

ATTYLA MOHYLNY

CONTOURS  
*of*  
THE CITY

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**THE CITY**



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# CONTOURS OF THE CITY

by Attyla Mohylny

Translated from Ukrainian by Michael M. Naydan  
With Translations of Five Poems by Virlana Tkacz and Wanda Phipps  
Guest Introduction by Ivan Malkovych  
Translator's introduction by Michael M. Naydan  
Michael Naydan's Translations Edited by Larysa Bobrova

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Ivan Malkovych’s essay “Dinastychnyi ukrains’kyi poet” (A Dynastic Ukrainian Poet) first appeared in Ukrainian in Attyla Mohyl’ny, *Kyivski kontury*. Kyiv: AB-BA-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA, 2013. Part of Michael Naydan’s introductory essay to this volume first appeared in Ukrainian in the journal *Suchasnist* in the July 1993 issue under the title “Dvoie ukrains’kykh poetiv: Oksana Zabuzhko i Attyla Mohyl’nyi” (Two Ukrainian Poets: Oksana Zabuzhko and Attyla Mohyl’ny).

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## A DYNASTIC KYIVAN POET

Attyla Mohylny happened to transverse his creative path in a cloak of invisibility common for a Ukrainian artist. There are very few articles about his books and very little mention of him in the press. Fortunately, over the past two or three years in conversations with several Americans interested in Ukrainian poetry Attyla's name suddenly and consistently has been uttered in ecstatic reveries about English translations of his poems that were marvelously congruent with a Western sensibility. This is not surprising because Attyla is a poet of Ukraine's largest megalopolis, and in his poetry there are numerous images and feelings that in one way or another are compatible with those of American beatniks. Toward the end of his life Attyla even acquired the real appearance of a beatnik, but not as a result of some kind of scandalous behavior, but rather just because something had gone wrong in his life.

However, in his poetry—with bright platoons of horseback riders, with solemn princely military drills, and the Polovtsian eyes of waitresses in Kyiv's cafes—I primarily feel an involuntary echo of the poets Yuri Darahan and Olexander Olzhych. And, of course, the early poetry of Bohdan Ihor Antonych, but somehow a very Kyivan Antonych. In Attyla's last poetry there is poignant Mandelstamian despair... Kyiv in Attyla's poetry becomes a full-blooded Ukraine-centered Mecca. The language of his poems is precise, noble, decisive, impetuous. Ukrainian princes would have spoken this way when, once setting off for dangerous military or hunting exercises, they might unexpectedly have appeared in modern-day Kyiv.

Attyla Mohylny was born September 16, 1963 in Kyiv and died September 3, 2008 in the city he loved and called home his entire abbreviated life. He was one of the most talented of the "Eightiers" generation of writers and one of the very few dynastic poets of Kyiv. His father—the poet Viktor Mohylny—is better known to the wider community as the great children's poet Vit Vitko.

Attyla graduated from the philological faculty of Taras Shevchenko Kyiv State University. For some time he taught there and taught as well in the Ukrainian studies program at the University of Warsaw. He studied Persian language and culture at the University of Tadjikistan, worked in

television, in the Mohyla Academy Collegium, and as an editor for the newspaper Voice of Ukraine.

He is the author of two collections of poetry: *Tumbler Pigeons over the Rooftops* (1987) and *The Outlines of the City* (1991). He is also the author of the original children's book *Mavka and the Ant Prince* (1988, 2006).

We were classmates and close friends in school. For two years we even shared an apartment together. Attyla was a native of Kyiv, but his Hungarian mother's blood probably added to his character a special "tzimmes" that demanded absolute freedom.

We met each other first at our entrance exams to the university. Attyla distinguished me from among the other applicants by my "Angela Davis" hair and a scar on my hand. With his zealous poetic imagination he somehow treated me like a young Don Juan gypsy poet. This, in fact, clearly was characteristic of his worldview. Attylka (as we called him by the diminutive form of his name) loved creating romantic myths.

We often read the same books, and in our shared apartment listened to the same music—from the Beatles to classical symphonies. A third classmate, the poet Ihor Malenky, joined us there. It was as if we formed a kind of trio—three "M's." We managed to save a copy of our jointly penned "triad" poem, written under the pseudonym of Ivan Troyan. We wrote it during student military prep classes and called it "Guidelines for Cleaning Weapons and Shoes":

Don't clean your shoes like a rifle for shooting  
because right when you move beyond all the rivers  
in the early morning— drums lie there  
with drumsticks stuck into the ground  
they'll quietly count all who have fallen  
monotonically like dust on sandals...

In 1983 we were on summer student training at a young pioneer camp at the seaside near Gelendzhik not far from Novorossisk, where the vast majority of children—descendants of Kuban Cossacks—spoke to each other mainly in Ukrainian. On this comforting occasion Attylka and I (it was actually his idea) introduced Ukrainian commands in our detachments. "Platoon! Straighten up! Attention!" Along with a few other commands. This sounded especially stirring coming from the lips of a boy from Moscow, whom we specifically chose as head of the unit. But then someone snitched

on us and our “military Ukrainization” on the territory occupied by our “brother Slavs” was harshly abbreviated....

We, of course, read our just written poems to each other. We praised or criticized each other’s work, seasoning everything with a dose of constant irony. To his last days Attyla liked to jot down poems on cigarette packs and matchbooks. Attyla’s character was reserved and quite secretive rather than open. Once he brought home some hand-rolled cigarettes filled with marijuana, but it, fortunately, had no effect on me. Attylka toyed with this new hobby just for a day or two—poetry became “ingrained” inside him a hundred times stronger.

In addition to poetry, Attylka was crazy over the opposite sex. He could fall in love at half a glance (but usually not for very long). Without an inkling of remorse he could go after some other guy’s girlfriend. He once visited me in Bereziv, where later in our house (this was during the dark times of the USSR), we secretly baptized his young poet wife (I was the “godmother’s” godfather). And before that his only children’s tale was “baptized”—while working in the Veselka children’s publishing house I urged Attylka to write a children’s book (that’s when his “Mavka and the Ant Prince” was published in an edition of nearly two hundred thousand copies). Much later, two years before he passed away, I managed to reissue a revised version of “Mavka...” in my A-BA-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA Publishing House. Over the last ten to twelve years of his earthly journey Attyla dropped by several times a week at my A-BA-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA office in downtown Kyiv for a coffee and a smoke....

I’ve long loved his poems and know several by heart. I’ve even read them in the Union of Writers author’s evenings at the end of the late nineties at the extremely rare during his lifetime. I sincerely consider this restless (and currently still quite underappreciated) Kyiv wanderer one of the most interesting and most identifiable Ukrainian poets of the end of the second millennium. I have a secret hope that, like the poets Bohdan Ihor Antonych or Mykhail Semenko, interest in Attyla’s poetry will be sparked among a young readership.

For a better understanding of the environment in which Attyla grew, I’ll give a brief sketch of his father—Viktor Mohylny, a talented poet in his own right and a prominent Ukrainian philatelist. The author of the essay is Vasyl Ovsyenko:

“In the early 1960s, after decades of anti-Ukrainian pogroms, informed Ukrainians in Kyiv felt humiliated, estranged. Probably there were very

few informed Ukrainian families—on those islands of independence. One of them was the Mohylny family—Viktor and his wife Aurelia (who was Hungarian and from the Western Ukrainian city of Uzhhorod and who became a Ukrainian patriot).

A mighty Ukrainian spirit dominated in the Mohylny home in Chokolivka. The walls were covered everywhere with Ukrainian words and autographs, with Ukrainian books and cultural artifacts lying everywhere. An informal literary circle was active there, where Ukrainian might surged. It consisted of a cohort that created a critical mass of Ukrainianness. It appeared in the sixties, and later—in the human rights movement and in the struggle for independence at the cusp of the 1980s-1990s. In these kinds of families children grew up for whom it was extremely difficult to remain Ukrainians in a totally Russified and amorally aggressive environment. This is how Viktor's son, the poet Attyla Mohylny, Viktor's daughter Dzvinka, and his grandchildren Bohdan and Yaropolk grew.

Viktor Mohylny was unable to acquire a higher education because at the university entrance exams, being a truthful individual, he interpreted Shevchenko's *Kateryna* (from his long poem "Kateryna") as an image of Ukraine, violated by a Russian soldier.

Viktor, as a proscribed writer, was not permitted to publish a single poetry book. Only in the 1980s when his grandson was born did his children's books come out under the pseudonym of Vit Vitko: "The Snail-Tiny Ant," "Swing Once, Swing Twice" and in 1999 a samizdat collection "Csokolivka, csokolj meg! or The Bitten Apple" under the bizarre pseudonym of Vykhtir Orkhlyn (in Hungarian: Chokolivka, Kiss Me!). His poetic language is refined, his metaphors expressive and paradoxical. His poetry is outwardly non-political, but does manage to express a Ukrainian mentality.

And this worker of "Leninska Kuznya" (Lenin's Forge), where he worked for 25 years, became proscribed because of the fact that he participated in the "Brama" (The Gate) literary workshop of workers' poets in the Club of Creative Youth. On May 22, 1967 Viktor Mohylny was among four arrested by KGB agents near the Taras Shevchenko monument in Kyiv. At that time Mykola Plakhotniuk summoned others to go there together to free them. Close to midnight about 600 followers of Shevchenko went to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and managed to negotiate the release of the detainees. It was there for the first time Ukrainians chanted "hanba" (shame) in unison. This word later became a verbal pickaxe to gouge at the

colonial regime. There was a lone tourist there—a German—who ran up to them and asked: “Was ist hanba?”

You had to be not of the easily frightened dozen to go to the former Simon Petlura supporter and political prisoner with twenty years of “experience” Borys Antonenko-Davydovych. Viktor did that together with Oles Shevchenko (a well-known dissident and Attyla’s godfather) and Hryts Tymenko. Hryts went missing without a trace when he began to prepare the book by Ukrainian dissident Ivan Dziuba *Internationalism or Russification?* In 1968 an article by Antonenko-Davydovych appeared in the newspaper Literary Ukraine entitled “A Letter that is Mourned” (about the banned by the Soviets Ukrainian letter “r” (g) in which the author cited an earlier article by Viktor Mohylny in Literary Ukraine dated October 1, 1965 under the title “The Trouble with Consonants”). Deputy editor Marharita Malinovska intentionally published the rebellious article and announced a discussion of the feasibility of a return to the Ukrainian alphabet of the banned letter.

In the next issue Doctor of Philology Vitaly Rusanovsky, whom for the latter’s support of the Russification “theory of bilingualism,” Ivan Bilodid nicknamed “Russofather,” made a pronouncement: “There’s Nothing to be Sad About.” The debate was stopped in its tracks.

Vsevolod Hantsov, a well-known linguist in the 1920s and the only surviving member of the “SVU” (League for the Liberation of Ukraine) court case,<sup>1</sup> lived in Chernihiv. Mohylny sent him a letter asking for explanations of certain philological issues. This was at a time when everyone avoided Hantsov in fear. The scholar answered him with a substantive letter—and that for him proved to be strong moral support.

Once again Viktor Mohylny was “lustrated” in the case of Oles Shevchenko, Vitaly Shevchenko, and Stepan Khmara. During a search on March 31, 1980 of Oles’s home they discovered a poem “Biography (I am frightened...)” There were accusations that the author was spreading a “defamatory, anti-Soviet document.” At that time Oles told the investigator that he had stolen the poem: the owner was not home, and his wife was doing the wash. He liked the poem lying on the table and put it in his pocket. Vladimir Shevchenko observed at an evening gathering that Mohylny at their trial in Lviv aggressively demanded a clarification to him

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1 In 1930 at a show trial in Kharkiv Hantsov received a prison term of eight years during Stalin’s crackdown against Ukrainian intellectuals.

of which lines of the poem and what exactly are “defamatory” about them. The judge spoke in Russian to him, and Mohylny acting as if he didn’t understand asked him in Ukrainian: “Pardon me?” And he did so several times. In this way he forced the judge to speak Ukrainian to him.

The same day, during a search of Mohylny’s home, 34 documents were seized—works of samizdat, “The Declaration” and “Memorandum Number 1” of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, books, notebooks, manuscripts, letters, and a typewriter. On February 21, 1981, according to the Director of the State Archive of the Security Service Alexander Pshennykov, “for nationalistic statements and for writing poetry with an ideologically harmful content V.M. Mohylny was put under preventive care by the Fifth Department of the KGB of the Ukrainian SSR as a result of a conversation on the premises of the KGB with the verdict of an official warning”....

It is worth knowing that independence did not fall from heaven to Ukrainians. It depended on specific people who endured intense pressure from the occupiers and during the harshest times of ruin were living bearers of the Ukrainian spirit.”

—Ivan Malkovych

—Translated by Michael M. Naydan



## CONTOURS OF CONSCIOUSNESS: THE POETRY OF ATTYLA MOHYLNY

Attyla Mohylny, son of the Ukrainian poet Vit Vitko, was born on September 16, 1963 in Kyiv, Ukraine, and died all too prematurely on September 3, 2008 at the age of 45. Mohylny, whose last name comes from the Ukrainian word “mohyla”—meaning “grave” or “mound,” sadly became the realized metaphor of his personal onomastic origins.

He completed his philology degree at Kyiv State University and then continued his studies while working in Dushanbe, Tadjikistan, first as a group leader of The Young Pioneers, then as a teacher in the Medical Institute until 1985. Following his travels to Tadjikistan, in Kyiv he tried his hand at journalism for the newspaper Evening Kyiv. Since then Mohylny had an off and on career as a teacher and journalist. He worked as an editor in the Molod Publishing House, and from 1987 taught occasionally at Kyiv and Warsaw Universities. He worked in television, writing film scripts for children’s shows. He authored two books of poetry early in his career: *Tumbler Pigeons above the Rooftops* (1987) and *Contours of the City* (1991) as well as the text for the exquisite children’s book *Mavka and the Ant King* in 2006. He continued to work on writing short stories and a novel before his death.

The poet told me that he was named after a saint Attyla and not the Hun of more historical renown. Mohyla was a poet of the city, one of the late 1980s generation of urban intellectuals who lived and breathed the pulsating rhythms of the capital city of Kyiv’s urban landscapes. While he found inspiration in the cityscapes, he did so in unique ways with a poetic voice distinctly different from traditional Ukrainian rhymed and metered poetry. He transformed elements of the city into scenes that turned the seemingly mundane into the mystical. Mohylny’s essential quest was one of self-definition. His lyrical “I” is akin to a camera roving over the cityscape and through the coffee shops, where his generation formulated its outlook on life in heated daily discussions in the shadows of Brezhnev’s hypocritical and hollow policy of the “friendship of nations.” For these

young Ukrainians the coffee houses during their young adulthood, and not the officially sanctioned and heavily censored journals, provided the locus for intellectual life. It was in these coffee shops where they discovered life, love, and the roots of their individuality as well as their own inner spirit. It is no surprise, too, that he titles one of his cycles “Beatles,” precisely because their music represented one of the strongest emblems of freedom for generations of East Europeans.

The liner notes to Mohylny’s second book *Contours of the City* (*Obrysy mista*; 1991), which also could be translated as *Outlines*, succinctly articulate the poet’s quest: “This is not a monologue, but a dialogue with his (the poet’s) contemporaries, the searching for what unifies people into a single generation, for what we call universal human values.” Mohylny’s search is not among the petrified icons of Ukrainian history such as the Kozak leaders Bohdan Khmelnytsky and Ivan Mazepa, who fought for Ukrainian independence from the Russians and Poles. Instead, he seeks the past in a transcendent, mythical sense. For example, in the cycle “Arias,” the poet celebrates a scene of weary men returning from the steppe to their women with their “hot white legs” and “warm pink breasts,” who wait to wrap their bodies around their returning warriors. While the eroticism is overt in this poem, the poem is really more about living as an individual, about the self-definition of a man via the ancestral shadows of his distant historical past, about his humanness, about his empowerment of the self.

Mohylny presents a lyric persona in his collection unusual for the Ukrainian and Slavic poetic tradition. He writes in a loose free verse style that projects a roaming consciousness, with a tenacity, with a childlike quality, with the spiritual longing of someone cut loose from an umbilical cord with an unquenchable thirst for experience. That consciousness is elusive, fleeting, constantly shifting. We are given to perceive the emotionality of his lyrical “I” in a fragmented, piecemeal way. The poems rapidly oscillate with extraordinary verbal tactility, much in the same way that Impressionist paintings can vibrate to allow us to see what the artist envisions through his unique perspective. In the poetry we are left with an emotional imprint of these moments of flowing consciousness captured in time.

Mohylny poses the questions that poets and philosophers have always posed: life, love, consciousness, being, eternity. He seeks the answers in the world around him, in the shadows, the lights and contours of the city that vibrate with the imprint of the past, shimmering simultaneously

in his lyrical present. To borrow some of his own metaphors, memory provides a bridge, a slipstream to the past to help him define himself in his interpreted world. The ineluctability of music has that ability to capture the essence of the sorrow of his lonely quest, which is temporarily overcome by bright moments of interconnectedness with others. These motifs of brooding neo-Romantic loneliness and journey abound in his poems. He constantly takes to the streets, to the trams, to ships, to planes. He wanders to the coffee houses, along familiar paths, seeking something, constantly pondering, writing verse. Spring always turns to autumn leaves in the seemingly unending cycle of love and loss. Yet the poet continually finds strength in the world around him despite its often doleful nature. The cycle “Black Lakes” provides an appropriate microcosmic glimpse into Mohylny’s created poetic world. Throughout the poem the “I” and “you” attempt to interact, to become a “we.” Sometimes the “you” is his love, other times a projected image of the self. But the poet’s “I” has no control over where this creative process will lead him. The trail of dreams takes him to the past, where cutters arrive amid yellowed leaves and depart off into the distance. They provide a constant flow of people, experiences and memories into and out of his life. This is a past where his love still lives in the recollections of his youth. The poet compares people to migrating birds that descend onto the damp, dark “lake” of the city. The stopover is transitory, the very nature of life on earth, barely long enough to rest until warmer climes can be reached. In the same way as the birds, people seek temporary respite and warmth in each other’s company. In a coda closure, the black reflections after the rain on the “lakes” strewn with autumn leaves are all that remains at the end of the poem.

A cycle such as “Night Melodies” offers a similar roving consciousness with the typical “I” interacting with the memory and reality of a “you.” It begins with music and a reference that anchors the poem in time:

Do you hear the guys from Liverpool singing?  
You don’t understand the words,  
but you know the feelings.  
And now you walk along the street  
your love beside you.

Mohylny intersperses philosophical musings throughout the cycle. In the second part, the poet shifts from musings in a coffee shop on his loneliness,

to his bittersweet lost youth, to a parching thirst in the middle of the night, to the radio where he seeks comfort with the music of Amadeus and reconciliation for his fate in the art of Ludwig. The telephone, another kind of technological wonder that transmits the music of the human voice, and which should offer a means to link with another individual, provides nothing but a banal snatch of conversation with the Beatle John Lennon: “John, is it snowing where you are, too?” In the third part of the cycle the poet attempts to transcend his self into his projected other and to achieve a sense of interconnectedness with his countrymen. In the poet’s words: “The voice of a nation is the voice of God.” That collective Ukrainian voice appears to the poet via memory in part four, where those wounded in battle, where gallows, where bloodied swords awaited the poet, who has passed them all by, by virtue of his youth and time of birth too late in the century.

In the final segment, the poet mentally transports himself into the role of a parachutist leaping from his plane onto the city with tracer bullets shooting up at him into the night sky. He comes to his senses from this dream state in a room with his love sleeping bundled in a blanket. He awakens before the parachute hits, so the dreamer in his dream state is jolted back into his reality.

While Mohylny offers bits of Kyivan realia in his poems, and makes links to his collective and individual “Ukrainianness” and past, he articulates a vision of his immediate present vibrant with life. He tests his life with all its uncertainty. His persona calls out: this is me, this is who I am at this point in time. And the journey to self-realization begins, repeats with variations, and continues, for this is the very nature of life.

The poetry of Mohylny in this exquisite collection, which was largely overlooked when it first appeared, certainly deserves a wider audience both in Mohylny’s homeland where he is all but forgotten as well as in the wider world. While it, unfortunately, might be described as a one-hit wonder because of the poet’s premature death, it remains a brilliant hit for all time.

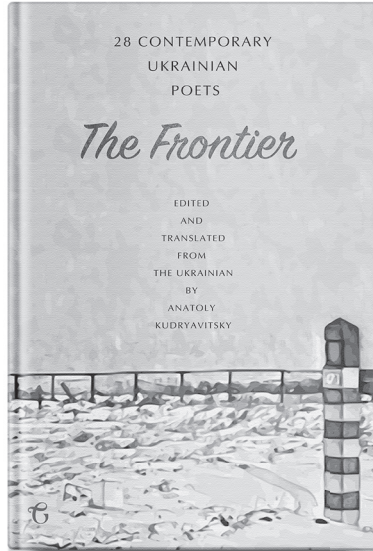
#### A PERSONAL NOTE ON THE POET

I first met Attyla during an extended stay in Kyiv in 1993 with the Ukrainian writer Oksana Zabuzhko, whom I had met a few years previous to that at a Ukrainian studies conference at the University of Illinois. Oksana introduced me to him. Attyla, who was immediately quite friendly,

suggested along with Oksana that the three of us take an overnight trip to the union of writer's retreat in Irpin just outside of Kyiv to experience the Ukrainian countryside. You get there to the sylvan outpost of literary culture nestled next to a tiny village by slow, dingy commuter train. This was a popular stop for many writers during Soviet times. Boris Pasternak and so many other great writers frequented it in earlier times to commune with pristine nature. Attyla immediately struck me as a childlike, mildly idiosyncratic fellow. He was slight of build with narrow shoulders, with a dark downward drooping mustache that seemed too big and out of place on his boyish face. He looked much younger than his age at that time. The mustache seemed to be a strategy to make himself look older. I vividly recall a quirky incident as we were waiting on a platform for the *elektrychka*, the electric local commuter train, to Irpin. Somehow Attyla's shoe accidentally tapped the shoe of a teenage girl, who was walking past us. The girl continued to walk away without paying much attention to the minor incident. Attyla had a different reaction. He immediately chased after her, imploring that she tap his shoe with hers, otherwise, he said, they would get into an argument. Attyla's superstitious belief came to be realized all too soon. He insisted so persistently, albeit politely, that she eventually raised her voice to him to leave her alone and moved as far away from him on the platform as she possibly could, shouting out that she was not going to tap his shoe. It was just one of those humorous moments, of course, that you always remember with a smile. I also recall one other interesting occasion during my visit with Attyla. Late in the evening he decided we should start a small bonfire in the woods on the grounds of the writer's retreat. He seemed quite adept at making bonfires, so Oksana and I sat back and watched him as he chain-smoked and gathered twigs, brambles and branches into a pile. We politely refused swigs of *horilka* (Ukrainian vodka) from a bottle he had brought with him, but he continued to take portions from it for himself. He seemed to be on the tipsy side though in control of his faculties. At one point during the building of the bonfire he threw a log onto it that somehow shot up smoke, ash and sparks at Oksana. Oksana jumped back, shouted out something like *oi, blin, chort* (oh crap, damn) brushed the ashes off her dress and implored him to stop and not ruin her dress. She calmed down quickly, and he managed to sober up immediately and not shoot any more sparks at her from the fire. It was a chilly evening, so we ended up appreciating the fire's warmth.

## The Frontier

### 28 Contemporary Ukrainian Poets - An Anthology



This anthology reflects a search of the Ukrainian nation for its identity, the roots of which lie deep inside Ukrainian-language poetry. Some of the included poets are well-known locally and internationally; among them are Serhiy Zhadan, Halyna Kruk, Ostap Slyvynsky, Marianna Kijanowska, Oleh Kotsarev, Anna Bagriana and, of course, the living legend of Ukrainian poetry, Vasyl Holoborodko. The next Ukrainian poetic generation also features prominently in the collection. Such poets as Les Beley, Olena Herasymyuk, Myroslav Laiuk, Hanna Malihon, Taras Malkovych, Julia Musakovska, Julia Stahivska and Lyuba Yakimchuk are the ones Ukrainians like to read today, and each of them already has an excellent reputation abroad due to festival appearances and translations to European languages. The work collected here documents poetry in Ukraine responding to challenges of the time by forging a radical new poetic, reconsidering writing techniques and language itself.

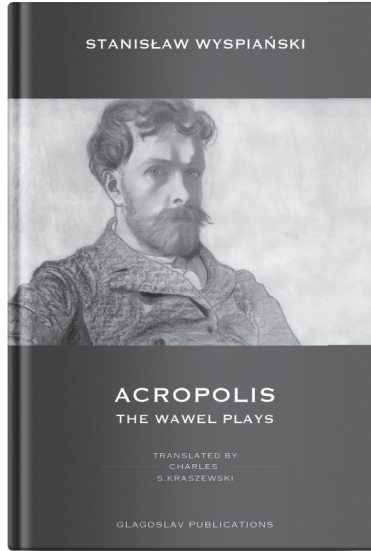
Edited and translated from the Ukrainian by Anatoly Kudryavitsky.

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# Acropolis – The Wawel Plays

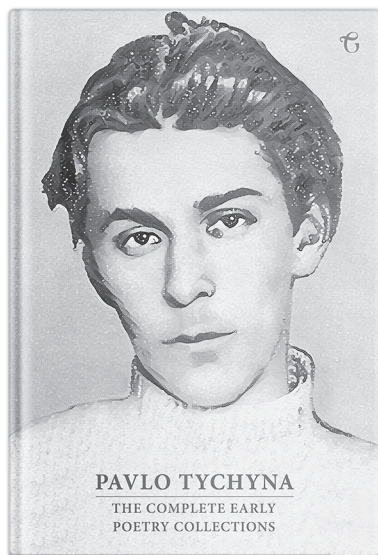
by Stanisław Wyspiański



Stanisław Wyspiański (1869-1907) achieved worldwide fame, both as a painter, and Poland's greatest dramatist of the first half of the twentieth century. *Acropolis: the Wawel Plays*, brings together four of Wyspiański's most important dramatic works in a new English translation by Charles S. Kraszewski. All of the plays centre on Wawel Hill: the legendary seat of royal and ecclesiastical power in the poet's native city, the ancient capital of Poland. In these plays, Wyspiański explores the foundational myths of his nation: that of the self-sacrificial Wanda, and the struggle between King Bolesław the Bold and Bishop Stanisław Szczepanowski. In the eponymous play which brings the cycle to an end, Wyspiański carefully considers the value of myth to a nation without political autonomy, soaring in thought into an apocalyptic vision of the future. Richly illustrated with the poet's artwork, *Acropolis: the Wawel Plays* also contains Wyspiański's architectural proposal for the renovation of Wawel Hill, and a detailed critical introduction by the translator. In its plaited presentation of *Bolesław the Bold* and *Skalka*, the translation offers, for the first time, the two plays in the unified, composite format that the poet intended, but was prevented from carrying out by his untimely death.

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## Pavlo Tychyna: The Complete Early Poetry Collections

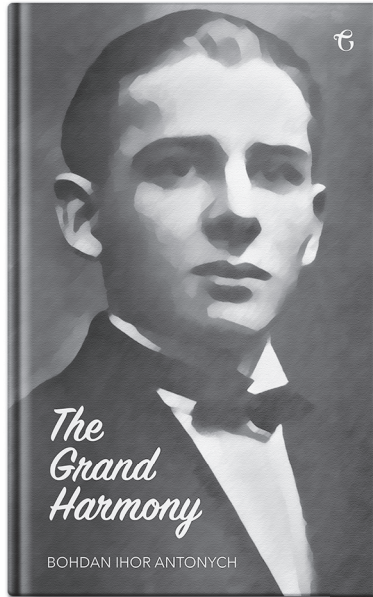


Pavlo Tychyna (1891-1967) is arguably the greatest Ukrainian poet of the twentieth century and has been described as a “tillerman’s Orpheus” by Ukrainian poet and literary critic Vasyl Barka. With his innovative poetics, deep spirituality and creative word play, Tychyna deserves a place among the pantheon of his European contemporaries such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Rainer Maria Rilke, Federico Garcia Lorca, and Osip Mandelstam. His early collections *Clarinets of the Sun* (1918), *The Plow* (1920), *Instead of Sonnets and Octaves* (1920), *The Wind from Ukraine* (1924), and his poetic cycle *In the Orchestra of the Cosmos* (1921) mark the pinnacle of his creativity and poetically document the emotional and spiritual toll of the Revolution of 1917 as well as the Civil War and its aftermath in Ukraine.

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# The Grand Harmony

by Bohdan Ihor Antonych



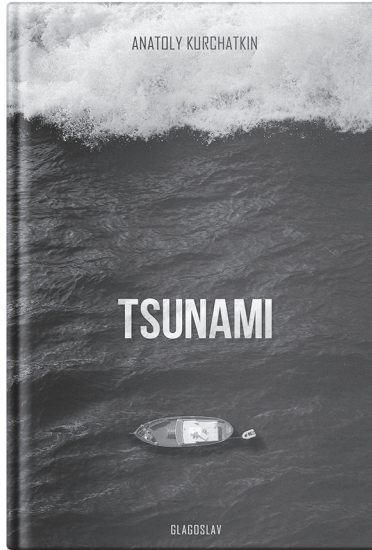
The extraordinarily inventive Ukrainian poet and literary critic Bohdan Ihor Antonych (1909-1937), the son of a Catholic priest, died prematurely at the early age of 28 of pneumonia. Originally from the mountainous Lemko region in Poland, where a variant of Ukrainian is spoken, he was home-schooled for the first eleven years of his life because of frequent illness. He began to write poetry in Ukrainian after he moved to the Western Ukrainian city of Lviv to continue his studies at the University of Lviv.

A collection of poems on religious themes written in 1932 and 1933, *The Grand Harmony* is a subtle and supple examination of Antonych's intimately personal journey to faith, with all its revelatory verities as well as self-questioning and doubt. The collection marks the beginning of Antonych's development into one of the greatest poets of his time.

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# Tsunami

by Anatoly Kurchatkin



Anatoly Kurchatkin's novel, set in Russia and Thailand, ranges in time from the Brezhnev years of political stagnation, when Soviet values seemed set to endure for eternity, through Gorbachev's Perestroika and the following tumultuous and disorientating decades. Under the surface, ancient currents are influencing the destinies of mathematician Rad, art gallery owner Jenny, entrepreneur (and spy?) Dron, American investor Chris, redundant Soviet diplomat Yelena and Thai playboy Tony in a rapidly globalizing world of laptop computers, mobile phones, credit cards and international finance. The fourteenth-century battle in which the Prince of Muscovy, inspired by St Sergius of Radonezh, defeated the Golden Horde of the Mongol Empire foreshadows a modern struggle for the soul of Russia.

*Tsunami* was shortlisted for the Russian Booker Prize and the Russo-Italian Moscow-Penne Prize.

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*More coming soon...*





Ukrainian poet Attyla Mohylny (1963-2008) died prematurely at the age of 45. He completed his philology degree at Taras Shevchenko Kyiv State University and worked mostly as a teacher, editor and journalist during his abbreviated lifetime. He authored two books of poetry early in his career: *Rattling above the Rooftops* (1987) and *Contours of the City* (1991) along with the text for the exquisitely illustrated children's book *Mavka and the Ant King* in 2006. He continued to work on writing short stories and a novel until his death. He was part of the transitional and transformational group of Ukrainian writers who dramatically turned from Soviet-imposed censorship to create new directions and a new poetics for Ukrainian culture. The poetry of Mohylny's *Contours of the City* completely breaks with the tradition of rhyme and meter that dominated Ukrainian poetics until only recently and, except for Kyivan realia, fits seamlessly into Western late modernity. *Contours of the City* arguably comprises one of the finest collections of free verse ever written in Ukrainian even though it was largely overlooked when it first appeared during the political transition to Ukrainian independence in 1991. It certainly deserves a broader audience both in Mohylny's homeland as well as in the wider world. While it may be described as a one-hit wonder because of the poet's premature death, it remains a brilliant hit for all time.

