SOVIET NATIONAL POETS

Byelorussian

I. Yanka Kupala (1882–1942) the most talented and prominent writer of poetry and prose in modern Byelorussian literature. His first works were published as early as 1905, and his first poetry collection “Ahaileka” (The Flute) appeared in 1908. In his very first poem “Muzhik” (The Peasant) Kupala raised his voice to defend the human dignity of the Byelorussian peasant who for centuries had suffered social injustice. Kupala’s poetic horizons soon began to expand beyond peasant social conditions, and the idea of national liberation became the dominant theme of his works. His next poetic works were “Guslar” (The Bard, 1910), “Shliakham Zhytia” (Along the Road of Life, 1913), “Spadchyna” (Heritage, 1922), and “Beznaznayave” (Nameless, 1925). Kupala was not only a poet but also a writer of prose and plays. After the establishment of Communist rule in Byelorussia Yanka Kupala wrote very little. In 1930 Kupala was arrested, and on his way to prison he attempted suicide. He was saved and cured, but his poetic spirit and his health were broken. Kupala died in 1942 in Moscow, and there are reasons to believe that this was a second attempt at suicide which proved successful.

The main sources of Kupala’s writings are Byelorussian oral folk literature and his own knowledge of his people’s way of life. Technically Kupala’s poetry has unusually vigorous and musical rhythms, rich and varied forms, and vivid imagery pervaded by spiritual feeling. Kupala’s influence on the Byelorussian people was immense. The patriotic poetry of Kupala has not lost its national revolutionary influence even today.

“IAM NO POET”

by Yanka Kupala—National Poet of Belorussia

(1882–1942)

Translated by Herbert Marshall
from the Byelo-Russian Original.

Original

Я не паэт, о, крый мяне Бога!
Ня рувся я к славе гэткой німала,
Хочь песеньку-думку і вясенню можа,
Завуся я толькі — Янка Купала.

Slavu паэта разносяць па сьвече,
Вянкi ўскладаюць і звонiць пахвалей,

Я закінчыўт прымету, хто-ж ціхіх прымецт?
Ат! ведама з вёскi — Янка Купала!

Кожныi край мае тых, што апляваюць,
Чым есць для народу ўпадак і хваля,
А Беларусы нікога-ж на маюць,
Няхай-жа хоць будзе Янка Купала.

Доляй уборгi, ён ціхi, нясымеля,
Ядла, яго мацi, узгадавала,
Свёлы пагардзі п’ё толькi век цэлы,
Ат, ведама, просты Янка Купала.

Песьнi пачаў пець тэй мовай убогай,
Якi пагарджаюць горка, надбала,
Пэўна і песнейцuv шчурлацца мноца,
Ат, ведамa, здумаў Янка Купала.

Шчасце та радка над сьветам усходзье;
Усё-ж досьць бывае мясцi хоць мала,
— Долю каб бачьць, а родным нароўездзе,
А буй-бьц шчасльвай Янка Купала.

Эт, з часам людзi ўпадаюць на сіле,
Свектр цкое, глядзі і больш крыжам сталця;
Нахта спьтвае: хто ў гэтай магіле?
А напіс пакажа: Янка Купала.

Transliteration

Yanka Kupala

IA NE PAETA...

Yanka Kupala

I AM NOT A POET...

ia ne paeta, o kryi miane bozha!
I (am) not a poet, o save me God!

Ne rusia ia k slave getkai nimala.
(Do) not seek I fame such not-a-little.

Khots’ pesen’ku-dumku i Vysnuui mozha,
Although (a) song-thought (1) weave maybe

Zavusia ia tol’ki—lanka Kupala.
Named I only—Yanka Kupala.

Slavu paetau razhosiats’ pa svete,
Glory (of the) poets (is) spread around (the) world,

Vianky uskladaiuts’ i zvoniat’ pakhvalai,
Laurels (are) given and ringing praise

Ia-zh tiksha igraiut,khoto-zh tikshikh prymetse?
(But) I then softly play, who then would (the) quiet (one) notice?

At! vedama z veski—lanka Kupala!
O! is-known (one) from (the) village—Yanka Kupala!

Kozhny krai mae tykh, shto apilavaiuts’,
Every country has those who sings-about
Chym ests’ dilia naroda upadak i khvala,  
What is for (the) people downfall and glory,  
A Belarussi nikoga-eh ne maiuts’,  
But Byelorussians have no one,  
Niakhai-za kholz ybudze lanka Kupala.  
Let-have at-least Yanka Kupala.  
Doliai ubogi, en tiskihi, niasmely,  
By-fate wretched, he (is) quiet, shy,  
Biada iago matsi, uzgadavala,  
Misfortune his mother nurtured (him)  
Slezy pagardy p’e tol’ki vek teley,  
Tears (of) disdain drinks only (his) life whole,  
Ot, vedama, protsy Yanka Kupala.  
O, (it is) known, (a) simple-one Yanka Kupala  
Pesi Pachau pets’ tei movai ubogai,  
(The) songs started (to) sing (in) that language poor,  
Iakov pagardzhaius’ gorka, hiadbala,  
Which (is) disrespected bitterly, negligately,  
Peina i pesnia shchuraitstsa mnoga,  
(If) possible that (his) songs (are) repudiated by-many,  
Ot, vedama, zdumau Ianka Kupala.  
O, (it is) known, (its) imagined (by) Yanka Kupala.  
Shchastae tak redka nad cveetaum ushkodie;  
Happiness so seldom over (this) world rises;  
Use-zh dosyts’ byvae metsi khot’ mala,—  
But enough sometime to-have just (a) little,—  
Doliu kab bchyu u rodnym narodze;  
Happiness if (he) would-see with (his) people,  
A byu-by shchaslivy Ianka Kupala.  
Would be then happier Yanka Kupala.  
Et, z chasam liudzi upadahui’ na sile,  
O, with time people lose (their) strength,  
Smrets’ skose, gliadzi—i bol’sh khyzham stala;  
Death will-claim, look—and (one) more crossed appeared;  
Nekhta spytste:khto u getai magile?  
Somebody may-ask who (lies) in this grave?  
A nadpis pakažha: Yanka Kupala.  
And (the) inscription will-show: Yanka Kupala.

Final Translation

I’m no poet, God save me from that,  
and I seek not glory or fame.  
Though, maybe, I can weave a few songs,  
And Yanka Kupala’s my name.

MONOGRAPHS

Proposed series of MONOGRAPHS to  
be issued under the auspices of  
the Center for Soviet & East  
European Studies.

Over a considerable period a large amount of material  
accumulated in the archives of Herbert Marshall and is now  
to be found housed in the Center. The bulk of this work does  
not fit into either book form or as articles in journals. But  
much of it is of interest to many teachers, students, and  
from time to time xerocopy copies are commissioned for researchers  
and readers. With our modern technology’s ability to produce  
more with less, it is now possible to duplicate them at a more  
reasonable rate than for xerocopy and in a readable format.  
After consultation with the Graduate School, Office of Re-  
search & Projects, the Dean of the College of  
Communications and Fine Arts, the Chairman of the Department  
of Theater and our Advisory Committee, we have decided  
to start publishing these Monographs as a series.  
They fall into the following categories:

1) Such material as is pertinent to the researches and  
studies of the Center dealing with the Soviet Union  
and its East European Associates. These will be SPE-  
CIAL MONOGRAPHS.  
2) Such material relating to other activities in theatre,  
cinema, music and poetry. These will be GENERAL  
MONOGRAPHS.

The cost of each monograph will vary according to the num-  
ber of pages, that is the actual cost of reproduction plus a  
percentage for overheads and authors and translators. The  
number of pages will vary from about 30 to 150. Orders can  
be sent in (but no money) and the monograph will be dis-  
patched when ready.

SPECIAL MONOGRAPHS

THEATRE STUDIES

1. The Art of Acting. A condensed adaptation of the  
Stanislavsky Method from the Russian of I Rappoport of  
the Moscow Vakhtangov Theatre, by Herbert Marshall. This is  
available for $1.75.

2. The Art and Roles of Ira Aldridge—The Black  
Tragedian. By Herbert Marshall with a special introduction
see a literal word-for-word translation which give them an idea
(a) of the original subject matter of the original
(b) of the order of the subject matter, and
(c) the poetic style of the original, i.e. in strict metre and rhyme, or not, free verse or not, etc.

Many people who do not know a foreign language, do not realize how inverted material can be in another language, and what different ways the same ideas are put in different languages. I have already initiated this in our Bulletins.

This I think will introduce a much larger or potential audience for this kind of specialized work.

8. Requiem by Anna Akmatova (1888–1969). This is an authorized translation; in other words, the authoress herself personally asked me to translate this work, because she was dissatisfied with the translations that hitherto appeared. However, as we go to press news came that this translation of the poem Requiem by Anna Akmatova will be published in “The Russian Literature Tri-Quarterly” No. 2, February 1972, issued by ARDIS, Publishers of Russian Literature, 615 Waverly Drive, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

9. The Story of M. Potez, Mr. Inspector, Rabbi Isaac and Commissar Bloch, by Joseph Utkin (1903–1944). This is also an authorized translation. I knew the poet himself, who was Russian Jew, a very talented youngster, a lyricist, and who was at one time satirized by Mayakovsky, but still kept to his own, so to speak, lyrical sphere. Though Jewish, his work was written in Russian, although his family came from a Jewish settlement and spoke Yiddish. This poem was written in 1921, and was first published in 1931. It is a unique work, dealing with the effect of the Russian revolution on a Jewish settlement in Kishinev in the Ukraine.

The strange thing about it is, the events depicted in it are of a nature that could not possibly happen today. For example, when the Red Squad comes marching, it represents, of course, the real armament force of the revolution, it is headed by Commissar Bloch, who is a Jew, and he carries, alongside the Red flag, the Star of David! It has many Yiddish phrases in it, and Yiddish words, which I have kept as they are in the original.

10. The Siberian Cycle, by Vctor Bokov (1914– ). This is a translation authorized personally by the poet, who during the Kruschev thaw period participated with Professor Marshall on public platforms in the Soviet Union, reading his poems alongside the translations. This epic poem is considered to be the poetic equivalent of Solzhenitsyn’s classic novel, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisich, and is the story of the author’s own experiences as an innocent victim of Stalinist oppression. He was, for several years, in a Siberian prison camp, and this poem is a result of his experiences. But only part of this epic poem has been published in Russia, part of it has never been published. Here it is given complete and unexpurgated.

The author is still a passionate Russian poet and one of its greatest experts in the field of folk art and folk song. He has a collection of nearly ten thousand Chatshushkas, the most prolific folk song in Russia.

11. Beyond the Beyond, by Alexander Tvardovsky. (1910– ). The author of this poem is known, of course, as one of the most liberal of the intelligentsia in the Soviet Union, and up till recently, the editor of the liberal magazine Novy Mir, from which he recently resigned. Tvardovsky is famous in the Soviet Union for being the author of a series of poems on a character he created called Vasily Tyekin, a Russian prototype of G. I. Joe or Tommy Atkins, and this was the most beloved character of Red Armymen during the terrible struggle against Hitler, and Tyekin went through everything that the rank and file soldier went through.

During the Kruschev period and de-Stalinization, Tvardovsky wrote a sequel, called Tyekin in the Other World, which was one of the most satirical indictments of the Stalin period that has ever been penned by any Soviet writer.
Already in his great epic poem called Beyond the Beyond there is a chapter dealing with Stalinist Russia. Here is given an extract from that section of the poem, and at the same time, another section is translated showing the lyrical side of Tvardovsky and in particular his own early childhood in a blacksmith's shop.

13. A Selection from "Kobsar" by Taras Shevchenko. (1814–1861). These translations were commissioned for the special UNESCO Centennial celebrations of Taras Shevchenko, the great Ukrainian bard and artist, but not all published. His work is little known in our western world, and at the special request of Mikola Bazhan, a leading Ukrainian poet and statesman, Herbert Marshall translated the outstanding poems of Taras Shevchenko; for the existing ones, Ukrainians found, were far from satisfactory, and more often than not were translated by patriots rather than poets!

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF THEATRE RESEARCH CONFERENCE AT LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY, LINCOLN CENTER NEW YORK 27 NOVEMBER 1971

Professor Herbert Marshall will present an original paper on "The Roles and Art of Ira Aldridge: The Negro Tragedian," further research on this unique black actor of the 19th century, following the book by Herbert Marshall and Mildred Stock, published in paperback by Southern Illinois University Press.

ADDITIONAL ARCHIVES YIDDISH THEATRE

IN ENGLISH:

Books:


New Scala Theatre, The Yiddish Art Theatre of America, In Repertoire; Director, Maurice Swartz.

5ss-Photo-Copies


IN YIDDISH:


THE AAASS ANNUAL CONFERENCE 1972

The next annual conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies will be held in Dallas, Texas, March 16/18th, 1972, in conjunction with the Southern Western AAASS and Prof. G. Richards of University of Texas, Arlington. Herbert Marshall will present a paper on "Translating Russian Poetry."

SUBSCRIPTION NOTICE

The cost of producing and distributing this Bulletin has risen like everything else, and the University's funds have been curtailed. So far, we have distributed the Bulletin gratis. Now we are asking subscribers to pay $5 per annum for the four quarter-numbers from the next winter (1971) issue. Please make checks payable to the Center for Soviet and East European Studies, SIU.