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“THE NEW WOMAN” IN SHORT PROSE BY OLGA KOBYLANSKA AND EDITH WHARTON

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The transatlantic notion of the New Woman, which emerged as a feminist ideal in Western consciousness during the late 19th century, resonates throughout both European and US-American literature. The main character in Olga Kobylanska’s novella “Eine Unzivilisierte” (1898) embodies the theme of female liberation in Ukrainian literature of the era. Similarly, the central female figures in Edith Wharton’s short stories, “The Other Two” (1902) and “The Mission of Jane” (1904), highlight the heightened role of women within the patriarchal society of the United States during that period. Applying close reading, block method and typological approach for the study of diachronic aspects of literary relationships the article analyzes the literary embodiment of the concept of New Woman in short prose of Ukrainian and US-American women authors. In “Eine Unzivilisierte”, the protagonist Paraska actively opposes marrying a man chosen by others and is decisive in her own choice of partners; she does not feel any obligation to be a typical “housewife”, or to correspond to the typical picture of a woman, with all the activity connoted as typically “feminine”. Independent of her husband, the New Woman at the turn of the centuries, Paraska proudly appeals to her right and ability to find another partner at any given moment. In contrast to Kobylanska’s novella Wharton’s short stories demonstrate rather submissive behavior of their central female characters, both named Alice. Maternity enables both Alices to subvert the established hierarchy achieving some freedom of New Woman. In Kobylanska’s novella, the rural setting contrasts with the urban backdrop of Edith Wharton’s short stories, symbolizing the societal constraints faced by the New Woman.

Ключові слова: *New Woman; Olga Kobylanska; Edith Wharton; emancipation; marriage; maternity; freedom of choice.*

Гайдаш А. В., Денк М. "Нова жінка" в малій прозі Ольги Кобилянської та Едіт Вортон

Трансатлантичне поняття "нова жінка", яке виникло як феміністський ідеал у західній свідомості наприкінці XIX століття, знаходить відлуння як у європейській, так і в північно-американській літературі доби. Протагоністка повісті Ольги Кобилянської "Некультурна" (надрукована німецькою мовою у штутгартському журналі у 1898 році) реалізує тему жіночої незалежності в українській літературі того часу, тоді як центральні жіночі персонажі в оповіданнях Едіт Вортон "The Other Two" (1902) і "The Mission of Jane" (1904) розробляють тему активізації ролі жінок у патріархальному суспільстві США зазначеного періоду. Застосовуючи ретельне читання, блоковий метод і типологічний підхід для дослідження діахронічних аспектів літературних взаємозв'язків, у статті аналізується літературне втілення концепту "нова жінка" в малій прозі української і північно-американської письменниць. У "Некультурній" Параска активно виступає проти виходу заміж за чоловіка, обраного іншими, і вибирає партнерів самотійно; вона не відчуває жодного обов'язку бути типовою "домогосподаркою" або відповідати типовому образу жінки. Незалежно від свого чоловіка, "нова жінка" порубіжжя Параска з гордістю апелює до свого права та можливості обирати партнера. На відміну від повісті Кобилянської, оповідання Вортон демонструють досить покірливу поведінку центральних жіночих персонажів з однаковим іменем Еліс. Материнство дозволяє їм обом підривати встановлену ієрархію, досягаючи певної свободи "нової жінки". У новелі Кобилянської сільське середовище контрастує з міським фоном оповідань Вортон, символізуючи суспільні обмеження, з якими стикається "нова жінка". Хоча обидві авторки наголошують на різних аспектах концепції "нової жінки", спільним знаменником їхніх текстів є революційні моделі поведінки протагоністок, які відображають незворотні суспільні зміни.

Ключові слова: "нова жінка"; Ольга Кобилянська; Едіт Вортон; емансипація; шлюб; материнство; свобода вибору.

Introduction. Originally written in German novella "Eine Unzivilisierte" (later translated by the author as "Некультурна") is a part of European modernist literature in which feminist implications reveal the concept of New Woman. Olga Kobylanska¹'s US-American counterpart, Edith Wharton, works out thoroughly the same concept in her short prose simultaneously with the Ukrainian woman writer. While Kobylanska constructs a somewhat utopian profile of New Woman in the Bukovyna area of Ukraine, whose Hutsul protagonist self-consciously avoids an active role in society, Wharton's prototype of New Woman is a social representative in upper class New York. First published in Stuttgart newspaper "Die Neue Zeit" in 1898 (Hundorova, 2002, pp. 13-14), "Eine Unzivilisierte" is read closely along with the short stories, "The Other Two" and "The Mission of Jane", written by Wharton respectively in 1902 and 1904, from the perspective of the concept of New Woman at the fin de siècle. In her cutting edge work of 1904,

¹ To avoid confusion with Ольга Кобилянська's name in English, the transliteration Kobylanska as translated by J. C. C. Bruns Verlag in 1901 and Czernowitz Knyhy-XXI in 2013 is used in the article.

W. H. Cooley considers “The term New Woman [to be] luminous with meaning; yet it is a paradox; for the advanced woman, the woman who does things, who strives not only to be, but to act, is not new, but more numerous than ever before. She has appeared at intervals throughout all time, in the guise of an inspired warrior, a brilliant orator, or organizer, a Greek poetess, a scholar, or a queen. The new woman is only the old woman with new opportunities!” (Cooley, 1904, p. 16).

A feminist ideal formed in the Western awareness of the late 19th century, the concept of New Woman finds its reverberations in the European and US modernistic literature. With the rise of political movements and industrialization, women in Europe and the US were gaining new democratic, educational and sexual rights, fighting for their rights to vote and to become active participants of workforce. Though often featured in the dominant US-American narrative of the period as “the bloomer-wearing bicyclist or slogan-wielding suffragist”² (Patterson, 2008, p. 2), “the trope of the New Woman worked to define American identity during a period of dramatic technological and social change” (Patterson, 2008, p. 25).

The New Woman was free to take advantage of post-secondary education and start a career and, to her, self-realization and self-growth became more important than self-submission in domestic spheres and family (Köhler, 2004, pp. 167-168; Lavender, 1998, pp. 1-5; Patterson, 2008, p. 3). The feminist agenda of the period required to adapt women to working in “all sorts of work” instead of sticking to the conventional occupations as homemakers, which was not considered to enable women to exercise their whole human capacities (Lavender, 1998, pp.1-5). In addition, with increasing financial and legal independence from her husband or other male figures, the New Woman gained sexual autonomy: “With growing public acceptance of at least some measure of the new morality’s emphasis on a woman’s right to experience sexual pleasure came new expectations that marriage should be pleasurable as well. Increasing numbers of unmarried women were having sexual experiences, and increasing numbers of married women were seeking a divorce if their marriage was unhappy” (Patterson, 2008, p. 17). New divorce laws made it legal for a woman to choose her husband, to get married,

² Also the scholar mentions numerous caricatures of the New Woman in the periodical press: e.g., tabloid *National Police Gazette* “regularly featured New Women in bloomers or tights who were boxing, drinking, smoking, or committing crimes” (Patterson, 2008, p. 4). It should be noted that “the New Woman and the periodical press were inextricably bound up together” (Heilmann and Beetham, 2004, p. 2).

divorced or remarried at any time (Lavender, 1998, pp. 3-4). On top of that the issue of birth control along with voluntary motherhood was widely discussed and promised progressive social change (Patterson, 2008, p. 22). Defined by Hundorova as “feminist and narcissistic discourse” (2019, p. 191), Kobylanska’s literature at the fin de siècle champions the societal achievements (progress) in liberating the subaltern. Namely, Paraska, the protagonist of “Eine Unzivilisierte” represents female emancipation in Ukrainian and European fiction of the time. Similarly the central female characters in Wharton’s short stories establish more salient role of women in patriarchal US-American society of the time.

Theoretical Background. Olga Kobylanska’s “Eine Unzivilisierte” is to be put in a modernistic and transatlantic context even though Ukrainian modernism represented among others by Ukrainka, Vorony, Kotsiubynsky, and the very Kobylanska, was not quite avant garde or radical movement with the established program (Luckyj, 1992, pp. 9-10). Following the European role model, the mentioned authors shed light on psychology and the inner spiritual conflicts of the individual. Old, worn-out moral conventions are renewed and clichés would no longer be the subject of modernistic work (Čyževs’kyj, 1997, pp. 685-702). In addition, “the New Woman was a genuinely transatlantic phenomenon” (Richardson, 2004, p. 243) which enables its revision in a comparative study. Though early Ukrainian modernism adheres to European literary trends, namely engagement with “degeneracy and decay”, yet the authors endeavor to “move away from cultural pessimism toward paligenetic hope” (Shkandrij, 2015, p. 151) in particular, in Olga Kobylanska’s “Nietzschean aristocrats of the spirit” (ibidem). Both Kobylanska and Wharton were influenced to a different extent by Nietzsche’s works, which explains the upheaval of morals, also concerning the conflict between sexuality and societal conventions inherent in the works of both women writers and overlapping with the concept of the New Woman (Singley, 1998, pp. 17-20). It was an act of emancipation of feminists to celebrate their sexuality openly and proof that women had sexual desires similar to men. But still, social judgment awaited a woman taking advantage of her rights, whereas extramarital sex was still widely considered immoral (Lavender, 1998, pp. 2-4). As a way to resist male tyranny, some women made use of their freedom in choice of a partner and engaged in homosexual relationships. They preferred deep emotional relationships to other females, which “had been deemed the purest form of love and the most beautiful expression of female character” (Lavender, 1998, p. 4). Hundorova specifies that in the framework of her New Woman Kobylanska

“reveals not only sensuality and sexuality, but also its culture-creating, Apollonian form” (2002, p. 20), which takes “the appearance of androgynous characters” (2019, p. 290). Thus “Eine Unzivilisierte” is nurtured by “the ideal form of nature” as physically strong and dignified Paraska, who, “emancipated not by reason, but rather by instinct, with her faith in the happiness destined for her, with her love for “masculine” work”, becomes “archetypal and bisexual” in Kobylanska’s text (Hundorova, 2002, p. 20).

In her comparative study of Kobylanska and Wharton’s imagery, Rymarchuk considers the system of characters of the neoromanticism through the prism of Nietzsche’s concept of *Übermensch* detected in the texts of Ukrainian and US-American women writers. Striving for freedom becomes a common denominator of female protagonists in novels of two authors. If in Kobylanska’s texts Rymarchuk observes a direct impact and a “cordocentric” perception of “Thus spoke Zarathustra” which is rendered by Ukrainian modernist in “a deeply national tradition of the “philosophy of heart”” (2004, p. 47), Wharton’s fiction is less indicative of the influence of Nietzsche’s philosophy. The paradigm of neoromanticism helps Kobylanska develop the new perspectives for the Ukrainian woman of fin de siècle: engagement with “masculine” work becomes “a means of development of the individuality of neoromantic character” as well as “the only salvation, consolation in troubles and a source of happiness” for a number of the novelist’s women characters (Rymarchuk, 2004, p. 47). The depictions of Eastern coast smart society develop the dramatic conflict of the individual will of a woman character and social mores embodied by US-American public opinion in Wharton’s texts. In addition to this opposition the author exacerbates the motif of sexual awakening oftentimes incompatible with the traditional role of a “lady” (Rymarchuk, 2004, p. 50). The outlined dichotomies in the writings of two authors build up the image of New Woman with revolutionary for their time behavior patterns in different settings which are discussed in detail below.

Methods. There have been employed historical references of cultural setting of the époque to denote the object of the study; a typological method for the study of diachronic aspects of literary relationships; correlation of literary phenomena of short prose to establish thematic, figurative, similarities and/or differences, which allows to compare the works belonging to different cultural milieu; close reading to analyze the semantic and poetic features of the selected texts. Due to reasons of congruency with the selected material the block method is applied.

Results and Discussion.

The imagery of New Woman in Kobylanska's novella

The New Woman of the Hutsul protagonist in Kobylanska's novella is revealed through her relationship to men, life and work emphasized by Paraska's inner life, memories, thoughts and dreams. Due to her unusual behavior and differing perspectives on womanhood, referred to below, Paraska is in the position of the social outcast in her community. In the dialogue with a female stranger, an unnamed character (another instance of New Woman who plays a role of an intelligent observer), more details of her inner life, her past love affairs and achievements are provided by confiding key moments of her past, explaining this kind of behavior. It is a novella about the life of an unprivileged woman that has been forced to show strength and emancipate in many different ways in order to survive and remain independent: "*Lebhaft, graziös, schien sie um vieles jünger, und in ihren kleinen Händen stark Manneskraft*" (Kobylanska, 2013, S. 65). Her eyes, a symbol for the soul in literature, reflect "a fire" and "intelligence and youth" (Kobylanska, 2013, S. 74), which are common traits of the New Woman as Bourne (as cited in Lavender 1998) describes them. Talking about her past with confidence, reminding the reader of an emancipated woman, Paraska likes to stress on her ability of defending herself, her physical abilities and muscle power. Indifferent of embroidery, which is a common activity among Hutsul women at that time, a job in the town and marriage with a landlord, Paraska disparages women who choose an urban lifestyle. Protagonist's home is messy, pathetic, with dirty windows and unsophisticated interior design (Kobylanska, 2013, S. 71).

New Woman in "Eine Unzivilisierte" challenges the common cliché of a housewife that focuses on cleaning, embroidery or other domestic works. Instead, the female adult celebrates working in male spheres in outdoor environment. Smoking tobacco pipes (Kobylanska, 2013, p. 61) is an example consciously used by Ukrainian writer for her protagonist's unusual, "unfeminine" behavior as well. It was only after the First World War that female smoking completely lost its social stigma and even then, smoking tobacco was still an act of emancipation (Amos A., Halund M., 2000). In the novella, there are two characters Paraska shares tobacco with that can be read as a sign of trust: first, the woman stranger who seeks shelter from the rain in the protagonist's house. Hundorova considers this unnamed character as the double representation of the emancipated female adult in Kobylanska's text who functions as a narrator, too (storytelling acquires interview-like structure): "an intelligent woman, a type of New Woman who visits

and asks Paraska about her life” (2002, p. 21). In addition, the scholar cites the writer’s autobiographical entry on the friendship with the Hutsul woman, apparently Paraska’s prototype (Hundorova, 2002, p. 21). The woman stranger begins to visit her on a regular basis and brings presents like flax, money and tobacco. Paraska becomes emotionally drawn toward this character: “*Die Huzulin ward anhänglich an sie wie ein Kind, und als die Frau einmal für länger fortreiste und von jener erst nach Verlauf mehrerer Wochen und zufällig in der Stadt wiedergesehen wurde, war die Freude dieses Weibes so groß, daß es zu ihrem übergroßen Erstaunen sie mitten auf den Mund küßte!*” (Kobylanska, 2013, p. 73). The joy and the kiss on the mouth are indicative of the deep emotional connection that Paraska feels for this woman in the development of their friendship. This reverberates with the feminist ideal of the New Woman at the turn of the centuries (Lavender, 1998). Though platonic the emotional connection between the two female characters seems to be more intimate than Paraska’s relationship with most male figures.

Another instance of the trusted person in the context of tobacco exchange is Mr. Kuba, Paraska’s Romanian employer and landlord in her youth, whom she collects haystacks for since she was 19 years old. Impressing Mr. Kuba with her physical skills the protagonist is honored to be selected by her employer. Sharing this episode with the female stranger Paraska emphasizes the desirability of being selected by the landlord whom she respects. The protagonist becomes the center of male interest more than once. Thus, she is accused by men workers of being favored not because of her good work, but because she is being sexualized by Mr. Kuba. Deeply rooted in this accusation is the prejudice of women being reliant on males as economical providers (Lavender, 1998). The loyalty to her kind (‘tribe’ / Stamme) that she refers to several times throughout the story is an indicator for her strong moral beliefs and conventions. As Paraska proudly talks about her first-time meeting with Mr. Kuba, the male gypsy expresses the same accusation, and Paraska defends herself by answering “*Ich bin nicht von solchem Stamme!*” (Kobylanska, 2013, S. 68) making clear by that that it is neither congruent to her moral principles, nor she has intentions into benefit from her gender. This could be interpreted as an act of emancipation and a call for gender equality, where human skills are considered more important than gender.

Adapting these habits as a woman at that time is as a sign of Paraska’s independence from gender roles and can be interpreted as the “new woman’s” protest against societal expectations.

As a young woman Paraska wears a red floral headscarf (Kobylanska, 2013, S. 76). This accessory can be interpreted as a marker of femininity as well as cultural belonging and while red is the color of love, sexuality and passion, flowers stand for innocent girlishness, which underlines Paraska's coquetry in her youth. It is not until her second partner and her sister betray her by sending her into the devil's mill that Paraska loses that headscarf, and with him her own feminine pride. Unhidden sexuality and the confidence of demonstrating it to others is another marker of the New Woman identity (Lavender, 1998).

Paraska's dreams and wishes are ahead of her time. The break of New Woman with the traditional female image is presented by protagonist's view on maternity. To a neighbor's suggestion of having a child to soothe her loneliness, Paraska responds: "*wenn's ein häßliches Kind wäre... aj du lieber Gott! Nein, häßliche und schmutzige kann ich nun einmal nicht ansehen!*" (Kobylanska, 2013, p. 69). Her derogatory way of speaking about children shows that the character does not view building a family as a necessity and that she values her own comfort and self-fulfillment the most. Parallel to the New Woman movement feminism "stood for self-development as contrasted with self-sacrifice or submergence in family" (Lavender, 1998).

Dominant behavior of protagonist is manifested in love-triangle episode with Paraska's "shameless" and "evil" sister Thekla, also a childless widow as attractive as protagonist, and her second husband, referred in the novella as son of the old Malwine. This man is the only one of Paraska's romantic partners who she seemed to have loved: "*Aus ihren jetzigen knappen Sätzen ergab es sich, daß sie mit diesem ‚Sohn der alten Malwine‘ gelebt und ihn geliebt habe, wengleich das Wort ‚Liebe‘ nicht über ihre Lippen kam*" (Kobylanska, 2013, S. 106). Thekla and her partner conspired against Paraska and sent her on a lengthy and dangerous voyage to a mill to get flour. The walk was supposed to ultimately get rid of Paraska to enable her sister and the son of the old Malwine to have a relationship and a house to live in. But Paraska returns alive and refuses to care for her sister's partner or give him money. As a punishment for her not obeying, the male character beats her up and breaks her foot which does not result in Paraska's fear of this man or giving up her tough behavior: "*Übrigens... ehe er mich erschlagen hätte, hätte ich ihn erdrosselt. Ich fürchte mich nicht!*" (Kobylanska, 2013, S. 125), she confesses to the female stranger. The protagonist stops cooking and caring for him that becomes the main reason for the male character to leave Paraska's house. During one of their last encounters, he cries like a wolf that has been shot. This

simile demonstrates the dominance of Paraska during the conflict with the son of the old Malwine. The active opposition and demonstration of consequences for misbehavior of a male and the active contribution to a romantic relationship or marriage of a woman can be considered dominant action. As Lavender says about the feminism of the turn of the centuries of which the New Woman is a symptom: “feminism sought to change human consciousness about male dominance” (Lavender, 1998).

Another instance of Paraska’s strong character and independence is the rape attempt by shepherd Ilija. The metaphor of the “fist” is used as a sign for resistance when young, strong and handsome shepherd tries to open her fist for a ring against woman’s will. As a sign of resistance, as a gesture of provocation toward the physically stronger man freedom-loving woman would shake both of her fists toward Ilija. In this dangerous situation of attempted rape it seems rather brave, if not heroic. Again, after her honor is challenged by a male character, the protagonist refers to her kind (literally ‘tribe’): “*glaubst du, mein Stamm sei der letzte?*” (Kobylanska, 2013, S. 89) that could be interpreted as another demonstration of sexual autonomy, the resistance against male dominance and a claim of sexual right of decision which is congruent to the ideas of the New Woman movement (Lavender, 1998). The ‘tribal’ references in this text are closely linked to situations in which Paraska feels obligated to demonstrate her dominance toward males. This corresponds to her behavior in relationships. Her freedom of choice in partners as an important value of herself reappears throughout the text, like for example when she declines to marry a landlord in the city (Kobylanska, 2013, S. 90). The protagonist is not at all afraid to be alone; marrying and finding male validation is not one of Paraska’s dreams though rather a duty that the female character is aware of.

The novella explores the modernistic touch of Ukrainian myths and transcendental consciousness in the protagonist's life. It emphasizes the Christian worldview, with God as a religious guardian. Power of decision is often transferred to the ‘Sudjilnetzi’, angels in Ukrainian folklore who determine destiny. Superstitious traditions and rituals, such as dreams interpreted as prophecies, curses, and soothsayers, are also present. Paraska follows a routine of laying out cards about her future every Sunday, and the devil's mill is an analogy for Romanian “moar dracoli”.

Another important cultural reference is the reiteration “*Ich bin nicht von solchem Stamme*” that is closely linked to the dominance of Paraska toward male

characters. Whenever she is objectified by a man because of her gender, the protagonist objects by saying that she does not belong to their kind (literally ‘tribe’). Paraska’s rural lifestyle detaches her from society and makes her not representative of the average, limiting Kobylanska’s portrait of the New Woman to a rather utopian representation.

The embodiment of New Woman in Wharton’s short stories

Edith Wharton develops an urban picture of the New Woman in short stories “The Other Two” and “The Mission of Jane”. Their central female characters are described through the eyes of their husbands, and both named Alice, which is an indicator for their analogical personalities. Both women characters gain power by making use of the opportunities of the New Woman while struggling with their social environment. Thus in “The Other Two”, the character of Alice is presented by her husband Waythorn, who is a salesman and unwillingly confronted with the past of his wife. Waythorn is Alice’s third husband, and lives with her and her child Lily, which causes the family a certain social judgment. While getting to know Alice’s former husbands Waythorn loses his admiration for his wife whereas his respect for her ex-husbands grows.

“The Mission of Jane” is told from the perspective of Lethbury, who one day obliges his wife Alice’s wish of adopting a child, Jane. Jane grows up to be a strong character with a controversial nature, with a habit of advising the people around her. The marriage of her parents, that at first is described as a “failure” (Wharton, 1991, p. 70) develops into a close bond and after matrimony changes Alice’s character, her daughter leaves her parent’s home, Jane’s “mission” is finally fulfilled.

Both Alices in two short stories are described as girly (Wharton, 1991, pp. 78, 66), with a timid conduct in discussions, often blushing and being pliant toward their husbands. In their interaction with spouses, the wives in both short stories “murmur, falter, stutter or speak incoherently” (Wharton, 1991, pp. 68, 69), pauses in their speech often being symbolized by three full stops, which emphasizes their incoherence due to feeling subordinate toward their husbands.

The sexist worldview, underestimation and generalization of female characters is conveyed via male point of view on a women’s main purpose: “Maternity was no doubt the supreme function of primitive woman, the one end to which her whole organism tended” (Wharton, 1991, p. 70). In her study of US-American womanhood of the fin de siècle, M. Ryan argues that “Motherhood was used to justify a multitude of extramarital activities” and was resorted to by the

suffrage movement and the pioneer social scientists (Ryan, 1979, pp. 136-137). For the Alice in “The Mission of Jane” this moment was proposing to adopt a child to her husband, which was a “supreme effort” the female character “had to gather her courage for” (Wharton, 1991, p. 69). This is the only time of their marriage when a female partner verbalizes a wish, in order to have a say in the relationship and to claim something only for her own sake. It is recurrent in both short stories that these women characters gather domestic power through maternity. In “The Mission of Jane”, “expanded like a dried sponge” (Wharton, 1991, p. 72) Alice acquires a powerful position becoming more “assertive and definite” (Wharton, 1991, p. 72). It correlates to the concept of New Woman who stands up for herself and verbalizes her wishes.

Aware of their inferior position as women in the society both Alices often conceal their emotions and perform good manners according to societal expectations. In “The Other Two”, Alice has “a way of surmounting obstacles without seeming to be aware of them” (Wharton, 1991, p. 83). This also contributes to the fact of the underestimation of others, because of the pliant facade these women bear to hold up for social acceptance. Other actions that contribute to this facade in “The Other Two” are the “perfectly balanced nerves” of Alice and her “soothing presence” due to her being well put together. The only time she falls out of this role is when her ex-husband claims his “*right by the court to have a voice about Lily’s bringing-up*” (Wharton, 1991, p. 93) and asks to employ a different governess. There the female character shows “a slight quiver of outraged motherhood” (Wharton, 1991, p. 93). As Alice’s most valued right of decision on the life of her daughter is taken from her, but nevertheless her husband’s voice is louder, and there is no other choice for the wife than to oblige.

Alice Waythorn also opposes to social standards by divorce and remarriage. After her second divorce, she was expected by her environment to “*remain the injured wife*” (Wharton, 1991, p. 83), and not remarry, but she does anyways. She had “a habit of surmounting obstacles without seeming aware of it”, her husband admiringly describes before he loses his respect for her. The obstacles in this case mean social judgment of a woman using the “*freedom the law accords her*” (Wharton, 1991, p. 83) and with that, making use of the “new woman’s” newly gained sexual liberty in choice of partners.

The obvious hierarchy in both Alice’s marriages is definite at the first glance: the wife must “divine” the wishes of her husband. In “The Other Two”, Waythorn admires all his wife’s positive character traits, and even puts her on a pedestal,

“*having found a richer, warmer nature than his own*” (Wharton, 1991, p. 83). Furthermore, he loves her “*unperturbed gaiety, which kept her elastic*” (Wharton, 1991, p. 83), and while getting to know more about her past and gets a look behind his wife’s facade, loses admiration for her and objectifies her, implying that she lost worth with every marriage: “*She was as easy as a worn out shoe – a shoe that too many feet had worn*” (Wharton, 1991, p. 95). Here, Waythorn judges his wife for her pliancy because does not have the ability to grasp his mind on how she was able to shift her lifestyles while adapting to husbands of completely different personalities. Through the perspective of male characters, the pliant behavior of his wife is a sign of weakness, yet it could be interpreted as adaptation to different lifestyles in an urban environment. The “elasticity” seems more like a survival strategy in a society in which any woman must justify her actions for her environment.

In both stories, the female variations of Alice wife tend to show certain “adaptability” (Wharton, 1991, p. 94) and tend to mostly put their own needs behind their husbands. Likewise Lethbury in “The Mission of Jane”, in his marriage to Alice was “*in liberty to enjoy his own fare without any reproach of mediocrity at his gate*” (Wharton, 1991, p. 70) before his wife verbalized her wish of adopting a child. Also, his wife is put into an inferior position by being associated with adjectives like “unhumorous” (Wharton, 1991, p. 68), “trivial”, “stupid”, “limited” (Wharton, 1991, p. 70).

Full-fledged New Woman is introduced by Wharton in the character of Jane, described as “*extraordinarily intelligent*” with “*inordinate pride in the capacity of her mental storehouse*” (Wharton, 1991, p. 74), who is homeschooled by her father. As a more emancipated woman of the newer generation Jane grows up to be a bright, educated, confident, “impassive” (Wharton, 1991, p. 77) woman who tends to dominate the people around her, and therefore struggles with social acceptance. Jane has as “categorical prettiness” (Wharton, 1991, p. 75), but experiences difficulties with finding a husband because young men feel intimidated to an intellectually superior woman. Yet aware of their urban social environment and the social expectations that come along with it, mother and daughter are “*both pursuing with unabated zeal the elusive prize of popularity*” (Wharton, 1991, p. 76), achieved by finding a husband. As Mr. Budd finally shows interest in Jane and offers to marry her, she does not accept the proposal right away, but decides “thinking it over” (Wharton, 1991, p. 78) first, and that “*if she was worth winning, she was worth waiting for*” (Wharton, 1991, p. 78). This

implements a certain confidence that no matter the social duties of an aristocratic woman, the character values the most her right of decision. Finally, Jane accepts the proposal and unlike the relationship of her parents, the young character “*assumes prenuptial control of her bethroned*” (Wharton, 1991, p. 79), which also demonstrates the unusual distribution of power between the newlywed that corresponds to the New Woman’s perception of marital bonds. It is only after marriage, that “*never had Mr. Budd been more dominant*” (Wharton, 1991, p.80), demonstrating that Jane loses a part of her autonomy after being engaged.

In contrast to rural environment of Kobylanska’s “*Eine Unzivilisierte*” the New York urban topos of Wharton’s short stories symbolizes social imprisonment of the New Woman. Societal expectations set a different standard for emancipation and by that limit the opportunities of the upper class emancipated female adult to demonstrate her autonomy. Typical indicators for the New York environment are inherent in both stories. In “*The Other Two*” they are represented by the stock market, business, social clubs for men and the New York courts. The latter cause an obstacle for women, who although legally allowed to be divorced, often lose the trial (Wharton, 1991, p. 83). The daily lives of the female characters in both stories differ from the rural lifestyle of Paraska. In Wharton’s texts, the man of the house provides for the family over the day and dines with his wife at evenings. The wife stays at home during the day and cares for her children, like Alice Lethbury in “*The Mission of Jane*” who decides over hostesses and schooling of her daughter Jane. Also, going out and “*a pronounced taste for society*” (Wharton, 1991, p. 76) is what Jane seeks every winter, which is an instrument for social acceptance a way to integrate into socially worthy circles as an attempt to increase social status.

Conclusions and perspectives. The short prose of leading Ukrainian and US-American women writers of fin de siècle is analyzed through the transatlantic prism of the concept of the New Woman. Olga Kobylanska’s “*Eine Unzivilisierte*” is approached within modernistic context with the focus on breaking away from moral conventions. Kobylanska explores themes of emancipation, sexuality, and societal judgment, depicting central character emancipated by instinct and engaged in unconventional roles. Comparatively, Edith Wharton’s works tackles the theme of female freedom within a marriage, particularly in the confines of American society. The female characters in both Olga Kobylanska’s and Edith Wharton’s stories represent New Women, who are aware of their inferior positions, stand up for themselves and struggle for social acceptance. While Paraska fights against general sexual discrimination because of her gender, Wharton’s Alices try to live

up to the social standards of the submissive and popular housewife and conceal their true emotions that leads to underestimation by society and their male partners. The rural setting in “Eine Unzivilisierte” and the citified environment in “The Other Two” and “The Mission of Jane” set altering opportunities for the New Woman to escape social standards. Childfree Paraska gains autonomy due to her occupations and dominance toward males, actively opposes to the cliché of a female homemaker and mother, trusts her own physical and mental strength and focuses on her personal well-being and peace. On the other hand, Wharton’s characters stand up against gender discrimination through maternity and sexual freedom, making use of divorce and adoption as rights of the civilized New Woman, while keeping up their social facade. Paraska seems to be a more obviously controversial female character, showing her contempt with her social destiny more explicitly, more radically, more graphically, which she is capable of due to her different social milieu. Applying mysticism, Ukrainian folklore and rural aspects, Kobylanska makes her portrait of the New Woman utopian, archetypal of rather nature’s environment. No less emancipated Wharton’s characters represent the female adult in a metropolitan context with the New Woman as a mother (both Alices), an intellectual (Jane) performing an active role in US-American smart set. Even though both authors emphasize different aspects of the New Woman concept, the common denominator of Kobylanska and Wharton’s texts is revolutionary behavior patterns of their female protagonists, reflecting the societal shifts of their respective settings.

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