Bohdan Ihor Antonych. ***The Grand Harmony.*** Translated by Michael M. Naydan, Glagoslav Publications, 2017. 74 pp. Illustrations. €19.00, paper.

Recently, I watched a video on the website of a medical university in Ternopil, Ukraine (Ternopil State Medical University; see "'Narodyvsia Boh'" ["'God Has Been Born'"]). A group of carollers enthusiastically sang a song, and the audience responded with equal appreciation. It was a combination of two poems by Bohdan Ihor Antonych ("Rizdvo" ["Christmas"] and "Koliada" ["A Carol"]) set to music, which has now become a Christmas carol (Vasyl' Zhdankin's "Narodyvsia Boh na saniakh" ["God Has Been Born on a Sleigh"], 1989). That was one example of the cherishing of Antonych's creativity and of Antonych being introduced or, rather, reintroduced to a new generation. Translator Michael M. Naydan and Glagoslav Publications present a second example, with the book *The Grand Harmony*.

Naydan describes Antonych's work as "a sustained metaphysical quest by the twenty-two year old poet to come to a deeper understanding of the nature of God as well as his personal and poetic relationship to Him" (12). Naydan explores the use of the word "harmony," from the book's title, and he expresses the following insight: "The poet throughout the collection is an instrument played by God . . ." (17).

Some prayers that are recited during feast days of the liturgical year make a connection between music as an acceptable sacrifice to God and the possibility that the human body can be the instrument through which praise is offered. The prayer with the words "having achieved self-control, that I might sing to you a song of victory like one who plays a dulcimer" ("schob ia, opanuvavshy tilo, iak na tsymbalakh, pisniu peremohy tobi zaspivav"; my trans.; Basilian Liturgical Commission, "24 chervnia" 919) is one example. Also, one of the prayers for a confessor, such as the famous Maximus the confessor, calls him a "spiritual flute" ("sopilko dukhovna"; my trans.; Basilian Liturgical Commission, "Zahal'ni tropari" 1245) for the clarity of thought and enlightened teaching that are his gifts.

In some poems, Antonych writes in a manner that is very reminiscent of the style of St. John Damascene. St. John wrote funeral meditations that are part of Eastern Christian funeral rites to this day. Antonych, in the poem "On Death III: Requiem," writes, "For you the contradictions of good and / evil already no longer exist . . ." (49). Compare this to St. John's meditation: "All human things are vain, for they cannot survive death. Neither riches remain with us nor glory accompanies us . . ." (*Zaupokiini bohosluzhby* 27). For Antonych—"You have given to eternity what is eternal, / and to the earth what is earthly . . ." (49). For St. John—"You formed my body from earth and gave me a soul by your divine and life-creating breath" (*Zaupokiini bohosluzhby* 29). This notion is also found in the following prayer at the

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cemetery: "What has been made in God's image, the Creator has already reclaimed, and now you, Earth, receive what belongs to you" (*Zaupokiini bohosluzhby* 47). The poem "On Death III" is about persevering, even in the face of death, in the pursuit of "the harmony of life," in opposition to an ongoing and uncertain struggle: "And still seek the harmony of life and struggle now— / you already have found the harmony of peace" (49).

In "De Morte IV: On Death IV," the dichotomy is described as a "cliff" in opposition to "the hordes": "O Lord, grant that I stand in the contest / like a cliff against the hordes. . . ." For Antonych, life and death are like a song, which, whether closing in a major key or a minor key, in the end resolves as a "last / chord of harmony" (25). Antonych also speaks of a "contest" in his poem on Christmas ("Gloria in Excelsis: Glory in the Highest"): "Let a song play during the contest, / For this is the greatest of victories. / Today the Lord was born / in the stream of my heart" (24).

As I read the book, I wondered about a few things. First, Antonych would have been the son of an Eastern Christian priest since Roman Catholic priests would have been celibate. Both churches have their own liturgical rites. Why, then, does Antonych employ titles whose structures derive from the Roman Catholic liturgy? The answer might be found in his post-secondary education at Jan Kazimierz University (today the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv), which is described as a Polish university in notes on Antonych found in Ivan Malkovych's anthology of Ukrainian poetry, *Antolohiia ukrains'koi poezii XX stolittia.: Vid Tychyny do Zhadana* (*Anthology of Twentieth-Century Ukrainian Poetry: From Tychyna to Zhadan*, 2017 [see Malkovych 499-501]). Antonych really did form himself with a universal education for the purpose, as he writes in "Duae Viae: Two Roads", to quench the thirst of a frantic longing: "I've searched for you, Lord, on long roads . . ." (27).

Second, given the years during which these poems were written, 1932-33, I was expecting to read some direct or cryptic references to the Holodomor, which was occurring at that time across the border in Soviet Ukraine. Such references do seem to appear in his later poetry. In one of the poems in Malkovych's anthology, "Uryvok" ("Fragment"), written in 1935, the narrator, after an evocatively describing fearful and sleepless nights, disruptive and incomplete (as the title of the poem itself suggests), in which the moon dominates the sky, refers to "my restless voice / in my tragic homeland" ("mii holos nespokiinyi / v moii trahichnii Bat'kivshchyni"; my trans.; Malkovych 550).

These themes are already embodied in poetry in *The Grand Harmony*. In "De Morte II: On Death II," written in 1933, Antonych speaks about the moon when he writes, "No one wants to die / until the night pays the moon a golden ducat, / the deposit of death." Regarding fearful nights, he writes, "I know the days become worse, / that something wakes us at night." And then he

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addresses the value of his creative work: "Let these poems be the cure / for the dread of death" (26).

This collection of poems was written in the 1930s, but, as Naydan writes, it was only published later—in 1967, in North America, as the cycle *Velyka harmoniia* (*The Grand Harmony*) in *Zibrani tvory* (*Collected Works* [13]). Naydan's English-language poems in the book under review are revisions of earlier translations that he had made—here, they appear with advice from Lydia Stefanowska, "an expert on Antonych par excellence" (5). What I have learned from translating articles for *Euromaidan Press* (euromaidanpress.com) is that one should have access to the original texts as well. It would have been appreciated to have the Ukrainian poems here, too, in what otherwise is a most welcome collection of poetry.

Finally, as Antonych writes in "Amen," which is the only poem from this collection included among the forty-two Antonych poems in Malkovych's anthology (see Malkovych 514): "Let the heart finish singing / what is left unsaid of these words" (29).

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