New Books From Ukraine

Ukrainian Book Institute

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New Books From Ukraine

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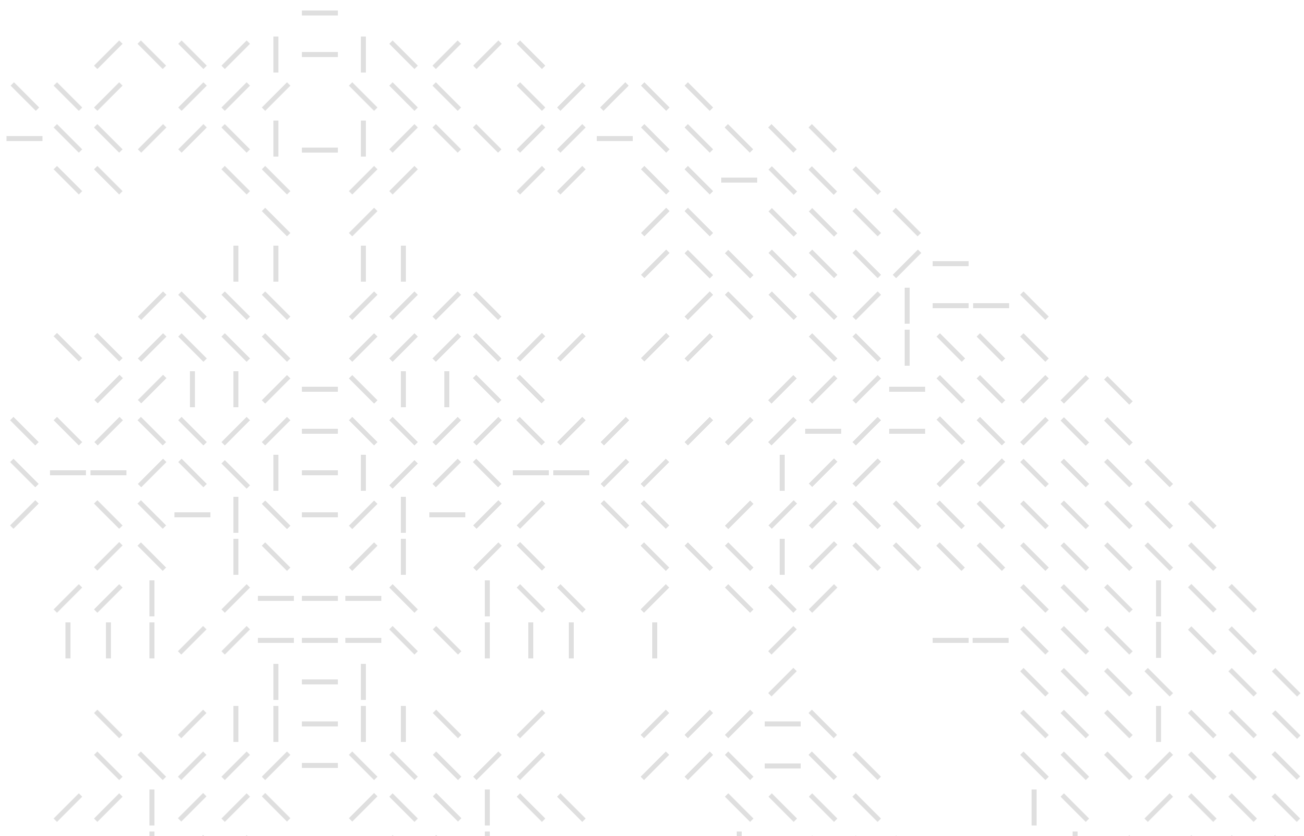

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Looking into Reality

So, let's talk about Ukrainian literature. First of all, it's here. And this catalogue is the best evidence of that.

Secondly, the books presented here were published in 2018–2019, within one calendar year, which means they emerged in times of heightened social turbulence, expectations and anxiety; during cultural metamorphoses and ongoing social transmutations. All these processes are reflected in the publications, among many other things unexpectedly for both the Ukrainian reader and the world which, like it or not, already has in mind a particular set of expectations related to literature from the Eastern European region: let's say, dealing with family, personal memory and historical trauma, adventurism combined with tragedy, and fantasy magnified by a whimsical sense of humour, a 'hanged man's laughter'. All this can be found here. This block of resonant publications, which chronologically covers the last six years, only deepens this vision.

But it should be noted at once: perhaps the most important tendency of recent years in the Ukrainian literary process is that writers of different calibres and from different generations have come closer to a reality they avoided for too long, and which was simply unattainable for them for a long time, either at the thematic level or at a level of atmosphere and spirit of the times. Now the situation is changing. This is surprising. And the surprise is comforting. However, the current proximity of our books to our present day needs some explanation.

Of course, the present-day Ukrainian nerve — and it is fully exposed — concerns the Russian-Ukrainian war in Donbas. It is continuing, and has no visible end. So, war and its related processes. But paradoxically, literature — excluding documentary and memoir — has reacted poorly to the events of the last five years.

Why is this so? The question remains open. Perhaps it is all too close to us; we live inside this tunnel, and many people's internal reaction is to try not to notice the worst. Or perhaps literature, as an unhurried type of cultural production, needs more time and a longer distance to understand the scourge still afflicting Ukraine. The novel already known to Europe, *The Orphanage* by Serhiy Zhadan, which is probably the strongest artistic expression of recent years where war is at the centre of the story, appears to be something of an exception here. This is also true of Kateryna Kalytko's small, yet accurate and virtuoso prose.

On the other hand the war, while not the main character, appears in the background and inevitable scenery of numerous Ukrainian prose works: it is intangible, indirect, and yet its presence is slowly increasing. *Behind Your Back*

by Haska Shyyan, which has already won the EU Literary Prize, is a novel about a young Galician woman who rebels against the norms of a traditionally conservative society by refusing to be an exemplary 'life partner to a warrior who has gone to the front'; it is written in nicely cheeky and vital prose wrapped in feminism. In the unexpected and fresh *Happy Falls* by Evgeniya Belorusets the war is also present, rather in the manner of a black hole that cannot be seen, but whose existence can be felt through the influence it exerts on surrounding objects, with the difference that the impact is extremely dramatic and the objects are people, usually contemporary women.

The same can be said of a novel by an author from Donetsk, Volodymyr Rafienko, who until recently was a Russian-speaking writer. *Mondegreen* is in fact a text about language and its nature, but the background of this tricky philological text is the same Donbas, whence the main character, a teacher, escapes to Kyiv. *Grey Bees* by Andriy Kurkov can be described similarly, as the author begins his almost-parable about a travelling bee-keeper in the grey zone controlled neither by the Ukrainian military nor Russian mercenaries. The war is a story trigger and a disturbingly horrible atmosphere, a war that is not visible but literally everywhere, subtly spilling into electrified air.

The critical strategic achievement of the Ukrainian publishing market in the last few years is the creation of conditions for original non-fiction to appear. And it has appeared. Despite the small number of items presented, each of these books is a potential regional best-seller that should gain a wider audience than interested and persistent seekers of 'Oriental exoticism'. A common denominator of these publications could be formulated as follows: a record of varied experiences of otherness and the desire to see and comprehend this Ukrainian Other. Again, a focus on the present day, and a turn towards immediate reality, past or present, is very noticeable.

Olesya Yaremchuk has compiled a book of subtle, warm-hearted reports about national minorities in Ukraine, which explores the balance between maintaining their individuality and incorporating them more or less into Ukrainian society; another theme is whether the state somehow contributes to these processes and what Jews, Roma and Meskhetian Turks think about themselves and their Ukrainian neighbours. In a pair with Yaremchuk's book, the *Ukraïner* media project has released a book of the same name covering selected locations from its first half-year expedition, which describes places and people or 'people in the landscape', discovering the most unexpected crafts in the least touristy places. This 'Other Ukraine' is in high demand within the country, not to mention as a cultural export.

Two books in the catalogue place outstanding women at the centre of the story, in the spirit of the feminist turn of global public opinion. One book describes the work of Sofia Jablonska, a cosmopolitan traveller, photographer and journalist originally from Ukraine, who managed to travel around almost half of the world from France to New Zealand in the first half of the 20th century. The figure of Jablonska allows to scale up the view of Ukrainian artists as a separate subspecies in Europe, by expanding the context and illustrating a 'life that succeeded'.

The second book is a much more complex story by publicist Olena Styazhkina, which explores women's survival and, most importantly, self-perception in a state of occupation and its aftermath, the experience of finding words and actions to preserve one's identity in a situation most unfavourable for heroism and morality, between two totalitarianisms. All this, unfortunately, precisely fits the realities of today's Russian occupation. Despite the difference in facts and biographical endings of these two heroines' lives, both these books are about women winners who, against all possible odds, have succeeded.

If it seems that Ukrainian authors — publicists, journalists, philosophers, essayists, and prose writers — are interested only in their own, purely Ukrainian issues, this is not the case. Their ability to attain a higher point of view and integrate internal processes into broader contexts is inherent. For example, Volodymyr Yermolenko shows in his book *Flowing Ideologies* the deep and apparent connections that link communism, liberalism and nationalism, though more generally this book is about the roots of the political reality in which we are all now living. It talks about both Putin's Russia and today's 'spineless' France. Another example is Diana Klochko's *65 Ukrainian Masterpieces*, which not only explains how a classic painting is created and works, but also expands the context of its perception. This is a cult book that you will wish to read and re-read time and again.

Amidst this wide variety, some publications stand out in principle; they are written to be noticed and read. Books that catch you with their author's well-known name or by their theme, genre or format usually attract increased readership. Here we can include Yuri Andrukhovych's latest work, a kind of East European crime story; a collection of autobiographical stories by Oleg Sentsov written in prison; Markian Kamysh's book about Chornobyl as a survived apocalypse where life blooms despite everything; an urban fantasy by Svitlana Taratorina, which imagines an alternative Kyiv during an explosive 1914, and underground, little-known Ukrainian modernism in the person of V. Domontovych, who can be placed without shame next to such European experimentalists as Alfredo Deblin and Leo Perutz. And the rediscovery of the still-popular genre of the family novel by poets Oleg Kotsarev and Myroslav Laiuk is well worth the attention of the general public.

In short, Ukrainian literature, both prose and the whole range of non-fiction, does not simply exist and is consonant with pan-European literary developments; this has been obvious for a long time and needs no further confirmation. Importantly, today it is entering a new phase where it not only stops being afraid of surrounding reality but wants to tell us intense and fascinating stories from relevant material. And this combination — relevance and the desire to interest potential readers — is a real, tangible victory of the Ukrainian book market in 2018–2019. After all, before changing real life, it would be good to look into it and try to understand artistic and intellectual ways to reflect it. This process has begun.

Eugene Stasinevych, literary critic

© T.Davydenko

Yuri Andrukhovych

Darlings of Justice

NOVEL #history #crime #galicia

Yuri Andrukhovych, born in 1960, is one of the most renowned Ukrainian writers and a representative of Ukrainian postmodernism. He is the author of six books of prose, seven novels, and four collections of essays, as well as a translator of English, German, Polish, and Russian literary works. He studied at the Ukrainian Academy of Printing, where he worked on his first poetry collection dedicated to the topography of Lviv, *Sky and Squares*. That same year Yuri, together with Viktor Neborak and Oleksandr Irvanets, founded the neo-baroque literary performance group Bu-Ba-Bu.

Yuri researched the modernist poetry of Bohdan Ihor Antonych, which had been suppressed during the Soviet era, and completed a doctoral dissertation on this topic. With the financial support of a Fulbright Grant, he translated Beatnik poetry, which was published as *The Day Mrs. Day Died* (2006). Yuri is one of the most striking representatives of the so-called Stanislav Phenomenon — a literary phenomenon uniting the writers of the city of Ivano-Frankivsk near the Ukrainian Carpathians.

The author has taken a distinct and pronounced civic stand in support of the European integration of Ukraine, and actively shares his relevant ideas through contributions to the local and international media.

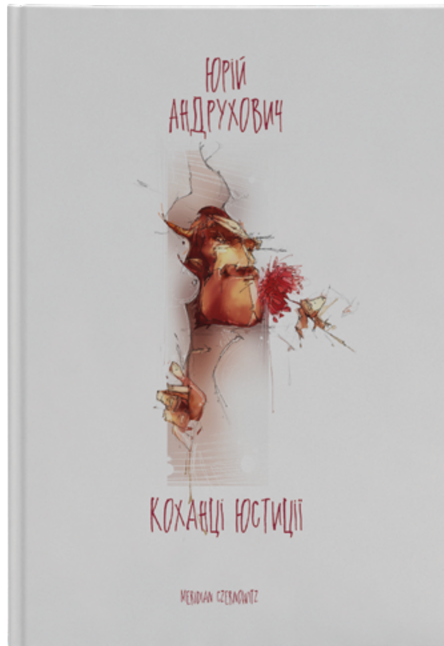
Yuri consistently experiments with language and form in his writing, and is known for his interdisciplinary approach to literature, often working on joint projects with musicians and actors.

Yuri is the recipient of numerous international literary awards, including the Herder Prize (2001), the Erich-Maria-Remarque Peace Prize (2005), the Leipzig Book Fair Prize for European Understanding (2006), the Angelus Award (2006), the Hannah Arendt Prize (2014), and the Goethe Medal (2016). His most recent novel, *Darlings of Justice*, was awarded the 2018 BBC Book of the Year Award in Ukraine.

Meridian Czernowitz Publishing, 2017
304 pages
Rights: Christoph Hassenzahl
hassenzahl@suhrkamp.de

"…one of the most popular authors in Ukraine."
— *Deutsche Welle*

Darlings of Justice is a paranormal novel in which the characters' individual life stories, through Andrukhovych's characteristic compositional and stylistic skill, are united into an artistic whole and even cry for cinematization in an eight-and-a-half-part series. Commonplace and political murders, rapes and robberies, child molestation and mysterious decapitation, ideological betrayals and betrayals for the sake of ideology, souls pledged to various devils, and sometimes unfair but often horrific punishments — what else could a reader need to feel feeble and, with delight, realize their moral superiority over these unfortunate darlings of capricious Justice? And too, in true time-honored fashion, over the author as well, who came up with the idea of immortalizing such done-for creatures?



Yuri on Literature:

"In writing a new text, I personally try to push myself away from the previous text. But it's not always possible to create something different because you can't completely stop being yourself when you're writing."

In all the years given to him Mario Pongratz committed only one murder. He would only have to face the responsibility for it at the heavenly court, and the details of that *closed* trial remain unknown — for understandable reasons. As for the earthly court, it was very open indeed and sentenced Mario Pongratz under a completely different article. However, this is not at all the beginning, but rather one of the endings of this story, and it looms somewhere far ahead, sometime in the 1890s.

But everything begins forty-plus years earlier, when the young Mario Pongratz, the son of Alojz and Veronica-Victoria, a native of either Dalmatia or Illyria, a novice merchant searching for his own fate and financial independence, severs forever the ties with the parental nest and sets out traveling. He lands in the town of Kolomea, located somewhere in the far eastern backwoods of the empire, in the twenty-fourth year of his life. With him he has a rather large chest containing samples of colonial goods. Recently he became a salesman for a large firm headquartered in Vienna, with branch offices in Budapest, Bremen, and Amsterdam. The year is 1855; the young emperor Franz Joseph has just completed an inspection visit to the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria.

Mario Pongratz does not plan to stay in Kolomea long. For his lodging quarters, he chooses the small Hotel Oasis, significantly cleaner than its rivals, in the town's Kuty suburb. He is in the only hotel room in town that has a bathtub; **lying in it, you can puff on your cigar and look out at the bluish outline of nearby mountains through the southern window.** On the second day he orders supper at the hotel tavern. Food and wine are brought to his table by a maid named Genowefa (although most call her Maria) Vitrakivna, an orphan from a half-extinguished family of minor nobility, educated at the boarding school run by the Sisters of St. Basil. A few years earlier, having come of age, she fled comet-like from the nuns' protection and started taking care of her life quite independently, combining the daytime work as a maid with nighttime work of a somewhat different kind.

During supper Mario Pongratz allows himself a few frank glances in her direction. He even orders an additional half-carafe of wine in order to stay at the table longer and at least twice or thrice — secretly, or if it works, more openly — rest his eyes on the area where her waist transitions into her thighs. Having gone back up to his room, he cannot fall asleep for a long time and lies quietly with his eyes open. He recalls that he hasn't made love for about a month and a half: the last time was quite accidental, with a rabbi's daughter in Przemyśl. So, he figures, this excitement, which so brutally came to possess him, will not die down on its own. **He has already decided to take care of it through a means to which, truth be told, he had to resort every now and then. And right around that time (or is he hearing things?) there comes a careful, or better put, trembling knock on the door, and a young woman's voice,** dried out from excitement, pours out some nonsense about clean towels for the morning. (At first she mistakenly says "for breakfast" but then corrects herself.) "Come in," Mario Pongratz tells her, his throat also dry. For some reason he did not lock the door.

Sometime between five and six in the morning, again alone in his bed, although now the sheets are messed and tangled up as if at least ten intertwined bodies have been rolling around on them, not just two, he would smile and think about several things simultaneously.

That this gal knows how to do everything — and much better than many others.

That she not so much forgot, but did not want to take the money offered.

That all of his life (and he is already twenty-five!) he looked for someone just like that.

That her vagina has a barely perceptible taste of wild garlic, and that's a definite plus.

That spring is coming.

That now he wouldn't be getting out of this hole soon.

By hole he also meant Kolomea.

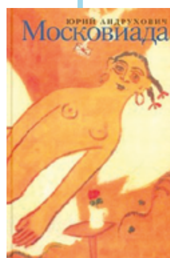
Translated by Vitaly Chernetsky

***Moscoviada*, Andrukhovych's most successful book, translated into many languages, was written in spring 1992 on the banks of Lake Starnberg outside Munich — and is surprisingly topical today.**

Moscoviada is sold to:

USA *(Spuyten Duyvil)*, Spanish world rights *(Quaderns Crema)*, Russia *(New Literary Review)*, France *(Noir sur Blanc)*, Italy *(Besa Editrice)*, Poland *(Czarne)*, Czech Republic *(FRA)*, Slovak Republic *(Kalligram)*, Hungary *(Gondolat)*, Bulgaria *(Paradox)*, Romania *(Allfa)*, Macedonia *(Makedonska Rech)*, Belarus *(ARCHE)*, Georgia *(Bakur Sulakauri)*

2000 by Wydawnictwo Czarne



2001 by Новое литературное обозрение

2004 by Wydawnictwo Czarne

2006 by Suhrkamp

2006 by Suhrkamp

2007 by Noir sur Blanc

2015 by Fra

2015 by Wydawnictwo Czarne

2017 by ბაკურ სულაკაურის გამომცემლობა

Neo-authoritarian Russia, strident nationalism, the mystification of the Communist era, chauvinist kitsch, ideological pressures — all these ghosts are sent packing in a Carnevalesque spectacle and amidst panic-filled laughter.

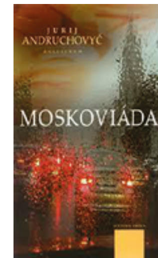
Otto von F., a student of literature from the West Ukraine, lives in Moscow, that “rotten heart of a half-dead empire”. In the students residence of the renowned Gorki Institute, the poetic hopes from the Soviet provinces sit together, the future representatives of young national bodies of literature, composing Medieval Yiddish poems, Ukrainian verses, and stanzas for Uzbek songs. We are in the early 1990s, the mood is agitated, and vodka is running short. Otto von F. senses quite physically that all the seams are about to tear, that the countries and peoples, each a cosmos or continent of its own, are fast drifting apart.

2008 by Spuyten Duyvil

2009 by Парадокс

2010 by Acantilado

2010 by ALLFA



2013 by Kalligram

> “Juri Andruchowytsch writes about his homeland in such a fascinating, cosmopolitan way that we are shocked by our own provinciality.”
>
> — Neue Zürcher Zeitung

Selected awards

- Goethe Medal *2016*
- Hannah Arendt Prize *2014*
- Leipziger Buchpreis for European Understanding *2006*
- Angelus Award *2006*
- Erich-Maria-Remarque Prize *2005*
- Herder Prize *2001*

© Taras Bovt, TheUkrainians

Andrey Kurkov

Grey Bees

NOVEL

#war #Crimea #ato

Andrey Kurkov was born in 1961 in Budogoshch in the Leningrad region of Russia. He graduated from the Kyiv National Linguistic University in 1983, where he studied English and French. From 1985 to 1987, he fulfilled his military service as a guard at a correctional colony in Odesa, and has since held positions as an editor at the Dnipro Publishing House, a screenwriter at the Dovzhenko Film Studios, and a lecturer of scenario writing at the Kyiv National University of Theater. Andrey also frequently serves as a guest for foreign media on events in Ukraine.

The author of over a dozen books and translated in thirty-seven languages, Andrey is the best known contemporary Ukrainian author abroad. With over 150,000 copies of the Ukrainian edition of his novel *Death and the Penguin* sold in Ukraine, he is a bestselling author in his home country as well. His most recent novel, *Grey Bees*, was a finalist for the 2018 BBC Ukrainian Book of the Year Award and is being translated into English, German, French, and Farsi, having already been published in Denmark.

Andrey has been a member of English PEN since 1988 and currently serves as president of PEN Ukraine.

"Kurkov is a fine satirist and a real, blacky comic"
— *Observer*

"slender work"
— *The Guardian*

Folio Publishing, 2018
304 pages
Rights: Susanne Bauknecht
bau@diogenes.ch

The events of Andrey's Grey Bees begin in the Mala Starohradivka village in the so-called "grey zone" — the area flanking the 500-kilometer line of conflict between the territories controlled by Ukraine and those under Russian control. In this particular village, only two people remain: the forty-nine-year-old pensioner Serhiy Serhiyovych and his former classmate Pashka. Despite having diametrically opposing views on life, these two men are forced to make their peace, even as one of them hosts Ukrainian soldiers while the other hosts separatists. Serhiy is preoccupied with worries about how to transport his bees — all six hives of them — as far away as possible from the war when spring arrives. He wants to take them where there is no shooting, so that their honey not develop a warrish tang. Heading out on his journey, the beekeeper is completely unaware of the trials and tribulations that await him and his bees. After a not entirely successful stopover near Zaporizhzhia, he decides to travel with his bees to Crimea, to visit a Tatar whom he had met twenty years earlier at a beekeeper's conference. As he travels with his bees, Serhiy can't even imagine that a summer spent in Crimea will teach him to distrust not only people, but his own bees as well.

Andrey on Life:

"I don't like glorious speeches and slogans. I just like life and people. I know that people need faith, ideals, convictions and the freedom to be mistaken in their ideas."

Every evening, as darkness descended, Sergeyich would stroll up the hill overlooking the vineyards and Albat. It was a habit with him. He wanted to feast his eyes on the bright lights of the settlement, the glowing windows and streetlamps. No such luck. The district seemed to be having serious problems with electricity these days. Instead of enchanting Albat, what he saw was the black hole of «Soviet Kuybyshevo»[1]. He'd look down into the murk, give a sigh, and head back to his tent.

[1]Kuybyshevo (population: 2,441) is a village in southern Crimea. Albat was its historical name, but it was renamed in honour of a Soviet politician and Red Army officer Valerian Kuybyshev in 1945, erasing its Crimean Tatar heritage after the 1944 deportation of Crimean Tatars.

It would have been nice to know how long Muslims were expected to mourn for the dead. Aisylu had told him that people were supposed to hold wakes on the third, seventh, and fifty-first days after someone died, but he hadn't thought to ask her about mourning. A shame. There was no one around to tell him, and he couldn't very well ask the bees, could he? What if Bekir didn't return in the next few days? It was just about time to harvest the honey… You miss the harvest, and the bees think the honey's all theirs — they have no reason to fly off and work. How was he supposed to explain to the bees that it was all a mistake, that they had to keep flying all summer long? Didn't Bekir sense it was time? Akhtem would have sensed it… Maybe Sergeyich should go down and try to find another beekeeper among the locals… He didn't want to disturb Aisylu and Bekir. And besides, any beekeeper would help a brother beekeeper, wouldn't he?

The next morning Sergeyich went up the hill and was surprised to see a young woman pedalling up the road, giving it her all. He watched her from above, at a distance. Funny — tourists usually travelled in groups. But this one was all alone.

And so the beekeeper stood there, warming his head in the rays of the sun, which had yet to start burning in earnest. He stood and peered at the stubborn young cyclist, who had already jumped off her bike and was now walking it up the road. He stared and stared and, at last, recognized Aisha. From far away, her face didn't look Eastern at all. Only up close could you see that she wasn't Slavic, thanks to the shape of her brown eyes. She had never been up here to see him before, so chances were she was just passing through on some errand. There was no end of trails around here, leading this way and that…

Still, Sergeyich stood there and waited.

When Aisha spotted the beekeeper, she picked up her pace. He could see how hard it was for her to push the bike.

"Hello," she puffed, stopping about three meters away from him. "My mom needs to see you — as soon as possible."

When the beekeeper turned right at the mosque, the first thing he noticed was the special forces men were gone. In fact, the street where Aisylu lived was completely deserted — no people, no cars with flashing lights.

This should have eased Sergeyich's mind, but instead it had the opposite effect. He couldn't get to the grapevine-covered courtyard fast enough. Once inside, he didn't even bother closing the gate behind him and made straight for the house. Aisylu opened the door and led him into the main room. Right away, he shot a glance at the mirror above the dresser — it was still draped, and there was still a candle burning in front of it. But it was a different candle this time, tallow.

"They've arrested Bekir," she said, in a voice heavy with brittle, weary pain. It was as if a new grief had been added to the old one, which had already sapped her of all her strength.

"What for?" Sergeyich asked, staring dumbly into her eyes.

"They searched the house. The investigator said that Bekir had robbed the church, that he had stolen candles." She glanced at the small flame fluttering in front of the mirror. "But someone left those candles at our door when the electricity went out. Bekir was away that day. How could he have robbed the church when he was in Belogorsk?"

Sergeyich tensed up.

"No, he didn't rob anything — I'm sure of it," he said slowly, after a pause. "I brought you those candles. They're mine. No one stole them. Our church was bombed back at home, and I just went in and took them…"

Aisylu's eyes lit up.

"You brought the candles?" she asked, as if she couldn't believe his words.

"I sure did! And look, I've brought more," he pulled a paper bundle out of his bag, placed it on the table, and unwrapped it.

"Praise be to Allah!" Aisylu exclaimed, breathing a sigh of relief. "Then you'll tell them? Yes? You'll tell them you brought the candles?"

"Of course, of course — where do I go?"

"To the police station in Bakhchysarai. That's where they holding him."

Translated by Boris Dralyuk

Death and the Penguin.
One of the bestselling novels by Andrey Kurkov first published in 1996 has 67 editions worldwide.

Death and the Penguin is translated to:

Arabic
Chinese / CN
Chinese / TW
English / world
Estonian
French
Hebrew
Italian
Japanese
Lithuanian
Norwegian
Spanish

1999 by Diogenes Verlag

2001 by Plaza Janés Editores

2002 by Vintage

2003 by Garzanti

2003 by תרנכ, תיב
רואל האצוה

2004 by Hr. Ferdinand

2004 by Points

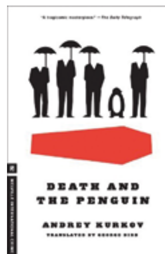
2006 by Curtea Veche

2006 by El tercer nombre

2006 by Natur och Kultur

2006 by Otava

2008 by روزن



2011 by Melville International Crime

2017 by رشنلل يبرعل
عيزوتلاو

2018 by Blackie Books

"A brilliantly deadpan satire on corruption in post-communist Ukraine."
— Christopher Tayler / The Sunday Telegraph, London

"The deadpan tone works perfectly, and it will be a hard-hearted reader who is not touched by Viktor's relationship with his unusual pet."
— The Times, London

"A striking portrait of post-Soviet isolation … In this bleak moral landscape Kurkov manages to find ample refuge for his dark humour."
— New York Times, New York

"A black comedy of rare distinction, and the penguin is an invention of genius."
— The Spectator, London

"Death and the Penguin‹ is the most professional work of literature to have been published here for years!"
— Olga Busina / Kyiv News

"Death and the Penguin comes across as an almost perfect little novel … fast-paced and witty and on the side of the angels."
— John Powers / NPR's Fresh Air, Washington D.C.

"Death and the Penguin successfully balances the social awkwardness of Woody Allen, the absurd clashes of Jean-Luc Godard and the escalating paranoia of Franz Kafka."
— Vikas Turakias / The Cleveland Plain Dealer

"Misha, the most memorable character of his thriller Death and the Penguin, left web-footed prints all over my imagination."
— NPR, Washington D.C.

Selected awards

- Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, *2014*
- Gogol Prize, Rome, *2012*
- Prix des lecteurs, France, for The Gardner from Ochakov, *2012*
- Jury member of Man Booker International Prize, *2009*
- Writer in Residence in Innsbruck, *2008*
- One of the 50 most important modern writers in the world (Lire magazine), *2005*
- The writer of the year *2001*, Ukraine
- Nominee for the Felix Award as the best European scriptwriter for the script A Friend of the Deceased, *1997*
- Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Stipendium, *1994*

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Anatoliy Dnistroviy

B-52

NOVEL

#midlife crisis #kyiv

Anatoliy Dnistroviy was born in 1974 in Western Ukraine. He is a Ukrainian essayist, prose writer, poet, and artist, and a member of PEN Ukraine and the Association of Ukrainian Writers. He is the author of twelve published books, and holds undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in philosophy. He also holds a PhD in philosophy, for which he defended a dissertation on radical nationalist interpretations of Ukrainian history.

Anatoliy works on the border of counterculture and urban prose with a distinct social and psychological component. His recent novels are characterized by an intensified essayism. Other components of his creative work include poetic works and a considerable body of essays, whose key thematic lines are typically literary studies and the philosophy of creativity, political and philosophical explorations of liberal democracy, nationalism, and the sociology of globalization.

The author's personal interests include world poetry, anti-system philosophy, sociology, fishing, Westerns, and painting. Anatoliy debuted as an artist in 2013, first by posting pictures of his paintings on Facebook and with time holding his own exhibits. In interviews, the author refers to this period as an escape from society. In 2019, the author published his newest novel *B-52*, entitled after both the cocktail and the bomber plane.

Anatoliy is also an active translator and has translated the poetry of Georg Trakl, Paul Celan, Hermann Broch, Albert Ehrenstein, Gottfried Benn, Gerhard Fritsch, Vitezslav Nezval, and Ales Ryazanov.

Academia Publishing, 2019
256 pages
Rights: Vasyl Teremko
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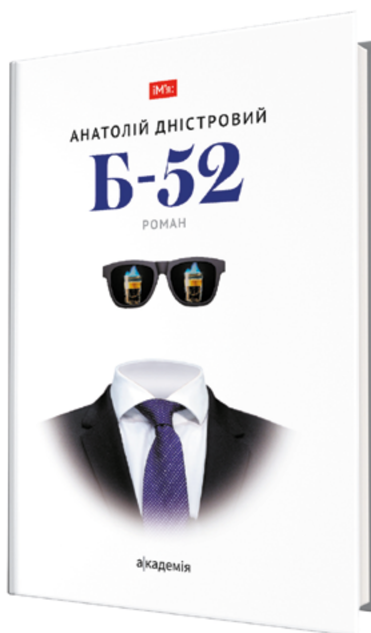
"There's one successful thing in this novel: It's written in the present, even when it's dealing with memories or events in the past. And you develop the impression that the main event of Shefer's life is being delayed, that he lives in a state of expectation, and that he'll go one living in this dumb endlessness forever. 'Waking up every day in a desert' — he'd call it that himself."

— *Hanna Uliura, Ukrainian literary critic*

In the novel *B-52*, forty-year-old Myroslav Shefer — a brilliant analyst and senior manager at a foreign holding company in pre-hipster Kyiv — lives life to the fullest, saving himself from a midlife crisis in partying and booze. His life is a mix of cool socializing and mingling, friends who don't judge and turn a blind eye, a cocktail of nightlife romps, and a pursuit of firsthand knowledge of women that he uses as material for his plays.

A longstanding dream of becoming a playwright won't let him go and leads him to an internal conflict. For the sake of this dream, Shefer neglects his career, steps over his boss's illusions, and quits his job.

For a while it seems as though everything is going as he had hoped and in his intended direction: His talent gets noticed and appreciated. But as soon as he incautiously falls in love with the young anarcha-feminist Varya Kropotkina, his world flips upside down. Shefer is no longer in charge of the situation: His dependence on Varya's love beats him mercilessly.



Anatoliy on Literature:

"My ideal is prose that's very intimate and closed. I'm still a modernist: However it may sound these days, hierarchism is very important to me. All this flirting with mass culture… It's foreign to me. I yearn for something denser, something deeper."

Virlana says, "Disregard all this. This is the workshop of several artists, that's why it's such a mess. We divide the month into weeks, but not many of us clean up after ourselves."

"It's fine."

"I can't deal with the responsibilities of daily life. They drive me crazy and wear me down. The daily grind makes my skin itch all over."

"Have you seen a doctor?"

Virlana glances at him, struck dumb. "Dude, what the hell do I need a doctor for? There's nothing worse than these endless fucking dishes. Just thinking about it makes my hands itchy. And I hate like hell when my hands itch because then that's all I can think about. What's a doctor good for? This is just life!"

"Got it. So what are you working on now?"

"I'm messing around with a series inspired by 'Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Heart Club Band.'"

"Cool. I'd like to have something like that," Shaeffer says with sincerity.

"Cough up some cash, and you'll have it."

"Really? So how much does it cost?"

Virlana glances at him curiously.

"For you I'll do a discount. Do you dabble in painting too?"

Shaeffer deflates a little, the girl notices this, and the corners of her lips curve slightly into a smile. He's not sure how to act, so he lowers his eyes. Then, mustering the courage to look at her again, he asks, "So what's the basic idea of this series?"

Virlana glances at him incredulously. "Whaaat?"

"Well, there's a basic idea in all this, isn't there?"

"Where'd you come up with that? 'The basic idea' — humph. The basic idea is to make money."

"So you're saying that you paint paintings without any plan?"

"Dude, where'd you fall down from? Fuck, it's all very simple. The important thing needs to be here," she says, putting her hand on her heart, "and everything else is worth shit."

"But still…"

"You really are a dork. It's a sweet little stylization of the good old, carefree sixties. What stupid-ass 'basic idea?' We don't even talk about that kind of shit stoned!" Virlana scrutinizes him again critically and lets out a loud laugh.

"Cool," Shaeffer says timidly, trying to smooth out an awkward situation.

"OK then!" She humphs contentedly, lighting a cigarette with her lighter. "So do you like the sixties?"

"I don't know." Shaeffer deflates a little again and adds that in his youth he liked a lot of things from that era.

Virlana continues dreamily: "Hippies, booze, rock concerts in the wilderness… People used to know how to kick back. It's only now that all the idiots think: an office and cash, and you're in paradise."

"Oh, right. I thought you were asking about our sixties, not theirs," Schaeffer adds, feeling even more awkward.

Virlana gapes at him, disappointed and surprised, but then moves toward the kitchen, where she packs weed into a bong made out of a small plastic water bottle, inhales a bit, and brings it to him.

"What's that for?" Shaeffer asks distrustfully.

"I'm feeling nice today. Take a hit."

They take turns inhaling.

"Hey, Basic Idea… Can I call you Basic Idea?"

"Sure," Shaeffer replies, shrinking again.

"So who are you anyway? You really don't mind that I'm going to call you Basic Idea?" Virlana asks, exhaling smoke through her mouth and handing him the crumpled plastic bottle.

"I don't mind," Shaeffer replies with a smile.

"Take another hit. Get comfortable."

"Thanks."

Schaeffer starts to cough and waves his hand to disperse the smoke. He doesn't want to take another hit, but realizes that refusing to do so will only cement his reputation as a nerd in her eyes. First he blushes like a boiled crab, then he gasps for air, strains as if his throat is closing, and breaks into a hacking cough. Shaeffer isn't enjoying this: he's never smoked weed before, even at chill university parties where most students felt little need for self-control and remembered little of what was going on around them…

"So who are you? What do you do?"

"I'm an analyst, well — a financial analyst," he replies.

"Whaaat??" Her eyes widen and she breaks into a crazy cackle.

"What's so funny?"

"Listen, you're an antique!"

"Well, that's a new one," Schaeffer says with a smile.

Translated by Sandra Joy Russell and Zenia Tompkins

Myroslav Laiuk

The World Is Not Created

NOVEL #timetraveling #Chernobyl #Makhno

© Darya Koltsova

Born in 1990 in the Carpathians, Myroslav Laiuk is a poet, novelist, and screenwriter. He made his debut as a poet in 2013 with the collection *Thistle!* Since then Myroslav has authored two additional poetry collections, *Metrophobia* (2015) and *The Rose* (2019), as well as the novels *Babornia: The Old Folks' Home* (2016) and *The World Is Not Created* (2018). He also served as editor of *The Anthology of Young Ukrainian Poets of the Third Millennium* (2018).

Myroslav has won several literary awards in Ukraine and abroad, including the Smoloskyp Award, the Oles Honchar Prize, and the Kovaliv Fund Award (USA). Two of his poetry collections have been awarded the LitAkcent prize for the best poetry book of the year, and his debut novel was a finalist for the 2016 BBC Ukrainian Book of the Year Award. In 2019, Myroslav was honored by *the Kyiv Post* as one of the Top 30 Under 30 most innovative young Ukrainians.

The author holds a PhD in philosophy in literature from the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, where he currently teaches creative writing. He has been a participant in various exhibitions and theatrical projects based on his poetry and a guest at literary festivals both in Ukraine and abroad. Myroslav also routinely hosts television and radio shows about contemporary Ukrainian poetry.

The Old Lion Publishing House, 2018
288 pages
Rights: Ivan Fedechko
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"The writer freely plays with the form of the novel, turning into a special kind of labyrinth from which the reader may be pulled out at the end of the nineteenth century or a century later. There is also a love story here, and it stretches across all of Europe, from Paris to revolutionary Kyiv. The perfect option for particularly atmospheric evenings of reading."

— *Nataliya Vasiura, L'Officiel Ukraine*

Myroslav's novel *The World Is Not Created* twines several stories, as if into barbed wire. It leads the reader out of the dark labyrinth born of the question "What's all this for?" Amid the time-scattered plotlines is an artistic project that compels the undertaking of an odyssey from the Roma camps to the Chernobyl Zone and the depths of memory, offense, and forgiveness. A strange light appears in the Carpathians, causing all the milk to sour and a premonition of an apocalypse to build; a conversation with the historical anarchist revolutionary Father Makhno (1888–1934) about walnuts is later continued near the abandoned and destroyed industrial zone in Lysychansk; and a love story spans Paris and Eastern Europe, unfurling from revolutionary Kyiv to steppes brimming with fire, freedom, and death. Some of the characters almost make it till the end, until a current surges through the barbed wire and casts them into the abyss. But there are also those who find their way to self-realization, causing a new world to arise.

Myroslav on Literature:

"Books aren't supposed to be boring. Next, they need to provoke us to a fresh reconsideration of the world and give us reasons to questions that we had considered resolved. The books I love the most are the ones that can amaze me, in style, in the inventiveness of their plots — books that literally broaden my conception of the world. By contrast, books that leave me no different after the last page than I was before entering the first are a pointless waste of time."

B flach! B flach![*]

In 1918, the spirit of my great-grandfather Stepan, along with my mother and uncle, got in a britzka and scrambled off to Paris, to Napoleon, against whom my great-grandfather fought along with the Cossacks to whom the Russians promised to return self-rule. With him in the cart went the soul of Grandpa Oleh who lost a finger when he was cutting down the old linden near the house; his second finger was blown off by a cannonball near Balaklava, and later his entire hand was cut off by some Turk. Later went the spirit of my father, also Stepan, who didn't take part in any wars but died of measles at age forty. They all got the heck out of here. First, they went to Kyiv led by my mother, Tamara Makarivna, in order to collect Uncle's family and me, their son. And their son, it turns out, has now come back to rob his own home (I didn't drive my war buddies away, did I?). It's a shame that I didn't know where that bathtub was, or whatever they bathed me in when I was little. It would have been good to walk through the ranks of anarchists with that basin and tell them all to spit into it.

Remembering every room, I carried Alina upstairs to my mother's bedroom. There was no longer any furniture or pictures, only bare walls. The bed and mattress remained, but this was enough. Mom hated noise, so she set up her room far away from the running in the halls and the creaks on the stairs. I adjusted the mattress; in the gap, looking like a stalk of wheat, there lay a gold bracelet that my mom lost in the haste and the thieves could not find in all the mayhem. I tucked it into my pocket.

This place could still be saved. It was strong, built under the leadership of my grandpa who knew how to do it so it would be good. He built a sawmill, a gristmill, a dress factory (today it's probably also been ransacked by someone, perhaps even by our own).

Alina had a complete, displaced break in her right fibula. First we needed water. I went downstairs — the guys were dragging out the piano like an old cow to the slaughter.

"What are you doing with that?"

"Taking it out."

"Why?"

"What's it to you? We want to have fun."

"Can you play?"

"We're not your bourgeois lily-handed bitches."

They couldn't play, but they were famous at destruction. "Noise is the music of the new time," one of the smarter ones among them might have said. "But noise is the opposite of music. Like a rose is the opposite of your ugly mugs," I'd have responded if there was anyone to say it to. I could also have said that this was a Bosendorfer grand piano, that it was very expensive — but do the guys not deserve such a luxury?

"Why are you so boring? We're relaxing."

"Then let me play a little first."

"Go ahead, but fast. One two."

So I played. Like before. My fingers ran up and down the black and white keys, which weren't simply keys of these the simplest of colors. These were the keys that remembered my fingers specifically. This was achieved by that German sloven Katerina, our governess. She knew a bunch of languages, could play the piano, and was interested in the latest scientific discoveries. But she had not an ounce of sympathy for anyone who couldn't grasp something on the first try. More than once she hit my pinky against that black key that remembered every one of its four thousand touches. She would pound it on the key and shout, *"Si bemol! Si bemol,"* and later again bang my fingers and translate,

"B flach! B flach!"

I played. I couldn't reveal myself, so the only thing I could do was believe in miracles. What if these coarse men see another value in this bit of furniture so incomprehensible to them? And what if they didn't destroy it, this symbol of my childhood, of my land, of my air, that which I couldn't protect in any other way? My air. My water.

"Shchedryk, shchedryk, shchedrivochka," one of them who had recognized the tune started to sing along.

"Look at you." They didn't expect this from me, who had just recently been slaughtering left and right, drinking the blood of humans like water.

They said, **"Again, again!"**

A group of curious guys gathered around me. They were ordinary farmers, thieves and recidivists, peasants and workers, everyone except for Skorsky. They needed this music like they needed baths. The music cleansed them from the inside. Perhaps. They had not heard anything other than the whistle of a bullet, the neighing of horses, or the knocking of chisels and the whirring of saws amputating limbs for a long time.

But it couldn't go on for long. I didn't close the cover, just stood up and went to get Alina some water, not finishing playing so I could do it later. The well was to the north, that is, at the "Head." Once my father promised to give me a compass if I could learn to identify the ends of the earth by the sun. And to make it easier to remember, I gave each one of them a name: the east where the day begins was "Righty" (right hand), the west "Lefty," the north "Head," and the south "Feet." When I could still do whatever I wanted all day long, I would wake up in the morning and say: I'm going to the Feet. The mound was at the Feet, Lefty had the river, Righty had the forest. It was only to the Head that I rarely went, because there was a village there: when they saw me, they would speak in whispers and try not to get too close to the master's son.

. . . I wiped her brow and her burning, sunken cheeks. I lay down next to her to feel the heat of her skin.

When the fire in Alina calmed slightly, I decided to go out into our orchard. My father had once been given a gift from Japan — a tulip tree that blossomed in yellow-green flowers. It had to have grown in the time that I was away. It would have been fatal had it been cut down. I again took the stairs down into the auditorium and didn't come across anyone — they had disappeared in search of food or hidden away in their burrows. In the middle of the hall like an opened rib cage was the smashed piano.

Translated by Ali Kinsella

[*]B flat! B flat!

© Kateryna Adamenko

Irena Karpa

Good Tidings from the Aral Sea

NOVEL #Paris #feminism

Irena Karpa is a writer and journalist, who has authored twelve books of prose and one children's book. She is also the frontwoman of the alternative music group QARPA.

Irena was born in 1980 in Cherkasy in Eastern Ukraine and moved to Yaremche, a small city in the Ivano-Frankivsk region of Western Ukraine, with her parents in 1984. In 1998, she entered the Kyiv National Linguistic University, from where she graduated with a master's degree in French language. Upon graduating, she moved to the Indonesian city of Yogyakarta, where she worked for various international human rights NGOs focused specifically on women's rights. While in Yogyakarta, she routinely gave free lectures at a local university. The author returned to Kyiv in 2004, where she focused her energies on writing and worked as a television broadcaster from 2005 till 2013.

Since 2015, Irena has been serving as the First Secretary of Culture at the Embassy of Ukraine in France. Her work in the field of cultural diplomacy has included organizing the multicultural festival Week-end à l'Est, at which Kyiv was the invited city, and coordinating Ukraine's participation in the Paris book festival Salon du Livre. She has also been actively involved in events such as the international biennale of young photography Circulation, the international festival of animated films and creative technology Mifa Market, and the exhibit "A l'Est, la Guerre sans fin?" at the Army Museum in Paris. Irena routinely assists Ukrainian designers showcasing their work at Paris Fashion Week, Paris Design Week, and Maison et Objets, and actively promotes the translation of the works of contemporary Ukrainian authors into French.

#knygolove Publishing, 2019
592 pages
Rights: Inna Naminas
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"From a distance, the plot is reminiscent of Sex in the City: four different women, scandals, betrayal, and journeys of self-discovery. All this is spiced up with a Ukrainian backdrop and the topography of a vibrant Paris."

— L'Officiel Ukraine

Irena's newest novel, *Good Tidings from the Aral Sea,* tells the story of four Ukrainian women in France. Each of the women is in search of something different: The young beauty Bohdana is seeking adventure and entertainment, the experienced and thoughtful Ryta wants freedom and domestic comfort, the former rock musician Khloya longs for peace and quiet, while the energetic feminist Masha hopes for self-actualization and glory. Relationships and sex, searches for one's self, trauma, intrigue, and murders pull the reader into a dizzying swirl of emotions. But as long as there is genuine affection, friendship, and support; as long as there is the ability to take pleasure in life, and to love both oneself and one's city — hope for the "good tidings" that inevitably arrive after the greatest disasters also remains.

The dream of France lures with its style and romance, with the aromas from bakeries and the taste of exquisite wine. It would seem that Paris is the perfect place to escape to, a place where it's easy to begin everything anew. But the streets of Paris reveal secrets only to its own, and you can't escape the past while it lives on in your memory…

Irena on Literature:

"We learn history through movies and literature. That's why there's a responsibility for the future present here. In twenty years, people who weren't witnesses to certain events, will believe in the literary word more because it's more comprehensible and more interesting. So it's worth talking about meta-responsibility."

The first course was slices of melon. Just sliced melon. No hint of ham or anything. Everyone, even the children, managed the melon perfectly — cutting it on their plates so that not a morsel was lost, separating the flesh from the peel in straight, aristocratic movements. Rita smiled, remembering her Ukrainian childhood in Cherkasy with her grandparents. There you were allowed to get watermelon or melon juice right up to your ears as you bit into the heart of the piece cut off for you, sometimes demolishing the watermelon itself by tearing the "lamb" out of it — that sweetest part right smack in the middle. And your ears did get sweet because the watermelons were the size of wild boars: before you had even gobbled your way down to the rind, you had to go wash both your face and neck. Ekh, what do you people here know about true pleasure?

As everyone was finishing up sawing their melon, Auntie went to the kitchen for the main course. It turned out to be…tagliatelle carbonara. Even at a gas station Rita would have chosen something at least a bit more interesting. But apparently Auntie was focused on economic considerations: a crowd of guests equaled a bucket of pasta. And, as was often the case with the French, the pasta was terribly overcooked. "Al dente?" No, they hadn't heard of that.

"OK, so you say Arabs. No one used to like the Italians here either, but then what did they start saying? Right, that we share a common religion with them."

Not a common one, thinks Rita. It would be common if only you learned how to cook pasta."

Rita turned to Philip and, through her teeth, whispered in his ear in English, "Do I have to eat this shit?"

"You don't," Philip responded. "I'm not going to eat all of it either."

Meanwhile, the topic had shifted to drunk driving. The word "cannabis" made the older children giggle: at thirteen, they were preoccupied with other things than the adults.

"I've never tried cannabis before!" gleefully announced Philip's sixty-nine-year-old mother, a respectable child psychiatrist and an overall fairy-woman.

"What, you don't prescribe cocaine to patients?" Rita said jokingly, referring to the photo of Freud on the psychiatrist mom's shelf. "Oh, these horrid new times."

The prospect of eating even a spoonful of the overcooked, under-salted abomination was driving Rita into a stupor. Politeness in the face of survival,

when the only thought in your head is "RUUUUUN!!!"

Auntie already had her eyes fixed on the imperfectly cut up melon on Rita's plate either way and was talking to the other guests, openly looking right through Rita, her whole appearance embodying the phrase "Akh, so unsuitable!" Even if out of a pressing need to defend something of hers, it would've been nice of Philip's mom to open her mouth and say something about Rita's redeeming qualities. But now, clearly noticing Rita's sharp loss of appetite for her haute cuisine, she was completely fine freezing her with the liquid nitrogen of her beady eyes.

It was then that Philip's uncle Jean-François — a golf apologist and the owner of a proper polo shirt, perfectly ironed trousers, and a super-long list of ties in cultural and polities circles — turned to Rita and said the demoralizing, "Rita, we're not speaking too fast for you, are we?"

Damn, they had figured it out, Rita thought. She hadn't managed to mask her complete lack of attention with nods and lips pouting "pffff" at just the right moment or oh-là-làs mimicking them. She was done for.

"No, not too fast. Too boring."

But out loud, Rita laughed instead: "No, everything's fine."

Thanks for the slack. Your poor Papuan has been studying your language since age eleven. Thank you, there's no need to compliment her diligence.

"No, that's true," the prosecutor cousin jumped in sympathetically. "There should be a proper correlation between the meaning of what I say and the speed!"

Rita made such a ridiculous face that everyone laughed, including the uptight uncle: two rounds of slack in one go were a little too painful.

"She speaks French like a native!" Philip's psychiatrist mom somewhat awkwardly stepped in to defend Rita.

"That's not necessary," Rita said to her in thanks.

"It really is a foreign language for me. And no matter how hard I try, I'm never going to speak it like my mother tongue."

Philip moved the conversation onto something else. Something about golf and about whether or not his kids play well. Clubs, drives, holes, distances, the names of champions…

"And now I'll go to sleep," Rita announced in the voice of Petriy Pyatochkin from the Soviet cartoon.

Auntie had just served the salad. A beautiful, green, washed salad.

"And here we have desert…" the good Rita thought.

"It's simply unmatched, this salad of yours!"

She barely stifled the urge to ask for the recipe. Rita was, after all, an unconfrontational person.

Translated by Sandra Joy Russell and Zenia Tompkins

© Olga Zakrevska

Haska Shyyan

Behind Their Backs

NOVEL #war #feminism #sexuality

Haska Shyyan is a writer, translator, blogger, and photographer, born in Lviv in 1980 and currently residing in Kyiv. She studied classical philology at the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, and subsequently co-owned a bookshop in the city. She has actively campaigned for the elimination of nontransparent corruption schemes in the purchase of textbooks, and established a writing course entitled Creative Writing with Tilo Schulz: A Story in a Weekend.

In 2014, Haska debuted as an author with the novel *Hunt, Doctor, Hunt!*, much of which was written on a cell phone while the author was temporarily bedridden. Her second novel, *Behind Their Backs*, was published in 2019 and was the first Ukrainian novel to receive the European Union Prize for Literature.

Fabula Publishing, 2019
352 pages
Rights: Kateryna Natidze
kateryna.natidze@ranok.com.ua

"The novel is not just stylistically skillful and mature but also important for the present day, because it places Ukraine within the universal human context. The author converts this war from a safe space of 'somewhere there in the wild East' into the disturbing space of 'here, in our shared Europe'. Because this conflict is actually here, on our continent and it concerns us all, Europeans."
—*EU Prize jury*

Haska's *Behind Their Backs* opens with Marta's boyfriend Max deciding to enlist in the Ukrainian army and fight in the ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine, leaving the young woman torn. The fighting is taking place far from the comfortable nest they have built for themselves, some 1500 kilometers away. Marta has achieved professional success working in Ukraine's booming IT industry, and she and Max had been living a cozy life far from politics and war — until Max's decision. With Max away, Marta tries hard to fit the mold of a war hero's girlfriend: Patriotism has become a new norm in Ukraine, one that can hardly be questioned. Yet the young woman feels an inner conflict between this social pressure and her rejection of Max's departure.

Marta settles into a depressing routine with no hope of change — until one day she travels to Paris, where she has a one-night stand with the young student Xavier, who takes her on a trip to the French riviera.

En route to a party, Marta drags Xavier to Nice, but the couple becomes separated in the chaos following a Bastille Day terrorist attack. Left with nothing but her purse, she has no idea what has happened to Xavier and has no way of finding him. She makes her way back home to Ukraine and once more falls into a depression, subjecting herself to a life of isolation. As she eventually stops returning Max's phone calls, her ex comes to understand that their relationship has no future.

Behind Us is replete with social questions and explorations regarding military and moral duty, the search for safety in the modern world, patriotism versus nationalism, female sexuality, and social pressure in a patriarchal society.

We quickly start to get rather drunk and stories about the ones who left, ones who came back, and ones who didn't inevitably rise to the surface. Distancing ourselves from our trauma, we discuss not our own men, but some almost abstract examples from life. Someone lost a successful business while he was over there. Someone else called on his kid's birthday and excitedly told him about the fire from the Grad rocket launchers yesterday. Someone didn't drink for ten years and then broke down; he died of cirrhosis not long after getting back. Someone's chief motivation was that his grandma wouldn't otherwise accept him on Christmas **because Grandpa died for Ukraine and it's a matter of family honor.** Someone left after an argument, slamming the door behind him — they never did have a chance to make up. Someone else finds his only solace in making beadwork icons now that he's off amphetamines. Someone had a little extra weight, a business, and four kids, and his former business partners still don't understand what it was that drew him there whence he never returned. Someone was shooting short films about the Ukrainian insurgent army UPA, which was how he got jinxed. Someone brought back AIDS and it wasn't discovered until his pregnant wife went for her mandatory blood tests. Someone else's wife hid that she and their child were in the hospital so as not to distract him from his important mission. And someone had a fiancée, a cool DJ who called at the least opportune moment to ask where the chopsticks were. Someone had simply been waiting for this war his whole life. Someone else decided to end his life once he returned to civilian life. Katrusia tells a story about one of her friends who ran into her childhood sweetheart whom she hadn't seen in fifteen years on a volunteer mission and it turned out that he had been at the front since day one, mostly just to impress her. So she left the children with her successful scientist husband who had a contract with a foreign university and a bright future, and she and the classmate got married last week. There are countless stories. We flip through them like an HR rolodex with all the appraisals, fuck-ups, experiences, and waves of hype. Approve, submit, check-up — they pour forth in some sort of catharsis, the odd comfort that there are so many of us, that thousands of women are going through this. Someone has the unremitting obligation of waiting, and someone else, finally, got the chance to cheat. There's that too. Get this, someone recently had a baby and everyone except her husband, who rarely came home on leave, knows that it's not his. He believes it's a miracle and that after eight years of infertility God and testosterone have interfered. We tell and retell these stories in search of a little disturbing, sick relief. We catch the painful romanticism in the stories about the Italian woman who was in love with a charismatic solider who died in the first wave of the self-sacrificing patriotic fervor. She wrote him letters for another year until she married a Georgian. Under our magnifying glass we examine the inspiration in the story of the solider who paints at the front line and whose works, according to his loved ones, because of this are now so valuable that they're about to be exhibited at Sotheby's.

The tequila had done a number on us. Olha guzzles a glass of Coca-Cola, downs an antacid packet, chases it with two glasses of water, and calls a taxi for her and Katrusia. While she's waiting for the car, she plays "We'll Have Something to Remember" on her phone and then, swaying and shouting, sighs, "I should just get knocked up a third time. Then he could stay home."

"It won't help," Katrusia answers her.

And the disturbing sparkle of her eyes echoes the line from the song.

For some reason, I don't want to go home. It's strange, but I feel comfortable at Ella's and I don't want to all of a sudden leave her alone so she again feels that emptiness that she's probably already used to.

I can't stand it any longer.

You know when the notice first came, the first thing I saw before my eyes was his small, white body. I imagined him dead." I realize that saying this to Ella is egoistical and cynical, but I get carried away like a dam has broken inside me and the words pour out faster than I can even think them. It seems it's not even me who's speaking, but perhaps the tequila. "He's skinny and not at all athletic, he's got 20/150 eyesight. His corpse will probably be sickly and emaciated. These visions, they were so strong. And what if he's missing a limb?"

"From the very beginning I was constantly thinking, 'How is it that our husbands are at war?'"

"Yeah, this should be about some great-grandmothers, not us."

Translated by Ali Kinsella

© from the personal archive

Volodymyr Rafeenko

Mondegreen

NOVEL #war #misinterpretation #language

Volodymyr (Vladimir) Rafeenko is a prose writer and poet born in 1969 in Donetsk. From 1992 until 2018, he wrote his works in Russian, was typically published in Russia, and considered himself a representative of Russian literature. In 2014, fleeing from Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine, Volodymyr moved to the outskirts of Kyiv with his family and began studying Ukrainian. He subsequently wrote his latest novel, Mondegreen, in Ukrainian, becoming an active representative of Ukrainian literature as well.

Volodymyr is a graduate of Donetsk National University, where he earned a degree in Russian philology and cultural studies. He has worked as an editor at various Donetsk publishing houses, and is the author of numerous popular science, self-help, and science fiction books, as well as crime novels. His published works include seven books of prose and three poetry collections.

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Rights: Evgenia Lopata
office@meridiancz.com

"In times like ours, one can't throw around words like "feat." But Volodymyr Rafeenko's Mondegreen — at least from a literary point of view — is precisely a feat. Refusing to live under the "protection" of Russian propaganda and Russian tanks, a mature, long-since shaped Russian-speaking writer at the peak of his creative potential abandons his native occupied Donetsk and moves to Kyiv, where he delves into a reality new to him and a language almost completely unknown to him, only to soon afterwards write a brilliant novel in it about a painful farewell to a forcibly lost past and a no less painful, albeit voluntary, choice of a new future — even if this future from the very start turns out to be not the one he had longed for."

— Oleksandr Boychenko, Ukrainian literary critic

Mondegreen = a misunderstood or misinterpreted word or phrase that, with usage, becomes transformed into an expression or word with a new meaning.

As demonstrated in Volodymyr's newest novel *Mondegreen*, one may not know what a mondegreen is, yet still fall victim to one. This semi-autobiographical novel explores whether it is possible, after being compelled as an adult to move from a Russian-speaking Donetsk to a not entirely Ukrainian-speaking Kyiv, to quickly master the Ukrainian language. More than demonstrating that this is possible, the book reveals that it's even possible for a mature and recognized Russian-speaking author, upon finding himself in Kyiv, to master the Ukrainian language to such an extent that he writes a poignant novel about a Russian-speaking migrant who delves into the joy- and longing-filled nature of the Ukrainian language. Volodymyr's *Mondegreen* also discloses the author's unwillingness to accept the role of a passive object of Russia's "protection." But first and foremost, the novel explores how poorly the parts of Ukraine speaking different languages have heard one another till now, becoming, as a result, a collective mondegreen to each other. Is there a chance of overcoming these misunderstandings? No one knows. But, as *Mondegreen* advises readers, it's worth at least trying to listen more closely, and just perhaps Ukrainians will be fortunate enough to begin deciphering one another's distorted sounds.

Haba landed in this city not that long ago. About so-and-so many years ago at the beginning of such-and-such century. It doesn't matter precisely when he left his occupied home. He gathered his stuff and moved to the city of sacred Ukr-power. Many good things awaited him here. For example, the absence of terrorists, Ebola fever, and Russian vacationers. But many unexpected things suddenly appeared in his being as well. They burst forth from non-being, like Pylyp out of the hemp bushes in that Braty Hadiukiny song, and forced him to feel somehow about them. The surprises were both pleasant and not. There were also those that at first had neither a positive nor a negative charge, but they absorbed the majority of the displaced man's spiritual health. Like, say, the subway or women of Obolon.

But the most shocking novelty was the Ukrainian language. Melodic and beautiful. On the one hand, this was the language nightingales, mice, roosters, and miraculous worms spoke to Haba in his childhood. Which is to say nothing of the mare's head. On the other, the thing was that he had to communicate regularly with him, with this worm, now.

How to explain it? It's difficult, but there's no way out. Well, look. Haba had read in Ukrainian from practically his earliest childhood. He loved reading in Ukrainian, but of course reading Russian was incomparably easier. But he couldn't speak Ukrainian at all for there was no one to speak it with in his hometown. As an adult he became friends with a few good, smart Ukrainian-speaking guys, but they only spoke Ukrainian to each other, presumably thus preserving fidelity to the caste of Ukrainophiles. Haba asked them to speak Ukrainian with him a few times, to accept him into their circle of the initiated and nationally educated. Of course, he didn't tell anyone about this and would have taken the secret to the grave (only patriots spoke Ukrainian in the Donbas and the Ukrainian intelligentsia almost never came here from across the Dnipro). The beautiful wizards of the Donbas laughed at this. They were cautious and blushed sweetly. Yet, having bought the vodka and snacks, having sat down at a common table, they still switched into Russian. It was easier for them.

Haba understood this phenomenon. Assimilation is a completely understandable desire in a city where the local residents had been asking Putin to bring in his military since Paleolithic times (zombified mammoths hanging around, pro-Russian banners fluttering near the capital building).

But there was something just a little bit different about these guys' behavior. For example, the fact that they felt a great love for their language. And that in the depths of their souls it seemed like there was no sense in speaking this language with the inhabitants of the Donbas. Pearls before swine. Well, sorry, perhaps not quite so categorically, not before swine, but, say, before hedgehogs, worms, squirrels. Clumsy and feeble beavers and raccoons. But what the hell difference does it make? These guys were ashamed of their language and at the same time ashamed of themselves before this language. Both inferiority and great, genuine Irish pride teemed in the uzvar of their brilliant-provincial consciousness and there was nothing to do about it. That's why in those years, guys, Ukraine didn't have a chance at understanding among the various strata of the intellectual elite or the formation of a single nation of salo-eaters and Moscow-haters. No one took pains to form a common cultural space, to say nothing of space flights or intelligent, reasonable, individual language quotas. At least within the Donbas.

Translated by Ali Kinsella

Volodymyr on Language:

"I consciously acquired the Ukrainian language, forcing myself to talk and write in it. Some of my Ukrainian-speaking friends would say, 'Talk in Russian if it's more comfortable: That's no problem, we understand.' Because they saw that my sentences weren't assembling naturally, that I couldn't remember the words and expressions I was looking for. But bit by bit I forced myself. Back then, in 2014, when Russia was declaring that Russian-speakers in Ukraine needed protection — this lie really got on my nerves, to put it mildly. I had spent forty-five years living in Donetsk, I wrote in and spoke Russian, I had received international literary awards in Moscow, and I was never in need of protection from anyone. I hadn't needed protection from my own country."

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Artem Cheh

District D

FICTION #childhood #historical memory #soviet

Artem Cheh was born in 1985 in the city of Cherkasy. He studied sociology, but never worked in the field. Instead, he has work experience as an actor with the Cherkasy Drama Theater, a security guard, a salesclerk, a promoter, a journalist, a copywriter, a maker of artistic models, and a senior marksman and gunner of armored personnel carriers in the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Artem was discharged from the military in 2016, and is the author of nine books of prose. His 2017 memoir *Point Zero*, a lyrical diary of his time at the front, is scheduled for publication in English in 2020.

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320 pages
Rights: Evgenia Lopata
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District D is a collection of stories united through a common time period and location, from which gradually emerges a portrait of the author against the backdrop of "other shores," on which his childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood passed. The book paints a self-critical portrait of the author in which one can discern the features of husbandry and cosmopolitanism, pettiness and magnanimity, and much else. Simultaneously, it paints a group portrait of a few dozen more or less registered residents of the aforementioned Cherkasy district with their more or less successful attempts at surviving the unexpected transition from post-soviet to newly independent Ukraine. According to the author, *District D* served as therapy for his own traumatic experiences because he wrote it while serving in the war: "I would write it out of me and would feel better; I escaped from that war and those experiences into writing."

Artem on Literature:

"I dealt with my past a long time ago already, forgiving everything that needed to be forgiven and letting go of everything that needed to be let go. What's remained are memories, stories, and a certain first-hand knowledge. That's why I permitted myself to make literature of these remnants."

Cherkashchyna… "The Land of Bohdan [Khmelnytsky] and Taras [Shevhcenko]" reads an enormous sign at the entrance to the Cherkasy region. Welcome to the cherished heritage of fertile meadows and dense groves, cradle of the Cossack movement, big and small motherland of important people and crucial historical events, nature's flawless creation, the quintessential degenerate of the age of industrialization.

From the second half of the twentieth century onward, Cherkasy was a provincial and yet rather forward-looking city boasting the most modern plants, green parks, and tidy (that's how they used to be) neighborhoods. In the 1960s, heavy industry demanded ever more victims willing to offer their souls and bodies for sacrifice at the pagan temple of chemical industry. A free-flowing stream of migrants from the surrounding villages and urban settlements sprinkled new colors on the consistency of a relatively stale cultural life. The city's proletarian leisure confronted new manifestations of everyday life, culture and lack of thereof. Finally, this social mass intermingled inside an industrial blender, and thus the average inhabitant of Cherkasy was created by the mid-1980s. This person was far from being Bohdan and even less like Taras, but the Soviet social and educational systems prevented him from becoming a representative of the lumpenproletariat. **At the same time, the system blocked the air flow for all those who were trying to soar high and dive deep.**

All of my childhood and youth, up until I graduated high school, I was surrounded by the mighty geographical borders and the psychological barriers caused by them. They were so clear and distinct that one could not dare to think about crossing them. On one hand, my childhood was confined by Cherkasy Dam, a long earthy embankment in the midst of The Kremenchuk water reservoir; on the other — by the passage leading to Chervona Sloboda and the road to Chyhyryn. Exactly so, passage and dam, the two main insurmountable borders of the real and even imaginary world. There was nowhere to go beyond that, it was dangerous to step into the darkness, and you would have huge doubts whether anything else, apart from cosmic dust and arctic cold, ever existed.

Everyone would always want to escape from here. For the locals, rescue through escape constituted the usual paradigm of their wishes and dreams. As a child, you have nowhere to escape to and do not even wish for it. Your world consists of parents, school, backyard, a dirty building entrance and the inscription "Lenin is a Gang Leader" on the fence behind the boiler room. Why and, more importantly, where to flee? Everything is easy to comprehend, habitual, cozy, and clean. Most importantly, your main concerns are taken care of: a sense of being part of a family, perception of the visible and imaginary boundaries of your world, your zone of comfort, a recreational zone, a distinct fairway on the Dnipro river, and the faithful flock of peers who supposedly share your interests. With age, however, thoughts about escape become imminent. They are as intrusive as thoughts about death. **Escape is uncompromising. The most important thing is to understand that you have sufficient internal freedom and spiritual strength to accomplish it. And, of course, to know that the city is letting you go.**

The majority of those who appear in this book were escapists. For them, Cherkasy became point B, a place they could get to after long wanderings over continents, a place they could settle and sprout the roots of their souls into the radioactive concrete. **As time went by, life kept pressing but happiness never arrived, and so they set off in search of other cities, warm countries, and nests, where they could build (or at least comprehend) something that was worth living for, worth surviving and procreating for.**

Translated by Oksana Rosenblum

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Oleh Kotsarev

People in Nests

NOVEL #family #historical memory #family saga

Oleh Kotsarev was born in 1981 in Kharkiv, and graduated from the Kharkiv National University with a degree in journalism. His research focuses on the twentieth-century literature, history, and culture of Ukraine, and the Ukrainian literary avant-garde in particular. Together with Yulia Stakhivska, he coordinated the publication of the anthology *Ukrainian Avant-Garde Poetry (1910–1930s).*

Oleh is the author of eight poetry collections and two books of prose. *People in Nests* is his debut novel and is based on the stories of several generations of his own family. The book interweaves family lore with details from archival documents, and differing versions of the same events compete with one another. The novel was a finalist for the 2018 BBC Ukrainian Book of the Year Award.

Komora Publishing, 2018
232 pages
Rights: Alla Kostovska
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"Very important for me right at this time is Oleh Kotsarev's ironic novel, which proposes moving forward more calmly, without ruckus; without fussing over one's biography, but simply reflecting on it and accepting it; and being human — dealing with the whole truth about both your own family and others, coping with the fact that those whom you love can be different from one another, and admitting that you won't rectify anything in the past but that you can try to change its outcome."
— Olha Herasymiuk, journalist and BBC Book of the Year jury member

In every family there are stories that are invariably recounted from generation to generation like the components of a secret ritual. Other stories are left off screen and with time virtually disappear, settling as dust on old photographs or crumbling up into absurd or little-understood fragments. *People in Nests* is a peculiar mixture of the former and the latter, marked by light humor, parody, and deconstruction — hearkening back to how almost the entire historical memory (the local and familial one in particular) had been deconstructed in this part of the world.

The plot's novel includes romantic escapes, shootings on the front and from behind, incredible twists of fate, and a lone abandoned piano that grieves at the train station while horses bearing riders habitually clamber up stairs to the second floor and ghosts of long-deceased relatives quietly savor apple jam.

Oleh on Literature:

"I supported myself and continue to support myself through words, however pathetic that may sound. Poems, prose, the Smoloskyp Publishing house, readings — these are intimately related things for me. The world of language, of words — I'm deeply immersed in it and am very glad of this. It's never boring or empty there."

1936

Little Lida sat on a footstool while Uncle Mykola messed with a bit of iron gadgetry for the sugar plant.

"Nah, Lidka, let's do it this way. I won't riddle you, we'll flip it. You give me a word, and I'll come up with a riddle for it."

"Tongue!"

"There's a log in a bog, and it won't dry or rot."

"You knew it!"

While they talked like that, a train sped along Russia's northern tracks, its plume of smoke fluttering like a white-black-and-brown pennant above the engine's chimney. Low, sparse pine trees grew their very dense needles. You could imagine, if you wrapped them in a large handkerchief or cigarette paper, you could play them like a harmonica. The guard stood at the tailgate of the car. The car was the color of spoiled cherry jam. The guard watched the snow spin, the storm be born — it was the storm that would play the harmonicas of the meager northern pines. It was getting harder to see, life spun like a kaleidoscope, snow wound slingshots in the air and felt ready to launch something. The guard adjusted his rifle on his shoulder. For some reason, he felt an irresistible urge to lick a metal part of the cart and get frozen to it, at any cost, he even stuck his tongue out — his tongue did not like being outside, but who was asking it, lick and freeze, lick and freeze, lick and freeze to a metal thing — the guard bent down, just to touch something, heard everything crackle around him, and in the next instant he was pushed, gently, as if by his faraway dear mother. **He was lifted up and learned to fly. Until his belt caught on something, must've been a light, and after that the guard flew along with the train.**

The prisoners first threw the bodies of other guards off the train, and then, paying no mind to anything — the snowstorm, or the one who hung there, fastened to the train's light by his belt and bounced against the car — jumped into the black-and-white expressionism of the woods. They leaped through the kaleidoscope, and each prepared to grasp his lot in this lottery: a pole, a pit, a warm hut in the heart of the forest, a plump saleswoman, the Finnish border, a round from a machine gun, an abandoned village, a boat, a wolf, a lynx, someone else's clothes, dogs, a comrade you eat, the rest of it, a trap, a crack in the ice underfoot, a skirt that can hide you for several years... so much was out there for them to have, it was enough to go mad, and they did.

At the station, they took him, unconscious, down from the lantern. The small man who had been explaining to the guard detail exactly what they had to look forward to after such a bold escape even paused his cursing for a moment and glanced at the boy.

"Who's that?"

"He's alive!"

"I fucking see he's fucking alive, who the fuck is he?"

"Galychenko, a private."

"Take him somewhere warm, you morons. You'll envy him yet!"

Private Galychenko, drafted into the NKVD for his military duty, slowly came to his senses. With time, he got better. His family learned about his adventure after he came home from his service. Still, no one had the right words to comment on it.

"Only he wasn't quite right in the head after that."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, he'd be sitting right there, at his machine, on the job, working, and then all of a sudden he'd get up, in the middle of his shift, and be gone home."

There was another man in that family that was also gone that way. He worked as a guard at a factory, and fell asleep at his post once. The director found him — the director, for no good reason, doing his rounds right then — took the rifle from his unconscious arms and discharged it right above the man's head. Ever since then, the guard was liable to leave his post any second. Which could not fail to entertain the rest of the factory's workforce...

Translated by Nina Murray

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Oles Ilchenko

The City with Chimeras

NOVEL #Kyiv #prerevolutionary #history #detective

Oles Ilchenko, born in 1957, is a Ukrainian poet, prose writer, and screenwriter. He is educated in both the natural sciences and literature, and holds degrees from both the National Pedagogical Drahomanov University in Kyiv and the Maxim Gorky Literature Institute in Moscow. He is the author of over thirty books for adults and children, as well as numerous publications on cultural topics in the media.

Oles is one of the Kyiv-based authors whose family history was closely interwoven with that of the city over the last century. Recreating the city on the basis of a mosaic of memories and family stories — of the irises on the glazed tiles in his grandfather's old house, of adventures on the sets of the Dovzhenko Film Studios where his father used to work, of the semi-conspiratorial meetings in private apartments during his own student days — the author paints the features of his native Kyiv through the mask of the present-day megalopolis it has become.

Oles lives and works in Switzerland.

Komora Publishing, 2019
264 pages
Rights: Alla Kostovska
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The novel *The City with Chimeras* allows the reader to travel back in time and delve into life in the Kyiv of the early twentieth century: to peek behind the scenes in the Solovtsov Theater, to meet the author Larysa Kosach (Lesya Ukrainka) in the Museum of Antiquities, to drink some hot chocolate in the Swiss Semadeni sweetshop, to watch the construction of the St. Nicholas Roman Catholic Cathedral, and even take a flight in an airplane with the prominent aviation pioneer Igor Sikorsky.

The diligent reader will learn of the mysteries surrounding the life of the renowned architect Vladislav Horodetsky and, together with the novel's characters, will have the opportunity to uncover Kyiv's crucial secret. What does the "foreboding triangle" mean? Why was it created? What's located at the center of this triangle? Why is danger lurking over the old city, and is it truly in the past already?

Oles on His Novel:

"In the novel, all the character names, street names, addresses, and even the fact that a construction worker was killed during the building of the cathedral — it's all true. But as an author I have my own version of Horodetsky's life and my own interpretation of why he moved to Persia in his late years, considering he had a good life in Poland, and of why he built this Building with Chimeras. Some say that in doing so he succeeded in publicizing the possible potential of the cement and concrete that his company produced, but I have a different opinion on this and on why he lived a double life in a spiritual-mystical sense. The more I unraveled the tangle of his life, the more I comprehended his architectural structures."

Wladislaw Horodecki stepped out of his house. In front of the entrance to the building on 10 Bankivska Street, the architect's landaulet was already waiting for him.

In a few moments Horodecki reached the cathedral's construction site. He kept looking up at the idle worker on the cathedral's scaffolding. Feeling somewhat irritated, Horodecki called out, "Hey buddy!" The worker looked down to see who it was, resting his weight on the other foot, wanting to either straighten up in front of the architect or say something, and lost balance… The board under him cracked, and hanging on to thin air, he dropped like a stone.

In a few seconds the young man, covered with blood, was lying with his face on the ground. It was clear: he was dead.

The architect provided the explanations to the police officers, who arrived at this tragic scene, as well as to the paramedics, who confirmed the death of the young construction worker and took his body away. Then he headed to the precinct to give his statement.

And this is why Horodecki's day went south. The visit to Solovtsov's Theater was no longer feasible. Policemen rejoiced at the terrible and yet easily solvable case, which they opened on this day in August. The one and only culprit was the popular architect Horodecki, whose negligence caused a tragedy at the construction site.

For Mr. Wladislaw the most unpleasant aspect of this situation, apart from sudden death of the worker, was that his troubles had only just started. Tomorrow, he was informed, Horodecki would have to go to the highest-ranking police official to explain what happened and contest the accusations.

***

The office of the editor of a certain Kyiv newspaper made a pleasant impression on its visitors. The enormous desk with a green lamp always had heaps of papers on it, a desk chair stood nearby. The editor, Dmytro Ivanovych, a rather conspicuous man, was clearly enjoying the account. The journalist Hryhoriy, still flushed as he ran from the construction site of the cathedral to the editorial office, was sitting on a modest chair for visitors, looking at the editor across the wide surface of the desk.

"So you saw it with your own eyes? He fell to his death?" Dmytro Ivanovych inquired again.

"Yes. The circumstances of the worker's death are very bizarre, it is as if he was hypnotized. The youngster did not pay any attention to anyone except Wladislaw Horodecki. He jumped from the very top of the scaffolding. What a sensational story! Famous Architect Horodecki Called to the Police Precinct. I think he will be arrested!"

Dmytro Ivanovych got up from his desk chair, leisurely opened a silver cigarette case, pulled out a cigarette and lit it.

"There will be no arrest. Unfortunately. Those gentlemen from the police will sweep the case under the rug, you'll see. However, in the meantime let's impress the audience! Write emotionally, be bold! And details, details! The body of the young worker in a pool of blood, etcetera."

The chief editor took a step closer to the journalist.

"Once you are finished with the article, take a closer look at this architect Horodecki. He's an oddball. I heard all kinds of gossip about him. His passion for bloody hunting, for theater actresses — here, another topic for you."

The editor walked the length of the office and back.

"They say Horodecki frequents Solovtsov's Theater, creates sketches of costumes and shoes, for the actresses exclusively. Odd for a married man, no? Add two kids to that. You can write a short piece without naming him directly, something like: snooty master of architecture, bonvivant, hunter… Emphasize: he fancies ladies. The gentleman-architect is such an eccentric. Perhaps a mason? Or an insurgent, as all Poles are? Maybe he is sympathetic to the Ukrainian cause? So much room for work, my friend…and for getting good pay!"

Translated by Oksana Rosenblum

Svitlana Taratorina

Lazarus

NOVEL

#fantasy #Kyiv #historical memory

© from the author's archive

Svitalana Taratorina is a journalist, political technologist, and mass communications specialist. She is the winner of a fantasy story contest organized by the literary association Star Fortress and a macabre story contest organized by the magazine *Stos*. Her debut novel *Lazarus*, which earned her the LitAkcent Literary Prize in Ukraine, is set in the mystifying Kyiv of 1913: a bizarre and vivid world of magic, of legends come to life, of political strife and detective investigations, and of great injustice. People rule the world depicted in *Lazarus*, but discriminated-against, impure semi-humans continue to believe in their legendary leader — a dragon that sleeps under the hills of Kyiv, who will awaken some day and whose awakening will bring a time of great battle.

Svitlana comments on her novel: "I wanted to create a world that was believable, so that the reader was left feeling like this world actually existed somewhere in a parallel reality. But from the very beginning, I also wanted to engage on some touchy subjects. Fantasy has precisely this kind of threshold for entry into the text that allows the author to raise serious topics, leaving the reader with the impression that they're being drawn into a political discussion. And these things are deserving of a discussion.*Lazarus* explores many more complex topics that people often try to avoid. Religions, collective memory, the interaction between different nations — these are all subjects that immediately compel people to get riled up in our country, and I feel that fantasy is the format and genre that gives us the opportunity to discuss these things more calmly."

"Lazarus literalizes the chauvinistic strategies of an empire that demonizes and dehumanizes its ethnic-minority subjects and attempts to find a way to subdue them. On the novel's pages — in lieu of the historical Pale of Settlement, where Jews were permitted to settle in the Russian Empire (and which accounted for possibly the greatest ethnic diversity in all the Empire's territories) — a Border arises, where various folkloric types abound in a complex but symbiotic relationship, while beneath the hills of Kyiv, as legend has it, a Dragon sleeps."

— Dr. Iaroslava Strikha, literary scholar

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Rights: Olha Marynovych
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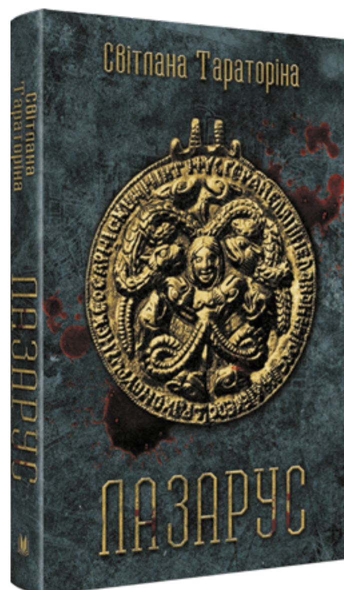
Svitlana's *Lazarus* takes place in 1913. In Kyiv, people are comfortably living alongside the impure — ghouls, devils, and werewolves, as well as gruesome forest, field, and water spirits. For centuries a relative order has between the two groups has been maintained: The humans rule the Empire, while the impure await the return of their legendary leader, the Dragon. But one day everything changes. In the reeds next to the Dnipro River's Trukhaniv Island, where the manlike impure have long been living, the adopted child of the water spirits is found with his stomach torn open. The dragon-specializing doctor is adamant: The deceased is a human. In order to unravel the mystery and prevent yet another war between the humans and the impure, the humans enlist the help of an experienced investigator who happened to be passing through Kyiv, Oleksandr Petrovych Tiuryn. But will the investigator be able to defeat his own demons and actually see what he had for so many years refused to believe in?



Svitlana on Literature:

"Ukrainian literature has a long-standing tradition of fantasy. Even more so: It's hard to find a text that's void of some fantastic element. The fact that we don't talk about this openly and divide novels into "high literature" and "genre" is another matter. But readers particularly traumatized by Ukraine's school curriculum yearn for contemporary and engaging texts. And here you can't dispense with fantasy."

Tyurin opened the copy of Lazarus' book he found in Zhytotska's apartment. "The Legend of the Great Victory" matched verbatim the version of the tale he read in the book he received from his father's estate. The two copies were identical in every way except the last pages. The book from Zhytotska's apartment had a few additional pages, printed in a language he did not understand. What they said, and how these pages ended up bound in the book, Tyurin could not even guess, but he was certain the copy from Zhytotska's apartment was unique. All others, the ones he hunted down across Empire's many libraries, were faithful copies of the original his father had bequeathed him.

"Is this your message, Father?" Tyurin picked up the daguerreotype portrait of the three men. It felt queer to be looking at the face whose features had been all but erased from his memory. Tyurin did indeed look like his father. Only the scar on the left cheek marred his father's handsome face. In the portrait, the three members of the Archaeological Commission posed in front of St. Cyril's Church.

"This must have been taken after they completed the Shchekavytsa dig," Tyurin reasoned. "If they had found the bones of The Serpent and secured them somewhere, it would have been there, on St. Cyril's hill, to be protected by the Church — but Golubev knows this already. His father was there when they moved the bones. So, Golubev must be looking for something else — either The Serpent's heart, or the full text of Ophanita's prophecy. Which means the Black Hundred do not yet have all the keys they need to unlock The Serpent. Or myself, who is supposed to make that happen." Tyurin hunched over, defeated.

"Fresh reports from the occupied districts!" The sheriff burst into the room, then stopped and rubbed his eyes: he, like Tyurin, had spent the night at the station. The sudden hustle in the hallway did not bode well. Tyurin took the dispatches from him and stepped up to the map on the wall. The sheriff handed him a red pencil.

The area around Turiv and River-Meadow Streets had been declared infected and sealed off: the north end of that district bordered Obolon's sparsely populated delta, and it was impossible to control the influx of wights there.

The field-folk were left to face the infected on their own.

The wights advanced from the direction of the Polytechnic Institute. The outbreak had begun at the gramophone records' factory owned by Joseph Extrafon, a first-rate demon. Exrafon himself was unscathed, but the cottages around the factory had been decimated. No one would dare go there now — it was a wasteland, haunted by the feral, hungry wights.

Then Batyev's Hill fell. The police could see signals from fire towers for several more days, but then those went out too. No one was in favor of sending storm troops to the crowded hills, populated mostly by the uncouth, because that would have meant sacrificing too many brave human volunteers. The Bacteriology Institute on Protasov Street was hit next. The cemetery next to it became a wights' nest.

A large portion of Demiivka was also gone. Fighting raged from the Trinity Square all the way to the brick-works at Subotina. Here and there, neighborhood militia still held its ground. Golems helped, as long as their masters were alive — once the man fell, the Golem collapsed in a pile of clay.

The city slaughterhouses drew new and new swarms of wights like flies to honey. It was only a matter of time before the whole district fell.

The wights made a ring around the city like the Ouroboros snake from Zhytotska's tapestry. The suburbs were home mostly to the poor and the uncouth, whose lives were a dime a dozen, but the nightmare kept spreading. Police started running into the infected downtown; they'd had to burn down St. Mary's shelter on Zhylianska. And that was only a few blocks away from the railway station.

Just yesterday, they took Trus, a swamp imp, straight from the City Hall — he had attacked a colleague. At first everyone chalked it up to the force of habit, but then they saw the signs of infection and knew he'd been turned.

No matter how Tyurin looked at the map, all he could see was The Serpent's self-satisfied grin. Only the St. Cyril's Church, despite its location on the outskirts of the city, remained untouched.

Suddenly, Tyurin saw it: That's where The Serpent's heart was.

Translated by Nina Murray

Tamara Horikha Zernya

Daughter

UBI Director's Special Choice

NOVEL

#war #refugees

© Ulyana Basova

Tamara Horikha Zernya (Tamara Duda) was born and raised in Kyiv. An author of poetry and prose, as well as a songwriter, she holds a degree in journalism from the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. Daughter is her debut novel and received favorable reviews from both literary critics and well-established Ukrainian writers.

With the outbreak of war in Eastern Ukraine, Tamara took a leave of absence from her career to serve as a volunteer at the front. In 2014 and 2015, she and her husband raised funds for, purchased, and delivered to the front equipment and aid for Ukrainian soldiers. The author spent a full two years on the road in combat areas, and refers to this period as the most tragic, fascinating, intense, and inspiring years of her life — years that changed not only the country but also each Ukrainian.

The author describes her novel Daughter as a contribution to victory: "The heroine absorbed both what she had personally experienced and the experiences of many of the combatants, military volunteers, and displaced people with which fate had brought her together. She became a "place of strength" of sorts for many people. 'We shall live!' says the heroine. 'Indeed, we shall!' I add."

Bilka Publishing, 2019
285 pages
Rights: duda.tamara@gmail.com

While the critics were engaging in tasseomancy over their coffee cups, divining when it was "this war" would give birth to its own Remarques and Hemingways, and were debating into which category the surge of "veterans' prose" would fit, this war unexpectedly found itself both a voice and a genre, from a least expected side.

— Oksana Zabuzhko, Ukrainian author

This book is about love. It doesn't contain a single word beginning with "lo…," but it's about love. It's about magic — not the cheap kind propagated on TV screens, but the real kind that stems from your tribe and roots, the kind that has you diving headfirst into the Ancient Ocean and surfacing with a fish between your teeth. And it's about courage too, about the unqualified courage to find what's yours, to recognize it, to dig in determinedly and give it away to no one: your home, your motherland, your heart, your right to walk with your head held high. The events of the novel unfold in the spring and summer of 2014 in Donetsk. Donbas is a zeroing out point; it's a place of strength where the country's most important questions have sounded. And only there are the necessary answers hidden. There, where it all began, is where it will come to a close, when the story passes through yet another iteration and the infinite Ouroboros serpent once again bites its own tail. It was here that the novel's nameless heroine lost her family, home, job, and illusions, and it was here that she gathered up the fragments of her life and discovered new meaning and new support. Step by step the reader observes the process of transformation, the metamorphosis of a crop-sower into a warrior. This book has forever changed the person who has written it and will likewise change whoever reads it. Because war is when you eat the earth. So what's more important than feeding the earth?

The book is extraordinary: I read it from start to finish in one sitting. I'm hoping for a continuation of the book. I get the sense that much more can yet be written about the heroine. And it's practically a ready-made scenario for a TV series.

— Oleksandra Koval, Director of the Ukrainian Book Institute

07.07.14

What does a city under occupation look like? You won't believe it, but it has no look. That is, it looks the same as if it were free. People walk, minibuses transport them, stores are open. There's bustle during rush hours, and the bazaar on Saturdays.

It's just that you come tumbling out of a July bus, where you lost seven rounds of sweat, and you bump into soldiers at the exit. They politely let passengers pass, then spread into the body of the bus, helping themselves along with the butts of their rifles.

You get used to walking with your head down in order to see the asphalt beneath your feet. Or conversely, you pull your chin upward and look at the roofs. Because in the middle, between the sky and the ground, your gaze keeps stumbling on machine guns. You see raised muzzles and freeze when they carelessly pivot, tracing the line of fire across your chest, and you can't not wonder: Why is everyone calm? Why is no one falling, hands covering their heads? Why are they not scuttling off to the side? How can they walk through the army-green huddles, pushing them apart with barely their shoulders, not slowing down their gaits or stopping their conversations? "Why are you all worked up? They don't touch us, and we don't touch them. It's not our concern, got it?" they tell me in Russian.

I need to adapt to life in these new conditions, but, for starters, I can't at all make up my mind if I want to live. A hundred times I repeat to myself that my worth as a person and as an individual isn't dependent on external circumstances. That the most important thing is what's inside me, irrespective of others' opinions. That this acute longing, this hole in my chest, this feeling like an abandoned child — it's all a result of my complexes and unjustified expectations, meaning it too is my problem. If the world out of nowhere doesn't conform with your notions of it, then change your notions, not the world.

No one called. Not the combatants, though I didn't expect them to. Well, maybe a little, deep down inside: It would've been nice to hear a few words, that they wouldn't abandon us… But my great Ukraine was uncommunicative, as if listening intently to itself: What's it like, living without a hand? Or was I fooling myself again, and we were no hand, not even a finger, but an inflamed appendix? Were we gangrene, rotten flesh without which everyone would be better off? Maybe the ones who are screaming that there's no one here worth protecting are right? And is this gray land, liberally plowed and sown with bones and iron, worth it? Is it worth the blood that will spill for its protection? Maybe we need to run from here like from a cholera barracks, and he who lingers is a fool. I see the joy of the locals, I see the marauders' flags at every step, I hear that they're "a republic." If they're a "young republic," who then am I? And what am I doing among the "republic-builders"? I need to run from here without looking back and not seek the righteous in the steppes of Sodom — because here every man is for himself and no one is for us…

I peer at tomorrow — darkness and endless darkness. And endless darkness. And endless darkness.
Only black water. And black thicket.

He knew everything about Donetsk, this scrap-girded poet from the boiler room, this prophet who feared not one of them and vanquished them all. But was that victory meaningful if Vasyl Stus is dead while they're alive and their children have staked claim to the streets? And what would he say to me? And I to him, if I had the opportunity? I would tell him, Crawl away. Crawl away, admit defeat, and live a normal life. Raise your son, spend time at your dacha, go fishing for carp. Wait it out, and safeguard the gene pool.

Or no…

Shove your "it doesn't concern me" up your ass! If I saw Stus, I'd tell him, Kill! Stand erect and laugh, laugh right in their faces. Even if there's no Ukraine around you, even if you're surrounded by wasteland and ice, even if there's nothing but Egyptian darkness. Ukraine will stand on its own inside you because you — you yourself — are Ukraine.

Translated by Zenia Tompkins

© Oleksandr Chekmenev

Andriy Bondar

Tserebro

CREATIVE NON-FICTION #short stories #surrealism

Born in 1974, Andriy Bondar is a poet, essayist, and author of short prose fiction. He has authored six collections of poetry and four collections of essays and short stories. Andriy is a graduate of the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, where he studied literary history and theory. He debuted as a poet in 1993.

Andriy has worked as deputy editor-in-chief of Literature Plus, the newspaper of the Association of Ukrainian Writers; as literature editor for the newspaper *Mirror of the Week;* and as a columnist for *Hazeta Po-Ukrainsky, Zbruc.eu,* and *Kraina.* He has participated in several international literary programs and residencies, including LiteratureExpress Europe (2000), Gaude Polonia (2003), and Homines Urbani (2004). Andriy's essays are as a rule timely and reliant on first-hand observations of present-day life. His most recent collection of short prose, *Tserebro,* comprises previously unpublished stories and essays, and won the 2018 BBC Book of the Year Award in Ukraine in the award's new Nonfiction category.

The Old Lion Publishing House, 2018
120 pages
Rights: Ivan Fedechko
ivan.fedechko@starlev.com.ua

"This rib, Tserebro, is a part of you. Writing is like the creation of woman in the Bible: The text grows and becomes something greater than you, it breaks out from inside, leaving an empty pit in its wake. Where the heart once was a wound has formed: The German Shepherd Adolf left such a wound in the story 'Adolf.'"
— *Bohdana Romantsova, LitAkcent*

Tserebro is a collection of short prose that invites the reader to a quirky world of little human adventures. This is conveyed in the original Ukrainian title *Tserebro,* a double entendre on the phrase "This is a rib" and the Ukrainian word for a well bucket. These brief narratives of chance encounters and conventional situations, which we all recognize and can relate to, prompt the characters to ponder, make decisions, and act. The uniqueness of these texts lies in the fact that some of them are rooted in real experiences, while others are entirely fictitious, creating an utter phantasmagoria.

The collection won Andriy the 2018 BBC Book of the Year Award in the Nonfiction Essay category, to which the author himself responded: "Essayism and journalism have perhaps not completely vanished in Tserebro. The world is hybrid, people are hybrid, wars are hybrid… I see no reason why literary genres must remain pure."

Andriy on Literature:

"Any conversations about Ukrainian literature in the public sphere serve to benefit this literature. And any interpretation of a given book — even the most naïve one — is to the book's advantage."

An excerpt from "Ahmad"

I don't understand how people become sewer cleaners. Perhaps in the life of absolutely every individual there comes a moment when the boring routine and striking inauspiciousness of all other professions becomes obvious. It would seem you just have to take a step. But no: someone is being carried out to the crest of the wave and tossed into that domain, and someone else loses the moment while doing something rhythmic and inauspicious. This is why, for example, there are incomparably more engineers and philologists than sewage treatment workers.

The window of opportunity here is terribly narrow and reminiscent of a barely visible arrowslit in the great fortress of human fate. This moment is very subtle; it can be approximately compared to the preparation of the Japanese fugu: one extra minute in here or there and you're done for. In choosing the profession of sewer cleaner, the vocation collides with the calling and everything together forms the heroic deed. This is why so few do it.

People, for the most part, feel disgust for sewer cleaners, but you cannot imagine your life without them. It would be approximately like not having the righteous. The city wouldn't stand without the righteous any more than the summer vacationers without the sewer cleaners. Without a doubt, it's a craft. The majority of people nastily believe that it is a special craft. I believe that it is an uber-craft and a sub-art, some vanished link between craft and art, something decidedly intermediary.

It's an uber-craft precisely because ostensibly in giving something, the sewer cleaner frees, bestows a desired emptiness. Or is the emptiness the object of the craft? Or could excrement perhaps be its object? It's a sub-art because the cleansing of the cesspools is never just the simple execution of a certain sequence of events. It is always something greater; it is improvisation and performance where the performance skills of each specific master matter so much. In order to transform into art, the business of cleaning sewers should reject a few things neither a lot nor a little. First and foremost, this is utilitarianism — do it out of pure love for the process. And, of course, profit-seeking — do it for free.

Among the sewer cleaners I know, there are two wings: radical and conservative. The former do everything for the sake of their work, and therefore bravely crawl into that cesspool. Sometimes even up to their waist. The latter don't drive on the weekends, meticulously wipe their hands with wet rags, and don't pick up shit with their hands.

"Please hold this hose here," says one of the "conservatives."

"This one?" you ask scared. "Here?!"

"Here, here, fuck," he answers, thinking that you probably have mental retardation. "Where it's dripping."

And you, not wearing any gloves, take it and hold it. And he goes out to the car, turns on the engine, removes his gloves, and lights a Prima. Yet you still hold. You hold it for an eternity. It's your shit, after all. It's yours to hold. Obviously I have more sympathy for the radicals. They, who for the sake of their work, are capable of anything.

The main secret of sewer cleaning is to do it quickly, while burning as little fuel as possible. The cost of this service is complicated to calculate. Many factors must be taken into consideration — the time and distance to get to the object, the number of trips, and the length of the hose. For some reason it is always more expensive with a longer hose. Probably the same principle governs the pay scale for porn actors. And weekends are more expensive yet. Of all the professions I know, sewer cleaners respect religious holidays and value their free time the most. And this isn't just a superstition, it is an inviolable principle. Sometimes it seems like they're not sewer cleaners on a daily basis, but just happen to be them from time to time. On a daily basis they're artists. After nine years of regular communication with sewer cleaners, I was entitled to such a conclusion. It is impossible to simply "call a worker." He must be persuaded to come and you better ask nicely to prove his dignity. A sewer cleaner won't go to just anyone.

Zhenia, Sasha, Vasyl, Yura, Mykola, and Mykola Mykhailovych — I knew a lot of them. I remember each one's handwriting; I studied each one's temperament. I learned what was both distinctive and shared in their approaches and habits. I would ask them about life, take an interest in their family matters, funds, and health. And they all reciprocated in some way. Over nine years of life in the womb of nature

I had put together an internal register of this particular breed of human and gotten closer to understanding its essence.

Its essence was that not one of them in these long nine years had responded to my sincere invitation to come over for tea or coffee. Not one of them had crossed the threshold of my home even though I had inveigled and crawled out of my skin. And not one of them had offered me his hand. A superficial guess would have suggested that this could be an ordinary professional superstition: entry onto a client's private territory spoke something in a secret language to these servants of the cult and somehow logically or mystically validated its undesirability. However, having taken a deeper look at the problem, you reach the conclusion that, as it were, sewer cleaners think that people consider them unclean. Our society is far from having a caste system, but probably the First Sewer Cleaner at some point decided that setting foot onto a client's private territory was forbidden, taboo, a no-no. This, obviously, would break the harmony of spheres and at once the mystery of the calling would disappear.

Hence, not one of them — not Zhenia, not Sasha, not Vasyl, not Yura, not Mykola, not Mykola Mykhailovych — ever crossed the threshold of my home. No one ever drank a swallow of liquid from my hands. No one ever offered me his hand in greeting or farewell. No one. Except for a single one. He ruined and broke everything. He came yesterday. His name is Andrij, just like mine.

Translated by Ali Kinsella

© Eva Vradiy

Oleg Sentsov

Distributor

SHORT STORIES #childhood #historical memory #ninetees

Born in 1976, Oleg Sentsov is a Russian-speaking Ukrainian filmmaker and writer from Crimea, best known for his 2011 film *Gamer.* Following the Russian annexation of Crimea, Oleg was arrested and sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment by the Russian judiciary on charges of plotting terrorist acts. The conviction was described as fabricated by Amnesty International, and intellectuals around the world have expressed their support for Sentsov.

Oleg studied economics in Kyiv and film directing and screenwriting in Moscow. He is the director of two short films, *Bananafish (2008)* and *The Horn of a Bull (2009),* as well as of the aforementioned Gamer, which debuted at the Rotterdam International Film Festival in 2012.

Prior to imprisonment, Oleg authored the autobiographical story collection *Life: Stories,* which has been translated into Ukrainian, Polish, German, French, and English. Since his imprisonment, he has been working on multiple new books and scripts in the penal colony of Labytnangi in the far north of Russia. In 2018, Oleg undertook a 145-day hunger strike in opposition of the wrongful imprisonment of Ukrainians by Russia. That same year he was awarded the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.

Oleg Sentsov returned to Ukraine in September 2019 due to the prisoner exchange.

The Old Lion Publishing House, 2019
376 pages
Rights: Ivan Fedechko
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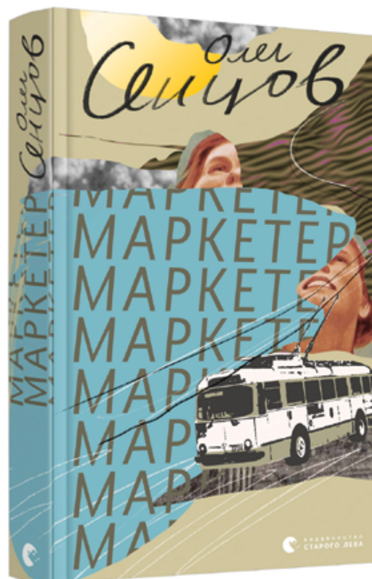
"Sentsov consistently manages to see the world through the eyes of a child while writing, in a disarmingly unaffected style, with the wisdom and sardonic wit of a sometimes-disillusioned adult. […] An imprisoned Ukrainian dissident artfully unearths his past in stories."

— Kirkus Review

"An award-winning filmmaker who criticised the annexation of Crimea."

— The Guardian

Distributor is Oleg's second collection of short autobiographical prose, in which the author describes life during his university years: taking exams, weekdays in dormitories and apartments, endless fun, and his lack of money, namely the typical ingredients of the life of the young that result in knowledge. The early nineties, a shift in values, the destruction of stereotypes, self-formation, a toughening soul and character, love, friendship, survival, and business — all this is thoughtfully and sincerely shared in Oleg's second collection.



Oleg on Literature and Life:

"It's very hard to feel like a person when you have lost the most important thing to you… Children are probably the most valuable thing that will remain after us. We will live on in them after our death. Therefore, we must not spoil their lives by educating them. We should educate ourselves, and simply love our children. And if it all possible, teach them these two truly necessary things: to read books and to speak the truth."

Quoted from Oleg's letter to PEN America

Today he really needed money. More than he had needed it yesterday. And even more than the day before. And tomorrow he would need money so badly that it was better not to think about it. He had stopped thinking about tomorrow entirely. The day after tomorrow seemed impossibly far in the future, and next week was like a new millennium. He had genuinely learned to live one day at a time. Just for today. Although at the same time he knew that today would bring nothing good. He got up early, filled with both hope and despair. There was nothing to eat at home for breakfast, at most he'd have a cup of tea. He tried to leave home a bit earlier than usual, believing that he would manage to get more done. Although maybe it was just because he wanted to get out of the house before someone came around asking questions about money, questions he didn't know how to answer. The old answers didn't wash anymore, though then again neither did the new ones. And he was tired of thinking them up anyway. He was also really tired of lying. And tired of wondering where to get money. There was only one way out, and he was pursuing it, though so far unsuccessfully. He had given up hope of ever earning money here. That illusion seemed to have dissolved a whole eternity ago, though it had only been a few months. From the times of his old, problem-free life, which he had left far behind, there was only one thing he wanted —

to settle his accounts and forget this whole nightmare. But the nightmare just wouldn't end, and instead it got worse with every passing day, just as his debt, like a ball of dirt, grew and grew.

He had always considered himself smart. What's more, he considered himself experienced — and that wasn't just his own opinion. Now twenty, he'd already seen a thing or two in his life, but it was that cursed year that gave him his first grey hair. It was like life was deliberately hitting him over the head with a hammer. Today's blow was already the third. The previous two, he'd thought, were already pretty catastrophic. But they had been short, hard and sharp, like a sudden explosion. Afterwards, his wounds took a long time to heal, but gradually, bit by bit, the pain eased. But this third calamity was different. It was like stepping from a safe bank into a muddy swamp because you've decided that the beautiful flower growing on that tuft, which seemed so close, was growing there just for you. So you wade in, step by step, deeper and deeper. And then you're in up to your knees, your waist, eventually your chest. You're still trying to get to your goal, but you just can't reach it, no matter how hard you try. You have no strength left. You're stuck, and you're sinking. Everyone who tried to help you in the beginning has left you. You can understand why —

nobody wants to get covered in filth in your swamp. Only your mother is with you, on that slippery bank, worrying that her offspring won't be able to crawl out and not understanding just how stuck he is. She was already covered in that muck from head to toe herself, but she would take more without the slightest hesitation. But that would be beyond the strength of an ordinary woman. She couldn't change places with him, nor could she pull him out. He was already grown up and was too heavy for her. As for him, he was convinced that his friends, acquaintances and even random people he met should be prepared to sacrifice everything, or at least a lot, just for him.

He still hadn't understood the sense of the saying 'the rescue of the drowning must be achieved by the drowning themselves'.

Translated by Dr. Uilleam Blacker

© Alexander Bugaenko, BBC

Artem Chapeye

The Ukraine

SHORT STORIES #historical memory #society #Ukraine

An author of both creative nonfiction and popular fiction, Artem Chapeye was born in 1981 and raised in the small Western Ukrainian city of Kolomyia and has spent much of the last twenty years living in Kyiv. He has authored two novels and four books of creative nonfiction, and is a co-author of a book of war reportage. A four-time finalist of the BBC Book of the Year Award, his recent collection *The Ukraine* was one of three finalists in the award's new Nonfiction category in 2018.

Artem is an avid traveler who has spent approximately two years living, working, and traveling in the U.S. and Central America — an experience that has greatly informed his writing. His work has been translated into seven languages, and has appeared in English in *the Best European Fiction anthology* and in publications such as *Refugees Worldwide* in translation by Marian Schwartz. Artem is a past recipient of the Central European Initiative Fellowship for Writers in Residence (Slovenia) and the Paul Celan Fellowship for Translators (Austria), as well as a finalist of the Kurt Schork Award in International Journalism.

Books XXI Publishing, 2018
240 pages
Rights: Artem Chapeye
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"There's one imperative that runs through all the stories in this book, which is formulated in the final story: 'People are beautiful, even if they themselves don't understand this.' That's why all the stories here are not about places, but about people: Mr. Ivan, Grandma Nadia, Lena from Semenivka, the policeman Ilarion, the two Antons, the old man Vasyl, the stalker Markiyan…"
— *Dmytro Shevchuk, political philosopher, Krytyka Magazine*

The Ukraine is a collection of twenty-six essays and stories that deliberately blurs the lines between nonfiction and fiction, leaving the reader wondering which of its pieces are true and which fictionalized. Consciously and facetiously playing with the English misuse of the article "the" in reference to Ukraine, Chapeye essentializes "the Ukraine," which, for him, differs from "Ukraine" and captures a Ukraine as perceived from the outside, by foreigners. This pseudo-kitsch, often historically shallow, and not-quite-real Ukraine nonetheless resonates for both author and reader because of its highly engaging and brutally candid snapshots of ordinary lives and typical places.

The Ukraine conveys to the reader an aroma of Ukraine that is distinctly Ukrainian — at times unglorifying and irreverent, at times loving and tender, at times uncomfortable and inconvenient. In defiance of its misused article, the author's "the Ukraine" is every Ukrainian's Ukraine and encompasses the country's good, bad, obnoxiously ugly, and achingly beautiful. It is, quite simply, Ukraine.

Artem on Literature:

"I write books the way I would like to see them being written by other people. Very often a reader, in reading even the best books, essentially crawls into the plot and begins to empathize with the characters. And it's precisely so that the reader not get pulled into this routine that I accelerate the pace greatly at the end — so that in the final thirty pages, tin he final hour or hour and a half of reading, the reader finds himself quickening his own pace; so that the book ends for him with a breath in, not a breath out; so that the reader, upon closing the book, finds himself feeling spent."

She and I converged at a sullen love for our country. A hate-love, some might say. A love with a dash of masochism, I used to say. A love in defiance of pain, she used to say. And that's how she and I loved one another. Through pain and a bit frantically.

Almost every weekend she and I would get on a train or in a share taxi and head off somewhere. And in Ukraine, over the course of a weekend, you can get far. And return home too. Only once were we late for work on Monday, when we were hitchhiking back from Milove in the Luhansk Oblast in January. It's the easternmost point of the country. We made it there in share taxis, and headed back on foot along a snow-covered road, hand in hand. We had just fallen in love then. Guys in Soviet-style Zhiguli four-doors were picking us up no problem, but each time they'd give us a lift for a few kilometers, then drop us off at the side of the road and turn off toward their villages. We shivered in the blue twilight but were happy.

Melancholically we loved precisely everything in Ukraine that annoyed many of our acquaintances. The random thrashiest of thrash metals on intercity buses. The obligatory multi-hour sessions of horrid comedy shows like Evening Quarter. The Dnipro-like plasma at the fancier bus stations, where the thrash on the speakers is even heavier — like that little rap that goes "The best feeling's when you're the coolest of 'em all" by Ukrainian performers with Latinized brand names along the lines of Danilenko, Alekseev, Oleinik, and Maksimova. The sour taste of the alcohol being poured in semidarkness on the lower bunks of the economy-class sleeper car while we're trying to fall asleep on the top ones.

The instant coffee in plastic cups and the hot dog with a plasticky sausage. The low-grade food at train stations, like cabbage-filled patties or hand pies wrapped in paper; even back then I wondered why it was she didn't at all care about her health.

Or the more tender: the slightly squat and chubby mother and daughter speaking Surzhyk, so alike in appearance — dark-haired, with cropped hairdos, their faces wide, a deep beet-colored flush on their cheeks, and seemingly not pretty, if not for the huge, kind, grayish-green eyes that made them beautiful! They're the employee-owners of a cheap café at the bus station of a nameless town, with tables covered in oilcloth cut up by knives, which the daughter rubs with a gray rag before bringing out plates of food for us prepared by her mother, and where we had a meal — if you add it up, for less than a dollar — of mashed potatoes with a sun-disk of butter melted in the center of the plate, pork chops fried to a crisp, and homemade sour-cherry juice in a tumbler.

Or the people with the gray faces, void of smiles and weary from a long shift, in the buses of Donetsk. The wet autumn leaves stuck to the footpaths of the Storozhynets Arboretum in Chernivtsi, where we had gone just to take a stroll — likely the only ones to make a day-long excursion to have a look at a city where, when push comes to shove, there's nothing much worth looking at.

She was quoting Serhiy Zhadan, her favorite poet: "Ya lyublyu tsyu krainu navit' bez kokainu," I love this country even without cocaine.

I was prosaically chiming in, "And without antidepressants either." It was then that she stopped taking antidepressants: she said she gained weight from them — the only pettiness I noticed in her in all those years. And now she always resurfaces in my mind along with a line from my favorite poet: She was a middle-class girl… She had spent a few years living in the US: her father had gone there to earn some fast cash, then brought her over too. While there, she finished college, got married, and quickly divorced. It was a past for which I envied her, and that's why we spoke of it little. One time she told me how her friends there, and even her ex-husband, used to call her home country The Ukraine. With the definite article. Even though they knew that in English simply Ukraine was considered correct, you could notice how their tongues seemingly reverted to pronouncing "the" on their own. Why, she would ask. One time her ex-husband, after some thought, surmised, "I think it's the U sound." It's just the sound: the USA, the UK, the Ukraine. She and I had a laugh, but from then on we began to notice and point out to one another situations and instances when it was correct to actually say "the Ukraine": because there's Ukraine as such, but there is in fact also a the Ukraine — a "voilà-Ukraine." A Ukrainian Dasein.

Translated by Zenia Tompkins

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Yevgenia Belorusets

Fortunate Fallings

CREATIVE NON-FICTION #photography #feminism #art

Yevgenia Belorusets is a photographer, author, and literary critic. Yevgenia holds a master's degree in literature from Kyiv National Linguistic University and a bachelor's degree in documentary photography from the Victor Marushchenko School of Photography. She also completed postgraduate studies at the University of Vienna. In 2008 she founded the literary-art magazine *Prostory (Expanses)*, and became a member of the curatorial and activist interdisciplinary group Hurdada the following year.

Utilizing the strategies of investigative journalism, Yevgenia delves deep into a chosen topic, creating selective documentary reportages on realistic topics. Her photographs are narrative, semi-staged images that reflect and represent hidden social realities and complex social structures. Her work, which is primarily devoted to a critical look at pressing aspects of history, has received various awards and has been exhibited both in Ukraine and abroad.

Yevgenia's Gogol Street 32 project was conducted over a number of years and consists of research into the everyday lives of people living in progressively more dilapidated government-owned communal housing. One of her most recent projects, Victories of the Defeated 2014–16, focuses on post-industrial Ukraine, work in the coal mines at the edge of the war zone, and contemporary forms of labor during a period of military conflict in Donbas.

IST Publishing, 2019
150 pages
Rights: Matthes & Seitz
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The central focus of *Fortunate Fallings'* texts are stories of women who view themselves as witnesses to their own lives and the "great history" that forced them to change their biographies, their manner of interpreting reality, and their place of residence. The storylines unfold around the traumatic events and the socio-political turmoil in the Ukraine of the recent past, whose influence we find in fragments of conversations, everyday situations, and the women's life experiences. The women's stories remain largely invisible and their voices barely audible in a time of direct threats to life, restrictions on civil rights, loss of employment, and risks of being exploited. The author's interest is directed at the situations of those who unexpectedly found themselves on a periphery — one not easy to appeal and, even more complexly, from which it was difficult to speak. Thus, is everything seemingly insignificant, petty, and accidental that the reader encounters in *Happy Fallings* truly so?

Yevgenia on Literature:

"The most important aspect of my work is sabotaging "the trend," "the tendencies." This applies to both the text and the photography, whose language is constantly changing if you listen closely to "the trend." In my recent work I have been seeking opportunities to establish a paradoxical, mutually contradictory relationship between an image and the voice of the speaker, between the text and the photography."

"The Florist"

The florist is a woman who loves flowers. As for me, I confess, I was for some consecutive months in love with such a woman. The florist has a better grasp of flowers than anybody else. The words ranunculus and hellebore cannot astonish her. But she very much does like to be astonished — to recoil, her daisy of a face turned innocently toward her interlocutor, to open her eyes widely, grasp the back of a chair with a fluttering hand, set her mouth into an O.

Actually, she took after flowers also in being imperturbable, and even her rare beauty she got from flowers. Each morning she raised the shutters of her store, neared the window and smiled, pausing for some moments in a prospect of aspidistra and bupleurum.

Practically no one ever noticed her astonishingly well-assembled face. I have never seen a passerby stop to admire her. In the afternoon, right after lunch break, she would stand for some time, leaning against the plastic window frame, as indifferent passersby went past and only rarely did anyone enter her flower shop. I liked to look into her store and to study how she gathered bouquets, arranged flowers and branches in vases, cut stems, tore off leaves. The florist was familiar with exotic, barely existing words denoting hues, tints, petals. She pronounced them clearly and with joy, the way a child recites a poem it learned by heart for the first time: Bring them closer to light, these Persian buttercups the color of ivory. She was convinced that her customers bought not so much flowers as their names.

This acquaintance of mine lived in Donetsk and more than anything in the world she loved to make up designations for flower arrangements, bouquets, and flower packages. One winter morning I found her glowing and happy behind the counter. Her brightly painted lips, aptly located in the lower half of her mother-of-pearl face, triumphantly pronounced: Listen, my new names are finished! Attend to their melodic form, but do not forget the philosophical significance, too.

Breakfast in Venice.
Spring Pageantry Wow.
Absolute Spring.
A Roman Bedchamber.
An Ukrainian Mystery.
March Spring.

She was waiting for my approval and it was granted. She had made up bouquet names for the next season — it was to be spring — and she counted on its rapid approach.

The florist was a successful, practical woman, with an excellent understanding not only of flowers, but also of book-keeping. At the same time, she was entirely unsuited for real life. As she herself frequently told me, only inside her store, which at some moment became the meaning of her life, did she know how to exist. She decided to abolish weekends even, and in the winter of 2014 she was working on Saturdays and Sundays.

What is this story I am telling about? Does it make any sense to continue? In fact the story does not exist, the narrative does not continue, it breaks off. The florist disappeared. The house where she lived was destroyed. Her store was refitted into a warehouse of propaganda materials. Her regular customers left Donetsk long ago.

Not long ago and purely by accident I met up with one of the people who had often bought flowers from her, and he confessed to having heard something of the florist. He said she went off into the fields and joined the partisans. That's exactly what he said: "went off into the fields." But on what side her partisan unit is fighting and where those fields are, he had no idea. The florist, he reminded me, never had a sense for politics. She was a sort of a flowerworm: she even divided people into different kinds of flowers. She had never seen anything in life other than flowers, he lamented.

"She must be fighting on the side of the hyacinths," he suddenly declared and broke into laughter. We fell silent, and then he looked at me and waited that I give his sense of humor its due. "Time is passing, I am getting cleverer, I am beginning to understand which way the wind is blowing, and where we're going to," he added. "I am not the person I was. You can't fool me at one try! Kyiv has taught me a thing or two. It's not our naïve Donetsk. But I still have my sense of humor at hand. I don't have to rifle my pockets for it." And he again broke into laughter and walked off, with a triumphant gait, to follow his business.

Translated by Dr. Eugene Ostashevsky

V.Domontovych

Selected Works in Two Volumes

NOVEL #Kyiv #modernism #intellectual novel

Viktor Petrov (1894–1964, pen names V. Domontovych and Viktor Ber) was a Ukrainian writer, philosopher, social anthropologist, literary critic, archeologist, historian, and cultural scientist, who held a PhD in history and philology. Together with Valerian Pidmohylny, Petrov was the founder of the Ukrainian intellectual novel, as well as of the novelized biography.

Petrov spent his childhood in coastal Odesa. After completing his studies in the department of history and philology at Kyiv University, he joined the Ethnographic Commission of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, with time becoming its head. During this period, he became acquainted with the most well-known Ukrainian modernist poets, the Neoclassicists, and debuted as an author in 1928 with the novel The Girl with the Teddy Bear. During WWII he lived in Kharkiv, then occupied by the Germans, then moved to Germany. There he became one of the founders of the organization of Ukrainian writers in German emigration, the Ukrainian Art Movement, and taught ethnography in the Ukrainian Free University in Munich. In 1949 Petrov disappeared from Munich, which led to various theories of his possible murder. It was later discovered that he was residing in the USSR, working first at the Institute for the History of Material Culture in Moscow and later at the Institute for Archeology in Kyiv. Petrov died in 1969 and was buried in the military section of the capital's cemetery with general's honors. Up until Ukraine's independence, Petrov's name remained virtually unresearched by Ukrainian literary scholars and unknown to readers.

One of Petrov's favorite themes, which he developed in both his literary prose and historiographic studies, was that of the person at the pivoting point of two eras, "whose life is determined by the course of a general history that that person neither perceives nor understands." Petrov understood that no person, much less an artist, could be unambiguous and unidirectional. For this reason his characters are impermanent: They constantly escape the frame of their initial depiction. Central in Petrov's works is the idea of boundary, of transit, of an existential crisis in which the character arises as the one who doubts.

Komora Publishing House, 2017, 2019
Volume I, 448 pages
Volume II, 288 pages
Rights: komora.books@gmail.com

A secret agent of Soviet intelligence and a bohemian modernist, a Berlin-based professor and theologian, a man in a German officer's uniform, and a recluse archeologist studying Trypillian culture — should someone write a fictionalized biography of Viktor Petrov, such a book would be no less engrossing than a page-turning spy novel. But while the government archives refuse to provide information on this extraordinary figure, a new two-volume edition of Domontovych's works opens up his world for readers.

The engaging and somewhat extravagant novel *The Girl with the Teddy Bear* describes the love of a sagacious teacher and his rebellious student. The novel is also a brilliant example of intellectual prose about the changing cultural orientations and the tragic cleaving of a person destined to live in a critical epoch.

Doctor Seraficus is the story of a strange and infantile ascetic professor who preaches a peculiar sort of "Don Juanism in reverse": the desire to love all women and shun any and all of them.

Domontovych on Literature:

"Words and the mystery of joining them always scared me. I always approached words with suspicion and doubt, like to beings that were cruel and dangerous, duplicitous and treacherous. Words are vulgar, worthless, and deceitful. They hold betrayal in store, they lie in wait for a person everywhere, they wait to catch a person on the ready in order to grip them and muddle them. I don't belong to those who can make them gentle and submissive. Before me they, senseless and wild, stood erect. Words were my enemy. They always pushed me away."

Quoted from the novel The Girl with the Teddy Bear

Thirst for Music, Volume II

Excerpt from On Shaky Ground

I look at the flickering stars, at the space that connects all beginnings and endings, everything that was, is, and going to be. I remember the night when, engulfed by delirious desires, Larysa and I wandered around drunk on the hallucinations of a nocturnal abyss.

Arsen Petrovych approaches me. He lightly embraces me, leans out of the window by my side, and asks, "Are you looking?"

His question betrays feelings of meekness, light sadness, and a docile acceptance of fate's decisions. I feel the sadness that saturates his being.

I am filled with compassion and yet, what can I possibly do?

The word destruction affects Ivan Vasyl'ovych Gulia as the prick of a harpoon would. He interprets the recollection of destruction as a personal reproach. He represents the Protection of the Sites of Cultural Heritage, Antiquities, and Art Committee (KOPKSiM). As a representative of KOPKSiM, he carries full responsibility for any disappearance or destruction. Nothing should disappear.

Nothing should be destroyed.

He surveys us all with a sense of concentrated gloom.

"I have always believed that the inactivity of KOPKSiM's representatives was the greatest evil. I have never failed to remind you about that. I used to warn you all the time. This is exactly what I spoke about in my speech during the Second All-Ukrainian Congress of KOPKSiM."

Gulia perceives the issue of destruction with the sensitivity of a professional, with the lofty awkwardness of an expert. For him, the history of humanity equals the history of KOPKSiM's activities. Everything that had happened in the past depended on the activities of the Protection of the Cultural Heritage Committee. The chain of committees could be sufficiently or not sufficiently developed, the representatives could have sufficient or insufficient powers, and this was causing corresponding changes in the history of humanity, the preservation or decline of human cultures.

Representatives of the Committee have existed from time immemorial. The world might not have come into existence, but they did. Flaws in the activities of the Committee have caused the decline of cultures. Here is what Gulia imagines the essence of the historical process to be, and he aims his anger at the perpetrators of the Bylaws. The Committee's Bylaws constitute the greatest achievement of humanity, its highest accomplishment, a version of a Bible, a kind of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, albeit more perfect and impeccable.

Gulia puts his hands into his pockets and, overtaken by his thoughts, wanders around the room. Sounding on edge, he repeats the same words and fragments. He has just a few in his arsenal.

"We have to adopt measures… Turn to those in power… Appeal to public opinion… Widen the circles of authorized representatives."

He pauses. He folds his fingers, one by one.

"During the Second Congress of KOPKSiM, I pointed out: a. the insufficient activities of the local representatives of the Committee, b. the inactivity of those representatives, c. the fact that they are not reaching the necessary level, d. they do not measure up to their purpose, e. for the most part, they consist of low-skilled people, and f. they are either indifferent or careless with regard to the cause thathas been entrusted to them. In sum, I noted that all these might lead to a disaster."

I look at a strand of black hair that, as if a tongue of fire, gloomily ascends from the top of Ivan Vasyl'ovych Gulia's heavy, prominent forehead. I look at his folded arms, his hanging head, and I seem to understand him. It seems to me that I understand his professionally abstract thinking, the obscure character of his concepts, his thinking patterns, those of an expert. He perceives all things, ideas, and phenomena in terms of functions within the organization he is working for. To him, the entire world and everything in it can be classified as sites of heritage, antiquities, and art. They have to be registered and protected, and they differ among themselves only on the basis of the extent of their importance, be it on the level of the republic, the Soviet Union, or the world in its entirety.

Gulia's ideal would be to transform the universe into a colossal museum, where every object is registered, defined, described, and put on an index card with an individual code, drawing, or photo attached to it, with the date of acquisition, provenance, and price.

The world needed to be catalogued. His, Gulia's, ideal world would be climate controlled, and the objects in it would be seasonally affected by the formalin. Moths, worms, humidity, mold, and temperature fluctuations — the biggest enemies of humanity and culture — would be overthrown for good and liquidated. The decisions of the Protection of Heritage Sites Committee would be final and not open to appeal.

I remember well the extent of the annoyance, stubbornness, and burning enthusiasm that Gulia displayed in Kharkiv when, as a representative of the Committee, he demanded to add a typist to his staff, on top of the already existing position of a clerk. Based on his words and arguments, humanity's fate depended on the outcome of this issue. Would the staff and the budget distribution be increased in order to purchase a bookcase, folders, a mimeograph, ink, chairs, a fan, as well as a door mat? The Committee's accountant was as afraid of Gulia's arrival as he would be of a natural disaster. The accountant would run home and not show up at work on those days. Even Petro Ivanovych Stryzhyous, a fishlike personality with constantly wet palms, a secretary of the Committee, used to lose his balance at times like this. He sat, all flushed and baffled, blinking or fussing around.

Only endowing the Protection of Heritage Sites with full powers could guarantee the preservation of human culture. Humanity would have access to the full body of published and deciphered papyri. We would have not just the fragments but the entire collection of works by Heraclitus. Humanity would not have suffered because of the absence of the perfect manuscript of the twelfth-century epic The Tale of Ihor's Campaign, and La Gioconda by Leonardo da Vinci would not have been stolen from the Louvre in Paris. All nineteenth-century ethnographic works and letters by Hanna Barvinok would have been published. Old huts in Ukraine would have been described, photographed, and measured. It would have been forbidden to plow up Scythian grave mounds in the steppes. A separate Museum would have been created, where experts would study the stone stelae collected there.

Gulia invites us to fill our glasses with slyvyanka plum brandy, strong as alcohol and sweet as candied honey, and drink to all those who understand the providential importance of protecting heritage sites. The words that would seem to be sheer blabbering coming out of someone else's mouth sound moving and sincere coming from Gulia's.

His passionate toast is accepted enthusiastically. People shake his hand. To be precise, it's him, Gulia, who is shaking hands with everybody. He is greeted, thanked for expressing the genuine sentiment of all us gathered here.

The atmosphere in the room becomes animated.

Translated by Oksana Rosenblum

Mykola Khvyloviy

Full Collected Works

#executed renessaince #modernism #socialism

Mykola Khvyloviy (1893–1933), born Mykola Fitilyov, was a Ukrainian prose writer, poet, and essayist, and remains one of the best-known representatives of the so-called Executed Renaissance.

Khvyloviy was born in the Russian Empire in the Kharkiv region. As a teen, he traveled through Donbas and southern Ukraine on foot in search of employment, subsequently fighting in WWI as a soldier from 1916. His education in the trenches of war and the civil war of 1917–21 shaped him into a convinced Bolshevik. At the helm of a rebel detachment that he organized in late 1918 in the Kharkiv region, he fought against the Hetmanists, the Germans, the Drozdovtsis, and the army of the Ukrainian National Republic. In 1921 he moved to Kharkiv and founded the literary organization VAPLITE — a free academy of proletarian literature. In the context of unification, Khvyloviy coins his celebrated slogan "Away from Moscow!" to which Joseph Stalin reacts with the following: "At a time when Western European proletarians are gazing at the flag flying over Moscow with affection, the Ukrainian communist Khvloviy can't say anything in favor of Moscow other than how to teach Ukrainian activists to run away from Moscow as fast as possible." Khvyloviy's views brought on criticism of VAPLITE from party and state figures of the USSR, and in 1928 the organization was forcibly self-dissolved.

In an atmosphere of intense persecution and possibly with a premonition of the impending terror, Khvyloviy — after the arrest of his friend and fellow writer Mykhailo Yaloviy and as a sign of protest against the developing mass repressions of the Ukrainian artistic intelligentsia — committed suicide in 1933 in the Kharkiv Slovo House of Writers. His death became a symbol of both the ideological collapse of Ukrainian national communism and of the end of the Ukrainian national renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s. Khvyloviy's works remained inaccessible and his name prohibited up until the final years of the existence of the totalitarian regime in Ukraine.

Smoloskyp Publishing House, 2019
Contact: smoloskyp@gmail.com

The full collected works of Mykola Khvyolviy have been published for the first time in Ukraine. The first volume of the collection includes the author's complete poetry, as well as his political writings and literary reviews. The second volume includes his short prose and a portion of his correspondence. The author's novels, novellas, and longer stories comprise the third volume. Each of the volumes is accompanied by scholarly materials offering insight into and context for the author's writings.

The collection is geared toward the widest possible readership, specifically those readers interested in Ukrainian literature and culture.

An excerpt from I: A Romance

"Flowering Apple Trees"

From the distant fog, from the still lakes of the commune beyond the ridge, comes a rustle: That's Maria walking. I walk out into the edgeless fields, cross the mountain passes, and lean against a lone desert crag where the burial mounds glow red in the sun. I gaze into the distance. Then, like Amazons, thought after thought come prancing around me. Then everything falls away… The mysterious horsewomen fly toward the mountain spurs, swaying rhythmically, and the day fades away. My darling is running through the graves, the silent steppe in her wake… I raise my eyes and reminisce… truly my mother was an archetype of that extraordinary Maria that stands on the boundary of unknown ages. My mother was naiveté, quiet sorrow, and limitless goodness. (This I remember well!) And my impossible pain and my unbearable torment are warmed in the candle of worship before this beautiful, heart-wrenching image.

My mother says that I (her restless son) have worn myself down completely… Then I take her dear head with its veil of silvery gray and gently place it on my chest… Outside the window lay dew-covered mornings and pearl-like raindrops fell. We were living through impossible days. In the distance travelers made their way from the dark forest, stopping next to the blue well where the roads had flown apart, where the cross for thieves stands. It was young folk from beyond the ridge.

But nights are passing, the evenings rustle through the poplars, and the poplars recede into paved-road obscurity, my years and turbulent youth slipping behind them. Then come the pre-thunderstorm days. There, beyond the spurs, on the dove-colored side, bolts of lightning flash and the mountains swell and froth. The heavy, oppressive thunder just won't rip its way out of India, from the east. And nature languishes in wait for the storm. But from behind the scum of cloud comes a different rumbling… a deafening cannonade. Two storms are moving in.

"Prepare for an emergency!" My mother says that she watered the mint that day: that the mint is dying from longing. My mother says, "A storm is approaching!" And I see two crystal dewdrops glistening in her eyes.

I

Attack after attack. The enemy regiments are pressing in fiercely. Then our cavalry flanks them, and flanks of insurgents counterattack, and the storm grows: My thoughts stretch like an impossibly taut wire.

I disappear day and night into the Cheka offices.

Our premises are a fantastical palace: the house of an executed nobleman. Fanciful drapes, old and intricate patterns on walls, portraits of the prince's family — all this gazes at me from every corner of my unexpected office.

Somewhere a military telephone drones its grief-filled, uneasy melody, reminiscent of a train horn at a faraway station.

An armed Tartar, his feet tucked under himself, sits on a luxurious settee and croons in monotone the Asian "Allah-al-lah."

I look at the portraits: The prince is furrowing his brows, the princess is all haughty disdain, their children stand in the shadows of centuries-old oaks.

And in this unusual austereness, I feel the entirety of the ancient world, all the feeble grandiosity and beauty of the past years of nobility.

This is a distinct mother-of-pearl at the banquet of a wild and hungry nation.

And I, a complete stranger — a bandit in one terminology, an insurgent in another — I'm looking at these portraits plainly and clearly, and my soul does not and will not harbor any anger. And this is understandable:

I'm a Chekist, but I'm also a man.

In the dark of night, when evening festivities are transpiring outside the window (the wealth has soared upward and lords over the town), when blue puffs of smoke rise above the brickwork and the average man, like a mouse, slips under the gate into the canary castle — in the dark of night my comrades convene in my extraordinary office. This is the new Sanhedrin, this is the commune's black tribunal.

Then, true and verily horrific death peers from every nook and cranny. An average citizen says:

"Sadism is taking hold here!"

Me:

…(I'm silent).

On the town tower beyond the mountain pass, a copper bell is clanking troublingly. That's the town clock chiming. A deafening cannonade resonates from the dark steppe.

My comrades are sitting behind a wide table made of black wood. Silence fills the air. Only the faraway train-station horn of the telephone once again drones its grief-filled, uneasy melody. Now and then, an insurgent passes outside the window.

My comrades are easy to recognize:

Doctor Tahabat,

Andriusha,

the third is a degenerate (the loyal guard on duty).

The black tribunal in full force.

Me:

"Attention everyone! The matter of Shopkeeper X is on the agenda!"

Footmen emerge from the ancient chambers and, as they did before the princes, bow their heads, examine the new Sanhedrin closely, and place tea on the table. Then they noiselessly disappear over the velvet of the carpets into the labyrinths of high-ceilinged rooms.

Two candles of the candelabra burn dimly. The light isn't strong enough to reach even a quarter of the office. High above, a candle sconce glimmers barely. The town is shrouded in darkness. Here too there is darkness: The power plant is down. Doctor Tahabat is sprawled out on the wide settee at a distance from the candelabra, and I see only his white baldness and overly high forehead. Behind him, further in the darkness, is the loyal guard with the malformed skull. I can only see his slightly mad eyes, but I know:

The degenerate has a small forehead, a black shock of disheveled hair, and a flat nose. He always reminds me of a convict, and it crosses my mind that he must have visited the Department of Criminal Chronicles many a time.

Andriusha is sitting to my right with a bewildered expression, now and then glancing at the doctor anxiously. I know what's going on.

Andriusha, my poor Andriusha, was assigned here to the Cheka by the Revolutionary Committee against his feeble will. And Andriusha, this unhappy communard, when he needs to energetically sign his name under the dark order that decrees

"execute,"

always crumbles, always signs like this:

He doesn't write his first and last names on the strict life decree, but instead draws an utterly incomprehensible, utterly odd squiggle, like a Chinese character.

Me:

"Back to business. Doctor Tabahat, what do you think?"

The doctor (dynamically):

"Execute them!"

Andriusha looks at Tahabat with slight panic and crumbles. Finally, trembling and with a faltering voice, he says, "Doctor, I don't agree with you."

"You don't agree with me?" And a hoarse guffaw rolls through the dark princely chambers.

I was waiting for this laugh. That's how it always was. But this time I start, feeling like I'm entering a cold quagmire. The rapidness of my thinking is reaching its culmination.

And at that very moment, the image of my mother suddenly rises before me…

…"Execute???"

And my mother looks at me — quiet, crestfallen.

Translated by Zenia Tompkins

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Olesya Yaremchuk

Our Others: Stories of Ukrainian Diversity

LITERARY REPORTAGE #national minorities #diversity

Olesya Yaremchuk is a journalist and writer born in 1991, who has studied in Lviv, Vienna, and Munich. Since graduating from the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, she has been working as a journalist for various Ukrainian and international news sources, including *Hamburger Abendblatt*, *Deutsche Welle*, London-based *The Day*, *The Ukrainians*, and *The Ukrainian Journal*. She is currently completing a doctoral dissertation on travel anthropology in the literary journalism of Joseph Roth.

Olesya's first book, *Our Others: Stories of Ukrainian Diversity*, is a nonfiction exploration of Ukraine's national minorities. The first excerpt of the manuscript won the 2015 Samovydets Literary Reportage Award in Ukraine. The book was published in 2018 and subsequently won the 2018 LitAkcent Prize in Ukraine for best nonfiction book of the year.

Choven Publishing House, 2018
208 pages
Rights: Olesya Yaremchuk
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Olesya Yaremchuk writes literary reportages on national minorities in modern Ukraine. She seeks a balance between the remote impartial observer and deeply involved witness. This difficult thing is only possible in the form of literary reportage. This book is deep and honest. Our Others: Stories of Ukrainian Diversity uses a pronoun they frequently. Try changing they into we — we have a lot to learn when it comes to Other-Among-Us.

— *Hanna Uliura, literary critic*

Armenians, Germans, Meskhetian Turks, Jews, Romanians, Swedes… Ukraine is home to dozens of people, each vibrant and complex in their own way. Olesya's *Our Others: Stories of Ukrainian Diversity* is a chronicle of the author's travels to minority settlements in the dirty cities of Donbas and Bukovyna and the quiet villages in Bessarabia and the Carpathians. The author's goal was to document the present-day lives of Ukraine's national minorities and record the far-extending memories that they preserve about their own pasts. *Our Others* comprises fourteen rich and informative story-like essays about the individuals and groups that make up contemporary Ukraine.

Olesya on Literature:

"It is a very personal story for me. In my childhood i lived in a house where Jews, Ukrainians, Russians, Armenians lived. I want to tell stories of these people and help the readers to see the ethnic diversity of Ukraine. This project is about trust."

“Hippity hop! Hippity hop! Sweet little girl. Is she yours?” Mrs. Sofiya sits peacefully in the living room, playing with a stuffed toy.

“Where’s Mom? Come on, shout, ‘Mom! Mom!’” she says, addressing her question to the toy and throwing it up in the air. “Hippity hop! Hippity hop!”

She is a war veteran decorated with the For Courage Order of the third degree, the Order of the Patriotic War, and thirteen medals.

“Mom! What Mom? Where’s Mom?” she laughs and gives me the toy. “That’s where Mom is,” she points at the ceiling. “Nice Mom. Dad’s there, too. Mom’s there, Dad’s there.”

“This house stands in the area of the former ghetto,” her grandson says. “When she was in there, her mother pushed her somehow outside the fence. At least, she claims it was her mother. I don’t know how she did it. So, she went to the neighboring village of Ponykovytsia — people knew her there and helped her.”

“Where’s Mom? Hippity hop! Where’s Mom? Where is she?”

“After 2004, her senses became blurred,” her grandson says. “Her blood pressure jumped up and down. She just couldn’t talk about the war. Back in the 1990s, she could still keep it together. But then she just lost it. A year and a half ago, in October, she broke her leg and got stuck in bed. Her conscious state altered — it got mummified.”

“Where’s Mom? Hippity hop! Where’s Mom? Where is she? There she is!” once again, she points at the ceiling. “Will you stay with Mom? Where’s Mom?”

“Her grandma was killed right away. Her parents died in the ghetto. Her younger sister and two or three brothers died, too. After the war, her elder brother joined the guerilla. Later on, he became a sort of a deputy at the local council; then, in the 1950s, he moved to Poland, and after that — to the United States. She visited him once, in 1991. Her brother died soon afterwards.”

“Where’s Mom? No Mom. Where’s Mom? Where is she? Kommen Sie zu mir!”

“She took shelter wherever she could. Back in 1944. She never wanted to talk about it.”

“Hippity hop-hop-hop! Where’s Mom? Where is she?”

“Then she stayed with the guerilla.”

“Where’s Mom? Where is she?”

“When it all ended, she went to Ivanovo where she met my father.”

“Where’s Mom? Where is she?”

“She found a job here, at the cafeteria, and later at a grocery store.”

“Where’s Mom? Where is she? I will take you with me then,” the old lady says merrily, pointing at me. “I will take him, too,” she points at the toy. “And we’ll hippity-mom-mom!”

She breathes out, laughing.

“Kommen Sie essen? Hippity-hop!”

Sofiya Solomonivna keeps silent. Her past, just as the Jewish past of Brody, remains unuttered. The old lady throws the toy in the air once again, a big smile shining on her face.

“Where’s Mom? Where is she? Right there!” she points at the ceiling. “Right there!”

Translated by Hanna Leliv

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Volodymyr Yermolenko

Traveling Ideologies: Ideas and Politics in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe

HUMANITIES #ideology #politics #philosophy

Volodymyr Yermolenko is a philosopher, writer, and journalist, born in 1980. A graduate of the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, where he earned a PhD in philosophy in 2008 and currently teaches, Volodymyr also holds doctorates in political studies and philosophy from the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS) in Paris, earned in 2011 and 2018 respectively.

As a journalist, Volodymyr writes and presents for Hromadske World, an analytical weekly program on international politics. He also serves as an expert for the international nonprofit Internews and routinely comments on events in Ukraine for foreign media outlets such as *The Economist*, *Le Monde*, Radio France International, France 24, *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, *La Croix*, and Mediapart.

Volodymyr is the author of four books: *The Narrator and the Philosopher: Walter Benjamin and his Time* (2011), *The Distant Familiars: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (2015), the novel *The Catcher of the Ocean: The Story of Odysseus* (2017), and *Shifting Ideologies: Ideas and Politics in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe* (2018). Traveling Ideologies was awarded the 2018 Yurii Sheveliov Prize, sponsored in part by PEN Ukraine and the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard.

Dukh I Litera Publishing House, 2018
480 pages
Rights: Leonid Finberh
leonid.finberg@gmail.com

Modern ideologies, according to Yermolenko, have ceased to be strict constructions. We do not see a reconciliation between the left and the right. Moreover, ideologies no longer have global visions and dreams of a new person and humanity. Today, they appear to be tactics aimed at winning a specific battle rather than a global war.

— Dmytro Shevchuk, political philosopher

Volodymyr's *Traveling Ideologies: Ideas and Politics in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe* is a detailed and unexpected history of European intellectual thought during this period. The book explores how concepts and metaphors born in the era of the French Revolution continued to live in the totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century. Specifically, it looks at how the images of passing through death, the saintly criminal, the victim-messiah, and the renewing catastrophe nourished the histories of two centuries' worth of ideas, inspiring both ideological allies and their opposites. Volodymyr offers a detailed and harsh analysis of the present's chief ideological monsters: racism, communism, Nazism, fascism, and also their commingled byproducts. The book crosses the boundaries of various disciplines, including philosophy, the history of ideas, political science, and the history of literature.

Volodymyr on Literature:

I remember how I felt when got acquainted with the philosophy or literature for the first time. I touched the old dusty books but felt the joy of meeting with the live people. Those who wrote the books were of flesh and blood as we are. They breathed, walked, breakfasted, defecated, dreamed, loved, got irritated, quarreled and reconciled — as we do.

The ideologies of the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries maintained that history moved forward through a series of catastrophes, that its advance was always accompanied by cataclysms and occurred in jerks, and that there was little fluidity in history and anything new always brought with it the death of the old. What's more, they believed that only death could open up a space for new birth. Stirb und werde — die and (only then) become (someone else), they could say along with Goethe: The new could arise only through death, suffering, and destruction. The right-leaning Ballanche called it "palingenesis," the left-leaning Marx called it revolution, while later the twentieth-century liberal Schumpeter talked about "creative destruction."

The point remains largely unchanged: The key ideologies of this period converged at the idea that advance was possible only through suffering and destruction.

But if advance and progress always come through suffering and death, then another, even more terrifying idea ensues: the idea that there should always be those who take this death on themselves, who pay for the progress with their lives. This idea rests on the notion that progress requires human sacrifice, like an archaic deity hungry for human life. The ideologies of the period dealt with these sacrifices easily, first in the imagination and later in reality: German Nazism used Jews, American and British liberalism used "non-historic peoples" (from Africans to Native Americans), and Russian communism used "non-historic classes" (for example, Ukrainian peasants).

As it turns out, these enemies/ideologies truly had much in common. And their commonality lay first and foremost in their desire to justify brutality, their readiness to justify destruction, and their belief in the idea that death could be justified.

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Today we need to not be totalitarian, yet still have criteria for evaluation and action. We need to not be postmodernist, yet still accept the relativity of ideas and ideologies. The ability to maneuver between these two alternatives is capable of simultaneously making society both more effective and more humane, and of creating a society in which traveling ideas are an opportunity for life, not a justification for death.

Translated by Zenia Tompkins

© from the author's archive

Olena Stiazhkina

The Stigma of Occupation: The Self-Perception of Ukrainian Women in the 1940s

HUMANITIES #soviet #feminism #occupation

Olena Stiazhkina, born in 1968, is a Ukrainian author and political essayist, who has authored ten books of prose. Olena holds a PhD in history and is a senior researcher of Ukrainian history of the second half of the twentieth century at the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. She is also a professor in the Department of Slavic History at the Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University. Olena's doctoral dissertation was entitled *Women in the History of Ukrainian Culture in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century.*

Olena has been living in Kyiv with her family since the start of the war in Donbas in 2014.

Dukh I Litera Publishing House, 2019
384 pages
Rights: Leonid Finberh
leonid.finberg@gmail.com

The Stigma of Occupation: The Self-Perception of Ukrainian Women in the 1940s is a book about a war and a people's inability to process the experience of being occupied, both in the moment of its occurrence and in the first years after the expulsion of the occupiers. The research is built around the stories of three women and two regimes, one of which forced its female citizens to be Soviet and die heroically, while the other, the Nazi regime, forced them to renounce both the Soviet and the human. The book deals with despair and survival; with differences in the comprehension and perception of good and evil; with searching for and choosing strategies for both life and death; and with the subtle and uncertain boundaries between collaborating and remaining righteous, resisting and shunning, and marauding and supporting others. The book is also an analysis of the female experience and of the traumatic and unstable process of finding words and mechanisms of self-description in the contexts of "exploits," "betrayal," "enemies," and "heroes," all of which changed over the course of the 1940s both in response to the internal intentions of those women going against the grain, as well as under the pressure of the propaganda guidelines set by the state with respect to the "correct behavior" of Soviet citizens under occupation. This is the story of the formation of a state policy of stigmatizing the occupied, as well as the story of the self-stigmatization of the people who considered themselves Soviet. Lastly, this is a story of the nonlinearity of the war experience, presented in the uncodified language of the women themselves — one of whom was in search of a canonical biography for herself, the second of whom bravely and desperately fought for survival, and the third of whom saved others with no regard to the risk of punishment at the hands of Nazi or Soviet authorities.

Olena on Researching the Phenomenon of "Sovietness" Today:

"Not long ago, while preparing for a conference on the Soviet daily life and cultural memory of Ukrainian society, I began wondering about where Sovietness fits in: whether it had actually disappeared from Ukrainians' communicative memory already and moved into our cultural one. Obviously not. Sovietness is still with us, particularly in the words we use and in our manner of thinking.

"My impression is that, in a certain sense, there is an echo of Sovietness in the conversations of the majority, and when taking into consideration the "prevailing majority," it's not just an echo, but a relationship system between man and society. Innocent at first glance, words form in one's consciousness an image of identical people with an identical way of thinking, who are supposedly unconditionally correct simply because they're the prevailing majority.

"My own vocabulary also consists of Soviet words: They're not that easy to get rid of. Hence, you need to constantly tell yourself, Stop, and examine whether it's you thinking a certain way or Soviet language thinking on your behalf."

Over the course of "Stalin's" (Hannah Arendt), but really the Bolshevik-imperial war on Ukraine, women, who are the heroes of this book, acted — freely or not, consciously or automatically — both as the victims of the totalitarian system and as its agents. (Actually, this agency or capacity of people who saw themselves as Soviet and worked situationally or strategically for the good of the Soviet state leads the term "Soviet occupation" into the realm of a separate discussion.) What remains critically important, for me, is the understanding of the fact that society's coming under Nazi occupation was a catastrophe that has not been knocked from the ranks of the catastrophes society had already lived through, familiarity with which had led to practically useful experiences and symbolic principles. **Thus, the principle of the "heroic death" and the guilt at being alive against the background of the death/struggle/martyrdom/betrayal of others who, according to the authoritative Soviet discourse, should have survived Nazi occupation,** appeared at neither the moment of the start nor the development of Hitler's invasion, but already was anchored in the experience of daily survival of totalitarianism by women who saw themselves as Soviet.

Thanks to this, they gained the experience and practical skills of daily survival under the conditions of prolonged threats of torture and torture itself. Rewriting biographies, renouncing the past (parents, friends, colleagues, memories of another life), the manifestation of the concept of poverty as a marker of suffering and denoting one's self as "not theirs" in regards to the former government, the experience of sabotage, of seeming ignorance, of conscious lies as a practice of resisting coercion, the skills of workplace theft to feed one's family — these and other tactics tested under the Bolshevik government came in handy and were widely used under Nazi occupation. Whereas under the Soviet authorities these skills could have been viewed as crimes, in the situation of "living under the enemy," they took on a symbolic coloration of valor, bravery, and ingenuity, and, strangely enough, could be presented as "loyalty to the Soviet state."

The external view — held by both the Soviet and Nazi states — of women as a resource, as so much expendable material, often (yet not always and not for everyone) coincided with women's views of themselves: they were not "sorry to lose themselves" for the sake of the circle they considered "their own." "Their own" did not necessarily mean people who were blood related; furthermore, the circle of "their own" was not something that was set once and for all. It changed according to circumstances, concrete situations, the personal intentions of the female and male participants in the events. Some women were willing to view their lives as a resource for their children; some for their own and others'; still others for their colleagues, neighbors, and unknown yet suffering people. The tactics of survival that these women resorted to in times of "purges," "repressions," forced resettlements, and especially the Holodomor and mass collectivization, also proved effective under Nazi occupation. […] **The nonlinearity, zigzagged-ness, and the either reflexive or unconscious but always present anxiety of nonbeing was strengthened by the aforementioned Soviet directive "to die."** The Soviet government was suspicious of the non-dead, which is why for women who saw themselves as Soviet, living through the occupation (survival, being, the capacity to feel joy) increased their feeling of guilt. One of the heroines of this book — the partisan Polina Hubina — who survived two terms in Nazi prisons, felt this guilt more acutely than others. This guilt before the Soviet state permeated the whole of her diary. The fear of punishment, of the threat of turning a seven-year-old child into a hostage for the mother's "insufficiently Soviet" behavior was stronger than the fear of dying at the hands of the Nazis. Ultimately, the threat of execution was realized and Polina Hubina ended up not in the GULAG as a traitor, but in the pantheon of memory as a Soviet heroine.

Translated by Ali Kinsella

© from the personal archive

Stanislav Aseyev

In Isolation

DOCUMENTARY LITERATURE #war #ATO #imprisonment

Born in 1989 in Donetsk, Stanislav Aseev is a journalist and writer who holds a degree in philosophy from Donetsk National University. After the occupation of Donetsk, Stanislav began writing articles for the Ukrainian media depicting life in the occupied territories under the penname Stas Vasin. He has worked with such media outlets as *The Ukrainian Week, Mirror of the Week, Ukrainska Pravda,* Radio Donbas.Realii, and Radio Svoboda.

In June 2017, Stanislav was taken prisoner. In July 2017, the governing body of the Donetsk People's Republic acknowledged his detention on alleged charges of espionage. He remains a captive of the insurgents in the Donetsk region, which is not under the control of Ukraine.

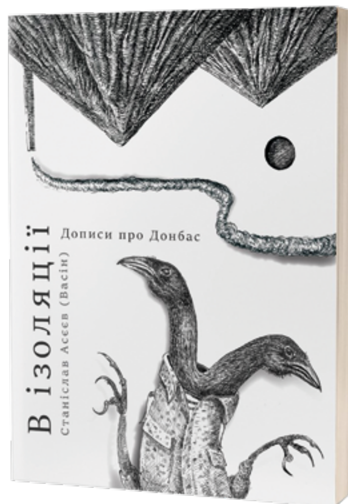
Stanislav's first novel, *The Elephant of German Silver,* was published in 2016. *In Isolation* is a collection of nonfiction essays and stories depicting everyday life in occupied Donetsk, which Stanislav authored for the Ukrainian media between early 2015 and his arrest in mid-2017.

Liuta Sprava Publishing, 2018
212 pages
Rights: Andriy Honcharuk
info@lutasprava.com

"What is Ukraine — the kind of Ukraine that would give us the opportunity to move away from the ubiquitous juxtaposition "we and they," which I so diligently avoided in this text, writing 'Ukraine' every time that I wanted to write 'we'? So long as we don't know the answer to this question, the thesis of the fictional cynic in one of Stas' articles ('A Letter from a Cynic to His Country') about how the state will sooner renounce its citizens than its territory will remain the truth."

— Kateryna Zarembo, political scientist, for Krytyka Magazine

Shops and movie theaters, public transport and churches, propaganda in the streets, shootings and the new occupational order, the opinions of Donetsk residents — Stanislav depicted all this in his articles and blogs. The Donetsk People's Republic detained him for this, severing the first-hand knowledge the remainder of the world had of present-day Donetsk through his journalistic writings. Stanislav's nonfiction collection is entitled In Isolation not only as a reference to the place where he is currently being held — the famous Isolation Art Center in Donetsk that has now been transformed into a prison — but also as a reference to the entire territory that the author depicted at peril to his life, which is now in isolation from Ukraine and the rest of the world.



March 5, 2015

In my over three hundred days of roaming the streets of Maki'ivka and Donetsk, I never did set foot on ground solid enough to withstand terror's enormous body. I wasn't able to. I will say this: When you're looking at a person wearing a suicide belt, who's saying that they can care less if they take the lives of two people or of five hundred million, you can disagree with them all you like, but the one thing you can't contest is their candor.

Here, in Donbas, you won't find this. From the very first days and minutes of the separatist protests, those who today solemnly wear camouflage balaclavas and DNR patches on their sleeves never actually said why it is they turned our country into a heap of smoking ruins. From the very beginning, the understandings of "friend" and "enemy" prevalent in Donbas made impossible the main principle of war: distinguishing us from them.

I don't support the Donetsk People's Republic. That's how it's been since these protest movements first arose, and there's no need to go into the reasons here. But when I'm looking at my separatist enemies, at those who've taken the lives of over a thousand people, I don't see Nazi banners, I don't hear an unfamiliar language, and I don't understand why it is I should be afraid of the so-called russkiy mir [Russian world] whose creators hail from the same people as does my entire family. Here it is: That same old rake that our entire nation keeps stepping on over and over again.

I, who through the power of my will and thought have held firmly loyal to the blue and yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag, can't stop wrestling with the question, who should I be scared of? Really, who? The Russians? The ones who sat with me round the same table in Kursk every night? Or my own "militia" friends whose home addresses are three hundred meters from mine? Can they really be the enemy? Can they really be the ones I may find myself shooting tomorrow with no compunction at all: Yes or no? And the only possible answer will be to admit to yourself honestly, Yes. Here it is: reality. **How we reached this reality — that's a whole different question.** But if we want to safeguard the capacity for fresh thought in the face of the tremendous press of propaganda, we'll need to admit that a common language and shared form of ID don't yet denote a brotherly hand. All the subtleties lie in the fact that, even despite the corpses and tears in the streets of Donetsk, the majority of Donbas residents still don't see an obvious threat, the kind that would plant us in the middle of an Arab desert with a knife raised to our throats. Yet is this desert really that far off?

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March 1, 2015

When you begin talking about your own life, typically the first things that cross your mind are hard-set phrases you use to your buttress your personal experiences, like that old crutch in the corner of the room. Something along the lines of, "I was born," "I finished college," "got married," "two kids," and so on. This always used to get us off the hook, right? But I won't even give you my own name now. The entirety of my conscious life has been reduced to unimaginative pseudonyms and masks in place of a real photo on social networks. **This became possible only after DNR banners began flapping over my native land where blue-and-yellow flags once flew, and I found myself transformed into a peculiar form of exile.**

Let me introduce myself. Stanislav Vasin — these are the two words from behind which I'll look at you from these pages. And the first thing I'd like to tell you about is the impossible. About the feeling that continues to not leave me even though I haven't left Maki'ivka for a single day since the very first moment of the Anti-Terrorist Operation and should have gotten used to it all by now. But the feeling of the impossible won't go away. What am I talking about? I'm talking about the completely demolished airport from which, clean and shiny, I used to fly to Kyiv only two years ago. About the wonderful restaurant in the center of Donetsk where a polite, elderly doorman used to hand me my jacket on my way out, but where now piles of sandbags tower and chaps with grenades come and go. About the air injected with explosions and the smell of burnt buildings. And finally, about the people whose families were cleaved right through by the front line, making recent friends and acquaintances into enemies. All this is impossible.

Some two-three years ago, as I walked down the spring streets of Donetsk, a university textbook under my arm, I could have made a bet that some sort of global cataclysm was more likely to happen on the other end of the earth than me encountering a column of tanks, howitzers, and artillery on University Street in such a short while. Really, why in the world should they be here? It's impossible. And what do I see before me now? Corpses on concrete and petrified looks.

Last year I witnessed all the key events that happened on our soil during the ATO, including both the "prisoner parade" and the first March rally, from which, in fact, began the solemn procession of separatism through our land… I heard the wails and moans rising from the bodies scattered on the roadsides after the bombardment of Donetsk known to all of us. On a few occasions, I too was not far from becoming a checkmark in the dry statistics on victims of this war. Moreover, I knew well many of those who were close to the fountainheads of Donetsk separatism or who are today members of the United Armed Forces of Novorossiya — some recruited into the so-called Kazachestvo [Cossacks], some into the Vostok and Somalia Battalions, and some into the local "police" or the SMERSH secret police. I see these people almost daily — people with whom I once played as a child in the same yard or just recently made plans for a summer vacation in Yalta.

Translated by Zenia Tompkins

© Gregory Vepryk

Bohdan Lohvynenko

Ukraïner: A Country from within

ART-BOOK #travel #storytelling #unknown Ukraine

Bohdan Lohvynenko, born in 1988 in Kyiv, is a journalist, music manager, television broadcaster, critic, community activist, writer, and traveler. He is the author of three books, one of which, *Saint Porno*, was a national bestseller in Ukraine.

Bohdan spent a period of five years traveling the world and lived in Southeast Asia for several years. During his travels, he hitchhiked a distance equivalent to circumambulating the globe twice over along the equator. In 2015, Bohdan launched the #NoVisaToUkraine campaign advocating for the simplification of the visa process, for which he received a Transparency International Anti-Corruption Award.

The author currently resides in Ukraine, where is working on the socio-cultural multimedia project Ukraïner. Over the course of 2017 and early 2018, over two hundred volunteers joined the project, and the project's online publications have been translated into six languages. By May of 2018, over fifty stories describing various corners of Ukraine have been published, and twelve of the planned sixteen regions of the country had been visited by writers on the project.

The Old Lion Publishing House, 2019
256 pages
Rights: Ivan Fedechko
ivan.fedechko@starlev.com.ua

Ukraïner: A Country from within is a book based on the first round of a large-scale expedition through Ukraine, which took place between the summer of 2016 and the winter of 2018 and covered all of the country's historic regions — from Slobozhanshchyna in the northeast to Podilia in the east, and from Volyn in the northwest to Tavriya in central Ukraine. The most powerful and vivid moments from the writer's travels to the country's unique nooks and crannies are gathered in this book: Stories about people and places that inspire, touch, and amaze are published alongside striking photographs depicting Ukraine as unexpected and interesting. *Ukraïner* is a vivid and illuminating portrait of present-day Ukraine, real and authentic, and was the most sold book at the 2019 international Kyiv Book Arsenal.

Bohdan on Literature:

"In any travels, the important thing for me is the cultural component. I try to get to know the society I'm penetrating through its culture. I'm not interestead in traveling as a process. I want to bring something back with me — and not little magnets or advice on how to travel well, but something inside me."

THE AZOV REGION

Askania-Nova

Askania-Nova Nova is the oldest steppe biosphere reserve in the world and the largest in Europe. Since 1984, it has been listed in UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Still in 1898, Friedrich Falz-Fein, a descendant of German colonists, donated the first six hundred hectares of land to establish a nature reserve. The researcher wanted to see how nature would live without human interference. The landowner donated a large share of his income as well for the establishment of a zoo and a steppe reserve.

Askania-Nova's director, Viktor Havrylenko, knows every plot of this land like the back of his hand. You cannot enter the reserve by any car except for the director's. The animals won't recognize it.

"I tell my colleagues that I'm the wildest one among them. No one has lived this long far away from civilization, in the woods."

Today, there are over five hundred species of higher plants and three thousand species of animals in Askania-Nova. You can study the behavior of zebras, buffalos, and antelopes in nearly wilderness conditions.

Botieve: The Bulgarians

The Azov region is multicultural. Bulgarians, Greeks, Albanians, Germans, and many other peoples have been coexisting in these lands for many centuries. The photo below shows the settlement of ethnic Bulgarians in the village of Botieve.

The local group of Bulgarians in the Azov region arose in the wake of a wave of mass migration in 1861–1862. Over that period, Bulgarian resettlers from Bessarabia established more than thirty villages in the Azov region.

In the 1990s, Bulgarian cultural societies sprang up in the region. They introduced Bulgarian language lessons in schools, founded newspapers, and set up folklore ensembles. The Bulgarian culture maintained in this region is authentic, which helps preserve the people's ethnic traditions and language.

Mariupol: Slag Piles

Mariupol, a factory city by the sea, sits in the southeast of Ukraine. The factories employ approximately one hundred thousand people living in this city with a population of half a million.

Slag piles are one of the landmarks of this coal-mining region. These mountains of mining waste usually tower above coal mines or pits.

Right after the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict and the temporary occupation of Mariupol, alternative spaces started to spring up in the city. These are coworking offices, playgrounds, concert and theater halls, and urban development organizations that are trying to reimagine the city. Most of them are on a mission to prepare for the forthcoming shutdown of the industrial giants, so that their former employees will have an alternative and don't become susceptible to depression. […]

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THE POLTAVA REGION

Horishni Plavni: Yachtsman Vasyl Leshchenko

Horishni Plavni is an industrial town on the banks of the Kamyanka water reservoir. Several villages in the region were leveled to the ground to free up space for a mining and refining facility. The flood plain that gave its name to this territory (plavni is the word for "flood plain" in Ukrainian) has been preserved and still surrounds the town.

The availability of a water recreation area gave a boost to yachting and even shipbuilding. In the 1970s still, a yacht club was established in Horishni Plavni, quickly becoming a local landmark.

Vasyl Leshchenko has built dozens of yachts in his garage. His Fregat became one of the town symbols. It all started with tiny wooden boats.

"In 1972, I bought a simple ready-made wooden boat for ten rubles and rigged it with a sail made of a bed sheet. That's how my young family and I went sailing for the first time."

Yuryivka: Beekeeper Ivan Hura

In Yuryivka, there has never been as much as a street nameplate. Today, fewer than twenty people live in the village where once there were sixty houses with almost three hundred residents. It is here, in Yuryivka, that the largest bee yard in the district, with more than one hundred bee hives, stands. Ivan Hura is the one who takes care of it.

If not for this bee yard, the village would have long since vanished off the map.

"Once, someone asked me at a school reunion, 'Do you know who that idiot is that's building something in Yuryivka?' And I said proudly, 'That's me!'"

Translated by Hanna Leliv

© from the personal archive

Diana Klochko

Sixty-Five Ukrainian Masterpieces

HUMANITIES #artbook #essay

Diana Klochko is an art critic and lecturer, who completed her postgraduate studies at the National Academy of Fine Arts and Architecture in Kyiv. She has been working in the publishing industry for over ten years, founding publishing houses, serving as an expert and member of the jury for various literary competitions, and founding the Metaphora Translation Award. She has been actively involved in a variety of published projects, such as art books on the work of Johann Georg Pinsel, Wladyslaw Horodecki, Olha Rapay, and Sergei Parajanov; books about the wooden architecture of Japan and Ukraine; guide books; and translation series.

ArtHuss Publishing, 2019
244 pages
Rights: info@huss.com.ua

In Sixty-Five Ukrainian Masterpieces, Diana invites readers on an excursion through the history of Ukrainian art from the seventeenth century through the final year before Ukraine's independence. The book includes explorations of Ukrainian icons, paintings, sculptures, and graphics, and posits the art of this period in a global context.

Diana's book aims to create an alternate history of Ukrainian art — one supplemented by works not considered "canonical" or "deserving of attention" in the nineteenth century for ideological reasons — and offers a subjective view of individual pieces preserved in both Ukrainian museums and private collections. This is why the choice, descriptions, and interpretations of the sixty-five masterpieces focus less on a "linear" understanding of to how these masterpieces of sculpture, graphic art, and painting were created, and more on a broader series of associations with European art. In the course of presenting these works, Diana explains why it is that these masterpieces hold such importance for Ukrainians today and why they aren't orphans in the diverse universe of style, but are instead witnesses to great (though in some instances unknown) intellectual stories.

Not only do philosophers create dialogues: Artists engage in them as well, conducting them silently through ages and over borders. Yet making out their messages to one another through their works of art isn't always straightforward. This book isn't about borrowings and postmodern quotes; it's about secret teachers, friends, and rivals that the authors chose for themselves at a given point in time — in museums, reproductions, and travels through space and time, in order to hide this at times fateful choice in specific works of art.

From the introduction:

Many years' experience delivering public lectures has taught me that for any masterpiece of Western European art one can rather quickly find a few texts and videos with various interpretations of what is depicted, while for Ukrainian ones you will be fortunate if there is one thorough description that identifies the year it was created.

Ukrainian masterpieces have seemed to me like orphans that live at exhibitions where few people are curious as to why they came into the world. They don't have anyone to tell their stories to. On the other hand, the formation of our own list of Ukrainian masterpieces has shown that many of them are profaned by belonging to a mass culture far from individual thought or emotion.

It is not just philosophers who create dialogs; artists also carry them on inaudibly across the ages and borders, and reading the intersections with their works is not always easy. This is not about borrowed or post-modern citations; it is about secret teachers, friends, and adversaries whom they, the artists, selected for themselves in certain moments — in museums, reproductions, and travels through space and time — in order to hide this sometimes fatal choice in specific works.

For half a year I tried to overcome the specter of the orphan artwork and understand even just a little the artists' hints recorded in their landscapes, portraits, still lifes, compositions, and colorist findings. Sometimes I succeeded. It was at those times that I saw how the chain was constructed, the topic that slowly evolves into a chapter was explicated. Attempts to visualize myths, create iconographic systems and principles of expression in which the heroines and heroes will be as recognizable and impressive can be found in the chapter "Remembering Myths." On artists' attempts to see the same traits they identify in themselves in their relatives and close friends, see the chapter "Among Their Own." The chapter "French Traces" is about Paris modernism as a hidden school for embodying non-Soviet Ukrainianness. Spokespeople for the new ideas that found an artistic language of a different level of space and which surprise with a courage that is almost unattainable for us today are found in the chapter "Visionaries of Ideas." A few chapters are comprehensive, including the addition of separate subjects in chronological order; a few essays tell about complex processes somewhat cursorily since there is information about them in other books.

Sometimes the artists whom I honestly tried to understand for some reason didn't let me get beyond the hints, therefore the number of essays was changed and there is much less on graphic art than on painting. There is only a little on sculpture, and it is mostly about the subject itself rather than accenting the expressive means. The chapter "A Fine Stroke" concludes the book, because the subject of graphic art was built on a through line of two academics — Shevchenko and Yakutovych — whose fate and works have seen a long line of modifications to Ukrainian drawing.

There's no chapter on sculpture. Not because there aren't any masterpieces, but because for us sculpture and architecture are just editorializing, access to public space, and not object-subject relationships, even when it's Pinzel, Olha Rapai-Markish, or the unknown masters of the Bohorodchany iconostasis. Archipenko left and the chronological framework of this book ends in 1990 — in other words, before the moment of Ukraine's independence, after which sculpture changed somewhat, as I hope to write about later.

For now, Ukraine does not have a tradition of the art history essay, yet sometimes I hung over each sentence or paragraph as if in weightlessness.

Translated by Ali Kinsella

Tetiana Filevska

Kazimir Malevich: The Kyiv Aspect

ART-BOOK #Malevich #modernism #avant-garde

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Tetiana Filevska is the creative director of The Ukrainian Institute in Kyiv, as well as an art manager, cultural activist, and the coordinator of the book *Kazimir Malevich: The Kyiv Period, 1928–1930.* A prominent research of the work of the avant-garde artist and art theorist Kazimir Malevich, she co-taught a lecture series entitled "Malevich's Kyiv Lectures: Reconstruction" in 2015.

Tetiana holds a degree in philosophy from Taras Shevchenko National University, and has held positions at the contemporary art support foundation EIDOS, the Foundation Center for Contemporary Art in Kyiv, and at the IZOLYATSIA Platform for Cultural Initiatives. She has also served on the managing team of the Kyiv arts fair Mystetskiy Arsenal and the First Kyiv International Biennale of Contemporary Art ARSENALE 2012.

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336 pages
Rights: Lidiya Lykhach
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Tetiana on Malevich:

"Kazimir Malevich may become the cornerstone holding up the bridge that connects two epochs, that connects Ukrainian and world culture, that connects different types of art, and, more broadly, that connects art with other spheres of the humanities."

In late 2015, news reached the artworld that new texts and documents authored by the avant-garde artist and art theorist Kazimir Malevich, dating back to the period of his instruction at the Kyiv Art Institute in 1929–1930, had been uncovered. *Kazimir Malevich: The Kyiv Period, 1928–1930 (Rodovid, 2016)* featured many of the over seventy typed and several handwritten sheets that had been preserved in the archive of artist Marian Kropyvnytskyi. Now, the collection *Kazimir Malevich: The Kyiv Aspect,* intended as a complement to the first book, offers eighteen studies on various themes related to Malevich's Kyiv period authored on the basis of these newly discovered documents. They include studies on his seventeen years in Ukraine, the artist's creative output while teaching at the Kyiv Art Institute, comparisons of his style to that of his contemporaries, his relationships with other artists of the time, and new biographical research, among others. The articles are authored by the most respected researchers of Malevich's work in Ukraine and abroad, including Jean-Claude Marcadé, Christina Lodder, Irina Vakar, Myroslava M. Mudrak, Iwona Luba, Alexander Lisov, Dmytro Horbachov, Tetiana Filevska (project coordinator), Serhii Pobozii, Ostap Kovalchuk, Yaryna Tsymbal, and others.

Introduction

The discovery of the "Ukrainian" Malevich persists. This is only the tip of the iceberg in a larger and more involved process of researching the "continent of the Ukrainian avant-garde" (in the words of scholar Dmytro Horbachov). Time separates us ever more from these little-known events, and the threads that bind us are concealed or lost in history: archives have been destroyed, abstract works of art burned, memory is sublimated, and important figures have fallen out of history. Despite all this, "our twenties" are getting closer. Names are returning from oblivion and new archives are being found, which allows us to restore the ambiguous reality of hundred-year-old events fact by fact. This process is similar to mining gemstones where the discovery of a single fact reveals years of tough investigative work: the search for and study of archival documents, research, discussions, and analysis. Yet, miracles do happen and large discoveries can fall from the sky, as was the case with Marian Kropyvnytsky's archive in 2015, provoking an upswell of interest in the figure of Malevich and the Ukrainian art process of the 1920s.

The appearance of the archive was an occasion to talk about Malevich's "Kyiv period," which had previously not stood out in this founder of Suprematism's biography. Recorded as a collection of materials in the book Kazimir Malevich: The Kyiv Period, 1928–1930 (Rodovid, 2016), it was the subject of discussion at Ukraine's first international conference on Malevich, Kazimir Malevich: Kyiv Aspect (October 6–9, 2016) and a colloquium at the Ukrainian Museum in New York, Modern Ukrainian Art in a Global Context: New Publications (February 2017). This book aims to strengthen the current wave of active interest in the Ukrainian avant-garde, which should conclude with exhibitions in museums all over the world and the inclusion of the Ukrainian avant-garde in contemporary academic discourse.

This book is the logical continuation and realization of three-year-old plans. It was initially conceived as an anthology of analytical materials on Malevich's ties to Ukraine, and is the second portion of the edition on material from his Kyiv period. The articles in this collection reveal to us, first and foremost, Malevich the teacher, a topic that had been waiting to be comprehensively studied. And, in fact, there is a diamond in the rough: a previously unknown letter from Malevich to Oleksii Poltoratsky, the editor of the journal Nova Generatsiia (New Generation), is being published in this book. Together with Yaryna Tsymbal's article, it offers us another piece of the Ukrainian-Malevich puzzle.

Although plenty of questions remain, more directions have been opened for further research.

A significant portion of the texts in this volume were delivered as lectures at the 2016 Kyiv conference (Marcadé, Horbachov, Pavlova, Meleshkina, Hovorkova, Vakar, Amelina, Kovalchuk, Lisov, Luba, and Pobozhii). A few of them were written especially for this publication (Lodder, Susak, Tsymbal, Filevska, and Kostiukova); two pieces are being published here for the second time (Mudrak and Levchuk). The illustrations to the articles were provided by the authors unless otherwise noted.

I would like to thank everyone without whom this book would not have been possible, or would have at least looked completely different. First of all, this is the authors: Larisa Amelina, Dmytro Horbachov, Nataliya Hovorkova, Valentyna Kostiukova, Ostap Kovalchuk, Larysa Levchuk, Alexander Lisov, Christina Lodder, Iwona Luba, Jean-Claude Marcadé, Iryna Meleshkina, Myroslava M. Mudrak, Tetiana Pavlova, Serhii Pobozii, Vita Susak, Yaryna Tsymbal, and Irina Vakar.

Thank you to the translators and editors as well: Alina Kuchma, Alexandra Koroleva, Oksana Strok, Yelyzaveta Taranukha, Yaryna Tsymbal, Antonina Yashchuk, Ali Kinsella and Tetiana Mykhaylychenko. They have made the texts accessible to the widest possible audience. I also want to thank Andrii Adamsky for his book design and layout, as well as for his support in carrying out this project and beyond. A special thanks to Yaryna Tsymbal for her invaluable advice and comments at all hours of the day. Finally, I am especially grateful to Lidia Lykhach and Rodovid Press for their collaboration on this book.

This book would not have been possible without the support of the Malevich Society (New York), the Adamovsky Foundation (Kyiv), and the M17 Contemporary Arts Center (Kyiv).

Translated by Ali Kinsella

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Oksana Zabuzhko

And yet Again I'm Getting into a Tank

HUMANITIES #essay #interview #modern history

Oksana Zabuzhko was born in 1960 in Lutsk to philologist-parents, and moved with her family to Kyiv in 1968. Her writing began getting published in literary periodicals in 1972. She studied philosophy at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and completed a course of postgraduate study in ethics and aesthetics at this same institution. Her dissertation toward a PhD in philosophy was entitled *The Aesthetic Nature of Lyricism as a Form of Art.*

Subsequently, Oksana taught aesthetics and cultural history at the National Tchaikovsky Music Academy of Ukraine, becoming a fellow of the Institute of Philosophy at the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. She lived in the U.S. from 1992 to 1994, as a Fulbright Fellow, writer in residence, and visiting lecturer at Penn State University, Harvard University, and the University of Pittsburgh. Since 1996, when her novel *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex* was published in Ukraine and her collection *A Kingdom of Fallen Statues: Poems and Essays* was published in Canada, Oksana has devoted herself fulltime to writing. She is the author of six poetry collections, six books of prose, eight books of political essays, and three philosophical studies.

Komora Publishing House, 2016
416 pages
Contact: komora.books@gmail.com

"Zabuzhko's post-colonial prose is similar to the contemporary post-colonial prose of Toni Morrison."
"The characteristic feature of Zabuzhko's prose are the subjective narratives, the internal monologues and dialogues, and the quotations and allusions that are all organically woven into the authorial voice."

— Dr. Tamara Hundorova, Ukrainian literary scholar

Oksana's *And yet Again I'm Getting into a Tank* is a book for those who don't avoid honest answers to pressing questions and are concerned about the challenges facing Ukrainians today. This book explores the illusory dreams of the "enslaved mind" and the masks and shapes that the long-standing war takes on in the age of mass media. It's about the search for heroes, about seminal figures and texts, and, ultimately, about how dignity and resistance to the established rules of the game give European civilization new hope. This is exclusive reportage from the hot spots of the information front, where the struggle with the forgetting and the indifference that almost cost Ukrainians their state continues. The appearance of this book is a warning for Ukrainian society — the society in which Oksana engages in not only her own artistic work, but also toilsome civic work. In particular, viewed as an intellectual and moral authority by her fellow citizens, she constantly evaluates the phenomena of Ukraine's socio-political life.

And yet Again I'm getting into a Tank includes articles, essays, interviews, and memoirs written by Oksana during the presidency of Viktor Yanukovych, the dramatic events of the Euromaidan, and the beginning and development of the war in Eastern Ukraine. A portion of the book's texts have been previously published in the Western media and are appearing in Ukrainian for the first time.

Zabuzhko on Literature:

"The first and most important commandment of a writer is: Don't lie. It seems simple. Yet if you try to follow it staunchly, it's precisely this commandment that makes literature a dangerous profession — as dangerous as that of a mountain climber or a deep-sea diver."

“This is no longer your home,” the men with machine guns tell you. “Pack up, the transport is waiting.”

This message can come — has come, countless times — in different versions. For example, You have two hours to pack (or half an hour, or twenty-four hours — a difference, in this case, nothing short of existential). Or, You are allowed two kilos of belongings per person, (or five, or as much as you can carry), and every clarifying detail here is worth its weight in living flesh, each smells of breast-milk, of freshly baked bread, of baby hair and old photographs, of the conjugal bed, medicine, dried herbs in a sachet, the candle-wax splattered gods of the hearth — of that entire inalienable life of yours, fed into your blood by several generations, and out of which you now must snatch, with great precision, a few essential elements so that it can stay intact — and it’s already fallen apart! — and you can throw together a new, portable, backpackable home for yourself, a snail’s shell that would keep you whole. This is why it is in fact a very important question, the question of all questions perhaps, one the answer to which will say much more about you than hundreds of questionnaires and quizzes of the five-books-you-would-take-to-a-desert-island variety: How much time would you need to pack if you found men with machine guns on your doorstep and they told you, get out, the transport is waiting?

This is not a journey — a journey is something from which you return. It’s not emigration — emigration is something you choose. At least you retain agency in your actions. Here, the key word is “transport”, because you become cargo, a statistical unit of logistics on a mass scale, like a head of cattle, or a cord of wood. Someone else’s invisible will has determined that you are to be uprooted, like a tree, from your one and only home, from the landscape of your tribal, genetic memory, as organic and tangible as a limb, to be transported across the map into oblivion and abandoned in an alien place. Now, they tell you, your home is here — put down new roots. If you can’t, if you wither — well, that’s your own fault.

Should the experiment be repeated on several generations, those subjected to it learn not to put down deep roots anywhere, ever. They learn to avoid becoming one with any place, like those unfortunate souls who had their first love brutally thwarted and spend their entire lives afraid of loving again. The instinctive, bone-marrow-deep memory of the original trauma of being uprooted blocks every subsequent attempt at rootedness, flashes a red alarm: a home of one’s own (and, by extension, the protective concentric rings of one’s village, city, and country around it) is the thing that it hurts to lose, so — no, please, don’t make me, I’ll have a light, portable home instead. This way, should the doors fly open and the strangers with machine guns step inside, you could pack, grab the essentials (your baby in the sling, your laptop in your backpack, your credit cards in your chest-pocket, you’ll buy what you need wherever you’re going, hurry, hurry, the transport is waiting!), and roll on with the wind, through cold, desolate space, not rupturing anything, no bleeding heart, no slashed flesh, having taught yourself to love not a point on the map but the distance between points, not the stasis, but the transition, not a place, but the motion: the road — the railway station — the airport. You’re up for it — being a nomad, living out of a suitcase, for years, decades if you have to, blind to your environment, as a tourist is blind to the peeling, flee-stained wallpaper in hotel rooms.

One learns to recognize them — places that are unloved, land that had been robbed of true owners, villages littered with strangers’ graves, places under the pall of anemia as if someone had pumped all of their blood out and injected them instead with someone else’s, of incompatible type. The new, rejected blood cells are people, and their loitering in these places, among incomprehensible walls and neglected homesteads where other families’ ghosts howl in the chimneys, leaves an outside observer with a disorienting impression that all these people are, mentally, not here but elsewhere, someplace where, they secretly believe, their real life, their own ancestral Golden Age is being kept, with no expiration date or long-term penalties, on ice, awaiting defrosting. This faith of theirs stays with them as the smell preserved somehow at the bottom of their own grandmother’s hastily packed (You have two hours!) suitcase. Even if nothing else could be preserved, taken along, this smell is forever — there is no home without it. Not even a portable home.

We catch whiffs of it in every corner of the world, at every latitude. The children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of the deported, we have spread over the surface of the planet like a new ocean, carrying with us our virus of acquired home-deficiency. We want to feel at home everywhere — and so we have homogenized, ironed out the universe into a few universally recognizable — and therefore (trans) portable — elements: the highway, the gas station, the McDonalds, the airport. We rely on disposable cutlery and cycle through domiciles and localities as we do through laptops and mass-produced winter coats. We have adapted quite well, when you think about it, nothing to complain about. The only thorn in our collective side is this smell.

It can overcome you without warning — it ambushes you in a snippet of an old tune, an accidental combination of colors, the sounds of a forgotten language. It’s in the steam rising from a pot of food — oh yes, we are convinced this is exactly what it smelled like in the kitchen of our great-great-grand-home, recipes are always replicated from memory, aren’t they, so the same food tastes the same no matter where it’s cooked. Doesn’t it? (The correct answer is, no, it doesn’t, but it’s better not to know this.) Movies, books, retro-styled cafes, historic reconstructions — we have spawned an entire industry of nostalgia, just so we wouldn’t feel homeless. But the smell still visits us in our dreams, and can explode with sudden, awesome force, reverberating through the entire length, it feels, of that long-ago un-rooted trunk — and that’s how you find a grown woman, a refugee from the occupied Donetsk, wailing and screaming at the stunned hospital personnel to dare not — dare not! — designate her a “migrant” in her new records, because she’s no migrant, oh no, she had driven her own car here.

And you cry with her, you wail right along, disapproving looks from the check-in ladies be damned, because you know this: two or three generations ago, this woman’s ancestors were brought to the Donbas to work the mines, like most of the locals to-be, precisely as official Soviet “migrants” — in a cattle car filled with other exiled kulaks. They were lucky — my kin were taken out to much more distant lands, to Siberia and the Kazakh steppes, and the mines they dug there and the cities that grew, like polyps, around those mines are now falling into ruin without any help from the Russian army, by virtue of those lands’ restoring themselves to wilderness in the wake of the violence inflicted upon them by men — and there isn’t anyone there who might look after the graves of those of my family’s members who never came back.

The woman in Kyiv — the third-generation deportee — had come back. By herself. She drove her own car. And it doesn’t matter that she was forced to do so — to pick up and go, albeit in the opposite direction this time — by men with machine guns (probably of the same brand as all those years before). The important thing is that she is no longer a piece of cargo, she has “her own car” — a perfect snail’s shell, her portable home that she had managed to put together from the land that was never really domesticated — and thus never loved, and thus the land so bitterly, hopelessly, and frighteningly left defenseless.

I can picture her driving. Through the rolled-down window, she could smell the smoke of burnt-out fires, the steam of field canteens at check-points, exhaust and the breath of the spring steppe coming to life — the smell of home.

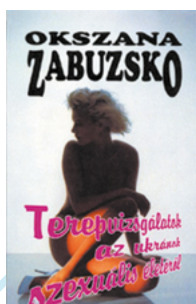
Translated by Nina Murray

Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex is a bestselling novel by Oksana Zabuzhko, both well-known in Ukraine and abroad.

Zabuzhko works have been translated into 20 languages.

It became an international phenomenon when it shot to number one on the Ukrainian bestseller list and remained there throughout the 1990s. The novel is narrated in first-person streams of thought by a sharp-tongued poet with an irreverently honest voice. She is visiting professor of Slavic studies at Harvard and her exposure to American values and behaviors conspires with her yearning to break free from Ukrainian conventions. In her despair over a recently ended affair, she turns her attention to the details of her lover's abusive behavior. In detailing the power her Ukrainian lover wielded over her, and in admitting the underlying reasons for her attraction to him, she begins to see the chains that have defined her as a Ukrainian woman — and in doing so, exposes and calls into question her country's culture of fear and repression at the very time that it wrestled its way toward independence.

Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex was first published in Ukraine in 1996, unleashing a storm of controversy and propelling the author to national fame. It topped the bestseller list in Ukraine for more than ten years, making it the most successful Ukrainian-language book of the nineties in every regard.



1999 by Europa Konyvkiado

2001 by Независимая Газета

2001 by One Woman Press

2003 by W.A.B. (Poland)

2005 by Изток-Запад (Bulgaria)

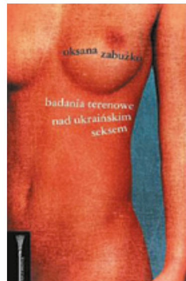
2006 by Literaturverlag Droschl (Germany)

2006 by Norstedts

2008 by Art (Romania)

2008 by Besa Editrice (Italia)

2008 by S.Fischer Verlag



2008 by W.A.B. (Poland)

2009 by Wereldbibliotheek

2012 by Plato Books

2015 by Intervalles (France)

"Oksana Zabuzhko is a well-known Ukrainian poet of the younger generation as well as a literary critic and translator. Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex, her debut in the genre of the novel, marks the emergence of a powerful new voice in Ukrainian belles-lettres. This work immediately strikes the reader with its novelty of form and with the original way it presents eternal issues like love, life, and creativity, intertwining them with uniquely Ukrainian themes."

— *Slavic and East European Journal*

"Language — any language — that's what I would call the capital love of my life: nothing else has the power to synthesize music and myth, two things without which the world would be a totally unlivable place."

— *Oksana Zabuzhko*

Selected awards

- Angelus Novel of the Year
- Taras Shevchenko National Prize 2019
- Antonovych Foundation Prize
- Correspondent magazine book of the year 2010 (for The Museum of Abandoned secrets)
- Ukrainian National Women's League of America first prize for «Notre Dame d'Ukraine»
- Sister, Sister (Praha: Argo, 2006) nominated as "Book of the Year 2006" by «Lidove noviny» magazine (Czech Republic)
- The 2004 European Grand Prix For Poetry by the Academy «Orient-Ocident», awarded at the International Festival "Poetry Nights at Curtea d'Arges" (Romania).
- The 2004 Milena Jesenska Fellowship in Journalism, awarded by the European Cultural Foundation and the Institute of Human Science in Vienna (Austria)
- The Bogliasco Foundation 2003 Award in Literature.
- 1997 Global Commitment Poetry Award.

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Sofia Andrukhovych

Felix Austria

NOVEL #Austria-Hungary #diary #historical memory

Sofia Andrukhovych, born in 1982, is a Ukrainian author, translator, and essayist. She is the author of five books of adult prose. Sofia is the daughter of the renowned Ukrainian author Yuri Andrukhovych and, like her father, studied in the Lviv Academy of Printing. Her novel *Felix Austria* was published in 2014 and won the BBC Book of the Year Award in Ukraine that same year. In 2015, she was awarded the Joseph Conrad Korzienowski Literary Prize from the Polish Institute in Kyiv. Together with Mariana Prokhasko, she co-authored the children's book *The Chicken Constellation* in 2016, which was featured in the 2017 White Ravens Catalog of International Children's Literature.

Sofia translates from both Polish and English, and has translated, among others, works by Kazuo Ishiguro, C.S. Lewis, and J.K. Rowling.

Sofia's *Felix Austria* has been translated into various languages, including German, French, Hungarian, Polish, and Czech. The book, in its French edition, was nominated for the prestigious Jean Monnet Literary Prize in 2018, and an English translation of it was the first translation from the Ukrainian to receive a PEN/Heim Translation Award from PEN America. It is currently being cinematized in Ukraine for release in 2020.

The Old Lion Publishing House, 2014
288 pages
Rights: Ivan Fedechko
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"What's important in this novel is sensuality. It's hidden in the aroma of spices, in Stefa's fragrant cooking, in Adela's hair. It's the intense sensuality of the end of a century, the end of an era."
— Isabelle Rüf, Le Temps

"Sofia Andrukhovych's novel is notable first and foremost for its extraordinary and thorough refinement."
— Oksana Shchur, literary critic

The events of *Felix Austria* unfold in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Stanislav, present-day Ivano-Frankivsk — an ordinary city in the Reczposolita territories of Felix Austria, whose residents live, suffer, inseparably fall in love, delight in science and the charlatan performances of world-renowned illusionists, seek amusement at balls and carnivals, *shpatzir* around their neighborhoods, and hide secrets in carved commodes. And against the backdrop of an era that, for posterity, will become overgrown in myths about an idyllic way of life, arise the fates of two women, intertwined as closely as the trunks of two trees, who are bonded in an inextricable relationship that doesn't allow them to live or breathe, stay or leave.

Felix Austria, Andrukhovych's second novel, was first published in 2014. It quickly became a bestseller in Ukraine and has been translated into German, French, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, and Croatian. The book has received an array of awards, prizes, and commendations, both in Ukraine and abroad.

Sofia on Literature:

"Good literature is when you don't understand how a text was crafted. When the act of reading sends a shiver down your spine, causes goosebumps on your skin, makes a lump arise in your throat, and brings tears to your eyes. With good literature, the ensuing days you find yourself sad or, conversely, joyous: You close the book and leap up, overwhelmed with the urge to act immediately."

For as long as I can remember myself, I recall being suddenly awakened by the Doctor's screams, extricating myself from Adela's embrace and rushing downstairs. The doctor slept in the office where he often saw patients: beneath the portrait of his father, on a narrow sofa, its heavy fringe brushing the carpet.

Typically, when I ran in, I would find the doctor sitting up on the sofa — visibly agitated, perspiring, with unseeing eyes. I looked into them, hoping to catch there some sense of what had happened to him, but only saw broken blood vessels, despair and terror, pain and guilt.

Though just a child myself, I would whisper in his ear, hushing him gently, stroking his sweat-drenched hair, and try to coax him to lie back down on the sofa. But he resisted, muttered something unintelligible in protest, his mouth pouting pitifully, hidden in the fullness of his beard. I brought him a drink of water and, in a spoon, a few drops of a sedative infusion from one of the little blue bottles. I toweled off his head and chest and quickly changed out his wet bedding for dry.

It was only in these moments, when he was no longer asleep but not quite awake, that I was able to ask him at least some questions about the fire.

On September 28, 1868, when at Lotringer's they were making marmalade in the garden, cooking it over a fire, half the city burned down. The Doctor's wife — Adela's mother — died in that fire, and for as long as he lived, he could not reconcile his sorrow. And we never again had marmalade in the house.

My parents, our tiny hovel nearby, also perished that day. No trace of the house remains, but I love to sit there in the spring, in the thickets of blossoming lilac, and think of what my mom would cook for the doctor and his family, keeping house for them.

It was the neighbors who rescued Adela and me, right away handing the two of us together over to the doctor, two bundles covered in soot and reeking of smoke. The women the doctor engaged to care for us came and went. It made little difference that he paid well — twice what their husbands made working at the distillery or the lumber mill. And whether or not it was so, I was convinced that I was the reason they didn't stay long. Adela was an agreeable and quiet sort, while I was loud and excitable, crying even when I was asleep. Sometimes I would get angry and foul-mouthed, and at other times you couldn't get a word out of me. In any case, their faces came and went like a fast-running stream, impossible to remember. Adela's face, on the other hand, always remained with me.

Among my favorite childhood fantasies was a melodramatic plot in which I unexpectedly discover that Doctor Anger was my real father. That he had had a brief fling with my mother while she was making a whipped cream babka for the doctor's wife. I spent long hours scanning myself in the mirror for any shared features with Adela to give my hopes some substance. Which was ridiculous: Adela and I were like heaven and earth. Pale, nearly translucent, with a downy cloud of strawberry blonde hair — Adela is delicate like a whipped cream babka, dreamy, easily wounded, and quick to tears.

Adela is someone you want to protect, swaddle her like a baby, and feed her with a silver spoon. You want to keep sharp knives, oil lamps, or anything heavy out of her hands. And cover her eyes and ears should anything come near that might alarm or frighten her.

I — Stefania Chornenko — am dark, wiry, and fast, as strong as a boy, and no great beauty. Except for my hair, which shines, lying healthy and straight; in the shade its color is dark like tree bark, but in the sun it shimmers with copper sparks. When it's not in braids, my hair is like fine silk, like a cascade of olive oil. It is a sin to admit it, but more than once I've caught Petro admiring my hair and making no effort to hide the fact. Petro is an artist; he lives in a world of imagery and shape, ornament, contour, and reflected light. He can admire a lump of earth, a hunk of broken glass, or a puddle of spilled oil. But it's the dead that he reveres most — he fashions their headstones.

Although no — he admires Adela most of all, having built a mausoleum for her although she is still alive.

Translated by Dr. Vitaly Chernetsky

2017 PEN/Heim Translation Award Winner

© ORF, Johannes Puch

Tanja Maljartschuk

Forgottenness

NOVEL

#time #historical memory

Born in 1983, Tanja Maljartschuk (Tania Malyarchuk) grew up in the Western Ukrainian city of Ivano-Frankivsk and moved to Kyiv in her early twenties, after completing a degree in philology at Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University. She subsequently emigrated to Austria in 2011, and currently divides her time Poland and Austria.

In Ukrainian, Tanja is the author of five collections of short prose, two novels, a young adult novel, and a forthcoming poetry collection. Her work has been translated into over ten languages and is widely available in German. She is a winner of the Joseph Conrad Korzeniowski Literary Prize from the Polish Institute in Kyiv and the Slovenian Kristal Vilencia Award. In 2016 Tanja won the BBC Ukrainian Book of the Year Award for her novel Forgottenness, after previously being a two-time finalist for this award for the novel A Biography of a Chance Miracle and the collection Downwards from Above. Her work has been supported by grants and fellowships from various German, Austrian, and Polish arts foundations, as well as the Federal Chancellery of Austria.

Though Tanja continues to write primarily in Ukrainian, she has also been writing creative nonfiction in German since 2014. Her first story authored in German, "Frogs in the Sea," won her the prestigious Ingeborg Bachmann Prize at the Festival of German-Language Literature in 2018.

The Old Lion Publishing House, 2016
312 pages
Rights: Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch, Cologne/ Germany
Iris Brandt ibrandt@kiwi-verlag.de

Written in hauntingly sparse and deliberate prose, *Forgottenness* chronicles the mental and emotional journey of a young Ukrainian woman searching through her nation's past for footprints to guide her through the present. The narrator, a young author, finds her life spiraling downward through a series of progressively less successful relationships until she is teetering on the verge of psychosis. She discovers unexpected solace and companionship in the unlikely figure of Vyacheslav Lypynsky (1882–1931), an unsung Ukrainian social and political activist of Polish descent, whose life is artfully tied with that of the narrator throughout the book. Thought-provoking digressions concurrently tell the story of multiple generations of the narrator's family against the historical backdrop of twentieth-century Ukraine. As the narrator grasps at sanity, she simultaneously grasps at aspects of her nation's history to keep them from slipping into oblivion.

Complex in both content and structure, *Forgottenness* defies a nation's Soviet-imposed memory of rootlessness by exploring the burden of a collective memory built on fear, obedience, and forgetting. The book was published in German in early 2019 under the title *Blauwal der Erinnerung* by Kiepenheuer & Witsch.

"A literarily impressive novel that shows what it means when one's own identity is made up of fear, obedience, and forgetting."
— *Buch Magazin*

"The comforting thing about this book is its discomfort. The blue whale [of time] shuts its mouth and swims on."
— *Frankfurter Rundschau*

"Maljartschuk is an outstanding storyteller who writes against the erasure of Ukrainian history."
— *Volksblatt.at*

Tanja on Language and Literature:

"Language, of course, is very linked to certain traumas, to certain fears, and when I write about them in a language that isn't native to me, a therapeutic distance is crated. It's not as painful, causes and consequences are more visible, it's easier to laugh to myself… Though from the perspective of creativity, there's no difference between writing in Ukrainian or German. Creativity has no nationality or linguistic identity."

1903: Krakow

Typically, Krakow's Ukrainian community, which was informally headed by Professor Bohdan Lepky, would rendezvous at the Mrozinski Coffee Shop in the city's Main Square. Every day the owner of the coffee shop would hold a little table for the occasion — next to the window, to the right of the entrance — and had even agreed to order the Ukrainian-language newspaper Dilo from Lviv. The same discussions always took place at the table: about the lethargy of the Ukrainian community, the hopelessness of the Ukrainian situation, the illiteracy of the Ukrainian peasant, and the unscrupulousness of the Ukrainian disposition. Mrozinski himself, while unobtrusively topping off his guests' cups with coffee or glasses with wine, would carefully memorize what he had heard, transcribing it all verbatim onto paper afterwards and passing neat little envelopes to the agents of the secret police every week. His informant letters were, however, rarely read in full. A certain measured dose of underground revolutionary activity suited Krakow as it did no other Galician town. It's no wonder that it was precisely here, in the seeming heart of Polish pomposity, that Lipinski the student, in full view of many witnesses, transformed into Lypynsky and entered the ranks of Ukrainian community leaders. No one summoned him there or offered him a particular welcome; he came on his own. "He's a marvel," Professor Lepky would repeat.

The monument to Ivan Kotliarevsky was to blame for everything.

It was finally erected that September of 1903 on Protopopivsky Boulevard in Poltava, and the event had an enormous, hitherto unprecedented resonance.

On the occasion of such a momentous event, Professor Lepky hosted a celebratory dinner at his home in late November to which he invited his closest friends and some local Poles loyal to Ukrainians. It was with them that an unpleasant argument arose after midnight, when the professor's wife had long since been asleep, which the previously taciturn and placid student Lypynsky began.

"This is an incredible act of victory of the community over despotism," he commented on the events with passion, to which someone less romantic remarked that all of it was likely not the beginning of a pattern but a mere fluke.

"The Ukrainian community is a flock of naïve sheep ruled by wolves. It's feeble and helpless because it doesn't have its own leaders."

"New leaders are rising! We must become these leaders!" Lypynsky exclaimed.

"Don't be silly, Mr. Lypynsky. You, as a Pole, will get handed over to the wolves first by the Ukrainian community. Or they'll eat you up themselves. Ukrainian sheep are a carnivorous lot."

Lypynsky fell silent for a while, but when the room had quieted again, he unexpectedly said, "The Polish intelligentsia of Ukraine has no other alternative but to support the inevitable formation of a Ukrainian state."

The Poles present at the gathering, ripe-aged men, were dumbstruck. They would have silently smiled and nodded their heads in response to similar assertions from their Ukrainian brethren, but pride didn't permit them to tolerate such a thing from the lips of one of their own.

"Young man," began one of them," you're talking rubbish. May the esteemed master of this home forgive me, but for there to be a Ukrainian state, it's not enough to have one monument in a provincial town, don't you think?"

Lypynsky seemed to be expecting this.

"The monument is just the beginning. The rebirth of the Ukrainian nation is inevitable."

"So, you're a clairvoyant?"

"One need not be a clairvoyant to foresee obvious things confirmed long ago by history. Ukrainians, split between the Kaiser and the Tsar, have ended up in a situation where they must either surrender and perish as a nation or revolt. In all of history, there is no example of a nation surrendering of its own volition. The Ukrainian people are no exception and won't surrender without a fight. They lived through something similar in the mid-seventeenth century and rallied for a war of national liberation, which was, incidentally, led by none other than a Ukrainian Pole, Bohdan Khmelnytsky."

2003: Soot

They say that the paintings of the great Renaissance artists once upon a time, immediately after being painted, had a completely different appearance than they do now. The soot from the candles that for centuries, up until the invention of electricity, settled on their surfaces is now impossible to remove or rub off with anything, hence a single museum visitor will no longer see the original colors. One can only speculate as to the gamut of color beneath the smoky overlay. The past is nothing but a speculation of the past. The soot that so densely coats lengthy stretches of time is a historical circumstance, while reality is that which, in defiance of everything, nonetheless emerges through it. It isn't necessarily the most important detail of the entire painting; conversely, it's some sort of wholly secondary, trifling minutiae that you wouldn't notice were you actually seeing the principal thing.

That's how I had stored my past in my mind. The secondary details play a more important role in it — or, more precisely, in my memory of it — than do the main ones. The main ones are all coated in soot. I can't navigate the past of my own life. If someone factchecked my knowledge of myself, I would fail the test, worse than anyone else. The neighbors could tell you more. But then, I have a very good memory of involuntary glances, cast furtively, when willpower failed me; of fears that never did get realized but hold me firmly in their grips till this day; of the unexpected smell of linden trees or asphalt steeped in summer rain, and how I'm running over it headlong, spattering my raspberry-colored velvet pants with puddle mud.

I remember very well the desire that made my head spin. I wanted everything. I wanted to experience everything firsthand. Is this hunger not sometimes called youth?

I didn't run away, for instance, upon learning that my golden-haired man was married. It would've in fact been strange to expect that a staid university lecturer two minutes shy of becoming a professor was living a bachelor's life. Wedlock is some sort of requisite beginning phase without which certain men dare not move up the social ladder. First they need to get married, and only then can they do the rest: build a career, publish books, reflect on the meaning of existence, grab drinks with their colleagues after work — in short, live. Such men are born already married. In which case every woman who falls in love with them should feel like a sinner from birth. Dolefully I was coming to the conclusion that I was sinning, but I didn't know this for a fact. Perhaps because I didn't know that I loved him.

2019, Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch, Cologne / Germany

Translated by Zenia Tompkins

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Kateryna Kalytko

The Land of the Lost, or Frightening Little Tales

SHORT STORIES

#mythology #reality

Born in 1982, Kateryna Kalytko is a writer, translator, and member of PEN Ukraine. She is the author of seven collections of poetry, the two most recent of which — *Bunar* and *Torture Chamber, Vineyard, Home* — earned her the LitAkcent Prize in Ukraine in 2018 and 2014 respectively. Kateryna is also the author of two short story collections: *M(h)ysteria* and *The Land of the Lost, or Frightening Little Tales*. Her work has been translated into over ten languages.

Kateryna is the winner of the 2017 BBC Book of the Year Award and the 2017 Joseph Conrad Korzienowski Literary Prize from the Polish Institute in Kyiv. She has been commended by critics for "prose writing that explores actual problems, makes us think, and expands our knowledge of other cultures." In 2015, Kateryna was the recipient of a CEI Fellowship for Writers in Residence, and was awarded the Kristal Vilencia Award in Slovenia the following year. Additionally, she was a KulturKontact Austria Fellow in 2018 and a Reading Balkans Program Fellow in 2019.

"For writing that left the jury with the sense of a dynamic and innately beautiful poetic voice, and for poems that moved us through a series of imaginatively-charged questions relating to the spheres of historical consequence, human intimacy, and the negotiation of loss; as well as questions with metaphysical and even spiritual tones; and, perhaps above all, for poems whose compelling national character also transmits an unmistakable universal resonance, a humanity at once borderless and fearless"

— *Vilenica Prize Jury*

The Old Lion Publishing House, 2017
224 pages
Rights: Ivan Fedechko
ivan.fedechko@starlev.com.ua

In Kateryna's *The Land of the Lost, or Frightening Little Tales*, the Land of the Lost drifts daily on the seas of an alternative geography that's in firm parallel with our everyday, commonplace geography. The Land of the Lost arose so that overly different people who found themselves displaced from the "normal world" had somewhere to go. It grew out of the need for shelter and a bastion. It regenerates and expands each time that yet another different someone is experiencing the world's rejection, and is therefore perpetually surrounded by water like an embryo. That's why all the incredibly variegated inhabitants of this small world are to some extent relatives and to some extent repeat one another's fates. This book, written in the rhythm of breathing, is about them, and each story is like a bridge over water that encourages the reader to cross over and learn to breathe in unison with them.

Kateryna on Literature:

"What's going on today with humanity isn't at all comforting. The good news is that humanity generally experiences catastrophe after catastrophe, yet still survives. Theodor Adorno's thesis that poetry is impossible after Auschwitz hasn't justified itself. It is possible. Yes, this is a different literature: language has changed, the microsurgery of working with texts has changed… But humanity does exist, and literature is possible. And the task of writers in this context is to do everything so that people continue to meaningfully exist on."

I've never been down there. It would be a long, dangerous, and unnecessary journey. I, a she. I distinctly remember the day when I started perceiving myself as a woman, "I, a she," instead of the usual "I, a he." But at first, I have to recall all those never-ending, unbearable days of being a man. Although, come to think of it, a boy's skin did bring me some good: it let me learn to read and write, and later to unroll old manuscripts in a town library. There, I tried to count all the attacks and sieges we withstood, but their number turned out to be much more significant than my little head could grasp. However, I couldn't remember a single one. My father, when we talked about it, always claimed that I, his son, surely had witnessed at least one, but I didn't remember anything, for it was too scary to remember. And every time, he would raise his eyes to the sky in silent gratitude either for my survival, or for my oblivion and his survival, or for everything together. He was a blacksmith. My mother was a skilled seamstress, and she was the only one who sewed my clothes, even when her eyesight started failing her. No one else would do it without raising unwanted questions. She called me her "honey-sweet son" and patted my close-cropped head and sunken swarthy cheeks.

Behind my back, though, she told my father that she was afraid of my green, devilish eyes.

Upon turning ten, all boys were expected to work. It was a way to master a craft and earn a few extra coins for the family. Girls were taught sewing and embroidery, but my mother would never teach me anything like that. My parents hoped that I would work alongside my father in the smithy, but I turned out — I, a she — to be too weak of a boy for this. Our neighbor, a water carrier, took me on as an apprentice. He was a kind man who always considered me a frail boy and didn't overwhelm me with work. The work, I must say, was even honorable: for us, water was of the utmost value. Sometimes it rained, but the streams of life-giving moisture immediately poured downward, to the valley, and life there thrived, much to our envy. Once I told my parents — I, a she, their son — that it would be nice to go live down in the valley, and they immediately gave me a good dressing-down: we lived in a proud town and would never agree to trade its status as the celestial gates for some two harvests a year.

So I bit my tongue — I, a she, their son — and worked since then without saying a word.

We only had two wells, sacred and shallow: as the old water carrier had explained to me, rainwater gathered between the layers of soil and thus sustained them. Prophesying a long drought, the well water would first turn salty, and then run almost dry, and people would draw buckets half-full of sand. Even in the best of times, water from these wells was far from being as crystal-clear and good as water from the Stone Eye, which was two hours away on horseback from the Eastern Gates. That well was bottomless, hollowed out in a rock — as if the giant, strangling the serpent, left a fingerprint there — and always full of ice-cold water. We would go fetch it three times a week. The journey was grueling, our work honorable, and the water expensive. People were happy to pay for it, though, and occasionally shoved some homemade treats into my hands, or even an extra coin. But our main job was to fill human-sized barrels that were kept in a secret cave so that we would have a water supply in case of another siege. The cave also held our arsenal, and when finished with their main tasks, the children had to work there as well: to count the cannonballs, hewn out of stone, and place them in the corners, to patch tarpots, and to sharpen arrowheads and put them away in chests.

Older children didn't work with us and instead practiced swordsmanship. How eager we were to grow up!

***

Everyone remembered war. It was the only way to live. These memories replaced our spines and partly our air. Everyone remembered at least one war, and when children were born in a rare lull, before long, they too would see war. It usually erupted right when newborns started developing tenacious, conscious memory — life repeats itself, there's no denying it! So everyone remembered war.

Also, there were many orphans around.

My parents — the only ones I had — were not my real parents and thought I was fortunate to be adopted as their son. It wasn't a slip of the tongue when I said: "adopted as their son." Yes, they harmed me more than a lonely childhood, starvation, malice, beggary and sleeping in the grass without a roof over my head ever would. They had always wanted a son. And, without telling anyone that they'd taken an orphaned girl into their house, they raised me as a son.

I hardly remembered anything about my life before them. Only a dark house with ceilings so high I never even saw them. The cold was the only master of that house. Orphans lived there, countless children who were afraid of one another and cowered in the corners, crying or baring their almost animal-like teeth. I was one of them. I remember pressing my ear against the wall in the evenings and listening to a woodworm gnawing at the boards. I could spend all evening doing just that. Some children disappeared from the house, but new ones arrived instead. It seemed we did nothing else but wander through the rooms in half-darkness, some of us incessantly crying. Sometimes shadows of the town widows would appear as if sketched on the walls with thick black ink. They silently dispersed through the rooms, patted us on the head, gave us food, bathed us, mended our clothes — and then vanished again. One day my adoptive parents came, and I, too, disappeared from the dark house. No one remembered who I was there and where I came from. I, myself, wasn't quite sure what kind of animal I was, so they easily made me their son. And they gave me a name, Laleh, fitting for either a girl or a boy. All the children here had floral names. Plants didn't favor our poor soils and bitter fogs, which crawled over the mountain ridge almost every day. So adults raised us, children, instead: we also had pretty names and usually kept submissively silent.

Translated by Tetiana Savchynska

Kateryna Babkina

Happy Naked People

SHORT STORIES #personal history #happiness #postsoviet

Kateryna Babkina is a poet, prose writer, playwright, and screenwriter born in 1985. She is the author of four poetry collections, one novel, two collections of short stories, and two children's books. Kateryna graduated from the Institute of Journalism at Taras Shevchenko National University in Kyiv in 2006. She is a regular contributor to both Ukrainian and foreign publications such as *Esquire Ukraine, Focus, Business, Le Monde, Art Ukraine, Harper's Bazaar, The Insider, Platforma*, and *Buro 24/7*.

In 2015, together with Ukrainian author Mark Livin, Kateryna initiated the flash mob #bookchallenge_ua, which challenged Ukrainians to read two hundred books a year. The reach of the project on social networks was six million Ukrainians.

Kateryna's literary texts have been published in numerous periodicals and anthologies in Ukraine, Europe, the U.K, and the U.S. Her novel *Sonia* has been published in German, and multiple of her stories have been made into short films that have been featured at film festivals in Ukraine, Serbia, and the U.S. In 2016, a short film authored by Kateryna was screened as a Young Director's selection at the Cannes Film Festival.

© Valentyn Kuzan

Meridian Czernowitz, 2016
80 pages
Rights: Kateryna Babkina
babkina_@ukr.net

"A young and established Ukrainian writer and screenwriter."
— KulturKontakt Austria

"The book has many subtle and aching moments. War is present in the lives of the characters just as it's present in the lives of actual people — without pathos, with shock and trauma. The reader truly plugs into the lives of the characters and feels their emotions, and it's not often that authors succeed at this."
— Svitlana Prykalo, BBC Ukraine

Happy Naked People is a thematically tied collection of stories about happiness or, more precisely, about what happens to us before its onset. These are stories about the generations of Ukrainians who, in the periphery of their lives, encountered ruin and a dustpan, who grew up and grew stronger however they could, not owing to but in spite of everything that was happening to them. It's about how these people live now and how they interact with a world in which war, love, emigration, Hanoi, New York, the dead, the living, the blind, and the unwise all coexist.

Kateryna on Literature:

"A writer should know a lot, think a lot, read a lot…and write a lot. All this takes a lot of time. You need to constantly update your knowledge of the world and verify its tenability, maintain the vitality of your brain, and follow the trends, the development of language, and whatever interests society."

And then she and I were eating oysters together at the Grand Central Oyster Bar. Anka came to the bookstore in the East Village for my reading. She listened absent-mindedly — texting the whole time — waited patiently until I signed a few books, and then came up to me and got down to business right away. "Hi. I'm Yasmin Greenstein. Didn't you recognize me?"

I didn't. I'd never known any Yasmin Greenstein with short hair and a pierced eyebrow who wore an expensive leather coat and had incredibly bright eyes. I had absolutely no doubt about that. My experience at these kinds of events taught me to smile politely and keep my mouth shut.

"Tanks," said Yasmin Greenstein. "Buttons."

I was the only one she could play with in the military garrison. Anka's father was in jail most of the time, her mother was quite hard-working and level-headed, but she died. Anka was taken in by Vadik, Denys, and Isfar. I barely could remember those guys; they were slightly older than us. They were petty thiefs who would steal car radios, wallets, and old women's jewelry. Those guys belonged to some bigger organization; they called it the mafia — at least that's what they told Anka. Anka would tag along, like a younger friend or sister; she learned how to break into cars and she sold everything her father hadn't gotten rid of yet. She didn't skip school, because that would've raised questions. But nothing raised questions back then. One country had just collapsed and another one had yet to be born. Everyone was just trying to get ahead, the military base was plundered, those who could left the garrison, and those who couldn't stayed.

We'd finished the oysters and bottle of wine by that point, so we went up to the big, excellent bar on the second floor, soft music playing in the background, and a glass chandelier hanging somewhere over our heads. The hostess showed us to our seats. Someone sent Anka an Old Fashioned right away; she nodded, said "Hi" into the gloom, and ordered two more for us. And another two. And then two more.

Anka had to figure out her future when she fourteen. She couldn't just tag along with Vadik, Denys, and Isfar any more, so she had a serious talk with them. They totally agreed with her, so they talked to someone from the mafia about her future. After all, she had a knack for breaking into cars and men's apartments: she'd get them drunk, flirt with them, steal their keys, and then worm their addresses out of them.

They returned to Anka and said she had to be initiated. They offered her a choice: either they rape her, all three of them, or she fights them. Like a man. Gloves off. Anka was given some time to mull it over.

Then we got into Anka's shiny BMW. Her maneuvering was a bit tentative by this point, but she did manage to parallel park somewhere in the East Village about ten minutes later. Anka stopped by a Chinese joint and came out with a bottle of good whiskey and two tumblers; as I sat there waiting for Anka, I thought she'd never come back and that she'd never even been here, actually. We wound up losing those tumblers somehow. We walked by the church Andy Warhol went to, sat on the grass near the church where Patti Smith read her poems, drank straight from the bottle, hugging each other on the tall steps across from the building where Auden lived.

Anka took that choice very seriously. It just so happened that she barely knew her father, but, at that time, he was bumming around the house. Anka told him briefly what was going on and asked him point-blank, "What should I do?"

And he said, "Fight."

He probably should have told her to run away and hide, forget all about those people, go to school, find a job so she could get out of there one day, volunteer somewhere, move abroad, find a good guy and have kids, save herself, forget about life there and try to never come back again — or something like that. But all he said was "Fight."

So Anka fought. Like a man. Gloves off. But there were three of them.

"And you know what?" she said, pulling at her eyebrow piercing and passing me the bottle somewhere by the corner of Second Avenue and 11th Street, near the river that smelled of rotten watermelons. "When I couldn't fight any longer, when I was down and out and almost unconscious, they went ahead and raped me anyway."

Translated from the Ukrainian by Hanna Leliv

Edited by Reilly Costigan-Humes

Kateryna on her book:

"These are personal stories, and, as should be easily understood, these are stories about traumatic experiences. Because what else does such a time bring people? What matters isn't what kinds of experiences you've had and carry around with you, but how you handle them. When we live through complex things, we obviously accrue armor. It's a healthy protective mechanism of our psyche. We become more hardened, stronger; we adapt better to the circumstances. We form a kind of shell. But in order — I'm not going to say to be, but — to be happy, once in a while you need to be able to shed this things and leave yourself completely naked."

© Vitaly Vorobyov

Yuri Vynnychuk

The Tango of Death

NOVEL

#historical memory #Lviv #holocaust

Yuri Vynnychuk, born in 1952, is a prolific writer, known popularly as the "father of black humor" in Ukrainian literature. He is an avid researcher of the city of Lviv and the author of erotic and humorous best-selling novels, provocative literary-political texts, and literary hoax texts. Yuri has authored fourteen novels, two collections of poetry, three short story collections, and a host of regional-study and children's books.

The works written by Yuri in the 1970s and 1980s were distributed through self-publishing, arousing the interest of the KGB. Many of his books are characterized by a lively plot, frequent erotic and comical passages, and polished language flavored by the regional dialect of his native Halychyna. The author is known for his use of allusions, and for playing with and provoking the reader.

Yuri is a member of PEN Ukraine and the vice-president of the Association of Ukrainian Writers.

"The Tango of Death is a true literary masterpiece. It describes — if we simplify it to the extreme — the phenomenon of Lviv. However, Yuri Vynnychuk reanimates its prewar magic and the horror of its occupation in an atypical manner. The novel's main character says that old Lviv 'vanished in the depths of time, like Atlantis.' He says, 'Only the stonework remained; everything else — the people, the language, the culture — vanished and became a dream.'"

— Dariusz Nowacki, Gazeta Wyborcza

Folio Publishing, 2012
379 pages
Rights: vynnychuk@mail.lviv.ua

"Having been given the opportunity to be the first to read The Tango of Death as a still unpublished manuscript, I must admit that with its appearance we now have a Ukrainian Umberto Eco, and even with notes of Jorge Luis Borges. Into the fabric of the text are woven tragedy, humor, amorous suspense, detective intrigue, and entire pages of encyclopedic knowledge and narrations. To describe pre-war Lviv so vividly and delectably — this required mastering remarkable craftsmanship and a remarkable depth of knowledge. Ukrainians have long needed a text in this sort of historical light."

— Andriy Lyubka, Ukrainian author

Yuri's novel *The Tango of Death* undoubtedly remains one of the most resonant literary events of recent years and one of the pinnacles of the author's work. The novel's events unfold in two parallel plots. In prewar Lviv and over the course of WWII, four friends — a Ukrainian, a Pole, a German, and a Jew, all of whose fathers were soldiers in the army of the Ukrainian National Republic and died in 1921 in the battle outside the village of Bazar — live through various adventures, fall in love, and fight, remaining loyal to their friendship at all costs. Parallel to this, other events involving other characters are taking place in present-day Lviv and Turkey. Only in the novel's unexpected finale are the two storylines masterfully merged.

Yuri on Literature:

"If I feel some kind of responsibility for my writing, it's only a linguistic one. I know that I need to write with refinement and sophistication, demonstrating a rich vocabulary. But a writer isn't obligated to feel literary responsibility. Literature can nurture, educate, advise, inspire, or depress, but in general that's not its calling. I don't set any particular tasks before myself when I write because I never know in advance how it'll all end."

We're all nobodies in our youth — even the greatest geniuses whose careers and recognition lie in store enter this world not at all acclimatized to life — which is why it's no wonder that upon getting married we subject ourselves to all sorts of ordeals that rarely end happily and, more often than not, end in divorce. It was precisely into this sort of trap that the young Myrko Yarosz fell when he married the warm and sweet Roma right after college. He would read her poems by fine poets and she would pretend to listen, even half-closing her eyes and tautening her lips, while her face took on such an inspired look that he fell more and more deeply in love with her, thinking that she had in fact been created in order to sit and listen, enchanted, to everything he said, that entire mass of words in which he reveled and into which he would sink like into a quagmire, gulping air greedily. And when during these readings she would snuggle against him and tickle his ear with her hot breath, he thought that this idyll would be eternal and that both of them were simply destined to get married. Feelings were overpowering common sense; and then when they did get married, they moved in with Roma's parents, and this became the beginning of the end.

Two years of teaching, subsequently coupled with long-distance graduate work, didn't portend anything joyous because money was as lacking as it had been, and Roma's parents didn't deny themselves the pleasure of time and again reminding the young couple that they were living off them like leeches. In the evenings, after lulling his son to sleep, Yarosz would surround himself with books in the kitchen and work on his dissertation on the literatures of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Sumer, Arcanum, and the Hittite Kingdom, but the deeper he delved into the topic, reaching for the next round of sources, the more hopeless the work seemed to him because one round of sources begot other sources, and those begot still other ones, and so on without end, forcing him to wander lost in the labyrinths of contrasting texts, forcing him to often draw conclusions by groping, since everyone who had worked on this subject had dealt not with the full panorama of that period's literary life, but only with fragments of it that had by some miracle reached us, had by some miracle been deciphered and read, yet even then not all of them because no one ever did succeed in penetrating the Arcanum language, and conclusions about Arcanum literature continued to be inferred on the basis of Hittite and Hurrian sources. And it was this last problem that soon captivated Yarosz to such a degree that he moved everything else aside and set about deciphering Arcanum texts. Many a scholar had tried to do this before him, but they had had no luck in the end: The Arcanum cuneiform was unlike any other.

Finding time for his research in only small chunks, Yarosz began to seriously contemplate the point of his family life. His dumb, rote work in a school depressed and exhausted him, and he questioned how it was he had become a schoolteacher, seeing as he had loathed the profession back in grade school still. He would come home tired, and the only thing that could motivate him to work on his research was wine. The first cup washed away the day's tension, while the second freed his thoughts, tearing all the shackles off them, and then his pen would fly over paper as if mad. Granted, this would last at most two hours because then fatigue really would get the better of him, and he would go to bed with his head full of ancient hieroglyphs, clay tablets, and papyri, to all of which would be added both his wife's and her parents' utter disdain toward his research; they considered what he was working on to be nonsense, a futile waste of time, since he'd never complete his research, which is why he was destined to live out his days as a lowly schoolteacher. For them it had already become some sort of compulsory ritual to tear him away from his work by sending him to the store for bread, to take out the trash, to go fetch water from the delivery truck whenever the water supply was shut off, or to wake him at the crack of dawn so that he run and get in line for milk, sausage, cheese, sugar, flour, whatever. He alone had to go fetch all this back then in the 1980s, when everything imaginable was in short supply and people turned into merchandise-hunters, scuttling around the city and grabbing spots in multiple lines at once in order to buy a kilo of sugar or a packet of laundry detergent in each of them because more than that wasn't being vouchsafed into one set of hands. On top of this, he had to keep an eye on the bookstores, which took delivery of new books once a week, with only a limited circle of people having access to this information, so that already an hour prior to the bookstore opening after the "acceptance of goods" he could get in line and then burst in at the front of the horde and be the first to snatch Kafka, Camus, Akutagawa, Cortázar, Márquez, Borges, and the whole lot. Yarosz, for the sake of this sacrosanct cause, even struck up a platonic romance with a particular female bookseller; he didn't have the mettle for something more than this because she belonged to that **body of post-prime spinsters who, in consequence of years spent living alone, became insufferable, capricious, and complete bores.** Inviting her out for a coffee, Yarosz was forced to hear out her whole life credo, that entire heap of intricate precepts with which she had strung herself like signal flags dressing a ship. Her entire wardrobe was, after all, one of these signal flags — like that of a nun, intended to conceal all her body's protuberances because she was waiting for "a serious relationship," "flirting didn't interest her," but "Mr. Myrko was a very nice person," "he could be trusted," "it sometimes felt like they've known each other for a long time," and then a promising and auspicious smile, one more little flag beginning to flutter on the horizon, albeit with the evocative warning, "It's for no one, no one, no one — only the one." Yarosz gazed at her snow-white arms, covered in fine, auburn hairs, and pictured her legs, perhaps just as hairy, which aroused in him the desire to explore this continent not yet traversed by anyone, with all its unrevealed sanctums, but he was rescued from the expedition by the fact that he didn't have enough free time and that just going out for coffee more than sufficed to sustain a cordial relationship and extract information about the arrival of new books.

Translated by Zenia Tompkins

Markiyan Kamysh

Scrap

NOVEL #Chernobyl #Pripyat

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Markiyan Kamysh is a Ukrainian novelist born in 1988. He studied history at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, but abandoned his studies to devote himself to literary pursuits and the prohibited research of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone. From 2010 through 2017, he was essentially an illegal stalker of Chernobyl, making a countless number of excursions beyond the barbed wire encircling the Zone. In total, he spent more than a year living within the Zone, several months of which were spent in the abandoned town of Prypiat'. These expeditions resulted in the 2015 novel Ophormlandia, or a Stroll Into the Zone.

A Stroll Into the Zone was published in France by Arthaud (Groupe Flammarion) under the title La Zone. The prominent Paris-based magazine Le Nouvel Observateur characterized the book as "breathtaking" while Les Inrockuptibles described it as a "sparkling text." L'Humanite described it as "fantastic," Le Point singled it out as "beautifully written." The book was also recommended as a pick of the month by the Monaco-based newspaper Monaco Hebdo.

Markiyan was born into the family of a Chernobyl liquidator and nuclear physicist.

Markiyan's second novel Scrap, about marauders of the Chernobyl Zone, was published in 2017.

NORA-druk Publishing, 2017
160 pages
Rights: Astier-Pécher Literary & Film Agency
lpecher@pierreastier.com

Scrap is a story about people from the half-abandoned Chernobyl-area villages where life still lingers. It is about people residing near the border of the Exclusion Zone who illegally collect radioactive ferrous scrap. It tells of harsh, bold, perpetually drunk men with metal teeth and monochrome prison tattoos on their hands, who harvest air bombs in sacks and steal metal fences from neighbors in exchange for alcohol. Scrap introduces readers to a provincial and only partially alive Ukraine replete with the unattractive, the dark, and the gloomy.

Scrap is a tragic comedy — an honest story about society's outcasts who fantasize about earning a profit by turning everything in as scrap, even the Earth's core. The novel was long-listed for the 2017 BBC Book of the Year Award and received the Oles Ulianenko Award for the author's nonconformist approach to life and literature.

"A vivid and strong text. Cool!"

— Myroslav Slaboshpytskyi, Ukrainian film director

"The book, which was published two years ago in French, became immediately popular in France, was an immediate topic of conversation: Everyone was interested because they had heard about Chernobyl. The zone will always hold in it a mystery: That's a well-known, universal theme already. It's like with the Bermuda Triangle or the Tunguska event: It interests everyone."

— Andrey Kurkov, Ukrainian author

Markiyan on Literature:

"But the longer I stay in Pripyat, the stronger I believe that we're all set in motion by the implacable flow of time. We're in a rush to leave our mark wherever time has stopped, by doing street art, writing a book, shooting a movie, or taking pictures of every nook and cranny. We are in a rush, for we feel that this place is vanishing before our very eyes and that deserted towns are quickly transforming into ruins and jungles".

— from the Asymptote Journal

May showers have been washing the blood off the asphalt and the dust off everything else for the past three days. The rain falls down on the gravel between the asphalt and the grass. The pebbles prick you if you walk on them barefoot. Alik walks on them sometimes, imagining that he's stepping on broken glass, driving it deep under his skin, cutting off a piece of skin with his sheath-knife, removing the glass, and scorching the wound, soothing the pain with the divine saliva from the top shelf of his liquor cabinet.

Once his metal Kilimanjaro becomes a sharp-peaked Everest, Alik takes care of his dog who climbs up the heap of metal every morning and cocks its head to catch the wind. He doesn't want his dog to fall down and get cut by something sharp. He'd have to bury him in the countryside and drink grain alcohol mixed with water, still hot, for the peace of his soul.

When the heap grows, Alik gives his blessings to the warm spring wind, happy that it's not February. In the winter, when the snow piles up and the prices of metal soar, the heap of scrap freezes up you have to pour boiling water on it and thrash it till you're blue in the face to rip off pieces of metal frozen together, gripped by the embrace of horror, terrified by the meltback and coming separation.

If the metal piled up, but Alik had no time to go to Narodychi, he sent for Petrovych's Kamaz truck and loaded gas stoves with knocked-out burners, transformer pillars with ripped-off insides and poured-out thickened blood-oil, and a couple of church bells, as well as electrical wires and conveyor rollers of crushing departments into the excavator bucket with a sticker that read **"Watch out! You have a family waiting for you back home!"**

When the Kamaz arrived they loaded it up with all kinds of stuff, even furniture plates and door knobs, handles, lamps and window hinges, not to mention the aluminum frames from abandoned supermarkets and grocery stores whose doors and windows had long been boarded-up.

The piled-up scrap was wrapped into the veins of wire mesh which Hrysha and Petia tore off the fences and rolled up into bulky coils. Even tin cans were scrapped. Alik hated accepting those. He spat, told the guys to fuck off, explained that wire mesh and tin cans took up too much goddamn fucking space, yet weighed nothing, but in the end he still accepted them, gave out bottles of methanol, and let the poor bastards go, god bless them.

Alik and the Kamaz driver threw the smashed metal hearts into the back. Alik stood on the heap of metal, his legs tangled in the wire mesh and cable vines. Only his army boots with the thickest soles in the world saved his feet from being cut. His boots stomped loudly on the asphalt; his stomping reached the bowels of the planet, forced its way through miles of crust, through the rough oceans of magma, and made the Earth's metal heart beat in unison.

Alik kept nagging Petrovych about installing high fenders on his Kamaz. So he wouldn't have to build scaffolding from headboards and car hoods which the local bums dumped in his scrap yard along with the radioactive engines from the burial site.

In the end, Alik untangled himself from the wire mash, finished off his cigarette, threw the butt in the grass, climbed into the front, and he and the Kamaz driver bounced along the bumpy asphalt road, piles of metal rattling in the back.

The driver's name was Misha; it was tattooed on his arm as if someone took a q-tip, dipped it into brilliant green dye and wrote the letters on his skin, bronzed by rust and the sun. His face took all the hardships of this land upon itself: it was scarred and pockmarked by shards of a German landmine that went off and killed his fellow scrap hunter standing right beside him. While metal hearts clattered in the back and the police officer's maroon Niva moved towards them slowly, Alik offered a full bottle of Sylvaner to Misha and realized, again and again, that this fellow was the salt, the copper, and the cast iron of the Earth. He met him years ago, but they only got together when they sawed cables, fences, and Donbass fridges and loaded all that into his Kamaz. Alik had long suspected that Misha wasn't even a human. He was a golem. His veins were actually cables carrying red streams of copper; his teeth were made of shiny aluminum, his skin resembled brass, and his bones rotted into iron scrap. That was all Petrovych's handiwork: this round-bellied Frankenstein genius went through all the stuff Alik brought him over the years and picked corrugated pipes for the arms, coil pipes for the guts, cooking pots for the head and braces to fasten it all together, until he finally put his masterpiece together, wrapped it in the veins of wire mash, and put this Optimus Prime behind the wheel to drive around the neighborhood and pick up his own kind.

During the rough, stormy nights — when dense, purple clouds gather above Narodychi, lightning strikes the hapless, the rain pelts down, and the wind howls behind the narrow embrasures of his castle — Petrovych gathers his con men, who need a never-ending supply of booze to work.

Narodychi is a town of unlit windows looming like black saucepans on the gray corpses of dead five-story apartment buildings. One-third of the town has been abandoned; the hospital has been, too, but they still do abortions more than anything else. The streets are as gloomy an April morning at the Reich Chancellery in 1945. The streets look horrible, like the Hindenburg disaster. In spring, the snow won't melt; it rolls into dirty lumps which jut out of the sea of puddles like tiny islands, demons hopping from one to another on the look-out for deposits of scrap and recyclable paper. Warmed up by moonshine, they search, lonely in the twilight, for someone on whom they can take out their anger and pain. Those they can kick in the kidneys until their feet hurt.

Petrovych welcomes Alik with a fuck-you, lays into him for the wire mesh and the tin cans, and while the golems unload the Optimus Prime, throwing off the headboards and the car hoods, he and Alik finish the bottle of Sylvaner, smoke cigarette after cigarette, and gripe about how sharply the price of copper has dropped.

Translated from the Ukrainian by Hanna Leliv and Reilly Costigan-Humes

© Valentyn Kuzan

Serhiy Zhadan

Orphanage, Voroshilovgrad

NOVEL

#postsoviet #Donbas

Serhiy Zhadan is a poet, prose writer, translator, and activist, who was born in 1974 in Starobil's'k in Eastern Ukraine. He is the author of eleven books of poetry, five novels, and two short story collections. Serhiy completed his doctoral studies Ukrainian and German at Kharkiv National University, where he completed his dissertation on Mykhaylo Semenko, one of Ukraine's most prominent futuristic poets.

Serhiy's literary works have received countless national and international prizes and awards, and have been translated into over twenty languages, making him one of the most recognized names in contemporary Ukrainian literature abroad. His novel *Voroshilovhrad* has been translated into twelve languages, including English, and has been cinematized in Ukrainian by the director Yaroslav Lodyhin as *The Wild Fields.*

The author is also one of the most active organizers and promoters of Ukrainian literature within the country and a frequent collaborator in creative multimedia projects. He is the lead vocalist of the rock groups Zhadan and the Dogs (Zhadan i Sobaky) and The Mannerheim Line.

As a political and community activist, Serhiy is vocal about his civic position. In 2014 he took part in the Euromaidan protests and actively opposed the seizure of the Kharkiv State Administration by pro-Russian forces. In 2017 he founded the Serhiy Zhadan Charitable Foundation, which supports a variety of educational, cultural, and healthcare initiatives in the occupied territories of Eastern Ukraine.

Meridian Czernowitz Publishing, 2017
336 pages
Rights: Christoph Hassenzahl
hassenzahl@suhrkamp.de

"Zhadan's language is wild and powerful. The rhythm structuring his endless sentences demonstrates his beginnings as a poet."

— *World Literature Today*

One day, when you wake up, you see fire outside your window. You didn't start it. But you too will have to help extinguish it… The events of Serhiy's novel *The Orphanage (originally entitled Internat)* unfold January of 2015 in Donbas. Pasha, a teacher in one of the local schools, watches as the front line steadily approaches his home. He finds himself forced to cross that line, in order to later come back home. And to do this he must at the very least decide on whose side his house lies.

The novel *Voroshilovhrad* centers on Herman, a young advertising executive who is rattled by an unexpected phone call: His brother, who runs a remote petrol station, has disappeared. In order to find his brother, Herman must undertake an incredible journey, drifting off the beaten track like a nomad across the steppe.

Serhiy on Literature:

"It's a little funny to talk about whether literature has "gotten better": a football championship can "get better", a harvest can "get better", but literature is a living organism and it's difficult to talk about it in these terms. Literature has become more varied and more intense. If you follow events in Ukraine, you will know that things are not just happening on the frontlines. Ukrainian culture is being transformed — and that is a very important, very painful process."

— *from The Calvert Journal*

Excerpt from Voroshilovgrad

Telephones exist for breaking all kinds of bad news. They make people sound cold and detached. I guess it's easier to pass along bad news in an official-sounding voice. I know what I'm talking about. I've been fighting telephone receivers my whole life, albeit unsuccessfully. Operators all over the world still monitor people's conversations, jotting down the most important words and phrases. Meanwhile, psalm books and phone directories lie open on hotel nightstands; that's all you need to keep the faith.

I slept in my clothes — jeans and a stretched-out T-shirt. I woke up and roamed around the room, scattering empty soda bottles, glasses, cans, ashtrays, shoes, and plates with sauce slopped all over them. Barefoot and bad-tempered, I stepped on apples, pistachios, and dates like oily cockroaches. When you're renting an apartment where you don't own the furniture, you try to be careful with everything, since it might not belong to you. I'd filled my place up with so much junk, you'd think I was running a thrift shop. I had gramophone records and hockey sticks hiding under my couch, along with some clothes a girl had left behind and some big road signs I'd gotten my hands on somehow. I couldn't throw anything away, since I didn't know what belonged to me. But from the very first day, the very first moment that I found myself here, the telephone was lying right there on the floor, in the middle of the room. Its voice and its silence filled me with hatred. Before bed I'd cover the damn thing up with a cardboard box, and in the morning I'd take that box out to the balcony. The demonic apparatus lay in the center of the room, its jarring, irritating ring always ready to sing out and declare that someone needed me after all.

Now somebody was calling again. Calling on a Thursday, at 5 a.m. I crawled out from under the covers, tossed the cardboard box into the corner, picked up the phone, and went out to the balcony. It was quiet and empty in the neighborhood. A security guard, treating himself to a morning smoke break, came out the side door of the bank. When someone calls you at 5 a.m., don't expect any good to come of it. Holding back my irritation, I picked up the receiver. That's how it all started.

"Buddy." I recognized Kocha's voice immediately. It sounded like he had emphysema or something, as though someone had installed a set of old, blown-out speakers in place of his lungs. "Herman, were you asleep, man?" His speakers were hissing and spitting out consonants. It was 5 a.m., on a Thursday. "Hello, Herman?"

"Hello," I said.

"Buddy," Kocha said, his tone dipping a bit. "Herman!"

"Kocha, it's five in the morning. What do you want?"

"Herman, the thing is, I wouldn't have woken you up, but some serious shit has gone down here." A horrible shrill whistle came out of the receiver as he said this, and it made me believe him, for some reason. "I haven't slept all night, you know? Your brother called yesterday."

"And?"

"The thing is . . . he's gone, Herman." The sound of Kocha's breathing drew away then, as though removed to a great height.

"Where's he at?" I asked, unsettled. Listening to him was like riding a rollercoaster.

"Far away, Herman." The start of every new sentence was marked by feedback. "He's either in Berlin or Amsterdam. I didn't really catch it."

"Maybe he's going to Amsterdam via Berlin?"

"Maybe you're right, Herman, maybe you're right," said Kocha hoarsely.

"When's he getting back?" I asked, relaxing a bit. I was starting to think that this was all just routine for Kocha, that he was just giving me an update on the family.

"Looks like never," he declared, and the receiver made the feedback noise again.

"When?"

"Never, Herman, never. He's left for good. He called yesterday, told me to tell you."

Translated by Reilly Costigan-Humes
and Isaac Stackhouse Wheel

© 2016, Deep Vellum Publishing

Voroshilovgrad is the most famous novel by Serhiy Zhadan. It is a reference to the easternUkrainian city of Luhansk, which in the Soviet period was renamed in honour of military commander and politician Kliment Voroshilov.

An entertaining tale . . . Trouble keeps finding Herman, and it's hard not to root for him.

— *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*

A dark but funny tale of an urbanite who returns to his hometown to run his brother's gas station. It's a road novel with splashes of magical realism and an embrace of fraternal loyalty. In hindsight, the bleak, disheartening environs and attitudes make it hard not to notice parallels to Trumpian middle America.

— *The Austin Chronicle*

A fascinating exploration into a post-soviet Ukraine. Not only does it explore the effects of communism to an industrial city, but also the power vacuum left behind when the Soviet Union collapsed.

— *Knowledge Lost*

Lithuania

Romania

Germany

Ukraine

USA

Slovakia

Ukraine

Poland

France

Georgia

Hungary

Italy

Netherlands

Voroshilovgrad is an unsentimental novel about human relationships in conditions of brutality in which there is not a single act of betrayal… In his prose there is no nostalgia, but there is genuine affection, rough and profound. Even in this brutish habitus, there is trust, loyalty, and love.

— The New Yorker

'Voroshilovgrad is more, however, than an exercise in post-Soviet social realism. There is something deeply mythological about the novel, and, like many myths, it is a story of homecoming. . . Zhadan's language is suitably elastic, swinging from the tough, streetwise irony of a Ukrainian Irvine Welsh to flights of ebullient poetry more reminiscent of Bruno Schulz.

— Times Literary Supplement

A homecoming is by turns magical and brutal in Zhadan's impressive picaresque novel. . . . For Zhadan, loyalty and fraternity are the life-giving forces in this exhausted, fertile, near-anarchic corner of the country . . . readers will be touched by his devotion to a land of haunted beauty, 'high sky,' and 'black earth.'

— Publishers Weekly

With Voroshilovgrad, Zhadan has created an authentic poetics of post-Soviet rural devastation. His ragged, sympathetic characters aren't the newly rich post-Soviets of Moscow, the urban oligarchs Peter Pomerantsev has described, who 'sing hymns to Russian religious conservatism — and keep their money and families in London.' They are individuals struggling to come to terms with their place in history and with the history of their place.

— Los Angeles Review of Books

The Bard of Eastern Ukraine, Where Things Are Falling Apart.

Marci Shore for The New Yorker

Zhadan's canvas is large and is filled with bold characters... [he] also tosses into the mix fantastic and surreal flights of prose; poetic descriptions of the still-beautiful parts of the Ukraine, with its rich, black, enduring earth.

— Lively Arts

Voroshilovgrad crosses, with tremendous grace, back and forth between lyrical dreaminess and brutal nightmarishness, and Zhadan works in lots of absurdity… it's absurdity of the sort that feels normal in books set in the Former Soviet Union, making everything in Voroshilovgrad feel paradoxically both real and bizarre.

— Lizok's Bookshelf

Voroshilovgrad is a road novel that escapes itself...[it] evokes the notion that the things we may consider nearest and dearest (romantic love, "brotherhood" and even more cynical values like materialism) are, rather than the be-all and end-all, just the tip of the iceberg emerging from the more alien depths of human motivation.

— Lit All Over

A trippy novel of contemporary Ukraine . . . set far away from the bustle of the metropolis and the Maidan, yet no less representative of the unsettled state of a country unable to transition. A bit meandering — but generally in a good way — Voroshilovgrad is an entertaining sort-of-road-novel with quite a bit of depth to it.

— Complete Review

Zhadan is a writer who is a rock star, like Byron in the early nineteenth century was a rock star.

— The New Yorker

The industrial landscape of eastern Ukraine provides the real and imaginary setting for this Ukrainian »Easy Rider«. The novel centres on Herman, a young advertising executive who is rattled by an unexpected phone call: his brother, who runs a remote petrol station, has disappeared. In order to find his brother he must undertake an incredible journey, drifting off the beaten track like a nomad across the steppe.

Zhadan wants us to understand that there is something to stay for. In his prose there is no nostalgia, but there is genuine affection, rough and profound. Even in this brutish habitus, there is trust, loyalty, and love.

He is conscious of his role as the unofficial bard of eastern Ukraine — and still more conscious of the moral responsibility he bears for his words. There are not many people from his part of the world whose words reach beyond its borders.

Zhadan is among a handful of Ukrainian authors whose work has been widely translated. His most recent novel, "Voroshilovgrad," won the Jan Michalski Prize for Literature in Switzerland; he has drawn enthusiastic audiences in Austria, Germany, Poland, and Russia.

TAULT

The Tompkins Agency for Ukrainian Literature in Translation is a nonprofit literary agency and translation house devoted to the visibility and availability of contemporary Ukrainian literature in the English-speaking world. Founded in 2019 by literary translator Zenia Tompkins, TAULT promotes the work of award-winning Ukrainian authors, with a specific interest in Ukraine's younger generation of writers. Through our New Voices program, we also seek to build visibility for emerging authors of exceptional promise.

TAULT represents Ukrainian literature across a variety of genres and styles, from literary fiction and popular fiction to the growing field of Ukrainian creative nonfiction and the remarkable universe of Ukrainian children's literature. In collaboration with our translators, we take a comprehensive approach to promoting our authors' work, with the goal of building a broader audience for both the individual author and contemporary Ukrainian literature as a whole.

TAULT's translators are available to engage in targeted scouting and in the translation of both samples and other supporting materials into English for presses publishing in any language.

www.facebook.com/UkrainianLit/

The Tompkins Agency for Ukrainian Literature in Translation

A nonprofit literary agency and translation house

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The TAULT Translation Team

ZENIA TOMPKINS is the founder of The Tompkins Agency for Ukrainian Literature in Translation (TAULT), a nonprofit literary agency and translation house representing contemporary Ukrainian literature. She holds graduate degrees in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies from Columbia University and the University of Virginia, and began translating four years ago after fifteen years' experience in education and anti-corruption. Her first translation was Tanja Maljartschuk's *A Biography of a Chance Miracle* (Cadmus Press, 2018).

ALI KINSELLA been translating from Ukrainian for seven years. Her published works include essays, poetry, monographs, and subtitles to films. She holds a Master's degree in Slavic Studies from Columbia University, where she focused on Eastern European history and literature and wrote a thesis on the intersection of feminism and nationalism in small states. A former Peace Corps volunteer, Ali lived in both Western and Central Ukraine for nearly five years.

NINA MURRAY is the translator of Oksana Zabuzhko's novel *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* and translator and editor of her short story collection *After the Third Bell: Stories* (forthcoming), among other titles. She is also the author of two volumes of poetry: *Alcestis in the Underworld (2019)* and *Minimize Considered (2018).*

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OKSANA ROSENBLUM is a Ukrainian-born art historian and translator residing in NYC. She studied Cultural Anthropology at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and Jewish Visual Art at the Jewish Theological Seminary (NYC). Her poetry translations from Ukrainian have been published by *Kalyna Language Press* and *National Translation Month.* She is also the editor of a bilingual collection of the early poetry by Mykola Bazhan (*Academic Studies Press,* forthcoming 2020).

TETIANA SAVCHYNSKA resides in Lviv and holds an M.A. in Comparative Literature from Dartmouth College, where she studied on a Fulbright Scholarship. She was a 2019 resident at the Banff International Literary Translation Centre in Alberta, Canada. Her recent translations into Ukrainian include Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant* and Madeleine Thien's *Do Not Say We Have Nothing.* Her writing and translations into English have appeared in *The Los Angeles Review of Books* and *Asymptote.*

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UILLEAM BLACKER is a translator and academic at University College London specializing in Ukrainian literature and culture. His translations of contemporary Ukrainian writers (Sofia Andrukhovych, Lina Kostenko, Olena Stiazhkina, Vasyl' Makhno, Taras Prokhasko, Taras Antypovych) have appeared in *Modern Poetry in Translation, Words Without Borders,* the Dalkey Archive *Best European Fiction* series and in various anthologies. His translation of Oleg Sentsov's short stories *Life Went on Anyway* was published by Deep Vellum in 2019.

VITALY CHERNETSKY is an associate professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and director of the Center for Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies at the University of Kansas. He has been publishing literary translations from the Ukrainian and Russian since 1995. His translations include two novels, a poetry collection, as well as short prose and numerous essays by Yuri Andrukhovych, and also selections from poetry and prose by nineteen other Ukrainian authors.

REILLY COSTIGAN-HUMES AND ISAAC STACKHOUSE WHEELER are a team of literary translators who work with both Russian and Ukrainian, best known for their renderings of novels by contemporary Ukrainian author Serhiy Zhadan, including *Voroshilovgrad* (Deep Vellum Publishing) and *Mesopotamia* (Yale University Press). Wheeler is also a poet and an editor at *Two Chairs,* a new online poetry journal.

BORIS DRALYUK is the executive editor of The Los Angeles Review of Books and holds a PhD in Slavic Languages and Literatures from UCLA, where he taught Russian literature for a number of years. He is the translator of several volumes from Russian and Polish, including, most recently, Mikhail Zoshchenko's *Sentimental Tales* (Columbia University Press, 2018) and Isaac Babel's *Red Cavalry* and *Odessa Stories* (Pushkin Press, 2015 and 2016).

UKRAINIAN BOOK INSTITUTE

The Ukrainian Book Institute is a state-run agency founded in 2016 by the Ministry of Culture. UBI promotes Ukrainian literature abroad, strengthens intercultural dialogue through literature, supports the Ukrainian book market, and develops a culture of reading in Ukraine.

OUR PROGRAMMES

PROMOTION OF UKRAINIAN LITERATURE ABROAD

We participate in international book fairs and invite Ukrainian writers and publishers to join us on the road to set up a global network of stakeholders.

LITERARY TRANSLATION PROGRAMME

We provide grants to foreign publishers for the translation and licensing costs to foster translation of Ukrainian literature abroad. Forthcoming in 2020.

PROMOTION OF READING IN UKRAINE

We support national and local projects and fairs which promote readership among Ukrainians.

DIGITAL LIBRARY PROJECT

We are establishing a database of Ukrainian literature to make it available for everyone. Forthcoming in 2020.

The Ukrainian Book Institute encourages and supports individual expression through literature. We are open for international cooperation to enrich Ukrainian literature and offer new reading experiences to the world's literary heritage.

Let's stay in touch!

Contacts

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TRANSLATION PROGRAM

The Ukrainian Book Institute invites publishers to submit applications for the Translation Grant Program "Translate Ukraine". The program is designed for foreign publishings willing to translate and publish Ukrainian literature. Publishers may apply for either partial or total coverage of the costs of translation and rights fee.

"Translate Ukraine" covers main genres of modern and classical Ukrainian literature. Grants will be available for the translation of fiction, children's literature, the humanities (non-fiction, history, philosophy, literary criticism).

The program does not provide subsidies for books already translated into particular foreign language.

The application for the grant must include:

- filled application form;
- a copy of signed contract with the original rightsholder;
- a copy of signed contract with the translator;
- translator's CV
- brief information about the publishing house

Applications may be submitted only by email.

"Translate Ukraine" is forthcoming in 2020.
For further information please contact:
Bohdana Neborak *uik.bohdana.neborak@gmail.com*

Legal partner: Baker Mckenzie Ukraine

Baker McKenzie.

Book Forum

The Book Forum is International Literature Festival founded in 1994. It is held annually in September. It is the primary book event of the country and one of the largest in Eastern Europe.
The goal of the Book Forum is to bring together all those who are interested in developing Ukrainian book publishing, expand cultural and educational offerings to Ukrainians, promote Ukrainian titles, and inspire all those who love to read.

50,000 visitors
5,000 professionals
2,500 new titles
1,800 publications in the media
1,000 events
750 authors
750 accredited journalists
500 volunteers
250 publishing houses
27 discussion streams and special projects
27 countries

BOOKFORUM'S MAIN EVENTS:

Lviv Book Fair
Lviv International Literature Festival
A Night of Poetry and Music NON-STOP
Charity event The Third Age: The Pleasure of Reading
Lviv Library Forum

GUESTS OF HONOR OF THE LVIV INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE FESTIVAL, 2006–2019:

Paulo Coelho (Brazil), Yusten Gorder (Norway), Erlend Law (Norway), Zigmund Baumann (Poland), Thomas Venclova (Lithuania), Frederic Bugdeer (France), Timothy Snyder (USA), Martin Pollack (Austria), Janusz León Wiśniewski (Poland), Milenko Ergovich (Bosnia / Croatia), Olga Tokarchuk (Poland), Adam Zagayevsky (Poland), Adam Michnik (Poland), Lyudmila Ulitskaya (Russia), Paolo Giordano (Italy), Janusz Glowacki (Poland-USA), David Satter (USA), Sergey Plokhii (USA), Vladimir Sorokin (Russia), Viktor Yerofeyev (Russia), Leonidas Donskis (Lithuania), Jeremy Strong (Great Britain), Anne Applebaum (USA), Marci Shore (USA), Philippe Sands (Great Britain), Arundhati Roy (India), Elchin Safarli (Azerbaijan), Mariam Petrosyan (Armenia).

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Book Arsenal

The International Book Arsenal Festival — an annual project of the Mystetskyi Arsenal — is an intellectual event in Ukraine (Kyiv), where the book, literary and artistic scenes develop and interact with each other, and joint high-quality, timely and innovative projects are implemented.
Each year, the program of the Festival raises and reflects the important issues of human existence, as well as society and culture, prompting the proactive position of the participants and visitors.
In 2019, The International Book Arsenal Festival won The Literary Festival Award of The London Book Fair International Excellence Awards 2019.
The 10th Festival will be held on May 20–24, 2020.

5 days
32 countries
50,000 visitors
20,000 sqm of exhibition area
400 events
250 authors
200 participants

STARS OF THE LITERARY SCENE:
Svetlana Alexievich (Belarusia), Ulf Stark (Sweden), Etgar Keret (Israel), Anne Applebaum (USA), Alessandro Baricco (Italy), Joseph Winkler (Austria), Gérard de Cortanze (France), Luigi Serafini (Italy), Jean-Claude Marcadé (France), Karl Schlögel (Germany), David Satter (USA), Jonathan Coe (Great Britain), Joseph McElroy (USA), Milenko Ergovich (Croatia, Bosnia).

Being an interdisciplinary project of the Mystetskyi Arsenal, each year the Book Arsenal Festival pays special attention to the visual component — from exhibition projects on the art of book publishing, illustration, design, art books and art objects, and installations to the latest design trends in zines and self-published books.

Since 2016, the Book Arsenal Festival, together with the Goethe-Institut in Ukraine, with the support of the Frankfurt Book Fair and the Buchkunst Foundation, has been holding a competition for the best book design among the Ukrainian publishers and cultural institutions. Each year, the publications included in the shortlist of the contest are presented within the collection The Most Beautiful Books of the World at the Frankfurt and Leipzig Book Fairs.

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