



Translations from Ukrainian into French Language between 1991 and 2012

a study by the Next Page Foundation in the framework of the Book Platform project

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I. Introduction

Ukraine is a little known country in France. Therefore, Ukrainian literature is unknown as such. Only knowledgeable experts in Slavic languages would recall Shevchenko or Andrukhovych while the general public would also name Shevchenko when Ukraine is brought up; however, it would be Andriy and not Taras. The name of Gogol is also often brought up, with the obligatory accompanying questions on Russia/Ukraine and Russian/Ukrainian language.

The first notions of Ukrainian literature appear in Ukraine in the 19th century thanks to the interest of Slavic language scholars among which we should name Alfred Rambaud and Louis Leger who were interested in Russian Empire as well as Adolphe d'Avril who dedicated himself to studying Slavic cultures in general. There also exists a less influential Polish filter. Thanks to these people, first translations of poems by Taras Shevchenko as well as research works on Ukrainian dumas were published.

Many travelers to the Russian Empire who made their way via Ukraine brought back to France romantic memories on Ukrainian folklore or, similarly to Armand Silvestre, remembered the land of Gogol and affirmed the romantic image of the land with rich nature: "... Ukraine is a land of love"³.

The epic novel by Marko Vovchok "Marusya" was also a great success in France. It was adapted to French taste and tailored to a French issue by the translator; he drew a parallel between Ukraine and Alsace lost by France during Franco-Prussian War. The translator's name was Pierre-Jules Hetzel (literary pseudonym P.-J. Stahl), he was one of the founders of children's literature and a well-known publisher. Despite the fact that the real author's name quickly disappeared from the cover, the book, which stayed among favorites of French children (girls in particular), spread knowledge about Ukraine.

³ Armand Silvestre, *La Russie, Impression, Portraits, Paysages*. Paris, Emile Testard Editeur, 1892.



II. Review of book publishing and translations market in France

You can see the statistical data on French book publishing market on the Internet, on the website of French Ministry of Culture:

http://www.dgmic.culture.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/Chiffres-cles_2010-2011.pdf

In 2011, France had 70,109 titles published, which is 4.2 per cent more than in 2010 (67,728 titles). Average number of copies in 2010 amounted to 7,937, which is 2.6 per cent less in comparison with the previous year.

New titles amounted to a little over 60 per cent of sales in 2010 – 2011. In 2012, 65,412 new titles were published.

In 2011, total sales volume fell by 1 per cent in monetary equivalent in comparison with the previous year. This reduction trend is maintained for three years in a row, according to FranceLivre.⁴ Instead, positive trend is observed by the number of titles for the second year in a row: +7% in 2010 and +2% in 2011. If publishers' revenues grew only insignificantly in 2010 (+0.2%), the amount of sold copies fell by 2.7 per cent while staying at a relatively high amount of 451.9 million sold copies. This drop is partially explained by increase in electronic book sales (+2%), which amounted to 52.9 million euro in 2010. In 2012, Internet sales grew by 6.5%.

In 2011, book prices grew by 2.2 per cent on average. In 2008-2009, 13,792 persons worked in book sector, while book shops employed 12,467 persons.

If we turn to the habits of the readers, about 50 per cent of the French buy at least one book per year, while 11.3 per cent buy over 12 books per year. If 23.4 per cent of the population buy books in traditional shops, 13.1 per cent use the Internet. 70 per cent of the French aged 18 and up, according to the data of 2008, read at least one book in a year, while 17 per cent claim they read over 20 books. In 2010, French market offered 622,440 titles in comparison with 599,450 in 2009 (+3.8 per cent).

⁴ <http://www.francelivre.org/Actualites/Carte-blanche-a-Livres-Hebdo/Le-marche-du-livre-accuse-le-coup-de-la-crise>.



Translations from Ukrainian into French language

Novels constitute 24 per cent of financial volume (25 per cent of sold copies), 14 per cent are made up by children's books (20 per cent of sold copies) while 10 per cent of volume are constituted by textbooks (8 per cent of sold copies). Pocketbook format makes up 18.5 per cent of printed titles and 25.2 per cent of sold copies, which amounts to 12.9 per cent of financial flow.

In 2009, translations accounted for 14.3 per cent (9,088 new titles), and in 2011, 15.9 per cent or 10,226 new titles. 60 per cent of books translated in 2011 in commercial publishing houses were translated from English (6,130 titles), while the next position in rating is occupied by Japanese with just 8.8 per cent and 898 titles. Russian – the first among Eastern European languages, accounts for 0.9 per cent or 96 titles.

III. Translations from Ukrainian into French language

III.1. General data and division by genres

The first attempt of compiling a general collection dedicated to Ukrainian literature dates back to 1919 in Bern, thanks to the efforts of Earl Tyshkevich: it was a summary of history of Ukrainian literature by S. Yefremov.

During the period between world wars, a chair of Ukrainian studies is opened in the Institute of Eastern Languages thanks to the efforts of Ilko Borschak. He also helped spread Ukrainian language and literature, taught history and tried to integrate an image of Ukraine as a European nation, though he was not always too scrupulous and gave rise to numerous legends and exaggerations in the process. It was his student Marie Scherer-Dolgoruky who replaced him as the head of the chair and published the fullest collection of Ukrainian dumas in 1947.

In the postwar period, *The Riders* by Yanovsky and *The Artist* by Shevchenko saw the light in a prestigious publishing house Gallimard thanks to Soviet-French cooperation in particular.

However, it would be unfair to claim that translations of Ukrainian authors were promoted just as a type of Soviet literature. During this period, two novels of Ukrainian diaspora writers were also published in French, i.e. *Maria* by Ulas Samchuk and *Garden of Gethsemane* by Ivan Bagryany. We cannot but mention Mykhaylo Osadchy, journalist, poet, writer and dissident, who transferred the manuscript of his book to the West; in 1971 it was first published there, became famous and



Translations from Ukrainian into French language

was immediately translated into English, German, French, Spanish, Russian and Chinese languages. The following year, in 1972, *Wall-Eye* ranked 6th among 102 French bestsellers.

Therefore, we are mostly concerned with recognition of Ukrainian literature value in general.

In 1981, Gallimard publishes translation of Vasyl Barka's *Yellow Prince*, which immediately disappears from book shop shelves and is now a great bibliographic rarity.

We should also remember work conducted to popularize Ukrainian authors and literature in France by Ukrainian printing house PIUF founded in 1933. It was this printing house that issued annotated translations of works by "sixties" generations as well as collections dedicated to Taras Shevchenko, Ivan Franko and Lesya Ukrainka (as a rule, respective conferences were organized in Sorbonne). Despite the fact that these publications were somewhat confidential and there were not distributed in book shops generally, they affirmed historical value of Ukrainian literature.

Ukrainian newspaper "Ukrainske slovo" ("Ukrainian Word") published works by dissidents, in particular *Internationalism or Russification* by I. Dzyuba or *Grief from Reason* by V. Chornovil and thereby maintained the image of powerful intellectual community engaged in noble struggle against totalitarian system. Ukrainian dissident movement was personalized in France first of all by Ukrainian writers. Campaigns to support Leonid Plusch or Vasyl Stus as well as the death of the latter in a Perm camp were publicized in French press, which constantly reminded their readers about the pressure Ukraine and its creative forces had to suffer.

During post-Soviet period, the first commercial translation from Ukrainian – works by Mykola Khvylyovy – was published in Edition du Rocher after it had published *Ukraine, Towards Europe*, a book by dissident Leonid Plusch.

Noir sur Blanc, a publishing house specializing in Eastern European literature, was among the first one to turn to Ukraine. As of today it has published three books by Yuriy Andrukhovych and is preparing a fourth one for publication. The same publishing house includes Ukrainian authors in theme collections, such as *Odessa Transfer* (2011) or *Literary Atlas of Central and Eastern European Countries* (2009). It is also preparing *Voroshylivgrad*, a novel by Sergiy Zhadan, for publication by the end of 2013.

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Translations from Ukrainian into French language

Works by young Ukrainian writers published in France also include *Cult*, a novel by Lyubko Deresh, which was published in a prestigious publishing house Stock.

Lately, thanks to the efforts of poets and enthusiasts D. Chystyak and I. Ryabchiiy, numerous translations of both modern and classical poems have been published in France and Belgium.

III.2. Other Publications

Thanks to the efforts of professor Arkadiy Zhukovsky, an *Antology of Ukrainian Literature* was published, which contained practically all existing translations into French. However, it won't be possible to distribute this book through legal networks due to somewhat hazy adherence to copyright.

Among other sources of Ukrainian literature popularization it is necessary to mention literary journals publishing separate poetic or prose works. Big literary journals in French, which published Ukrainian authors, include "Revue de Belles-Lettres" in Switzerland (published Andrukhovych and Zhadan, 2010/1-2 and 2012/2) as well as "Vice-Versa", which also opened its pages to Yuriy Andrukhovych (2012/6).

IV. Translations of Ukrainian authors through other languages

Nowadays Ukrainian works reach French readership thanks to direct translations (in 1960s, translation through Polish or Russian intermediaries was practiced).

Out of publications from the list only works by Andriy Kurkov and Maria and Sergiy Dyachenko were translated from Russian, i.e. from a language they had been written in.

Andriy Kurkov, who is all the more (not in the least thanks to his own efforts) identified as a Ukrainian writer, though writing in Russian language, is a real star in France: Lian Levy published more than ten of his works.⁵

⁵ The review does not include translations into French performed in the USSR, in Dnipro publishing house in Kyiv (in particular, translations by Kazymir Shimansky and Jeanette Maksimovich) or in Moscow. Mostly such translations were about Ukrainian classical authors (Shevchenko, Franko, Ukrainka) or fairy tales. In spite of supreme quality of these translations, their distribution in French-speaking countries was rather limited, and their impact on the French market insignificant. A full list of Ukrainian works translated in France is provided separately.



V. Conditions of work and professional development

Professional training in literary translation, and not just translation in general, appeared in France not that long ago. Over a half of students learn translation from English, which corresponds to the objective needs of the market where books translated from English take up the lion's share. Translation diplomas can be obtained in Saint Charles University in Paris and Institute of Eastern Languages and Civilizations; by the way, the latter is the only institution where Ukrainian language is taught. An experimental school of literary translation was opened in National Book Center (CNL): <http://www.etl-cnlf.fr/>.

Annual gatherings of literary translators in Arles are rather popular (this year's session will be dedicated to the 30th anniversary of such gatherings). In November 2012, 228 translators had a three-day meeting. Arles also hosts meetings under the aegis of International College of Literary Translators (CITL) aiming to establish contacts among translators from different countries and on different levels (<http://www.atlas-citl.org/fr/citl.htm>).

Translators' interests are protected in particular by the Association of Literary Translators in France (ATLF): <http://www.atlf.org/>. Prioritizing translation quality, Association watches market trends and also consults translators about protection of their rights in relations with publishers (e.g., translation contracts). Association recommends to set a fee of about 20 – 22 EUR per page of 1,500 characters. A minimal price recognized by sector participants amounts to 18 EUR per page containing 25 lines with 60 characters each (source: CNL).

ATLF also provides a list of its members by type of translation and language combinations. Presently, the association website lists Oksana Mizerak and Iryna Dmytryshyn as translators from Ukrainian.

Lately, commercial publishing houses issued translations from Ukrainian performed by Mariya Malanchuk and Oles Maslyuk.

FranceLivre professional register provides four names after searching for “Ukrainian translator”: Galyna Cherniyenko, Dmytro Chystyak, Yevgeniya Kononenko and Ganna Malets.



Translations from Ukrainian into French language

In 2011, SNL assigned a report on translators' situation (work conditions, rights and obligations) to P. Assulin.⁶

After numerous consulting, in particular with ATLF, the report states that situation of translators in France is to be envied by the rest of the planet.

Translation promotion

Conditions of providing financial help for translations from National Book Center, CNL, are described on the organization's website.⁷

A commission gathering three times a year makes decisions on requests addressed to it directly by translators; the maximum amount of available aid is 7,000 EUR. The commission takes into account such criteria as the importance of translating a selected work into French, complexity of translation itself, financial situation of the translator and the quality of provided excerpt.

VI. Intermediaries

A leading role in popularizing works of Ukrainian literature as well as their translations belongs to translators. In France, this issue is dealt with in a systemic way by the following people: Oksana Mizerak heading "Ukrainian Literature Club", which has held many a campaign with Ukrainian writers in Paris; Iryna Dmytryshyn, who is not only a translator but also a promoter of Ukrainian literature on the territory of France and has coordinated numerous events (starting from 2010) in the framework of international project "More Countries, More Books" (<http://www.uabooks.org/>).

Thanks to the efforts of NGOs working in the framework of this project in France for the last two years, cooperation between Ukrainian and French publishers as well as official institutions dealing with book policy in France has become more active. Ukraine was invited as an honorable guest to the literary festival in Cognac in 2012, and in 2013 for the first time in many years the

⁶http://www.centrenationaldulivre.fr/fichier/p_ressource/1942/ressource_fichier_fr_ressource_fichier_fr_2011.assouline.la.condition.du.traducteur.pdf

⁷http://www.centrenationaldulivre.fr/fr/editeur/aide_a_la_traduction/aide_pour_la_traduction_en_francais_d_ouvrages_etrangers/



Translations from Ukrainian into French language

Book Salon in Paris will have an official Ukrainian stand with seven Ukrainian writers and five publishers.

An association “Mouvement Interculturel France-Ukraine (MICT)”, working in Strasbourg, is a partner for projects promoting Ukrainian literature in France.

VII. Reaction to translations

There are too few translations from Ukrainian to single out general tendencies. However, reactions in the press after publication of novels by Y. Andrukhovych or L. Deresh were positive and underlined the strength and continuity of ties with Central European literature as well as some Gogol motives.

Starting from 2012, when it became known that the most famous French publishing house Gallimard signed an agreement with Mariya Matios and after Ukraine was mentioned at the Festival of European Literature (Cognac), communication for Ukrainian publishers in French publishing circles was greatly eased: Ukraine was finally identified on a publishing map of Europe. Thanks to Cognac, a collection of Ukrainian novellas in “Miniatures” series was published (Magellan publishing house) with six authors presented: M. Matios, O. Zabuzhko, Y. Andrukhovych, S. Zhadan, A. Kurkov, and Y. Prokhasko.

VIII. Final provisions and recommendations

Lack of clear identification markers of the country and literature greatly complicates all attempts to popularize Ukrainian authors. Offering a Ukrainian author to French publisher / reader, we have to understand that our interlocutor probably does not have any literary associations coming up, except maybe Gogol, which is clearly ambivalent.

That is why all events targeted at restoring Ukraine’s spot on French mental maps are extremely important and needed. They include doubtless success of Ukrainian literature presentation in National Book Center in 2011 as well as Ukraine’s invitation as an honorable guest to the Festival of European Literature in Cognac, in November 2012.

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Translations from Ukrainian into French language

The presence of Ukraine at Book Salon in Paris for the second year in a row, with presentations to which French book sector representatives are invited as well as meetings in Frankfurt, Leipzig or London allow to extend contact network; without such network, it is unreasonable to hope for French publishers' interest in Ukrainian authors. The publication of *Almanac-Catalogue* with excerpts of works by Ukrainian authors⁸ is yet another method to familiarize specialized community with modern Ukrainian literature.

It would be extremely important to constantly cooperate with French books institutions, such as BIEF (International French Publications Bureau) <http://www.bief.org/>, CNL (National Book Center) or Book France (France Livre) <http://www.francelivre.org>.

The websites of these organizations, BIEF in particular, should contain a review of Ukrainian market (such research exists for most countries, under the general title of *Publishing business in...* or in another form, such as: *Catalogue of publishing houses in Baltic countries: Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia* (August 2011); *Situation and Prospects of book market in United Arab Emirates* (February 2011); *Some information on book market in Russia* (July 2009), etc). These articles – as a rule, BIEF publishes them three or four times a year – confirm the existence in a given country of a book market, readers (which is interesting first of all for French publishers) and therefore writers. Apart from general research, there also exist specialized sector studies such as *Publishing of art albums in Turkey* (December 2012), *Comic books and children's books in Russia* (December 2012), *University publications in the United States of America* (September 2011). Finally, it would be advisable to help BIEF fill out a section for Ukraine, which is now featuring an empty page. Ukraine is also absent in “Foreign Publishers” section, which is filled out according to information provided, exchanges and contacts with partners (for the sake of comparison, Russia presents six publishing houses and Poland, two). “The lack of presence”, quoting a Ukrainian writer, makes one think in the direction of absence or extreme weakness and lack of form of book market as such. It is also necessary to study more carefully the available programs of exchanges and familiarization with the French market organized by BIEF (“Professional exchanges” section) as an instrument for establishing fruitful contacts.

⁸ http://www.uabooks.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=105:-1&catid=11:2012-05-30-10-09-54&Itemid=16



Translations from Ukrainian into French language

International College of Literary Translators (CITL) in Arles also organizes binational meetings with certain countries in the form of seminars among experienced translators and novices where Ukrainian language should also be proposed: <http://www.atlas-citl.org/fr/citl.htm>

Yet one more problem for distributing the Ukrainian book is almost a total loss of stand in university circles. Ukrainian studies have not been developed in a systemic way due to various objective and subjective circumstances, and if there are some research works on history or politics, literary studies are now totally separated from general literary process. We would need a lot of insistent effort to return Ukraine to the positions of at least late 19th and early 20th centuries, even if the situation of the time was guided first of all by the presence of such powerful personalities of Ukrainian literature as Ivan Franko, Lesya Ukrainka or Olga Kobylyanska. However, apart from world-class level writers' lack or presence, this process won't start until the emergence of a sufficient amount of students mastering Ukrainian language well enough to read, analyze and distribute knowledge about Ukrainian literature. That is why exchanges, summer language schools for students, seminars and internships for translators, familiarization with Ukraine, its history and culture are extremely important.

All these events, meetings and contacts form the basis for future success of Ukrainian literature in France. There is hope that constant presence of Ukrainian authors and publishers at events organized by French book market will someday completely transform the situation.

Finally, Ukrainian literature in France cannot count on powerful help of diplomatic or cultural state institutions. Support of translations, organization of music or theatre festivals, meetings with French readers, which are regularly organized by Polish, Hungarian or Czech Institutes for Paris audience, are not comparable with the policy of Kiev officials. Nowadays, translation support program of Open Ukraine fund is the only well-known Ukrainian player on this market.

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