
**To cite this article:**

Pavlyshyn, Marko. “The Translation Front: Reflections *à propos* of Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine.” *The AALITRA Review: A Journal of Literary Translation* 21, (December 2025): 15-28.

aalitra.org.au

Australian Association for Literary Translation

# The Translation Front: Reflections *à propos* of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

MARKO PAVLYSHYN
Monash University

**Abstract**

The publication rate of translations into English of Ukrainian literary texts increased after the beginning of the Russian Federation's war on Ukraine in 2014 and again after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Yet, for at least the four reasons adduced in this paper, the likely impact of this development on public awareness of, or attitude toward, Ukraine should not be overstated. First, the correlation between the public availability of literary works and public sentiment is difficult to measure. Secondly, poetry, which comprises a significant proportion of the Ukrainian literature translated, commands only a niche audience in the Anglosphere. Third, English-language translations of Ukrainian literature seldom appear with major publishing houses which possess powerful distribution and publicity networks. Fourth, Ukrainian literature in English is at a disadvantage relative to translated literature from cultures, most relevantly the Russian, with long traditions of presence in English. Many translators who render Ukrainian works into English and the publishers of such translations cite ethical considerations and a commitment to fairness as the pre-eminent factors that motivate them to continue their activity.

In the following, I survey developments in literary translation from Ukrainian to English since the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of 24 February 2022, but also since the war's beginning with the illegal annexation of Crimea and Russia's commencement of aggression in Ukraine's east in 2014. I draw attention to translators' and publishers' motivations, in the context of the war, for trying to bring Ukrainian literature to the attention of English-reading publics. I share the optimism of many commentators that flows from the notable increase in the number of Ukrainian literary works translated into, and published in, English. But I also sound notes of caution about raising too high the expectation that this welcome shift will greatly and swiftly alter perceptions of Ukraine in the target societies. I end by drawing attention to the fact that, now as ever, translators and publishers of Ukrainian literature in translation alike regard their endeavour as justified, above all, by the ethical principle that a culture long occluded by an oppressive colonialism deserves at last to be seen, known and respected by people of good will.

Before addressing the topic of translation *from* Ukrainian, let me mention the role that translation *into* Ukrainian has played in the cultural history of Ukraine. The project to build a modern nation for the people of Ukraine began in the early nineteenth century. At the time the educated elites of that people in large part had been assimilated to the cultures dominant in the empires in which Ukrainians found themselves. In the tsarist empire, the supervening culture was the Russian. In the Ukrainian lands annexed by the Habsburgs during the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the end of the eighteenth century, the cultures of power were the Polish (by inertia) and, to a less pronounced extent, the German. As in other Central European national revivals, in Ukraine the Romantic valorisation of folklore and literary creativity in the language spoken by ordinary people was part of an endeavour to create a Ukrainian national high culture able to take its place as an equal at the imaginary round table

as the first work in vernacular (as distinct from learned or ecclesiastical) Ukrainian was Ivan Kotliarevsky's *Eneida*, whose first parts were published in 1798.[2] *Eneida* was a travesty of Vergil's *Aeneid*: a transposition into an incongruously popular and comic style of a revered classic familiar to the educated elite of the period. Translation enriched and refined the Ukrainian literary language, whether in the nineteenth century through Panteleimon Kulish's translations of the Bible and Shakespeare; or in the 1960s, when the masterly translations of Mykola Lukash, Hryhorii Kochur and Maksym Rylsky were defiant statements in defence of Ukrainian language and identity against Russification in the USSR; or in the 1980s, when the journal of translations *Vsesvit* brought global literature to readers of Ukrainian and, with it, ideas and aesthetic models that challenged the Soviet status quo.[3]

Today the abundance of works in translation from European, North and South American and other literatures that fills the catalogues of Ukrainian publishing houses attests to Ukrainian society's appetite for westward integration. On 10 November 2025, for example, the first page (of a total of 142 pages) of the online catalogue of books in print issued by the reputable Lviv publishing house Stary Lev (Old Lion) listed fifteen books in Ukrainian and thirteen in translation from several languages (Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva).

Traditionally, there has not been a symmetrical appetite for Ukrainian literary (and other cultural) production in the Anglosphere. The contrary, rather, has been the case. One scholar has observed from a postcolonial studies perspective that Ukrainian literature has been burdened with the affliction of "non-translation," a phenomenon comprising "deliberate omissions [which] contribute to shaping knowledge in significant ways" (Odrekhivska 7). English is not among the leading languages into which Ukrainian literature has been translated. According to the Ukrainian Book Institute, the largest number of translations from the Ukrainian are published in the countries of central Europe: Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia, Romania and the Czech Republic. The United States, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Canada follow (House of Europe). However, the situation as regards English-language translations has trended favourably in recent years, especially since 2022, as is evident from Figure 1.

[2] The names of contemporary authors who have published in English are given as they appear in their English-language publications. In the body of the article, names of other persons and titles of works are transliterated from the Cyrillic using the Library of Congress romanisation system modified for ease of reading (Є, Ю and Я at the beginning of names are rendered as Ye, Yu and Ya and the ending -ий as -y; the soft sign is not transliterated). In citations and the Bibliography, however, the LC system (without ligatures) is used without modification.

[3] Chernetsky provides a lucid account of the role of translation into Ukrainian in the evolution of Ukrainian national identity. See also Kal′nychenko.

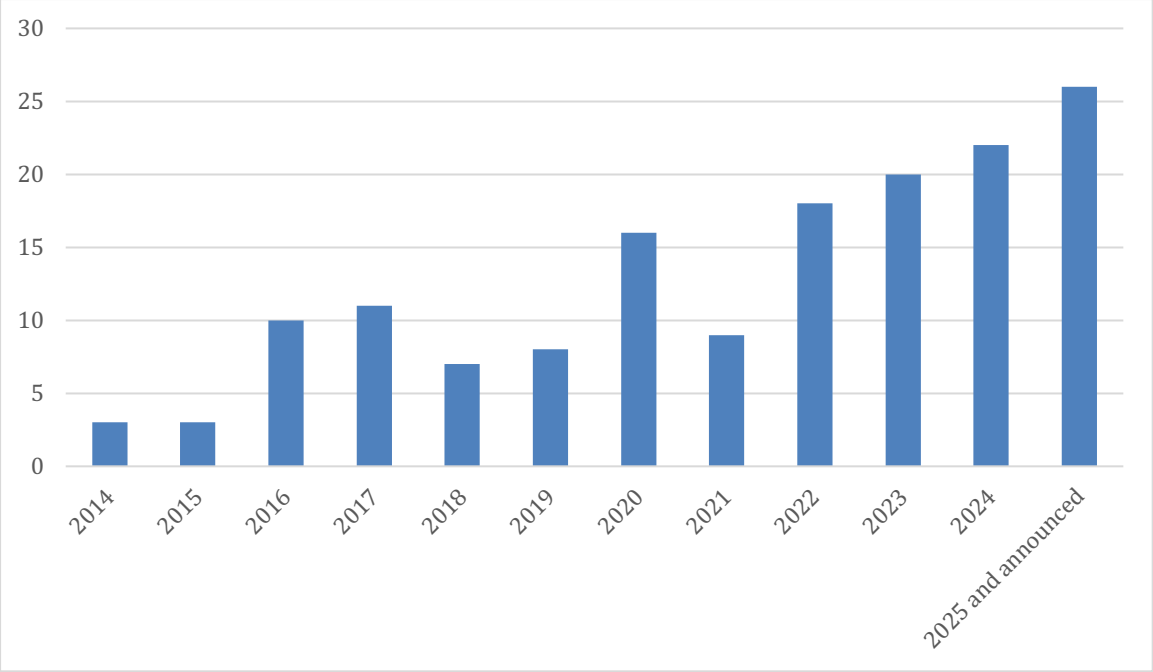


**Figure 1. Ukrainian literature in English translation: Number of book titles per year**

Furthermore, the full-scale invasion of 2022 boosted demand for translations of Ukrainian literature already in print. Christine Lysnewycz Holbert of Lost Horse Press, a small United States publishing house with a series dedicated to contemporary Ukrainian poetry, reported that, while the invasion of Crimea and the beginning of the war in 2014 had sparked little interest in books published by Lost Horse, the reaction to the events of February 2022 was very different: "Now we can't keep books in stock, our printer here in Spokane can't print them fast enough! I can hardly keep up with the orders, the requests for review copies, and the interest in interviews with the authors, translators, and even myself" (Wright and Lysnewycz Holbert).

Even so, the number of titles translated is not large. To my knowledge, from 2014 until mid-November 2025 there were 153 such titles. This includes books that were announced as forthcoming on publishers' web pages and one book which had not been so announced, but whose translation rights had been purchased by a major United States publishing house (Wood). The increase is scarcely surprising, given the war and the plausible conjecture that its topicality would increase interest not only in Ukraine's geopolitical situation and history, but also its culture. Soon after the full-scale invasion, the journalist Alexandra Alter wrote in the *New York Times*:

> Bringing nuanced and reflective writing from Ukraine and about the war to English-language audiences is a project as political as it is cultural, several translators and Ukrainian authors said. Part of Putin's justification for the invasion rests on his claim that he is 'liberating' culturally Russian areas from Ukrainian rule. By highlighting Ukraine's vibrant literary and linguistic heritage, translators hope to emphasize the country's distinction from Russia, and to draw attention to a rich cultural landscape that could be endangered under occupation by the forces of an increasingly authoritarian leader.

In similar spirit, the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, calling for donations in support of its Translating Ukraine Summer Institute, stated in its promotional e-mail that "every translated book is a voice breaking through silence – telling stories of resistance, memory, and hope" (HURI Books).

In the course of the online search that yielded Alter's and many similar observations, I typed the phrase "motivations for publishing translations of Ukrainian literature" into the browser's search line and received the following text, generated by artificial intelligence:

> Motivations for publishing literary translations of Ukrainian literature include promoting Ukrainian culture and identity against Russian propaganda, satisfying reader demand for Ukrainian stories, providing support for Ukrainian colleagues, leveraging government translation programs, countering narratives about Ukraine, and recognizing the intrinsic literary value of Ukrainian works. These efforts are part of a broader cultural diplomacy strategy to showcase Ukraine's vibrant culture on the international stage, especially during a time of historical upheaval and war.

To my annoyance, this is a rather good summary of what publishers whose opinions about this matter appear online have had to say. Notably, AI did not identify making a profit from the sale of such books as one of the reasons for publishing them. Some publishers have expressed the view that publishing translations of Ukrainian literature at a time when Ukraine is resisting invasion is a moral duty. As Anna Schmidt Andersen of Forlæns Publishing in Denmark put it in 2023, "How could we help – besides, of course, donating directly to relief agencies and receiving Ukrainian refugees? In our line of business the answer was, of course, to publish (more) Ukrainian titles" (House of Europe).

Books are, of course, only one of the media through which Ukrainian literature, especially works in such short genres as poetry and the essay, becomes available to the Anglophone public. Sites like *Poetry International*, *Washington Square Review*, *Small Orange* and *Modern Poetry in Translation*, to name but a few, enable readers who actively seek out Ukrainian texts to find a great deal of contemporary or recent Ukrainian short-form literature online. Fifteen Ukrainian poets appear in English on the *Poetry International* site, compared with eight from Poland, fourteen from Belarus and sixteen from Romania. These representations are not orders of magnitude smaller than those of western European literatures in translation (35 from France, 36 each from Germany and 71 from Belgium) (Poetry International). The poetry of Serhiy Zhadan, today probably the foremost Ukrainian novelist and poet who is also renowned as a popular musician, political activist and wartime military volunteer, is available for free in English translation in several online locations.[4]

Also relatively well represented online, though perhaps less easy to find, is literature of the Ukrainian nineteenth and twentieth-century canons. *Ukrainian Literature: A Journal of Translations*, which presents English-language translations of works from the full range of Ukrainian literary history, is accessible online through the University of Toronto, as is a bibliography of such translations, comprehensive up to 1989 (Tarnawsky). Many English-language translations of Ukrainian classical literature may be found on the excellent Ukraine-based web site Diasporiana, into whose Ukrainian-language search box English-language text may be entered, yielding access to out-of-copyright scans of translations of Ivan Franko, Lesia Ukrainka, Olha Kobylianska, Vasyl Stefanyk and dozens of other members of the Ukrainian literary pantheon. As for the poet venerated as Ukraine's national bard, Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861), his poetry proliferates on the internet. There is even a site which opens access to large selections of translations of Shevchenko's poems by each of fourteen translators (storinka.org). The survey *Ukrainian Literature: A Wartime Guide for Anglophone Readers* explicitly aims to help potential readers discover what is available in English (Pavlyshyn, 1-2).

[4] See, e.g., Zhadan, "Four Poems," "Needle," "Poems" (*Poetry International*), "Poems" (*Words for War*), "Three Poems" and "Untitled."

As for printed books, online ordering and print-on-demand have made Ukrainian literature (like other translated literatures for which there may not be strong demand in any individual local market) immeasurably more accessible than it was in the past, benefiting, for example, both of the Australian publishing enterprises which specialise in English translations of Ukrainian literature, Bayda Books and Sova Books.[5]

On the whole, then, the recent narrative of Ukrainian literature in English translation is a good news story. There are, however, reasons to temper optimism with caution. First, it is difficult to estimate how much of the translated material is in fact read by its target audiences. Sizes of print editions are not generally public, we do not know how many books are sold, and while it is no doubt possible for website administrators to count the number of downloads or visits to web pages, this information is not easily available. Even if it were, it would almost certainly not indicate the number of texts actually read (see Metz; Perschak). As the poet Oksana Maksymchuk has observed, the fact of publishing a translation (or any book, for that matter) is no guarantee that it will be bought and then read: the anthology of Ukrainian poetry *Words for War*, edited by Maksymchuk and Max Rosochinsky and published in 2017, had sold eighteen copies prior to 2022. This changed only after the full-scale invasion, when the anthology was featured in the *New York Times*, *The Times* and other influential publications (University of Melbourne, 45:40 minutes).

It is easy to assume that there is a correlation between the number of titles available that articulate a particular value stance (e.g., solidarity with Ukraine), and the impact of this availability on such difficult-to-measure phenomena as public opinion and attitude. But this common-sense, intuitive belief may well be wide off the mark. It is almost a truism that the "impact" of works of literature is methodologically difficult to study (Forehand; Hakemulder; Cooper). What empirical scholarship exists suggests that the same work can elicit very diverse, often unexpected and implausible, reactions from different readers. For that reason, the branch of literary scholarship known as "reception aesthetics" and championed in the 1970s by Hans Robert Jauss resorted to the essentially speculative investigation of what effects upon "the reader" aspects of *texts'* structures were "intended" to yield.

Second, a very substantial part of the newly published translated material consists of poetry – anthologies of individual authors, or collections – among them several excellent ones, including *Words for War*. Of the 153 titles on my list, fully 55, or 36 per cent, are books of poetry or dramatic verse. The prominence of poetry reflects the wartime situation: lyrical poems, and their translations, are mostly shorter and faster to produce than works of other genres. They can have the immediacy that is appropriate to the extreme situations that the war generates – of death, violence, bereavement, dispossession and flight are well placed to communicate the predicament of Ukrainian society and the emotions of the Ukrainian person in the here and now: such emotions as anticipation of death, anger, defiance and survivor guilt.[6]

The journalist, translator and manager of cultural events Sofiia Cheliak has reflected eloquently on the way in which the full-scale invasion has pushed poetry to the forefront of Ukrainian literary creativity. In her afterword to the posthumous anthology of the poetry of Victoria Amelina, who died of injuries suffered in a Russian missile attack on Kramatorsk in eastern Ukraine, Cheliak writes:

[5] At the time of writing, English-language translations of Ukrainian literary texts published by Bayda Books were available on Bayda's own website (fifteen titles), Amazon.com.au (nine titles), and Booktopia (five titles); Sova Books had nine such titles on its website and four on Amazon.com.au.

[6] For example, see (respectively) "he asks, don't help me" by Oksana Lutsyshyna, "God, don't quiet the voice of anger" by Halyna Kruk (97), "My god spends all night forming his battalions" by Marjana Savka and "the heart trapped in guilt-pain" by Marianna Kiyanovska (Kiyanovska, "No Freedom in these Ruins").

> The war has deprived us of literary prose, and on the morning of 24 February 2022 words lost their meaning. Prose descriptions of the loss of a son, of evacuation or the imminence of it sounded pallid and false, especially in the early days of the full-scale invasion. After that we searched for a new prose language – each of us at our own pace – but in the transition between the old language and the new we were speechless. Victoria chose to write poetry so as not to remain silent. (60; my translation)

But in Anglophone countries narrative fiction is the dominant and most widely read literary genre; readers of poetry constitute a relatively small audience.[7] There is some recent Ukrainian fiction in English translation, but novel-length works that have been written in the current, post-full-scale-invasion, phase of the war are yet to appear in translation. One hopes that the recent works of Eugenia Kuznetsova (Kuznietsova), for example, will be translated soon. Her novels *Drabyna* (The Ladder, 2023) and *Vivtsi tsili* (… And Eat It, Too, 2025) are psychologically complex and mirror the diversity of Ukrainian and Ukrainian émigré society when it comes to its views and attitudes. But they also reflect the unanimity of that society in its condemnation of Putin, the Russia that supports and enables him, and Westerners who seek to insulate "liberal" parts of Russian society, or Russian culture, from their share of responsibility for the war.

There are, however, already in print or soon to be published, translations of novels written during the previous phase of the war: after 2014, when Russia occupied Crimea and fighting was relatively quickly confined to the east, but before February 2022. This less intense stage of the war elicited works quite different in world-view and affective engagement from those that would follow. Cases in point include Serhiy Zhadan's *The Orphanage*, published in Ukrainian in 2017 and in English in 2021, and Oksana Lutsyshyna's *Ivan and Phoebe* (2019, 2023) of those that are already available in English, and three works that await English-language publication: Victoria Amelina's *Dom's Dream Kingdom* (2017, promised in HarperCollins in 2027); Haska Shyyan's *Behind Your Back* (2019, announced by the Harvard Library of Ukrainian Literature) and Sophia Andrukhovych's *Amadoka* (2020; translation rights purchased by Simon and Schuster).

These works were critically acclaimed in Ukraine as parts of society's quest for self-understanding and its efforts to come to terms with several difficult pasts, Soviet, Second-World-War and post-Soviet. But theirs is the pathos, not of the present-day struggle for survival, but of analysing causes, seeking to understand the other side, balancing one's critique of the colonial Other with critique of the national Self. These are not, then, works likely to conjure forth post-full-scale-invasion Ukraine, its sense of injustice, its anger and its passionate defiance, for persons unfamiliar with the country. These novels are subtle, thoughtful, and in temperament cool rather than warm.

The Ukrainian author most widely translated into English (no fewer than 13 novels of his total of 19) is Andrey Kurkov, who emphatically calls himself a Ukrainian writer writing in Russian. His *Ukraine Diaries* of the events of 2013-2014 and *Diary of an Invasion* (2022) are valuable testimonies. His novel *Grey Bees* (first published 2018; English translation 2020) takes its place among the pre-full-scale-invasion novels that aspire to offer an "even-handed" perspective on the war. Many of his other novels, combining crime fiction with elements of the gothic, from today's perspective seem dangerously close to depicting Ukraine as a weird, not quite real place, faintly amusing even as it is sinister. That mode of representing Ukraine had

[7] While the number of books published annually in English is so large that it is difficult to be certain what proportion of the book market a particular genre commands, one investigation found that in 2017 fiction constituted 8.2 per cent of all books published and 23 per cent of all books sold (Fredner). As for poetry books, in the United States poetry books account for only about 3 million of the 800 million books sold annually, or about 0.4 per cent (F).

been launched in the 1830s by Mykola Hohol (best known in English as Nikolai Gogol, the transliteration of the Russian form of his name) and remains beloved by Russian propaganda.

| | Publishing House | No. of Titles |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Glagoslav | 28 |
| 2. | Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute | 21 |
| 3. | Lost Horse Press | 18 |
| 4. | Sova Books | 7 |
| 5. | Academic Studies Press | 6 |
| 6. | Arrowsmith Press | 6 |
| 7. | Bayda Books | 6 |
| 8. | Kalyna Language Press | 6 |
| 9. | Yale University Press | 6 |
| 10. | CIUS Press | 5 |
| 11. | HarperCollins | 5 |
| 12. | Deep Vellum | 4 |
| 13. | Seven Stories Press | 4 |
| 14. | Spuyten Duyvil | 3 |
| 15. | Atthis Arts | 2 |
| 16. | Ibidem | 2 |
| 17. | Jantar | 2 |
| 18. | University of Toronto Press | 2 |
| 19. | Amazon Crossing | 1 |
| 20. | Carcanet Press | 1 |
| 21. | Central European University Press | 1 |
| 22. | Guernica Editions | 1 |
| 23. | Harvill Secker | 1 |
| 24. | Kulturalis | 1 |
| 25. | Liveright (Norton) | 1 |
| 26. | MacLehose | 1 |
| 27. | Monoray | 1 |
| 28. | Mosaic Press | 1 |
| 29. | Mountain Leopard | 1 |
| 30. | Nick Hern Books | 1 |
| 31. | NYRB Poets | 1 |
| 32. | Penguin | 1 |
| 33. | Piramida | 1 |
| 34. | Plamen Press | 1 |
| 35. | River Paw | 1 |
| 36. | Simon and Schuster | 1 |
| 37. | UCL Press | 1 |
| 38. | Veronica Lane Books | 1 |

**Figure 2. Ukrainian literature in English translation, 2014-November 2025: Number of book titles, published and announced, by publishing house**

Third, the publishers of Ukrainian literature in English are, in general, small presses (see Figure 2). Of the 153 books on my list, 28 were published or had been announced as forthcoming by the British-Dutch house Glagoslav, which specialises in translations of East European fiction, including the classics. 21 were published by Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. Eighteen appeared with Lost Horse Press, whose

emphasis is on poetry. The next band, with between five and seven books in the period covered, includes the two Australian publishers, both one-person enterprises owned and run by translators: Yuri Tkacz's Bayda Books and Svitlana Yakovenko's Sova Books, in Melbourne and Sydney respectively. Only one of the major presses that appear on Figure 2, HarperCollins, is represented by more than one book, and three of its five items are translations from the Russian of fantasy genre fiction by Maryna Dyachenko and Serhiy Dyachenko. Notably, however, HarperCollins also published Victoria Amelina's *Looking At Women, Looking at War: A War and Justice Diary*, and their fifth, forthcoming, item is Amelina's *Dom's Dream Kingdom*. In November 2025 Harvill Secker, Norton, Penguin, and Simon and Schuster each had one book of Ukrainian literature in English translation in their catalogue.

The small presses typically do not have strong distribution networks or the capacity to publicise their wares. Sometimes their choices of works for translation are more reflective of the works' standing in the Ukrainian literary canon than of their capacity to engage a contemporary Anglophone audience or illuminate Ukraine's present-day predicament, as Yuri Tkacz, who has translated on commission for other publishers than his own Bayda, has remarked to me.

Some of what the larger presses have published is relevant to the task of "explaining" Ukraine, its identity and aspirations, and of persuading audiences of the justice of its cause. An example is Penguin's *Ukraine 22*, edited by Mark Andryczyk, a republication of the collection of poetry, short fiction and essays *The White Chalk of Days* that first came out with Academic Studies Press. Tanja Maljartschuk, seven of whose books have appeared in German translation (hence the German romanisation of her name) debuted in English in 2024 with *Forgottenness*, which came out under the Liveright imprint of W. W. Norton. *Forgottenness* is a structurally ambitious novel that blends the fictionalised biography of Viacheslav Lypynsky, a Ukrainian interwar émigré political thinker, with the *bildungsroman* of a present-day woman narrator. Inherited historical trauma is one of the novel's themes; the work has a general, but indirect, connection to contemporary wartime reality.

Finally, fourth: even if Ukrainian books in translation were to triple or quadruple in number, they would still be overwhelmingly outnumbered by translations from the Russian. In October 2025, when the presentation on which this article is based was delivered, a leading Melbourne bookshop had on its shelves four translations of Tolstoi's *War and Peace*, three of them by major presses: Vintage, Penguin and OUP, as well as many other books by and about Tolstoi (and the Tolstoi materials available for ordering through the bookshop's online catalogue numbered 2943 titles). There was a corresponding plethora of material related to the other Russian classics. By contrast, the bookshop had on its shelves three works of Ukrainian literature in translation: two titles by Kurkov and one by Zhadan. Readers seeking acquaintance in English with works by the pillar of Ukraine's literary tradition, the nineteenth-century poet Taras Shevchenko (whose anticolonial and anti-autocratic poetry is acutely relevant to the current war) would have had to order online.

The welcome increase in the availability of Ukrainian literature in English cannot be expected to dent the historical advantage of Russian literature in the same receptive space. The translation and retranslation of books by Tolstoi and Dostoevsky combine with the enduring presence of Chekhov on Western stages and of Tchaikovsky and his compatriots in the repertoires of Western orchestras to generate an ongoing cultural alibi for Russia even as the Russian state engages in unconscionable aggression against not only Ukraine, but also Ukrainian identity and culture.

I have sounded four notes of caution about expecting too much of Ukrainian literature in English translation as far as transformative cultural impact is concerned. What imperative flows from this – for translators and for publishers of translations?

As I remarked earlier in this article, it is not possible to demonstrate a causal relationship between an increase in the availability of Ukrainian literature in translation and greater global awareness of, and solidarity with, Ukraine. But it is clear that many translators of Ukrainian works into English, and the publishing houses that put resources into bringing Ukrainian literature to public view, are motivated by the belief that such a connection exists. Thus, Nina Murray, a diplomat for the United States as well as a translator of the fin-de-siècle dramatist Lesia Ukrainka and the present-day writers Oksana Zabuzhko, Serhiy Zhadan and Oksana Lutsyshyna, observes that "the translator is conscious of their public mission. Their effort will take a work of literature out of its original time and place and transplant it into a new language, and therefore into a new culture. [… M]any translators who chose to work on a piece from their native culture clearly see themselves as its ambassadors and advocates, not just bearers."

This view of the translator as explicator of Ukraine and the Ukrainian cause to a world audience has acquired the status of a commonplace. The website *Literary Hub*, for example, carries the forthright assertion that

> [f]or decades, Ukraine remained in the shadow of the Russian imperial discourse. Foreign readers had access to only a limited number of translations of Ukrainian literature. Today, fortunately, the number of translations is steadily growing, which means that Ukraine finally has the opportunity to be heard – through books that not only counter Russian propaganda but also tell the story of the country's present life and show that Ukrainian literature existed long before the declaration of independence in 1991. (Klos)

The translation studies scholar Roman Ivashkiv makes the same point in the idiom of postcolonial studies. He examines two anthologies of Ukrainian poetry in translation and attributes to them "unprecedented political significance and relevance," which derive from

> […] their giving voice to the formerly colonized, oppressed, marginalized, and underrepresented – or, to paraphrase Gayatri Spivak, in letting the subaltern speak. The subaltern in this case is colonized Ukraine vis-à-vis colonizer Russia (imperial and Soviet), which for centuries has been imposing its discourse on Ukraine and silencing all things Ukrainian. (56)

Spokespersons of the Ukrainian Institute London under whose auspices the Ukrainian Literature in Translation Prize is conferred go even further, underscoring the role of literary translators not only as mediators of Ukraine's wartime experience to the world, but as advocates of the principled behaviour that is modelled by the works they translate: "The winning translations […] speak powerfully from this moment in Ukraine's history, as the country endures the fourth year of Russia's full-scale war. Steeped in the experience of imperial violence, these are voices that do not bend or break under the threat of suppression; instead, they sing, fight, and love. [They] are radiant with the will to survive and thrive" (UIL).

In the context of Russia's war on Ukraine, translation from the Ukrainian and the publication of literary translations from the Ukrainian are acts of political engagement. As Zenia Tompkins, a translator and the founder of the United States-based Tompkins Agency for Ukrainian Literature in Translation, candidly puts it, "In the field of Ukrainian literature, there's no room or patience right now – for passivity and silence. The authors we translate, many of whom are risking their lives on a daily basis, need and deserve better: they need and deserve translators who openly and loudly condemn Putin, the Russian army, and the

imperialistic undercurrent of Russian culture that has enabled and justified Russia's invasion of Ukraine" (Tsurkan).

Reflecting on the translator's role in periods of extremity such as the present one, Tompkins's friend Kate Tsurkan, an American writer and journalist who lives in Ukraine, has offered an eloquent and encouraging statement that values the translator as one of the cultural actors who make hope and positivity possible even in dire circumstances. It seems a fitting sentiment with which to end this discussion: "The translator is not just a navigator of the author's sense and meaning in *this* situation, but a link to [the] past life; a reminder that, although our world is invariably changed by the horrors that we're living through, there are some things to strive for and look forward to."

**Bibliography**


Alter, Alexandra. "An Urgent Mission for Literary Translators: Bringing Ukrainian Voices to the West." *New York Times*. 10 March 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/10/books/ukraine-translate-books.html. Accessed 6 October 2025.

Amelina, Victoria. *Dom's Dream Kingdom*. Translated by Grace Mahoney. HarperCollins, forthcoming in 2027.

———. *Looking At Women, Looking at War: A War and Justice Diary*. London: Harper Collins, 2025.

Andrukhovych, Sofiia. *Amadoka*. Lviv: Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, 2020.

Bayda Books. "Published Books." *Bayda Books*. https://www.baydabooks.com/published-books. Accessed 13 November 2025.

Cheliak, Sofiia. "Staty tilom dlia holosu." [To Become a Body for a Voice.] Viktoriia Amelina, *Svidchennia*. [Testimony.] Lviv: Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, 2024. 58-63.

Chernetsky, Vitaly. "Nation and Translation: Literary Translation and the Shaping of Modern Ukrainian Culture." *Contexts, Subtexts and Pretexts*. Ed. Brian James Baer. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011. 33-54.

Cooper, Charles R. "Empirical Studies of Response to Literature: Review and Suggestions." *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 10.3-4 (1976): 77-93.

Diasporiana. *Diasporiana.org.ua: elektronna biblioteka*. [Diasporiana.org.ua: Electronic Library.] https://diasporiana.org.ua/. Accessed 11 November 2025.

F, Christopher. "Poetry Book Sales in the United States: The Latest Figures and Trends in the Genre." *Medium*. 28 July 2024. Accessed 13 November 2025.

Forehand, Garlie A. "Problems of Measuring Response to Literature." *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* 40.6 (1966): 369-75.

Fredner, Erik. “How Many Novels Have Been Published in English? (An Attempt).” *Stanford Literary Lab*. 14 March 2017. https://litlab.stanford.edu/how-many-novels-have-been-published-in-english-an-attempt/. Accessed 13 November 2025.

Hakemulder, Jèmeljan. “Effects of Literature: A Review.” *The Systematic and Empirical Approach to Literature and Culture as Theory and Application*. Ed. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Irene Sywenky. Edmonton: Research Institute for Comparative Literature and Cross-Cultural Studies, 1997. 31-50.

House of Europe. “How the World is Helping a Ukrainian Literature Reach an International Audience.” *Chytomo*. 22 June 2023. https://chytomo.com/en/how-the-world-is-helping-a-ukrainian-literature-reach-an-international-audience/. Accessed 6 October 2025.

HURI Books. “This International Translation Day…” *Mailchimp*. https://mailchi.mp/fas.harvard.edu/tusi2026-ebrd-match-9302116?e=e3e3fd4341. Accessed 30 September 2025.

Ivashkiv, Roman. “Translating Ukrainian War Poetry into English: Why It Is Relevant.” *East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 9.1 (2022): 37-65.

Jauss, Hans Robert. *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*. Translated by Timothy Bahti. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

Kal′nychenko, Oleksandr. “A Sketch of the Ukrainian History of Translation of the 1920s.” *Between Cultures and Texts: Itineraries in Translation History*. Ed. Antoine Chalvin, Anne Lange and Daniele Monticelli. Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2011. 235-48.

Kiyanovska, Marianna. “‘No Freedom in These Ruins’: Four Poems of War.” Translated by Amelia M. Glaser and Yuliya Ilchuk. *Literary Hub*. 12 August 2022. https://lithub.com/no-freedom-in-these-ruins-four-poems-of-war-by-marianna-kiyanovska/. Accessed 20 November 2025.

Klos, Nelly. “Ten Titles in Translation That Celebrate Ukraine.” *Literary Hub*. 29 September 2025. https://lithub.com/ten-titles-in-translation-that-celebrate-ukraine/. Accessed 16 November 2025.

Kurkov, Andrey. *Diary of an Invasion*. London: Mountain Leopard Press, 2022.

———. *Grey Bees*. Translated by Boris Dralyuk. London: MacLehose Press, 2020.

———. *Ukraine Diaries: Dispatches from Kiev* [Kyiv]. Translated by Sam Taylor and Amanda Love Darragh. London: Harvill Secker, 2014.

Kruk, Halyna. *A Crash Course in Molotov Cocktails*. Translated by Amelia M. Glaser and Yuliya Ilchuk. Medford, MA: Arrowsmith Press, 2023.

Kuznietsova, Ievheniia. *Drabyna* [The Ladder]. Lviv: Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, 2023.

———. *Vivtsi tsili* [… And Eat It, Too]. Lviv: Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, 2025.

Lutsyshyna, Oksana. “he asks, don’t help me.” Translated by Oksana Maksymchuk and Max Rosochinsky. *In the Hour of War: Poetry from Ukraine*. Ed. Carolyn Forché and Ilya Kaminsky. Medford, MA: Arrowsmith Press, 2023. 41.

———. *Ivan and Phoebe*. Translated by Nina Murray. Dallas, TX: Deep Vellum Press, 2023.

Maljartschuk, Tanja. *Forgottenness*. Translated by Zenia Tompkins. New York: Liveright, 2024.

Metz, Bernhard. “Bibliomania and the Folly of Reading.” *Comparative Critical Studies* 5.2-3 (2008): 249-69.

Murray, Nina. “Judge’s Commentary: Nina Murray – Ukrainian Spotlight.” *Stephen Spender Trust*. November 2023. https://www.stephen-spender.org/judges-commentary-2023-nina-murray/. Accessed 16 November 2025.

Odrekhivska, Iryna. “Decolonial Analytics in Translation History: Ukrainian Literature in the Contested Space of English Translation.” *World Literature Studies* 16.3 (2024): 4-14.

Pavlyshyn, Marko. *Ukrainian Literature: A Wartime Guide for Anglophone Readers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025.

Perschak, Katharina Evelin Maria. “Heavy Readers and Their Unread Books: Explaining a Common Habit.” *Literacy in the New Landscape of Communication: Research, Education, and the Everyday*. Ed. Margit Böck, Andreas Hudelist and Florian Auernig. Graz: Austrian Literacy Association, 2017. 69-75.

Poetry International. “Poets.” *Poetry International*. https://www.poetryinternational.com/en/poets-poems/poets. Accessed 11 November 2025.

Savka, Marjana. “my god spends all night forming his battalions.” Translated by Askold Melnyczuk. *The Blue Mountain Review* 35 (2025): 29. https://issuu.com/collectivemedia/docs/blue_mountain_review_september_2025. Accessed 20 November 2025.

Shyyan, Haska. *Behind Your Back*. Translated by Isaac Stackhouse Wheeler. Cambridge, MA: Havard University Press for the Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, forthcoming in 2026.

Sova Books. “Books.” *Sova Books*. https://sovabooks.com.au/shop/. Accessed 13 November 2025.

Storinka.org. *Poetical Works of Shevchenko, Translated into English by C.A. Manning, Vera Rich, F. R. Livesay, John Weir, Irina Zheleznova, Ethel Lilian Voynich, Michael M. Naydan and Others*. https://taras-shevchenko.storinka.org/about.html. Accessed 11 November 2025.

Tarnawsky, Marta. *Ukrainian Literature in English: An Annotated Bibliography*. https://tarnawsky.artsci.utoronto.ca/elul/English/ULE/#gsc.tab=0. Accessed 20 November 2025.

Tsurkan, Kate, and Zenia Tompkins. “An Interview with Zenia Tompkins.” *Asymptote*. https://www.asymptotejournal.com/interview/an-interview-with-zenia-tompkins/. Accessed 16 November 2025.

*Ukraine 22: Ukrainian Writers Respond to War*. Ed. Mark Andryczyk. N. p.: Penguin, 2022.

*Ukrainian Literature: A Journal of Translations*. https://tarnawsky.artsci.utoronto.ca/elul/Ukr_Lit/. Accessed 20 November 2025.

UIL. “Ukrainian Literature in Translation: Prize Winners and Honourable Mentions.” *UIL: Ukrainian Institute London*. 2024. https://uil.org.uk/ukrainian-literature-in-translation-prize-2024/. Accessed 16 November 2025.

University of Melbourne. “Ukraine Writes Back, Webinar I: Names on the Maps.” Co-hosted by the Faculty of Arts Research Initiative on Post-Soviet Space (RIPSS) at the University of Melbourne and the Ukrainian Studies Association of Australia and New Zealand (USAANZ). *ArtsUnimelb*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5dxjMhr1Dto. Accessed 13 November 2025.

Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva. *Kataloh*. https://starylev.com.ua/bookstore. Accessed 10 November 2025.

Wright, Carolyne, and Christine Lysnewycz Holbert. “Born to Make Books: In Conversation with Christine Lysnewycz Holbert of Lost Horse Press.” *Gulf Coast*. 15 November 2023. https://gulfcoastmag.org/stories/born-to-make-books-in-conversation-with-christine-lysnewycz-holbert-of-lost-horse-press,4584. Accessed 16 November 2025.

Wood, Heloise. “Scribner Signs Andrukhovych’s ‘Incredible Novel.’” *The Bookseller*. 6 October 2023. https://www.thebookseller.com/rights/scribner-signs-andrukhovychs-incredible-novel. Accessed 14 November 2025.

*The White Chalk of Days: The Contemporary Ukrainian Literature Series Anthology*. Ed. Mark Andryczyk. Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2017.

*Words for War: New Poems from Ukraine*. Ed. Oksana Maksymchuk and Max Rosochinsky. Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2017.

Zhadan, Serhiy. “Four Poems.” Translated by John Hennessy and Ostap Kin. *Asymptote*. https://www.asymptotejournal.com/poetry/serhiy-zhadan-four-poems/. Accessed 11 November 2025.

———. “Needle.” Translated by Amelia M. Glaser and Yuliya Ilchuk. *Modern Poetry in Translation*. https://modernpoetryintranslation.com/poem/needle/. Accessed 11 November 2025.

———. *The Orphanage*. Translated by Reilly Costigan-Humes and Isaac Stackhouse Wheeler. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021.

———. “Poems.” *Poetry International*. Translated by Virlana Tkacz and Wanda Phipps, and Dzvinka Orlowsky. https://www.poetryinternational.com/en/poets-poems/poets/poet/102-5526_Zhadan. Accessed 11 November 2025.

———. “Poems.” *Words for War: New Poems from Ukraine*. Ed. Oksana Maksymchuk and Max Rosochinsky. Translated by Valzhyna Mort, Amelia Glazer and Yuliya Ilchuk, Virlana Tkacz and Bob Holman, Ilya Kaminsky, Ostap Kin, and Virlana Tkacz and Wanda Phipps. https://www.wordsforwar.com/serhiy-zhadan-bio. Accessed 11 November 2025.

———. “Three Poems.” Translated by Virlana Tkacz and Wanda Phipps. *Solstice: A Magazine of Diverse Voices*. Summer 2022. https://solsticelitmag.org/content/three-poems-by-serhiy-zhadan/. Accessed 11 November 2025.

———. “Untitled.” Transl. Ostap Kin and John Hennesy. *MoMA*. 23 March 2023. https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/713. Accessed 11 November 2025.