

Dear Publishers,

This year's *New Books from Poland* catalogue has a special character. This year, 2018, Poles are celebrating the 100th anniversary of regaining independence. Poland, a country with almost a thousand years of history, disappeared from the map of Europe in 1795 when it was partitioned by its neighbouring countries. The succeeding decades were full of the dramatic struggle to preserve the Polish language and national identity. It was not until 1918, when Europe rose from the ruins of the First World War, that Poland became an independent state again.

This anniversary is, therefore, an opportunity to celebrate the beauty of freedom and the affirmation of values that led to its restoration. It also allows for a moment of reflection on the history of the 20th century. This explains the presence of this topic in this year's edition of the *New Books from Poland* catalogue.

This presence is not limited to historical prose. We point to its two most artistically successful realisations: the novel *Pogrom 1905*, which deals with an unknown yet sensational episode from the 1905 revolution, and *Ashes (Zgliszczka)*, which in turn is devoted to the times shortly after the Second World War, when communist power was being formed in Poland.

We also recommend two pieces of reportage on the most tragic forms of totalitarianism of the 20th century: Nazism and Stalinism. *Goodnight, Auschwitz (Dobranoc, Auschwitz)* depicts the profiles of former prisoners of Nazi German concentration camps, and *Black Ikona. Biełomor (Czarna Ikona. Biełomor)* is a story about the mechanism of the enslavement of Soviet Russia's literary elite.

The past returns as personal experience through the expressive female characters in the novels *Unfeeling (Nieczułość)* and *A Brief Exchange of Fire (Krótka wymiana ognia)*, and also constitutes a direct context for Wojciech Tomczyk's dramas. Neither do Bronisław Wildstein and Marek Cichocki, authors of essays on contemporary times, shy away from history. The former offers a fierce polemic with the ideologies reigning today, while the latter provides an engaging vision of the historical and geographical configuration of Poland and Europe.

History is also about specific individuals, and in particular courageous rebels who live in spite of the social patterns assigned to them. They are featured in biographical books on, for example, Adam Chmielowski, a Catholic saint who became famous for helping the poor, Irena Sendler, who saved Jewish children from extermination, and a legend of Polish Himalayan climbing, Wanda Rutkiewicz, who climbed the world's highest mountains. The profiles of prominent writers and artists are presented in books devoted to Zbigniew Herbert, Stanisław Lem, Witold Gombrowicz, Stanisław Wyspiański, Bolesław Prus and Krzysztof Komeda (such a large offering of biographies illustrates a real phenomenon in the Polish publishing market over the last two years).

But the books showcased in the catalogue also contain contemporary themes. Waldemar Bawolek introduces us to the world of a small-town community in a compelling style, Zyta Rudzka touches on the issue of aging, and Father Robert Skrzypczak analyses the extremely topical problem of the durability of marriage. The catalogue features the greatest Polish metaphysical poet, subtle poetry of existence as well as moving poems devoted to nature. Finally, we recommend the works of Rafał Kosik and the authors of the *Worlds Apart (Inne światy)*, an anthology for readers interested in futuristic and alternative worlds.

This year's selection was designed so that as many publishers as possible with different profiles may find something interesting. Hence, we decided to be as open as possible to different genres. Alongside novels, reportage, and biography, we present popular literature, spiritual literature (which has a large share of the Polish book market and is a separate, interesting phenomenon), as well as essays, poetry, and drama. The past year was outstanding for Polish short stories, which was also reflected in the genre's representation. For the first time, a graphic novel – *Bradł* by Tobiasz Piątkowski and Marek Oleksicki – is also in the selection.

The catalogue features great masters such as Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz and Wiesław Myśliwski: writers with established literary positions such as International Booker Prize winner Olga Tokarczuk, Marzanna Bogumiła Kiełar, and Dorota Masłowska and promising debutants Mariola Kruszewska, Martyna Bunda, and Paweł Sołtys. The Polish Book Institute offers grants for translators and publishers (see page 61). We invite you to browse the catalogue, order copies, and collaborate in the publication and promotion of Polish books. We also wish you many reading discoveries, inspiration from diversity, and pleasure in reading.

DARIUSZ JAWORSKI,

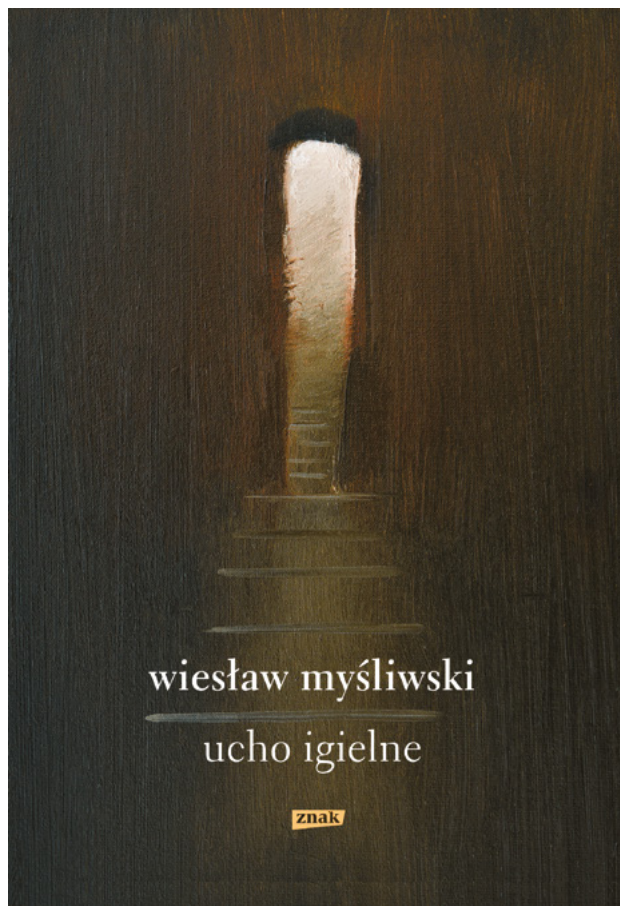
Director of the Polish Book Institute

Dr hab. KRZYSZTOF KOEHLER,

Deputy Director of the Polish Book Institute

The Needle's Eye

A new novel by the master of Polish prose



AWARD-WINNING & BESTSELLING AUTHOR

A gripping novel that asks fundamental questions about human existence. The story begins with an enigmatic meeting between two men on a steep stairway leading to a “wild old green valley,” in a defile known as the Needle’s Eye. A tragic incident triggers the action. Who are the men and what is their relationship? Who is the mysterious girl in the photograph that one of them carries with him?

In this masterfully constructed book nothing happens by chance; each scene has its significance, like a step on a stairway. Gradually we learn the story of the central character: his childhood in a small town during the war, his youth spent under communism, and finally old age in present-day Poland. We’re with him in his family home, on walks with the girl, in rooming houses, rented apartments; we see him as a schoolboy, a college student, and finally as a history teacher. From time to time we go back with him to visit his parents, with

whom he is close, painfully watching them grow old and moving “toward silence.” History leaves its stamp on the lives of the protagonists, including on those parts that remain unspoken.

The novel, constructed as a series of interwoven retrospectives, uncovers the work of memory, and at the same time poses questions about its nature. It tells of the past and simultaneously inquires into what the past actually is. A kind of probe serving this inquiry is the repeated motif of the encounter between youth and old age. What is human identity based on? What enables us to say of ourselves that we are who we are? This magnificent book contains everything: a relish for detail, the pithiness of spoken language, and the heft of symbol. With each new reading it reveals a different dimension of itself to the reader.

Małgorzata Szczurek, translated by Bill Johnston

One afternoon I was on my way to second shift at two o'clock when all of a sudden I heard something like whining, or a child crying. I stopped for a moment. To the left of the road was an empty lot with piles of bricks, stones, planks, beams, beyond all of which, at the far end there was a cottage. I left the road and went out onto the lot. It was only then that I spotted a pit of slaked lime, and in it a child drowning. All you could see was his little head. A moment later and he would go under. I ran across, lay down at the edge of the pit, plunged my hands up to the elbows in the lime, hooked the child under the arms and tried to lift him, but my muscles wouldn't work. More by an effort of will than anything else, I kept the boy's head above the surface. My heart was pounding, my mind racing. I had to hurry, because slaked lime burns, and it drags you in like a swamp. Plus, it could have drawn me in too, because there was no way I was letting go of the kid, yet only half my body, more or less to the waist, was lying on the bank. The other half, with my arms stretched out holding onto the child, was hanging over the lime. I don't know, maybe I just imagined I could see the little tear-stained face, the blue eyes frozen in fear. I must have brought my own head close to the child's, as if I was cradling him.

Then, somewhere in the distance I heard a cry that sounded like it was being torn from someone's innards: "Mother of God!" Thudding of footsteps, shouts, curses. The mother, father, grandfather were running from the cottage. Someone's strong hands took me by the ankles, and a powerful male voice, the father's as it turned out, yelled over my head:

"Hold on to him! I'll pull you back!"

He snatched the child from my arms and ran to the well with him. He pulled up a bucketful of water and poured it over the boy, who started crying even louder than when he'd been drowning in lime. The mother ran back to the cottage and a moment later hurried out with an armful of rags, not so much crying as keening, "Dear Lord, Dear Lord!" Meanwhile the grandfather tottered around the lime pit, shaking his head and repeating over and over:

"I said cover it, cover it up I said. I said cover it up. . ."

Evidently these lamentations weren't enough for him, because he stood at the edge of the pit at the place where the boy had fallen in and began whacking his walking stick against the bank, sending up clouds of dust.

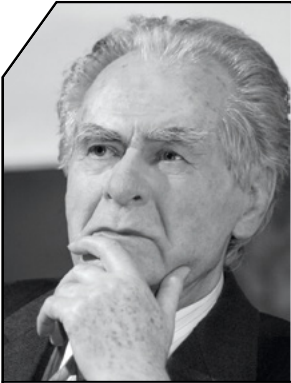
"You monster! Damn you! Take that!"

"Father-in-law, have you gone mad?" The boy's father

grabbed the walking stick out of his hand, making the older man stagger till he almost fell in the pit himself. "You're knocking earth into the lime!"

They were slaking the lime for the construction of a new house. It was going to be brick built, with a cellar, a steep roof, a tall attic, big windows, a glassed-in porch. And it was going to stand by the road, in front of the lime pit, it'd be separated from the roadway only by a little flower garden. No lilac or jasmine, so as not to block the view of the road. It's more cheerful when you can see who's walking or driving by, windows ought to have some life in them.

Excerpt translated by Bill Johnston



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WIESŁAW
MYŚLIWSKI

Born 1932

Ucho Igielne [Needle's Eye]

Publisher: Znak Publishers, Kraków 2018

ISBN: 978-83-240-5446-6

Translation rights: Znak Publishers, bolinska@znak.com.pl

Novels published

Nagi sad, 1967

Pałac, 1970

Kamień na kamieniu [Stone upon Stone], 1984

Widnokrąg [The Horizon], 1996

Traktat o łuskaniu fasoli [A Treatise on Shelling Beans], 2006

– over 100,000 copies sold

Ostatnie rozdanie, 2013

Foreign language translations

USA, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Russia, Israel, Turkey, Iraq

Selected awards

Nike Literary Award (1997 and 2007)

Gdynia Literary Prize (2007)

Grand Prix Littéraire de Saint-Émilion (2011)

Three Percent's Best Translated Book Prize (2012)

Prix Jean Monnet de Littérature Européenne (2011) – nomination

Angelus Central European Literature Award (2013) – nomination

Other People

An epic rooted in the intuition and rhythm of hip-hop



OUTSTANDING LITERARY PERSONALITY

We can read *Other People* as an epic poem about a community's disintegration in language. We follow the destinies of jaded people, for whom consumption has become a secular religion, people who have no trouble making do without higher needs.

Kamil lives in an apartment block, has no great aspirations, and settles for pushing drugs and hitting the pipe in the morning. Any minute now his sister Sandra is going to choose a course that will lead her astray. Ivana, a nouveau-riche matron, is looking for a feeling that will set some distinctive tone for her boring, predictable daily life. Matthew, her husband, an internally shredded man of success, finds, among some exclusive narcotics, the ink he uses to print out his inner emptiness. He and his wife have enjoyed a union devoid of emotion, following the credo, "Therefore / what the bank has joined together, it won't be so easy for man to put asunder." The destinies of all these people become intertwined as their motivations are painfully exposed.

Their dreams bring about an unmitigated fiasco, their bonds fray. Masłowska has written a book about loneliness in which "no one counts on anyone, though everybody counts on something." Everyone in this world is missing the spiritual element, an internal depth. The author has an exceptional ear for language and her environment; she draws her characters quite convincingly in language, imbuing them with distinctive and refined qualities – obsessions, follies, and habits that give rise to high-flying linguistic jousting. Here is an epic rooted in the intuition and rhythm of hip-hop. Masłowska depicts a world that is taking the easy way out, gratifying itself with fast fulfillment, incapable of a moment's concentration. And this is just as much an epic about the modern city, urban life, losing touch with reality, of objectifying one's own self.

Bartosz Suwiński, translated by Benjamin Paloff

(Kamil is taking an evening tram through downtown)

He's staring at the sky
as he's sitting on the tram,
the dark surface chem-
-trail-sliced, like an iPhone with a cracked
(horror-spattered) screen, but
over there flashes flashing, the embrace of urban
embers, the Not-So-Great New Worlds'
beguiling neon pass-through, Fall in Love with
Warsaw, some banner says he has to.
He's spent years trying, but for real? It's not so E-Z,
it's no done deal, as anyone can see
in the shitty jars filled with down-home fare splashing
out of minibuses onto Defilad Square—
it's out to mom's for the weekend.

(ANETA, buying a bus ticket: "To Radzyń, please."
DRIVER, brusquely: "No change!")

They're heading out of town to pay their taxes,
though they're all from Warsaw, if you're asking.
Some say they love the city, its entire groove,
though I Hate It! gets lots of clicks, too.
The clique, based on politicians and Mafiosi,
the street's apathetic apotheosi.
Even in the uterus they're mugging for the cameras,
career-craving hot lust,
no one counts on anyone, though everybody counts
on something, is counting something out,
applied mathematics always in effect / clever hand
washing hand at every step /
through the wine at little Lidl's—people picking,
in the freezers dumping out the dumplings,
fries, or they get stuck with a dirt-cheap dainty
pawned off by some poor biddy.
For some it's poetry, for others it's life's prose.
For others still, a drama. Speaking of drama, he has
no scarf for his nose,
and the tram piss-reeks from someone's zipper-hose,
so his head starts to go the way a record goes...

[...]

Ashen faces, ashen faces, people with no dreams
or hopes,
days off, days off, after holidays off, a sell-off sale
on what they hope to own, they dream a screen
can kill
their germs. Holidays and afterwards,
it's a sell-off sale.

Ashen faces, ashen faces, they'll watch so many
things fail
that before the days off, pre-day sales, and after,
post-sale sales,

they're afraid of what fearsome things the News
will tell.
They dream whatever network wizards spell.

Excerpt translated by Benjamin Paloff



© Karol Gygoruk

DOROTA
MASŁOWSKA
Born 1983

Inni ludzie [Other People]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2018

ISBN: 978-83-08-06510-5

Translation rights: Agencja Literacka Syndykat Autorów,
moregulska@gmail.com

Selected books

Wojna polsko-ruska pod flagą białą-czerwoną [Snow White and Russian Red], 2002 – **over 120,000 copies sold;**

adapted for the screen

Paw królowej, 2005

Dwoje biednych Rumunów mówiących po polsku [A Couple of Poor Polish-Speaking Romanians], 2006

Między nami dobrze jest, 2008

Kochanie, zabiłam nasze koty, 2012

Jak zostałam wiedźmą, 2014

Foreign language translations

USA, UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Croatia, Sweden,
Netherlands, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia,
Ukraine, Russia

Selected awards

Polityka's Passport Award (2002)

Nike Literary Award (2006; 2003 – Readers' Choice Award; 2009 –
nomination)

Gdynia Literary Prize (2018) – nomination

A Brief Exchange of Fire



The story of unextinguished, belated desire

Roma, the main character of *A Brief Exchange of Fire* by Zyta Rudzka, is a poet. She is almost seventy, intelligent, oversensitive, and vulgar. She knows she is getting older – for some time her body has been refusing to obey. Nevertheless, Roma walks around the city with a hunter's keen eye: she lusts after passing young men, she loses herself in memories of her romances and marriages. Along the way, she tells in brief the story of her absent daughter. If the narrator were a man, *A Brief Exchange of Fire* would probably not stand out from other similar novels. At the end of the day, the story of unextinguished, belated desire is a well-worn theme. Yet this time we hear the voice of an independent, embittered "old lady," who doesn't hesitate to declare her grudges and claims against the world. She is aware of how silly she is, but is still hungry for life. Roma's distinct voice is the strongest point of the book.

This poet's stories are accompanied by monologues by her mother. We, therefore, learn the stories of three generations of women. Each of the main characters has the same flaw, perhaps the aftermath of wartime trauma, or perhaps simply a hereditary defect. Regar-

dless of where they live, they seem nevertheless to share a similar fate. Equally rebellious and lost, they have different ways of celebrating their sense of hurt. One might even posit that *A Brief Exchange of Fire* generally tells the story of a certain unsettling model of femininity, one fairly widespread in this part of Europe. Rudzka's women are independent, but lonely and unfulfilled. They do without men out of necessity, because if men appear at all it is in the form of executioners, casual lovers, or eternal boys who need to be looked after into old age. Left on their own, these women battle the whole world, attempting to save themselves and their loved ones, but sometimes they surrender.

Language plays an important role in Zyta Rudzka's book. As so often with this author, it works in short sentences, is sometimes stylized into slang, and is full of deliberate inconsistencies. Roma and her mother speak to survive. Yet can words cope with what is muddled up and unclear within ourselves? It is worth reading *A Brief Exchange of Fire* to make up your own mind.

Marta Kwaśnicka, translated by Sean Gasper Bye

Cyryl lives on a small lane projecting off of General Zajączek Street; I'm on my way there, murmuring his name: Cyryl. Cyryl. Hard. Sweet and syrupy. A hard candy.

Maybe I'll finally get something. Rough and frantic, and finally, putting my dress back on, I'll tenderly remark:

Did you have a good time with me, you dog?

The apartment is the opposite of its owner – narrow and tall. It smells like onions, men's sweat, and wild lovemaking, in other words, Poland for beginners.

We're sitting in the kitchen, the flooring is partially torn up. On the floor are a woman's sandal with a wedge heel and the insole slipping out, an empty jar of mayonnaise, a fork with no handle.

I feel more and more as though Cyryl is looking at me like I've come to borrow some money to top off my pension. This is the first time I'm sure he saw my social security number in the light of day.

I'm afraid I'll want to touch him. To hold onto him. I begin to daydream of laying down beside him. Close. To stay that way, just like that, until morning. I'm afraid. I'm very afraid of myself.

So I lie to him. I take off my overcoat and warn him he's not my type.

The young man looks at me like I was speaking Tlingit. Ejective fricative consonants in the mouths of Indians in Alaska and Canada.

I start to explain:

I'm done with doctors, translators, literary types. Know what I mean? Just simple guys. I want to take my clothes off in front of train conductors, lumberjacks, machinists, when the passion takes me.

Cyryl speaks up:

Pardon me. What are you talking about?

About how this doesn't mean anything. Anyway, I've always woken up beside the wrong men. But doesn't that give you a thrill, my boy, hmm?

I peer at the young man, narrowing my eyes. He looks like he has no soul inside him. But what do I care about his soul, it's enough his body is at arm's length.

Christ, lines from airport novels make us feel so good. Suddenly he asks, sounding worried as a damn boy scout:

Are you sure your heart doesn't hurt?

No, I snarl. So what?

Because you. . .

I what?

The way you're holding yourself.

I'm holding up fine. I've got a nice patina.

You're holding tight to your heart.

My heart is no threat to me. My heart is holding up

well, it hasn't gotten much use.

Airport novels slipping in again. Cheap flights for solitary travelers.

Suddenly he asks in a half-whisper:

I'm really sorry, but how long are we going to spend together, approximately? It's just I've got something scheduled.

I answer that at my age, nothing will last long.

Excerpt translated by Sean Gasper Bye



Author's archive

ZYTA
RUDZKA
Born 1964

Krótką wymiana ognia [A Brief Exchange of Fire]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo W.A.B./ Grupa Wydawnicza Foksal, Warszawa 2018

ISBN: 978-83-280-5061-7

Translation rights:

Grupa Wydawnicza Foksal, blanka.woskowiak@gwfoksal.pl

Novels published

Białe klisze, 1996

Uczty i głody, 1995

Pałac Cezarów, 1997

Mykwa, 1999

Dziewczyny Bonda, 2004

Ślicznotka doktora Josefa, 2006

Zyta Rudzka is also the author of numerous award-winning dramas.

Foreign language translations

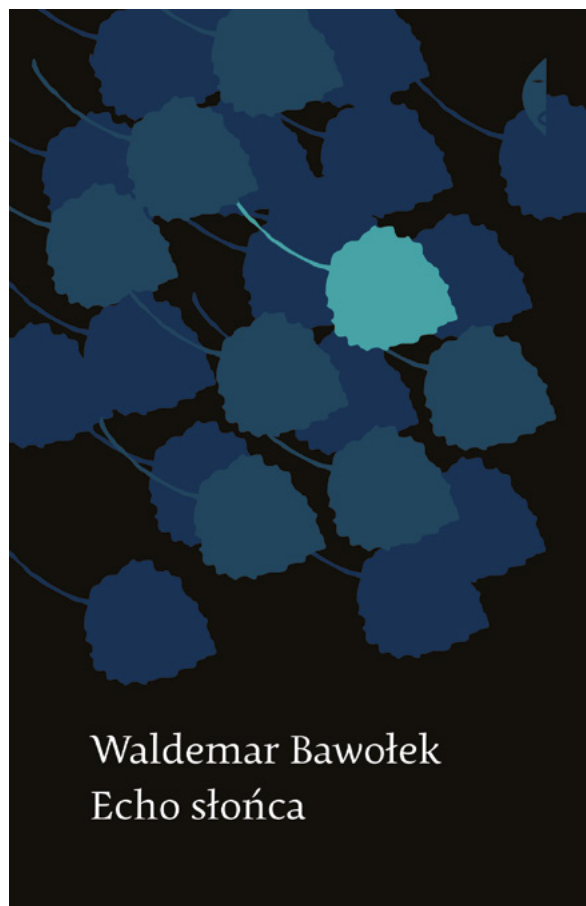
Germany, Switzerland, Russia, Croatia, Bulgaria – in anthologies

Selected awards

Gdynia Drama Award (2011)

Gold Remi, Houston WorldFest Independent Festival (2016)

Echo of the Sun



A mismatched couple, connected by a shared fate, a blood bond, a pension

Echo of the Sun only appears to have an easily perceived “subject.” The main character is a man over fifty who lives with his mother in a small town in southern Poland (reminiscent of Carlo Emilio Gadda’s book *The Experience of Pain*). They are a mismatched couple, though connected by a shared fate, a blood bond, a pension. A key moment in the book comes when an old tree in front of their house is cut down, which for the son has metaphysical consequences, while his mother does her best to pluck out practical ones, and many further consequences arise that no longer have anything directly to do with the tree.

The theoretical subject of the author’s exploration, though, is narration – its subtlety, its refinement. The book combines realistic parts, a plethora of “overheard” conversations alongside extensive internal monologues, oneiric images, and bravura episodes of surreal origins. The poetic quality of the prose is perceptible, as is its discreet self-restraint in the face of the difficult and often cruel symptoms of life. The main character and his mother persist in a symbiotic relationship – she is as much Goddess

as Monster, while he, accustomed to the role of an obedient son, begins to notice his own life is also coming to an end, yet meanwhile it is passing by in a procession of ordinary, repetitive actions.

Salvation comes from the imagination, which Bawolek has in abundance: we keep falling with him into “possible worlds,” though for all its narrative vividness, the novel is very friendly to readers. While it is certainly not easy entertainment, it is not exhausting either. We observe “a prince disguised as a pauper,” somewhat resigned, but attached to his spiritual riches, somewhat haughty, but content to sit every day with his friends and to listen to their everyday secrets.

This book will grab readers who enjoy entering into a narrated world and making themselves at home there, then unhurriedly to undergo a range of epiphanies and revelations (alternating with arguments, illnesses, and everything “life itself” supplies). We might consider *Echo of the Sun* the literary equivalent of “slow cinema,” a long adagio from some cheerful-sad symphony.

Adam Wiedemann, translated by Sean Gasper Bye

For some time now, the thought of death has followed me. How many funerals have I been to now in so short a time? Four? Five? That plus a sick mother, death following her constantly and her age pressing evenly against it. Recently I've also felt somehow half-dead. Besides, what you can think when there's just the two of you and nothing is happening? As time goes on, life gets boring and monotonous. And my dreams get more frightening. And that space within you and beyond you, where decay keeps speeding up. My mother over there, me here. Silence over there and motionlessness here. Mom reading a book, me sitting at the table and looking out the window. Out the window, nothing moves an inch. The telephone pole standing there, my neighbor's house, the bushes, the driveway. Nothing moves. And time – the same here as out there. Everything and nothing fitting within it. I can get up and I do, I pace around the room, I talk to mom. Two spoonfuls of sugar. Stir. These everyday actions push us offstage, drive us onto the balcony, into the rain and fog, send us running for our rain gear and galoshes, for clichéd stage business. The desire concealed in this for something unusual to happen, for life and the world to lose – even if for a little while – the ordinariness of everyday persistence. Then you could forget about death. But no, no chance, nada. At best a fly buzzes past that you have to get rid of. The most important question: where did it come from, since the windows and doors are closed? If you don't do anything for long enough, the fly will vanish off somewhere on its own, as though flying beyond the circle described by the hands of the clock. The thought of death does not pass. Especially in the evening, before sleep. When it is dark and the silence is so pervasive it's even a shame to break it. Better to somehow sink into insomnia, which will finally pass when the familiar images, shapes, contours, sounds, desires and fulfillments begin to appear. I'm going to have to go to the funeral, even though I've just come back from a different one. We were laying my neighbor to rest. I remember him asking me to buy him a quarter-liter of vodka not long ago. He couldn't do it himself, he was afraid of what people would say if he bought himself vodka. He was barely alive, his time was near, and here he was afraid what people would say if he bought himself a quarter-liter of vodka. He gave me the money and went off to send in his lottery ticket. I bought the vodka, but when I went back to that spot I couldn't find him, it was hard to figure out where he'd gotten to. I started hunting around the market, only noticing him once I'd decided I wanted to head back home. He thanked me for the booze and left. That was the last time I saw him. Afterwards there was just the funeral. (...)

And who says that? I mean, I know I need to live in the here and now, I shouldn't see myself in others or see myself through their eyes. Why dwell on every step? After all that squanders time, which I have less and less of, and never enough. So, I raise a toast to the marvelous world, to those lies that fill us up, to those who think they're the smartest, think they want for nothing, feel they'll leave something behind them. (...) Sometimes you want to say, "let them do what they want!" Maybe that's best.

Excerpt translated by Sean Gasper Bye



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WALDEMAR
BAWOŁEK

Born 1962

Echo stońca [Echo of the Sun]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wołowiec 2017

ISBN: 978-83-8049-539-5

Translation rights: Andrew Nurnberg Associates Warsaw,
anna.rucinska@nurnberg.pl

Novels published

Delecatio morosa, 1996

Raz dokola, 2005

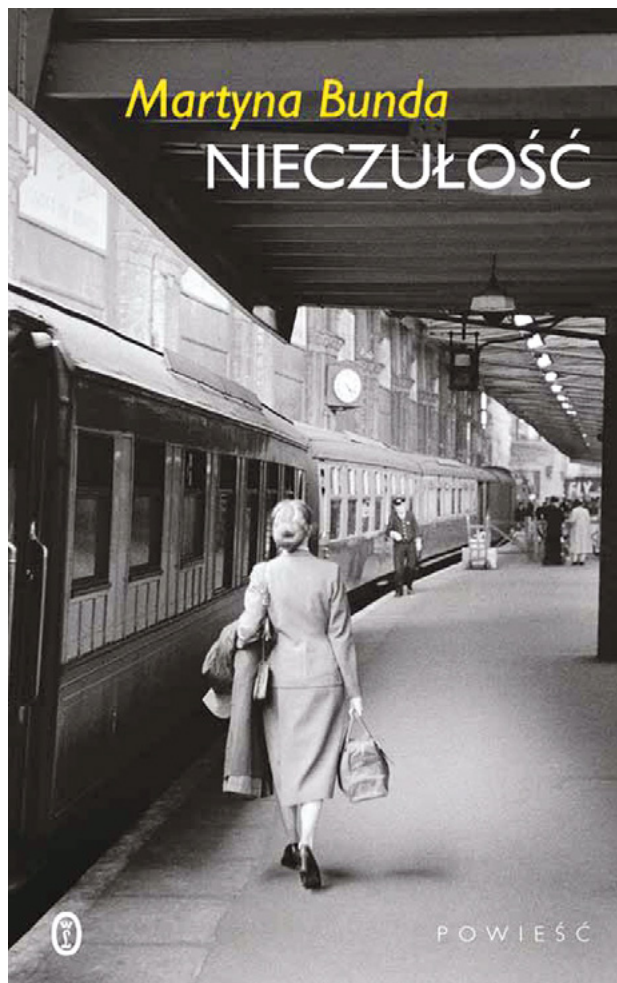
Humoreska, 2012

To co obok, 2014

Selected awards

Gdynia Literary Prize (2015, 2018) – nominations

Unfeeling



A picture of true closeness – that between women

The protagonists of this women's saga, the action of which extends from the Second World War to times closer to the present, are three sisters: reliable and responsible Gerta, Truda, who yields easily to the call of the heart, and rebellious Ilda, as well as the head of the family, Rozela, who raises her daughters in the Kashubian village of Dziewcza Góra [Dziewcza Hill]. The structure of the novel, divided into seasons, designates subsequent years in the lives of the three sisters, their mother, husbands and children. Each new season brings a change in the fate of the main characters – they learn about love, give birth to children, lose a loved one, mature, and inevitably grow old and say goodbye to one another.

Each of the sisters chooses their own path, assuming (most often mistakenly) that it leads in the opposite direction to the one chosen years ago by their mother, Rozela. However, no matter how far Gerta, Truda and Ilda move away from home, they always come back to it, with anger, with tears in their eyes, with joy, longing or pain. They return to tell their own stories,

to confront what has been left unsaid over the years of the war, and finally to find out that they are not so different from their mother Rozela, from grandmother Otylia and from all those women who still have to deal with the passing of love, parents, children, dreams and ambitions.

Unfeeling is a story about how many subconscious fears, doubts, and wounds are carried over generations in the history of one family, and how women, the guardians of identity, guarantee its endurance over time. It shows women as repositories of traditions handed down from generation to generation, bearing the memory of the family history and traumas that they inherit. Bunda, under a layer of insensitivity and dryness, and through the bubbling emotions of the heroines, creates a picture of true closeness – that between women.

Magdalena Brodacka, translated by Katarzyna Popowicz

It must have been Truda, the middle sister, who thought of putting the roses in a bucket of ink for the night. A bit of colour for symbolic value, she said. As they're burying him last. It must have been Gerta, the eldest, who added that their bouquet had to be on top. Before the service she shoved fifty zlotys in the sexton's pocket to remind him whose flowers should be uppermost. The sexton, the illiterate one who dragged his feet, acquitted himself well, and respectfully spread the ribbons on either side of the coffin. Written on them was the message "Miss Unfeeling".

Winter; a wet, protracted February. The year 1979. The tinted roses and two pieces of white plastic tape had ended up at the very top of the pile, above the lilies with the inscription "Your Faithful Wife" and heaps of flowers for the "Great Sculptor," the "Pride of the Region," the "Perfect Artist," the "Noble Son of Pomerania." How could all that compare with "Miss Unfeeling?"

And then came the sisters, arm in arm, shoe in line with shoe, the older girls supporting Ilda, the youngest. On her left was Truda, the middle sister. Usually at the centre of the universe, with earrings dangling in all directions, now she was focused and quiet. On the right was Gerta. Always so sensitive to what people would say, that day she stood the straightest of all, like a ramrod. Between them Ilda, oddly small and fragile that day, despite her truly impressive bust, still remembered in town from the days when she crammed it into a one-piece leather suit. And ahead of them went he, Tadeusz Gelbert, in a mahogany coffin with silver fittings.

And so the cortege proceeded in the greyish-white snow, with a cross swaying rhythmically in the sexton's hands, with the Ever Loving Wife on the ribbons and at the front, with the local mayor, the bank manager, all Truda's old underlings, the neighbours, the notables from the sculpture studio, the loyal customers for gravestones, the shopkeepers, the kiosk attendants, and both Kartuzy's taxi drivers – for nobody in this town could possibly miss such a major event – while the sisters moved up step by step, ever closer to the coffin. And it was the eldest, Gerta, who took the next row of mourners from the right, and it was the middle one, Truda, who took them from the left. So it was, just in front of the freshly dug grave, not by striding but only casually gaining speed, they caught up the Legal Widow. Over the coffin they stood face to face. And then, from the small handbag she'd received

from him, Ilda took out the lipstick, a gift from him, and coated her lips. They'd been counting on a show, and they got one.

Before darkness had fallen, the three sisters were sitting together at table in the house below Dziewcza Hill.

Excerpt translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones



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MARTYNA
BUNDA

Born 1975

Nieczułość (Unfeeling)

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2017

ISBN: 978-83-08-06498-6

Translation rights: Agencja Literacko-Scenariuszowa
Beaty Stasińskiej, stasinska.beata@gmail.com

Foreign language translations

Germany, Ukraine, Czech Republic

Literary awards

Gryfia Literary Award for the best Polish female author (2018)

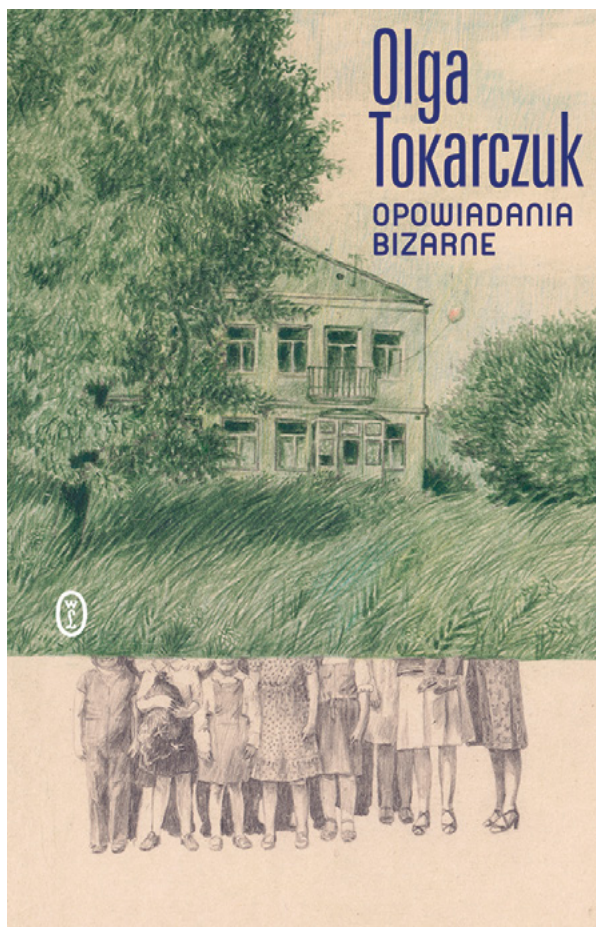
Nike Literary Award (2018) – nomination

Gdynia Literary Prize (2018) – nomination

Martyna Bunda has worked as a journalist and a reporter.
Unfeeling is her literary debut.

Tales of the Bizarre

A new book by one of the most acclaimed and popular Polish writers



**BY THE MAN BOOKER
INTERNATIONAL PRIZE 2018 WINNER**

Olga Tokarczuk became the first Pole to win the international edition of the Booker Prize, which only attested to her position in Polish literature, and *Opowiadania bizarre* [*Tales of the Bizarre*], published at the same time, confirms her writing class. "Bizarre" is not a word from the Polish dictionary, as the writer Polonised the French "bizarre", meaning "strange".

By principle, even if it is the surrounding world Tokarczuk speaks about, she puts some surprising elements into it, such as in *Preserves*, where the hero finds marinated laces in a jar. Firstly, it is a realistic story about an alcoholic and a loser who tortured his mother all his life, secondly, it is a moving study of the fall, and thirdly one has to ask if it is not a postponed murder, or just the effect of madness?

It is in such stories from the boundary of realism and surrealism (sometimes even in the style of Edgar Allan Poe) that the writer is at her best. When she takes up a historical theme, the effect is also splendid. *Green Children*, set in the 17th century somewhere

in Volhynia during the Swedish Deluge, is additional proof that the writer is wonderful when speaking about topics that relate to Poland's past. The tale of King John II Casimir's court physician is at the same time a beautiful contemporary fairy tale and a great examination of the relationship between man and nature.

Tokarczuk is also magnificent when she reaches for topics that touch on metaphysics, for example in *Passenger*, which opens the book. This is one of those stories that can happen to any of us because everyone knows childish fears that become reality. *Seams* is surprising as the hero's transformation begins when he notices seams on his socks that have never been seen before.

This is the strength of *Tales of the Bizarre* by Olga Tokarczuk. Thanks to them, we can spot the unseen seams of the world.

Mariusz Cieřlik, translated by Katarzyna Popowicz

The plane arrived over Zurich when it was supposed to, but for a long time it was obliged to circle the city, since snow had covered the airport, and we had to wait until the slow yet so effective machines had managed to clear it. Just as it landed, the snow clouds parted, and against the orange blazing sky there were contrails in tangles that transformed the firmament into a giant grid – almost as though God were extending an invitation to play a round of tic-tac-toe.

The driver who was supposed to pick me up and who was waiting with my last name written out on the lid of a cardboard shoebox, was quick to state the facts: “I’m supposed to take you to the pension – the road up to the Institute is completely snowed under. We won’t make it there.”

But his dialect was so strange I could barely understand him. I also felt like I had missed something. It was May, after all, the eighth of May.

“The world’s turned on its head. Just take a look at that.” He placed my luggage in the car and then pointed to the darkening sky. “I’ve heard they’re poisoning us with it, airplane fumes altering our subconscious.”

I nodded. The grated horizon really did trigger a sense. We reached our destination late at night, traffic jams everywhere, cars’ wheels spinning in place, all of us moving at a snail’s pace – at best – in the wet snow. Gray slush accumulated along the roadsides. In town the snowplows were in full force, but further along, in the mountains, which we began to climb, very carefully, it turned out there was no one clearing the roads. My driver clung to the steering wheel, leaning in; his ample aquiline nose pointed out our direction like the bow of a ship pulling us through a murky sea towards some port.

The reason I was here was that I’d signed a contract to come. I was supposed to administer a test to a group of teenagers. It was a test I had come up with myself, and for more than thirty years, it had remained the only one of its kind, enjoying considerable renown among my fellow developmental psychologists.

The honorarium they had offered me was very large. When I saw it in the agreement, I was sure they had made a mistake. I was also bound, however, by the strictest secrecy. The company that was conducting the test had its headquarters in Zurich, but I hadn’t recognized its name. I can’t say it was only the money that had convinced me. There were other reasons, too. I got a shock when I found out that the “pension” my driver had mentioned was in fact a few guest rooms in a dark ancient convent at the base of the mountain.

From the short story *All Saints’ Mountain*,
translated by Jennifer Croft
Extended English sample available (office@bookinstitute.pl)



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OLGA
TOKARCZUK

Born 1962

Tales of the Bizarre [Opowiadania bizardne]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2018

ISBN: 978-83-08-06498-6

Translation rights: Rogers, Coleridge & White Agency,
l.laluyaux@rcwlitagency.com

Novels published

Podróż ludzi Księgi, 1993

E. E., 1995

Prawiek i inne czasy [Primeval and Other Times], 1996

Dom dzienny, dom nocny [House of Day, House of Night], 1998

Ostatnie historie, 2004

Anna In w grobowcach świata, 2006

Bieguni [Flights], 2007

Prowadź swój pług przez kości umarłych [Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead], 2009

– adapted into a film by Agnieszka Holland

Księgi Jakubowe [The Books of Jacob], 2014

– 150,000 copies sold

Foreign language translations

Armenia Belarus, Bulgaria, Catalonia, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, India, Israel, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Macedonia, Mexico, Norway, Netherlands, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Taiwan, Turkey, Ukraine, UK, USA

Selected awards

Kościelski Foundation Award (1997)

Polityka’s Passport Award (1997)

Brücke Berlin Preis (2002)

International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award (2004) – nomination

Nike Literary Award (2008, 2015; nomination in 1997, 1999, 2002, 2010; three-time winner of Readers’ Choice Award)

Angelus Central European Literary Award (2015) – nomination

Man Booker International Prize (2018)

New Academy Prize in Literature (2018) – longlisted

Microtics

**Micro-stories about
a city inhaled like nicotine
or a narcotic**



**SENSATIONAL DEBUT BY ONE
OF THE BEST POLISH SONGWRITERS**

In *Microtics* – twenty-three micro-stories by Paweł Soltys (he uses the stage name “Pablopavo” as a vocalist and a songwriter) – the city rules. Sprawling, fragmented, cobbled together from scrappy neighborhoods and housing blocks, sliced in two by the blue ribbon of the yet-to-be-tamed river, a city far from random or anonymous, and quite concrete: Warsaw. A city inhaled like nicotine or a narcotic, from which one longs to escape, but cannot, because it has crept deep into the soul, into the very core of you, it has become part of you, and you can no longer live without it. A city full of mangled, seemingly uncomplicated people from the side streets, quiet and meaningless. Who are Professor Kruk, Aunt Stefania, Uncle Madman, Anka the Hairdresser? Who are all those who have departed or vanished? It is them and their little stories that create the city – the city of individual memory, a micro-world throbbing with life.

Space in *Microtics* is an urban reality that stretches between the 1980s, the 1990s, and the present, one story blending into the next. This is a remarkable record of the memory of “passers-by,” episodic figures who linger only for moment, but sometimes return many years later, forever tied to the city, always present within it: the local produce woman, two brothers from school days who seem plucked out of the 19th century, the mad neighbor who never leaves his apartment... Soltys has made each of them protagonists for a second, has let them move us and amuse us, casting a shade of “gentle melancholy” over them. Their apparently irrelevant existence is in fact necessary for the life of the city, in both a real and a metaphorical sense, as they inhabit the city of the author’s memory, giving the physical metropolis a dimension that steps beyond reality.

Katarzyna Wójcik, translated by Soren Gauger

The Frying Pan

A side street in Warsaw. One of those more off to the side. One might be tempted to write “lined with villas”, but that’s not true. Houses and cottages, rather plain fences, balding lawns, and here and there some flower beds covered with tree branches that form shelters. A low wall makes me pause. It’s mossy, but without ostentation: a fine layer of green with a few holes. It makes you want to touch it: softness on concrete. Embarrassingly moving. Above are metal railings stained with rust; behind them, the thick trunk of a tree. This is where the green has flowed down from, or so it appears. The moss here is serious, spreading unchecked; you could comb it. I’ve lit a cigarette to stay a bit longer. There’s a brick house behind the tree. The December sky is grey, like the shell suits sold by the first post-Soviet traders near the stadium. There’s not much light, but enough. If I were making up this story, I’d throw in a skinny cat with a mistrustful gaze. Skinny cats always fit. But there isn’t one.

I walk on, and the houses and gardens start to rhyme. Not with perfect rhymes, but still. In front of one house there’s a plastic rubbish bin. And beside it, placed where it can be reached through the gap under the fence, a frying pan. Used but still quite good. Fairly deep, with a wooden handle; well scrubbed. In such instances, the mind often comes up with the weirdest things. I recall that a large group of Roma who arrived in Poland in the 19th century were the Kalderash. The Kelderari, meaning those who make pots, pans, cauldrons. I take a look around, and indeed, there are pots too, on the other side of the bin. Old, ordinary pots, same as my grandmother had, mass-produced, probably in the 1980s. Orange on the outside, with simple drawings of flowers. Suddenly my heart contracts. Hopefully someone has simply bought themselves new cookware. From a market vendor, in a designer shop or at the supermarket, with a suitable number of sales stickers attached. Because the way my mind works, it knows straight away: someone has died and left behind this frying pan and the pots. And the children or grandchildren are slowly clearing the house of all the junk. Nobody will buy these, that’s for sure, but someone might still find them useful. So I see this house that rhymes with the others as a house in mourning. Someone has probably lived here for sixty years, and my eyes seek out the colour black. In this light everything that’s dark is black. The branches of a

nearby bush, the ground where the grass is worn, the rubber doormat in front of the entrance. Two rooks are picking at the ground with their beaks, and I decide to call them ravens. It’s said that ravens are able to give each other names and tell simple stories.

Short story *The Frying Pan*, translated by Eliza Marciniak
Extended English sample available (anna.rucinska@nurnberg.pl)



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PAWEŁ
SOŁTYS
Born 1972

Mikrotyki [Microtics]
Publisher: Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wołowiec 2017
ISBN: 9788380495869
Translation rights: Andrew Nurnberg Associates Warsaw,
anna.rucinska@nurnberg.pl

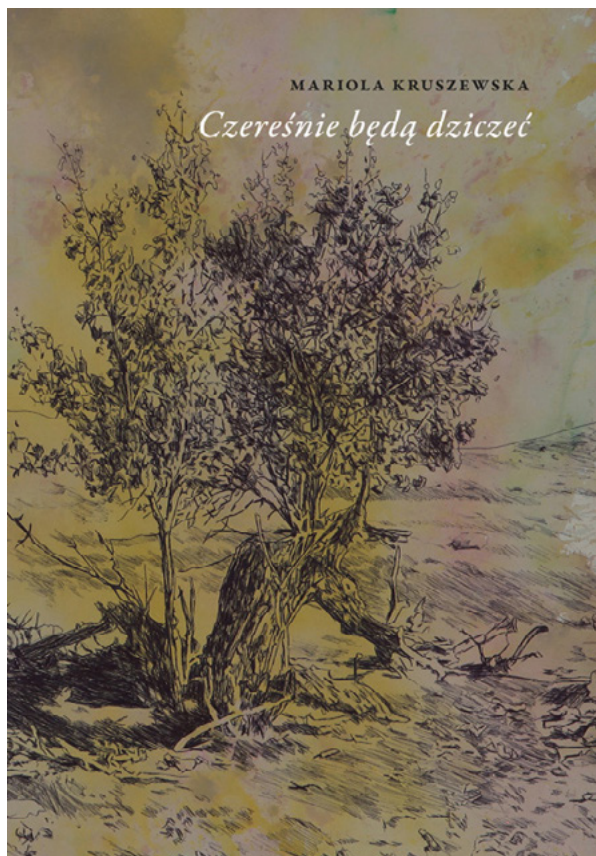
Sales numbers
12,000 copies sold

Selected awards
Marek Nowakowski Prize for Literature, awarded by The National Library of Poland (2018)
Gdynia Literary Prize (2018)
Nike Literary Award (2018) – nomination

Foreign language translations
An excerpt in English will be published in *Best European Fiction 2019* by Dalkey Archive

Music
Under the stage name **Pablopavo** he has released 14 albums and played 1,000 concerts. He has also received Polityka’s Passport Award (2015).

Cherries Will Grow Wild



Captivating short story collection that reads like a novel

The collective heroes of Mariola Kruszevska's book are Polish repatriates, or rather exiles after the Second World War, forced to leave their homes and everything that was familiar to them and move into a foreign world, called – for whatever reason – the Recovered Territories. There are also some displaced Germans among the book's characters, as their fate is also important to the author.

In the endless journey to the new homeland, a child is lost, someone else falls ill and will not be able to stand up again. And upon arrival, we read, "They stumbled over rubble, lack of water, fear of thieves and the return of Germans. (...) They dismantled wartime barricades. They buried people. They buried animals. They buried history. They sowed new reality, ready to quit it at any moment and go back to their place".

They did not know yet that there was no return to lost territories in the Eastern Borderlands, and in the new place everything seemed temporary, fragile, uncertain. The new reality will also bring new threats: on the part of the Soviet "liberators", still throwing their weight around, and the allegedly native authorities,

imposed by force. They will remain distrustful of it, but they will have to come to terms with it, just as they should deal with what is here and now. And they must lick the fresh wounds inflicted on them by history; first and foremost, the one whose face had well known features, namely of the Ukrainian neighbours from Volhynia.

Mariola Kruszevska's book is a collection of stories. It consists of thirteen texts entitled, for example *Appletree*, *Black Currants*, *Potatoes*, *Winter Crops*, *Sunflowers* and *Jasmine*. While reading, however, we realise that it is one coherent story in which individual threads overlap, the characters enter into relationships with one another, sometimes we only move with them to another place, or go back or forward in time.

The author (b. 1965) used to be better known as a poet. *Cherries Will Grow Wild*, awarded in the Bolesław Fac Literary Contest of the City of Gdansk, indicates that she has even more to say in prose.

Krzysztof Masłoń, translated by Katarzyna Popowicz

Mariola waited for her husband; she couldn't leave without him, not now. She felt as though somebody had thrown her, in the middle of the day, down a chasm from which she couldn't climb out of on her own. She spent weeks in fear, just looking out for him. She didn't let the children leave the house, even during the day. She carried a small linen bag under her blouse, resting on her breast, containing money and items of jewellery the Russians hadn't found, ready to flee into the forest at any moment. She barely slept. She couldn't eat and she was tormented by nausea – and not just in the morning. She cried into her pillow and beat her fists against her belly. Every evening she fervently prayed for a miracle. And one day it occurred. August returned, haggard, distressed by news about the new world order. Several other farmers also returned from shifting the contents of a looted factory onto Soviet trucks. But not all her prayers were answered.

"We have to leave, dad," he explained mildly, chewing some bread. "We can't stay here. They're clearing out whole villages, whole towns. They're taking everything. The Russkies will be back, they'll be back and won't be shifted for a long time. They're saying this'll be Poland. We have to get out, while there's still time. We must take what we can and hide the rest till we're back. They're setting up camps for people like us, they'll help us."

"Be quiet!"

"You don't understand anything, dad. We've lost the war. Nothing will change now, not for the moment at least. The time has come for accounts to be settled. Dad, I heard in town... Heini's dead. Heini, who would never hurt a fly, killed himself. You didn't like him much, did you? They raped his daughter, she wasn't even fifteen, you remember her, and his wife... They were screaming, but no one helped them. Then they killed them, throttled them. They say that's how the new authorities will be running things. He was left all alone. Hanged himself with his belt. And where was it? Outside the town hall."

"A coward! Just like you!" Günter spat into August's face. "That's enough of your idle talk. If you want to leave your fatherland then go, you coward. Take your family and your whining wife and head for the hills, but without me. I'm not giving up this house or this land. It's mine, I built it with my own hands. I'll watch over it. I won't let it go to waste! This lot will blow over. You and the rest will be back. I'll watch over it. Somebody has to."

"You'll die. They'll kill you and burn the house down."

"I built it myself, every brick, every beam... I planted

trees. I'd sooner burn it down with these hands than let them get their filthy mitts on it. Over my dead body, over my dead body!"

"Dad..."

"Out of my sight! Pack up what's yours and go!" Günter struck his cane so hard on the wooden floor he made a dent in it. He went out into the farmyard ruddy with anger. He took a deep breath, trying to calm his thumping heart. He thought about his father and his father's father, about all the generations that had built houses, barns, planted apple trees, currants, jasmine shrubs, sown winter wheat and grass. He caressed the fence tenderly, as though wanting to assure it that it was in good hands.

When August and his wife and children set off, pushing their heavily laden handcart, Günter didn't go onto the doorstep. Only when their shapes began to recede into the distance did he hobble to the door, touched by a sudden thought, open it and shout his son's name out several times. He called him back with a vigorous wave of his cane. He hugged August with all his strength and kissed him on the forehead upon which he made the sign of the cross.

Excerpt translated by David French



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MARIOLA
KRUSZEWSKA

Born 1965

Czereśnie będą dziczeć [Cherries Will Grow Wild]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo W Podwórkę, Warszawa 2017

ISBN: 978836413417-3

Translation rights: Mariola Kruszevska, mariolakrusz@wp.pl

Poetry collections published

Bywam kobietą (2011)

Wczoraj czyli dziś (2013)

Selected awards

Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński Poetry Prize ORPHEUS (2014)

Bolesław Fac Literary Prize for debutants, awarded by the City of Gdansk (2016)

Józef Mackiewicz Literary Prize (2017) – nomination

Pogrom 1905

Holewiński makes human sexuality the key to the epoch he describes



BY THE JÓZEF MACKIEWICZ LITERARY PRIZE WINNER

In the fascinating historical novel by Wacław Holewiński, several dozen figures of different social status are thrown together by fate during the authentic street tumult that led to the lynching of several pimps and prostitutes in Warsaw in 1905. Was it a spontaneous pogrom caused by anti-Semitic sentiments? Was it carried out by Jews in their own community? Or maybe it was a Russian provocation inspired by the tsarist service?

Many characters stand for a collective hero, but this is only part of the truth, because the most important hero of *Pogrom 1905* is the Warsaw of the beginning of the 20th century – a vibrant metropolis of extremes. Modern, and at the same time dirty and repulsive. Disgustingly rich and frighteningly poor. Frivolous and at the same time spiritual. Diverse but also full of class-ethnic tensions between Poles, the Jewish minority, and the elites of the Russian invader. Not necessarily the “Paris of the North”, but rather a rapidly modernising Moloch, controlled only nominally by the Russians, because in fact chaos rules.

Historical novelists often search for new perspectives to tell about the past in a refreshing way. They choose as heroes criminals, outcasts, the excluded, and all kinds of “others” that the great narratives have hitherto ignored. In turn, Wacław Holewiński makes human sexuality the key to the epoch he describes. He portrays women prostituting themselves, teenagers forced to sell their bodies, men overwhelmed by lust – both lustful youths and old lechers, and even a doctor specialising in venereal diseases. Everything in *Pogrom 1905* revolves around carnality, but the writer does not reach for it like a pornographer. He does not want to arouse excitement, but rather has the ambition of telling the story in a new, bold, and broad-minded way.

Marcin Kube, translated by Katarzyna Popowicz

Konstantin Andrievich Yurin was forty-one and all he dreamed about was his bed and peace and quiet. Especially on a day like today, with his head exploding into a million pieces after yesterday's drinking session at the rooms of Lieutenant Rex, Commissioner of District no. 4 – Bielany.

He heard a knock at the door and a moment later saw Klachkin's huge head. Yurin looked up at him. "Gavrotsky has arrived," he reported. "Shall I let him in?"

For a long while he had to think who the intruder was. He evoked the face of the nark, his piercing blue eyes. And his hands. Some machine had half cut off two of the fingers on his left hand. After years of work, he sometimes observed in astonishment that there was an apparatus installed in his head, which after pushing a button, brought to mind the faces of criminals, agents, lovers, the people he had sent to penal servitude and the ones who had refused him loans. In short – everybody.

Yurin didn't have the strength to talk to him. "Says it's important," Klachkin said, not giving up, although no doubt after serving Yurin for six years and three months he must have known that the captain's stubborn efforts to focus on a single point was evidence of his intense experience the night before.

"Let him wait," he waved a hand and before the door had closed had reached out for a carafe standing on the left-hand side of the desk. He picked it up and looked at it but decided not to pour any water from it into a glass standing on a wooden coaster.

He ought to go to a doctor, request leave, get out of Warsaw, that was certain. But instead, he spent every day in his office. District no. 7 was his curse ... If they would only post him somewhere else. And ideally send him back to Russia, to Piter. To Alyosha, his childhood friend, who had done very well for himself and was a rich man. They had seen each barely a year before. Alyosha had laughed at his uniform and offered him a position in one of his numerous haulage companies. Yurin had turned it down then, although Nastasiya Philipovna took a deep breath at the thought she might be returning to her mother.

He didn't like the city or its inhabitants. He didn't like them nor understand them. He spoke Polish – without an accent, he believed. But so what? The women were attractive there, his flat comfortable, he enjoyed the local alcohol, but the fact that the newly appointed Governor-General of Warsaw, Constantin Claudievich Maximovich, kept having to flee to the fortress in Zegrze in fear of his life didn't fill him with optimism. There had been attempts on the general's life, they might also try to assassinate an ordinary captain. Why not? They were able to shoot at Captain Rastagayev on Żelazna St.? How lucky he'd been, it had seemed. The bullet passed through his neck and into his chin, where it had lodged. He'd been discharged barely two

months ago from the Hospital of the Infant Jesus, and a week later it turned out he had a nervous collapse. *They'll shoot at me sooner or later*, thought Yurin. Thoughts about the gallows were often hatching in Konstantin Andrievich's head. For what else did those bastards deserve? They wanted to kill, kill and kill again. He didn't understand those new-fangled efforts, those socialists, "going to the people", education for all, and those bombs which, let's face it, killed completely random passers-by and children. Neither did he understand showing those murderers mercy. He cared for order, he was its guardian, because that was the way things were, because somebody had to take on that lousy responsibility. Shoot, shoot at them like in January? Did a hundred die? A thousand could for all he was concerned. Whoever got in the way of bullets deserved them.

Excerpt translated by David French



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WACŁAW
HOLEWIŃSKI

Born 1956

Pogrom 1905

Publisher: Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2018

ISBN: 9788381163033

Translation rights: Zysk i S-ka,
anna.giryn@zysk.com.pl

Novels published

- Lament nad Babilonem*, 2003
- Za późno na modlitwę*, 2003
- Przeżyłem wszystkich poetów*, 2004
- Choćbym mówił językiem ludzi i aniołów*, 2005
- Droga do Putte*, 2007
- Opowiem ci o wolności*, 2012
- Szwy*, 2013
- Honor mi nie pozwała*, 2015

Foreign language translations

Hungary

Selected awards

- Warsaw Literary Premiere Award (2003, 2004, 2007)
- Józef Mackiewicz Literary Prize (2013; distinction in 2004)

Ashes

**From heroism to betrayal
– a passionate story about
people in post-war Poland**

The plot of *Ashes* takes place in the 1940s and '50s in post-war Poland. It's a passionate story about the toil of millions of Polish people whose lives have been shattered by the war, people who sometimes go in for dodgy deals with the new Communist authorities, yet are heroic at other times. Just how difficult and complex those decisions, attitudes, and motives were is shown by the story of Stanisław Jarosz, the pivotal character in the novel's progress. He's a sort of Everyman – a lawyer who becomes the chairman of the Warsaw court and has to face up to a series of everyday temptations, challenges, and inner contentions. One of the other characters is Stanisław Mikołajczyk, the wartime prime minister of the Polish government-in-exile who attempts to play a political game with the Communists. With the precision of a surgeon's scalpel and profound respect for the people of Poland, Piotr Zaremba tries to find an answer to the question of how far the compromises could go, of where the red line lay beyond which all you could get was just humiliation. In *Ashes* we have everything from heroism to betrayal.



And between them a hundred thousand other behaviours, because that's what Poland was like in the 1940s and '50s. For all that, Zaremba's book is very Polish. His aim is to give the reader an insight into all those icons of the Polish Peasants' Party [Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe] and those Doomed Soldiers, but also a picture of the grey, sometimes nasty, run-of-the-mill guys. His characters aren't cut out for the Hollywood clapperboard, they're true to life. *Ashes* is a tribute to the people of Poland and their attitudes in the face of a burgeoning Communist Hydra. *Ashes* delivers its tough lesson to every one of its readers, regardless of how much or how little he knows about Polish history. But it isn't a boring academic lecture. Zaremba's highly precise recall of the atmosphere of those times, together with a wickedly fascinating storyline and its fine language blend together to create a gripping drama. For anyone who wants to understand Polish post-war reality *Ashes* is a must-read.

Marcin Fijolek, translated by Teresa Bałuk-Ulewiczowa

As the car drove up to the Party building Mikołajczyk felt more unease than ever before. The security men stayed in the vehicle – they must have felt what was up, or maybe they had orders. He hadn’t attended a single cabinet meeting since the election.

There was a lot of hustle and bustle around the gate – people were coming in for the session of the Supreme Council. A small group stood by at the side.

“PSL, the Lackeys’ Party! Lackey, lackey, back to London!” they burst out shouting. Someone threw a snowball, but it missed him.

“Scoundrels,” Hulewiczowa made a clichéd remark to sum up the way he was being treated, and he felt embarrassed at the triteness of her words. He went inside briskly.

“There aren’t even eighty people here,” Witold Kulerski, secretary of the Council and faithful companion of Mikołajczyk’s predicament through good times and bad in London informed him as he reached his office. “People have been phoning in from the provinces since the morning with news of arrests. Some were rounded up from their homes, presumably they’ll release them, but after the weekend.”

Kulerski, Mikołajczyk, Hulewiczowa, and perhaps a few others from London sometimes used words like “weekend.” It reminded them of the grand world outside which had afforded them sanctuary and then spat them out.

“One-third have not arrived, but Wycech’s men have surely been released.” Trying to hide his confusion, the Deputy Prime Minister spoke sharply, with his head held high. “Who knows, maybe I’ll lose in the vote. People are tired.”

“You won’t lose. There’s still something called justice.”

“Actually, Marysia, there’s not much of it left at all.”

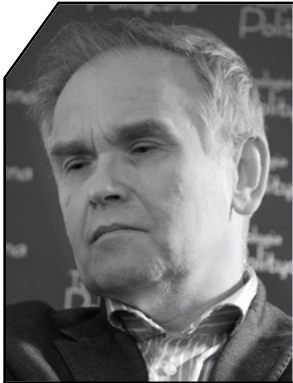
(...) And then Mikołajczyk read out his speech for two whole hours, hoarsely and with a lot of effort. He argued that they had taken the right path. It was just that the election had been conducted from start to finish by the Security Service, Minister Radkiewicz’s subordinates.

He produced examples: in Mińsk Mazowiecki people were being intimidated with stories that personal identity documents were going to be exchanged, and only those who voted for the Block would be issued new ones. In Kielce representatives of the local intelligentsia and shopkeepers were crossed off the

voters’ register, and anyone who wanted their name put back on the list of voters was advised to declare their support for the Block. A voter in Leszno was told he had no right to check the register to see if his name was on it, and when he insisted he was locked up in the cellar of the local Security Office. (...) “There’s no sense in holding a boycott, we have to be part of the new parliament to tell the whole truth about the abuses practised by the Block, about the rigged elections, in order to stop them from getting their own way with the Small Constitution. Perhaps we’ve chosen a path full of thorns, but one that leads to ultimate victory, and the effort we make to win it will make it all the more precious.”

The response he got was applause, but not as enthusiastic as in October. Those who had come looked at one another, trying to find an answer in other people’s faces, since they could find none in their own hearts.

Excerpt translated by Teresa Bałuk-Ulewiczowa



© Danuta Matloch

PIOTR
ZAREMBA
Born 1963

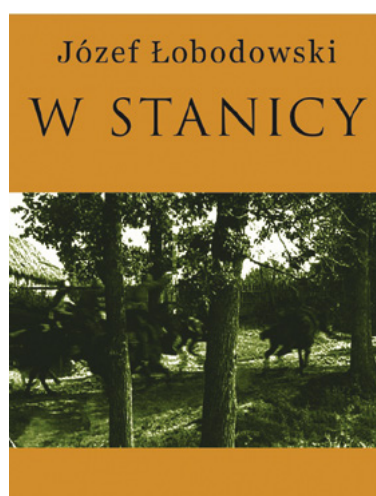
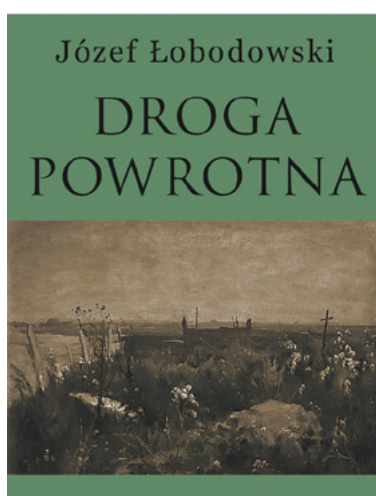
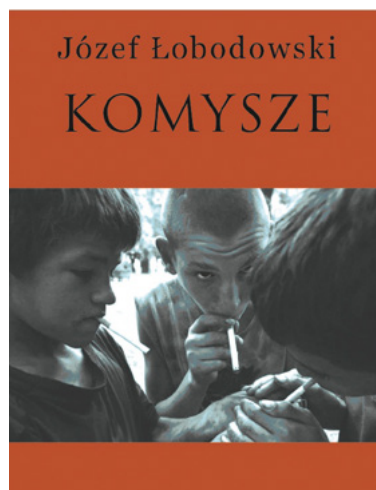
Zgliszcz (Ashes)
Publisher: Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2018
ISBN: 9788365521712
Translation rights: Zysk i S-ka,
anna.giryn@zysk.com.pl

Novels published
Plama na suficie, 2004
Romans licealny, 2009

Piotr Zaremba has also written several non-fiction books, including extended interviews with prominent Polish politicians and two books on American history. He has been published in many newspapers and magazines.

Awards
Józef Mackiewicz Literary Prize (2017) – nomination

Ukrainian Trilogy: Thickets, The Settlement, The Way Back



By an eulogist of Ukraine, fascinated by the East

The work of Józef Łobodowski (1909-1988) – a remarkable poet, prose writer, and translator, who spent most of his life in exile – is slowly being revived in Poland. Łobodowski's brilliant three-volume novel, composed on an epic scale, concerns the fate of families and orphans unmoored by the Bolshevik Revolution and civil war and scattered across the stretches of the former Russian empire. The plot frequently involves a teenager who is working to support his entire family. He hawks homemade rotgut and cigarettes, robs and steals, and gets into fights with police officers and Chekists alike. His companions do not fear death, only the *Dzietdom* – the orphanage in which sadistic caretakers exact their charges' obedience through ruthless psychological and physical terror.

The novel's hero (almost a stand-in for the author) is a Pole named Staś Majewski, who attaches himself to a group of young thugs when legal methods of earning a living start to dry up. The novel's action proceeds at

breakneck speed across Russia – from Yeysk on the Sea of Azov to Rostov-on-Don. After Tukhachevsky's defeat at Warsaw, the Red Terror escalates and Staś must flee – first to the titular thickets on the marshlands, then to the steppes, then to the Cossack settlements. There, he finds some vestiges of freedom, along with friends of Staś's father, who are able to repay him for earlier deeds. A crucial thread of the novel, replete with bold eroticism, is an unsuccessful attempt to reconstruct – referencing Cossack history – a free Zaporozhian Republic. An idyllic stay with the Cossacks ends in a life-and-death battle with Communists; the struggle on both sides constitutes the most significant part of the trilogy. If, after escaping the besieged settlement, Staś had not been late boarding the ship of repatriates, everything would have turned out differently. Once you start this novel, you won't be able to tear yourself away.

Jerzy Gizella, translated by Megan Thomas

The speaker broke off, tossed an unruly lock of hair from his forehead, and again raised his arm toward the crowd.

“Comrades, the victorious Revolution has no wish to restrict Cossack freedoms. Let them stay in their settlements as their fathers and grandfathers did before them. But they must share their excess grain with the city to help the starving poor! The blood that’s been spilled will be avenged. Tomorrow, over the coffins of our comrades, we will offer up an unbreakable, iron Bolshevik vow to do our utmost to ensure that, from this spilled blood, a new dawn of universal freedom, equality, and brotherhood will rise...”

“Gennari,” whispered Staś, nudging Aszwajanc. “What a pretty little song he sings. He’s already forgotten how he licked Markov’s boots so his officers wouldn’t put him up against the wall... Your father just barely saved him...”

“Comrades!” the speaker thundered on, “We will not allow these hundreds of thousands of victims, tortured to death, crushed by penal servitude, massacred at the front of imperialistic wars, these victims who perished at the hands of white counterrevolutionaries, to have died in vain. Our answer to the last gasp of the mortally wounded general scum is the answer we learned from the leaders and creators of the Revolution, Karl Marx, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, and Leon Trotsky. Down with the international bourgeoisie! Down with imperialist intervention! Down with generals, bankers, and industrialists! Down with White Poles! (...)”

The *Internationale* once again blared from the windows of the Executive Committee building. Another speaker stepped forward to address the swaying audience.

The heavens were ablaze with constellations as the two friends elbowed their way through the thinning crowd in the direction of Taganrogska Street. Suddenly, someone called Staś’s name. The odor of vodka wafted into his face. Professor Wasiliew clamped a hand on his shoulder and, leaning in, rasped,

“Tell Piotr Zdzisławowicz that the Bolsheviks were defeated near Warsaw. Understand, this comes from a reliable source. Most people don’t know yet. But it’s true. Kamieniew, Tukhachevsky, Budyonny, they’ve all been crushed. The Polish counteroffensive, backed up by French tanks and black divisions from Senegal. The Red bastard throws down his weapon and flees the front. Now Piłsudski will join forces with Wrangel. We’re back on our feet in Okhtyrka. The settlements are rising up. It’s the end of the Bolsheviks. (...)”

Wasiliew reeled and bellowed,

“Long live freedom! Long live free Poland!”

One of the men passing by stopped.

“His Poland’s already been liberated. He’s drunk and talking nonsense. They’ve been in Warsaw two weeks and haven’t taken her yet.”

Staś arranged to meet Aszwajanc the next and dashed toward home. (...) At his violent banging on the shutters, his terrified mother darted to the door.

He rushed into the room and, trying to catch his breath, triumphantly managed to squeeze out,

“Warsaw is free! The entire Bolshevik front is beaten!”

Excerpt translated by Megan Thomas



© Ludwik Hartwig

**JÓZEF
ŁOBODOWSKI**
(1909–1988)

Komysze, W stancy, Droga powrotna
[Thickets, The Settlement, The Way Back]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Test, Lublin 2018

ISBN: vol. 1: 978-83-7038-934-1; vol. 2: 978-83-7038-942-2; vol. 3: 978-83-7038-950-3

Translation rights: Wydawnictwo Test, test.bn@wp.eu

Józef Łobodowski published 19 volumes of poems and 7 volumes of prose.

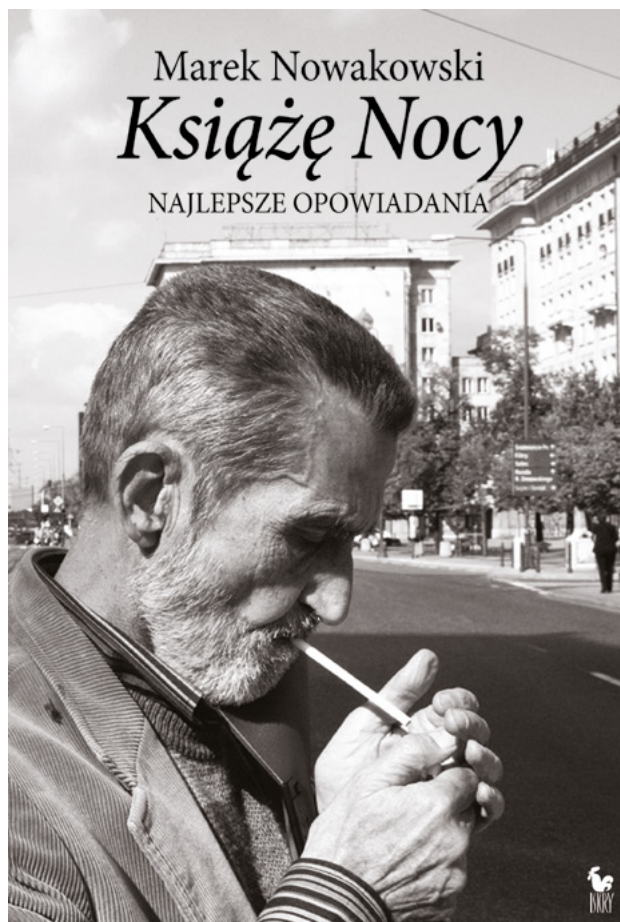
A translator of Spanish, Ukrainian, Belarusian and Russian poetry, Łobodowski was also a controversial and passionate publicist.

As a young man, he was inclined towards communist views, but became a fervent anti-communist over the years.

In his youth he led the avant-garde poets, winning the prestigious Young Writer’s Award of the Polish Academy of Literature. He led the life of a rebel and scandaliser. One of his volumes of poems was suppressed by censorship, and he was sent down from university in 1931. He fought in the Second World War, but did not return to Poland afterwards, settling instead in Madrid, where he collaborated with the radio station Radio Nacional de España. Łobodowski was an avid proponent of Polish-Ukrainian dialogue.

Prince of the Night. The Best Short Stories

**Beneath the surface
of everyday life**



Cover photo by Czesław Czaplinski

THE MASTER OF SHORT FORMS

The prose writer Marek Nowakowski, who died in 2014, is today a classic of Polish literature, and his stories are literary paintings that encompass his country's reality from the late 1950s to very recent times. It is enough to recall that Marek Nowakowski is the author of about 500 stories published in more than 60 books. This huge legacy is the result of a bold response to everyday life and a persistent, day-by-day recording of images that fascinate, frighten and, above all, inspire readers of this prose to reach deep beneath the surface of seemingly everyday life, discovering its hidden and encrypted meanings.

The book contains the best stories of Marek Nowakowski arranged in chronological order, starting with his feted debut *Square* from 1957. We also find here classic prose, such as *Benek the Florist*, *Where is the Road to Walne?*, and *Wedding Again!* as well as some great stories from the acclaimed *Report on Martial Law*, translated into many languages and widely commented on in the world literary press in

its time. The dark 1980s are symbolised by *Death* and *Two Days with an Angel*. It was during this period that the writer was arrested and accused of "slandering the regime". After 1989, Marek Nowakowski assiduously described the beginnings of Polish capitalism, as evidenced, for example, in the stories *Edek Gets the Upper Hand* and *Czarna and Mąta* from the selection. It is impossible to raise here all the elements that can be found in this anthology of more than a thousand pages. But one thing has to be said: it is the tip of the iceberg, after having become acquainted with it, one can delve into this unique work and find such pages to which one will often come back.

Wojciech Chmielewski, translated by Katarzyna Popowicz

Our world was small but seemed enormous. The daily local EKD train ferried us from the distant outskirts through fields and past low wooden buildings to the town centre. We were running away from our homes, from our parents' complaining, from school obligations, and from the quietness and relentless order of our district – unchanged for generations – where people called the man who emptied the septic tank 'goldman', and where that nickname was passed like a relay baton from the older boys to the younger. We were running from voices announcing, "Any old iron" or "Pots to mend", and our eyes no longer wanted to look constantly at that same old view from the window. And we thought we could really run away. Sometimes, without shoes or clothes, or shut up at home by my mother, I would close my eyes and all sorts of amazing worlds would appear. The intensifying rattle of wheels on tracks aroused my imagination to take action. Family connections prevailed on our route. We knew the guards, they knew us and occasionally they also let us travel without tickets. We passed Wiktoryn, Rapp's bakery, the roadside cross and the clay pits of Szczęśliwice. And thus, after twenty minutes, we reached the town centre.

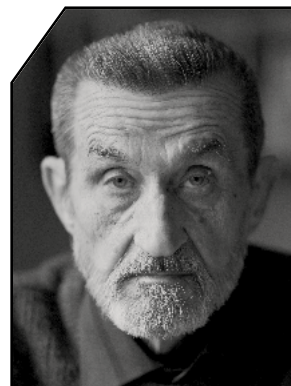
The town centre consisted of a few surviving tenement houses sticking up amongst ruins and piles of brick. Trams and horse-drawn carriages, the old hotel decorated with Art Nouveau reliefs, open markets and stalls, where commercial life teemed, shops, workshops, and small restaurants. Here in the town centre it seemed to us that we had reached the nucleus of the great big world. And after alighting from our blue and yellow train we tirelessly trod those streets, endlessly hoping for something, endlessly expecting something. Night was the best time. It veiled everything in thickening darkness, there were few streetlights at that time, and every gateway, every pile of rubble grew enormous, enhancing that portentous mood of mystery. Cries, whispers, and wheezes drifted from the ruins, and we – trembling in excitement – imagined dramas full of danger and pathos. The Prince of the Night stopped us on a night like that.

"My stable is in danger," he announced, outraged. Zbyszek Młotek and I were at his beck and call. The Prince of Night had a hawklike nose, a grey mop of hair, and wore richly patterned cravats. He peppered his speech with foreign words and was familiar with the connexions obtaining in many of Europe's prisons. His appearance was that of a many-coloured bird. The young militiamen who had come straight from the countryside to keep order in the town stared at him mutely. One batty old woman who used to frequent the Cinderella bar was unendingly astonished by him: "Where could such a flower have sprung up from?" So he was different. And that was actually enough for us. (...)

Zbyszek Młotek's ribs were fused together and he claimed he could take any punch. While I had nothing. A skinny, snot-nosed kid with unruly, sticking-out hair, who wasn't much good at fighting either. And I so wanted something to happen! (...) Zbyszek Młotek and I unanimously agreed that our former lives had been flat and dull.

Which is why when the Prince of Night appeared on the scene, everything immediately whirled around like a merry-go-round.

Excerpt translated by David French



© Krzysztof Dubiel

**MAREK
NOWAKOWSKI**
(1935–2014)

Książę Nocy. Najlepsze opowiadania

[Prince of the Night. The Best Short Stories]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Iskry, Warszawa 2018

ISBN: 978-83-244-0510-7

Translation rights: Jolanta Nowakowska, olasek8@wp.pl

Short story collections (selection)

Benek Kwiciarz, 1961

Silna gorączka, 1963

Zapis, 1965

Śmierć żółwia, 1973

Wesele raz jeszcze, 1974

Chłopak z gołębiami na głowie, 1979

Raport o stanie wojennym (1982–1984) [*The Canary and Other*

Tales of Martial Law], 1990

Opowiadania uliczne, 2002

Dziennik podróży w przeszłość, 2014

Marek Nowakowski's work includes several novels, non-fiction books, and screenplays as well. It has been adapted into films and stage plays.

Foreign language translations

USA, UK, Germany, France, Netherlands, Serbia

Sweden, Norway, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Azerbaijan, Japan, Vietnam – in anthologies

Selected awards

Kościelski Foundation Award (1968)

Freedom Award of the French Pen Club (1983)

Władysław Reymont Literary Award (2002)

Nike Literary Award (2002) – nomination

Literary Award of the Capital City of Warsaw (2010)

Rosary

Wake-up call against uncritical trust in technology



JANUSZ A. ZAJDEL AWARD

After the mysterious destruction of Earth, which occurred in an undefined past, humanity lives in a series of rings orbiting the Sun (hence the title of the novel). One of them hosts Warsaw. Nobody knows how food or other consumer goods are produced, no one knows whether or how they can travel to other rings, where cities from all over the world are located.

The author describes a system of points that are awarded to anyone who finds themselves in a stressful situation. This system, conceived in good faith to prevent crimes, in practice turned against the residents of Warsaw. After exceeding the appropriate limit, a person is subject to elimination, of which the only thing known is that it is inevitable and involves their removal from the city. The residents of Warsaw, unable to escape to another ring and terrified of elimination, are condemned to constant self-control.

Here arises the task for the protagonist, who has the ability to reduce the number of points he has; Harpad is a fixer, who helps – for a due price – those in need, who face mysterious and inevitable punishment if their points rise even more. *Rosary* is probably Kosik's most multi-layered novel, in which we follow the fate of not one protagonist, but a large number of by no means secondary characters. The novel keeps the reader in suspense and it is not known until the very end what the driving force of the described world really is. The solution to the puzzle, as it is with Kosik, is subversive and thought-provoking. I will not be lying if I say that this author's latest novel is one of the best texts in Polish fantasy, at least in recent years.

Michał Żarski, translated by Katarzyna Popowicz

He realised something was wrong when two featureless musclemen in gold mirror visors blocked him on his regular evening run. The trees in the park were masking the glow of streetlights so he almost ran into them. He thought he was being mugged, which was probably the reason he reacted. He lurched sideways and tripped on the curb. He heard an electric crack and blue sparks shot over his head. He steadied himself with a hand on the grass and rushed straight ahead. He didn't scream or look back, so as not to waste energy. He simply ran away as quickly as he could. (...) They'd fallen behind, they were a good fifteen metres behind him. If he reached the doorway... there would be people, and CCTV cameras, lots of them. He dashed out into a cobbled path and covered the distance separating him from safety in a few seconds.

An orange Nysa stopped right outside the doorway. With a hiss of compressed air, the doors with the letters "EL" in a circular logo parted and four men in black and orange bodysuits and helmets with gold mirror visors jumped out. He hesitated in horror and almost stopped. He turned left and sprinted away, but he'd lost his advantage. He saw a blue flash and felt a sharp pain in his left shoulder. The rest of the charge broke up with a hiss on the wrought iron fence. Rose petals scattered like feathers from a torn pillow. He screamed and staggered. His now limp arm was slowing him down, but he ran on.

Two people were coming the other way. A police patrol! He opened his mouth, but didn't manage to scream. Sparks danced on the pavement, along the cracks in the granite slabs. Needles of light struck his feet and his calves immediately went limp. He slumped to the ground, breaking his fall with his good hand. The policemen slowed down and observed the situation from some way away, curious.. He raised astonished eyes towards them and then understood – it wasn't a mugging.

The stamp of heavy boots thudded by his ear. A knee pushed him down to the ground, his arms were twisted behind him and handcuffs snapped shut on his wrists. Three men hauled him upwards. He couldn't stand by himself.

"Citizen Marek Reveda?" one of the heavies in black growled through his visor and continued without waiting for an answer. "Eliminator number eight-one. On behalf of the President of Warsaw I'm arresting you pre-emptively. The rights applying to you will be read out after confirmation of the legality of the arrest procedure."

His eyes swept helplessly from one mirrored visor to the next. By now he understood, but needed a little more time to believe it. I mean, he had a supper date in an hour and a meeting the following day – that project was back on track.

"What are...? he uttered with difficulty. "But I didn't... I haven't done..."

Before he could say anything else a cloth sack was placed on his head. He felt the men pulling him, the tips of his shoes dragging on the pavement. But what's...? I mean he's wanted to buy a cat to have something living hanging around his house. He'd almost decided on a black one so you wouldn't see the fur on the carpet. He was going to wash his car and buy Anka a gift. So many things to do... So what the...?

Excerpt translated by David French

Extended English sample available (kasia@powergraph.pl)



© Andrzej Kawa

RAFAŁ
KOSIK

Born 1971

Różaniec [Rosary]

Publisher: Powergraph, Warszawa 2017

ISBN: 9788364384684

Translation rights: Powergraph, kasia@powergraph.pl

SF novels for adults

Mars, 2003

Vertical, 2006

Kameleon, 2008

Books for children & YA

Amelia i Kuba series, 2014-2018

Felix, Net & Nika series, 2004-2015 – **over 800,000 copies sold**

Foreign language translations

Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania

Germany – in anthologies

Selected awards

Janusz A. Zajdel Award (2008, 2018)

Jerzy Żuławski Award (2008)

Worlds Apart



The authors invited to contribute to *Worlds Apart* represent the Polish cream of the crop

History in our times is also subject to the pop culture economy. Some periods are more in fashion, some ways of presenting history are considered more interesting than others – at least until the wheel of time turns once again. Jakub Różalski has recently found himself in the vein of one of these trends. *Worlds Apart* is an anthology inspired by his paintings.

Różalski himself is an artist, illustrator, and game designer. Yet not until he took on his own projects did he really spread his wings. The key to his success has been combining the realistic aesthetic of the paintings of Józef Chełmoński, Gustave Coubert or William Turner with a dash of Romantic madness: placing his paintings at the intersection of history, mythology, realism, and pop culture. And now it is the turn of writers to tackle his work.

The authors invited to contribute to *Worlds Apart* represent the Polish cream of the crop. They have all tried their hand at the mind-bending literature of

the imagination. In *Sforza*, Łukasz Orbitowski paints a picture of the changes that took place in Poland at the turn of the 9th and 10th century, seen through the eyes of heroes passing down a werewolf hide from generation to generation. Jakub Małecki depicts an oneiric horror story that occurs when the barriers between worlds are torn apart. Aneta Jadowska tells a story of the Polish Tatars, who struggle with their own legends and folklore. Jakub Żulczyk describes a day in the life of a fairytale gnome thrown into some very peculiar modern conditions. Aleksandra Zielińska uses a steampunk setting to tell the story of a provincial town. Robert J. Szmidt describes a Europe under Asian hegemony, while Jacek Dukaj takes his readers on an epic journey to Japan, where we find the heroes of Bolesław Prus's classic 19th-century novel *The Doll*. Yet these are only some of the attractions awaiting readers of *Worlds Apart*.

Michał Cetnarowski, translated by Sean Gasper Bye

We all know the legends of the Basilisk, of Faust, of the Spiders. The last of these are the most common, of course, and nearly each one is different. I remember my grandmother could endlessly tell the story of how she saw the Spiders with her own eyes here, in Wierzbów. It was 1920. Harvest time. Grandma was six. She was sitting in a field wearing an oversized straw hat, and the sun was melting the world around her. Suddenly someone screamed. One, two, three people. Sickles fell onto the freshly-cut field. Grandma saw each of the peasants, one after the other, either kneel or, still standing, cross themselves. Then she saw them.

They were enormous, glistening in the harsh sunlight. They were emerging slowly as if from fog. Their long legs reached sky-high, carrying bodies shaped like boats and cylinders over the face of the earth. They looked like houses that had come alive and decided to go wandering. You could hear their rhythmic, melodic grinding. As though someone was trying to play a tune on a windowpane with a nail.

Grandma told us the moment she laid eyes on the Spiders her head started spinning. They towered over the trees and she didn't know where they were heading. They were approaching in a loose herd. The earth was trembling.

One of them reached the neighbors' field. The peasants rose to their feet and headed toward it. They ran, outpacing one another. Some removed their shirts, others wheezed. The Spider's metal legs were supporting a semicircular construction. Its flat surface was crisscrossed with fissures and silver veins.

"Sort of like a nutshell, you know, but as large as a church," explained grandma.

The peasants were tripping over and getting cut up on the hardened furrows. The first of them reached a metal leg and started to climb. He fell down and tried again. The others followed him. They pushed past, pulled on one another, bit one another's legs, and fought. Supposedly the first to reach the top was my great-grandfather. He was moving up the metal leg like a monkey. He climbed to the very top, threw his body over the edge and disappeared into the shell forever. (...) The rest of the adults were going crazy. Only my grandmother and a few other children from the area kept their wits about them. The Spiders moved on and no one ever saw them again.

From the short story *Heaven is coming* by Jakub Małecki
Excerpt translated by Sean Gasper Bye



Author's archive

**JAKUB
RÓŻALSKI**

Born 1981

Inne światy (Worlds Apart)

Publisher: Sine Qua Non (SQN), Kraków 2018

ISBN: 978-83-65836-19-9

Translation rights: Sine Qua Non, pr@wsqn.pl

Short stories by the top Polish writers inspired by the work of **Jakub Różalski** – Polish graphic and game designer, painter, conceptual artist, and illustrator. See also: jrozalski.com.

Featured authors:

Sylwia Chutnik – author of novels, journalist, feminist activist, laureate of literary prizes. Her work has been translated into foreign languages.

Jacek Dukaj – writer, translator and editor, considered the greatest living author of Polish fantasy prose. Holder of numerous prizes. His works have been translated into many foreign languages. His novel *Ice [Lód]* is about to be published in Great Britain.

Aneta Jadowska – writer, literary scholar, fan of pop culture and forensic science.

Anna Kańtoch – author of fantasy books and crime fiction, five-time winner of the most important Polish award for fantasy authors – the Janusz A. Zajdel Award.

Jakub Małecki – writer and translator; author of ten books, including the celebrated *Dygot [Tremble]*; winner of the Jerzy Żuławski Award.

Remigiusz Mróz – a prodigy of Polish literature, author of crime fiction and thrillers that sell hundreds of thousands of copies.

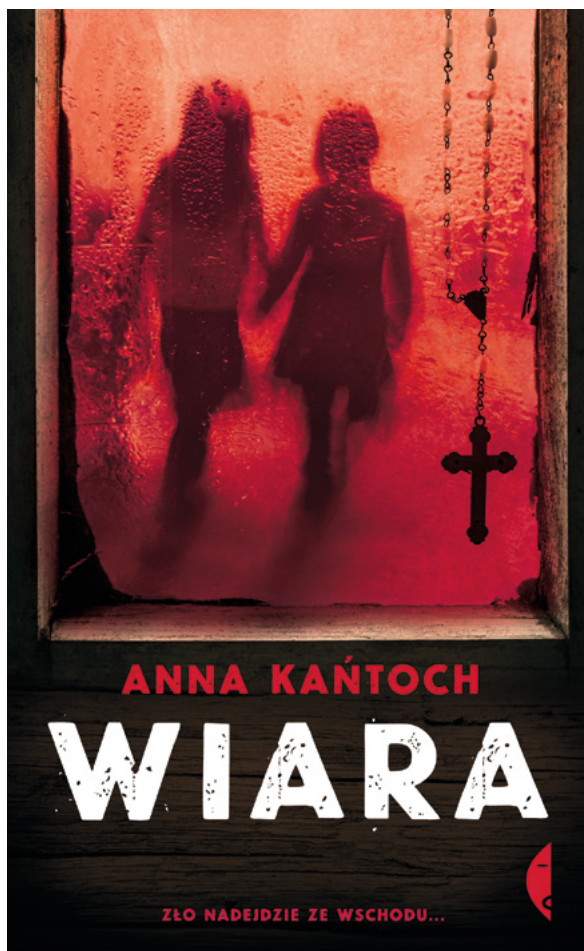
Łukasz Orbitowski – writer, editor, journalist, author of popular short stories and horror novels.

Robert J. Szmidt – science fiction and fantasy writer, translator, editor, journalist and publisher; his novel *Easy to Be A God*, has been published in the USA.

Aleksandra Zielińska – writer of the younger generation, author of a novel and a collection of short stories, a laureate of nominations for prestigious prizes.

Jakub Żulczyk – novelist and scriptwriter of popular film series, author of bestselling, award-winning literary fiction *Dog Hill [Wzgórze psów]* and *In Blinding Lights [Ślepnąc od światła]*; the latter is scheduled to be adapted into a HBO series.

Faith



The fictional Rokitnica is a closed microcosm, to which strangers are not allowed

Although Anna Kańtoch is known primarily as the author of excellent short stories and fantasy novels (she is a five-time winner of the Janusz Zajdel Prize, the most prestigious award in Polish fantasy), in just two years she has become a leading author of crime fiction. This is significant, as the competition in this genre is exceptionally tough. Her criminal debut, *Mercy*, was well received by critics and readers, but it is *Faith* that shows the full potential of this writer. The strength of her prose is not about a remarkable main character, since Captain Witczak “was a very average man” with “a nondescript” face; it is also difficult to regard as such the young priest who discovers a young woman’s body and for this reason becomes an important participant in events. Neither is it about some interesting reality (the action takes place in the 80s at a summer resort, close to a nuclear power plant that is being built), which, moreover, confirms that the Polish provinces today have the most to offer to culture – foreign included. What impresses most is the author’s excellent ear for language, especially as regards dialogue full of dialects, the skilful use of detail (this is why the stifling

atmosphere of *Faith* is so overwhelming), and above all intrigue: intricate and dark, based rather on the craft of writing and the idea than on a rushing plot and the stacking up of corpses. The fictional Rokitnica is a closed microcosm, to which strangers are not allowed. This applies both to the parish priest, who tries to learn something about the mysterious disappearances of his predecessors, as well as to Witczak, unsuccessfully trying to persuade the locals to share their secrets. The author’s fantasy background allows her to create a climate of strangeness: it is difficult to separate reality from what is imagined and even paranormal. Kańtoch touches on topics that are scarcely present in Polish literature: beside the faithfully recreated small-town landscape of mid-1980s Silesia, the writer brings the reader closer to the conflict between the clergy and militia, recalls Polish hippies, and recreates the customs and aspirations of Poles at that time. If it is true that a crime story portrays society today more faithfully than a literature of manners, then *Faith* would be its best example.

Krzysztof Cieślík, translated by Katarzyna Popowicz

The captain made his way along this section of the track. Amidst the brush on the right, there was a flash of reflected sunlight from a piece of metal. Witczak shielded his eyes. At the bottom of the embankment stood a cross, adorned with a wreath of fresh flowers. Swearing like a sailor, the captain slid down the slope, pulled his shirt sleeve over his hand, and carefully parted the nettles. At first, he thought that the cross was erected after the murder, but no – the rusted metal was decidedly old-looking. And under the fresh wreath was a second one, withered with age. Witczak called to Hanka. “What’s this cross?” he asked, as the girl struggled toward him through the brush. “I don’t know,” she replied, disconcerted. “I’m not from here. I spent my vacations here with my aunt, and I know a lot of people from Rokitnica, but no one ever said anything to me about a cross. Probably some accident with a train or something like that.” “And these flowers?” “Maybe someone wanted to memorialize that girl?” “The murder victim? Fine. And these? He lifted the fresh flowers to reveal the flowers underneath – withered, brown, and so shrunk that it was impossible to identify what kind they were. “How long, in your opinion, would they have to hang here to look like this?” “I don’t know,” she answered, increasingly uncertain. “A few days? Longer?” “Longer,” she acknowledged. “Two weeks, maybe.” “Which means someone hung flowers on this cross a week before the murder. That doesn’t seem strange to you?” “Not especially,” she said, but the captain wasn’t listening to her. He dropped the wreath and clambered back up the embankment. The girl followed in his footsteps. They reached the top just in time to see a man in rubber boots making his way through the meadow. Witczak watched him carefully, registering his dark hair, close set eyes, and hooked nose. Despite his rubber boots, dirty shirt, and pants smeared with who knows what, the man was handsome in an unsettling way that must appeal to women. “Franciszek Chojniak?” the captain asked his companion. “Yes.” “He lives here with his family?” “With his wife. They don’t have children. Ewa had an accident and now she’s paralyzed.” Chojniak untied the cow from its post, patted her side, and began to lead her in the direction of the house. He didn’t even glance at Hanka or Witczak. “I want to see him tomorrow at the police station,” the

captain said. “Send him a summons.” “If we send it by mail, it’ll take three days to arrive.” “Well, then notify him some other way,” Witczak’s irritation was returning. The girl hesitated for perhaps half a second and then ran back down the embankment, shouting, “Franek, wait!” The captain closed his eyes in despair.

Excerpt translated by Megan Thomas



© Sławomir Okrzejski

**ANNA
KAŃCZUCH**
Born 1976

Wiara [Faith]
Publisher: Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wołowiec 2017
ISBN: 978-83-8049-523-4
Translation rights: Andrew Nurnberg Associates Warsaw,
anna.rucinska@nurnberg.pl

Books published
Miasto w zieleni i błękicie, 2004,
Diabeł na wieży, 2005
Zabawki dla diabła, 2006,
13 anioł, 2007,
Przedksiężycowi series, 2009-2013,
Czarne, 2012,
Nina Pankowicz series, 2013-2018
Światy Dantego, 2015,
Łaska, 2016,
Niepełnia, 2017

Selected awards
Janusz A. Zajdel Award (2009, 2010, 2011, 2014, 2015)
European Science Fiction Society Encouragement Award (2007)
Jerzy Żuławski Award (2013)
High Caliber Award [Nagroda Wielkiego Kalibru] (2016)
– nomination
Piła Crime Fiction Festival Award (2017)
International Crime and Mystery Festival Wrocław (2018)
– Janina Paradowska Award (2018)

Goodnight, Auschwitz



Touching, original stories of five concentration camp survivors

“Here one lives three months at most”, is what the characters of *Goodnight, Auschwitz* hear when they cross the gate with the *Arbeit macht frei* inscription. The gate leads to hell, and as the book by Aleksandra Wójcik and Maciej Zdziarski shows, stretches to its very bottom, to Auschwitz, the Nazi German concentration and extermination camp in occupied Poland during the Second World War. Children who cry are risking their lives. Hunger and diseases transform prisoners such that even their family or friends do not recognise them. Here death is not a disaster but the norm. The crematorium smokes. The heroes of the reportage are five prisoners who survived the Nazi German Auschwitz camp. Józef Paczyński, Marcei Godlewski, Lidia Maksymowicz, Karol Tendera and Stefan Lipniak. They differ in age, length of stay in the camp and forms of terror they experienced. But they have one thing in common – they were at the bottom of a terrible hell. In the pages of the book, they create a picture of an unimaginable world. Lydia was three years old. She mastered the practice

of hiding from Dr. Mengele, who carried out medical experiments on children. The book contains plenty of such harrowing stories, but they do not overdo the brutality. Drastic descriptions are presented very neutrally. Coldly. Without emotions. As a result, they are even more moving. “About two thousand people can be killed in a gas chamber in a dozen or so minutes”; “People are enslaved like plasticine. You can do anything with them”. But experiences from the Nazi German camp are one thing, and life after liberation is another. The heroes live to old age. They live the need to bear witness. They rave in illnesses, returning to their camp memories. A few of them die before the book appears in bookstores. Their stories, however, live and are a warning to us. We must read this book so that we never forget what the effects of human hatred are.

Sylvia Krasnodębska, translated by Katarzyna Popowicz

The deepest place in memory

How did he end up in a concentration camp? he is asked at every meeting.
“Through stupidity!”
He escaped from Germany, escaped from Wrocław, even scarpered off from his father’s house when the Germans tracked him down. But he had no chance of escaping from the shop on Tomasz Street when he went to visit a friend.
The Gestapo visit the shop.
“Is Karol Tendera here?” asks a man in a coat.
“No,” answers Stanisław, the shop assistant.
And at that moment Karol enters. He opens the door and holds the door open for the man who wants to know. Stasiu, his mate from the shop, seemed not to understand what was happening. He says aloud:
“Karol, this gentleman’s looking for you.”
That was enough. It was all over.
“Gestapo, please follow me.”
The car sets off for the prison on Montelupich Street.

Plasticine

After a month of interrogation, they transport him from Krakow to the camp in a pickup truck. February, fifteen degrees below zero. In the cab: three Germans, the driver and two SS-men. And two at the back as well. In the back: fifteen prisoners kneeling down. Hungry, freezing. They keep each other warm. They don’t know what’s in store for them.
They finally drive up to the gate with the inscription *Arbeit macht frei*. By means of a welcome the guards hit the newcomers with rubber hoses full of sand. Karol tries to avoid the beating – he hides behind the backs of older, taller men.
Chased into the camp bathhouse they receive a lump of grey soap with the inscription RIF. His friends decipher the abbreviation. *Reines Jüdische Fett*, or ‘pure Jewish fat’, but Karol isn’t certain if it really stood for something so horrifying. The kapos responsible for the procedure of washing the prisoners run streams of hot water. First, they shout: “Raus! Raus! Raus!”, then in Polish:
“Get out! Get out.”
They don’t receive towels after washing. They go straight into the yard from the bathhouse. They stand up to their knees in the snow, shaking from the cold. Half of them die of pneumonia in the first few weeks. The strongest, the most hardened survive, ruthlessly fighting for their lives.
“An enslaved person,” Karol will say years later, “is like plasticine in a child’s hands. You can do what you like with them.”

Protection

Karol is sent to work building railway lines. Eight to ten prisoners transport rails attached to slings. They

screw the sections onto wooden sleepers. Undernourished, young, weak. Rivers of sweat pour off them. Some of them faint.
After a few days, one of his companions – his name is Michał, he’s taciturn, introverted – cracks. He says to Karol:
“I have to have a drink or at least splash myself down.”

Excerpt translated by David French



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ALEKSANDRA
WÓJCIK
Born 1987



© author's archive

MACIEJ
ZDZIARSKI
Born 1979

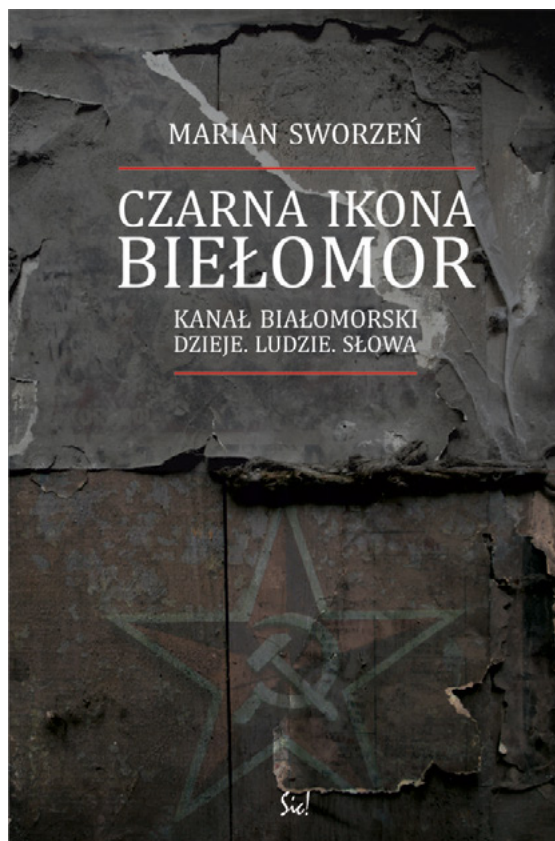
Dobranoc Auschwitz. Reportaż o byłych więźniach
[Goodnight, Auschwitz. A Reportage about Ex-Prisoners]
Publisher: Znak Publishers, Kraków 2017
ISBN: 978-83-240-4173-2
Translation rights: Znak Publishers, bolinska@znak.com.pl

Sales numbers
Over 15,000 copies sold

Media coverage
The book has been featured in biggest Polish newspapers and magazines (*Gazeta Wyborcza, Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, Gazeta Polska Codziennie, Do Rzeczy, Tygodnik Powszechny, Tygodnik Przegląd*), as well as in the national TV and radio.

Black Icon. Belomor

**One of the most important
Polish books on communism
and Russia in recent years**



**SHORTLISTED FOR THE GDYNIA,
ANGELUS AND MACKIEWICZ AWARDS**

Black Icon. Belomor is a monumental biographical and historical essay dedicated to the construction of the White Sea Canal in the USSR during 1931-1933, connecting the Baltic Sea with the White Sea. It was one of the flagship infrastructure projects of the Bolsheviks. Its construction was accompanied by boisterous propaganda, which ignored the fact that the Canal was built thanks to the slave labor of hundreds of thousands of political prisoners, of whom tens of thousands died. At the center of Marian Sworzeń's attention is a collective work that arose as a result of a journey made in 1933 by over one hundred Soviet writers to the place where the Canal was built. The authors of this "Tome", as it is called by Sworzeń, were nearly forty literati, among whom were people as well-known as Mikhail Zoszczenko and Maxim Gorki. The author of *Black Icon* describes and perceptively comments on the contents of the "Tome", reconstructs the biographies of its creators, recalls the fate of the participants of the 1933 voyage (for instance, Isaac Babel), and confronts the ideological lies with the dramatic biographies of the victims of the canal construction.

The title of Sworzeń's book is a metaphor for the Canal, and especially of the enormous sacrifice of human

life, the cost of its construction. The *Black Icon* is also an indictment of Bolshevism and an example of its moral and civilizational degeneracy, which the book's fragments of reportage superbly illustrate. At the same time, Sworzeń searches for the genesis of this murderous experiment among 19th-century utopians, such as the French communist Théodore Dézamy, who dreamed of "industrial armies" taming nature, and at the same time educating the "new man". The author also raises questions about the civilizational belonging of Russia, and warns artists against the slogan "engineers of human souls." He also shows that behind the crimes of communism were specific individuals and particular deeds and words that bear the responsibility for the tragedies of real people. *Black Icon* impresses with the author's erudition, literary talent, and personal involvement. This is one of the most important Polish books on communism and Russia in recent years.

Maciej Urbanowski, translated by Peter Obst

“I became superintendent for the building of lock eighteen, the one nearest the sea. My people were former kulak peasants and thieves. I had to live with them and lead them. My superiors were other engineers and those of the GPU State Political Directorate. (...) Before I realized it, a year had gone by. The lock was nearly completed, only the banks had to be finished. The work moved forward rapidly, the people worked because they had no other choice. In my group I lost no one – I am speaking of my sector. Yet I saw with my own eyes a group of peasants from Ukraine, how they came and walked off into the snow and cold and never returned. In such cases no one would look for those responsible! But if it would happen that a teamster had a horse drop dead, then he would not hear the end of it! I had seven hundred people under my command, which translated into seven hundred kilograms of bread per day. This was a valuable ration. The winter was hard; I quietly let out word that from each brigade one man could skip work for a day now and then. This happened everywhere ... Forced to work, we could not even dream of escape or rest; we were simply slaves...”

“Do you remember when the canal opened?” Unfortunately my question was not different from those that were posed at one time by people who came out from behind their desks in Leningrad or Moscow.

“All of that was already written about... They released the water, it started to fill the channel and push against the levees... they held! We opened the lock gates; they worked, water started to fill the lock... It could not have been otherwise, for then we would have had to start over, and work even faster, and who knows, our sentences could have been extended. But perhaps you don’t want me to repeat myself...”

“No, in no way.” I felt something like relief.

“After a while, something happened that you would find interesting. I was on duty and word came down that a ship, the *Vorshilov*, was going to pass through.”

“Wasn’t it the *Anokhin*?” I interrupted despite myself.

“No, it was the *Vorshilov*. It came, followed by a few barges. Then we saw that a steamboat was coming up, with a group of people on deck.”

“And that was the *Anokhin*, with the writers.”

“We know that now, but then... How was I to know that they were writers, all the more that they called themselves the writers’ brigade... I was standing on the side of the lock and just gaped at them. I saw the

fashionable jackets, caps, shaved faces, horn-rimmed glasses, notebooks under their arms, photo cameras. All men, but then I glimpsed a few women... Do you know, there was even a raised platform for an orchestra with a podium for the conductor. This was an entirely different world sailing by! And then someone was calling to me from the deck, repeating once, twice; finally I heard him. He wanted to know what I was sentenced for and how long I had been there. What could have I told him? I was not able anymore to converse with normal people. I was frightened, not knowing what to shout back. That I am totally innocent? For such talk I could easily get another ten years tacked on to my sentence.

Excerpt translated by Peter Obst



© Teresa Sworzeń

**MARIAN
SWORZEŃ**

Born 1954

Czarna ikona. Białomor. Kanał Białomorski: dzieje, ludzie, słowa
[Black icon. Białomor. The White Sea–Baltic Canal: History,
People, Words]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Sic!, Warszawa 2017

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info@wydawnictwo-sic.com.pl

Books published

Niepoprawni. Śpiewnik prozą, 2006

Melancholia w Faustheim. Powieść o rewolucji w Monachium, 2008

Opis krainy Gog, 2011

Inne życie. Biografia Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza, 2017

Selected awards

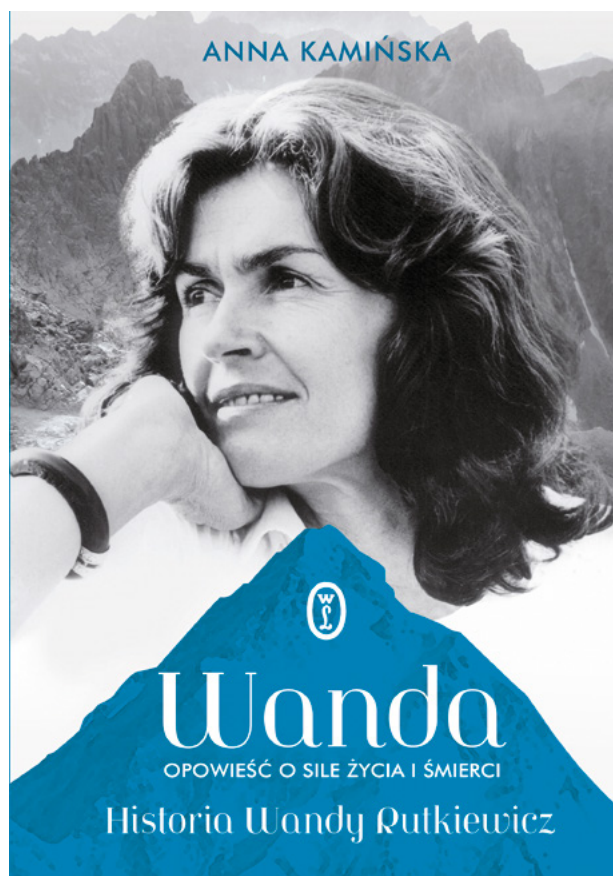
Gdynia Literary Prize (2012 – winner; 2018 – nomination)

Angelus Central European Literature Award (2018) – nomination

Józef Mackiewicz Literary Prize (2018) – nomination

Wanda, A Tale of Life and Death: The Story of Wanda Rutkiewicz

The story of the first woman
to ascend K2



A BESTSELLER

Wanda tells the story of the *grande dame* of Polish Himalayan climbing – Wanda Rutkiewicz (1943-1992), the first woman to reach the summit of K2, and the third to climb Mount Everest. Yet this is more a book about a person than a climber, about an intriguing woman who attracted crowds of admirers and stoked fierce emotions, ahead of her time, both as a Himalaist and as a woman.

Her life and achievements have often been described. Nonetheless, Anna Kamińska's book assembles and illuminates a great deal, such as why Wanda abandoned her promising career as an athlete. Some entirely new themes emerge, such as the tragic deaths of her father and brother. When we read about her childhood, we learn the source of her inflated ambition. The everyday reality in socialist Poland is illustrated in the fragments where Wanda takes several-month-long vacations from work to join expeditions.

One important chapter covers the conquering of Everest (the first Polish attempt); it makes for a stand-

alone story, full of brilliant anecdotes describing Wanda Rutkiewicz's greatest accomplishment. Kamińska describes earlier expeditions more succinctly, though there, too, she uncovers new facts. The author gained access to every living soul who had tales to tell about Wanda, and she managed to breach the mistrust of the mountaineering community.

The book contains this statement about Wanda: "She was focused on her goals, but equivocal in her close relationships." Anna Kamińska's book takes the reader into the heart of this equivocality. It is worth noting, however, that at no time does the author strip the protagonist of her intimacy.

This book is valuable for those who know little about climbing as well as for those who are quite knowledgeable. This is part of what has made the book a bestseller in Poland.

Andrzej Mirek, translated by Soren Gauger

In 1989, when Wanda decides to climb all the eight-thousanders, as she claimed in her submission to the IMM, Kangchenjunga was the first point in the “Caravan of Dreams” program she crafted in 1990 for conquering the Crowns of the Himalayas.

“I call my plan the ‘Caravan of Dreams’ because I am trying to make something that seems pure fantasy come true,” she says. “I’ll be hiking from valley to valley, through the various peaks, just as the caravans once did.”

She realizes this is her last chance to conquer all the peaks. “I haven’t got time, are you fucking aware how old I am?!” she explains to Andrzej Paczkowski.

In 1989, she is forty-six years old. She plans to conquer the Crown of the Himalayas in 1991, taking the eight eight-thousanders she had not yet climbed in the course of a single year.

In a letter she sent to her sponsors in late 1990, she writes: “My project encompasses eight major stages. Each requires enormous amounts of skill, courage, and enough endurance for the whole business; that is the greatest challenge.” She also stressed: “To this day, no woman has been up to this challenge; I’ll be the first. (...)”

The “Caravan” is a ground-breaking program never before accomplished in the history of Himalaism. Wanda seeks to conquer all the remaining peaks of the Crown of the Himalayas in such a short time, she says, to avoid the difficulty of acclimatization. For every time she set off on one or two expeditions in the course of a year, she fell ill on the march back to base; upon returning from the mountains she became weaker, her body unable to readjust. (...)

In 1990, Reinhold Messner had conquered the Crown of the Himalayas, followed by the late Jerzy Kukuczka. (...) “I will not be the third, coming after Messner and Kukuczka. I will be the first to try something new,” she tells reporter Barbara Rusowicz. “The whole point is to attempt to use constant acclimatization. That is something no one has ever done, man or woman.”

In Poland, many Himalaists just shake their heads in disbelief upon hearing of the “Caravan to Dreams.”

“At the height of her career, Wanda painted herself into a corner,” says Aleksander Lwow. “She came up with a program to conquer eight eight-thousanders in a single year. Doing five in one year was not feasible, Wanda was almost fifty years old. My colleagues and I knew from the very beginning that she had no chance of pulling it off.”

“The program and the idea were good, but Wanda wanted to do it too quickly,” Krzysztof Wielicki now comments. “One year was getting carried away. It would have been possible if she had gone about it differently. (...) All of us in the community knew that it could end badly.” (...)

In a letter fishing for sponsors in 1990, Wanda foresaw how her community would react to her project. “Without a doubt, some people will suppose I’m only after danger and thrills,” she warned. “But this is a mistake, and only I know the risks involved. If I were not convinced that I could do it, I would not be making the attempt. (...) I would not be putting myself in a situation that would be tough to survive, but the mountains are an inextricable part of my life.”

Excerpt translated by Soren Gauger



© Magdalena Wiśniewska-Krasnińska

ANNA
KAMIŃSKA
Born 1980

Wanda. Opowieść o sile życia i śmierci. Historia Wandy Rutkiewicz [Wanda, A Tale of Life and Death: The Story of Wanda Rutkiewicz]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2017

ISBN: 978-83-08-06357-6

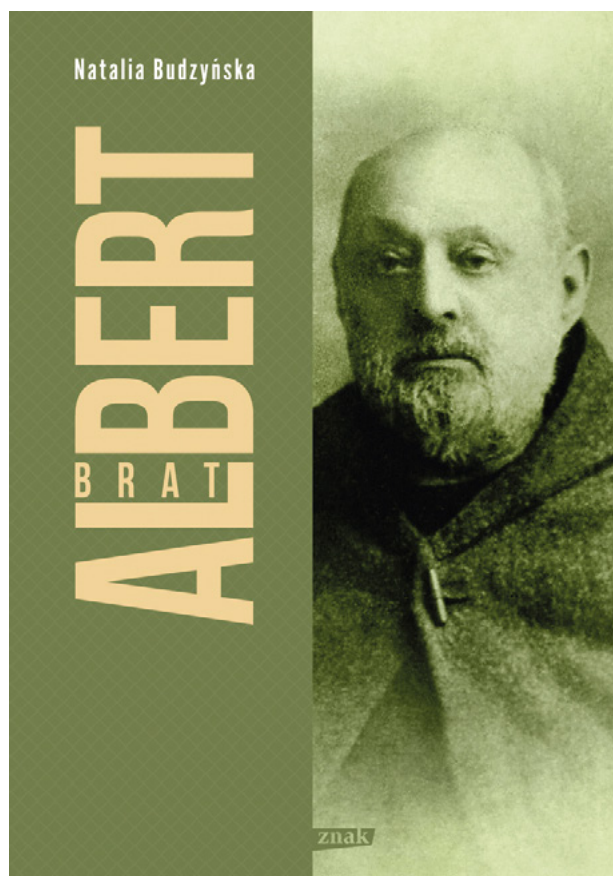
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j.dabrowska@wydawnictwoliterackie.pl

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Books published
Odnalezieni. Prawdziwe historie adoptowanych, 2010
Simona, 2015
Białowieża szeptem. Historie z Puszczy Białowieskiej, 2017

Selected awards
Empik Bestsellers, non-fiction (2017) – nomination
Empik – the biggest book chain in Poland

Brother Albert. A biography



A saint who walked in sandals and slept under the same roof as villains, drunks and whores

The lives of an eccentric and a saint have much in common. If you represented each one as a line on a graph, they would both eventually fall away from the well-trodden path that the fate of most people follows (school, first love, studies, work, marriage, children). Whereas the first starts to go around in blind circles, like the trace of meticulously joined-up handwriting, the second ascends, following an upward spiral, to heights that are difficult to comprehend.

The first half of Adam Chmielowski's life was typical for a Polish artist in the 19th century: the son of a good noble family, unfazed by working in the administrative apparatus of one of the foreign powers occupying Poland, eventually rebelling and becoming an idealistic student during the Spring of Nations. As a combatant in one of the tragically doomed uprisings against Russia, he was seriously injured and underwent an amputation without anaesthesia (his screams from an isolated forest hut were muffled by heavy snow fall).

Thanks to bribes and the help of influential relatives, he escaped from under the noses of the Russian authorities to become a student in Munich and Paris. It was an extravagant time of art models, wine, and top hats, mixed in with a hint of boredom. Then, following a Russian amnesty, he returned to Poland.

Suddenly, in 1880, the pen skids off the horizontal line and traces towards the heights. As a bearded monk, he walks in sandals, sleeps under the same roof as bandits, drunks, and whores. Philanthropists who, up until then, had given their charity wrapped in violet scented handkerchiefs (or, in the belief it was more hygienic, threw coins onto the pavement), could not understand him. We also do not completely understand how Adam Chmielowski could have become Brother Albert. This book attempts to provide, at least in some small way, an explanation.

Wojciech Stanisławski, translated by Daniel Wiśniewski

To me, these images in no way suited the Brother Albert whom I began to know. After all, he was never, even for a moment, an old softie. The love with which he surrounded the poor and all those around him was manly and radical, demanding and forgiving. Or, put simply, fatherly. That's why I love the photograph showing him holding a cigarette. In it he seems accessible, real, genuine. Looking at it, I can feel the sun's warmth, smell the grass and the cigarette smoke. I hear a babbling brook and feel myself shooing away flies. I imagine that if I touch his habit, I will feel its roughness. I could sit on a bench by the wooden wall and simply have a chat with him. I wonder if this is the photograph where he was caught off guard by the photographer of General Zamojski's wife. Most probably aware of Brother Albert's aversion to cameras, she tricked him into having it taken. Knowing that he was coming to visit her, she instructed her photographer to stand in a specific spot and to take his photograph without asking, out of the blue. This ruse did not amuse Brother Albert, in fact he was angry with her. But maybe thanks to this cunning plan, we now have a Brother Albert that we can reach out to with our hand, approachable and human. So much so, that, at any moment now, I feel he will lower his head, look sideways, tap the ash from his cigarette, turn around and simply walk off, out of the frame.

(...) He loved his tramps and paupers. He was able to find a common language with them. He didn't condemn them. He didn't moralise. He didn't evangelise. He was able to speak with them, share a joke, offer them vodka and a cigarette. In each of them he saw a human being and sought to find their virtues, whilst describing faults with humour. He didn't take himself too seriously. As observed by Countess Tarnowska: "It is hard to believe that this highly cultured person, living day and night in the most appalling physical and intellectual conditions, in indescribable poverty, in surroundings so unlike those to which he was accustomed as a gentleman and an artist, could retain in similar company his colourful and rather amusing manner of speaking on any subject, including his own problems, in such a way that often when in his presence, one would laugh heartily upon hearing about the adventures and opinions of his nocturnal guests, or his own efforts and even his disappointments, whether this be during a request for donations, or among honorees of various standing". Celina Bzowska also noted: "Brother Albert's face radiated with amusement when he told his stories. He became energised, illustrating everything with his tone of voice

and movements. He relished the abilities and qualities of his charges".

Some people were unable to stomach these accounts. Such a reduction to the level of the lowest of the low did not suit them. They said that Brother Albert sheltered drunks at night and cared for thieves. When local councillors insisted on a response to these charges, Brother Albert replied that, yes, he will continue to open his gates to alcoholics knocking in the middle of the night and, no, he will not pretend to be a policeman, and therefore had no intention of informing on thieves. They then asked him directly whether he would accept a murderer who had just attacked somebody. He replied that, yes, of course he would, adding that at least the murderer wouldn't hurt anybody while in his care. He reiterated that mercy is more important than rules and regulations.

Excerpt translated by Daniel Wiśniewski



© Tomasz Budzyński

**NATALIA
BUDZYŃSKA**

Born 1968

Brat Albert. Biografia [Brother Albert. A Biography]

Publisher: Znak Publishers, Kraków 2017

ISBN: 978-83-240-4975-2

Translation rights: Znak Publishers, bolinska@znak.com.pl

Books published

Matka męczennika. Poruszająca opowieść o Mariannie Kolbe, 2016

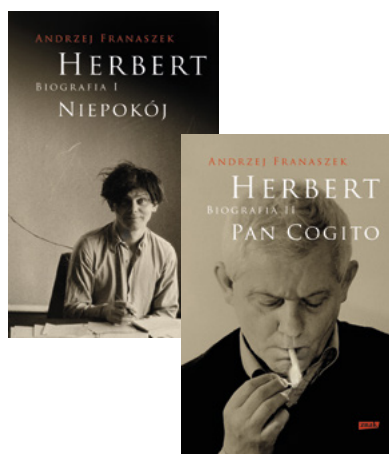
Awards

Catholic Publishers' Association Award FENIKS (2018)

Best Catholic Non-Fiction Book, Granice.pl (2018) – Readers' Choice

Biography: a trend to watch

In the last two years, Polish authors, publishers and readers have fallen in love with biographies, especially those of famous writers. Never before in such a short time have so many celebrated titles been published, which is a phenomenon on the book market. Appreciated by readers, noted by critics, passionately debated by experts, and sometimes controversial... below we present some of them.



Herbert. A Biography

Andrzej Franaszek's monumental biography of Zbigniew Herbert, one of the greatest Polish contemporary poets, is an engaging story about the fate and attitude of the artist. The author does not omit difficult or controversial topics, reading deeply into correspondence and private, previously unknown notes, to illuminate Herbert's work anew. He inscribes the poet's complicated fortunes into the historical panorama of the 20th century. (Another book by Franaszek, entitled *Mitosz. A Biography*, has been published abroad).

Author: Andrzej Franaszek

Publisher: Znak Publishers, 2017

ISBN: 9788324053766

Translation rights: Znak Publishers, bolinska@znak.com.pl



Gombrowicz. Me, A Genius

This is the first full biography of a writer whose life and work continues to fascinate each new generation. Klementyna Suchanow has been collecting materials for years, having talks and travelling in the footsteps of Gombrowicz. The result is a monumental work which reflects not only Itek/Witold, but also the cultural fermentation and complicated historical events of 20th century Europe.

Author: Klementyna Suchanow

Publisher: Czarne, 2017

ISBN: 9788380495579

Translation rights: Andrew Nurnberg Associates Warsaw, anna.rucinska@nurnberg.pl

Nominated for The Nike Literary Award



Lem. Not of This World

This is the first Polish biography of Stanisław Lem, author of science-fiction novels and one of the most translated Polish writers. Drawing from unpublished sources, Orliński discusses large and small, serious and funny secrets of Lem's life. Neither does he avoid the author's traumatic experiences in Lviv during the Holocaust.

Author: Wojciech Orliński

Publisher: Czarne, Agora, 2017

ISBN: 9788380495524

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Rights sold to: Russia, Argentina

30,000 copies sold



Komeda. A Personal Life of Jazz

To learn the truth about one of the greatest Polish musicians, whose *Rosemary's Baby* lullaby was hummed by the whole world, Magdalena Grzebałkowska visits, among others, Scandinavia, Russia and the United States. She reaches the last living witness of Komeda's tragic fall from a cliff fifty years ago, and is the first to present his version of events. She discovers the personal life of Polish jazz – of Komeda and his environment.

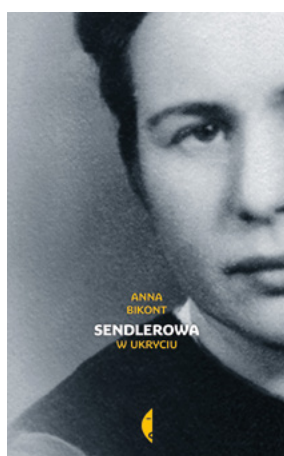
Author: Magdalena Grzebałkowska

Publisher: Znak Publishers, 2018

ISBN: 9788324053650

Translation rights: Znak Publishers, bolinska@znak.com.pl

30,000 copies sold



Sendler. In Hiding

The main character of Bikont's work, Irena Sendler, saved hundreds of Jewish children during the Second World War, and became a symbol of all those who had courage to oppose evil. The book gradually reveals a picture of Sendler among people connected by a common fate – the rescuers and survivors, those who gave shelter and those who sought it. This is a story of some extraordinary Polish women and the children they saved.

Author: Anna Bikont

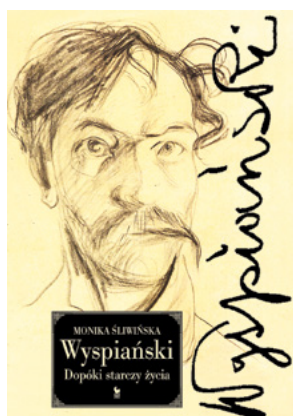
Publisher: Czarne, 2017

ISBN: 9788380496095

Translation rights: Anna Bikont, a.bikont@gmail.com

Capital City of Warsaw Literary Award; nomination for the Nike Literary Award

25,000 copies sold



Wypiański. While There is Life

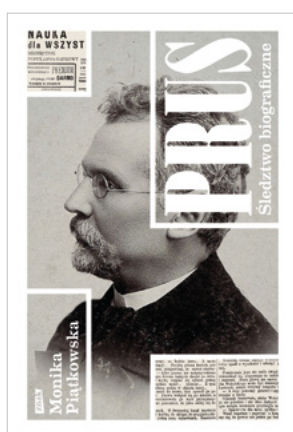
From archives, family documents, letters and diaries, Monika Śliwińska constructs a portrait of the little-known private life of Stanisław Wyspiański (1869-1907). She presents a dramatic record of the life of this genius painter, poet and theatre reformer, an artist who, at the peak of his popularity, said goodbye to the world.

Author: Monika Śliwińska

Publisher: Iskry, 2017

ISBN: 9788324404872

Translation rights: Monika Śliwińska, monika.sliwinska@fp.pl



Prus. A Biographical Investigation

Combining a detective's temperament with a psychologist's insight, Monika Piątkowska undertakes a meticulous investigation and creates a life-sized portrait of Bolesław Prus (1847-1912), a writer of genius, underestimated by his contemporaries, persecuted by numerous manias, surrounded by women and driven mad by jealousy about Sienkiewicz's fame. The master of the realistic novel, is presented by Piątkowska not as a bronze figure on a pedestal, but as a man of flesh and blood.

Author: Monika Piątkowska

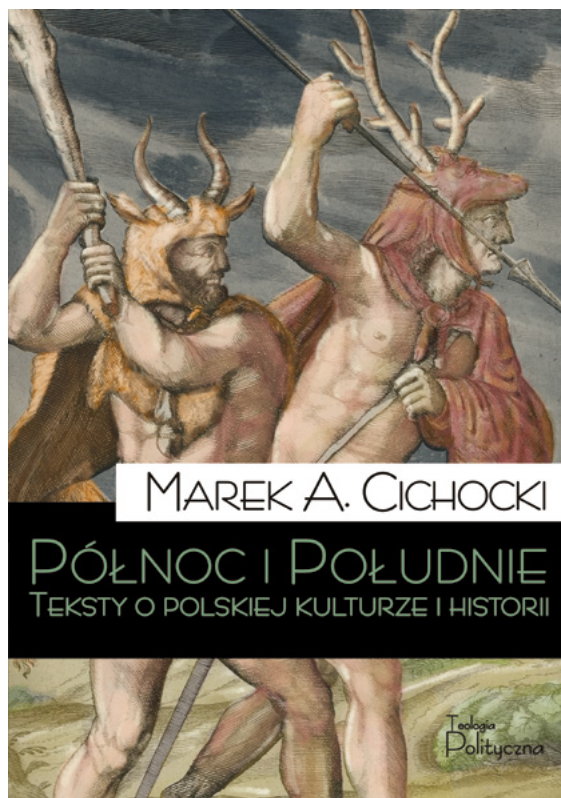
Publisher: Znak Publishers, 2017

ISBN: 9788324045433

Translation rights: Znak Publishers, bolinska@znak.com.pl

Nominated for The Gryfia Literary Award

North and South. Essays on Polish Culture and History



Poles should go back to defining themselves along the North-South axis

Where does Poland lie? For two centuries the Poles were suspended between the East and the West. Accession to the European Union finally seemed to settle where we belong. The problem is that the West we aspired to is now falling apart. Professor Marek Cichocki, philosopher, political scientist, and former adviser to Lech Kaczyński, argues in this brilliant book that Poles should give up on thinking in terms of East-West categories and go back to defining themselves along the North-South axis. Poland is a Slavic country with a Roman form. Cichocki masterfully shows how from the very beginning Polish culture drew from classical sources. The powerful Commonwealth of Two Nations was directly based upon republican models from ancient Rome. Polish struggles with 20th-century totalitarianisms were essentially a defense of this classical heritage against modern barbarism. The ultimate confirmation of

this tie with Rome was the pontificate of the Polish Pope, John Paul II. And so today, instead of looking towards foreign capitals, Poles should cultivate at home their own ancient, republican, and Catholic form. In this way, even when they distance themselves from the post-Enlightenment liberal discourse that dominates in today's EU structures, they will always remain Europeans. The real Europe is the result of the joining of North and South, the adoption by the pagan Gauls, Germans, and Slavs of classical and Christian heritage. As Cichocki argues evocatively, this project is endangered not only by Eastern barbarianism, manifesting itself in Russian communism, but also Western liberal universalism. "Poland will be Latin, or it will not be at all," he concludes. The same can be said about Europe.

Paweł Rojek, translated by Artur Rosman

Does some secret map of Europe exist? A map that, if we could decipher it, would lead us along the hidden paths of our continent, overgrown with the passage of time? Would it tell us who we are? Or, who we cannot be?

When Europe is spoken of today, our attention is primarily focused upon the unification of the continent. We mainly occupy ourselves with the extent to which our continent forms a unity, whether, and under what conditions, unity can be established . . . This political and intellectual compulsion towards unity, which cannot be denied for certain practical reasons, but which draws its power from a fear of divisions, has effectively killed contemporary Europe's capacity to perceive and understand differences, and along with that the potential for critical self-understanding and an understanding of the complex character of our own identity . . . This is why contemporary Europe has become politically and intellectually boring and barren, and some will go so far as comparing it to an infirm old woman. Meanwhile, from the perspective of knowledge, divisions and differences are more interesting and constitute for culture the other, more significant, side of the problem of Europeanness.

The dividing lines running across the continent determine our present consciousness. They are the foundations for differing behaviors and differing ways of perceiving the world. They arrange themselves into a kind of secret map of Europe. For the inhabitants of Central-Eastern Europe, the main division that imposes itself as the most obvious and important is the division into East and West . . . Besides the division into East and West there is also a much deeper division, much more significant for European identity, for understanding what Europe is and how it came to be, and, at the same time, key to understanding Polishness and its unbreakable ties with the process of the formation of European culture. It is the division between North and South. Our Europe was born from the collision of the North with the South and this division through the ages has marked out the spiritual, cultural, and political development of the Old Continent. The demarcation line between the North and South coincides, more or less, geographically with the line of the Rhine and the Danube, that is, the historical border to which the world of the ancient civilization of Christianized Romanitas reached politically. This border, at various historical intervals, divided or joined the continent, its northern and southern part, starting from very distant times – from Arminius, the German prince of the Cherusci, who in the Teutoburg Forest destroyed 20,000 of Varus's legionnaires, to Charlemagne, who was the king of the Franks, but became

the first emperor of a reborn Latin Western Europe, to subsequent German emperors, attempting to gain leadership over the world of the West as a new Rome. The division into North and South can be seen later in many key European historical events . . . Even today's crisis of the project of European integration, the European Union, once again reveals to us the vitality of this immemorial division of the continent, since the main line of the Euro Zone runs between the countries of the North and South.

Where is Poland situated in this division? Precisely right in the middle of it.

Excerpt from the essay *The Secret Map of Europe*,
translated by Artur Rosman



© Alina Gajdanowicz

**MAREK
CICHOCKI**

Born 1966

Północ i Południe. Teksty o polskiej kulturze i historii
[North and South. Essays on Polish Culture and History]

Publisher: Teologia Polityczna, Warszawa 2018

ISBN: 9788362884810

Translation rights: Marek A. Cichocki,
mcichocki@natolin.edu.pl

Books published

Ciągłość i zmiana, 1999

Porwanie Europy, 2004

Władza i pamięć, 2005

Problemy politycznej jedności w Europie, 2012

Marek Cichocki's dissertations on international relations and political philosophy have been published in German and English as well (in joint publications).

On Culture and Revolution



To understand the turnabout that has taken place in Poland, you must read Wildstein

If you want to understand what is happening in Poland, you must understand those who now govern Poland. And to this end, you need to read Bronisław Wildstein – an intellectual whose books and articles have fundamentally influenced the elite of the ruling party. Wildstein is a writer, journalist, and thinker. During his youth in the communist period, he was active in the democratic opposition. Then, during martial law, he became a political émigré in Paris. After the overthrow of communism, he was the president of public television. Most of his closest relatives died in the Holocaust, but he himself – unlike most Poles with a similar biography and background – associated himself unequivocally with the Catholic and rightist movements.

The experiences of the communist period had a major impact on his image of the world; proof of this can be found in the book, a collection of essays, *On Culture and Revolution*. Wildstein strongly disputes Marxism – an ideology that not only led to mass crimes against

humanity, but also, in his opinion, equips its adherents with a fundamentally false image of the world. He also disagrees with current western leftist and liberal thought, which, according to him, leads societies to the loss of cultural identity and, as a consequence, to collapse. Wildstein clearly situates himself on the side of tradition, and against its destruction, on the side of the people and against the elites, for the existing identities of European national cultures, and against their dissolution through immigration. Wildstein – once a friend of the leading Polish left-liberal democrats – is today decidedly against them. He accuses them – and he knows them well – of creating a pseudo-democratic system in the 1990s, in essence an oligarchy, to fulfill their selfish interests. To understand the turnabout that has taken place in Poland, you must read Wildstein.

Piotr Skwieciński, translated by Peter Obst

The fact that Europe is a civilizational concept and not a geographical one has always been known. What has changed is that which we consider to be the European foundation. The current European Union is to a large extent an ideological project whose aim was to fundamentally reconstruct the cultural order of Europe. This was quite apparent in the preamble to the European constitution that was rejected in French and Dutch referendums. Its authors referenced antiquity and then immediately moved to the Enlightenment. At least one and a half millennia of European, Christian history, from which the Enlightenment sprang, was not only left out, but the writers of the document strongly resisted any attempts to include this key tradition in European history, demonstrating that their intent was to change our civilization and remove the Christian underpinning.

A non-religious and anti-Christian Europe was to be the utopia of the “new man”, living according to the perfect laws designed by the enlightened, a community of self-forming beings emancipated from strong identities, starting with the religious and national, ending with gender.

Such fanciful views break with the usual and with the world of real people, who define themselves through national, social, family, and gender affiliation and who also need religion. Legal norms by themselves have never been enough and are not sufficient, and to be effective, must grow out of a living culture that has always had religious roots. Confronted with the immigration crisis, the leaders of modern Europe began to perceive threats and to repeat the need to adapt newcomers to “European values.” But when it came to listing those values, there was a problem. We hear about tolerance, openness, and democracy. In fact, each of these principles is secondary and depends on the previously accepted order, which is embedded in a specific metaphysical arrangement.

Tolerance in contemporary Europe has been brought to self-denial, that is, it has transitioned from recognizing that certain views, considered to be negative, have the right to exist, to demanding their affirmation. In fact, tolerance can never be boundless. Defenders of the modern version of tolerance demonstrate it fully, demanding punishment for their opponents. Rather, it must grow out of a deeper axiological order. Even more problematic and indefinable is “openness,” and current debates on the need for legal restrictions on democracy reveal that the political system must have a deeper ideological foundation.

The dominant ideology of today, which tends to break down traditional cultural forms, is nihilistic. Its goals, as in the case of any utopia, are vague. Newcomers then, understand only one thing: modern Europe is a

place where the old faith and order are dead. In this situation, they withdraw to the civilization that they know, that is their own. Where is Poland situated in this division? Precisely right in the middle of it.

Excerpt translated by Peter Obst



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**BRONISŁAW
WILDSTEIN**

Born 1952

O kulturze i rewolucji [On Culture and Revolution]

Publisher: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 2018

ISBN: 9788362884810

Translation rights: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, piw@piw.pl

Essay collections published

Jakiej prawicy Polacy nie potrzebują, 1987

Dekomunizacja, której nie było czyli Mistyfikacja triumfująca, 2000

Długi cień PRL-u, czyli dekomunizacja której nie było, 2005

Moje boje z III RP i nie tylko, 2008

Śmieszna dwuznaczność świata, który oszalał, 2009

Demokracja limitowana, czyli dlaczego nie lubię III RP, 2013

– over 10,000 copies sold

Cienie moich czasów, 2015

Novels

Jak woda, 1989

Brat, 1992

Mistrz, 2004

Dolina nicości, 2008 **– over 20,000 copies sold**

Czas niedokonany, 2011 **– over 20,000 copies sold;**

a TV series adaptation (in development)

Ukryty, 2012 **– 18,000 copies sold**

Dom wybranych, 2016 **– film adaptation (in development)**

Foreign language translations

USA, Germany, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania

Selected awards

Kościelski Foundation Award (1990)

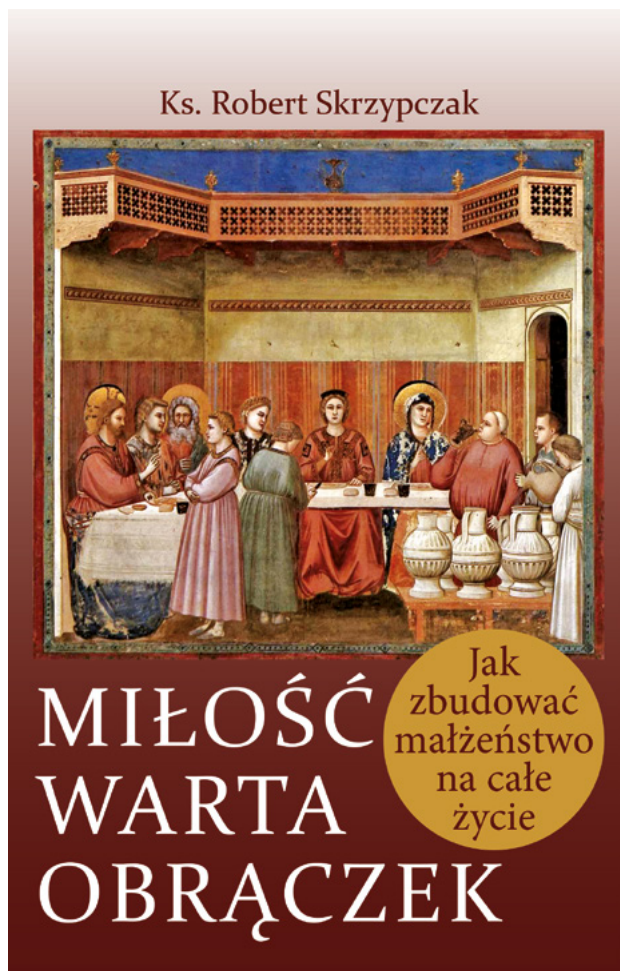
Andrzej Kijowski Award (2004)

Józef Mackiewicz Literary Prize (2009)

Dariusz Fikus Award, one of Poland's most prestigious prizes for excellence in journalism (2009)

Polish Journalists Association Award (2015)

A Love Worthy of a Ring



How to build a marriage that lasts a lifetime

Father Robert Skrzypczak is a philosopher and theologian who has the ability to speak about difficult issues in a way that is clear and easy to understand. His latest publication, *A Love Worthy of a Ring*, is no different. It deals with one of the biggest problems in modern Western society, namely the crisis in the institution of marriage, as evidenced by the rapid year-after-year increase in the divorce rate, together with the increasingly common practice of unmarried couples cohabiting. The author attempts to arrive at the causes of this state of affairs and concludes that today's problems stem from a lack of appreciation for the sacramental dimension of marriage. The joining of a man and a woman is no longer considered a life-long covenant and the mutual offering of oneself, devoid of any self-interest. Instead, it is turning into a contract with a get-out clause, or just another type of civil agreement, a business proposition. Increasingly common pre-nuptial agreements are also evidence of mutual suspicion and lack of trust at the very start of relationships.

According to Father Skrzypczak, the fundamental source of this crisis of marriage is secularism. This word is frequently treated as a cliché in descriptions of Europe's spiritual condition, but it is nevertheless a true reflection of the real lives of real people. At the heart of the issue is whether people see the actual presence of God in their own lives: in their marriages, families, and interactions with others.

Father Skrzypczak invites us to discover a lost image – the image in which we were created: a relationship to which we were called; a love which triumphs over any obstacle, crisis, or suffering; even death. He finds such an image in marriage. This is not some unattainable ideal, but rather – as the author shows us – a reality experienced today by many of the married couples with which he is acquainted.

Grzegorz Górny, translated by Daniel Wiśniewski

Relationships with parents, important as they are, must, after marriage, be thought through and transformed. This also applies to relationships with friends and, furthermore, married couples need to pay specific attention to their relationships with their children, which sometimes can risk turning into something exaggerated and exclusive. It is not healthy for a son or daughter to start dominating the entire emotional consciousness of their mother or father, thereby eliminating the other parent who becomes, so to speak, less important, if not downright dispensable. (...)

It would be appropriate finally to attempt to answer the following question, regardless of how absurd it sounds: Is it possible to commit adultery with your own wife? Jesus identified the roots of this sin as occurring when someone gazes lustfully at a woman or man. The commonly accepted interpretation of this teaching leads us to believe that this relates to a man gazing at a woman who is not his wife, corresponding with the content of the ninth commandment prohibiting the coveting of your neighbour's wife. However, Jesus did not say, "he who covets someone's wife" or "a woman who does not belong to him", but rather, "he who looks at a woman". (...) Since Jesus does not specify which woman he is talking about, it could mean any woman, including somebody's own wife and, as John Paul II explained, "This is what adultery committed in the heart consists of. Man can commit this adultery in the heart also with regard to his own wife, if he treats her only as an object to satisfy instinct.". Saint Augustine added, "But if the two are not alike in such sin, I boldly declare either that the woman is, so to say, the husband's harlot, or the man the wife's adulterer".

In no way is this about demonising the eroticism of someone's body and the feelings of attraction towards that person, but rather it is striving to achieve an integrated eroticism, taking into account all of a person's qualities, not just their sensuality. The utilitarian approach, therefore, truly deserves to be condemned, since it rejects the other's identity, requiring them to be treated exclusively as an object for one's own personal gratification or ambitions. It is not permissible for someone to be treated like this, and this is no less true for the opposite notion, as a "machine" for making children. An open attitude to procreation in a marriage is important, however it cannot be allowed to become one of the reasons to be attracted to somebody. This would be the "negation of the value of human sex, of the masculinity and femininity of the human person, or at least to their mere toleration in the limits

of the need delimited by the necessity of procreation". In either of these two scenarios, the unique and specific qualities of a husband or wife would be damaged.

Excerpt translated by Daniel Wiśniewski



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Father
**ROBERT
SKRZYPCZAK**

Born 1964

Miłość warta obrączek. Jak zbudować małżeństwo na całe życie [A Love Worthy of a Ring. How to Build a Marriage that Lasts a Lifetime]

Publisher: Fundacja Instytut Globalizacji, Gliwice 2018

ISBN: 9788376730561

Translation rights: Robert Skrzypczak, Fundacja Instytut Globalizacji, instytut@globalizacja.org

Books published (selection)

Kościół jako Niewiasta, 2001

Kościół misyjny według Jana Pawła II, 2005

Pomiędzy Chrystusem A Antychrystem, 2010

Nie umrzeć za życia. Dziesięć kroków w poszukiwaniu wiary, 2010

Chrześcijanin na rozdrożu, 2011

Karol Wojtyła na Soborze Watykańskim II, 2011

Filozofia i teologia osoby bł. Antonio Rosminiego, ojca personalizmu europejskiego, 2013

Wiara i seks. Jan Paweł II o małżeństwie i rodzinie, 2015

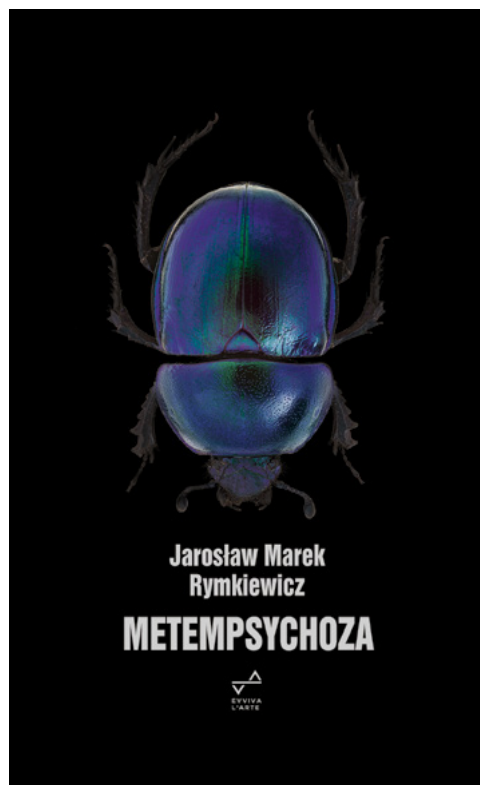
Piękny człowiek. Jan Paweł II – niezapomniany Papież, 2015

Awards

TOTUS TUUS Award (2013) – awarded by the Work of the New Millennium Foundation for the promotion of Pope John Paul II and Christian values

Metempsychosis. The Second Volume of Octastichs

**Poetry courageous
in its directness,
essential due to the gravity
of its themes**



ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT VOICES IN POLISH LITERATURE

Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz is one of Poland's most renowned poets, being also the author of numerous acclaimed essays, novels and stage plays, as well as the winner of several literary prizes. His work is often inspired by classicism and the Baroque, while his favourite topics include Polish history, national identity, existentialist reflections and the natural world.

In this series of short verses from his latest collection of poetry, he returns to previously explored themes, only this time in a seemingly lighter vein, speaking on a happier note, with a tangible tone of self-deprecation, typical of those reviewing their lives at a point when they feel they are nearing death. Lightly rhymed, at times apparently intentionally naive, epigrammatic or anecdotal, at times in the form of notes on the margins of the said book or additional footnotes: no more than scribbles of words connected by similar sounds, without any specific rhythmic equilibrium, this slim, episodic volume charts the author's whole life, for in these forty-four verses the poet exposes himself completely...

The first line of the opening poem *Deus sive Natura* posits the deistic thesis: "God animates Nature, moving every leaf in turn"; a declaration of faith the author will remain committed to until the very end – the end of the book and of his own life it seems, seeing

as this rhymed verse will deal with the topic of dying. But it will also be about rebirth, or rather about eternal returns. The poet wanders, but seemingly along the path of unorthodox theology, along tracts closer to scientific theories of spirituality dating back to the age of enlightened surrealism.

The metaphorical devices used in this treatise resolutely deal with the idea of poking around – digging in garden plots, as well as in books, poking about ageing bodies, or else poking about the corpuscular remains of spiritual substance.

These parallels are delicious; human flesh felt from within, the earthy tangibility of soil, the chokingly dusty air of old libraries. Rymkiewicz, as author and teacher, dissects his own "erudite clay", a substance he thinks he is composed of, since he was formed of it and will return to it in time. All of this, being closely connected, forms a structure of signs and symbols, arranging itself naturally into a treatise about the nature of things. But his treatise is a work of art, poetry courageous in its directness, essential due to the gravity of its themes. This is a truly rare and thus valuable thing these days. We therefore should take the time to reread this slim yet densely packed book time and time again.

Artur Grabowski, translated by Marek Kazmierski

To be like grass

“To escape with one’s soul and leap upon a small leaf” (...)
Adam Mickiewicz, 1839 or 1840

To be like tall grass on a meadow untrimmed
With its iris see skylarks roaming the blue above free

To be as green snails upon green leaves,
And from there give the world signs so few perceive

Like autumnal rowanberry bunches oh so red
Like the other side of this existence, not so easily read

Come the fall, feed baby hedgehogs at night from
an open palm
Be close to life like ivy climbing an evergreen
tree so calm

Two chickadees and titmice
sitting on a branch

A blue tit and a European crested tit sit upon a twig
Speaking, and if they speak it means there’s things
they twig

The blue tit with a wise head and the crested tit so grey
Round here all creatures great and small try to know
and say

Mirabelle plums and the withered apple tree also know
such things
Along dead branches their knowledge it forever springs

You too speak, maple tree, oh my trusted friend,
For I am now rather old, my knowledge at an end

A blind poet

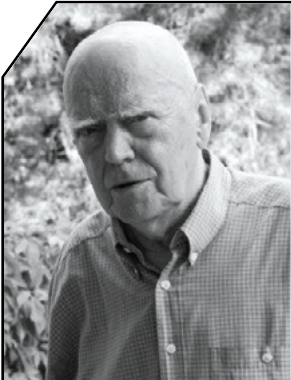
Darkness is blind – like me, like poetry
As blind as baby Birch and grown Maple trees

They hold my hand as we walk along
All of us humming the same jolly song.

Blind are the young Birches and Douglas fir trees
True to its nature blind too is poetry

And so we walk along, the two of us – she walking ahead
Blind darkness leading the poet of a blind garden bred

Translated by Marek Kazmierski



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JAROSŁAW
MAREK
RYMKIEWICZ
Born 1935

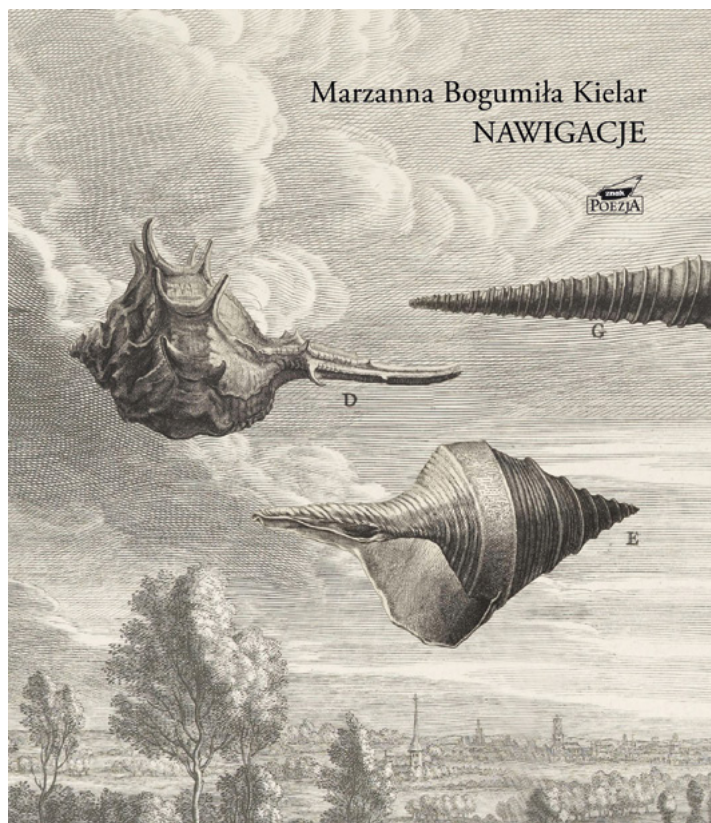
Metempsychoza. Druga ksiega oktostychów
[Metempsychosis. The Second Volume of Octastichs]
Publisher: Fundacja Ewiva L’arte, Warszawa 2018
ISBN: 9788394474713
Translation rights: Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz,
fundacja@evvivalarte.org

Poetry collections published
Konwencje, 1957
Ulica Mandelsztama, 1983
Mogila Ordona, 1984
Moje dzieło pośmiertne, 1993
Zachód słońca w Milanówku, 2002
Do widzenia gawrony, 2006
Pastuszek Chełmońskiego, 2014
Koniec lata w zdziczałym ogrodzie, 2015
Selected essay collections
Czym jest klasycyzm, 1967
Myśli różne o ogrodach, 1968
Wieszanie, 2007
Kinderszenen, 2008
Samuel Zborowski, 2010
Wielki Księżę, 2011
Reytan. Upadek Polski, 2013
Novels
Rozmowy polskie latem 1983, 1984
Ummschlagplatz, 1988

Foreign language translations
Germany, France
Denmark, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania,
Czech Republic, Colombia, Russia, Belarus, Romania,
Cuba – in anthologies

Foreign language translations
Zygmunt Hertz Literary Prize, awarded by the Paris “Kulture” (1986)
Kościelski Foundation Award (1967)
Nike Literary Award (2003; nominations in 2000, 2002, 2005, 2011)
Gdynia Literary Prize (2008, 2011) – nominations
Józef Mackiewicz Literary Prize (2008)
Julian Tuwim Literary Prize (2015)
Identitas Literary Award (2016; 2015 – shortlisted)
Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński Poetry Prize ORPHEUS
(2016; 2015 – shortlisted)

Navigations



Are we drifting or navigating?

Marzanna Bogumiła Kielar's *Navigations* is poetry of exquisite subtlety. The collection rethinks and reimagines the well-established topos of life as a voyage, evoked by its title. Immersed in philosophical and literary traditions, the poems pose numerous questions and attempt to answer them with raw honesty. Are we drifting or navigating? Can we resist the winds dispatched by the immobile mover (***The wind turned...*)? Is the juxtaposition of passivity and endeavour unequivocal? As Kielar suggests, attentiveness, distancing, contemplation of human existence – not that different from the life of plants and animals, matter itself – are the endeavour, too. They may well prove most meaningful. The goal is to read patiently the voices of the world, transforming from code to story.

Kielar employs her characteristically intellectual language: exact and imagistic. Like her masters, old Japanese painters studying a branch of a plum tree (*May Frost*) or the 19th-century Polish painter Aleksander Gierymski recording stone pines around

Villa Borghese (*Jan Cybis and Gierymski's Painting*), the poet wants to touch with her words the essence of reality. *Navigations* converses with the poetry of Czesław Miłosz and the Polish Romantics: Adam Mickiewicz's Lausanne lyrics or Juliusz Słowacki's poems, where landscape mirrors the onlooker's emotions.

In the thirty-eight texts of her precisely composed volume, Kielar explores the borderland between I and not-I. The poems, focused on transience as part of permanence, death as part of living in the incessant cycles of dark matter, emerge from private loss and teach difficult non-trepidation (***I am taught by granulation...*). Kielar's writing foregrounds the relationship between the primary fear of mortal beings and their delight in the momentary. The speaker's discretion in signalling private mourning in order to render it universal is particularly moving because of the book's dedication: *For my daughter Paula*.

Anna Spólna, translated by Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese

Luminous dawns of death,
once people were dying at home.
There was time to get used to dying,
work on it a little, starting early
with something small: back ache
or strained tendon.

Bit by bit the body's untying itself from life.
Looking around as if it paused at the border
and asked, 'Which of the two countries claims this soil?'

It has time still before it's shouldered by the colossal
dead wave
of unsheltered night.

Before dawns come, without brightness,
in the silence of the desolate world, neither islands
nor shallows, and the solitude
is already complete

Exercises in Non-existence

Fog was approaching in waves, once thin, then dense
again,
till it cut visibility off, erased us too. The garden departed
for hours.
Fog closed the door to reality.

The haze is thinning now, it reveals smoothed foothills,
a small town. Stumps of perennials unearthed,
in a long row
by the fence of coated planks.
Grey-winged birds wheel, calling

over the boggy sarcophagus of this autumn day,
brimful of leaf litter, slippery stems of dahlias
and sunflowers.

They return: roads cut short, houses with smooth walls,
no cornices
or details, roofs blown off like hats.

Dreams exhumed.
And we return – we are here where we are,
in the infinite now

Not comforting this
metaphor of the woods, where everything alive
– being born –
comes out onto the clearings of days.

And returns to the woods when it dies,
for ever written down.

Generations of people, swarms of green lacewings,
a lame dog. The almond white of our finite hours
grows
and turns into desert.

Someone whom we love steps in between
petrified trunks.
into the night with no wings.
Into the scree of dark shine

Translated by Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese



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MARZANNA
BOGUMIŁA
KIELAR

Born 1963

Nawigacje [Navigations]

Publisher: Znak Publishers, Kraków 2018

ISBN: 978-83-240-5359-9

Translation rights: Znak Publishers, bolinska@znak.com.pl

Poetry collections published

Sacra conversazione, 1992

Materia prima, 1999

Monodia [Salt Monody], 2006

Umbra, 2002

Brzeg, 2010

Materia prima. Wiersze wybrane, 2015

Foreign language translations

USA, Germany, Bulgaria

UK, France, Israel, Spain, Netherlands, Lithuania, Switzerland,
Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, Italy – in
anthologies

Selected awards

Kościelski Foundation Award (1993)

Kazimiera Iłłakowiczówna Award (1993)

Czas Kultury [Time of Culture] Magazine Prize (1993)

Akademie Schloss Solitude fellowship (1999)

– chosen by J. M. Coetzee

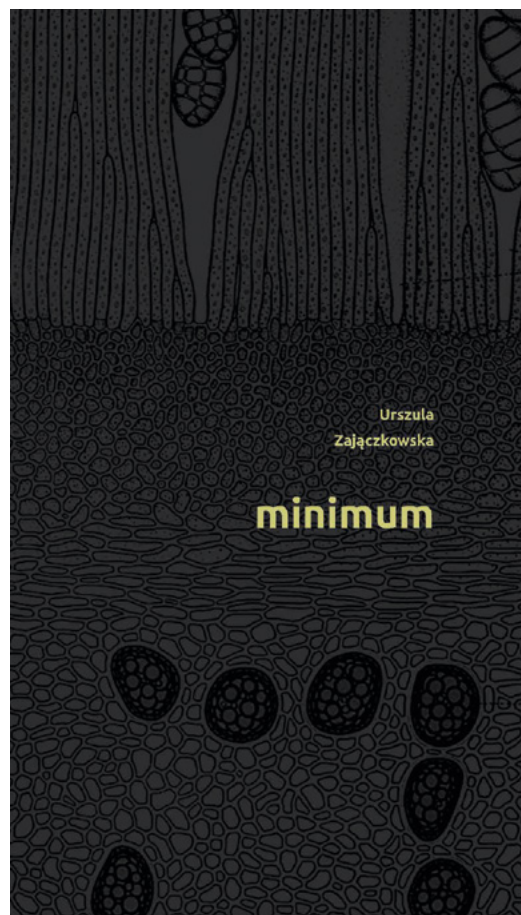
Polityka's Passport Award (2000)

Hubert Burda Preis (2000)

Nike Literary Award (2000) – nomination

minimum

Poems that disrupt our sense of comfortable wellbeing



KOŚCIELSKI FOUNDATION AWARD

The poems found in *minimum*, Urszula Zajączkowska's latest collection of poetry, disrupt our sense of comfortable wellbeing which insists we look at the world around us with a sense of superiority, that we think of ourselves human beings as the epicenters of the universe. Meanwhile, the poet herself rejects this anthropocentric perspective, seeming to say that we, people, are merely one of the components of nature, of life which everywhere falls prey to life, as in her poem *cat dog fly and me* (*sacred bodies*). Even the smallest fragment of matter makes room for one that is smaller, the miracle of metamorphosis omnipresent: "the yolk in the shell will produce blood, feathers and eyes, / and any earthworm fragment will always be reborn as another earthworm" (*minimum*).

Zajączkowska tends to present Nature in her poems as generous and sparing, linking the end and the next beginning, life and death, us and creatures without individual names. Zajączkowska could be said to echo William Blake, wanting to see the world in a grain of

sand. It's enough to have your eyes wide open... This teaches us sensitivity and humility with regards to that which exists, but above all allows us to change the angle we see things from and turn towards the invisible. That is when we will see that every green leaf is covered in myriads of creatures, and discover inside trees "completely new galaxies, milky ways and distant heavenly bodies." (*tall trees*).

But how to talk of that which we try to perceive? Do we have the appropriate lexicon? The originality of Zajączkowska's poetic imagination arises out of the constant tension between the language of science and lyricism, the precision of anatomical etchings and risky metaphors. Well, we do live in dramatic times after all. For "we still don't have / a good language, / a precise language, / so we formulate sentences / mainly with the eyes" (*jungle today – jungle tomorrow*).

Karol Alicznowicz, translated by Marek Kazmierski

church. rain

you see, I didn't actually come here to give thanks
for your ever so mildly pleasing creative output,
which only tires, tires me terribly.
and still nothing, however, nothing, because I here, now
only sit around,
waiting
for the cloud to pass,
and I will go out quietly
leaving you completely alone

with that great mystery
of yours.

tall trees
for Sherwin Carlquist

I remember when you said
that you really admire those
who study tall trees,
because you only ever studied up close
those which were within easy reach of your hands.

it really is moving,
it's moving
that you do not see
that it is you after all
who opened up the insides of trees,
completely new galaxies, milky ways
and distant heavenly bodies.
and you still take trips there
constantly, any time you feel like it
and as you like it,
(though it seems you're most keen on
walking there).

and this is how my friend
I think right now, swinging from
one of those branches of
yours.

skeleton

it so happens sometimes at night,
that my skeleton
disrupts my sleep
with the crunching of the discs in my spinal column,
as my head turns to the left or the right,
it must be loud when all else is quiet.
I don't want to go see any doctors about it, don't want to
go chasing it off.
Instead, I open my eyes and say to it:
"Yeah, I know, I remember."

Translated by Marek Kazmierski



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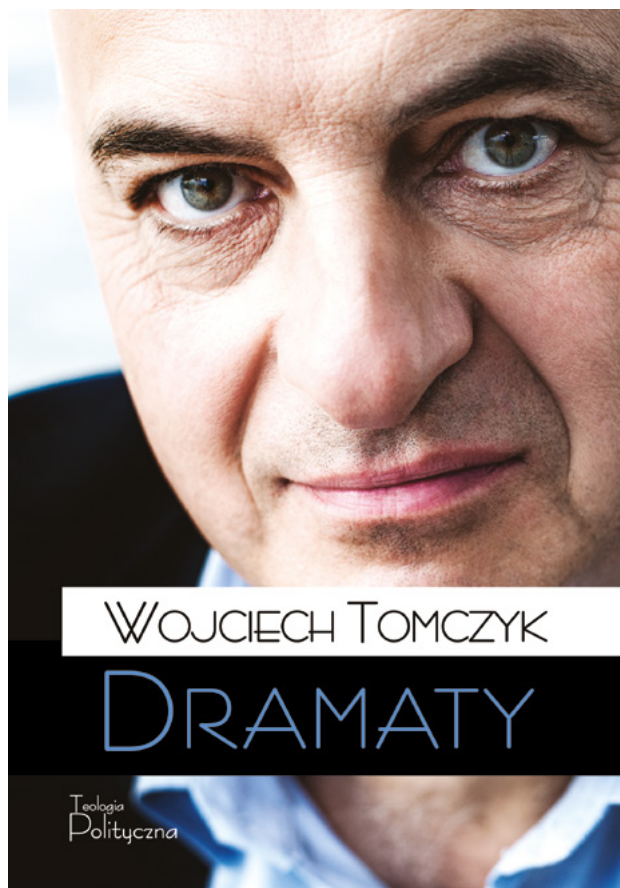
URSZULA
ZAJĄCZKOWSKA
Born 1978

minimum
Publisher: Wydawnictwo Warstwy, Wrocław 2017
ISBN: 978-83-65502-16-2
Translation rights: Urszula Zajączkowska, ula@botanik.pl

Poetry collections published
Atomy, 2014

Selected awards
Silesius Poetry Award (2015, 2018) – nominations
Kościelski Foundation Award (2017)
Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński Poetry Prize ORPHEUS (2018) – nomination
The EDITION Award for Excellence in Book Design & Editing (2016/2017) – for *minimum*'s publisher

Plays



Tomczyk draws from Polish history, but always bears in mind the problems of today

Wojciech Tomczyk (b. 1960) is the most important and at the same time, the most popular contemporary playwright in Poland. His plays, which have been staged for many years on *Television Theatre*, attract millions of viewers. The author of *Interregnum* successfully continues the tradition in the Polish theatre signified by the names of Sławomir Mrożek and Janusz Głowacki. As in the texts of these well-known authors, the characteristic feature of his style is realism, tinged with absurdity and the grotesque. Tomczyk uses dramatic irony masterfully. In his plays he introduces characters whose motives are ambiguous, intentions suspect, and declared views contradictory to their beliefs. Among the liars who feign honesty, fools who are convinced of their wisdom, and conformists who pretend to be non-conformists, there are also authentic, internally consistent, and ethical people. The presence of these bright figures only deepens the bitter disappointment with the world, dominating in Tomczyk's dramas.

The volume includes Tomczyk's most interesting plays, from the debut *Vampire*, through the most famous *Nuremberg*, to *The Marshal*, which premiered last year and was created in relation to the 100th anniversary of Poland regaining its independence. Tomczyk today is the only Polish theatrical author who seriously, though without unnecessary pathos, poses questions about the collective ethos of Poles. Thus, he goes against the current of contemporary drama, which mostly deals with the problems of indistinguishable inhabitants of the liberal anthill. His characters are people of power: officers, presidents, prime ministers, as well as people considered to be authorities: writers and journalists. Tomczyk draws from Polish history, but always bears in mind the problems of today, and the plays he writes have the dimension of a political debate. This ironic and sometimes satirical observer of Poles sets the bar very high for them: intelligence, integrity, and responsibility for the community.

Jacek Kopciński, translated by Katarzyna Popowicz

HANKA
Forgive me, I'm sure you have plenty of fascinating stories. But despite all that I'm more interested in the colonel.

COLONEL
He was a colonel, I was a colonel. He served, I served. Isn't it all the same thing?
(...)

COLONEL
So, in 1953 I broke my conspiratorial oath to save my own life. I betrayed my friends and homeland. I began working for a foreign power, and a criminal and homicidal regime. Am I boring you?

HANKA
What are you getting at?

COLONEL
It was the spring of 1953. Just after the Korean War, after the murders, after millions of Ukrainians had been starved to death. After the deportation and murder of Home Army soldiers. Of course, I knew who pulled the trigger in Katyń. Everybody did. The Soviets already had the hydrogen bomb. And I'd been of age for several months. I couldn't have any illusions – the Soviets were bent on destroying my country, and in global terms meant to conquer the whole world. Actually, they never concealed that. They always talked openly about a global revolution, of freeing the toiling masses. By “revolution” they had in mind the abolition of social classes and nations – which means genocide. The liberation of the toiling masses, of course, in their language meant universal slave labour – did you ever hear about Cambodia? Or the Gulag Archipelago?

HANKA
What are you getting at?
(...)

COLONEL
Can't you guess? It's obvious.

HANKA
Maybe an undercover agent can guess. A journalist has to find it out. What do you want?

COLONEL
I want a repeat of the Nuremberg Trials. I won't insult you by asking if you know what the Nuremberg Trials were.

HANKA
You want the Nuremberg Trials for the communists? Is that all? How do you intend to achieve that?

COLONEL
A repeat of the Nuremberg Trials for the communists

doesn't sound bad. But at my age a chap stops setting himself such ambitious goals. In any case, I disdain the communists.

HANKA
What is it you want, colonel?

COLONEL
I want a Nuremberg for myself. I want to be tried.

Excerpt translated by David French



© Karolina Kurek

WOJCIECH
TOMCZYK
Born 1960

Dramaty [Plays by Wojciech Tomczyk]

Publisher: Teologia Polityczna, Warszawa 2018
ISBN: 9788362884933
Translation rights: Teologia Polityczna,
mikolaj.marczak@teologiapolityczna.pl

Plays staged (theatre & TV)

Wampir, premiere: 2003
Zareczyny, 2003
Norymberga, 2006
Inka 1946, 2006
Komedia romantyczna, 2012
Zareczyny, 2015
Breakout, 2016
Marszałek, 2017
Wojciech Tomczyk is also a successful screenwriter and film producer.

Foreign language adaptations

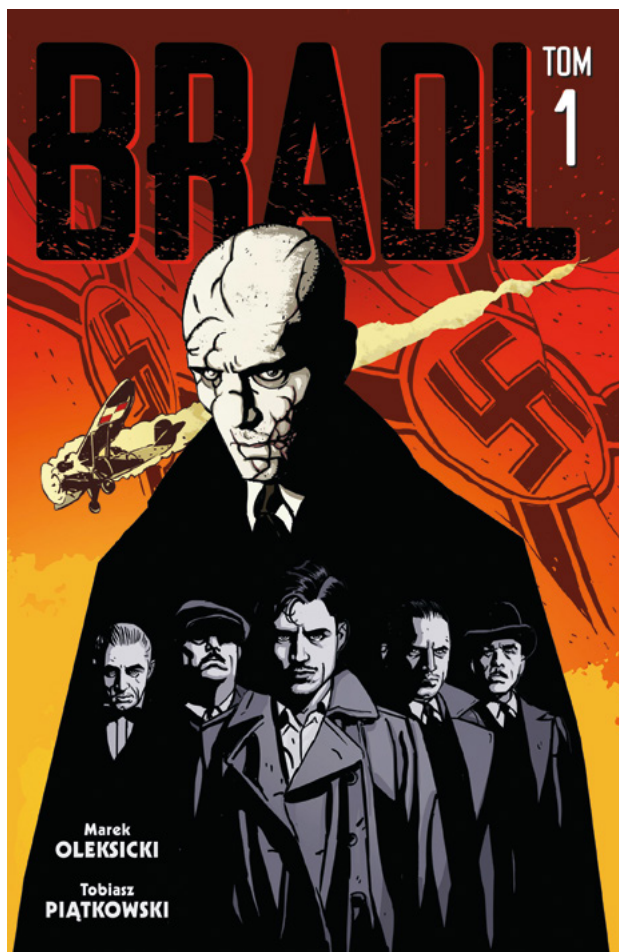
UK, Germany, Bulgaria, Russia, Belarus, Estonia

Selected awards

Grand Prix, International Independent Theatre Festival in Belarus (2008/2009)
Grand Prix, Two Theatres Festival in Sopot (2007)
Ministry of Culture Award (2007)
Best European TV film, Festival La Rochelle (2010) – nomination
Best European Historical TV series, INPUT, Seul (2011)
Grand Prix, Representation of Reality Contemporary Drama Festival in Zabrze (2003)

Bradł

Vol. 1-3



Members of the Polish resistance clash with Nazis in the noir style

The eponymous name *Bradł* is one of the many pseudonyms of Kazimierz Leski, an ace of Polish counterintelligence during World War Two. His wartime biography is full of daring missions carried out throughout Europe. The first two volumes of the graphic novel by Marek Oleksicki and Tobiasz Piątkowski recount the beginnings of Leski's underground journey against the background of a Warsaw occupied by the Germans.

In the context of other comics devoted to the 20th-century history of Poland, *Bradł* distinguishes itself by its page design and the artists' innovative approach to the subject. The difference is immediately signaled by the cover art, which connects to recognizable pop culture conventions – from horror to American superhero fiction. In fact, both artists tend to lean toward the noir style, creating a portrait of a mysterious Warsaw, atypical for Polish conditions, bathed in shadow, where members of a special unit of the Polish Underground State mercilessly clash with the ruthless forces of the occupier.

In addition to Leski, there is a gallery of equally colorful and diverse characters, who constitute the core of the “Musketeers” intelligence organization, methodically unraveling the actions and intentions of the Germans toward the Polish nation. We wander with them through Warsaw's nightclubs, run through secret passages in the sewers, and prepare clever traps for enemy agents hunting the conspirators. The comic also includes beautiful, determined women and a classic, dark character, whose scar-covered face menaces us from the cover of the first volume. Oleksicki and Piątkowski prove that one can present this painful period of history in an appealing way. *Bradł* is also a visual feast full of expressive panels as well as a historical story whose uniqueness lies in the skillful manipulation of pop cultural patterns.

Tomasz Miecznikowski, translated by Peter Obst



© author's archive

MAREK
OLEKSICKI

Born 1979



© author's archive

TOBIASZ
PIĄTKOWSKI

Born 1979

Bratki (volumes 1-3)

Publisher: Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego
[The Warsaw Rising Museum] & Egmont Polska, Warszawa 2017
ISBN: vol.1: 9788328118997, vol.2: 9788328119000,
vol. 3: 9788328135222

Translation rights: Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, Egmont
Polska, dbakowska@op.pl, kamilla.skoniczna@egmont.pl

Marek Oleksicki has illustrated such works as *Odmieniec*,
Ursynowska Specgrupa od Rozwałki, and for US publishers:
Frankenstein's Womb, 2009
28 days later, episode 5, 2010
Zero, episode 14, 2015
The Darkness: Close Your Eyes, 2014

Tobiasz Piątkowski is the writer of such comic books as
Status 7 series, *48 stron*, *Rezydent*, *Koszmary zebrane*, *Pierwsza
brygada*, *Nowe przygody Stasia i Nel*, and many others.

The Polish Book Institute

The Polish Book Institute is a national institution established by the Polish Ministry of Culture. It has been running in Kraków since January 2004.

The Institute's basic aims are to influence the reading public and to popularise books and reading within Poland, as well as to promote Polish literature worldwide. These aims are accomplished by:

- // promoting the best Polish books and their authors;
- // organising study visits for translators and foreign publishers;
- // increasing the number of translations from Polish into foreign languages with the help of the ©POLAND Translation Programme and Sample Translations ©POLAND;
- // making information on Polish books and the Polish publishing market accessible to foreign consumers.

The Institute organises literary programmes to promote Polish books at international book fairs, appearances by Polish writers at literary festivals, and within the scope of programmes designed to promote Polish culture worldwide, it publishes the annual catalogue *New Books from Poland*.

The Polish Book Institute is also the publisher of cultural journals covering mainly literature and theatre (*Akcent*, *Dialog*, *Literatura na świecie*, *Novaya Polsha*, *Nowe Książki*, *Odra*, *Teatr*, *Teatr Lalek*, and *Twórczość*).



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Director of the Book Institute

Dariusz Jaworski

Deputy Director of the Book Institute

Dr hab. **Krzysztof Koehler**

Selected Polish Book Institute programmes:

The Translator's College – based at a new building on the grounds of the Book Institute in Kraków, this programme provides study visits for translators of Polish literature. During their residency, the translators are provided with suitable conditions for their work and assistance with their translations. The college has been active since 2006. By 2018, over 100 translators from 34 countries had taken part.

The World Congress of Translators of Polish Literature, which is organized every four years, is the largest event of its kind. To date, there have been four Congresses, each attended by around 250 translators from every continent. Over the course of several days, there are meetings with writers, critics, scholars, and various other experts. This truly unique event offers a wonderful opportunity for leading professionals to exchange information, ideas, and opinions.

The Found in Translation Award is given to the translator (or translators) of the finest book-length translation of Polish literature into English published in the previous calendar year. The winner receives a prize of 16,000 zloty and a one-month residency in Kraków. We have been presenting this award in partnership with the Polish Cultural Institutes in London and New York on an annual basis since 2008.

The Transatlantyk Award is presented every year by the Book Institute to an outstanding ambassador of Polish literature abroad. The winner might be a translator, a publisher, a critic, or organizer of cultural events. The award was first presented in 2005 during the Congress of Translators of Polish Literature. The winner receives 10,000 euros and a statuette crafted by Łukasz Kieferling.

Seminars for Foreign Publishers – since 2006, the Book Institute has been inviting groups of publishers from various countries to Kraków in order to show them what Polish literature has to offer. We arrange meetings with writers, publishers, and critics – encouraging our guests to publish Polish literature.

Ambassadors of Literature – within this program, representatives of the Book Institute promote Polish literature among foreign publishers. Their task is to recommend, to provide information, and to act as intermediaries between publishers and rights owners. The program is currently being developed in the United States and the UK. It has been in development since 2017.

Sample Translations ©Poland – the purpose of this programme, aimed at translators of Polish literature, is to promote Polish literature abroad by encouraging translators to present Polish books to foreign publishers.

The programme funds the translation of up to 20 pages of a given text. The translator must have published a minimum of one translation in book form before making an application.

The ©POLAND Translation Programme aims to promote Polish literature abroad. The Book Institute financially supports Polish and foreign publishers who would like to publish works of Polish literature outside Poland in foreign-language translations.

Since 1999, the ©POLAND Translation Programme has provided over 2,200 grants for translations into 48 different languages published in 58 countries. The average grant was worth 10,000 zlotys (approx. 2,500 euros)

The Book Institute can help cover the costs of publishing the following types of works:

- // literature – prose, poetry, and dramas;
- // older and more recent works in the humanities in its broadest definition (with particular regard for books devoted to Polish culture and literature);
- // non-fiction literature (literary reportage, biographies, memoirs, essays);
- // historical books (essays and popular history, barring specialist academic works);
- // literature for children and young people;
- // comics.

The financial contribution of the Book Institute is designed to support the following publication costs:

- // translation
- // copyright license
- // printing.

Full information on our programmes, including a list of grants awarded to date and a funding application form can be found on the Book Institute's website, www.bookinstitute.pl.

For further information please contact: Ewa Wojciechowska,
e.wojciechowska@bookinstitute.pl



NEW BOOKS FROM POLAND 2018

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Edited by Anna Czartoryska-Sziler

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English text edited by John Merchant and David French

Layout design by Bogdan Kuc
Cover design by Ania Światłowska