature with women: "women . . . are typically situated on the side of irrationality, silence, nature, and body, while men are situated on the side of reason, discourse, culture, and mind."⁶² Seeing both the rhythms of nature and femininity as overwhelming and irrational, man must master and subdue them.

Nature in The Forest Song is not the insanely tempestuous nature of Shevchenko. It is a benevolent nature which reflects Mavka's innocence and provides her with a safe refuge. Mavka closely identifies herself with nature, regarding trees as her mother and her sisters. Although nature in the play is identified with the feminine -- through Mavka and through its rhythms of birth, growth, death and rebirth -- it is a nature which is, above all, rational. The rape of the forest is represented by the cutting down of Lev's favourite ancient oak tree for financial gain.⁶³ Such an irrational act is indicative of

⁶¹ Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1953) 146.

⁶² Elaine Showalter, The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980 (New York: Penguin, 1987) 3-4.

⁶³ The forest may be seen as a symbol of virginal territory. See de Beauvoir 154.

the disharmony civilisation has brought to the world. Man's attempt to structure nature, as it is symbolized by the confining practices of village life in the play, contrasts with the native harmony of nature.⁶⁴ Ironically, the attempt to structure nature leads to irrationality and the loss of ability to function normally. It is Lukash and Kylyna who are the victims of irrationality rather than Mavka, who in traditional folklore would be the victim imprisoned by the magical and irrational powers of nature.

Although Ukrainka retains the identification of nature with femininity, she understands the relationship as one of strength, rather than one of weakness. Nature in The Forest Song represents neither the "dark side" of humanity, nor does it represent feminine irrationality and vulnerability. Instead, it is presented as a momentous force which cannot be destroyed by encroachments on it by the *Urbemensch*. The oak tree may be cut down, Mavka may perish as an individual, but the eternal change of the seasons continues in its unstoppable course, everything at the end returning to its natural order. "He [man] exploits nature, but she crushes

⁶⁴ For an conservationist interpretation of nature in Ukrainka's play see Volodymyr Ianiv, "Le problème de la famille Ukrainienne à travers le Chant de la forêt de Lessia Oukraina et les Ombres des ancêtres oubliés de Mychailo Kotsioubyns'kyi," Actes du colloque Lessia Ukrainka (Paris: Université ukrainienne libre, 1983) 76.

him, he is born of her and dies in her . . . nature . . . is the supreme reality."⁶⁵ Mavka's most profound development in The Forest Song is her realization that she is but a small part of this much larger reality, and it is from here that she must draw her strength. Mavka, who at first wants to believe only in love as the eternal ideal realizes that it is through her organic connection with nature that she can reach the eternal: "No! I am alive! I will always live! I have in me that which does not die!"⁶⁶

Patriarchy, which has pointed to the woman's body, to woman herself, as "the other," an imperfect male, the Eve created from Adam, has done so because of its fear of the natural power of the female. Her power to give birth was controlled and the natural rhythms of her womb were made to seem unclean and uncontrollable. It is from the womb that sprang the concepts of irrationality and madness. Man's fear of nature has led to similar attempts to control it, which within the perfectly structured world of literature if not in reality, he has been able to achieve. Ukrainka's demystification of the powers of nature and her association of it with harmony in life presents a challenge to the Romantic conception of nature as a volatile "night side" of

⁶⁵ de Beauvoir 144.

⁶⁶ Ukrainka, Lisova pisnia, Zibrannia tvoriv 5: 269.

existence.

Ukrainka trusts her attraction to Romanticism but is not afraid to confront it. When she finds that the Romantic imagination contributes toward a confining and inhibitive image of women in literature, Ukrainka reconstructs those images. In Ukrainka's feminist Romanticism intellectualism and passion are not the diametrically opposed solitudes which they are traditionally believed to be.

Ukrainka's redefinition of two powerful patriarchal Romantic fallacies about the inferiority of women constitute a personal success of great magnitude for the author. Through The Forest Song she proved to herself that she could revisit the tradition she was brought up in and loved, yet one from which in many ways she felt estranged. In the process she showed Ukrainian literature how liberating a challenge to tradition can be.

Confronting a Legend: The Stone Master

The Stone Master (Kaminnyi hospodar), begun in the winter of 1911 and completed in the spring of 1912, was Ukrainka's penultimate drama.¹ The play appeared in the October 1912 issue of Literaturno-naukovyi visnyk, and was subsequently staged by Mykhailo Sadovs'kyi's theatrical company in January 1914, a half-year after Ukrainka's untimely death.

The Stone Master tells the story of Anna, who is unhappily but dutifully engaged to the Commander Don Gonzago. She learns that her confidante Dolores is the fiancée of the legendary Don Juan, banished from Spain for his misdeeds. Juan unexpectedly returns to Spain, and seeing Anna, becomes immediately interested in her, forgetting his commitment to Dolores. Anna flirts with Juan, putting to the test his concept of "love without constraints." Eventually, motivated by a profound need for love, Anna believes Juan's promises to love her. She soon finds, however, that her "knight of freedom" resembles her

¹ The drama's title has most often been translated as The Stone Host. See, for example, Constantine Bida, Vera Rich, Robert Karpiak, Wendell Aycock and Jacques Morel among others. Several critics (Oleksandr Deich, Clarence Manning, Stephen Chorney and Natalia Kuziakina), however, translate the play's title as The Stone Master. The difference in terminology here is crucial, and for reasons that will become apparent in this chapter, I have chosen to use the alternative translation of the play's title, that is, The Stone Master.

fiancé in his adherence to societal codes. Flirting openly with Juan, Anna dishonours Gonzago. Dishonoured by his wife's conduct, Gonzago confronts Juan and is killed by him. Later, while dining at Anna's house, Juan is encouraged by her to put on the Commander's overcoat. Having done so Juan effectively becomes the Commander's replacement. At this moment the ghost of the Commander emerges from Juan's reflection in a mirror, comes toward Juan, and placing his hand on Juan's shoulder, petrifies him.

The immediate response to The Stone Master was very favourable, even enthusiastic. The reviewer for Kiev's Rada, a newspaper highly critical of Ukrainka in the past, wrote: "Ukrainka's beautiful play, well thought-out and crafted, so originally treats the universal theme of Don Juan that it would grace every European theatre. . . ."² Similar praise of the play appeared from under the pen of Andrii Nikovs'kyi who remarked: "Lesia Ukrainka's The Stone Master is able to take its distinguished place among the European works to which this theme has been central."³ Mykola Ievshan termed Ukrainka's

² Quoted in Lesia Ukrainka, Zibrannia tvoriv u dvanadtsiat' tomakh, ed. Ievhen Shabliovs'kyi, 12 vols (Kiev: Naukova dumka, 1975-1979) 6: 401.

³ Andrii Nikovs'kyi, "Ukrains'ka literatura v 1912 rotsi," Literaturno-naukovyi visnyk 10 (1913): 174.

play a "jewel," adding that through it she "draws us [Ukrainian literature] into the sphere of universal themes . . ." thereby "rectifying a serious shortcoming of our poetry. . . ." ⁴ Later critics of all political and literary persuasions, beginning with Mykola Zerov, Andrii Muzychka and Mykhailo Drai-Khmara in the twenties, followed by Oleksandr Deich, Avraam Hozenpud, and ending with Oleh Babyshkin, Natalia Kuziakina and Constantine Bida all concur that The Stone Master is an important play. Jacques Morel describes this play as Ukrainka's "testament esthétique, social et spirituel," and in the words of Bida, it is "a masterpiece," and, along with The Forest Song (Lisova pisnia), represents "the culmination of her dramatic creation." ⁵

⁴ Mykola Ievshan, "Nash literaturnyi bilians za 1912 rik," Literaturno-naukovyi visnyk 10 (1913): 165. It is remarkable how critics had come to accept Ukrainka's new techniques and themes in the Ukrainian theatre just two decades after the appearance of the unappreciated Azure Rose (Blakytna troianda).

⁵ Jacques Morel, "Lessia Oukrainka et le mythe de Don Juan," Actes du Colloque Lessia Ukrainka (Paris: Université ukrainienne libre, 1983), 63. Constantine Bida, "Life and Work," Lesya Ukrainka (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1968) 78, 82. Although Ukrainka desperately wanted to hear her family's reaction to her play, none was forthcoming. She interpreted this silence as disapproval. Klyment Kvitka considered the drama to be "beneath its author," although he allowed that it should be published. See Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (sister)," 18 Oct. 1912, letter 243, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 414. Even Ol'ha Kobylins'ka was critical of the play. She thought that The Stone Master was not long enough, considering its important subject. See Ukrainka,

Unlike Ukrainka's other acclaimed masterpiece, The Forest Song, which had a gestation period spanning decades, The Stone Master was conceived over a short period of time. The immediate impetus for Ukrainka's work had much to do with her reading of Georges Gendarme de Bévotte's pioneering study, La légende de Don Juan.⁶ The only version of the legend Ukrainka had by her side when writing the play was Pushkin's The Stone Host (Kamennyi gost'), which she asked her sister Ol'ha to send to her immediately before she wrote her play. This fact signifies that the idea to write The Stone Master preceded the possibility of her having been influenced by a reading Pushkin's work. Similarly, her acquisition of Bévotte's work indicates a prior interest in the legend.

The question of why Ukrainka was drawn to the Don Juan legend has given rise to much speculation among critics, and

"To Ol'ha Kobylins'ka," 3 May 1913, letter 277, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 461.

⁶ Gendarme de Bévotte's two-volume study was published in 1911 (a single-volume edition had first appeared in 1906), providing a history of the Don Juan legend up to the early twentieth century. See Georges Gendarme de Bévotte, La légende de Don Juan, 2 vols. (Paris: Hachette et Cie, 1911). Ukrainka had only the first volume, which traced the legend up to and including Byron's "Don Juan." See Avraam Hozenpud, Poetychnyi teatr: Dramatychni tvory Lesi Ukrainky (Kiev: Mystetstvo, 1947) 219. Gendarme de Bévotte's study is still considered the definitive work on the Don Juan legend. See Leo Weinstein, The Metamorphoses of Don Juan (New York: AMS P, 1967) v-vi.

can provide an important key to understanding her play. Three schools of thought have emerged to explain Ukrainka's choice of the Don Juan legend for the subject of play. One of these contends that Ukrainka wrote her play for political reasons, using her characters to highlight the differences between Ukrainian political parties in their approach to revolution.⁷ A variation on the political motive asserts that Ukrainka's drama was part of her response to the escalating campaign of Russian jingoism at the time, which resulted in a backlash against Ukrainian and Belorussian culture. This movement was led by cadet leader Piotr Struve who, in Russkaia Mysl', argued the illogic of the independent existence of Ukrainian and Belorussian culture and questioned the ability of these cultures to "embrace the higher spiritual achievements of mankind."⁸ Ukrainka herself feared that if The Stone Master proved critically unpopular, its failure would be used to support such a view:

⁷ See for instance Ievhen Nenadkevych, "Ukrains'ka versiiia svitovoi temy pro Don Zhuana v istorychno-literaturnii perspektyvi," Ukrainka, Tvory, ed. Borys Iakubs'kyi, 12 vols. (Kiev: Knyhospilka, 1927-30) 11: 39, and Oleh Babyshkin, Dramaturhiia Lesi Ukrainky (Kiev: Derzhavne vydavnytstvo obrazotvorchoho mystetstva i muzychnoi Literatury, 1963) 307.

⁸ Oleksii Stavyts'kyi, Etapy tvorchoho shliakhu (Kiev: Dnipro, 1970) 196-97. See also Iurii Boiko, "Kaminnyi hospodar Lesi Ukrainky," Vybrane, 3 vols (Munich: Ukrains'ke vydavnytstvo, 1974) 2: 327, 359.

"they will say: The khokhly have finally come upon Don Juan, for the first time in 300 years, and unsuccessfully at that. . . ." ⁹ Clarence Manning goes even further in a political interpretation of the play by categorizing The Stone Master as a political response to Struve and others: "The Stone Master is then still another of that long series of works by Lesya Ukrainka which under a literary form depict the Ukrainian opposition to the Russian Empire. . . ." ¹⁰

Another school of thought rejects political motives for the play's emergence, and in their place proposes complex philosophical reasons. Ida Zhuravs'ka, for instance, contends that Ukrainka's drama is philosophically anti-Nietzschean, and thus a response to the Russian decadents' (and the "pro-imperialist Western") vision of Don

⁹ Ukrainka, "Letter to Ol'ha Kosach (sister)," 18 Oct. 1912, letter 243, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 414. Khokhly is a Russian derogatory word for Ukrainians.

¹⁰ Clarence Manning, "Lesya Ukrainka and Don Juan," Modern Languages Quarterly 16.1 (1955): 47. There is validity in considering that Ukrainka wished to respond to Struve's attacks. She urged her compatriots to increase their literary activity and in particular to translate more Western classics into Ukrainian, commenting, "this will have more meaning than all sorts of journalistic polemics." Stavyts'kyi 197. "'What lengths khokhlatskaia insolence has reached,' -- Struve along with his esteemed company of our 'older brothers' will say," joked Ukrainka about the appearance of her play. Lesia Ukrainka, "To Liudmyla Stavyts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka," June n.d. 1912, letter 235, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 399.

Juan as superman.¹¹ This view is shared by Jaroslav Rozumnyj, who states that Ukrainka's motive in writing the play was to demonstrate "the fictitiousness of the concept of superman."¹²

A third school of thought contends that Ukrainka chose and utilized the Don Juan legend mainly for artistic reasons. This widely-shared contention originated with critics such as Ievshan and Nikovs'kyi, who argued that The Stone Master was intended to be a work that would raise Ukrainian literature to European standards. This view is held by such diverse critics as Avraam Hozenpud, Dmytro Chyzhevs'kyj, and its latest proponent, Robert Karpiak, who writes, "It is our contention that the enrichment of Ukrainian literature was the immediate objective Lesia Ukrainka set before herself in writing Kaminnyi hospodar."¹³

All of the above reasons for Ukrainka's turning to the

¹¹ Ida Zhuravs'ka, Lesia Ukrainka ta zarubizhni literatury (Kiev: Akademiia nauk URSR, 1963) 162-64.

¹² Jaroslav Rozumnyj, "Conflicting Ideals in Lesia Ukrainka's Stone Host," Canadian Slavonic Papers 15.3 (1973): 384. There is an alternate view, championed by Dmytro Dontsov that Ukrainka was pro-Nietzschean, a proponent of profound individualism. Dmytro Dontsov, Poetka ukrains'koho risordzhimenta (Lviv: Vydavnytstvo Dontsovykh, 1922).

¹³ Robert Karpiak, "Don Juan in Slavic Drama," Ph.D. diss., U of Ottawa, 1977, 129.

Don Juan legend are partly valid. They all, however, remain oblivious to the possibility of gender motives in Ukrainka's choice of subject matter for her play. This oversight is particularly noticeable in a discussion of The Stone Master, because in approaching the Don Juan legend Ukrainka stands before one of the most powerful masculine patriarchal legends of European literature, a venerable legend whose hero is often held to be the "epitome of manliness."¹⁴ Ukrainka's choice of such a symbolically charged legend could hardly have been coincidental.

In writing her play, Ukrainka assumed that she was the first woman to use the Don Juan legend in a literary work.¹⁵ Even though she was actually the second woman to write a work with the legend as its subject (having been

¹⁴ According to respected Don Juan scholar José Ortega y Gasset, whose view is shared by many other critics. See Weinstein 156. I use the word venerable here purposely, as an important aspect of a significant variant of the Don Juan legend, that which is based on the life of Miguel Manara, has to do with his veneration (the penultimate step to sainthood) by the Catholic Church. The Don Manara version of the legend stresses Don Juan as the saved sinner, and has been best articulated by José Zorilla's popular Don Juan Tenorio (1844).

¹⁵ "[T]hat it was written by a woman (is perhaps a first occurrence for this subject" is what Ukrainka wrote in an ironic tone to Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi, using the phrase "occurrence" ("trapylos"), which in Ukrainian has the connotation of "chanced upon." Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," 6 June 1912, letter 233, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 397.

preceded by Swede Anna Quidling Akerheilm's drama Don Juan Tenorio in 1909), the fact of having done so in itself represented a major contravention of tradition, a tradition well-guarded by the over 2300 male versions of the theme.¹⁶ It was probably Ukrainka's stark realization of the magnitude of her attempt that led her to proclaim, "God forgive me and have mercy on me! I have written Don Juan!"¹⁷

Ukrainka's rise to such a formidable challenge is even more significant considering that such writers as Charlotte Brontë and Jane Austen, both of whom had rejected the romanticized Don Juan, felt compelled to ignore the legend rather than confronting it. George Sand had however indirectly condemned the idealization of Don Juan and shown him to be a coward through Lélia, the heroine of her novel of the same name (1833).¹⁸

¹⁶ Robert Karpiak first found that Ukrainka's play was not the first female treatment of the theme, a hitherto undisputed assumption of Ukrainka scholarship. Karpiak 130. Very few women have approached the Don Juan legend since Ukrainka.

¹⁷ Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," 6 June 1912, letter 233, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 396.

¹⁸ Ukrainka first mentioned Sand's novel in a letter to her brother in 1889, which shows the early date at which Ukrainka was exposed to the first feminist appraisal of Don Juan. Ukrainka had proposed Sand's novel for translation into Ukrainian that same year. Ukrainka, "To Mykhailo Kosach," 8-10 Dec. 1889, letter 27, Zibrannia tvoriv 10: 41.

The Don Juan myth's stature as a major European legend must also have been a factor in Ukrainka choosing to write upon it. Elaine Showalter observes that "as classical education was the intellectual dividing line between men and women, intelligent women aspired to study Greek and Latin, with a touching faith that such knowledge would open the world of male power and wisdom to them," often having a heroine "make mastery of the classics the initial goal in her search for truth."¹⁹ Besides introducing an entirely new interpretation of Ukrainka's fascination with (and mastery of) the classics (in language, reading, and literary creation), Showalter's observation sheds additional light on Ukrainka's utilization of the Don Juan legend. Extending Showalter's supposition, we may interpret Ukrainka's appropriation of a great male legend as its challenge,

¹⁹ Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own: British Female Novelists from Brontë to Lessing (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977) 42. Showalter notes that few nineteenth-century women had access to a classical education, since a patriarchal education system refused them entry. Such was the case with Ukrainka, who was denied entry into the Kiev University because of her sex. Ukrainka's biographers like to claim that she lacked a formal education solely due to health reasons. Ukrainka felt a tremendous inadequacy because of her lack of a formal education, mentioning it in her letters. See for example her comment to Kryms'kyi that "You of course know all this [fine points of Spanish pronunciation], and I -- am "uneducated!" But that's not strange -- I am an autodidact -- and you -- a professor. . . ." Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," 6 June 1912, letter 233, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 397.

mastery, and ultimately its defeat.

Ukrainka unequivocally equated the raison-d'être of her work, its originality, with a feminist interpretation of the legend. "There is," as she writes in a quote often used to support her national-literary motive for writing the play, "now in our literature our own, and not a translated, Don Juan. . . ." ²⁰ But scholars omit the rest of the sentence, which reads, "original in that it is written by a woman. . . ." ²¹ The Stone Master thus is not only Ukrainka's excursion into the realm of "world themes" for national-artistic reasons, but it is also an integral part of her multi-faceted protest against a phallocentric literary system and its corresponding societal values. The play thus represents another, consequential, step in Ukrainka's comprehensive deconstruction of literary patriarchy.

The Don Juan legend thus appealed to Ukrainka because it offered her an opportunity to write about a central theme of European literature which she admired artistically, but did not agree with philosophically. This was an opportunity which challenged both her ability as a writer and her

²⁰ Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," 6 June 1913, letter 233, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 396.

²¹ Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," 6 June 1913, letter 233, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 396-397

concerns as a woman.²² The combination proved irresistible. Not a simple polemical refutation of the Don Juan legend, the result is a complex play which is not a version of the legend, but a profound subversion of it.

Finally, it should be mentioned that despite the uniqueness of its conception and intent, The Stone Master was part of an upsurge of interest in the Don Juan legend in fin de siècle Europe, an interest rekindled by the rise in popularity of the philosophy of "Donjuanism," which

²² Ukrainka breathes immediacy and intimacy into her play through the introduction of her own experiences as a woman in society. We may slightly alter Leo Weinstein's observations about Hoffmann to refer just as well to the achievement of Ukrainka: "It is not from reading other authors . . . or from 'ideas that were in the air' but from within himself that Hoffmann drew his revolutionary interpretation of Mozart's Don Giovanni." Weinstein 74. Donna Anna's quest for a genuine "liberator" in the play reflects Ukrainka's own quest for such a person, and is apparently a theme with which many women can identify. Simone de Beauvoir finds that the dream of a liberator is common both among young girls (who believe he will take them away from their family) and married women (who believe he will "take them from under the marital yoke"). Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1953) 551. Both these desires are clearly discernible in Anna's welcoming Don Juan in The Stone Master.

On a literary level, Showalter writes that Victorian women sensationalist authors often depicted heroines "who pray their lovers to carry them off from husbands and homes they hate. . . . the death of the husband comes as a welcome release, and women escape their families through illness, madness, divorce, flight, and ultimately murder." Showalter 160. These situations are not unlike those found in Ukrainka's play. Critics have never properly explored the wealth of information about Ukrainka's life which has significant bearing on The Stone Master.

celebrated Don Juan as an admired character.²³ Ukrainka's play, however, does not adopt "Donjuanism" or any aspect of it, but rather rejects it.

In The Stone Master, writes Pavlo Antokol's'kyi, Ukrainka "polemicizes with the entire tradition of Donjuanism, taking to task Pushkin, Byron, Mozart, and many others. . . ."²⁴ Ievhen Nenadkevych's view is that the play represents "a highly original modernization of the legend," and Avraam Hozenpud terms it "totally original."²⁵ Ukrainka's changes to the legend's characters form her most fundamental alteration of the legend. Wendell Aycock, for instance, states that despite the similarities of Ukrainka's play to its antecedents in setting and plot, the conception and development of her characters "make her drama strikingly different from the previous versions of the legend."²⁶ Iurii Boiko suggests that Ukrainka's Dolores has no prototype, a claim also made by Sofiia Naumovych about Donna Anna.²⁷ Anna, continues Boiko, is a figure who is

²³ See Weinstein 147-50.

²⁴ Quoted in Stavyts'kyi 198.

²⁵ Nenadkevych 42, Hozenpud 219.

²⁶ Wendell Aycock, "Lesia Ukrainka and the Don Juan Legend," Lesia Ukrainka 1871-1971: Zbirnyk prats' na 100-richchia poetky, ed. Bohdan Romanenchuk (Philadelphia: Svitovyi komitet dlia vidznachennia 100-richchia poetky, 1971-80) 137.

both "Ibsenian and Nietzschean."²⁸ Although Zhuravs'ka agrees that Ibsen influences the creation of Anna, she argues that Anna represents Ukrainka's "reaction" to him.²⁹ Jaroslav Rozumnyj sees in Anna a "suffragette of the beginning of the twentieth century."³⁰

Ukrainka's philosophical conception of the legend is also original. Most critics agree that she intended her play to comment on contemporary problems, philosophical and political. Robert Karpiak, for example, sees The Stone Master as a "re-creation of myth and re-manifestation of archetypal patterns in response to the demands and conditions of the contemporary scene."³¹ A similar view is held by Ida Zhuravs'ka, who terms the play a work whose "character, meaning, and place can only be discussed in relation to the twentieth century and its literature. All that it has in common with other works on Don Juan is the story itself."³² Karpiak, who bases his observations about

²⁷ Boiko 353, Sofiia Naumovych, "Kaminnyi hospodar i Don Zhuan," Lesia Ukrainka 1871-1971 120.

²⁸ Boiko 354.

²⁹ Zhuravs'ka 164.

³⁰ Jaroslav Rozumnyi, "Problemy liuds'kykh vzaiemyn u Kaminnomu hospodari Lesi Ukrainky," Slovo 5 (1973) 207.

³¹ Karpiak 131.

³² Zhuravs'ka 157.

The Stone Master on a comprehensive knowledge of the Don Juan legend, concludes that "there is a strong link between this drama and the great plays which gave the myth its most artistically effective and lasting expression."³³ He finds, for example, that "the four principal characters are cast in essentially traditional roles, although each figure is perceived in a new and unprecedented light."³⁴ Karpiak's view is shared by Clarence Manning, who observes that Ukrainka's "retelling of the tale. . . . rests upon a solid foundation of European tradition. . . . and shows how a new generation can fill old legends with new thoughts without resorting to arbitrary and disrupting changes."³⁵

The preceding evaluations of The Stone Master's originality are not as contradictory as they first seem. Aycock, for instance, acknowledges "the striking

³³ Karpiak 146.

³⁴ Karpiak 131.

³⁵ Manning 48. Manning, like Karpiak, is both an expert in the Don Juan legend and an Ukrainka scholar. It seems that such critics are more likely to dismiss differences between Ukrainka's play and its antecedents with a more discerning eye than is done by critics not as well grounded in the history of the legend. Thus, although Karpiak writes that Ukrainka's portrayal of Donna Anna "constitutes a remarkable innovation" so dissimilar to her counterparts in classical tradition that they "can hardly be regarded as incarnations of the same archetype," he maintains that she is still a "recognizable archetype." Karpiak 131, 139-40.

originality" of the play, yet concludes that it is "ultimately valuable . . . because it adds a new dimension to the ageless legend of Don Juan."³⁴ Although he ascribes a high degree of originality to Ukrainka's play, Aycock sees it as no more than the addition of a new dimension to the legend, an assumption not unlike Karpiak's more sophisticatedly-derived conclusion. Both critics consider Ukrainka's play as essentially a version of the play, the only difference between them being their disagreement over the degree of originality achieved by The Stone Master. Disagreement, consequently, arises either over an understanding of Ukrainka's interpretation of the legend's details such as setting and plot, or elements such as character and philosophy. The foundation of the legend, however, remains unquestioned. Thus, whether Don Juan appears as heroic man of action, tragic idealist, or even anti-hero, is not as important as the fundamentality of his (man's) position as a superior being.

Nowhere is the notion of Juan's superiority as an unrefutable premise better manifested than in the critics' attitude toward the author. Nenadkevych terms Ukrainka's play "a woman's judgement of Juan," and Aycock sees The Stone Master as "the legend treated from a woman's point of

³⁴ Aycock 143.

view."³⁷ Stephen Chorney notes that "Ukrainka attempts to approach the theme from the woman's point of view at her time of emancipation," and Wolodymyr Zyla writes that "women dominate this play."³⁸ These critics unanimously agree that Donna Anna is the play's central character, yet they measure her tragedy in relation to Don Juan's, ultimately focusing on his significance in the play. Not one analyzes The Stone Master as essentially Anna's tragedy, which it is. In being Anna's tragedy, Ukrainka's play represents a major departure from the tradition of the Don Juan legend.

"Don Juan, for his part," writes Leo Weinstein, has been subjected to every conceivable kind of criticism: gentle chiding, pin-prick deflation, screaming hate, cold irony that strips away any pretense, medical and psychological examination that leaves one undressed, praise that turns to blame -- he has been spared none of these.³⁹

Along with the development of the legend, remarks Mabel Parker Worthington, "runs the parodying, the ridiculing of

³⁷ Nenadkevych 21, Aycock 125.

³⁸ Stephen S. Chorney, "Don Juanian Motif in Lesia Ukrainka's Dramaturgy," The Ukrainian Quarterly, 35.2 (1979): 165, Wolodymyr T. Zyla, "Don Juan Through Ukrainian Eyes," The Ukrainian Review, 28.3 (1981): 86.

³⁹ Weinstein 130.

the original myth."⁴⁰ She notes, however, that "the archetypal content of the myth remains, despite the circumstantiality each epoch attaches to it."⁴¹ Weinstein, who characterizes the new versions of Don Juan's character throughout the years as "character assassination," also maintains that "we can find in Tirso's Burlador practically all the future interpretations of Don Juan, either directly or in spe."⁴²

The Don Juan of Spanish legend first appeared in literature as the hero of Tirso de Molina's (the pseudonym of the monk Gabriel Téllez) play The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest (El Burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra) which appeared sometime between 1612 and 1630. Gendarme de Béville, through whom Ukrainka knew Tirso's play, characterizes Tirso's hero as a "Burlador, l'inlassable trompeur, épris de toutes les femmes. . . . Son libertinage est moins de la corruption que de l'exubérance. Il est plus léger et frivole que vicieux."⁴³ Tirso's Juan's boundless courage, argues

⁴⁰ Mabel Parker Worthington, "Don Juan: Theme and Development in the Nineteenth Century," Ph.D. diss., Columbia U, 1953, 60.

⁴¹ Worthington 64.

⁴² Weinstein 23.

⁴³ Gendarme de Béville 1: 49.

Karpiak, endeared him not only to the young noblemen who saw the play in the seventeenth century and emulated him, but also to succeeding generations of new admirers, who, fascinated by him, were ready to forgive his sacrilegious transgressions.⁴⁴ Bernard Shaw notes that "What attracts and impresses us in El Burlador de Sevilla is . . . the heroism of daring to be the enemy of God. From Prometheus to my own Devil's Disciple, such enemies have always been popular. Don Juan became such a pet that the world could not bear his damnation."⁴⁵

Infinitely more devious and more sophisticated than Tirso's Don Juan is Molière's Don Juan. No longer a likeable rascal, Molière's hero is a depraved sensualist, "a monster of nature" who, according to Gendarme de Bévotte, corrupts everything he touches through his egoism, debasement of love and desecration of religion.⁴⁶ In contrast to the simple trickster, Molière's Don Juan is a sophisticated thinker, a representation of the seventeenth-century French aristocratic libertine who rebels against society and religion. He is also, writes Weinstein, a "cool

⁴⁴ Karpiak 22-23.

⁴⁵ Bernard Shaw, "To Arthur Bingham Walkley," Man and Superman (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974) 11.

⁴⁶ Gendarme de Bévotte 1: 127.

reasoning. . . . master of himself, fully conscious of his actions," who has developed an "aesthetic philosophy" of seduction.⁴⁷ His philosophy becomes a justification for his depravity, and herein lies his hypocrisy.

Mozart's Don Giovanni (1787), writes Worthington, "is less a tale about a man and his women than a tale of sons and fathers, both earthly and heavenly fathers."⁴⁸ Echoing similar interpretations by Shaw and Gendarme de Bévotte, Worthington builds a theory around this observation which likens Don Juan to a "Rebel Son" archetype, whose lineage includes Prometheus, Oedipus, Cain, Satan, Hamlet and Faust among others.⁴⁹ The Rebel Son first defies authority, then is punished by and or is reconciled with authority, thereby expressing two opposing tendencies of man, "the urge to self-expression and defiance of authority, and the urge to submit to a higher authority."⁵⁰ Reconciliation, reasons Worthington, is the opera's most important motif. Having killed the father and then been compelled to expiate his crime, the hero accepts his inevitable and just punishment. "The audience feels a sense of completeness . . . one might

⁴⁷ Weinstein 32.

⁴⁸ Worthington 17.

⁴⁹ Worthington 18-19.

⁵⁰ Worthington 19.

almost say, 'Don Giovanni is dead, long live Don Giovanni'.⁵¹ Shaw considers Mozart's exalted Don Giovanni to be the "last of the true Don Juans," soon to be reshaped by the modern demands of the nineteenth century.⁵²

E. T. A. Hoffmann's short story Don Juan (1814) presents the first of the Romantic Juans. Like his predecessors, Hoffmann's Juan is also in conflict with God and society, but for an entirely new reason. This Juan is a seeker of ideals, in quest of the ideal woman. A major departure in Hoffmann's Don Juan concerns the relationship of its hero with women. Neither a trickster nor a debauchee, this Juan proves to be irresistible to women because of his Romantic nature.

Pushkin's The Stone Guest (Kamennyi gost') (1830) constitutes the first Slavic treatment of the legend. Likened to Pushkin himself, this Don Juan is a lover of life, "in love with love rather than with women."⁵³ Characterized by Worthington as "a child of nature -- joyous, impulsive, thoughtless, irresponsible and, despite his actions, possessed of a kind of childlike

⁵¹ Worthington 35.

⁵² Shaw 12.

⁵³ Janko Lavrin, Pushkin and Russian Literature (London: Macmillan, 1948) 174.

innocence," Pushkin's Juan is closer in spirit to Tirso's trickster than to Molière's libertine or Mozart's Rebel Son. Karpiak believes that Pushkin's hero "appears to epitomize his ancestors; he has inherited from them their best and their worst," and "The retention of the burlador [trickster] and convidado [the urge to submit to a higher authority] sub-themes testifies to the traditional spirit with which the drama was inspired and conceived."⁵⁴

A major development in the evolution of the Don Juan character in the nineteenth century was the fusion of the legends of Don Juan Tenorio with the legendary figure of Miguel Manara, a Spanish adventurer born in 1626. Manara led a turbulent life until the age of thirty, when he married. His wife died a few years later, and shortly thereafter Manara experienced an extraordinary conversion. He entered a monastery, and subsequently devoted his life to helping the poor. Manara died in 1679 and was venerated in 1778.

Prosper Mérimée first combined the Miguel Manara and Don Juan legends in his novel Les Ames du Purgatoire (1834). The new legend found its greatest popularity through José Zorilla's Don Juan Tenorio (1844), in which Don Juan is saved from his fate as an egotistical deceiver by the love

⁵⁴ Karpiak 87.

of a pure woman. "With Zorilla's Don Juan Tenorio," writes Weinstein, "we have reached the climax of Don Juan's rehabilitation, a development that had begun with Hoffmann's short story. . . . But Don Juan's glorification did not meet with glorious approval. After the applause came the howls of protest."⁵⁵

One of these "howls of protest" emanated from George Sand's novel Lélia. Although not a full version of the legend, it nevertheless puts forth an unprecedented attack on the figure of Don Juan, marking it as an important step in the evolution of the archetype.⁵⁶ Sand's Don Juan appears as a cowardly abuser of women, a "conceited fool" in search of "senseless rights," whose search for the ideal woman is no more than a hypocritical justification of his own egoism.⁵⁷ Sand's disenchantment with the glorified Romantic Juan is evident through Sténio's confrontation of the myth: "Oh, how badly they misunderstood you, those who like me, saw your life as the symbol of a glorious, persistent struggle against reality! If they had renewed the trial you attempted, they would not glorify your role as

⁵⁵ Weinstein 129.

⁵⁶ Sand only devotes one chapter of her novel to Don Juan.

⁵⁷ George Sand, Lélia, trans. Maria Espinosa (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978) 202.

they do."⁵⁸

Sand's attack on the Don Juan myth constitutes the first attempt at its undermining from a gender (in addition to social) perspective. Her challenge, however, did not represent a confrontation of equally matched opponents, but rather that of a frustrated rebel still under her adversary's powerful hold. The Don Juan legend's confrontation by a woman on equal terms would have to wait for a moment in time when she had won a more favourable position from which to mount her challenge.

On one level, Ukrainka's Don Juan is traditional. Jacques Morel maintains that "Sans aucun doute possible, la poétesse a voulu, dans son drame, présenter une sorte de synthèse (au rest très sobre) des virtualités diverses offertes par le mythe moderne de Don Juan. . . ."⁵⁹ Ukrainka herself strengthens such a notion by stressing that her Don Juan is a figure true to tradition: "my goal was not to add something new to the established figure of Don Juan in literature, perhaps only to emphasize the anarchy of his nature, since he really should appear as most imagine him to be. . . ."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Sand 204.

⁵⁹ Morel 64.

⁶⁰ Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kobylans'ka," 3 May 1913, letter 277, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 461-62.

As Morel suggests, Don Juan seems to be a composite figure of previous depictions. His introduction, through Dolores' description in conversation with Anna, establishes Don Juan as the traditional seducer:

I saw him last in Cadiz, he lived then, hiding in caves . . . living off contraband . . . sometimes sailing with pirates. . . . Then a gypsy girl ran off with him across the sea, and vanished somewhere there, he brought back with him to Cadiz some Moorish girl, who had poisoned her own brother for Juan's sake. . . . Then entered a convent.⁶¹

Juan's first appearance confirms his roguish reputation, as he begins an immediate flirtation with Donna Anna in the presence of her confidante and his betrothed, Dolores. However, Juan's flirtation with Anna becomes serious, and through the love song he sings to her at her masquerade-ball, Juan establishes himself as a rival to Anna's fiancé, the Commander.

Juan sees himself as a truly free individual: "Only he is free from society," he says, "whom society rejects, and that I have forced it to do."⁶² His sense of freedom allows

⁶¹ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 75.

⁶² Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 104.

him to stand above society, and also governs his attitude toward women: "I will break the custom for an extraordinary woman."⁶³ Also important to Juan is his sense of honour, exemplified by his belief in the sanctity of a "word of honour," and defended by his rapier. He remains faithful to Dolores not because he loves her, but because he has given her his word of honour to do so, a word of honour which is subject to "the holy law."⁶⁴ Juan sees no contradiction between his sense of freedom and his adherence to a regimented higher code of conduct, behaviour which is reminiscent of the trickster's recklessness yet ultimate respect of a higher authority.

Juan's sense of devotion to his personal code of honour prohibits him from surrendering the ring which binds him to Dolores. Anna interprets his refusal to give up Dolores' ring as proof that he, despite his homage to an abstract concept of freedom, is, like everyone else, not free. In her eyes the self-proclaimed "knight of freedom" differs little from the Commander, the "knight of duty," whom Juan sees as his antithesis.

A widely-held view of Juan is that he remains strong,

⁶³ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 98.

⁶⁴ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 116.

free, and true to his archetype until he falls in love, when he begins making concessions and ultimately loses his freedom.⁶⁵ This view, strongly based upon the idea of woman as corruptor, considers Juan's sense of freedom to be genuine. In his actions, however, Juan fails to live up to his own standards. When he learns that Dolores has obtained a pardon for him from the King which will allow him to reclaim his former position, he gladly accepts, much to Dolores' disappointment. Juan asks Dolores by what means she obtained his pardon, demanding to know whether it was "honourable" or "shameful." He is shocked to learn that the cost of the pardon was her chastity. Dolores notes the absurdity of both his concern with matters "shameful," as well as his condemnation of immorality. Juan's conduct is inconsistent for someone not concerned with "what people will say." This episode provides the first indication that although he professes to stand apart from society, Juan is not averse to partaking of its privileges. Through his cowardly attack on the Commander, Juan also destroys the credibility of his concept of honour. It, like his sense of freedom, is illusory rather than real.

⁶⁵ See for instance Boiko 350, Mykhailo Drai-Khmara, Lesia Ukrainka: Zhyttia i tvorchist', Mykhailo Drai-Khmara: Z literaturno-naukovoi spadshchyny (New York: Naukove tovarystvo im. Shevchenka, 1979) 159.

In his pursuit of Anna, Juan at first appears reminiscent of Hoffmann's ideal-seeker. He is drawn to Anna's strength and is impressed by the fact that she does not fear him. Juan tells Anna that he has been looking for her all his life, and having found her, it is now his "duty to save her proud free soul!"⁶⁶ Juan's idealization of Anna, however, is better understood in the context of the philosophy which governs his involvement with women. Juan believes that he gives women what they want and enables them to reach their potential. He cannot understand why Donna Sol, who has abandoned her husband for him, is furious that he will not run off with her rather than being appreciative of the freedom he has won for her. He reasons that Dolores, who is about to enter a monastery in penance for the sin she has committed for his sake, has reached "a high reverent pinnacle" through him, and congratulates himself: "What a beautiful soul I have forged!"⁶⁷ Juan's attitude towards women thus amounts to no more than a naive and egotistical justification for their seduction, and as such echoes the philosophy of Molière's Don Juan. In this context, his pursuit of Anna represents something less than a

⁶⁶ *Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv* 6: 107.

⁶⁷ *Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv* 6: 120, 122.

Hoffmannesque Romanticism. His justification of seduction is also consistent with a pattern of male behaviour noted by de Beauvoir: "dreaming of himself as a donor, liberator, redeemer, man still desires the subjugation of woman. . . ." ⁶⁸

In the latter part of the play Juan is completely unmasked. He succeeds in seducing Anna, although not because of his wiles, but because Anna permits herself to be seduced despite her better judgement. Having killed the Commander, Juan's actions are anything but honourable. He is willing to lie to implicate Anna in the murder, and to ultimately possess her he gives up Dolores' ring. This is the same ring that Juan had given his word of honour to keep forever, because of "the needs of his soul." ⁶⁹ Then, succumbing to Anna's temptations of the vast powers which await him if he takes on the Commander's role, he accepts the dead Commander's overcoat, symbolic of everything he loathes. Significantly, Juan does so not to appease Anna, but of his own free will, out of lust for the privileges of power and position.

Karpiak identifies the petrification of Don Juan, his

⁶⁸ de Beauvoir 184.

⁶⁹ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 120.

merging with the Commander, as Ukrainka's major thematic contribution to the legend.⁷⁰ Ukrainka's blurring of the two characters underscores what little difference really exists between them. Rather than being a heroic action motivated by the urge to submit to a higher authority, Juan's act represents no more than his real desire for power and authority, and likens him to Don Gonzago.

Gonzago represents the ominousness of patriarchy. The Commander tells Anna that once she accepts "the great oath" (to become his wife), she will be bound by a new responsibility, not dictated by him, but by "God and the law."⁷¹ An insignificant man himself, he uses all the means made available to him to maintain his position in society. Gonzago knows that he is not Anna's equal in strength of character, yet through his favourable social position can dominate her, a situation symbolically demonstrated through his placing a gift of pearls on her ceremoniously bowed head. Gonzago, like Juan, professes to be honourable. He tells Anna that the de Mendozas are a clan of "fearless knights" and "ladies beyond reproach," and that his commandership has been earned honourably and honestly. In reality, however, the Commander is a conniving plotter

⁷⁰ Karpiak 137.

⁷¹ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 87.

intent on gaining the throne, for which he needs Anna's help. His demands upon Anna, which he explains as adherence to "old respectable traditions," gradually enslave her and show his phrase, "You now belong to the house of the de Mendozas" to be literal in meaning.⁷² Through his hypocrisy the Commander is more a "knight of conniving," than the "knight of duty" he sees himself to be, and as such he is as much the trickster and deceiver as is Juan.

Juan, however, yearns to partake in the system which has proven so advantageous to the Commander. He is no Rebel Son because he desires what he professes to rebel against. The blurring of the two figures at the end of the play, and then their ultimate merging, thus should come as no surprise.

Neither Juan nor the Commander is an individualist. For the character Don Juan, this is Ukrainka's single most significant change to his stature. His lack of individualism is his most prominent feature as well as his most glaring weakness. Whereas Drai-Khmara feels that in Anna Juan has met his equal, I believe that he is clearly Anna's inferior.⁷³ From their first meeting, at which she

⁷² Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 124.

⁷³ Drai-Khmara 159.

takes control of their relationship, to the tragic finale, when she seduces him with the promise of power, Juan is but Anna's instrument. Although Stepan Chorney considers Anna "triumphant over the deceiver and seducer," it is paradoxically the opposite which is true.⁷⁴ For Donna Anna, individually vastly superior to Don Juan, loses her battle with him (and with the Commander) because he becomes part of an invincible system of patriarchy, whereas she stands alone. In such an unevenly matched confrontation, she has no hope of survival.

Having lost his individualism, Juan takes his place as but a cog in the ominous machinery of patriarchy. In himself, Ukrainka's hero has been rendered impotent, irrelevant, and ultimately insignificant. It is this aspect of him that makes Juan so subversive of his archetype. Although Ukrainka's depiction of Juan includes many elements of tradition, as well as their satirization, the resulting character represents something less than a sum total of his parts. It is not so much the similarities and differences between Juan and his historical counterparts which are important, as is the fact that he has lost his importance and centrality. For although the legendary Juan has frequently come under heavy attack in the past, a fact which

⁷⁴ Chorney 165.

which Weinstein suggests has only enhanced his stature, he has always remained the focus of attention.⁷⁵

Ukrainka's play is not about an individual man whose Promethean strength allows him to rise above the norm to a height from which he can challenge God and capture the imagination of those around him, as the Don Juan myth maintains, but about "The Stone Master," not an individual but an elaborate system of patriarchy which consists of insignificant men such as Juan and the Commander, who in a system of patriarchy maintain invincible power. Ukrainka's fundamental change to the archetypal Don Juan thus is her demythologization of Juan's individualism and position as an Urbarmensch. In an ironic way, however, Juan, the ultimate conformist, remains the ultimate trickster, although the most elaborate deception he commits is upon himself.

The only reminder of a "true" Don Juan in the play is, ironically, his servant Sganarelle. Rather than acting as the traditional buffoon or his master's conscience, Sganarelle becomes a ghostly reminder of past Juans. He tells Juan: "I'd be more of a knight if I were the master,

⁷⁵ Weinstein 131-32. Shaw's Don Juan for instance, who has become the prey to a "Donna Juana," is still very much at the center of Man and Superman, albeit in the novel-to-him role of victim. In Ukrainka's play, however, not only is he not a tragic hero or even an anti-hero, but he is also now a supporting player to the tragic heroine.

and you -- the servant."⁷⁶ Later, as Juan sharpens his ever-present rapier and muses that no one is worthy of his rapier, Sganarelle tells him that perhaps it is his rapier which is unworthy of others. When Juan ponders, "What a beautiful soul I have forged!" Sganarelle sarcastically inquires "Whose? Yours?"⁷⁷ It is perhaps Ukrainka's ultimate insult to Juan that his servant appears as his superior.

Ukrainka's demythologization of Don Juan, however, constitutes only a prelude to the second stage of her reconstruction of the myth, that being the transformation of the play into a tragedy with Donna Anna as the tragic heroine.

"Don Juan," writes Weinstein, "is at his best in a society that keeps its women behind barred windows. . . . that is why Don Juan was born in seventeenth-century Spain. . . ."⁷⁸ Tirso's The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest certainly reflects the unimportance of women in such a society. The play's four women appear as little more than objects of Juan's tricks. In the words of Gendarme de

⁷⁶ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 90.

⁷⁷ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 122.

⁷⁸ Weinstein 37.

Bévotte, they are "pale figures" overshadowed even by Tirso's secondary male characters such as Laporello.⁷⁹ The French critic adds that the role of these women in the play is derived from medieval Catholic Spain's image of the woman as an impure creature and corruptor of men.

Despite Tirso's relegation of women to a secondary status their depiction lays the foundation for the creation of archetypes. The play's two noblewomen, Duchess Isabella and Dona Anna are deliberately unsympathetic, and, like Juan, pursue egotistical goals. More interesting are the fishergirl Tisbea and the peasant-girl Aminta. Tisbea, notes Gwynne Edwards, although modelled on the "disdainful shepherdess" of sixteenth-century pastoral novels who is aloof from her many male admirers, is noteworthy because of her belief in her own control of the situation.⁸⁰ Aminta, on the other hand, is the first in the long line of honest and virtuous angel-like victims of Juan. Although the dichotomy in the depiction of the duality of woman as angel-monster has not yet been established in Tirso's drama, its outlines are clearly evident.

Juan first shares the limelight with a woman in

⁷⁹ Gendarme de Bévotte 1: 52.

⁸⁰ Gwynne Edwards, "Introduction," The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest, by Tirso de Molina, trans. Gwynne Edwards (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1986.) xxix.

Molière's Dom Juan. In Molière's play the heroine Elvire appears as Don Juan's opposite, chaste and sincere, lacking any trace of his depravity. She is, however, his worthy adversary and, according to Gendarme de Bévotte, the first "real woman" he has met.⁸¹ Weinstein considers Elvire a woman of "real worth" because she is pure and unselfish, "loves the seducer" and prays for his salvation even after recognizing Don Juan for what he really is.⁸²

In eighteenth-century treatments of Don Juan, women began to reflect the changing position of women in European society and literature. In Mozart's Don Giovanni Elvira appears as the archetypal abandoned woman who takes revenge on her antagonist. Worthington labels Elvira as the Mater Edax, the devouring mother who is Don Giovanni's counterpart. As Giovanni must possess all women, so Elvira must possess the one man who possesses all women.⁸³ As the object of Giovanni's idealistic search, Elvira appears as the woman torn between her love for him and her urge to avenge her father. She must destroy Giovanni because by

⁸¹ Gendarme de Bévotte 1: 144.

⁸² Weinstein 33. Weinstein's praise of the virtuous Elvire is typical of critics' evaluation of women figures in the myth according to their position in the angel-monster polarity.

⁸³ Worthington 23.

killing her father he has proven himself superior to her father, and consequently must be devoured by her.²⁴

Hoffmann's pioneering Romantic interpretation of the myth in the nineteenth century places its major focus on the relationship between Don Giovanni and Dona Anna.

Worthington identifies Anna as the Anima, the Ideal Woman, who although she loves Juan is still torn between her lover and her duty to her father.²⁵ She casts her lot with Don Juan, although it is too late for her love to save him.

Byron continues the trend, established by Hoffmann, to use the myth to portray the relationship between the sexes. *Gendarme de Bévotte* suggests that Byron's portrayal of women in Don Juan owes little to archetypes developed so far, being instead true and varied depictions of women.²⁶ Byron's women in the poem are diverse, ranging from the naive Haidee to the experienced "Messaline of the North," Catherine.²⁷ As such, they further the angel/monster dichotomy of women so central to the Don Juan myth.

In Pushkin's Stone Host, Anna, the widow -- hitherto

²⁴ Worthington 26.

²⁵ Worthington 70-71.

²⁶ *Gendarme de Bévotte* 1: 306.

²⁷ *Gendarme de Bévotte* 1: 307.

the daughter of the dead Commander in the Juan legend (as she was in Tirso's and Molière's plays) -- identifies herself completely with Don Juan. Unlike Mozart's Elvira, she experiences no conflict of loyalty between Juan and her dead husband, never having loved her spouse. Pushkin's Anna, notes Worthington, parallels his Don Juan, reflecting his exuberance: "they are two of a kind, and accept each other for what they are."⁸⁸ In the play, the role of the sacrificing abandoned woman is taken on by Laura.

The ultimate image of woman as Don Juan's saviour is found in Zorilla's Don Juan Tenorio. Dona Inés, innocent and pure, suffers her own damnation for Juan. Her sacrificial gesture is "successful," and Juan is saved. Salvador de Madariaga sarcastically notes that Zorilla's play has become so important in Spain because Spaniards "are accustomed to having their women do everything for them," including saving them through their own sacrifice.⁸⁹

As in her portrayal of Don Juan, so too in her portrayal of women, Ukrainka borrowed from the legend's archetypal images. Although The Stone Master's Anna is the play's central character and the story constitutes her tragedy, the inclusion of a secondary heroine, Dolores, is

⁸⁸ Worthington 168.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Weinstein 128.

consistent both with various versions of the legend (for example Pushkin's) and with Ukrainka's previous practice. As in The Azure Rose, The Nobleman's Wife (Boiarynia), and The Forest Song (Lisova pisnia), in The Stone Master Ukrainka depicts two opposed paths available to women, each articulated by the play's heroines.

Critics disagree about how original the character of Anna is. Karpiak argues that her depiction constitutes "a remarkable innovation," adding that she and her counterparts "are so dissimilar that they can hardly be regarded as incarnations of the same archetype."⁷⁰ Zyla also regards Anna as "virtually new," and Hozenpud suggests that she owes something to Pushkin's Donna Anna.⁷¹ Boiko finds in Anna Nietzschean and Ibsenian overtones, as does Zhuravs'ka, who likens her to Hilda in Ibsen's The Master Builder.⁷² Ibsen's influence on Anna is also noted by Natalia Kuziakina and Nenadkevych, who likens her to Hedda Gabler.⁷³ Nenadkevych also sees in Donna Anna shades of

⁷⁰ Karpiak 139-40.

⁷¹ Zyla 87, Hozenpud 221.

⁷² Boiko 354, Zhuravs'ka 160.

⁷³ Natalia Kuziakina, Ukrainskaia dramaturgiia nachala XX veka: Puti obnoveniia (na materiale dram Lesi Ukrainki) (Leningrad: Leningradskii gosudarstvennyi institut teatra, muzyki i kinomatografii, 1979) 82, Nenadkevych 34.

Lady Macbeth, as does Karpiak.⁷⁴ As such diverse interpretations of Anna would suggest, Ukrainka's character is a heroine of depth and complexity.

The impression Anna first imparts is one of strength. In response to Dolores' question whether she is being forced to marry the Commander, Anna answers indignantly, "and who is it that could force me?"⁷⁵ Later, Anna is left unimpressed by Dolores' account of Juan's exploits, and even mocks them. She remains unimpressed by Juan when she first meets him, and tells him outright "I am not afraid of you," much to his consternation.⁷⁶ From their very first meeting Anna takes control of their relationship by inviting him to her masquerade. At the masquerade she tells him: "I give you the first dance. . . . You will not have another," thereby becoming the initiator of whatever will or will not transpire between them.⁷⁷

There is, however, another side to Anna, which she reveals to Dolores through the description of a recurring dream. In her dream, Anna envisages herself as a princess

⁷⁴ Nenadkevych 32, Karpiak 28.

⁷⁵ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 72.

⁷⁶ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 106.

⁷⁷ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 98.

locked in an impregnable fortress high atop an unscalable mountain. Although many might try, none has yet been able to fight his way into the fortress. Dolores interrupts Anna by saying that obviously the Commander is the one knight who has succeeded, to which Anna responds "No, my Commander -- is the mountain, and the lucky knight -- doesn't exist."⁷⁸

Closely identified with Anna is this image of the stone mountain. It is an image of a prison-like fortress high atop an imposing mountain on which Anna feels safe. She describes the mountain as being the Commander, and by inference, it is symbolic of the imposing nature of patriarchy which he represents. By positioning herself atop of it Anna feels in charge of the forces which control her (the Commander). The mountain is also Anna's hideaway, a place where she can retreat and not be hurt by anyone or threatened by the hurt of love.⁷⁹ Juan, like many critics,

⁷⁸ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 81.

⁷⁹ This complex image, described as a "vicious" dream by Draï-Khmara, is telling of Ukrainka. As a little girl, writes Liudmyla Staryts'ka Cherniakhivs'ka, Ukrainka would often withdraw into an "armour" when hurt. Liudmyla Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka, "Khvylyny zhyttia Lesi Ukrainky," Spohady pro Lesiu Ukrainku, ed. Anatol' Kostenko, 2nd ed. (Kiev: Dnipro, 1971) 406. Many years later, consoling her friend Ol'ha Kobylans'ka after a painful disappointment in a love affair, Ukrainka wrote "Someone [Kobylans'ka] should . . . fly high up, where bears [men] do not venture." Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kobylans'ka," 15 Aug. 1901, letter 159, Zibrannia tvoriv 11: 267. Showalter notes that Woolf's concept of "a room of one's own" symbolizes a rejection of male society's culture, and becomes an

cannot see that the castle is Anna's refuge. He interprets her identification with the castle as a selfish act, describing her as a "stone, without a soul, without a heart," locked into her dream "which resembles a castle under siege."¹⁰⁰

Various critics note a duality within Anna. Zyla identifies Anna's dilemma as having to choose between Juan and the Commander, adding that neither choice will lead her to happiness.¹⁰¹ Karpiak considers Anna's problem as arising from a conflict between her pursuit of freedom and her lust for power which, as an expression of her egotism and ambition for superiority, renders her capable of evil.¹⁰² Such interpretations no doubt derive from Ukrainka's own description of her heroine as a woman with a "divided soul."¹⁰³ Yet, as with Ukrainka's earlier heroines, Anna's real conflict arises from her desires as a woman and her realization that she cannot achieve them.

"innerspace," a hideaway from men and adult sexuality. Showalter 33.

¹⁰⁰ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 140, 142.

¹⁰¹ Zyla 87.

¹⁰² Karpiak 141.

¹⁰³ Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," 6 June 1912, letter 233, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 396.

Anna loves neither the Commander nor Juan. She becomes the fiancé of the former because in him she sees the opportunity to lock herself into her inaccessible fortress in which she is both safe from disappointment in love, and in which she can deal with her emotions from a position of strength. On the other hand, Anna still retains a glimmer of a hope that she will be saved from her fate of imprisonment on the mountain. That is why she initiates her involvement with Juan. Although sceptical, Anna cannot resist allowing Juan one last attempt to free her. Proof for this is subtle. When asked by Dolores what she will do when a knight succeeds in "scaling the mountain," Anna answers, "[I will offer him] a glass of lemonade, to cool off!" which is exactly what she offers Juan after he sings her a love song at the masquerade.¹⁰⁴

Anna's dilemma is that although she doesn't believe in the possibility of true love and has developed an elaborate defense mechanism to protect herself, she still secretly hopes that she will somehow find love without having to surrender her freedom. Anna's desire for love is so powerful that in one brief moment, remarkably similar to Liubov's scene with Orest in The Azure Rose, she allows all

¹⁰⁴ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 81.

her defences to fall, and succumbs to Juan: "(in a state of weakness) I cannot . . . that stone . . . it's killing me, it's turning my soul to stone . . . that is the real horror. . . ." To which Juan replies, "I will awaken you with the fire of love (Juan embraces Anna, she lowers herself on his shoulder and sobs uncontrollably)!"¹⁰⁵ This image of Anna certainly does not square with the shrew incapable of love painted by critics. Boiko, for example, considers Anna "cold" and "power hungry," Nikovs'kyi suggests that she wants love to gain power, Karpiak sees her as conniving, and Rozumnyj describes her as "egotistical, cold and pragmatic."¹⁰⁶ As with the interpretation of her duality, so with her "egoism" critics take their cue for Anna's condemnation from Ukrainka's own description of her as "proud" and "egotistical."¹⁰⁷

Whereas Anna is reviled, Dolores is universally admired as a positive heroine. Karpiak writes that her love "transcends any physical manifestation."¹⁰⁸ Dolores, writes

¹⁰⁵ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 135.

¹⁰⁶ Boiko 355, Nikovs'kyi 70, Karpiak 28, Rozumnyi, "Problemy liuds'kykh vzaiemyn u Kaminnomu hospodari Lesi Ukrainky" 208-210.

¹⁰⁷ Ukrainka, "To Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi," 6 June 1912, letter 233, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 396.

¹⁰⁸ Karpiak 145.

Boiko, as Juan's "temple," represents the "ideal-woman type."¹⁰⁹ Ielyzaveta Savel'ieva praises Dolores' "moral purity," contrasting it with Anna's "severity."¹¹⁰ Babyshkin adds that the martyr-like figure of Dolores is close to Ukrainka, a sentiment echoed by Deich and Hozenpud.¹¹¹ Once more such interpretations of a character are based upon Ukrainka's own evaluation of Dolores. Ukrainka at one time considered making Dolores the play's heroine, because, she says, Dolores "was closer to my soul," but decided against such a strategy "out of a sense of truth, because in real life those like Dolores remain in the shadow of the Annas. . . ."¹¹² Ukrainka describes Dolores as "a victim, who must be crucified, even if she has to put herself on the cross. . . ." a woman over whom nothing "stonelike" can have authority (as it does over Anna), as she is utterly selfless and uncorruptible.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Boiko 347.

¹¹⁰ Ielyzaveta Savel'ieva, "Obraz Dolores u dramy Lesi Ukrainky Kaminnyi hospodar," Lesia Ukrainka: Publikatsii, statii, doslidzhennia, eds. Oleh Babyshkin, and Arsen Kaspruk, 3 vols. (Kiev: Akademiia nauk URSR, 1960) 3: 250, 253.

¹¹¹ Babyshkin 274, Oleksandr Deich, Krytyko-biohrafichnyi narys, Dorohoiu druzhby: statii, portrety, narysy (Kiev: Dnipro, 1977) 134, Hozenpud 226.

¹¹² Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kobyl'ians'ka," 3 May 1913, letter 277, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 462.

Dolores epitomizes the sacrificial women in the Don Juan legend, and can be likened to Molière's Elvire or Zorilla's Inéz. She yearns to be a victim of Juan, jealous of those women who sacrificed everything for him: "Why am I not the gypsy, who could forsake my freedom for him? Why am I not a Jewess? -- I'd trample my faith under my feet, to serve him! . . . If I had a family, -- I would not hesitate to spare it. . . ." ¹¹⁴ Dolores' ultimate expression of love for Juan is the selling of herself to obtain his pardon. The act can be interpreted in various ways. Karpiak suggests that by giving up her chastity for, rather than to, Juan, Dolores possesses him, becoming the "spiritual Juan:" "By incorporating the soul of the Rebel Son in her own body, by ingesting his spiritual identity, Dolores confirms her relationship to the Mater Edax archetype even to a greater degree than did her Classical ancestors." ¹¹⁵ Karpiak's premise is based upon Juan's own remark in the play that Dolores is his "shadow." In another way Dolores' act completes her total sacrifice to him. For Dolores, paying for Juan physically is insignificant compared with her

¹¹³ Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kobylans'ka," 3 May 1913, letter 277, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 462.

¹¹⁴ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 77.

¹¹⁵ Karpiak 146.

payment for him with her soul. When a confused Juan asks who pays with their soul, Dolores responds "All women, when they love."¹¹⁶

Dolores, "our lady of pain," symbolizes the nineteenth century's "vision of angelic beauty and sweetness: from Dante's Beatrice and Goethe's Gretchen and Makarie to Coventry Patmore's Angel in the House, the ideal woman is seen as a passive, docile and above all selfless creature."¹¹⁷ She is the archetypal Zorillan pure woman whose purpose in life is to save the sinner. Only this time her efforts are in vain, wasted on an unworthy Juan. Dolores' sacrificial act is consequently diminished.

Although Dolores and Anna relate to Juan in entirely different ways, both meet with a similar fate. Having submitted to a promise of love from Juan, Anna quickly reasserts control over her destiny. She reacts by taking revenge upon Juan by imprisoning him with her in her stone castle. Hers is a reaction which de Beauvoir identifies as a common women's defence mechanism: to have the man you hate close at hand to make him pay.¹¹⁸ Whereas Dolores forgives

¹¹⁶ Ukrainka, Kaminnyi hospodar, Zibrannia tvoriv 6: 118.

¹¹⁷ Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory (London: Methuen, 1985) 58. "Our lady of pain" is Kate Millett's term. Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970) 212.

Juan for his sins against womankind, Anna does not; thus her revenge. In a reversal, Anna, disappointed by Juan's broken promise of freedom in love turns into a Hoffmannesque revoltée. Anna successfully tempts Juan with power and position (his ultimate degradation). He becomes petrified, however, and instead of obtaining control over a now-subdued Juan, Anna sees him merge with the forces that she fears most. She is defeated, a victim of the Stone Master.

Anna, as tragic heroine, constitutes Ukrainka's greatest alteration of the legend. It is now her story, and more importantly, her tragedy. It is here that Ibsen's influence on Ukrainka can be seen, in the placement of the tragic burden upon a woman. The birth of the woman as hero, writes Carolyn Heilbrun, occurred in 1880, "when almost at the same moment Ibsen and James invented her. . . . Each. . . . had determined that . . . a woman would bear the burden of tragic action."¹¹⁹ Dolores, although she lacks the magnitude of Anna's tragic dimension, ironically too, ends up in stone, entombed in a monastery. The defeat of the women implies that regardless of the path they choose, they will still be devoured by the Stone Master.

¹¹⁸ de Beauvoir 608.

¹¹⁹ Carolyn Heilbrun, Towards a Recognition of Androgyny (New York: Knopf, 1973) 49.

Near the end of his insightful study of the Don Juan legend, Weinstein observes that its hero "reflects faithfully the changing modes and attitudes toward the relations between the sexes."¹²⁰ Weinstein's observation is certainly applicable to The Stone Master, which as a study in sexual politics reflects Ukrainka's feminist perspective. As such, it contributes a new dimension to Weinstein's interpretation of the legend's evolution.

Ukrainka's play represents a challenge to the male theory of objectivity. "Universal themes," notes Adrienne Rich, are male themes, and as such are interpreted as "objective."¹²¹ Through her play, however, Ukrainka gains "universal importance" for "women's problems," through the unique transformation of a male legend into a female tragedy. By challenging a myth as central to literary patriarchy as the Don Juan Legend, Ukrainka put her theory into practice.

Architectonically, The Stone Master represents a new achievement for its author. The language and structure of the play radically differ from her previous work: "The Stone

¹²⁰ Weinstein 144.

¹²¹ Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision," Adrienne Rich's Poetry: Texts of the Poems, The Poet on Her Work, Reviews and Criticism, eds. Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi, and Albert Gelpi (New York: Norton, 1975) 97.

Master seemed like the first real drama to come from under my pen, objective, concentrated, not overcome by lyricism, totally opposite to my usual manner. . . ." wrote Ukrainka, explaining that she intended "to concentrate its style . . . to make it laconic . . . to free it from lyrical blandness and vagueness . . . to endow it with something stone-like."¹²² Ukrainka's deliberate use of "male" language is subversive, and represents a type of "intellectual" language "devoid of female trappings" which Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest is sometimes used by female writers who challenge patriarchy.¹²³

The Stone Master is a fitting finale to Ukrainka's deconstruction of patriarchy in her work, begun in The Azure Rose. The play's complexity, depth and multi-facetedness, as well as the magnitude of the challenge it represents, attest to the evolutionary development, sophistication, and vision of its author.

¹²² Ukrainka, "To Ol'ha Kosach (sister)," 18 Oct. 1912, letter 243, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 414, "To Ol'ha Kobylians'ka," 3 May 1913, letter 277, Zibrannia tvoriv 12: 461.

¹²³ Sandra M. Gilbert, and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979) 32.

Conclusion

In her work Lesia Ukrainka not only voiced her joys, fears, and trepidations, but also presented her unique resolutions to the problems she confronted as a woman writing at the end of the nineteenth century -- and the beginning of the twentieth. The themes Ukrainka touches upon, apart from reflecting her experience, are universal. None is more universal than the search for love, the major theme which pervades all of her writing. It appears as a tragic quest, but one which is necessary. It is through their search for love that Liubov, Miriam, Oksana, Mavka, and Anna discover themselves, and come to an understanding, albeit tragic, of the world.

Ukrainka is often regarded (by both Soviet and Western scholars) as a writer of ideas (philosophical disputes rather than drama) and a fighter for ideals. Thus her works are categorized in the same way as male writing, but the issue crucial to the understanding of her work is disregarded -- her femaleness. Yet as this study has shown, without an understanding of her feminism her works may be easily misinterpreted and their emphasis distorted.

An author of tremendous intensity and passion who is at the same time supremely logical, Ukrainka successfully combines tender images of sensitivity and vulnerability with those of strength and triumph. Ukrainka's ability to combine these seemingly irreconcilable images is one of her

major achievements.

By writing in such an "androgynous" manner Ukrainka breaks down the barriers that have traditionally existed between what is considered masculine and feminine writing. More than that, she establishes her own boundaries of what women are both entitled to and capable of writing.

Ukrainka challenges some of the most fundamental and intimidating symbols and institutions. This list includes the medical establishment, the world of politics, the literary establishment, the Church, and even the authority of the image of God. Remarkably, Ukrainka's heroines emerge victorious in each of their confrontations with authority.

Their victories, however, are achieved at great and tragic personal cost. As the author did in her own life, so do they pay a tremendous price for their choice of action and autonomy over passivity and submission. Despite the enormity of what they risk and ultimately lose, not one of Ukrainka's heroines is ever rewarded with what she wants most -- to be loved by her beloved. Significantly, however, Ukrainka's heroines do not despair, but find new strength despite their unhappiness.

Apart from the heroine's quest for meaning in her private life she also searches for societal justice in all of its forms. None of Ukrainka's heroines is ever intimidated or stopped from challenging the forces which

oppress them. Often defeated physically, they are never defeated morally. The heroine's active attempt to resolve important problems represents a new phenomenon in Ukrainian fin de siècle literature.

Ukrainka's writing, both radical and subversive, was appreciated by few and misunderstood by many. She was unable to make a living from her literary endeavours, and never saw even one of her plays performed. Along with the few accolades she did receive were many jeers of derision.

Although Ukrainka's popularity soared in subsequent years, her work continued to be misunderstood. Her "official canonization" as a voice for national and class rights misinterprets and excludes many of the concerns which were, in fact, closer to her. Ironically, the sanitization of the facts of her life and the raising of her works to near cult status runs contrary to the dislike Ukrainka held for such shows of reverence; moreover such an attitude has prevented a true appreciation of her literary achievements and has obscured the extraordinarily subversive and avant-garde aspect of her work.

A feminist reading of Ukrainka's work affords a more accurate view, and reveals a tender, vulnerable, loving, principled yet strong and determined woman. These are the works of a writer through whose insight we gain a fuller understanding of the female and also of the human condition.

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