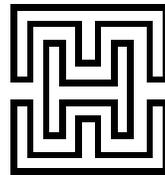


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A Journal of Translations

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Introduction

Ukrainian Literature is a forum for translation into English of literary works written in Ukrainian. The primary purpose of the journal is to open the world of Ukrainian literature to a wider audience by acquainting English speakers who cannot read Ukrainian with the bounty and variety of writing in this language.

Like every effort in support of translated literature, this journal begins with the idea that culture can and should be shared across national boundaries. Even in the shrinking world of commercial and political globalization, literature in a language other than our own needs the active intervention of translators before we can access it. Where two cultures have strong ties and close links, literary translations become a part of the cultural mainstream. Often they are supported or commissioned by commercial enterprises, cultural institutions, and educational or government agencies, and occasionally these translations are even profitable. In the case of translations from Ukrainian literature, however, neither profit nor institutional support is readily available.

Translations of Ukrainian literature into English have a brief and uneven history. Aside from a few works by some of Ukraine's classic authors, before the mid-twentieth century hardly any Ukrainian literature appeared in English. Then the Cold War and the presence of a generation of Ukrainian refugees in North America created circumstances in which translating literature was part of an effort to promote Ukrainian identity. In Soviet Ukraine, translators presented politically correct versions of ideologically compliant works, mostly by classic authors and usually with an ethnographic focus. Outside Ukraine, literary translation was largely a labor of love for a number of dedicated individuals, among them Mary Skrypnyk, Marco Carynnyk, and the late George S. N. Luckyj, to name a few of the most productive. Here too, the selection of works was somewhat eclectic, with a strong leaning toward the classics, particularly works whose authors were ignored in Soviet Ukraine. Institutional involvement was minimal. The two major centers of Ukrainian scholarship in North America, at Harvard University and at the University of Alberta, showed little interest in translating literature. Until recently, there were hardly any translation projects that originated outside the Ukrainian community or individual Ukrainians.

Ironically, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of an independent Ukraine was not a fortuitous development for Ukrainian

literature in English translation. Soviet institutions that supported literary translations were not replaced by equivalents in Ukraine. In North America, the model of Ukrainian ethnic identity subtly changed from that of a diaspora, a refugee community with a shared cultural heritage in need of protection, to that of an expatriate fraternity with political, economic, social, and family ties to the motherland. In the earlier model, culture was a central component of the community's active concerns. In the latter model, culture is a product of the motherland that émigrés receive passively. Many Ukrainians in North America see themselves as conduits of western culture to Ukraine rather than the reverse.

In this context, the establishment of a forum for translations of Ukrainian literature into English is an important development reversing the pattern of neglect. The Shevchenko Scientific Society merits commendation for its willingness to support this journal. In particular, the president of the Society, Larissa M. L. Z. Onyshkevych, herself a translator, deserves special praise for her leadership on this issue and the courage to commit institutional funding to translation, a field notoriously susceptible to criticism and derision.

There are no universal standards by which translations can be reasonably and comprehensively evaluated. The recently established scholarly field of translation studies has clearly shown that the goals and methods of literary translation and the evaluative criteria by which it can be judged are as varied as the translators who undertake it and the works they translate. In this journal, there is no particular "approach" to translating: the translations published here need only to meet the eclectic standards of the editorial board, all of whom are specialists in Ukrainian literature and translators in their own right. A good translation is always an example of good writing. But a good translation is also a good reproduction of someone else's work. In an effective translation, these two qualities must co-exist in a harmonious balance. As someone who teaches Ukrainian literature to university students, I am particularly attuned to the accuracy of translations. This quality is often given short shrift in Ukraine, where the style and tone of a translation frequently trumps meaning in the evaluation of a translation, particularly in poetry.

Another important factor in evaluating translations is the quality of the original work. A weak translation of a work by a brilliant writer will generally outshine a strong translation of a poorly written work. This journal seeks to publish translations of good works of literature only, but even among these the range in quality is wide. Since the intention here is to reflect Ukrainian literature in all its breadth and diversity, this journal will include works by a broad spectrum of writers, across a wide variety of genres and styles. The journal's intention is to show a strong preference for contemporary writing in Ukraine, but it will also publish translations of writers from the near and distant past. Eclectic variety will, it is hoped, give

every reader something to savor while providing a true reflection of the vitality and energy of Ukrainian literature today.

This journal owes its existence to a number of individuals. The idea originated with Marta Tarnawsky, who also secured the Shevchenko Scientific Society's financial support. The journal's manuscript editor, Uliana Pasicznyk, deserves recognition for her skillful editing as well as her patience in dealing with the editor. Thanks are also due to all the members of the editorial board for their generous help and cooperation, especially to my colleague Taras Koznarsky, who gave unstintingly of his time to improve the quality of the translations in this issue.

This journal would not be possible if there were no Ukrainian literature to translate. I am grateful to the authors of the original works for their cooperation and for the confidence they placed in this venture and I sincerely hope these translations will find them appreciative new readers. Finally, I thank the translators whose works appear in this first issue of *Ukrainian Literature* for their commitment and cooperation. This journal is their achievement. The satisfaction that readers derive from the works published here is a measure of their skill. It has been a great pleasure to work with them, and I hope to continue working with them and with new translators for many issues to come.

Maxim Tarnawsky
Toronto, 2004