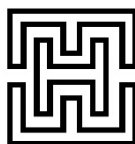


UKRAINIAN LITERATURE

A Journal of Translations

Volume 7
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Ukrainian Literature
A Journal of Translations

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Introduction

This issue of *Ukrainian Literature* should have appeared two years ago. There are several reasons for this delay, but they all boil down to my inability to find the time necessary to complete the task. I will do better for Volume 8—if for no other reason than because some of the material is ready now and there will be less work (these are famous last words). But the lesson for the future is clear: the journal will need to prepare for a day when Uliana and I can no longer handle this responsibility. We welcome ideas from readers.

That said, I am delighted Volume 7 has finally appeared and that it includes such a wide array of interesting works. It appears at a time when Ukrainian literature is experiencing an upsurge in English translations. I don't have statistical data on this (I hope someone does!) but clearly there is more Ukrainian literature published in English as well as in other languages than was the case even a decade ago. One of the reasons for this, tragically and ironically, is the genocidal Russian war against Ukraine, a war that has the explicit goal of eradicating Ukrainian national identity. I assume the quantity of translations of Ukrainian literature appearing in print is an indication of a growing awareness of Ukrainian culture and national identity among non-Ukrainians. The Russian attempt at destroying Ukrainian identity is clearly failing. This journal was founded before this new wave of attention to Ukraine materialized, but it was always intended to be part of an ongoing effort to secure a foothold for Ukrainian culture, specifically its literature, in the consciousness of the English-speaking world.

Given the current situation, a good deal of attention is being directed at promoting translations of contemporary Ukrainian writing, particularly about the war. This is understandable and salutary, not least because it aids the war effort by capturing Western attention. But the dearth of familiarity with a millennium of Ukrainian culture cannot be remedied merely by concentrating on works from the last few years. While I make no special effort to shape the choices translators make of works to translate, I am very gratified by the diversity of works in this issue. There are works from a variety of genres and from a variety of time periods. There are works by relatively obscure and mostly unknown authors as well as works by classic figures of the Ukrainian literary canon.

The volume begins with a war story. Borys Artemov's "Women's Day" gives us a very raw, emotional depiction of the horror faced daily by civilians in Ukraine in the face of Russian drones and missiles. Other works,

particularly the poems of Uliana Hlynchak, also refer to the war and the history of Russian and Soviet anti-Ukrainian policies. These policies are a constant theme in Ukrainian literature stretching far back into previous centuries. The Ukrainians in Artemov's story are victims of the same pernicious Russian attitudes and positions that Nechui describes in his novels in the nineteenth century.

The volume also features stories about victims of other wars, particularly WWII, as in the story by Yeva Biss, the pen name of Eva Bissová, a writer, playwright, and artist from the Prešov region of eastern Slovakia. Writing within the multilingual world of Slovak, Czech, Rusyn, Ukrainian, Russian, German, and Jewish cultural contact, Biss occupies an unusual place in twentieth-century Ukrainian-language literature: her work is written in Ukrainian yet deeply rooted in the social and linguistic realities of Carpatho-Rusyn life in Slovakia. The story translated here reflects this borderland position. Biss's prose shows how Ukrainian-language writing in Slovakia emerged from a more complicated local history, shaped by minority issues and shifting national categories.

The translations of Biss and Artemov highlight another prominent feature in this issue of the journal: the linguistic complexities of translation. Both of these works reflect the multilingual reality of much of Ukrainian culture. In both works, the authors chose to include passages in languages other than Ukrainian, knowing that their Ukrainian readers will understand these other languages. For the ordinary English language reader, however, this multilingual text must be rendered exclusively in English. Ironically, this problem does not arise in Nechui's works, although the world he describes was inherently and structurally bilingual to a far greater extent than those of these two twentieth-century authors. He chose to write in Ukrainian.

Similar challenges of translation arise in the special section devoted to Women's Prose Poetry. The authors translated here play with the qualities of language and language variants to create a world of nuanced shades of expression. The translators of these works make great efforts to capture the spirit of these wordplays and to convey the tone and color of the language. But translating poetry, whether written in prose, as here, or in the beautiful erotic love verses of Ivan Malkovych's "She's still asleep," is always a difficult test of a translator's skill. I sincerely hope that readers will appreciate the extraordinary efforts of the translators presented in this volume, and even more, will enjoy the wonderful works of the Ukrainian authors rendered here in English translation.

Maxim Tarnawsky
Toronto, August 7, 2026