

28 CONTEMPORARY
UKRAINIAN
POETS

The Frontier

EDITED
AND
TRANSLATED
FROM
THE UKRAINIAN
BY
ANATOLY
KUDRYAVITSKY



℄

The Frontier / Копгон

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28 Contemporary Ukrainian Poets

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Introduction

Prof. Halyna Kruk

The first thing one has to say about contemporary Ukrainian poetry is that it clearly and inevitably bears the birthmarks of being post-colonial. The consequences of this are many and varied.

In Ukraine, poetry has always been something greater than just a poet's personal vision of the world. For a Ukrainian poet, it is not enough to simply be a maker of texts: he also has to be a person on a mission, a "kobzar", a prophet. Our authors are supposed to add their civil and ethical stance to their poetic palettes that already display some uneasy, sometimes even hellish hues.

As a result of centuries of statelessness when the status of the Ukrainian language remained uncertain, Ukrainian poetry used to exist in oral rather than in written form, i.e. as word of mouth remembered and then recited or sung on special occasions. Because of that, popular Ukrainian poets these days can still draw audiences of hundreds, or even thousands. The kind of poetry they come up with is usually rhymed, smooth, melodious and written in syllabic metres; it has a distinct rhythmic pattern and can be easily memorised. Of course, poetic diversity and any kind of irregularity are being kept out more often than not. Cutting corners is commonly a temptation.

However, there is always another side of the coin: the underlying streams that feed poetic rivers. In Ukraine, there were—and still are—plenty of "underground" writers deprived of any publication options, or resorting to self-publishing. They are far from the mainstream tradition but at the same time they influence it and occasionally reach the mainstream status themselves. This is a normal and all-too-familiar path of literature's development.

Ukrainian poetry is still blessed to be at an early stage of its growth, and therefore remains open to many interpretations. It is

one of the most productive and fast-evolving forms of contemporary Ukrainian culture: flexible, variegated and flourishing. We now have a great number of authors belonging to quite a few generations; their aesthetic tastes and styles of writing differ along a whole range of cultural dimensions and traditions. Younger poets strive to find their own, unique writing techniques, which makes them explore language options. Their ideals of perfection are different, their poetics prove to be extremely challenging, both linguistically and semantically. They often describe reality's unusual features and sometimes give it a surreal aura, thus seeking to recreate the world of their visions. Contemporary Ukrainian poets hold their writing to the highest standards, and I am not only talking about a few—or even a few dozen—household names. This makes me extremely happy.

As for this particular anthology, I have to mention the particulars: here we have twenty-eight poets, the oldest of which, Vasyl Holoborodko, was born in 1945 and the two youngest, Olena Herasymyuk and Ivan Nepokora, in 1991. Geographically they represent almost all the regions of Ukraine. The reader won't fail to notice that the majority of the poets are thirty-year-olds. Although they were born in the USSR, most of what they remember are the years of Perestroika. Nowadays they respond to challenges of the time by forging a radical new poetic, reconsidering writing techniques and language itself. Alongside the fellow poets of their generation, they are destined to shape up poetry in Ukraine of the times to come.

All the included pieces are free-verse poems, although the reader can occasionally trace some patterns of sporadic rhyming. Inevitably, some interesting poets have been left out, but then the editor, who is also the translator, stresses that his choice was rather personal: he selected what he felt he could give a life to in the English language. I am delighted that the authors that he has gathered together under one cover will now have their voices heard in the English-speaking world.

Twenty-eight Ukrainian poets say hello to you. Hear them out!

Translated from the Ukrainian by Anatoly Kudryavitsky

Галина Бабак
Halyna Babak

Halyna Babak was born in Kharkiv in 1988. Having graduated from Kharkiv State University, where she studied the Ukrainian language and literature, she worked as an arts facilitator. She is currently studying for a PhD at the University of Prague in the Czech Republic. Her first collection, *I Love Green*, was published in 2007; her second, *From Clay and Water*, in 2011.

* * *

Замислившись над тим, звідки ми,
я вступила в калюжу,
яка хотіла проковтнути мій чобіт.
Калюжа – чобіт – я – який тут може бути зв'язок?

Хіба що калюжі іноді виблискують зірками...

Замислившись над тим, хто така калюжа,
я вступила в себе...

A Puddle

Contemplating where we come from,
I stepped into a puddle
that wanted to swallow my boot.
A puddle, a boot and I . . .
what kind of connection can there be?

Except that some puddles harbour sparkling stars . . .

Contemplating what a puddle is,
I stepped into my inner self.

* * *

трава кололася і горіла
здавалося що шлях до себе простий і солоний
і хотілося неба шматок у долоні
і падало небо до ніг дощем
говорили про себе
слухали вголос
і не було страшно
вітер запускав довгі пальці у волосся
і птахи підіймалися високо
а коли ми прийшли –
не впізнали себе

The Way Up

prickly grass was on fire
the road to inner self
seemed easy and salty
we yearned for a handful of heaven
the sky fell at our feet as rain
we were pondering ourselves
and listening aloud
there was no fear in us
the wind ran its long fingers through our hair
soaring birds gained height –
but when we arrived
we didn't recognise ourselves

Мовчання і горлач

Тілестність має час і простір.
Хоча не думає про це буденна жінка,
торкаючись як завше горлача,
щоб принести води.

Бо тиша і вода,
стирають лінії на тілі горлача,
що свого часу нанесла рука
творця.

Хоча не думає про це буденна жінка,
торкаючись як завше горлача,
щоб випити води.

Бо час і простір – то її рука.

Silence and a Jug

Corporeality has dimensions of time and space.
Although an everyday woman doesn't think of it
every time she takes a jug
to fetch water.

For silence and water
erase lines

on the body of the jug
left by Creator's hand.

Although the everyday woman doesn't think of it
every time she lifts the jug
and drinks water.

For her hand is both time and space.

* * *

Приходили до мене вівці,
танцювали танці, водили хороводи.
Просили випасати, не забувати, бути.
І спокій – тілом, теплом, росою, травою.

І приходила я.
Просила випасати, не забувати, бути.

Підіймала руки до неба,
а воно – хмари,
а воно – поле,
а воно – доля.
Вівці, мої вівці.

Sheep

Sheep came up to me,
they danced circle dances.
They asked me to keep letting them out to graze,
to be around them, not to forget them.
And calm came over me,
over my body, as warmth, as mildew, as grass.

Then I came up to you.
I asked you to keep letting me out to graze,
to be around me, not to forget me.

I raised my arms to the sky,
but the sky was all clouds,
all fields,
all destiny.
Oh sheep, my sheep. . .

* * *

Вона допитувалась,
чи любить море?
Але він мовчав.
Вона все допитувалась,
чи сумують кораблі за капітанами?
Але він все мовчав.
І вона допитувалась,
чому у води так багато терпіння?

І в його мовчанні народжувалось море,
і пливли кораблі,
і сумували старі капітани,
і слухали шум моря у мушлях,
і переглядали пожовклі світлини,
і розповідали онукам про свої мандри...

А хвилі тихо котились,
а хвилі тихо шепотіли
Про щось своє.

Може, про погоду,
а може, чекали на вітер з моря,
а може, просто чекали.

І вона відчувала силу його води.
І вона відчувала силу його терпіння.

The Sea

She wanted to know
if he was fond of the sea.
But he was untalkative.
She wanted to know if ships
miss their captains.
But he still remained silent.
She also wanted to know
why the waters were so patient.

And his silence gave birth to the sea,
and watercraft navigated it,
and ageing captains were sad,
and they listened to the roar in sea shells,
and viewed yellowed photographs,
and recounted their wanderings to their grandchildren.

And the waves were gently rolling,
and the waves were softly whispering
their thoughts.

Maybe about the weather,
or maybe they expected an onshore wind,
or just expected something.

And she felt the power of the waters.
And she felt the power of their patience.

* * *

час дорівнює відстані двох
що ковтають повітря мов риби
опинившись на березі снів
де межа між хотів увійти
і ввійшов у потік
що ні день і не ніч і не глина –
не зліпити лиця
не створити кумира
все змиває вода – і по колу
помаранчеве дерево
спрага і зброя –
все любов
і розмови птахів
і свобода і близькість
і слово

Time

Time is equal to the distance
between the two who gulp air like fish
stranded on the shore of dreams
that has a border between an urge to dive
and the actual dive into the stream
which isn't a day or a night
no clay there
impossible to mould a face
or an idol
the water washes all away
forming a circle, an orange tree
thirst and weaponry –
everything is love
birds' chirps
and freedom and intimacy
and the word

Кордон



Анна Багряна
Anna Bagriana

Anna Bagriana (Hanna Bagryantseva) was born in 1981 in the city of Fastiv near Kyiv. Having graduated from Kyiv National University named after Taras Shevchenko, where she studied the Ukrainian language and literature, she worked as a radio and television journalist. She has published six collections of her poems, the latest being *Love Spell* (2011), as well as three novels, a collection of her plays, a number of children's books and numerous translations from Bulgarian and Macedonian. Among her awards are the Panteleimon Kulish Prize (2013) and the Grigori Skovoroda Award (2014). She lives in Sofia with her husband, the Bulgarian poet Dimitar Hristov.

* * *

я – вершина старого і чорного дуба
мене рубали громи та невидимі руки Дажбога
я вистояла
але коли прийшла людина
я впала сама
щоб ніхто не подумав
ніби здатна піддатися
силі
безсилю рук

Oak

I am the apex of an old black oak
thunders and Dazhbog's* invisible hands
were trying to bring me down
yet I survived
but when a man approached
I fell of my own accord
so no one would think
that I could succumb
to the power
of weak hands

* Dazhbog: a major god in Slavic mythology.

Початок

спочатку були рани
а з ран витікало небо
на небі з'являлися лімфовузли
що зв'язували докупи
усі ті химерні кульки
що так безладно
вешталися по небу
(звідки вони взялися?..)
а потім вузли зростали
важчали
мов каміння
і
мов каміння
сипалися донизу
створюючи щось подібне
до тих (вже зв'язаних) кульок
які називалися
кожна
іменем бога
й богами самі ставали
бо думали
що немає
більше нікого в небі
(просто вони забули
про рани
з яких починався Всесвіт)

THE TRANSLATOR

Anatoly Kudryavitsky was born in Moscow, Russia, in 1954. His father was from Dnipro, Ukraine, mother of Irish descent. He has been living in Dublin, Ireland, since 1999. Between 2006 and 2009 he worked as a creative writing tutor for the Irish Writers' Centre. He has published four collections of his poetry, the latest being *Horizon* (Red Moon Press, USA, 2016), as well as three novels written in Russian. The latest title in English translation is *disUNITY* (Glagoslav, 2013). His anthology of Russian poetry in English translation, *A Night in the Nabokov Hotel*, appeared in 2006; his anthology of German-language poetry in English translation, *Coloured Handprints*, in 2015; both have been published in Ireland by Dedalus Press. He has also published his English translations from Tomas Tranströmer, Miron Białoszewski and a few other poets, and edited two anthologies of Irish haiku: *Bamboo Dreams* (Doghouse Books, 2012) and *Between the Leaves* (Arlen House, 2016). Kudryavitsky is the founding editor of *Shamrock Haiku Journal* and *SurVision*, a magazine for Surrealist poetry.

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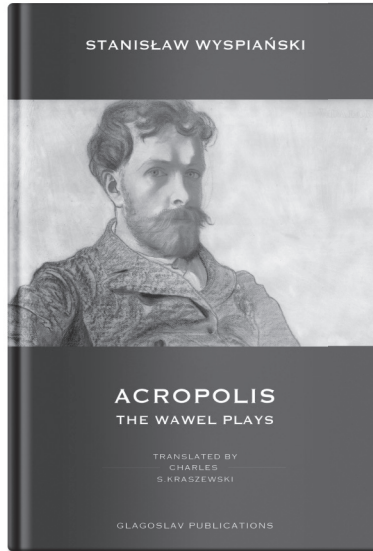
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Acropolis – The Wawel Plays

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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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 Stakhivska 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.



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