

Ukrainian literary fiction

The Orderly from Institutska Street

Novel. Lyuta Sprava. Ukraine 2016. 150 pages

Awards: longlist Big Book 2016

The Orderly from Institutska Street is the story of two friends from Kyiv, the poet Yurka Nezgoda and the artist Nikolai Umanets. They belong to the generation formed in the first years of Independent Ukraine. In the 1990's Nezgoda and Umanets were prominent members of the bohemian Kyiv art scene. Later, Umanets became a commercially successful artist and Nezgoda – the editor-in-chief of a glossy magazine. Their lives rarely touch politics; each in his own way tries to cope with the problems of contemporary life that always plague Ukrainians. Nezgoda's brilliance, his depression, his morbid obsession with a mythical historical progenitor, is chronicled through the point of view of his detached and ironic friend Umanets. But in the end the heroes meet again on Kyiv's Maidan Square. Umanets is with the protesters, while Nezgoda tries to stay neutral. But it is Nezgoda who gets pulled into the swirl of events in the novel. He dies as an orderly, trying to move the wounded to safety under fire. Umanets watches his friend die on live television.

The author considers the Ukrainian events of the beginning of the 21st century as another link in the historical chain of episodes of Ukraine's struggle for independence, which has been going on, now fading, now escalating, for several centuries.

Nikitin about the novel:

«Ukraine has always been situated in the center of a cruelly-mounted historical framework and it is continually looking to the past. But its past history is not exactly a story of triumphs. This is a cyclical focus on bad history, on bad experiences that need to be overcome. The success of Ukraine's protest movement was due to its refusal to cling to the past, its ability to find something new, to reject the burden of its negative experience.»

In 2019, five years after Maidan, the novel was the only Russian-language novel to be included in the list of "best texts about Maidan."

"The culminating events of the novel – the protests and violence on Maidan Square in 2014 – makes the novel a vivid evocation of modern Ukraine." CATHERINE O'NEIL

"Nezgoda, just a collective image of the Ukrainian nineties with their grandiose scandals, literary scholarships, the first collections that have become rarities, treatment in fools and constant longing for either imperfect or not perfect. I don't even remember if, after Andrukhovych's "Recreations", one created such a voluminous image..." NOVY NARNIA

"Maidan, as a lived experience, when the feeling of history being created, is perceived deeply and directly. This made The Orderly a deeper and wiser text than a mere projection of a series of lost generation." LITCENTR

Nikitin was born in Kiev in 1967. After completing his course of physics at the university of Kiev and his period of conscription he established his own company in 1992 and worked on different projects for the Ukrainian oil, chemical and atomic industries. In 2000 he published his first volume of poetry, which was awarded the Korolenko prize by the Ukrainian writers association for the best poetry of the year. In 2002 Nikitin closed his business operations and worked for several years as an IT journalist. Afterwards he dedicated himself completely to his literary activities and has since published several novels. Nikitin lives in Kiev.



THE AUTHOR

translations
4 languages

awards
National Bestseller 2014
Russkaya Premia shortlist 2013

sample translation available
english

other works
Bat Ami
Victory Park

Aleksei Nikitin