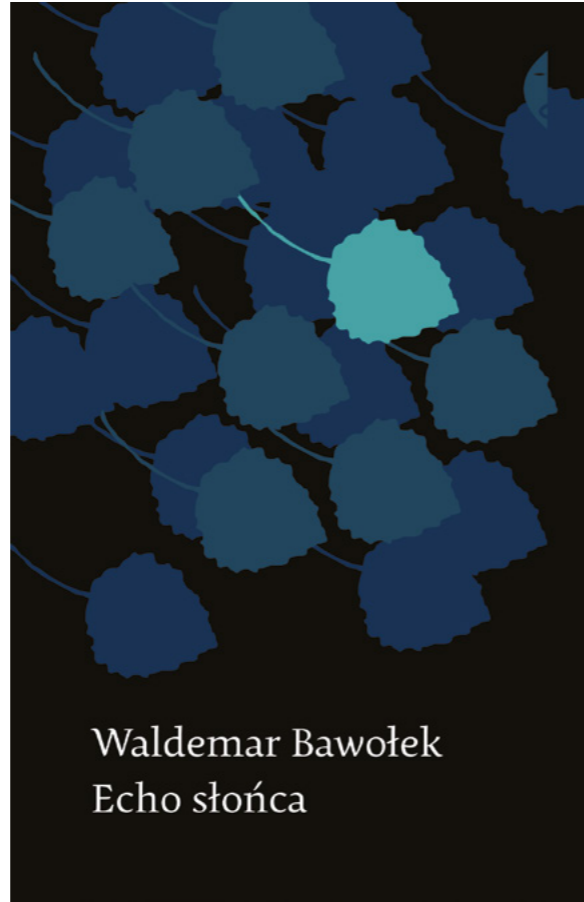


# Echo of the Sun



## 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 Bawołek 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.

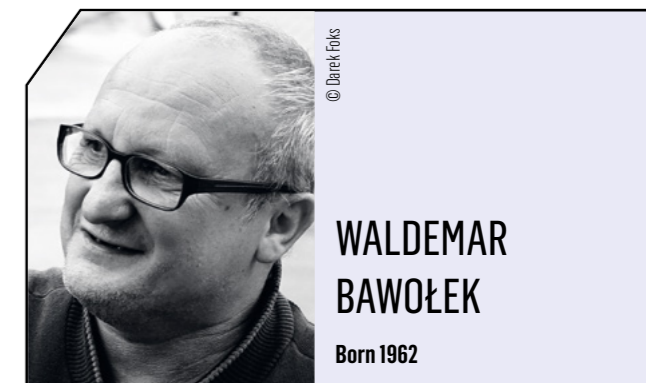
This book will grab readers who enjoy entering into a narrated world and making themselves at home there, then unhurriedly to undergo a range of epiphanies and revelations (alternating with arguments, illnesses, and everything “life itself” supplies). We might consider *Echo of the Sun* the literary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



*Echo słońca* [*Echo of the Sun*]

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### Novels published

*Delectatio morosa*, 1996

*Raz dokola*, 2005

*Humoreska*, 2012

*To co obok*, 2014

### Selected awards

Gdynia Literary Prize (2015, 2018) – nominations