



Lesya Ukrainka (Heritage)

By Constantine Bida

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The Ukrainian national poetess Lesya Ukrainka (1871–1913) has contributed greatly to the development of Ukrainian Modernism and its transition from Ukrainian ethnographic themes to subjects that were universal, historical and psychological. Breaking the thematic conventions of populist literature, she sought difficult and complex motifs and gave them original treatment: themes such as the revolutionary ideological conflicts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which appear in some of her later poetry, are strengthened, given greater impact by her method of applying the individual and the personal to the more general concepts.

From the beginning of her career her poetry was characterized by the theme of the poet's vocation and by the motifs connected with it—loneliness and alienation from society. Associated motifs deal with her love of freedom (national freedom in particular) and her hatred of anything weak and undecided.

This book, sponsored by the Women's Council of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee, is a discussion of her life and works and includes selected translations: *Robert Bruce* (1903), *Cassandra* (1907), *The Orgy* (1913), *The Stone Host* (1912), and “Contra spem spero.” Readers interested in development of poetic style can study the gradual evolution from the lyrical to the precise and analytical manner of the prose-poems of Lesya Ukrainka, and discover the thematic wealth, depth of thought, and emotional power of her poetry.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Constantine Bida (1916-1979) studied at the Universities of Lviv, Western Ukraine and Vienna before coming to Canada in 1950. He was one of the chief organizers of the Department of Slavic Studies at the University of Ottawa of which he became head of in 1957. In 1965 he was promoted to full professor.

Vera Rich (1936-2009) was a translator of Ukrainian works and the editor of *Manifold*, a quarterly of verse.

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