

# On Some Aspects of the Presence of Translated Ukrainian Literature in Poland after 1989

Arsen Hordziy, Viviana Nosilia

## 1. Introduction

The article is divided into two separate sections<sup>1</sup> and addresses some issues which help to inform an understanding of a number of peculiarities of the presence of Ukrainian literature on the Polish book market after 1989. In particular, the topic of the translation of Ukrainian literary works into Polish is tackled: we focus on chosen points which, although they are somewhat unrelated, provide a significant insight into the dynamics that enhance the appearance of certain works rather than others<sup>2</sup>.

Firstly, the trajectories of the most important agents (those whose impact on the reception has been the deepest from various points of view), who choose and promote specific works for translation into Polish, are presented. In some cases, the translators themselves play a major role and also act as literary agents; this is

<sup>1</sup> The first section (273-79) belongs to Arsen Hordziy, while the second (280-86) was written by Viviana Nosilia. The introduction and the conclusions are a common work.

<sup>2</sup> In this text only a limited number of issues related to the reception of Ukrainian literature in Poland is presented. As a whole, the topic has not been studied extensively, especially from a qualitative point of view. More general and coherent analysis and evaluation, both quantitative and qualitative (although differently applied), can be found for example in Hnatiuk 1997; 2010, Hordziy 2022b; Skowron 2018.

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the case of Ola Hnatiuk and Bohdan Zadura<sup>3</sup>. The image of Ukrainian literature conveyed to Polish readers reflects the ideals of the translators, their individual preferences and attitudes, the conception of their own canon. In other circumstances, publishing houses can be major actors. The most evident case of this, in terms of the promotion of Ukrainian literature, is the publisher Czarne<sup>4</sup>; this will also be discussed in the first section of the article.

Secondly, this article provides an analysis of translations from the point of view of the source language. Ukrainian literature is sometimes written in languages other than Ukrainian, so what kinds of texts are translated from these other source languages? We briefly examine the case of Russophone Ukrainian literature<sup>5</sup>, a topic Western scholars are particularly interested in<sup>6</sup>.

Finally, we try to assess whether and how the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022 has influenced the dynamics of translation of Ukrainian literature into Polish.

## 2. Polish translation agents of Ukrainian literature

### 2.1. Ola Hnatiuk (b. 1961)

Hnatiuk<sup>7</sup> studied Ukrainian and Russian at the University of Warsaw in the 1980s<sup>8</sup> at a time when, by and large, translations of Ukrainian authors still

<sup>3</sup> While on the whole less impactful, other translators should be mentioned as well: Katarzyna Kotyńska (next in line for the importance of her translatorial activity), Michał Petryk (known first of all as the translator of Serhij Żadan's work), Przemysław Tomanek, Lidia Stefanowska, Anna Korzeniowska-Bihun (who also works for TV and theatre translation), Marcin Gaczkowski (the author of the latest – and highly valuable and valued – translation of Vasyl' Stus), Tadeusz Karabowicz/Tadej Karabovyc̣ (a distinguished poetry translator, although with a minimal influence on national scale), Renata Rusnak, Adam Pomorski, Piotr Kupryś/Petro Kuprys' (the translator of Kotljarevs'kyj's *Eneida* and Ševčenko's *Kobzar*), Aneta Kamińska (sometimes critics, while appreciating greatly her efforts, formulate a number of negative evaluations, see Bakula 2012; Skowron 2018, 117-21).

<sup>4</sup> Czarne's contribution to the promotion of Ukrainian literature on the Polish national market is far greater than that of other publishing houses, although the text selection criteria it applies, as indicated below, privilege a narrow segment of that literature. On the other hand, a number of publishers specifically interested in Ukrainian literature should be mentioned here: Biuro Literackie, Warstwy, Warsztaty Kultury, Kolegium Europy Wschodniej im. Jana Nowaka-Jeziorańskiego.

<sup>5</sup> Its position in Ukraine, as of other Russophone literatures in the "post-Soviet space", is different in comparison to the rest of national languages (e.g. Polish, Hungarian etc.): it is the largest one, frequently written by non-Russians, often intentionally labelled as Ukrainian (see Михед 2007, 129-39; Puleri 2016). Since 2014 its scope had been visibly decreasing and in 2022 it received a fatal blow as the cruellest Russian attacks took place in the territories where the Russian language presence had been the strongest. Additionally, it can be argued that yet different position is reserved to Tatar culture.

<sup>6</sup> For the most part, the point of view of experts from outside is less charged ideologically. In fact, one of the reasons scholars study Ukraine is its diversity, in the past as well as in the present (e.g. Fowler 2015-16).

<sup>7</sup> It is worth mentioning Hnatiuk's partial Ukrainian origin.

<sup>8</sup> At that time it was impossible to study Ukrainian without Russian (Одинець 2018).

functioned as by-products of “Soviet-Polish brotherhood” and, consequently, were closely tied to ideological needs (Hnatiuk 1997, 54). Concurrently, this paradigm was being challenged in émigré circles by the Paris-based journal *Kultura* (Berdychowska 2016). The thinking expressed in this journal exercised a significant influence on Polish opposition movements in Poland, and also informed the approach to their country’s eastern neighbours (Snyder 2004). Indeed, *Kultura’s* idea(s) and the Polish opposition culture of the 1980s, which challenged (at different levels) totalitarianism and opposed stereotypes, formed the basis for the commitment of many young intellectuals in those years.

In order to resist a stereotype which portrayed Ukrainian literature as inferior and less sophisticated, and also to confront the tacit discouragement of studying certain topics, Hnatiuk devoted her doctoral thesis to Ukrainian baroque song. However, shortly thereafter her main interests moved from the past to the present: this happened at the end of the 1980s when she came into contact with contemporary Ukrainian literature by dynamic young authors in Kyiv and L’viv (Одинець 2018; Hnatiuk 2021). Not only was this literature compelling and fascinating in itself, it also presented an opportunity to challenge the Ukrainian stereotype in Poland by offering the public works that were not so distant from its own horizon of expectation.

After the political transformation of 1989-91, contemporary Ukrainian writers began to be published in periodicals and received particularly positive feedback; this was in marked contrast to the discussions, scandals, and accusations happening back in Ukraine. However, the breakthrough in the reception of Ukrainian literature in Poland came in 1994 in the form of an anthology edited by Hnatiuk – *Rybo-wino-kur*. At that early stage she tried to negotiate the Ukrainian canon by examining the *Sixtiers* (*šistdesjatnyky*) and the *Eightiers* (*visimdesjatnyky*) generations in combination and problematising their relations, in particular creating a continuity by showing the connections between them (Hnatiuk 1994). The anthology, notwithstanding its limited print run, was received extremely positively by reviewers; Jadwiga Skowron claims that it “[...] set the course to the functioning of Ukrainian literature in Poland. It introduced Polish readers to what was the most attractive for them” (2018, 97)<sup>9</sup>.

When it comes to more scholarly publications for academic publishers, Hnatiuk’s work exhibits the same propensity for innovation – both thematic and methodologic – and combines it with scientific rigour. This is confirmed by the fact that some of her books have been translated into Ukrainian<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, we can observe her tendency to work together with other researchers and publish edited volumes. The topics of her main publications can be divided into three

<sup>9</sup> “[antologia] [...] nadała kierunek funkcjonowaniu literatury ukraińskiej w Polsce. Zapoznała polskich odbiorców z tym, co było dla nich najatrakcyjniejsze”.

<sup>10</sup> Here, we can cite *Bunt pokolenia*, *Pożegnanie z imperium*, and *Odwaga i strach* (the translation of the latter text appeared in print before the original and received the Grand Prix at Book Forum L’viv in 2015).

areas: modernism<sup>11</sup>, identity discourse<sup>12</sup>, and history<sup>13</sup>. Over the years, these study interests have led Hnatiuk to move away from translation<sup>14</sup>, leaving it to younger scholars whom she herself has often trained and introduced into the field (Kotyńska 2021; Skowron 2018, 130).

## 2.2. Czarne Publishing House

*Rybo-wino-kur* was published by Świat Literacki (today's Czuły Barbarzyńca) thanks to Hnatiuk's private connections (Hnatiuk 2021); immediately afterwards, the same publisher introduced Jurij Andruchovyč's prose to the Polish market in book form (tellingly, this was done before it was published in the same format in Ukraine). Despite the initial commitment, this publishing enterprise was limited to a two-year period only<sup>15</sup>. This fact helps us to highlight a significant aspect of the development of networks with regard to the publication of Ukrainian literature in Poland: the most fragile point of those networks has been their unstable, occasional relationship to the medium- and large-scale publishing industry<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> It comprises three major anthologies: *Stepowa legenda: antologia ukraińskiej małej formy prozatorskiej lat 1890-1930* (edited together with Łarysa Sztos), *Prolog nie epilog... Poezja ukraińska w polskich przekładach (pierwsza połowa XX wieku)* (edited together with Katarzyna Kotyńska), *Modernistki: antologia ukraińskiej prozy kobiecej okresu międzywojennego* (edited together with Grażyna Borkowska, Iwona Boruszkowska, and Katarzyna Kotyńska). The latter text appeared as part of the Institute for Literary Research (Polish Academy of Sciences) project "Polish and Ukrainian Women's Prose in the Interwar Period – a (Central) European Modernism Perspective".

<sup>12</sup> Two books can be traced to this field of interest: *Bunt pokolenia. Rozmowy z intelektualistami ukraińskimi* (edited together with Bogumiła Berdychowska) and *Pożegnanie z imperium. Ukraińskie dyskusje o tożsamości*.

<sup>13</sup> Her latest publication addressing the periods of Soviet and German occupation of L'viv during the Second World War belongs here: *Odwaga i strach*. Besides Ukrainian, it was also translated into English and copublished by Kolegium Europy Wschodniej (Wrocław) and Academic Studies Press (Boston).

<sup>14</sup> Hnatiuk translated, alone or in collaboration, fourteen books. It should be noted that these data, as well as other data in the first section of the article, refer to the period between 1989 and 2021.

<sup>15</sup> Świat Literacki published a Ukrainian series called *Kolekcja Współczesnej Literatury Ukraińskiej (Contemporary Ukrainian Literature Collection)* in 1994-96; within the series the following books were published: the anthology *Rybo-wino-kur* edited by Ola Hnatiuk, the novel *Rekreacje (Рекреації)* (including a second edition in the same series in 1996) and the collection of essays *Erz-Herz-Perc* by Jurij Andruchovyč, and the bilingual poetry collections *Ikar na motylach skrzydłach (Ікар на метеликових крилах)* and *Podsumowując milczenie (Підсумовуючи мовчання)*, by Vasył' Holoborod'ko and Ihor Kalyneč' respectively (The original titles of works translated into Polish are indicated in brackets. The absence of such a marking indicates that a single Ukrainian original did not exist or that the two titles corresponded exactly).

<sup>16</sup> Besides Czarne, five large publishing houses published Ukrainian books: W.A.B. (since 2012 inside Grupa Wydawnicza Foksal), Pruszyński i S-ka, Zysk i S-ka, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, and Znak. In total, they published fourteen books.

Nonetheless, this downside was compensated for by the publishing house Czarne over the course of several years.

Czarne was founded in 1996 by the writer Andrzej Stasiuk (b. 1960) and his wife Monika Sznajderman (b. 1959) as a reaction to the structure of the Polish literary field, and especially to the privileging of Western books by private publishers' translation policies, often to the detriment of literary and cultural logic. Czarne, in fact, set out to translate, publish, and promote Central European prose in Poland. Over the years, a significant and efficient network was built, which involved a range of aspects such as Stasiuk's own literary legend, professional promotion campaigns, stable relations with trusted translators, book design policy<sup>17</sup>, and effective fundraising strategies. This afforded the publisher sizeable symbolic capital and a prominent position on the market. Czarne, aiming first of all at a young and educated audience (Cobel-Tokarska 2014, 452-53), evolved from a small peripheral publisher into a strong, independent medium-size player in the field.

Its involvement with Ukrainian literature can be traced back to Stasiuk and Andruchovyč's personal acquaintance, which started at the end of the 1990s<sup>18</sup>; as a consequence, at the beginning (2000-04) Czarne mostly published this author's prose, both fiction and essays. However, their publishing activity peaked after the Orange Revolution – in the period 2005-2008/09, when the so-called boom in Ukrainian literature occurred in Poland (ІЛЬЧЕНКО 2014). In total, Czarne published 24 first editions<sup>19</sup> by individual authors, the long essay *Moja Europa. Dwa eseje o Europie zwanej Środkową* co-authored by both Andruchovyč and Stasiuk<sup>20</sup>, and a volume of conversations between Andruchovyč and the Polish journalist Paweł Smoleński (*Szcze ne wmerła i nie umrze*); and Ukrainians also feature prominently in three essay collections published by Czarne (*Sarmackie krajobrazy, Dryblując przez granicę, Zwrotnik Ukraina*)<sup>21</sup>.

Czarne has a restrictive text selection policy which goes beyond the geographic criterion. They prefer ambitious works that can at the same time easily attract the general public and bring commercial benefits, works that avoid loftiness and – if dealing with serious topics – do so through the lens of personal and everyday experience (Cobel-Tokarska 2014, 450; see also Roszczynialska 2012). Moreover,

<sup>17</sup> The design of the books (colourful, contemporary, coherent, and created by talented artists) was intended to ward off any association with the unattractive literature of the "sister nations" of the people's democracy block which was published in socialist Poland (Cobel-Tokarska 2014, 442).

<sup>18</sup> This event, as well as considerable parts of Andruchovyč's and Stasiuk's lives (especially between the late 1980s and early 2000s), acquired a mythical aura (Гутик 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Among these, only *Moscoviada* (Московіада) has had more than one edition (2000, 2004, 2015). Moreover, eight books benefited from external funding, mostly from European institutions (e.g. the OSI-Zug Foundation, Pro Elvetia, the Stefan Batory Foundation, the Fund for Central and East European Book Projects).

<sup>20</sup> *Moja Europa...* has gone through four editions in Poland (2000, 2001, 2007, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> Additionally, one essay by Andruchovyč and one by Serhij Żadan appeared in other collected volumes, *Nostalgia: eseje o tęsknocie za komunizmem* and *Odessa transfer. Reportaże znad Morza Czarnego* respectively.

the publisher tends to choose a relatively small number of contemporary writers to work with: in the case of Ukrainian literature, Czarne has published and promoted six authors in total (Jurij Andruchovyč, Sofija Andruchovyč, Irena Karpa, Taras Prochas'ko, Natalka Snjadanko, Serhij Žadan)<sup>22</sup>. It could also be claimed that Andruchovyč's and Žadan's current recognisability is due to Czarne's field activity<sup>23</sup>. Overall, this activity has made quite a significant contribution to the predominance of contemporary literature in the system of translated Ukrainian literature in Poland<sup>24</sup>.

### 2.3. Bohdan Zadura (b. 1945)

Last but not least comes Bohdan Zadura, the most prolific – and the most famous – translator from Ukrainian in Poland<sup>25</sup>. He came across Ukrainian by chance at the end of the 1980s when he was asked by the State publisher Wydawnictwo Lubelskie to translate a poetry collection by Dmytro Pavlyčko (*Tajemnica twojej twarzy* [Таємниця твого обличчя])<sup>26</sup>. His vague ideas about inferiority of Ukrainian literature changed greatly after meeting Mykola Rjabčuk and, through him, Jurij Andruchovyč in Kyiv in 1989 (Borowiec and Zadura 2011, 75). Since then Zadura has been especially interested in contemporary Ukrainian poetry and

<sup>22</sup> A crucial aspect of the Ukrainian books published by Czarne is their print runs, which are much higher than the average (it is one of the major reasons why this publisher's activity was chosen to be presented). Wojčenko (Бойченко 2009) reports some extremely useful data, rarely available to the public: four to five thousand copies on average for Andruchovyč's books (the print run of *Dwanaście kregów* [Дванадцять обручів], on the other hand, reached seven or eight thousand copies), more than five thousand copies of *Kolekcja namiętności* (Колекція прустраптеї) by Natalka Snjadanko were printed, and four books by Žadan reached, in total, a print run of ten thousand copies (*Anarchy in the UKR*, *Big Mac*, *Depeche Mode*, *Hymn demokratycznej młodzieży* [Гімн демократичної молоді]). There is also good reason to believe that (at least) Žadan's *Internat* (Інтернат), published in 2019, had a similar fate in Poland. Taken into consideration the fact that a lot of information of this nature is not known and what can be deduced varies to some degree, nevertheless, these numbers are in stark contrast with the data we have (see Hnatiuk 2010, 54; Hordziy 2022b, 226 fn. 42).

<sup>23</sup> It should be added that two out of the five books published by Czarne which won the Central European literary award Angelus (2006-) are by Ukrainian writers (Andruchovyč's *Dwanaście kregów* in 2006 and Žadan's *Mezopotamia* [Месопотамія] in 2015).

<sup>24</sup> The vast majority of books by Ukrainian authors published by Czarne came out in the periods 2000-09 and 2013-14. As a matter of fact, around the middle of the 2010s Czarne changed its publishing policy shifting from fiction toward nonfiction, especially contemporary reportage.

<sup>25</sup> Zadura translated, alone or in collaboration, 42 books by Ukrainian authors (a small number of them from Russian). It should be mentioned that in the early days of his career he also translated from English and Hungarian, in the latter case using literal translations by others.

<sup>26</sup> Zadura's relationship with Ukrainian is also somewhat unusual from a linguistic perspective, at least in respect to the majority of professional translators nowadays. When he was asked to translate Pavlyčko's book, he did not know Ukrainian and progressively learned the language in the following years by reading and by establishing personal contacts with Ukrainian writers. Nonetheless, even today, Zadura's active linguistic skills in Ukrainian are not very proficient.

in 2004 the most influential Polish anthology of Ukrainian poetry – *Wiersze zawsze są wolne (Poems are always free)*<sup>27</sup> – was born from his readings and preferences.

The canon and symbolic capital of the anthology must be taken into consideration. The translator himself underlines the non-representativity of his selection, guided by his own interests, preferences, and readings (Zadura 2007, 9). In the anthology we find 220 poems by twenty poets, coming mainly from right-bank Ukraine. Fourteen of these poets were born after 1959, only three women are included, but poems from all the members of the literary groups *Bu-Ba-Bu*<sup>28</sup> and *LuHoSad*<sup>29</sup> are translated. Jerzy Jarniewicz spoke about two types of translators: translators ambassadors and translators legislators. In Jarniewicz's view Zadura belongs to the latter category: this kind of translator builds his own artistic hierarchies and creates in the target culture a canon that is often different from that which exists in the source culture (2005, 437).

Conversely, the symbolic capital aspect relates to Zadura's status as a renowned poet in his own right; he thus confers part of his own capital on the authors he translated, who are often unknown or little known to Polish audiences, and also actively engages in promotional activities. Conferring the poet's symbolic capital by translating and promoting has repercussions relevant to the discussion about the strictly textual level, i.e. the quality of the translations. Inez Okulska claims that many reviewers, even experts, gloss over analyses of the translations emphasising instead poetic mastery and the importance of Zadura's endeavours (2013, 192)<sup>30</sup>.

On the other hand, while Zadura started translating prose only in 2011, today it constitutes most of his output. In the second half of the 2010s, while the number of translations from Ukrainian grew consistently, they were more and more atomised, being published in low print runs by small publishers. In this situation Zadura's recognisability served to diminish, to a certain degree, the market invisibility of these publishing enterprises strongly committed to promoting

<sup>27</sup> The famous literary critic Bogusław Bakula considered the anthology a turning point in the reception of Ukrainian poetry in Poland. In his view Zadura's selection went against the stereotypical view of Ukrainian poetry as primarily folkloristic and sentimental (2005, 100).

<sup>28</sup> *Bu-Ba-Bu (Burlesk-Balahan-Bufonada)* was a literary group which existed in the second half of the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s whose literature is often analysed in terms of the post-modern and the carnivalesque.

<sup>29</sup> *LuHoSad* (from the surnames of the members Lučyk, Hončar, Sadlovs'kyj) was a literary group which existed between 1984 and, formally, 2009, and theorised its literature as a "poetic rearguard". Some of the characteristic poetic forms of the group included visual poetry and palindrome.

<sup>30</sup> These translation and promotion endeavours have been recognised in recent years by some important awards: the "Literatura na Świecie" poetry translation award for the translation of Zadan's *Antena* and Central European award Angelus for translators for the winning book in the main category *Nikt tak nie tańczył, jak mój dziadek (Мію дід танцював краще за всіх)* by Kateryna Babkina in 2021, and the Drahomán Prize for translators in 2022, awarded by the Ukrainian Institute, PEN Ukraine, and the Ukrainian Book Institute.

Ukrainian literature in Poland. Zadura has predominantly worked with Warstwy form Wrocław and Warsztaty Kultury from Lublin<sup>31</sup>.

### 3. Ukrainian literature in the Russian language in Poland and the latest developments in the translation activity: some remarks

#### 3.1. Translations of Russophone Ukrainian authors

Ukrainian literature written in the Russian language is an intriguing phenomenon for non-Ukrainian readers and researchers. An interview with a Russophone Ukrainian writer can hardly end without a question about the role of language in determining the author's identity and work<sup>32</sup>. Indeed, this literature has a peculiar position in the editorial market: on the one hand, it has the opportunity to reach a wide readership, on the other hand, it has to compete with publishing houses from the Russian Federation in order to be properly promoted (Puleri 2016, 98-9). Its status is also the subject of an intellectual and artistic debate<sup>33</sup>. The occupation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion of February 24th, 2022 have challenged this phenomenon even more, because, as a consequence, some writers decided to switch to the Ukrainian language for both their artistic production and everyday situations<sup>34</sup>. It is therefore worth looking into the presence of Ukrainian literature written in Russian in Polish translation.

Nevertheless, the concept of Russophone Ukrainian author is sometimes difficult to define. Of course, it encompasses writers who write in Russian, but the questionable part of the definition is the "Ukrainianness" of writers born outside the frontiers of Ukraine who consider themselves Ukrainians, such as Andrij Kurkov or Ihor Pomerancev, or those who link their career mainly to the Russian book market. We find it reasonable, as Hordziy does (2022b, 214), to take the authors' self-identification into account. We present here an outlook on those of their works that have been translated into Polish, on the basis of Arsen Hordziy's bibliography (2022a) and personal research by Viviana Nosilia.

Among these authors, those who write mass literature, especially fantasy books, can count on the widest readership. This is the case for Henry Lion Oldi (a pseudonym for Oleg Ladyženskij/Oleh Ladyžens'kyj and Dmitrij Gromov/Dmytro Hromov) and for Marina/Maryna and Sergej/Serhij Djačenko.

<sup>31</sup> In the years 2020-21 especially smaller publishers could also rely on funding from the Translate Ukraine Translation Grant Programme of the Ukrainian Book Institute. As a matter of fact, six of the eleven publications by Warstwy and Warsztaty Kultury in these two years benefited from this funding programme.

<sup>32</sup> This is also the case for Poland, see e.g. the interview to Andrij Kurkov by Wojciech Szot for *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Szot 2022). In general, current developments in political, social, and cultural spheres inform very strongly the interest in Ukraine in the West and influence the reception of its literature as well, in Poland at least since 2005.

<sup>33</sup> See Puleri 2016, 100-13.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. Volodymyr Rafejenko (Rafeenko 2022). About his case see also Puleri 2022.



If we consider works with higher artistic ambitions, translations of Ukrainian authors from Russian into Polish are rather scarce in comparison to translations from Ukrainian.

The author with the highest number of translations from Russian is Andrij/Andrej Kurkov: five of his works have been translated into Polish: *Kryptonim 'Pingwin'* (2004; *Пикник на льду*)<sup>35</sup>, *Ostatnia miłość prezydenta* (2007; *Последняя любовь президента*), *Prawo ślimaka* (2009; *Закон улитки*), *Dobry anioł śmierci* (2010; *Добрый ангел смерти*), and *Jimi Hendrix we Lwowie* (2021; *Львовская гастроль Джими Хендрикса*). In addition, his journal of the Revolution of Dignity (*Dziennik ukraiński*, 2015) has also been translated, but from German<sup>36</sup>, while his recent *Diary of an Invasion* (*Dziennik inwazji*, 2023) has been translated from English (2022). The translations of Kurkov's fictional prose into Polish follow a very strange pattern: they do not reflect the order in which they appeared in Russian, nor the order in which Ukrainian translations were published. The timespan between the publication of the original version and the translation was of three years in the case of *The president's last wife* (Russian: 2004; Polish: 2007), four years for *Prawo ślimaka* (Russian: 2005; Polish: 2009), seven years for *Kryptonim 'Pingwin'* (Russian: 1997; Polish: 2004), nine years for *Jimi Hendrix in L'viv* (Russian: 2012; Polish: 2021), and twelve years for *The good angel* (Russian: 1998; Polish: 2010). Moreover, not even half of Kurkov's literary production has been translated. Therefore, we cannot say that the reception of his work has been enthusiastic; the Polish translations are scarcely representative of the real scale of Kurkov's international success and his creative path.

Other Russophone Ukrainian authors whose works have been translated into Polish include Anatolij Krym and Oleh Sencov.

Five books of Polish translations of Krym's works have been published since 2008, when his *Tales about Jewish happiness* (*Рассказы о еврейском счастье*, 2005) appeared. The following year there appeared a collection of dramas: *Testament spotliwego rozprustnika i inne komedie* (*Завещание целомудренного бабника*, 2005). The other translations are the novels *Rura* (2011; *Труба*, 2010) and *Ukraińska kabała* (2020; *Украинская каб(б)ала*, 2014, republished in 2020), and the dramas collected in *Jesień w Weronie i inne utwory sceniczne* (2012)<sup>37</sup>. His dramas are represented on the stages of Polish theatres. The tradition of Jewish theatre in Poland may have helped him find his way into Polish bookshops and onto Polish stages. Interestingly enough, we have been unable to find German translations, although the German book market is a general reference point for Europe. The Polish translations thus seem to stem from a specific interest.

Oleh/Oleg Sencov is a writer and a film-director, who was unjustly detained in Russian prisons from 2014 to 2019. In 2019, while he was still in prison, a pub-

<sup>35</sup> On the Russian title of this work see Possamai (2008, 460 fn. 10).

<sup>36</sup> *Ukrainisches Tagebuch. Aufzeichnungen aus dem Herzen des Protests* (2014).

<sup>37</sup> It contains several dramas. The eponymous *Autumn in Verona* (*Осень в Вероне*) appeared in 2007.

lishing house in L'viv republished a collection of his tales in an edition containing both the original Russian text and the Ukrainian translation<sup>38</sup>. After he was liberated the same publisher released his autobiographical prose *Marketer*, in the same form<sup>39</sup>. These books were instantly translated into Polish, due to the relevance of his clamorous trial and imprisonment. Sencov's works were translated by one of the aforementioned protagonists in the reception of Ukrainian literature in Poland, Bohdan Zadura.

Of the authors with international renown, Volodymyr Rafejenko/Vladimir Rafeenko has also had a novel translated into Polish: *Najdłuższe czasy* (2020; *Долгота дней*, 2017). This is his last novel written in Russian as he wrote his following works in Ukrainian<sup>40</sup>.

Another book is worth mentioning in this context, although the author is usually classified as belonging to Soviet Union in general. In 2018 a new edition of Anatolij Kuznecov's *Babij Jar* (1966) was published. It had appeared in Poland in 1968<sup>41</sup>, as a censored version. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary was the occasion for a new, uncensored edition<sup>42</sup> issued by a small publishing house in Danzig.

In general, Ukrainian "high" literature in the Russian language is scarcely represented. Even the most famous Russophone Ukrainian writer, Andrij Kurkov, has only had five fictional books translated into Polish. One the most outstanding Russophone Ukrainian authors, Oleksij/Aleksej Nikitin, has never been translated into Polish. The current situation is quite uncertain and dynamic, and it will be very interesting to observe whether works written in Ukrainian by authors who have so far written in Russian will now receive a different reception in the Polish context.

### 3.2. After February 24th, 2022

The onset of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia provoked some changes in the trends of translation of Ukrainian literature on the Polish book-market, of course, but Poland is perhaps characterised by a relative continuity if compared to other countries. It would be incorrect to say that Polish readers discovered Ukrainian literature only after February 24th, 2022. An increased "presence of Ukraine" in the public discourse is evident, but in comparison to other countries Poland had a far better "starting point" so far as the extant translations are concerned. As Katarzyna Kotyńska notes, Ukraine has become relevant for some for the discussion on Polish identity, and Ukrainian literature by 2020 had already increased its presence on the bookstore shelves in Poland (2020, 272). Of course,

<sup>38</sup> First published in 2015, the short stories were then republished in 2019 under the title *Жизня*.

<sup>39</sup> <https://starylev.com.ua/marketer> (accessed: 13.01.2023).

<sup>40</sup> The novel *Мондегрін (пісні про смерть та любов)* (2019), and the drama *Мобільні хвилі буття* (2022). On this poet and the issue of Ukrainian Russophone writers see the fundamental work by Marco Puleri (2016).

<sup>41</sup> Anatol Kuznecow, *Babi Jar*, Warszawa: PIW, 1968 (translated by Zofia Korczak Zawadzka).

<sup>42</sup> Anatol Kuznecow, *Babi Jar: powieść-dokument*, Gdańsk: Fundacja Historia.pl, 2018 (translated by Piotr Tymiński).

a lot is still to be done, but the situation is quite encouraging. The new phase of the war raged by Russia has stimulated a reaction also in the book market, but in the context of an already existing attention for the Ukrainian literary production, and, more specifically, of an already present thematization of the war<sup>43</sup>.

One of the earliest examples of translations prompted by the full-scale invasion is the publication of translations of poems about the war in the journal *Teatr*, based in Warsaw. This journal publishes a great deal of materials devoted to Ukraine,<sup>44</sup> but it is intended for a specialist audience, not the vast general public.

The aforementioned publishing house Czarne recently issued a new edition of the Polish translation of Serhij Żadan's *Anthem of democratic youth*, which they had already printed in 2008 – clearly, this book has become relevant again. This move enabled the publisher to react promptly to the upsetting international developments.

The war influenced a project which had been conceived prior to the invasion: Bohdan Zadura had been preparing an anthology of his own translations for the publishing house Biuro Literackie, which has a series devoted to the publication of selections of a hundred poems from various literatures. The outbreak of the war changed the concept of the project: the theme of war became dominant, even though the poems had mainly been written before February 24th, 2022, in many cases in connection with the annexation of Crimea (*Nowy Napis* 2022). The result is a collection of 100 poems by 39 poets entitled *100 free poems from Ukraine* (*100 wierszy wolnych z Ukrainy*). The Polish title contains a play on words: in Polish, 'wiersz wolny' can be a free verse, as a form of poetry, but can also be a free poem, in the sense of an allusion to liberty. The wordplay also recalls the aforementioned influential anthology of 2004 *Wiersze zawsze są wolne*<sup>45</sup>, edited by the same translator. Soon after its initial publication, this book was republished as a revised version in 2005 and in 2007. Although the anthology was published before the beginning of the Orange Revolution, its reprints are very probably due to the international resonance of this political phenomenon.

By coincidence, then, we can observe how poetry first appeared on the Polish book market at critical moments of Ukrainian history. As previously mentioned, the 2022 anthology project had been conceived before the beginning of the war, but the book got into the hands of the readers some months after it had started; this certainly influenced the way in which it was perceived by readers.

Another initiative, instead, was born directly in connection with the war: the cultural centre Pogranicze started publishing the book series "Biblioteka Poezji Ukrainy", in which poems related to the war written by Ukrainian poets are print-

<sup>43</sup> Even before 2022 there appeared in Poland books of conversations with Ukrainian intellectuals, reportages, interviews, translations of classics, and prose and poetry relating to the present war.

<sup>44</sup> See issues nr 4 and 5 of 2022.

<sup>45</sup> See Biuro Literackie n.d. As Arsen Hordziy notes, the title is the Polish translation of a verse from Mykola Rjabčuk's poem in the *Prjamolinijni virši* cycle: "вірші завжди / вільні" (Рябчук 1989, 12).

ed, in editions illustrated by Ukrainian artists. The incomes are used to support Ukrainian writers suffering from the war. Poets like Serhij Żadan, Ilja Kiva, or Halyna Kruk were translated by various Polish translators (Jerzy Czech, Krzysztof Czyżewski, Aneta Kamińska, Jakub Pszoniak, Janusz Radwański, Leszek Szaruga, Katarzyna Szweda, Bohdan Zadura, and others) (Ósrodek Pogranicze 2022). So far, the centre Pogranicze has published twenty booklets.

Even though Ukrainian poems are published in Polish, it is however dubious that they can play a fundamental role in popularising Ukrainian literature among a vast public: poetic works are not widely read, as a report by the National Library of Poland for the years 2021/2022 and 2022 shows<sup>46</sup> (Chymkowski and Zasacka 2023a, 45; 2023b, 9). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the Ukrainian poet Andrij Ljubka (b. 1987) was one of the three poets mentioned by the readers interviewed in a 2023 study: “Poetry is only marginally present in the Polish readers’ choice, the respondents declared to have read only three poets: Anna Sztudynger-Kaliszewicz, Andrij Ljubka and Bolesław Leśmian” (Chymkowski and Zasacka 2023a, 45)<sup>47</sup>. As fortuitous as this choice may have been, it is of course noteworthy.

Translations of prose works are less numerous and are not related to the war: they are quite long novels, such as *Archduke Wilhelm’s orderly writing-books* by Natalka Snjadanko (*Porządne papiery arcyksięcia Wilhelma*, translated by Bohdan Zadura, 2022; *Охайні прописи ерцгерцога Вільгельма*, 2017) or *Daughter* by Tamara Duda (*Córeczka*, 2022, translated by Marcin Gaczkowski; Ukrainian first edition: *Доця*, 2019). These time-consuming and work-intensive projects had certainly been initiated long before the war began. *The age of red ants* by Tanja P’jankova (*Wiek czerwonych mrówek*, 2023, translated by Marek S. Zadura; *Вік червоних мурах*, 2022) had already been awarded at a contest in 2021 (Коронація слова, n.d.), and this fact probably influenced the decision to translate it. This is also the case for Jevhenija Kuznjecova’s *Ask Miječka* (*Nim dojrzeją maliny*, 2023, translated from Ukrainian by Iwona Boruszkowska; [*Снутаїте Мієчки*, 2021]) (EU Prize for Literature n.d.).

Although it is beyond the scope of our work, we will spend a couple of words on works of non-fiction about Ukraine published after February 24th, 2022. In Italy, many books, often written very quickly, appeared on the history and geopolitics of Ukraine; these books were of very variable quality. In Poland, many books on the history and geopolitics of Ukraine had been published following the invasion of 2014. More recently, new issues have mainly comprised reportage (e.g. Parafianowicz’s *Śniadanie pachnie trupem*, 2022) or biographies of Volody-

<sup>46</sup> For the year 2022 we have only the preliminary version. Literary works with higher artistic ambitions are read only by 21% of the readers, if we sum the data for works before 1918 and after 1918. This broad category comprises drama, poetry, and the classics, so we can reasonably infer that the percentage related to poetry is in fact smaller (Chymkowski and Zasacka 2023b, 9).

<sup>47</sup> “Poezja jest marginalnie obecna w wyborach lekturowych Polaków, wskazano tylko lekturę trzech poetów: Anny Sztudynger-Kaliszewicz, Andrija Lubki i Bolesława Leśmiana.”

myr Zelens'kyj<sup>48</sup>. Results from searching the website of one of the most popular Polish online bookshops, merlin.pl (Merlin Internet Bookshop. n.d.), indicate that Polish readers already have opportunities to find texts about Ukraine. For example, a book of interviews with the historian Jaroslav Hrycak that came out in 2022 (Hrycak and Chruślińska 2022) is in fact a revised and enlarged edition of a previous publication (Hrycak and Chruślińska 2009).

Some intellectual reflections written by Ukrainian authors have become available in Polish translation since the beginning of 2023. In January 2023 the book *My longest book tour (Najdłuższa podróż, 2023)*, a sort of pamphlet, came out in Poland (Zabużko 2023)<sup>49</sup>. In April 2023 it was the turn of the collection of essays by Vira Ahejeva entitled *In the Shadow of the Empire (W cieniu imperium. Kulisy ukraińsko-rosyjskiej wojny kulturowej, 2023; За лаштунками імперії. Есеї про українсько-російські культурні відносини, 2021)*. We can thus observe new editorial proposals in the form of individual views on the 'Russian mentality' and the way in which 'Russian culture' may have been involved in preparing a war against Ukraine.

The presence of Ukrainian refugees in Poland currently has led to the publication of books for children, in many cases of a bilingual nature with both Polish and Ukrainian texts, because the priority is to make little readers feel at home and help them integrate into schools.

Another interesting – although unsurprising – phenomenon is the republication of works from the past, such as those by Serhij Żadan or Oksana Zabużko. A new translation of Vasyl' Barka's *Yellow Prince* appeared in 2022 (*Żółty książe; Жовтий князь, 1962*) after the novel was first published in 1991, although the translator had set up the project two years earlier (Piotrowski 2022).

On the whole, we must necessarily wait to assess whether and how the full-scale aggression of the 24th of February 2022 has provoked changes in Ukrainian-Polish literary translations. It is however likely that the intensified presence of Ukrainian writers in Poland – as it is the case for Oksana Zabużko –

<sup>48</sup> One was written by a Polish author: Wojciech Rogaci, *Zelenski. Biografia*, Warszawa, Wielka Litera, 2022. Others are translated from English: Gallagher Fenwick, *Wołodymyr Zelenski. Ukraina we krwi*, Białystok, Mova, 2022; Andrew L. Urban, *Wołodymyr Zelenski. Zdumiewający Ukrainy, który oparł się Putinowi i zjednoczył świat*, Ożarów Mazowiecki, Arti, 2022. For our topic, the most relevant is the biography written by the Ukrainian journalist Serhij Rudenko and translated into Polish: S. Rudenko, *Zelenski. Poza scenariuszem*, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2022 (translated by Katarzyna Losson and Marek Zapór).

<sup>49</sup> Oksana Zabużko is one of the best known Ukrainian authors in Poland, although her fame is ambiguous. On the one hand, in some circles she is a very respected literary figure, she has been published by major publishers (W.A.B., Agora) and translated by talented translators such as Katarzyna Kotyńska, on the other, her, more or less, openly apologetic views of nationalist groups and single individuals involved in the massacres (sometimes defined as genocide) on the Polish population of Galicia and Volhynia during WWII cause controversy and protest. See an analysis of some key passages of her novel *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets (Музей покинутих секретів)*, which also appeared in Poland, by the historian Grzegorz Motyka in his book on the Polish-Ukrainian memory conflict (2013, 71-7).

and the place devoted to them at public events will bear fruit and stimulate the appearance of new translations.

#### 4. Conclusions

In this article we have endeavoured to shed some light on a number of factors which can affect the presence of a translation of a work belonging to Ukrainian literature in the Polish literary field. The position of Ukrainian literature has definitely improved since 1989; nevertheless, it still remains within the semi-peripheral areas of the receiving polysystem. In this situation the impact of a restricted number of strong actors who impose their individual choices is even greater, and networks based on personal acquaintance are crucial. The only strong tendency that can be identified between market demand and the projects of these actors, and also among the latter, is a drive toward contemporary literature, a significant part of which is deemed able to enhance intercultural dialogue between the two nations.

As regards Ukrainian literature in Russian, its presence on the Polish market is not remarkable, especially when it comes to literature with high artistic ambitions. It should be evaluated in the future whether the fact that some Russophone authors have started writing in Ukrainian (in part at least since 2014) will affect their presence in translation in Poland.

Finally, it is too soon to identify significantly crucial new trends in the presence of Ukrainian literature in Poland since the beginning of the war. What is certain is that a notable number of publications conceived prior to this event, if not all of them, has come to be seen in the light of the invasion.

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