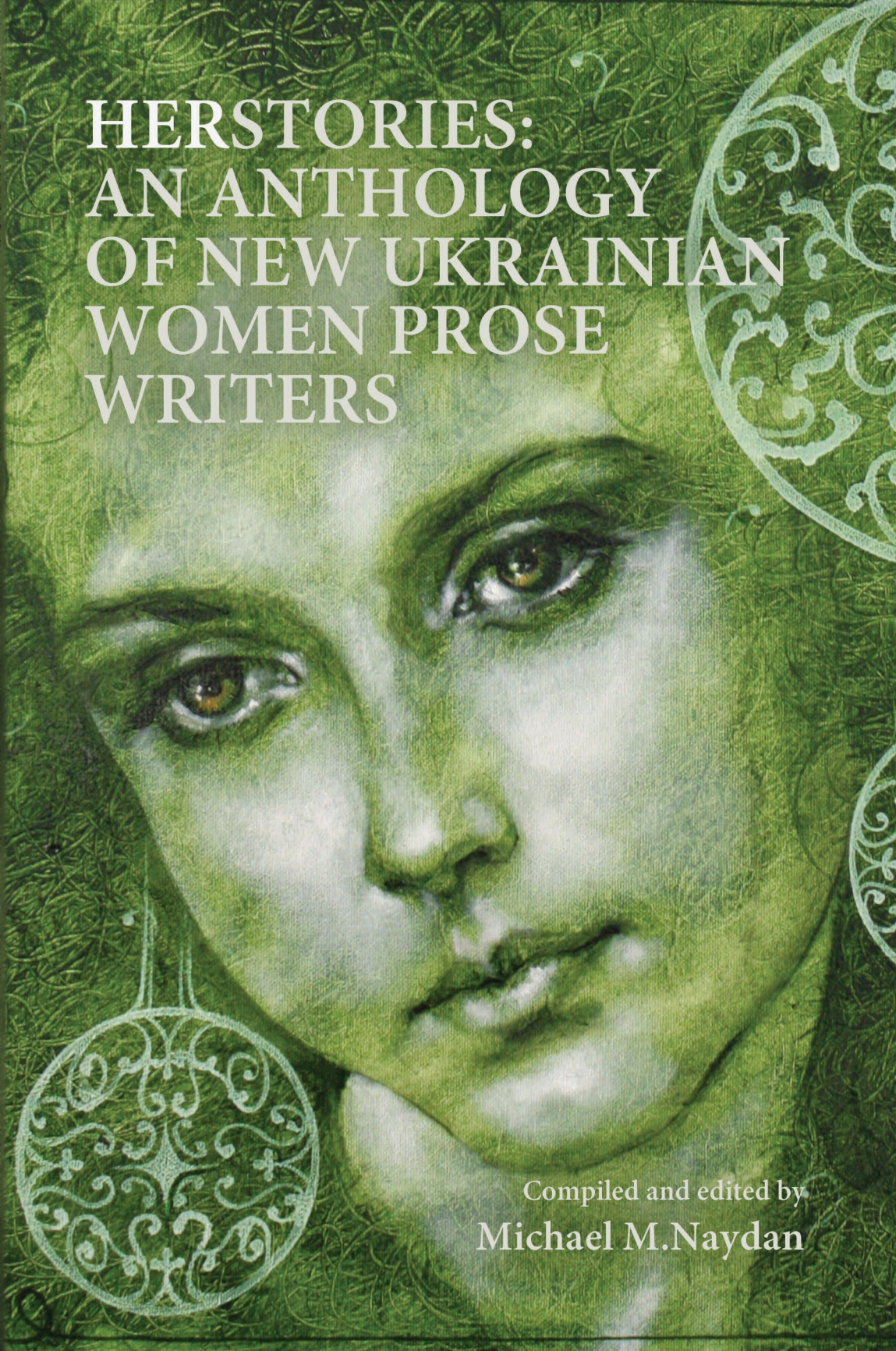
HERSTORIES: AN ANTHOLOGY OF NEW UKRAINIAN WOMEN PROSE WRITERS



Compiled and edited by

Michael M.Naydan

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GLAGOSLAV PUBLICATIONS

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Introduction by Michael M. Naydan

Translations by *Mark Andryczyk, Svitlana Bednazh, Nataliya Bilyuk, Vitaly Chernetsky, Jennifer Croft, Natalia Ferens, Halyna Hryn, Roman Ivashkiv, Askold Melnyczuk, Michael M. Naydan, Uliana Pasicznyk, Alla Perminova, Svitlana Pyrkalo, Olha Tytarenko, Yuri Tkacz, Liliya Valihun* and *Olesia Wallo*.

Image courtesy of Oksana Zhelisko, *April.*

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Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Emma Andijewska's "Tale about the Vampireling Who Fed on Human Will" and the "Tale about the Man Who Knew Doubt" first appeared in the journal *Ukrainian Literature*. An excerpt of Maria Matios's *Sweet Darusya* was initially published in *Metamorphoses*, the journal of literary translation. Eugenia Kononenko's "Three Worlds" was previously published in the journal *Glas* as well as in the Zephyr Press anthology *From Three Worlds: New Ukrainian Writing*. The excerpt from Oksana Zabuzhko's novel *Field Work in Ukrainian Sex* first appeared in the literary journal *AGNI* before it appeared in the edition published by Amazon Crossings. The story "Girls" by Zabuzhko was published first in the Internet journal *Words without Borders*. A portion of the excerpt from Iren Rozdobudko's *The Lost Button* was published previously in *World Literature Today* as *The Button* along with material that comprises the introduction to this volume. Tanya Malyarchuk's "A Village and its Witches" first was published in *Hayden's Ferry Review*. The excerpt from Iren Rozdobudko's *The Lost Button* is available from Glagoslav Publications in the complete English-language version of the novel. Glagoslav has also recently issued the complete version of Larysa Denysenko's *The Sarabande of Sara's Band*. Yuri Tkacz's translation of *Apocalypse* first appeared with Bayda Books. While Halyna Pahutiak chose not to be included in this anthology, a translation of an excerpt from her novel *The Minion from Dobromyl* can be found in the journal *Metamorphoses*.

A NOTE ON THE ANTHOLOGY

Approximately four years ago during my four-month Fulbright stay in Lviv, Ukraine, I was particularly impressed by the extraordinary number of new women prose writers on Ukrainian bookstore shelves. Since that had been somewhat of a rarity in Ukrainian literary history, I decided to explore the phenomenon and started reading and collecting works by authors I found especially interesting as well as ones my closest literary and editor friends recommended to me. At that point in time I also decided to begin contacting writers I didn't know personally to get permission to translate their works. After I published several shorter prose works in literary journals and began to work on larger projects of individual novels in translation, I grew determined to promote this wealth of Ukrainian women writers to the English-speaking world in the form of this anthology. I knew I couldn't accomplish a project this vast on my own, so when I decided which authors I needed to have translated, I engaged a cohort of translators and several of my former graduate students in the project. All their hard work and cooperation has really made this anthology possible.

All anthologies, of course, are shaped by the tastes of the compiler. This one is no exception. And all anthologies can never pretend to be complete. I am certain I have overlooked some authors who would have been just as worthy of inclusion here. But all anthologies have their limitations, too, so certain lacunae are inevitable. I do hope that this anthology gives a representative taste of some extraordinarily talented writers from a largely undiscovered country, who are very deserving of a wider readership in the English-speaking world.

The arrangement of the authors presented here is largely chronological according to the age of the various authors except in one instance — the poet Lina Kostenko, whose work appears at the end. Although she is the most mature writer represented in this group, she is the "youngest" prose writer in the anthology since her first novel in prose appeared in 2010 at the age of 80. I also decided to include two still-living older writers, who began writing long before the period of *glasnost* that began in the mid-1980s and Ukrainian independence in 1991. The surrealist poet, prose writer, and artist Emma Andijewska made her name in emigration in the United States and in Germany. And Nina Bichuya has been a prolific prose writer from Lviv in Western Ukraine, who for decades has been quite influential on women's prose. Most of the remaining writers began their prose writing careers in the 1980s and after.

The anthology offers either complete shorter works or excerpts from novels and novellas to give a representative flavor of each writer's writing style. A few works have been chosen for inclusion based primarily on their historical and cultural significance, but most have been chosen for purely esthetic reasons. The novel has been the dominant genre for most of the Ukrainian women writers of the 1990s and into the new millennium, although the short story and essay have had their extremely talented adherents. Tanya Malyarchuk can be singled out as a particularly notable short story writer, though her latest work is a novel. Many of the authors included here have also distinguished themselves in the genres of the literary and philosophical essay (especially Oksana Zabuzhko), in the New Journalism genre of the travelogue (e.g., Iren Rozdobudko), and in memoiristic writing (e.g., Maria Matios).

I suggest that readers not necessarily read the book from beginning to end, but rather peruse those works and authors they find the most intriguing. Some readers may be attracted to the unreserved abandon of some of the younger authors. Others may find the more traditional writers more appealing. Readers hopefully will find a cornucopia of interesting choices in the volume while they glimpse into the heart and soul of some of Ukraine's finest women writers.

I want to particularly thank Myroslava Prykhoda for assisting me over the years with advice on the project and for helping me to collect books by a number of the authors. My special gratitude to Svitlana Bednazh for her assistance as a perspicacious editor of several of my translations. Her drive and positive energy have been invaluable in helping to complete this volume, especially with the final push. I am also thankful to Olha Tytarenko for editing several of my translations and to Alla Perminova for sharing her expertise and answering many of my translation questions in the final stages. Thanks also to Mariya Tytarenko for all her boundless energy and for providing support for the project in myriad ways. I am extremely grateful to Ukrainian artist Oksana Zhelisko from Lviv, Ukraine, and now residing in Edmonton, Canada, for allowing us to reproduce her exquisite painting for the cover. Extra special thanks to Yana Kovalskaya of Glagoslav Publications for the incredible amount of work she did in arranging for all the permissions from authors, literary agents and publishers to make this volume possible.

This book is dedicated to the bright memory
of Daryna Zholdak, a wonderful young Ukrainian
woman and mother of two, who died far
too young, to the sorrow
of all of us who
knew her

EMERGING UKRAINIAN WOMEN PROSE WRITERS: AT TWENTY YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

by Michael M. Naydan

In the Ukrainian literary tradition there have been scores of women poets, several of them reaching extraordinarily prominent status. The most renowned of them include: the legendary seventeenth-century singer folksong writer Marusia Churai, the poet and dramatist Lesya Ukrayinka at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, and the poet Lina Kostenko in the Soviet and post-Soviet period.* Larysa Kosach at her mother's suggestion wrote under the pseudonym of Lesya Ukrainka, which, at least, was a female one. Thus in historically patriarchal Ukrainian society, poetry was first accepted as appropriate for women, perhaps, mostly because it is an art form linked with emotion, with concomitant stereotypical sentiments associated with women. Prose fiction prior to the twentieth century in the Slavic world by and large has been a genre in the domain of male writers.

The tradition of women's prose fiction as opposed to that of poetry has been considerably less developed. Language Lanterns Publications in Canada includes the following women authors in their Women's Voices in Ukrainian Literature series: Ukrainka's mother Olena Pchilka

* Kostenko's works include a novel in verse entitled *Marusia Churai* (1982) that is dedicated to the theme of the first great Ukrainian poet-singer.

(1849-1930), Natalia Kobrynska (1855-1920), Dniprova Chayka (1861-1927), Lyubov Yanovska (1861-1933), Olha Kobylianska (1863-1942), Hrytsko Hryhorenko (1867-1924), Yevhenia Yaroshynska (1868-1904), and Lesya Ukrainka (1871-1913). Only Olha Kobylianska of this group has garnered prominent stature as a prose writer, particularly with the publication of her novels *The Land* (1902) and *On Sunday Morning She Gathered Herbs* (1909). Kobylyanska initially wrote in German and switched to Ukrainian as her literary language as she became acquainted with civic-minded Ukrainian literary circles, especially the eminent writer Ivan Franko. One other woman prose writer Marko Vovchok (1834-1907), the pseudonym of Maria Vilinska, gained prominence in the nineteenth century under the guise of her male mask. She has been called the Ukrainian Harriet Beecher Stowe for her realistic, ethnographic short stories on peasant life in Ukraine, first written in Ukrainian (Vovchok's acquired language following her marriage to Opanas Markovych), which were translated and introduced into Russian literary circles with considerable success by the great Russian writer Ivan Turgenev in 1859.

The Soviet period, unfortunately, experienced a dearth of influential Ukrainian women prose writers, with the best women writers opting to write poetry. Just the émigré poet, prose writer and artist Emma Andijewska (1931-), who was born in Donetsk, stands out with her surrealistic prose works in the genre of the novel and novella, all written in emigration. What might the reasons be for the lack of significant Ukrainian women prose writers from the 1920s up to Ukrainian independence in 1991? One can only provide conjecture. Prose fiction requires cultural and societal stability, yet the repressive and congenitally patriarchal nature of the Soviet system may have stereotyped women from working in prose fiction. Simple biological issues (child bearing and rearing) may have kept some women writers from having adequate free time to write lengthier prose works. Poetry, of course, takes shorter spurts of concentration. The same social conditions in greater Russia during the Soviet period failed to produce any Russian women prose writers of note until The Thaw in the 1960s when I. Grekova (the

pseudonym of Elena Venttsel) began publishing, and in the mid-to-late 1980s when, Ludmilla Petrushevskaya and Tatiana Tolstaya emerged. Petrushevskaya's prose, though accepted for publication as early as 1969 in the leading Soviet journal Novyi mir (New World), was initially withdrawn because of its stark characters and negative depictions of Soviet realia.

The period of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's *glasnost* (openness) in the mid-to-late 1980s and the period of post-independence Ukraine following 1991 has seen a conspicuous blossoming of women prose writers. Two female writers in particular bridged the transitional period to Ukrainian independence: Eugenia Kononenko (1959-) and Halyna Pahutiak (1958-), who were publishing their short stories and novellas in Soviet periodicals. The Kyiv-based Kononenko was publishing mostly in literary journals such as the liberal Suchasnist in Kyiv, while the Lviv-based Pahutiak, besides publishing in the periodical press, managed to publish several books of collected prose works in Soviet times including *Children* (1982), *The Master* (1986), *To End Up in a Garden* (1989), and *Mustard Seed* (1990). Kononenko's early works, mostly short stories, largely deal with quite realistic scenes of Soviet life that often present Ukrainian women in crisis situations, particularly in dysfunctional family settings, and often with abusive and drunken husbands and boyfriends. In her choice of topics, she shares an affinity with Petrushevskaya in that respect. Her book-length feminist essay *Without a Hubby* (2005) comprises a lengthy, confessional autobiographical essay. Pahutiak's prose tends much more to be in the vein of magical realism and fantasy. Her vampire novel *The Minion from Dobromyl* (2009) fuses folklore and folk belief in witches and vampires with actual historical events including the Nazi invasion and Soviet rule in western Ukraine. Maria Matios, one of the most prominent Ukrainian women writers writing today, published her first prose work in 1992, a year after Ukrainian independence.

A watershed event for Ukrainian women's prose occurred in 1996. That is the year of publication of Oksana Zabuzhko's *Field Work in Ukrainian Sex*. The semi-autobiographical novel, based on Zabuzhko's

travels in the US on a Fulbright grant, focuses on her disastrous liaison with a Ukrainian artist. That failed relationship leads to a profoundly intense psychological self-analysis and examination of her Ukrainian identity and her identity as a woman, over the course of which the writer, among many other topics, candidly depicts sex and sexuality, which were completely taboo topics in previous Ukrainian women's literary discourse. Male writers had been writing about sex and sexuality from a male perspective prior to this. Of particular note is the erotic prose of Yuri Pokalchuk. Note also Yuri Vynnychuk's *Ladies of the Night* (1992) about two Odessan prostitutes and their pimp as well as Yuri Andrukhovych's novels *Recreations* (1992), *Moskoviada* (1993) and *Perverzion* (1996), all of which contain highly charged sexual scenes. *Recreations* contains a brutal rape scene, *Moskoviada* — the hero's sexual encounter with an African woman in the dormitory showers at a literary institute in Moscow, and the provocatively titled *Perverzion* — a threesome sex scene toward the end of the novel as well as a considerable amount of sexual content throughout. Zabuzhko's novel, currently in its ninth edition, differs by the fact that it dealt with these issues of sex and sexuality for the first time from a *female* psychological perspective. This particularly galvanized a women's readership in Ukraine and broad support for the novel based on gender. The novel elicited considerable negative reaction in the press when it appeared, but mostly, perhaps, for its provocative title. While foregrounded in the title, sex is actually a secondary theme in the book. Negative reactions tended to come from more conservative circles as well as from the opposite sex, though female critics such as Nila Zborovska took Zabuzhko to task over her writing. Zborovska's attacks, however, may have been based more on personal issues. Certain writers such as Natalka Sniadanko, who presented sexual content in her prose but without an openly feminist stance, were presented as the "anti-Zabuzhko." Zabuzhko's novel, in fact, is more about the failure of mutually pleasurable sex (one might also call this true intimate love) to happen in the heroine's love relationship with her Ukrainian artist lover and her inability to foster a child with him, as well as the

psychological reasons for that failure, both intrinsic and extrinsic. With the novel's publication Zabuzhko immediately created the persona and the paradigm of a self-promoting feminist writer in the Western mold, breaking social barriers for other women writers to follow. The novel also fostered lengthy discussions about women and feminism in the Ukrainian periodical press, as well as literary discussions on whether a bestseller was possible in Ukraine. The novel has been translated into a number of European languages and has put Zabuzhko into a dialog with Western literary and feminist circles.

Zabuzhko, just as many other writers of her generation, tends to try to always be cosmopolitan. There is no bucolic simplicity in the style of her works and little focus on village life. Her characters are virtually all intellectuals and city dwellers. Her prose writing style is also by design quite complex. Perhaps this comes from her training in philosophy and scholarly prose. All these aspects of her prose, either subliminally or intentionally, work against the imagined stereotype of Ukrainians as being singing, smiling pig lard(*salo*)-eating rustic villagers, a stereotype fostered in the Tsarist, Soviet and even post-Soviet Russian empires.

Essential to Zabuzhko's method in *Field Work in Ukrainian Sex* is her psychological, nearly confessional candor. The book, in fact, reminds me considerably of Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, in which Plath's life experiences are thinly veiled in the guise of her novel. That sometimes painfully candid and personally focused aspect of Zabuzhko's writing has been taken up by a number of other younger women writers including Svitlana Pyrkalo, Natalka Sniadanko, Irena Karpa, Svitlana Povalyaeva, and Sofia Andrukhovych. All these younger writers, who currently range in age from 29-37, just as Zabuzhko does in her pathbreaking novel, focus on urban life, use scatological and substandard language, tend toward the confessional, and in a quite frank manner describe their sexual experiences (largely ironically) as well as their inner emotional life, usually in turmoil. Most of this group have been trained as print or media journalists and have dual or even multiple career tracks. I should point out that the degree requirements for journalism majors in Ukraine focus heavily on philology and literature, often in comparative contexts,

so it is not the kind of narrowly focused journalistic background as found in the US. Pyrkalo and Sniadanko work as print and media journalists, and Karpa and Povalyaeva as radio and telejournalists. Karpa served as the host for the Ukrainian MTV channel and also works as a model, having done numerous nude photo shoots for Playboy and other sex magazines. She also is the lead singer for the Kyiv-based band called Quarpa (previously named *Faktychno sami*). The works of these writers, just as Zabuzhko's novel, are largely autobiographical. The stories they have to tell are stories about themselves. This need for psychological self-revelation at an early age, particularly in their first works, seems in general terms to differentiate these writers from their contemporary male counterparts. Their background in reporting (except for Sofia Andrukhovych, who just has a literary background and is the daughter of prominent writer Yuri Andrukhovych), seems to influence their writing style.

Another strain among younger authors is a self-reflective kind of philosophical prose such as that of translator-author Dzvinka Matiash, particularly in her first novel *A Requiem for November* (2005). The novel is confessional, but in a spiritual way, and comprises a deep meditation on death. Her second novel, *A Novel about Your Homeland* (2006), relates the stories of women's lives in Ukraine's past. The author's sister Bohdana Matiyash also writes in a philosophical vein, particularly noteworthy in this vein is her book of prose-poems *Conversations with God* (2007).

The writer Larysa Denysenko (1973-) also has a considerable amount of autobiographic content in her prose, but is considerably less confessional and more restrained in her writing than her contemporaries. Hers is a measured prose of everyday life situations. She is the prototype of a rare breed of woman who has managed to have it all in Ukrainian society. Having grown up a speaker of Russian with training in law, Ms. Denysenko learned to speak Ukrainian in her job with the Ukrainian Ministry of Justice at the age of 23. While she still practices law, she also hosts a culturological program Document+ on the "1+1" television program. Besides her seven novels and three

children's books, Ms. Denysenko also has done a number of photo shoots as a model for fashion and women's magazines.

Three of the most interesting writers to have emerged since Ukrainian independence include Maria Matios (1959-), Iren Rozdobudko (1962-) and Tanya Malyarchuk (1982-): the first two from the older generation and the latter from the younger. Matios comes to literature from a philological educational background and Rozdobudko and Malyarchuk from the field of journalism. One is particularly struck by the prolific nature of all three authors. Matios has published fourteen books of prose and six books of poetry, with her first book publication in 2001, nineteen years after her first book of poetry was published in 1982. One of her primary foci has been the fictional reconstruction of her past in rural Bukovyna where she was born and raised. Rozdobudko, originally from Donetsk in the Russian-speaking Eastern part of Ukraine, is the author of 14 books of prose and 2 books of poetry. She began her second career as a prose writer at the age of 38 with the publication of her first novel. And Malyarchuk, at the age of 28, has published six books of prose. She, too, like Matios, often deals with memories of village life, though in the Carpathian Mountains where she grew up.

Rozdobudko has become a master of the detective novel and psychological thriller. She focuses on story telling, and her writings are highly accessible to a mass readership. And many of her works are being turned into movies, thereby increasing her popularity as a writer. She often authors the filmscripts herself.

Several aspects of Matios's and Malyarchuk's exceptional prose works are striking to me. Rather than concentrate exclusively on the urban environment where they both live and work (the city of Kyiv), they both focus on their past and rural life in the village. Matios's writing in particular recalls the novels of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, who, in works such as *Beloved* and *The Color Purple*, recreate a colonial past and find aesthetic beauty and philosophical depth in it. Both Morrison and Walker seek authenticity in their portrayal of the past and use a considerable amount of dialectal speech to achieve their aim. Matios's postcolonial masterpiece *Sweet Darusia* is an engaging

character portrayal in the microcosmic world of a small village in Bukovyna. Her villagers speak the local Bukovynian dialect, which she regularly glosses with footnotes. Matios's writing style is rich and complex, yet still quite accessible to the Ukrainian reader. Instead of reacting against rural stereotypes, Matios revels in the unique individuality of her ancestral villagers, and shows the humanity and the psychological depth that can be found in their lives.

While Matios tends to write longer works in the genres of the novella and novel, Malyarchuk's strength as a writer lies in her vignettes, in shorter prose forms, although she has written several novellas. Like her younger contemporaries, Malyarchuk was inclined to be more self-revelatory in her first novel in 2004, *Adolpho's Endspiel, or a Rose for Liza*, while her later collections tend to have more of an authorial distance and restraint. While Malyarchuk's style is more terse and more transparent than Matios's, she is a talented and engaging storyteller. She seems to distance herself from contemporary postmodernist trends and has an impressive acumen for presenting the psychology of the characters that populate her stories. Her prose pieces, many drawn from childhood experience, avoid copious descriptive detail and comprise vignettes that, despite their seeming simplicity, give significantly deeper insight into life. Her story "A Village and its Witches" delightfully reverberates with life and the seeming natural order of things in a land that is both somehow familiar yet strangely different from the one most urban contemporary readers grow up in, a land whose collective psyche is still populated by witches, superstitions, and deeply seated supernatural beliefs. Instead of rejecting her rural roots in her writings from her now more sophisticated urban perspective, Malyarchuk often returns to and embraces her past with the life lessons it harbors. Those lessons, sometimes self-directedly ironic, seem to form an integral part of her own sense of being as well as that of her people. She also experiments considerably with narrative, often taking the point of view of male characters.

The writers Sofia Maidanska (1948-), Natalka Bilotserkivets (1954-), Liudmyla Taran (1954-) and Liuko Dashvar (the pseudonym of Irina

Chernova; 1954-) are worth noting as a phenomenon, with three of them born in the same year. They all have come to writing prose fiction late in their careers. Maidanska, Bilotserkivets and Taran are well-known poets and essayists who have begun to write prose in their mid-fifties. The Russian-speaking Dashvar, who was educated and worked as a journalist and later as a filmscript writer, began writing and publishing in Ukrainian in 2006, earning the 2008 BBC Book of the Year Award in Ukraine for her second novel *Milk with Blood* (2007) about village life in southern Ukraine. Her works, quite accessible to a wide audience, sell the most copies of any woman writing in Ukraine today. Bilotserkivets, one of the most prominent and well-known poets of her generation, has shifted to prose and has been working on a novel for several years. Her first novel has not yet appeared, so we are unable to include an excerpt of that in this volume. Taran has shifted mostly to writing shorter prose works, though she does continue to write poetry.

Three of the most important recent works in women's prose have been Oksana Zabuzhko's lengthy novel *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* (2009), Lina Kostenko's *Notes of a Ukrainian Selfmad Man* (2010), and Maria Matios's *Torn Pages from an Autobiography* (2010). Kostenko is Ukraine's preeminent poet, a revered figure, who turned 80 in 2010. She is one of the leading representatives of what has been called the Poets of the Sixties phenomenon, a group of Ukrainian writers who sought personal creative freedom from the state-imposed literary requirements of socialist realism. Her first foray into prose fiction at the end of 2010 met with critical reaction; in fact she canceled a visit to the city of Lviv for promotional appearances because of it. The novel, told from the perspective of a 35-year-old male protagonist computer programmer (Kostenko's son Vasyl Tsvirkun is trained as a computer programmer), has sold extremely well. Zabuzhko's 832-page novel, introduced with a considerable amount of hype, has had responses ranging from high praise to reactions that focus on the opaqueness of Zabuzhko's style. The book won the 2013 Angelus Prize for best Central European prose work. Matios's candid and often ironic memoir recounts growing up in the Soviet Union and the transition to Ukrainian independence. It

received a book of the year award in Ukraine for 2010. On December 17, 2010 Matios reported that the offices of Piramida Publishers in Lviv were searched by members of the Ukrainian ministry of internal affairs, who tried to remove copies of the book from circulation.* The essence of the complaint against her book was the fact that Matios called the gigantic titanium sword-wielding statue of the woman defender of the motherland in Kyiv a giant phallus.** Her comments apparently irked some Soviet army veterans of the "Great Patriotic War" (World War II), who made charges of defamation to the authoritarian Yanukovych government. Matios indignantly reacted to the illegal search with an open letter to the general procurator of Ukraine.*** While there have been no further repercussions, freedom of expression has, unfortunately, once again become dangerous in Ukraine.

All in all I see two general trends in the phenomenon of emerging women writers in Ukraine. One comprises urban writing, which is a backlash against previous Soviet colonialism and stereotyping. These writers seem to need to express their cosmopolitanism, to be a part of the larger culture and cultural trends of the world, and at the extreme end — to be chic and cutting edge with no holds barred. They, of course, tackle real issues and challenges presented by today's modern society and women's place in it. The other trend is toward a new retrospective rural prose tradition, a return to one's roots in village life in both the recent and distant past. These women writers (particularly Matios, Malyarchuk and Dashvar) revel in the past and its lessons, though they, too, at times also deal with urban characters in urban settings. Most interesting will be to see if some of the younger women urban writers continue on the same track after bearing and raising children.

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* An article in *Ukrainska Pravda* (The Ukrainian Truth) describes the situation in detail: *http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2011/01/12/5775945/*.

** A link to a picture of the monument can be found here: *http://miraimages.photoshelter.com/image?&_bqG=2&_bqH=eJyriIgIMwnzqvLxDyv2Sg0Mj80vCU9Ky8rKzE63MjIwsjIoMABhIOkZ7xLsbOuSmpaaV5yqBubFO_q52JYA2aHBrkHxni-620SCV3iWFhT75ERmbiaFq8Y7OIbbFqYlFyRkA_MIhdA--&GI_ID=*.

*** *http://life.pravda.com.ua/columns/2011/01/12/70243/*

TALE ABOUT THE VAMPIRELING WHO FED ON HUMAN WILL

by Emma Andijewska

Translated by Uliana Pasicznyk

There once appeared among the vampires a fledgling so puny, tiny, and feeble that its parents worried greatly whether their long-awaited offspring would ever succeed them in carrying on the fame and honor of the vampire race. For when it came time for the vampireling to try its wings, it became apparent that the young thing was not only too weak to attack humans but was scarcely able to maintain its balance. Its spine, arms, and legs were so soft and light that the slightest wind or even a draft through a house was enough for the vampireling to fall to the ground like an old rag doll, unable even to lift its head on its own. But what caused its parents the most travail was the terrible, inexplicable fact that even after their child lost its baby teeth and the permanent ones grew in, these were more like gelatinous scales filled with grayish fluid than teeth. Such teeth could not scratch, let alone pierce the skin of a human.

The claws on the vampireling's front legs were no better. Instead of being able to help the jaws do vampire's work, they grew as tender cartilage, resembling rose petals. Looking at them caused the parents to suffer as though an ashen stake were being driven through their hearts.

But even this did not cause the hapless parents the most anguish. Their deepest grief and disappointment sprang from the fact that

from birth the vampireling could not bear the sight of, let alone drink, the human blood that its soft-hearted parents initially brought the sickly child in a pouch made from a pig's bladder. At the very sight of even the freshest human blood, the vampireling immediately suffered terrible cramps that threatened to bring its life to a close. Lest they lose their only offspring the tearful parents, gritting their teeth, were forced to feed their child not healthful and nourishing human blood but porridge cooked from dandelions and juice squeezed from daisy petals.

Finally the vampireling's parents, who, like all loving parents, had tried every means to remedy the great affliction, lost hope that their child would ever find its way to being a true vampire. With grieving and breaking hearts, they began to consider whether to abandon their degenerate offspring to humans, so as not to bring ultimate disgrace to the vampire race and clan.

But one very old, toothless vampire, living out his days in the chimney of a stable that had burned to the ground, to whom the despairing parents had turned for some word of wisdom as a last resort, persuaded them to wait a little longer, and meanwhile to find some decisive and fearless man to serve as nanny to their child.

The parents decided that his was wise advice. Barely able to wait until the break of dawn, they immediately set out among humans. But no matter whom the vampires approached, no matter how respectfully they asked, everyone they turned to, resolutely refused to undertake any such task, crossing themselves as they spoke.

Then, in a wood, the vampires chanced across a man whom misfortune had dogged so long that he had lost any fear of them. Shunning needless hesitation, the vampires talked the man into taking care of their only child for a small remuneration, having also vowed that he would be inviolable to any other vampire. The requirements were that the man carry the vampireling out on walks; in several years it had not grown even an inch, so even now its legs folded together under it like string; and that he cook porridge of dandelions and squeeze daisy petal juice for his charge — the only food that did not bring on its cramps.

They came to terms, and the man began to care for the vampireling. Fate had not been kind to the man, and he rejoiced that things had at least taken a somewhat better turn. Now, at last, after long toil and much disappointment, the man had a roof over his head, even if it was among vampires, and he was even eating normal human food, which the vampires brought him, instead of the roots and moldy husks he had serendipitously found.

At first, truth to say, the man was wary of the vampireling, for he remembered that the acorn does not roll far from the oak. But once he became convinced that the child did not crave human blood, and that it was indeed puny and feeble, the man let down his guard. And because nothing much needed to be done for the child — after eating it usually sat quietly in a corner, rather than go to play — the man relaxed completely. And having relaxed, he grew lazy and careless.

So whereas earlier the man had fed the vampireling three times a day, now he decided that twice a day would suffice, all the more because the child never mentioned being hungry. Then, noting that it did not cry, the man began to prepare its food just once a day, a meal that seemed of no great interest to the child. And then somehow it happened that one fine day, the man just forgot to feed the vampireling altogether. Earlier that day the man had lunched especially well, for the vampireling's parents, believing that the man was caring for their child conscientiously, had brought a basket loaded with foods and wine filched from their victims. And since he who is sated never thinks of one who is hungry, the man, having eaten and drunk well, forgot about the vampireling, and soon he was overtaken by the urge to sleep.

Until then the man had taken care not to sleep in the presence of his charge. But now, deciding there was no danger — as things always seem to the satiated — and feeling his eyelids grow heavy, he made himself more comfortable, and he fell asleep.

That is when the vampireling first saw a human asleep.

If the man had fed it, perhaps the vampireling would have paid no attention. As things were, it felt hunger and began to look around

to see if a daisy petal might be lying about somewhere. Laboriously it made its way out from the corner and closer to the table, where there still lay remnants of the food the vampireling could not eat. Then it was struck by the discovery that a human sleeps totally differently from the way vampires do.

For when vampires slept, there arose from them a heavy stench of blood, which made the vampireling's extremities grow numb and took his breath away, making it feel ill. During the day, when the man was active, he smelled like an old goat. But now, as he slept, there wafted from him a pleasant aroma that tickled the nostrils.

The vampireling, intrigued, came up close. It did not yet realize, of course, that what smelled so sweet was human will, which during sleep rises up from man's flesh and floats above him in a soft, round, and aromatic biscuit. And because the vampireling was hungry and had found nothing it could eat, it nipped at this aroma. Slowly consuming a bit of human will, it was astonished to find that nothing in the world tastes as sweet as this nourishment.

The more the vampireling ate of this new food, the more it gained strength from it and the tastier it became. The vampireling was so taken by this new food that it ceased to eat only when the man stirred heavily and began to regain consciousness. Grasping his chest with his hands, the man felt a strange languor and lethargy throughout his body, unlike anything he had known before.

The man peered about on all sides but he did not realize what had happened. And how could he have realized anything, when, even before he sat up and rubbed his eyes, the vampireling, to whom the new nourishment had brought previously unknown strength and agility, had quickly scurried back to a corner and in no way betrayed that it had just been feasting on human will.

For the very moment that the vampireling tasted human will, not only strength but intellect awakened in it, as well as cunning and caution. The vampireling now resolved resolutely that from then on, human will would be its only food. When the man occasionally remembered the vampireling's existence, it still pretended to consume

the dandelion porridge and daisy petal juice, but when the man slept it was sure to feast on its incomparable new nourishment.

Thus, before long, the vampire child consumed all of the man's will, for a person lacking will never notices that he is a living corpse. And when it had satisfied itself that all this precious food had been eaten, the vampireling asked its parents to give the man a reward and let him go, and then host a lavish banquet before it set out to go among humankind. The time had come for the vampireling to make its parents rejoice at the realization of their dreams.

At that banquet, when the vampireling proclaimed not only to its parents but to all vampire kind that from that day forward they would feed on human will exclusively, the vampires, wonderstruck, unanimously agreed: the small, puny vampireling was the mightiest and most fearsome vampire of them all.

TALE ABOUT THE MAN WHO KNEW DOUBT

by Emma Andijewska

Translated by Uliana Pasicznyk

There once lived a man who from birth was defeated by doubt. No matter how he began any activity, whether indifferently or conscientiously, whether work or recreation, he would be seized by doubt. At that instant the work would become loathsome to him, or the pastime would slump into boredom and despair. Nothing brought him any pleasure, and existence itself seemed such a heavy burden that the poor fellow would gladly have rid himself of it, had not the resolve entailed effort beyond any that he could muster. For doubt did not allow him to make a final decision about anything.

When they realized something was amiss, the man's parents tried every way they knew to alleviate his distress, but all their attempts proved futile. The older their son became, the stronger his doubt grew, and all his worried parents' urgings and counsel served only to increase his despair and hopelessness, making their son weary of life.

Finally the parents became convinced that in his condition neither threats nor pleas were of any use. So they began to equip their only child with the things he would need to travel far and wide, in the hope that by being out among people he would gain the wisdom and experience needed to cure him of his excessive doubt. At last, having given him directions and bestowed their blessing, they let their feckless child go off on his long journey.

But even in far-off lands doubt continued to torment the man, and sooner or later everything he undertook ended in failure and vexation. From time to time the man came across kind-hearted people who took pity on him and gave him shelter and work. But as soon as the man took a good look at whatever he was doing, doubt would seize him again: he would abandon everything and find himself once again in the same situation as before. Yet now he was no longer an impetuous youth but a man full grown, for whom it was time to have a roof over his head and a family of his own.

And then, in his wanderings from place to place, because Providence, if not always immediately then at least occasionally, tends to even the most forsaken of men, the man somehow found a corner to call home and acquired a wife and children. Now he felt pleased that at last he was making something of his life. But as soon as his children began growing out of diapers, doubt once again seized the man, doubt stronger than he had ever known before. He left his wife and children and set off aimlessly into the world, as before.

And then one day, as he was fording a stream along his way, the man turned around and chanced to see that his doubts were seven chargers forged together as one black steed, bearing him into an abyss of no return. The terrified man, feigning calm, tried to vanquish the doubts now taking on such increasingly physical form. But his powers proved too weak to scatter them. Calling on God to bear witness that he could carry on no more, exhausted in body and soul, he dropped down at a crossroads, under a tree, and fell asleep.

As soon as his eyelids closed, he beheld a little old man standing before him, tugging at his sleeve. Pointing to a small yard made of packed clay, smooth as a finished floor, the old man asked, "Will you agree to sweep my yard? For this job I need a man defeated by too much doubt. Here are the sun and the moon; they will serve as your two brooms — and as for your pay, what I have to give you is one small seed."

"All right," said the man, and as he began to sweep the old man's yard, he immediately felt his doubts vanish somewhere. After a time

the old man made him stop, saying that his job was done, and in remuneration he gave him the one small seed.

The man thanked him, and then awoke. To his amazement, in his palm there indeed lay a small, luminous seed. As the man took another look at the seed, doubt again reared up within him, with such angry force that the man understood: his end was at hand, for the chargers were racing at a gallop under him. They were galloping so fiercely that, to stop himself from falling and cracking his skull as doubt was about to plunge him into the abyss, the man grabbed the horse's mane with one hand while pressing the other, the hand holding the little old man's payment to his breast. At that instant he felt the seed fall tremulously to the bottom of his heart and immediately send forth a slender shoot. And from the way the shoot trembled, the man understood that the seedling sprouting in him was hope.

"You have become a bad horseman," the man's reason immediately admonished him.

"You will never make any headway in life if you don't pull that log out from your heart," the doubts added angrily, slackening their galloping pace.

"It's not a log but a new doubt stirring in my heart," lied the man, all the while feeling the sapling of hope within him sprouting forth new branches.

"A person is a person only when he is overwhelmed by doubt," declared the doubts, appeased. And that was the last that they said. For hope, which from a tiny seed had flourished in the man's heart into a blossoming tree, silenced the voices of doubt. For only the tree of hope, growing in the human heart, helps man vanquish the doubts that are his horsemen to the abyss.

Women's prose writing has exploded on the literary scene in Ukraine just prior to and following Ukrainian independence in 1991. Over the past two decades scores of fascinating new women authors have emerged. These authors write in a wide variety of styles and genres including short stories, novels, essays, and new journalism. In the collection you will find: realism, magical realism, surrealism, the fantastic, deeply intellectual writing, newly discovered feminist perspectives, philosophical prose, psychological mysteries, confessional prose, and much more.

You'll find an entire gamut of these Ukrainian women writers' experiences that range from deep spirituality to candid depictions of sexuality and interpersonal relations. You'll find tragedy and humor and on occasion humor in the tragedy. You'll find urban prose, edgy, caustic, and intellectual; as well as prose harkening back to village life and profound tragedies from the Soviet past that have left marks of trauma on an entire nation. This is a collection of Ukrainian women's stories, histories that serve to tell *her* unique stories in English translation. Substantial excerpts from novels and translations of complete shorter works of each author will give the reader deep insight into this burgeoning phenomenon of contemporary Ukrainian women's prose.

The volume is compiled, edited and accompanied with a critical introduction by Michael M. Naydan, Woskob Family Professor of Ukrainian Studies at The Pennsylvania State University. Seventeen different translators from around the world have contributed translations to the volume.

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