Ivan Malkovych, editor and compiler. ***Antolohiia ukrains'koi poezii: XX stolittia*** [*Anthology of Ukrainian Poetry: Twentieth Century*]. Vydavnytstvo Ivana Malkovycha "A-BA-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA," 2016. Ukrains'ka poetychna antolohiia [Ukrainian Poetic Anthology]. 1280 pp. Cloth.

When I unwrapped a package containing the book *Anthology of Ukrainian Poetry: Twentieth Century*, published by A-BA-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA in 2016, my heart skipped a beat. I have been living in the United States for almost fifteen years and have not visited Ukraine often, so books from my homeland come to me mostly through friends. The aesthetic pleasure of holding this compact, beautifully printed volume in my hands was added value to the realization that, for the first time, most of my beloved poets born before 1950 were gathered "under one roof," so to speak.

Ever since I was a young and naïve student at the Ukrainian Humanities Lyceum in Kyiv in the early 1990s, I have been fascinated with the poetry of what has been termed The Executed Renaissance (*Rozstriliane vidrodzhennia*). Almost an entire generation of poets, writers, critics, and intellectuals was killed during the Stalinist terror of the 1930s. Their voices—clear and confused, romantic and bitter, patriotic, full of fervour, full of disappointment or blues—kept me awake at night. There was something raw and unbound about the energy of that poetry and something that was very different from the washed-out verses of the accepted "canon" that we learned at school.

The anthology under review contains the works of over one hundred poets. It comprises over 1,200 pages of decent, good, very good, great, and fantastic poetry. The division of the anthology into two parts is not dictated by chronology; rather, it reflects the complexity of the editor's task to showcase more than half a century of Ukrainian poetry. The first part—from Pavlo Tychyna to Oleh Lysheha—represents the poets whom we could not do without. The second part—from Maik Iohansen to Anatolii Kychyns'kyi—is intended, according to editor and compiler Ivan Malkovych, to be a "zooming" tool for the reader—for one to pay more attention to this or that particular author: "It is similar to focusing the light—look closely at this poet…" (my trans.; 6).

Some names in the anthology are well-known to those who have received schooling in Ukraine or to those who have studied Ukrainian literature, but other names are completely new. And this combination of known and half-forgotten or overlooked authors is one of the best aspects of the book. Perhaps this will be the first time that you hear the voice of Tychyna—a voice that is almost vulnerable in its openness and almost pantheistic in its dedication to nature. Or perhaps you never imagined Mykhail' (Mykhailo) Semenko, the key figure of Ukrainian literary futurism,

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Volume IV, No. 2 (2017) DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21226/T2ZD05

sounding so decadent, as if he grew up with a volume of Baudelaire under his pillow or read a great deal of Russian symbolist poetry. You might wonder why Volodymyr Sosiura's poem "Tse bulo na ostrovi Tseiloni" ("This Happened on the Island of Ceylon" [318]) reminds you, for some reason, of couplets by Aleksandr Vertinskii. And did you know that the lyrical Mykola Bazhan was experimenting with futurism and the avant-garde? Consider his "Rozmova serdets'" ("Conversation of Hearts" [424]), written in 1928—a fearless monologue about the strengthening grip of Soviet censorship and the growing suppression of Ukrainian cultural autonomy in the late 1920s and atmosphere of paranoia and terror surrounding the Ukrainian intelligentsia's creative pursuits. As I mentioned, this was 1928, some five years before Osip Mandel'shtam's famous lines "My zhyvem, pod soboiu nie chuia strany," ("We live, with no sense of country beneath us," 1933).

And yet, despite the horrors of the time, the poets of this period were still able to see the beauty of the moment, however fleeing it felt. Let us listen to the gentle voice (from the poem "Akvarium" ["Aquarium"]) of Oleh Ol'zhych—a talented archaeologist, the son of important Ukrainian lyric poet Oleksandr Oles', and a fighter for Ukrainian independence, who was tortured to death by the Gestapo in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in 1944:

На листя ти задивишся бліде,
На черепашку равлика прозору,
І в цю хвилину дівчина пройде
З школярським ранцем сходами нагору.

І ти вже знаєш: проминуть роки,
А ти ховатимеш, немов коштовність,
Води бурштин і убрання кратки—
Однаково прекрасну невимовність. (467)

You take a long look at the pale leaves,
At the transparent shell of a snail,
And at this moment a girl walks
Up the stairs with a school bag.

And you immediately know: the years will pass by,
But you will keep safe, as if a precious jewel,
The amber texture of the water, the square pattern of the clothing—
Equally beautiful ineffability. (my trans.)

How did all of this happen, and how do we put all of this into context—historical, cultural, philosophical, and literary? The "archaeologic" work of Malkovych—the editor and compiler of the anthology, who made his selection from hundreds of poems and wrote wonderful and moving

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biographic vignettes about every poet—is just the beginning of the process of contextualizing this literature. While it seems so natural and logical to declare the greatness of every single poet, and it seems to us now, looking back at those times, that this greatness is something intrinsic—because we know that this generation was murdered and fates were destroyed—we still need to know why they were, and remain, great. How did they interact with the world, with whom did they interact, and what was their inspiration? Even when there is no evidence, we need to draw typological parallels. Did they read French symbolists or Polish expressionists? Did they see Russian avant-garde artwork? Or were they, perhaps, inspired by travels to the countryside? If there are lacunae in that world view, we need to know why this happened or, at least, to have the intellectual curiosity to posit the question: "Why?" Also, why is there no reference to surrealism or to psychoanalysis? The answer might not be there, but asking the question will lead to more "archaeologic" work in the right direction.

The need to reconstruct the context for the poetry of The Executed Renaissance runs parallel to another need—to provide a critical apparatus for scholars of the period, who need to know more about the sources. When was this poetry first published, and where are the originals now? If there are no originals, what is the source for the reprint? This book is not an academic edition and it is meant for a wide audience, but let us hope that the necessary scholarship will appear in the near future.

Once we, the readers, turn to the second part of the anthology, which delves into the post-World War II world, we immediately feel a change of paradigm. Here, the feeling of despair and complete uncertainty lifts somewhat. There is more hopefulness, more sense of community, and even the social criticism has a sense of humour. The lyrical voices of Lina Kostenko and Dmytro Pavlychko create a trance-like state of immersion into the fabric of everyday life—with its delicate beauty and unexpected happiness. This is the world in which one does not need to be ready to face death at any moment, be it in a pogrom, from tuberculosis, or by torture at the hands of the Soviets or the Nazis.

Another universe of Ukrainian poetry developed in the diaspora—in Prague, Berlin, New York, and Rio de Janeiro. It was a different story there, especially for those poets who were blessed with longer lives. And, again, the gratitude goes to Malkovych for drawing the circle wide and including these various streams of Ukrainian poetry.

When looking at this anthology, it is impossible to avoid asking the hard questions about nationality, ethnicity, and religion. A great deal of this poetry is religious; a great deal—nationalist; and some of it—both. Yet, there is an understanding that Ukrainian poetry crosses the boundaries of ethnicity and language. Leonid Kysel'ov (1946-68), who died at the age of twenty-two and

© 2017 *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies* (ewjus.com) ISSN 2292-7956
Volume IV, No. 2 (2017) DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21226/T2ZD05

wrote just over thirty poems in Ukrainian, is an important part of this anthology, on a par with his namesake Leonid Pervomais'kyi (1908-73), a Ukrainian poet of Jewish background and the author of over twenty poetry collections.

Part of me wishes that Malkovych did not have to say in his introduction to *Anthology of Ukrainian Poetry* that the murders of Ukrainian poets happened "'thanks' to the inhumane regimes of 'brothers'-Muscovites [-*moskovyty*], since even under the worst of Ukrainian governments something like that would have been hard to fathom" (my trans.; 8). The battle for Ukrainian identity continues, and it is again drenched in blood, but there is a realization that at least some people in Russia are fighting the same battle or are acutely aware of all of the stigmas and traumas of the recent war, whether it is taking place on the ground or in the media. As Mariia Stepanova said while being interviewed by Ievhenii Stasinevych,

> [W]e [people in Russia] cannot say that we are the victims of the war, because there are the real victims of it. However, one can say that we all, in one way or another, are its survivors, and it is an immense trauma . . . . Nothing on this scale has happened to you or us in decades (my trans.; Stasinevych 194).

For the sake of these people, and while bearing in mind the entire connotation of the word "nationalist," can we start envisioning a new language that will better reflect the reality of today's globalized and fast-changing world where our dreams of yesterday quickly turn into nightmares of today? In order for the phenomenon of The Executed Renaissance to be better known in Europe and the United States, much educational work still needs to be undertaken and many translations still need to be made. Promoting poetry in the age of the short attention span and of declining intellectual priorities is a difficult task; even more so is promoting Ukrainian poetry to a world that continues to be dominated by a Russocentric cultural paradigm.

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