

Liudmyla Starytska-Cherniakhivska. *The Living Grave: A Ukrainian Legend*. Trans., with an intro. and foreword by Svitlana Chornomorets. Ed. Catherine Etteridge. Illus. Yanitsa Slavceva. Lidcombe, New South Wales: Sova Books, 2015. E-book.

Klym Polishchuk. *Treasure of the Ages: Ukrainian Legends*. Trans., with a foreword and notes by Svitlana Chornomorets. Ed. Catherine Etteridge. Abr. ed. Illus. Yanitsa Slavceva. Lidcombe, New South Wales: Sova Books, 2015. E-book.

The Australian-based publisher Sova Books has recently released two translations of Ukrainian literary works that add to the growing body of Ukrainian literature available in English. The two e-books feature Ukrainian authors belonging to the generation known as the Executed Renaissance; both Liudmyla Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka (1868-1941) and Klym Polishchuk (1891-1937) fell victim to the Stalinist terror of the mid-1930s in Ukraine. Because their works were suppressed during the Soviet period, neither author is widely known in Ukraine; Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka's oeuvre, including her dramas, memoirs, prose, and translations, saw the light of day only in the 2000s, and the same is true for Polishchuk's works. The present translations open up the works of both authors to a much wider readership, and for this, Sova Books and Svitlana Chornomorets', who translated both works, should be praised.

The status of Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka and Polishchuk as victims of major repressions in the Soviet era is not the only thread that connects their works. Thematically, both books are rooted in the Gothic literary sensibility and draw on Ukrainian folklore—similarities that have led the publisher to advertise the books as “Gothic Tales from Stalin’s ‘Enemies.’” Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka's novella, *The Living Grave: A Ukrainian Legend*, is set in the late medieval-early modern period of Ukrainian history, its action situated during the time of the Tatar raids and a growing tension between the Orthodox and Catholic churches. Some of the stories from Polishchuk's collection, *Treasure of the Ages: Ukrainian Legends*, take place during the same period, although the narrative frame for most of the stories is the author's contemporary time, amidst the civil war chaos and societal unrest that persisted following the collapse of the Russian Empire. Both books have forewords written by Chornomorets', which provide good explanations of historical and geographic context, as well as a brief biography of each author, respectively. In addition, the foreword and translator's notes provide a helpful guide to Ukraine's major cultural symbols, mythology, social customs, and religion (e.g., names and explanations for the main feast days that function as time markers in Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka's novella), as well as

to key Ukrainian terms that have been adopted into English (e.g., Cossacks, bandura players, borsch, etc.). The artistic presentation of each book deserves special recognition: both books contain illustrations of key moments in the narrative, thus guiding the reader's understanding of the story through visual cues.

The Living Grave: A Ukrainian Legend originally appeared in 1889. Stylistically and thematically, Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka's novella harks back to the earlier generation of Ukrainian Romantics, as it contains intertextual references to Levko Borovykovs'kyi's ballad "Marusia" (1829) and the long tale "A Terrible Vengeance" (1831-32) written by Nikolai Gogol' (Mykola Hohol'). *Living Grave* features one of the major themes of the Gothic literary tradition—that of a revenant who comes back from the grave to reclaim his intended bride. This topic found its most famous representation in Gottfried August Bürger's ballad "Lenore" (1796), which drew inspiration from German folk and medieval ballad traditions. Borovykovs'kyi's "Marusia," an adaptation of the Bürger ballad, nationalizes the Gothic-Romantic theme with a plot enriched with elements of Ukrainian ethnography; this is the path that Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka follows. Another textual reference in *Living Grave* is to William Shakespeare's famous tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), which centres on two star-crossed members of feuding families; this plot-theme (i.e., family turmoil) is similar to Gogol's "A Terrible Vengeance." Overall, in drawing on a national legend and imbuing it with a universal motif of feuding families and doomed lovers, Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka is creating a Ukrainian version of *Romeo and Juliet* in her Roman and Daryna, enriching Ukrainian literature with transnational themes. The feuding families of Roman and Daryna may also be seen as a metaphor for a long period of Ukrainian history filled with civil conflicts as its territory became a battleground for competing political factions.

Family conflict is at the centre of Polishchuk's Gothic stories, as well—in this case, brotherly conflict. The stories were published in 1921 and are written through the eyes of a narrator, who is travelling across the war-torn territory of Ukraine during 1917-21, collecting oral tales of the past told to him by people whom he meets along the way. Polishchuk's stories are replete with colourful elements—an ancient serpent awoken by cannon blasts over Kyiv; pagan gods of the Chorni Klobuky tribe; the watchful vigils of Haidamaky from their graves; ancient treasures held by spell in Ukrainian castles, and more. The stories weave together past and present, metaphorically reflecting on the civil unrests of Polishchuk's time and grounded in a line from the "Zvirynets Serpent" tale: "... foes and friends converged in one city and became entangled, everything mixed, and all because of the serpent" (11). The serpent represents the evil unleashed in

the twentieth century by humans on other humans, a theme also present in contemporary Gothic writing, grappling with the painful historical memory of that time. For example, Dmytro Bilyi's novel *Basavriuk XX* (1999) similarly presents events through the Gogolian folkloric devil, understanding evil not in supernatural terms, but as referring to the painful and horrific events that unfolded in twentieth-century Ukraine.

Both translations are a major step toward the popularization of Ukrainian literature. The books acquaint the general public with authors who might otherwise be overlooked and connect them with the Gothic tradition. Despite some minor typographical errors, the language is eloquent; the sociocultural and historical explanations are succinct but informative, giving the reader just enough reference material to understand context. One thing that this reviewer would have changed is the format of the notes in the Polishchuk translation. Chornomorets' chose to provide a brief summary of explanatory notes at the end of each story, a standard practice. However, readability would be improved by narrative-style annotation, similar to what she did in her foreword to the *Staryts'ka-Cherniakhivs'ka* translation. Overall, the books will lend themselves well to courses featuring Ukrainian literature in translation, and I recommend them to scholars, students, and the general public interested in Ukrainian literature—or to Gothic aficionados looking to enrich their library with writings from other cultures.

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