

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 Kątoch – 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 [Śpiąc od światła]*; the latter is scheduled to be adapted into a HBO series.