

motions. To him their current political struggle against oppression is pointless and false. Along with this he views Prague as nothing more than a tomb for these dead souls whose worldly aspirations must prove futile.

Weaving its way through the story—not really a narrative, but a relentless portrayal of a mind—is the desire of the Troubled Man for a singular friend, specifically a man whose thinking and sentiments replicate his own. He imagines such a life partner but does nothing practical to seek him out. This is the very muffled homoerotic theme that commentators on the book have pointed out, also noting that after World War I Karásek wrote openly about the need to change the negative public attitudes about homosexuality that prevailed in the First Czechoslovakian Republic. Another aspect of the book's oddity is the author's choice to write it in the third person, which has a distancing effect on the reader. This contrasts with the immediacy of stream-of-consciousness works embodied through a first-person narrator, made famous (and infamous in the eyes of Austro-Hungarian authorities) by Schnitzler's novella *Leutnant Gustl*. On the other hand it allows the narrator (a stand-in for the author) to create a kind of hypnotic, cumulative oversaturation of details as they are observed by the Troubled Man. Here is one of many examples: "Odors were in the carpets and sofa covers, in the scattered pillows, everywhere: odors not of the present, but of the past. A bluish twilight trickled into the chamber, seemingly filled with the dance of whirling dust by the window, above a groove of gleaming metal, spilling in as the curtains permitted, and further playing only in reflections. Deeper in the chamber there were only slumbering, blurred colors—the indistinct colorlessness of everything in a single hue." Cascades of sensory impressions adorn the dumb objects that surround him so that they acquire a rather florid, reliquary life projected into them by the mind of the Troubled Man. Although not written from within his mind, these descriptions are still mimetic of the way his mind works. The story of the Troubled Man who fails time and again in his series of feeble attempts to connect with the world ends with a burst of religious mania, followed by his

institutionalization and slow and somber death. By this time nothing in the world can capture his attention, and objects that once engrossed his mind by reflecting his fantasies become empty and dead. His struggle with his Maker seems finally resolved by resignation and belief.

Twisted Spoon Press, the book's publisher, has once again put out a compact, handsomely printed and bound work, with Symbolist-Decadent illustrations by Sascha Schneider. The translator, Kirsten Lodge, should be congratulated not only for her successful effort to bring the dense prose of a fairly obscure writer into highly readable English, but also for her notes on the novel and her brief biographical afterword. These put the book into a larger literary and social context and shed light on just what an odd variant of Decadence Karásek and his Czech peers have created. The most interesting thing for the English-language reader engaged by *A Gothic Soul* would be a translation of some of Karásek's nonfiction writing from the 1920s, which would presumably explain his methods and his goals.

Literature, Exile, Alterity The New York Group of Ukrainian Poets

By **Maria Rewakowicz**. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014. 242 pages. ISBN: 978-1-61811-403-7. Hardback.

Mark Andryczyk

The so-called New York Group of Ukrainian poets has recently been the focus of several publications in Ukraine. Maria Rewakowicz edited one anthology of the group's writings, *Pivstolittia napivtyshi: Antolohiia poezii N'iu-Iorks'koi hrupy* (2005), and with Vasyl' Gabor coedited another, *N'iu-Iors'ka hrupa: Antolohiia poezii, prozy ta eseistky* (2012). Yet another notable volume was Ihor Kotyk's monograph on the New York Group member Yuriy Tarnawsky's poetry *Ekzystentsiinyi vymir v poezi Iuriia Tarnavs'koho* (2009). In *Literature, Exile, Alterity* Rewakowicz offers the first English-language monograph on the subject.

She covers the New York Group in ten chapters that focus on each of the Group's members, offering their biographical background, organizational activity, and a close reading of their poetry. Although alluded to in the book, the prose and dramatic works written by the Group's members are not given extended analysis. The author has chosen to examine the Group primarily through the concepts of power, transgression, exile, liminality, and otherness. The overarching theme is the presence of modernism in Ukrainian literature and the New York Group's role in developing Ukrainian literary modernism in the 1950s and 1960s, the years that witnessed the hegemony of socialist realism in Soviet Ukrainian culture.

Most attention is paid to the Group's seven founding members: Bohdan Boychuk, Yuriy Tarnawsky, Zhenia Vasylykivska, Bohdan Rubchak, Patricia Kylyna, Emma Andijewska, and Vira Vovk, and the years during which they were most active, i.e., from the second half of the 1950s to the end of the 1960s. The preface contains the poets' biographical details. Rewakowicz begins her analysis by revisiting an important debate on modernism that took place in 2000 in the pages of the leading Ukrainian intellectual journal *Krytyka*, the debate initiated by Tarnawsky's response to Solomiia Pavlychko's 1999 book *Dyskurs modernizmu v ukrains'kii literaturi*. Pavlychko's monograph exerted an influence on her own post-Soviet generation of Ukrainian intellectuals who were at the forefront of Ukrainian culture in the 1990s, and the writers who consistently attempted to review and revive the concept of modernism in Ukrainian literature. The criticism of Pavlychko's book in *Krytyka* by Tarnawsky and Boychuk's response to Tarnawsky reaffirmed the centrality of the issue of modernism for the New York Group. By bringing this lively and insightful journal discussion to light, Rewakowicz establishes what she views as the most important issue regarding the New York Group.

Her remarks about the poets' activity and interaction complement her study of alterity and liminality in their poems. By means of samples of correspondence between the Group members, she demonstrates that one of the reasons the

Group was formed was to obtain a measure of authority they believed they needed to save the Ukrainian language from extinction. Rewakowicz states that as young poets, these men found themselves in a position of weakness within the arena of émigré cultural politics. The New York Group strove to defy erasure and attempted to prove that Ukrainian poets could exist outside the Soviet Union. To that end, Rubchak and Boychuk edited the seminal anthology of Ukrainian émigré poetry *Koordynaty: Antolohiia suchasnoi ukrains'koi poezii na Zakhodi* (1969, 2 vols.). From Rewakowicz's book we also learn about the audience for Ukrainian-language literature at the time of the Group's activity. Interestingly, the Group saw the *shistdesiatnyky* as their rivals in their search for readership. The book reveals a great deal about the various circles of Ukrainian émigré intellectuals at that time.

Rewakowicz presents members of the New York Group as émigré writers who were *not* driven by nostalgia for Ukraine; in fact, they were stimulated by their exilic condition and embraced it as something positive. However, this condition also forced them into a liminal situation. The author points out that "they longed for a symbolic return, hoping for an eventual literary acceptance by the center" (57). Viewing them as aesthetically pluralist, Rewakowicz traces their associations with surrealism, the avant-garde, and postmodernism. She interprets the recurring presence of Spain in their works as a conscious choice of cosmopolitan modernism. They used *eros* to address existential concerns and to express free choice. They engage these themes to express their desire to be free and unrestricted by Ukrainian émigré culture. Rewakowicz notes that Andijewska's poetry is so hermetic that it creates its own reality. Noticing the play and irony in the poetry of Rubchak and Andijewska, Rewakowicz attempts to locate them somewhere between modernism and postmodernism. An especially fascinating case is that of Kylyna, who learned Ukrainian language as an adult. We are shown how this writer chose the status of the Other within her own country by choosing to write in Ukrainian. We later learn that Kylyna's fascination with alterity actually proved to be

practical, as the writer admits that it was easier for her to publish poetry written in the language of a stateless people rather than the poems she had written in English.

Rewakowicz points out that these writers were disappointed with their reception in post-Soviet Ukraine: “They yearned for a wholesale embrace there, but encountered for the most part a silent gaze” (187). This sense of estrangement is certainly an important aspect of the group’s self-image, and Rewakowicz is correct in pointing it out, but it also would have been worthwhile for her to shed more light on how and where they were accepted in post-Soviet Ukraine. She does mention the affinity between them and the Kyiv School of poets, and briefly explores issues of exile in both groups. Interestingly, she attributes this affinity to the fact that both groups became “historicized” by the subsequent younger generation of writers in Ukraine. This perhaps indicates that any rejection of the New York Group in post-Soviet Ukraine was not caused so much by the Group’s members having lived outside Ukraine but by a generational conflict.

The New York Group played a role in the literary life of 1990s Ukraine. Boychuk’s journal *Svito-Vyd* was a forum for presenting the works of the *simdesiatnyky* generation, including those of Oleh Lysheha. Andiewska and Tarnawsky were well accepted by their younger colleagues. Yurii Izdryk and Yurii Andrukhovych included Tarnawsky in their now-legendary 1992 “encyclopedia” issue of the journal *Chetver* that listed what they deemed to be relevant to a newly post-Soviet Ukraine. Most recently, the New York Group has become a major subject of interest for Ukraine’s youngest generation of scholars. It also made an important connection with contemporary Ukrainian literature through the New York City-based poet Vasyl Makhno. Rewakowicz stresses the relevance of this by quoting one of Makhno’s poems, and analyzing Makhno together with Vadym Lesych and other Ukrainian writers who wrote about New York City.

Jurij Solovij’s painting titled *The New York Group* was an excellent choice for the monograph’s cover. A New York artist

originally from Lviv, Solovij has contributed to Ukrainian modernism by creating covers for the poetry volumes of several of the Group’s members. The New York Group has served the same purpose as the generations of Ukrainian intellectuals since the end of the nineteenth century. Their goal has been to maintain and develop Ukrainian culture’s relationship with modern times. The Group has discharged this obligation during a crucial yet bleak time in Ukrainian culture. Rewakowicz’s monograph makes clear that they generously and profoundly answered their calling.

MORE BOOKS

Debaty Artes Liberales: Intelligent, humanista, intelektualista, vol. VIII, edited by Katarzyna Tomaszuk. Warsaw: *Artes Liberales* at UW Press (www.al.uw.edu.pl), 2014. 163 pages. ISBN 978-83-63636-29-6. Paper. In Polish and English.

A series of recorded conversations, slightly edited, between Polish, Buryat, and Russian intellectuals concerning history and memory. What makes these conversations uniquely interesting is that they are not “official statements” such as those found in well thought-out articles and books, but rather spontaneous reactions to intellectual challenges that arise when scholars sit down to chat freely with one another with no preplanned strategy on how to treat their intellectual or political adversaries. *Artes Liberales*, a unique department in the University of Warsaw, specializes in and promotes such discussions owing to the inspiration of Professors Jerzy Axer, Jan Kieniewicz, and Piotr Wilczek. One imagines that this was the mode of discussion practiced at medieval universities where scholars who were also monks gathered to draw inspiration from each other’s ideas and criticism. Certainly the atmosphere of camaraderie and openness evident in these discussions is extremely rare nowadays, and mostly absent at other European and American universities where open-to-all debates are usually staged by organizers and the kind of discussion presented here is reserved for semi-private circles of *odinakomyshchik*. It would be rare at American universities to find the