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Vira Aheieva, ed.

*Buntarky: Novi zhinky  
i moderna natsiia*

[Women-Rebels: The New Women and the Modern Nation]

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*Reviewed by Tetiana Kalytenko*

The discussion of the Ukrainian feminist movement and intellectual tradition needs diverse research, publications, and other materials to fill in the gaps in national feminist theory, herstory, and their contexts. A book of essays, *Buntarky: novi zhinky i moderna natsiia* (Women-Rebels: The New Women and the Modern Nation), published at the end of 2020 is one such example of fundamental research that updates information on female Ukrainian writers and the feminist movement by presenting a wholesale audit of forgotten biographies, stories, and themes in twelve articles on twelve heroines.

Another main focus of *Buntarky* is the stressing of links between imperialism and patriarchy, which both exert equal pressure on groups with lower levels in the hierarchy. In her Preface, Vira Aheieva clearly emphasizes that the struggle for women's rights was accompanied by a struggle for the rights of the Ukrainian people. She notes not only the process of the development of the feminist movement, but also the considerable participation of women in the national liberation movement.

Vira Aheieva's article "Marko Vovchok: To Win Her Way into the Canon" (Marko Vovchok: vyboroty mistse v kanoni) provides a brief revision of Marko Vovchok's (Mariia Vilinska's) life and art. Due to her name being associated with the names of influential men (Panteleimon Kulish, Taras Shevchenko, Alexander Herzen, Ivan Turgenev, and others), her talent was always suspect and questioned. However, Aheieva emphasizes that a gender studies approach dispels all doubts about the original authorship of Marko Vovchok's prose.

The authoresses of *Buntarky* focus the reader's attention on the Drahomanov-Kosach family as a life-giving source for the Ukrainian intelligentsia at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th centuries. Olha Poliukhovych emphasizes this in her article "Ukrainian Female and Male Aristocrats: Salon Romance and Cultural

Enlightenment in the Works of Olena Pchilka” (Ukrainski arystokratky ta arystokraty: salonna romantyka i kulturne prosvitnytstvo u tvorchosti Oleny Pchilky), mentioning the clear civil position of Olena Pchilka in the context of the role of women in the national and political struggle. For instance, the writer delivered her speech at the grand All-Ukrainian opening celebration of the Ivan Kotliarevskiy monument in Poltava in 1903 in Ukrainian language, a truly rebellious act against the laws and pressures of the Russian Empire. Additionally, *The First Wreath* women’s almanac, prepared and published by Olena Pchilka and Nataliia Kobrynska, provided the opportunity for the realization of the literary ambitions of numerous prominent women of the era.

In “Beauty, Control, and Work in Nataliia Kobrynska’s Prose” (Krasa, kontrol i pratsia u prozi Natali Kobrynskoï) Iryna Borysiuk provides a detailed and deep analysis of Nataliia Kobrynska’s fiction, which was based on feminism, nationalism, and socialism. Also, Borysiuk aptly observes that Kobrynska’s art constituted a rejection of the private as a female domain and presented women in the territory of society at large.

In another article, “Between Word and Silence: Love, Death, and Flowers in Uliana Kravchenko’s Writings” (Mizh slovom i movchanniam: liubov, smert i kvity u tvorchosti Uliany Kravchenko), Borysiuk turns to the work of often forgotten Uliana Kravchenko (Yuliia Shnaider). Iryna Borysiuk not only discloses the strange relationship between the writer and Ivan Franko, who assessed Kravchenko’s prose negatively, but also provides a description of the feminist and humanistic points of view in her fiction.

Despite all obstacles, Ukrainian authoresses and feminists at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries were able to raise new and provocative topics in Ukrainian national literature. As Olha Poliukhovych notes in “To Be a Goal for Yourself: Olha Kobylanska’s Active and Contemplative Feminism” (“Buty i samii sobi tsilliu”: aktyvnyi i spohliadalnyi feminizm Olhy Kobylanskoï), Olha Kobylanska presented and intensified the “new woman” character.

As Hrytsko Hryhorenko noted: “I hate untruthfulness. That is why I stand up for women’s rights.” In her article “Hrytsko Hryhorenko: The Private as ‘Pure Friendship,’ the Public a Mutual Assistance” (Hrytsko Hryhorenko: pryvatne yak “chysta druzhba,” suspilne yak vzaiemodopomoha), Oksana Pashko raises the issue of low women’s career opportunities at the end of the 19th century. For instance, we lack information about Hrytsko Hryhorenko (Oleksandra Sudovshchikova-Kosach) as a lawyer, but it is well known that she worked at the city court, which was an uncommon practice for women at the time. Hrytsko Hryhorenko’s art articulates taboo topics for traditional patriarchal literature of the time, such as friendship between women, the psychological health of the pregnant woman, childbirth, and postpartum depression.

Vira Aheieva’s article “Aspasia and Penelope, or Female Alternatives” (Aspaziia i Penelopa, abo pro zhinochi alternatyvy) is devoted to the difficult and tragic fate of Liudmyla Starytska-Cherniakhivska. Reading this article, we can conclude that Liudmyla Starytska was not only a child of the Kyivan Ukrainian intelligentsia and a writer who criticized the old model of the family. She also participated in political

events and demarches of the time and delivered a speech at the funeral of the heroes of Kruty.

As Olena Peleshenko summarizes in “Orpheus With a Woman’s Face: the Art of Lesia Ukrainka Through the Feminist Optic” (Orfei iz zhinochym oblychchiam: tvorchist Lesi Ukrainky kriz pryizmu feministychnoi optyky), world literature and especially Ukrainian literature still suffers from a lack of worthy, interesting, and original female characters. In her dramas, Lesia Ukrainka reinterpreted heroes and themes in a new, fresh way, placing at the center of her plays not the Messiah or Trojan army, but Miriam (a follower of the Messiah) and Cassandra (daughter of the prophetess Priam).

In her second article, “Between Art and the Family Hearth: A Sketch of the Life and Art of Natalia Romanovych-Tkachenko” (Mizh mystetstvom ta rodynnym vohnyshchem: narys iz zhyttia i tvorchosti Natali Romanovych-Tkachenko), Olena Peleshenko details the genuine rebel spirit of Natalia Romanovych-Tkachenko, who cut off her hair in denial of patriarchal rules. Topics addressed by her include: the public education of children, the feminist movement, and the right to abortion.

Nadiia Surovtsova (a feminist, socialist, and nationalist) took part in the Ukrainization of national military units during the Ukrainian War of Independence and took part in the work of the governments of the time. Her biography and writings are analyzed by Oksana Pashko in her article “Nadiia Surovtsova.” The article details Surovtsova’s 29 years of imprisonment in Gulag camps in Kolyma, conceptualized in writing by the author.

Vira Aheieva’s narrative about Iryna Vilde in “Iryna Vilde. How to Survive When the Patriarchal House is Falling Apart?” (Iryna Vilde. Yak vyzhyty, koly ruinuietsia patriarkhalnyi dim?) concentrates on Vilde’s fiction, in which she portrays the change of epochs.

In “The Wandereress Sofiia Yablonska” (Podorozhnytsia Sofiia Yablonska), Oksana Schur introduces us to Sofiia Yablonska not through her texts but through her bright and full of adventures life, documented in her reports and photos. As Schur summarizes, Yablonska was not a feminist icon, but she was a new woman who discovered the world and her place in it.

In conclusion, *Buntarky* is extremely important for the scholarly and feminist environments, especially because the book of essays updates the reader on forgotten or obscure names such as Uliana Kravchenko, Hrytsko Hryhorenko, and Nadiia Surovtsova. For this reason, the book is suitable for a wide audience of readers from “neophytes” to more “advanced” students of feminist Ukrainian herstory. *Buntarky* will also be valuable resource for researchers in literary studies and Ukrainian literature.