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The Eaglets of Przemyśl



A monument to the “Eaglets” (*Orlęta*) in Przemyśl, a Polish city 54 miles west of Lviv, Ukraine. The Eaglets were Polish high school students who defended the city of Lwów (now Lviv) against Budyonny’s communist Cossacks during the Polish-Soviet war. On 17 August 1920 out of 330 Eaglets, 318 were killed in a suburb of Lwów now called the Polish Thermopylae.

Photo by the *Sarmatian Review* staff.

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Our Take

Our editorial team is particularly happy with this issue because of the range of topics it covers and the importance of some of these topics, particularly given their underrepresentation in commonly read Slavic journals. First, the issue of artistic consequences of the political systems that enslave their citizens is addressed, as broached by Professor Svetlana Vassileva-Karagoyzova. Colonialism not only drains the country of financial capital and international prestige, it also deforms the literary genre that has shaped many generations of Germans, English, or French: the bildungsroman. Instead of demonstrating a healthy development of personality, the bildungsroman in Soviet-occupied countries paints caricatures of such development. The influence of political systems on literary genres is a fertile field for researchers, and we salute Professor Vassileva-

Karagoyzova for a breakthrough in this area.

The range of books reviewed in this issue is exceptionally broad. The first two reviews deal with perhaps the finest short-story teller in America, Anthony Bukoski; the third review speaks about Polish communities in Texas in the nineteenth century. A balanced survey of the monumental work on Rising '44 follows—no, it is not Norman Davies's book, but a huge volume of documents published jointly by Polish and Russian researchers. Next, a review of a book by the notorious Patrick Buchanan whose ignorance-laced prejudice against Polish Catholics is matched only by his accommodating attitudes toward Russian postcommunists. In his largely negative portrait of Winston Churchill Buchanan leaves out Churchill's deplorable duplicity toward the Poles. Indeed, as the reviewer says, Churchill played a major role in handing over nearly half of Europe to the Soviets. Lewis Siegelbaum's book reminds us of the provenance of present-day postcommunists, while the reviewer of his book aptly notes that the book erroneously implies that the USSR was inhabited exclusively by Russians. Finally, an exceptionally fine review of the poetry of Kapuściński (yes, Ryszard Kapuściński) and Julia Hartwig. On the final pages of the issue we present translated poetry by two very different poets, Adam Mickiewicz and Jerzy Harasymowicz. What separates them is a century and a half under foreign occupation: back to our lead article. ▲



Sarmatian Review Data

Why learning used to be a privilege of the few

Average price of printed books in sixteenth-century Europe: 2 florins (1 florin=3.5 g of gold).

Source: Stanisław Mossakowski, *Kaplica Zygmuntowska, 1515–1533* (Warsaw, 2008), p. 33n.

How Russians love their country

Percentage of young (aged 24 to 35) Russians living in Moscow and St. Petersburg who want to leave their country temporarily or permanently: 50 percent.

Percentage of Russians in the provinces who live off their vegetable gardens: two-thirds (66 percent).

Source: 2008 Levada Center poll and analyst Pavel Voshchanov, as reported by Jonas Bernstein in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 5, no. 138 (21 July 2008).

Books and war in Poland

Estimated number of books destroyed in Poland from 1939 through 1941: 15,000,000.

Source: John Leonard, review of *A Universal History of the Destruction of Books*, *Harper's Magazine*, September 2008.

Gazprom facing gas underproduction

Gazprom President Alexei Miller's assessment of gas output between 2007–2009: no change.

Actual gas output from 2005 on: in 2005, 555 billion cubic meters; in 2006, 556 billion cubic meters; in 2007, 548.5 billion cubic meters; no data for 2008 and no data on the previously announced plans for increasing production between 2008–2011.

Price of gas in Russia: Russian government continues to subsidize internal gas consumption and appears to be backtracking on its previous promise to discontinue it by 2011.

Possible outcome: increasing internal and external demand for gas and dwindling capacity to extract gas from the Russian Federation's territory will make Russia more aggressive in appropriating Central Asian gas and selling it as "Russian" gas.

Source: Vladimir Socor, "Gazprom hit by gas shortfall," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 5, no. 136 (17 July 2008).

Losses of American investors in Russia

Amount of dollars American citizens lost when the Russian government nationalized Yukos: 12 billion dollars.

Source: Anders Aslund, "Russia's Capitalist Revolution: Why Market Reform Succeeded and Democracy Failed," *Kennan Institute Meeting Report*, vol. XXV, no. 17 (2008).

Russia and Ukraine

Estimate of the number of Russian passports held illegally by inhabitants of the Crimea: up to 100,000.

Status of the inhabitants of Ukraine who hold dual citizenship (Ukrainian and Russian): illegal. Ukraine does not allow dual citizenship.

Results of a recent investigation of dual citizenship in Sevastopol, Crimea: 1,595 cases of dual citizenship were discovered.

Reason Ukraine does not allow dual citizenship with Russia: it is afraid it will serve as a pretext for a possible future Russian invasion of the Crimea.

Source: Taras Kuzio in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 5, no. 176 (15 September 2008).

Opinions of Ukrainians about Russia and NATO after Russia-Georgia conflict

Percentage of Ukrainians who blame Russia for the conflict and consider Russians to be aggressors: 44.3 percent.

Percentage of Ukrainians who consider Russian actions to be a "peacekeeping operation": 41.4 percent.

The undecided vote: 14.3 percent.

Breakdown by region: Russia is perceived as aggressor by 72.9 percent of western Ukrainians, 62.5 percent of respondents in the Kyiv region, 58 percent of residents of central Ukraine, 56.3 percent in the east, and 53.5 percent in the south.

Percentage of Ukrainians who think Russia's reaction to Georgia's actions was unjustified: 57.4 percent.

Percentage of Ukrainians opposed to Ukrainian membership in NATO: 63 percent.

Percentage of Ukrainians opposed to Russian claims to the port of Sevastopol and the Crimea: 73.1 percent.

Source: Opinion polls by the Taylor Nelson Soifrez Ukraine, conducted 19–22 August 2008; and by Institute for Strategic Research, conducted 21–26 August 2008, as reported by Roman Kupchinsky in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 5, no. 173 (10 September 2008).

Ecological value of Polish agriculture

Number of varieties of apple trees still cultivated in Polish orchards: about 200.

Names of some varieties now cultivated only in Poland: *malinówki*, *antonówki*, *papierówki*, *renety gwiazdkowe*, *kosztele* (the favorite of King Jan III Sobieski)—all tall trees, in contrast to the commercial dwarf varieties.

Number of new growers persuaded to grow old apple varieties by the Ecological Institute: about 100.

Number of old fruit orchards in Poland in the 1990s and in 2008: about 2,000 and about 500, respectively.

Source: Grzegorz Łyś, "Niech znowu zakwitną kosztele," *Rzeczpospolita* (Plus-Minus), 4 October 2008.

Organic farming in Poland

Number of organic farms in Poland in 1996 and 2008: 300 and 13,500, respectively.

Average farm size in Poland: 17 acres, ideally suited for organic farming according to Bernhard Jansen, head of EkoConnect, a German nonprofit think tank that studies organic farming.

Source: Marynia Kruk, "Poland's organic farms prove to be fruitful ventures," *Christian Science Monitor*, 9 October 2008.

Dependence on Russian gas in Europe

Germany, 39 percent; Italy, 30 percent; Poland, 61 percent; Lithuania, 84 percent; Slovakia, 100 percent.

Source: Taras Kuzio in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 5, no. 176 (15 September 2008).

Turkmen gas reserves and their strategic implications

Estimated amount of gas reserves in the South Yoloten-Osman gas fields: between 6 and 14 trillion cubic meters, none of it committed to any gas or oil company, Eastern or Western.

Estimated amount of gas reserves in the Russian Shtokman gas field: four trillion cubic meters.

Estimated output of gas from the South Yoloten-Osman fields after development: from 10 to 70 billion cubic meters per year.

Name of company that has conducted an audit on the potential of these fields: Gaffney, Cline and Associates of Great Britain.

Amount of gas Turkmenistan produced in 2007: 70 billion cubic meters.

Countries that compete for the right to explore and develop Turkmen gas fields: Russia (through Gazprom), China, and several European countries.

Source: Vladimir Socor, "New Turkmen gas fields change the strategic gas export picture," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 5, no. 197 (October 15, 2008).

Russian attitudes toward immigrants

Number of racially motivated attacks in Russia in 2007: 73 attacks resulting in death, 580 resulting in body injury.

Number of such attacks between January 1 and November 5, 2008: 81 attacks resulting in death and 320 resulting in body injuries.

Percentage of Russians opposed to ethnic migration to Russia: 68 percent, 75 percent in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Source: Yuri Zarakhovich in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 5, no. 219 (14 November 2008).

Polish mission in Iraq 2003–2008

Number of Polish soldiers serving in Iraq in ten shifts: 15,000.

Casualties: 22 dead, 116 wounded.

Activities: conducting 88,000 patrols and convoys, checking 3,000,000 vehicles, disarming 3,600,000 explosives and mines; participating in 3,000 reconstruction projects costing 172 million dollars (such as rebuilding of schools, water and electricity systems, and training 31,000 Iraqis for military and police service).

Cost for the Polish budget of maintaining this mission: 800,000 zloties, or approximately 400,000 million dollars.

Source: *Rzeczpospolita*, 16 September 2008.

Jews in the United States Congress

Number of Jewish members in the 111th U.S. Congress: 31, and 13 Senators in the Senate.

Breakdown of the Jewish vote in the 2008 presidential election, according to the initial polling data: 78 percent for Obama, 22 percent for McCain.

Source: *The Global News Service of the Jewish People*, 5 November 2008 (<http://jta.org/news/article/2008/11/05/1000803/congressional-roundup-two-new-jews-but-no-rabbi>).

Voluntary social marginalization as a survival strategy in Polish postcommunist accounts of childhood

Svetlana Vassileva-Karagyozova

For the Polish cultural elite the lifting of censorship, decentralization of literary life, and regained pluralism of public discourse were undoubtedly the most significant consequences of the fall of communism. Polish artists and writers found themselves free to explore the complexity of human nature and the historical taboos previously guarded by the communist regime. Many turned to exploring personal and local identity, an unsurprising development after forty years of surveillance and discouragement of individualistic thoughts and aspirations.

The search for identity normally begins in the transitional period between childhood and adolescence. Thus most Polish writers have logically adopted the genre of the “initiation novel”[1] to explore the process of identity formation. The growing number of quasi-autobiographical novels whose central theme is the recollection of childhood and/or adolescent experience in Soviet-occupied Poland has come to the attention of literary critics, who now speak of them as the core of a new trend in post-1989 Polish literature.[2] A list of Polish initiation novels pertaining to this trend includes such works as: Antoni Libera’s *Madame*; Ryszard Sadaj’s *Telefon do Stalina* [A Phone Call to Stalin] and *Ławka pod kasztanem* [The Bench Under the Chestnut Tree]; Andrzej Stasiuk’s *Jak zostałem pisarzem. Próba autobiografii intelektualnej* [How I Became a Writer: An Attempt at an Intellectual Autobiography] and *Biały kruk* [A Rarity]; Izabela Filipiak’s *Absolutna amnezja* [Absolute Amnesia]; Wojciech Kuczok’s *Gnój* [Bastard]; Zbigniew Mentzel’s *Wszystkie języki świata* [All the Languages of the World]; Marek Stokowski’s *Samo-loty* [Airplanes]; Michał Szczępański’s *Dzieci sierżanta Pieprza* [Sergeant Pepper’s Children]; Jolanta Stefko’s *Możliwe sny* [Possible Dreams]; Lech Majewski’s *Pielgrzymka do grobu Brigitte Bardot Cudownej* [A Pilgrimage to the Tomb of the Miraculous Brigitte Bardot]; and Julian Kornhauser’s *Dom, sen i gry dziecięce* [The House, the Dream and Childish Games].

Most of these works are set in the darkest years of the totalitarian regime: in the Stalinist era of the 1950s and in the post-Solidarity period of martial law; some take place during Solidarity’s initial triumph. They typically feature young male narrators who try to structure their lives under the communist regime. However, communism is not the central theme in the post-1989 Polish initiation novels; rather it serves as a historical backdrop that allows the narrators to reflect on the process of social maturation in a totalitarian state where one is not entirely free to create one’s own identity. In other words, these works do not represent the persecution-type novel characteristic of émigré literature; instead, their retrospective narrative serves a therapeutic purpose as the narrator attempts to come to terms with a traumatic past.

Unlike the postmodern hero who programmatically denies a transcendent and unified self, the characters in the Polish novels under discussion desperately aim at achieving a coherent and autonomous subjectivity.

This new quasi-autobiographical trend is symptomatic of the paradigm shift that has occurred in Polish writing since 1989: the newer Polish literature has taken as its central theme not the sufferings of Poland trapped in the Soviet totalitarian net, but the universal process of initiation into adulthood and social maturity. Critic Dariusz Nowacki points out that “these novels do not join the barren and unwise political dispute about the People’s Republic of Poland because they answer the question ‘how was it?’ by asking the question ‘how was I?’ and not by telling any truth other than a personal truth.”[3] Polish writers have embraced the postmodern historical perspective and abandoned Lyotard’s “grand narrative.” They have chosen to focus on the uniqueness of personal experience, hoping to reveal in the layers of private memory some interesting anecdotes, images, and emotions associated with the communist regime that would provide nuance to the stark black-and-white contrast of contemporary public opinion.

Within this greater context, the present paper focuses on one specific aspect of post-1989 Polish accounts of communist childhood, namely, the various strategies that the young protagonists employ to survive communist reality. These rebellious children clearly recognize the mechanisms of moral relativism that party officials use to remove the weight of moral responsibility from the shoulders of citizens, thereby

making them accomplices in the common crime and eventually supporters of the regime. The young protagonists refuse to “buy into” the *status quo*, refuse to let communist rule corrupt their consciousness, and this refusal drives them to the margins of society.

The traditional framework of the classical western European bildungsroman undergoes radical permutations in the Polish postcommunist variant of the genre. The young Polish protagonists in the post-1989 literature refuse to enter the adult world and become full-fledged members of communist society because the totalitarian state deprives them of their traditional right to negotiate their place between modernity and tradition, individual and collective. In the classical examples of the bildungsroman, the trials and challenges that the protagonists experience bring them into their social community and serve their ultimate good and social advancement; in the Polish postcommunist initiation novels, the refusal to comply with the communist party’s ideological framework guarantees the preservation of the protagonists’ personal integrity. The question that logically arises at this point is whether or not their failure to be integrated as loyal members of society means that they “fail” their initiation and do not enter adulthood. What social and intellectual space do they then occupy?

The first part of this paper presents some of the reasons that have conditioned the desire to escape or withdraw from social life. Its second part describes and analyzes the alternative lifestyles that the juvenile protagonists adopt in order to avoid socialization into communist society. Finally, I will discuss the effect of failure to be initiated on the genre structure.

THE WITHDRAWAL FROM ADULT LIFE IN COMMUNISM

What circumstances lead the main characters of postcommunist initiation novels to a state of mind in which they reject the adult status quo? Some protagonists clearly declare their indifference to politics. Often they come from anticommunist families that have been hurt physically or spiritually by the regime. A good example in this regard is Tadzio, the hero of Zielenka’s eponymous novel, who thinks to himself when recollecting his first intimate relationship with the politically active Iwona, thinks to himself: “It is true that in the summer, I helped her once or twice to disperse some leaflets, but honestly, politics have never interested me.”[4] Tadzio’s indifference is actually a well-masked fear inherited from his father. The taboo topic in their house has always been mandatory military service. Tadzio’s father was emotionally abused and

physically injured while serving his time in the army because of his speech style.[5] Now, as Tadzio himself approaches the age when he will have to meet his military obligation, his parents are fearful because they suspect his guttural “r” might bring him the same bad luck it brought his father. The father’s traumatic military experience functions as a synecdoche of the totalitarian regime in the novel as it discloses the essence of the communist absurdity.

Other characters lack politically engaging role models. Bolek (*Possible Dreams*) and Adam (*A Pilgrimage to the Tomb of the Miraculous Brigitte Bardot*) are sensitive but emotionally disturbed children who suffer enormously from the lack of a father figure in their life. Although it is never stated directly in the novel, the reader infers that Bolek’s father decided not to return to communist Poland after the end of the Second World War. Forced by the manager of the factory to reveal his political preferences, the juvenile protagonist Bolek confesses: “I am for nobody, just for myself . . . Besides, I do not like to talk about politics, I do not like politics, I do not like politicians, because they usurp the right to decide how other people have to live, why they have to live, and if they should live at all.”[6] Adam’s father, on the other hand, was a hero, one of the few Polish aviators who participated in the battle for Great Britain during the war, but afterward he was sentenced to prison by a communist court and most probably killed. Adam’s mother does not have the courage to tell her son the truth and creates a story that his father is alive and lives in England. To maintain the myth, she regularly writes and sends postcards to their address as if they came from the father. Terrified of the regime and afraid of losing her adolescent son, Adam’s mother constantly reminds him: “‘Adam, honey, do not engage in politics;’ I am sick and tired of hearing this warning over and over again. Like I am engaged in any political actions.”[7]

Marian (*Airplanes*) only partially matches the stereotype described above. Like Bolek and Adam, he also comes from an anticommunist family and has lost his father because of the latter’s opposition to the totalitarian regime. Marian’s father is a political immigrant who lives in the United States and anchors a talk show at Voice of America, telling amusing yet revealing stories about his life in communist Poland. As one could expect, the Polish authorities are very concerned about the consequences of his anticommunist propaganda. His radio show not only compromises the regime outside Poland, but it also sabotages it from within, as many Polish citizens

secretly listen to the banned radio station. Unable to reach the renegade, the security officers attack his family: Marian is asked to condemn his father's behavior and to disown him in front of the whole school. His mother is compelled by security agents to take part in a radio program and tell the entire country what a dishonest and unfaithful husband Marian's father was. The intrusive presence of the secret police in his home turns politics into an everyday reality for young Marian. He starts asking his relatives about communism and goes even further in his dreams: he asks the French president and the Pentagon to throw a bomb at his school and the State Security Office, the two institutions that have caused his family the most pain and humiliation.

By depriving its citizens of private spaces and the possibility of developing decision-making and responsibility-taking skills, the communist state in fact destines them for perpetual immaturity.

Unlike the protagonists mentioned above, Ryszard (*A Bench under the Chestnut Tree*) and J. (*Home, Dreams, and Children's Games; A Sentimental Tale*) have not suffered any personal loss, but they are forced every day to witness their parents' quiet and self-destructive struggle with the regime because of their heritage (noble descent and Jewish origin, respectively). The family of Ryszard's mother belonged to the Polish gentry, but in the new circumstances she is forced to earn her own family's living by bootlegging. His father, a gifted engineer, swings back and forth between periods of creative euphoria and alcoholic torpor because his unwillingness to become a party member has blighted his professional career. The adolescent Ryszard is absolutely indifferent toward politics. His attitude remains unchanged even after the democratic revolution, when most Polish citizens developed an immediate and consistent interest in domestic politics: "At the beginning I had very little interest in this news, it seemed to me that they were talking about the same things over and over again, constantly repeating the same names: Jaruzelski, Wałęsa, Mazowiecki, Balcerowicz. Politics didn't appeal to me; however, I evidently knew that General Jaruzelski was from the communist party and Wałęsa from Solidarity which, as my father liked to say, brought communism to its knees." [8]

J. comes from an educated Jewish family with Silesian roots. His father, broken in spirit, lives the life of an outsider because he lacks the strength to either resist

the regime or emigrate to Israel like most of his relatives. J.'s confession about his lack of interest in politics and in clear understanding of the political realm displays no traces of remorse: "Seriously, he [J.] had a very little interest in it. Besides, he did not understand politics very well. . . . If he thought about these matters it was almost exclusively in philosophical categories, not in everyday terms. . . . He was interested in man with no political armor." [9]

Communism is usually a taboo topic in these fictional Polish families. Parents do not talk openly about politics in front of their children; they try to protect their innocence and safety as long as they can. However, all of the protagonists from the aforementioned novels are sensitive young individuals who unerringly decode their parents' unspoken message that silence and passivity can speak volumes about one's perception of reality. By making a conscious choice to avoid politics, they prove that they have learned their parents' lesson about self-preservation.

For other juvenile protagonists, however, politics is an everyday reality because their fathers are intimately involved with the communist party. Roman (*A Phone Call to Stalin*) and Marianna (*Absolute Amnesia*) are children of party authorities. This gives them a close perspective on the manipulative and antihuman nature of the administrative machine and an equally strong reason to despise it. Interestingly, the true rebels in these novels are actually the ones closest to power. Roman's father is vice-secretary of a regional party committee. The little boy sincerely likes his father and is proud of his important position in the town until he discovers his father's conflict with his in-laws, Roman's maternal grandparents. It is not only the generation gap that sets apart Roman's father and his parents-in-law, but the tragic abyss between the two different social and moral systems they represent. The depiction of the ideological conflict on a family level is not exclusively defined by the fact that the narrator in the novel is a child; the personalization of the official discourse also highlights the profound effect of politics on the private lives of ordinary people. Roman chooses his grandparents' side and begins to demonstratively ignore his father's will. His son's rebellious actions cause the vice-secretary to lose his job at the party committee, an event that represents a turning point in the father's life. His eyes gradually open to the truth he has been ignoring for a long time.

In contrast, Marianna's father (*Absolute Amnesia*), in contrast, seems incapable of any change. Controlling and tyrannical in both his public and private life, he is an embodiment of the communist party itself. It is

symptomatic that Marianna never uses her father's name when referring to him. She calls him "the Secretary," just as everybody else in the neighborhood does. By observing her father's behavior both inside and outside of their home, the adolescent protagonist discovers the "true purpose" of institutions like family and school: to deprive the younger generation of free will and systematically to mold their souls and minds so that they ultimately fit within ideologically sanctioned social norms. Marianna's observation echoes Erving Goffman's conclusion in "Characteristics of Total Institutions," that by depersonalizing or deindividualizing their subordinates, totalitarian institutions deprive them of the will to make independent decisions, thus leading them to collective identification with the regime.[10]

One would expect that children's perceptions of reality would be a function of their parents' beliefs and experiences, but this is not always the case in these novels. This overview suggests instead that despite their parents' compliance or non-compliance with the regime, the young protagonists unerringly recognize its immoral and oppressive nature. They consciously choose to stay away from politics; in doing so, they choose a clear political position—whether they understand that or not. Open resistance is not an option for them, because, as Leszek has realized, "even if you are protesting against the system, you become a subject to external influences and turn your life into a constant reaction." [11] In a totalitarian state, indifference to politics actually means abstention from official forms of public life. Most of the protagonists follow a similar pattern: not only do they withdraw from the political sphere, but they also withdraw from reality in order to create their own fictional worlds that satisfy their longing for freedom and give them some sense of control over their lives.

WITHDRAWAL TO WHERE?

Most of these juvenile protagonists are avid readers: Tadzio, Adam, Bolek, Marianna, and J. escape into the realm of literature. Literature allows them to dream and thus replace the unacceptable external world with an alternative reality; it allows them to experience different lifestyles and human relationships; it shapes their value systems. Tadzio sees reality as "a remote imperfect reflection of the world of his solitary readings and contemplations".[12] For Marianna the outside world becomes more acceptable when seen through the softening filters of recently-read novels. For J., reading is a special ritual that brings temporary

oblivion. Bolek is doubtful whether books make him a better person, but he is certain about their calming effect on him. Often he finds himself craving reading as a hungry man craves food. Leszek (*Drift*) defines his attitude toward reading in the 1980s statistically: "I read at least five hundred books, which I do not remember, but they are still there, in my subconsciousness, fermenting. . . . I had about three hundred sexual encounters. I am not sure if I want to switch those numbers." [13]

The abundance of titles, quotations, and references to literary, philosophical, and scientific works is a feature that almost all post-1989 initiation novels share. It might strike one as pretentious at first, but the repetitiveness of the pattern suggests that reading had a great impact on the younger generation in communist times. It will take a separate study to examine the books these teenage protagonists read, but even a quick glance indicates the prevalence of Western authors, ranging from Johann Wolfgang Goethe to Franz Kafka and Jorge Luis Borges. Antoni Libera—literary critic, writer, and author of the critically acclaimed initiation novel *Madame* [1999]—attaches an even greater meaning to the role of Western culture in the spiritual survival of Polish citizens. He goes so far as to say that, thanks to the Poles' love of Western literature and culture, the process of the sovietization of Polish society (or at least of its elites) has failed.

Most of the young characters are not only passionate readers, but they are also engage in some form of creative production. Tadzio, Marianna, Mikołaj, Adam, and J. use the medium of the *logos/word* not to create new and better universes, but to give deeper meaning to the one they live in. The setting in Adam's novel (*A Pilgrimage*), for example, is a fictional hotel where his protagonist lives with his favorite Western writers, movie stars, singers, and painters who belong to different generations and even different epochs. He claims he is staying at the hotel to seek his lost father, but Rabindranath Tagore leads him to the realization that he is actually trying to find his own identity. Each one of the celebrities represents a different hypostasis of the father, and they all serve as mediators in Adam's attempt at self-discovery.

Bolek (*Possible Dreams*) enjoys drawing as much as he enjoys reading. His dream is to become an architect and build a beautiful and people-friendly capital city in a place where nothing has existed before. In a contemplative moment, he points out that the option of building his dream city on the ruins of an old one is absolutely unacceptable.

Marian (*Airplanes*) and J. (*Home, Dreams, and Children's Games*) adore airplanes and often ride their bicycles to the airport to enjoy the view of the big metal birds and the roar of the motors: "This is not true," says Marian, "that this place was something ordinary for me. Every time I went there I had the feeling that I was stepping into something completely surreal".[14] Marian's passion for flying does not end with airport visits. He diligently studies his collection of Russian aviation magazines and spends long days sketching and constructing his own aircrafts. Marian and his friends even take two imaginary trips: to France and the United States. Interestingly, the first thing he notices after landing at the foreign airports is the immediate disappearance of his inseparable companion: fear. Airplanes are a transparent symbol of escape and freedom in Stokowski's novel.

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Most of the juvenile characters physically survive communist reality, but they emerge from their personal and lonely battle with the regime with damaged psyches and fragmented identities.

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The act of creation is a constructive outlet for adolescent artistic impulses and need for self-expression. It is also a way to escape "the absorbing grayness and mediocrity" for a short time. "Because,"—as Leszek (*Drift*) concludes,— "what else could we do in those dark years and at this puppy age, except create." [15] The act of self-estrangement reveals, at least to the reader, the illusion that even in the most unfavorable circumstances one might find a way of not compromising one's personal beliefs. This may sound pathetic, but most of the time the narratives successfully balance pathos with humor and irony.

Some protagonists have discovered that constant movement and changing of location make them feel free and prevent them from surrendering to social pressure: "We cared about our freedom. That is why we walked so much. Days and nights. And we traveled. Months. Until it got really cold. Even then we tried. Sometimes hitchhiking, sometimes riding trains without tickets." [16] When Bolek (*Possible Dreams*) and Leszek (*Drift*) play hooky, they spend the entire day riding random buses or trains to the last stop and enjoying the feeling of being anonymous in the outskirts or in other cities. Bolek usually takes a bag full of books with him, thus combining physical and mental escape routes. Leszek is simply killing time before the first show at the aptly named "Atlantic" theater.

Other protagonists take a larger step and cross state borders: Penguin (*Sergeant Pepper's Children*) emigrates to America, following his dream to become rich and famous; starving and desperate, his friend Brzanka joins him for a time. The original purpose of Tazio's trip to West Germany is to bring his cousin back to Poland. He fails in the rescue mission, but he succeeds in discovering himself as he experiences his initiation into adulthood at the immigration camp, just like his favorite literary character, Hans Castorp, in the Berghof sanatorium.

After taking his two imaginary trips to France and the United States to rescue his country from the communists, little Marian (*Airplanes*) decides that it is time to start thinking about his own safety. He prepares a meticulous plan to secretly board a real plane and flee to America to reunite with his father. The inhabitants of Adam's hotel (*A Pilgrimage*) collectively reach the decision that their only way out of the collapsing building is to build a rocket and escape to the United States. It is worth noting here that most of these protagonists associate their rescue with America. This is not surprising, given the fact that Voice of America's broadcasts during the early cold war not only countered communist propaganda by promoting American democratic values, but also nourished hope that the United States would intervene and help the Eastern Europeans destroy the totalitarian regime. As in the classical bildungsroman, the physical escape turns into a journey of self-discovery for some of the adolescent characters.

The attractions of the opposite sex prove to be an even stronger displacing force for the young protagonists. This takes various forms across the novels, ranging from pure platonic love to purely sexual encounters. Interestingly enough, age is not always the deciding factor. Some of the youngest characters (J., Ryszard, Roman) experience sexual initiation and discover the pleasures of the body. Others find the meaning of life in love. Love inspires them to live and evolve, and makes them feel worthy and needed.

The narrator in *Madame* suggests that he survived communism thanks to his attraction to his exotic French teacher. He mobilizes all his talents to discover a few details about her closely-guarded personal life, and then creatively arranges the individual pieces of information to reveal his feelings for "La Belle Victoire." This intellectually provocative and sensually charged game fully absorbs the young character's mind and unnoticeably liberates him from the grayness of everyday life. Emotionally confused and alienated,

Bolek (*Possible Dreams*) is willing to step out of his self-protective apathy only when a good woman enters his life. He eventually marries a girl involved with a children's charity and becomes the father of her adopted children. Love serves as a maturation catalyst for Tadzio (*Tadzio*) as well. In the German immigration camp he meets his cousin's fiancée, a good-hearted and sympathetic young woman. The friendship between Tadzio and Ela grows at the same pace as the alienation between her and Tadzio's cousin. When Tadzio's cousin abandons the pregnant Ela on their wedding day, Tadzio does not hesitate to propose to her, thus saving her dignity and the life of her child. In one of his contemplative moments Adam (*A Pilgrimage*) realizes that three things could save him from the collapsing building (late communist Poland): his lost father, a religion he could practice, and a woman he could fall in love with.

Unfortunately, not all of the juvenile protagonists engage in constructive escapism. Some of them find comfort in alcohol, drugs, and promiscuity. This means of self-exclusion from the rejected normative society is characteristic of the hippie culture, artistically captured in *Drift*, *Sergeant Pepper's Children*, and *How I Became a Writer*. Sobczak's *Drift* offers arguably the most graphic portrayal of communist absurdity and existential pain of the "lost generation." The choice of the main character's family name, Wałęsik, is not random. The verb *walęsać się* means "to idle," and that is exactly what Leszek and his friends do: they waste their time and energy in seeking alcohol, drugs, and women to escape reality: "My friends and I discovered marijuana rather early, long before the reggae wave, and we left beer, red wine, and school for it. . . . I was abusing other substances as well, but none of them helped me to find the meaning of life." [17] Several protagonists from different novels suggest that in the 1980s, especially during the period of martial law, drug abuse among the youth surpassed alcohol abuse, which has traditionally been high in Poland. Mikołaj (*Sergeant Pepper's Children*) grows marijuana himself and takes pride in its thicket green bushes, but his friend Brzanka is rather upset about the fact that the "whole city has gone crazy and people smoke pot like they drink vodka." [18] *Drift* offers a similar observation: "They took them [the girls] from one party to another, but instead of alcohol, there were green leaves everywhere: dried in a hurry in the oven and smoked in pipes." [18]

Another means of escape popular among the juvenile protagonists is feigned schizophrenia. Leszek (*Drift*) openly confesses: "I want to be a schizophrenic on

paper." In order to obtain the desirable diagnosis, he has to demonstrate his insanity in front of a psychiatrist every two weeks for an entire year. The doctor immediately recognizes the ruse, but lets him do his show anyway and finally prescribes diazepam. This episode suggests that Leszek was not the only person who had come up with the brilliant idea of buying freedom and safety in exchange for a diagnosis of "schizophrenia," which in any normal circumstances would be a stigma.

The narrator in *How I Became a Writer* recollects his fake suicide attempt (during which he almost dies) in order to escape military obligations. Stasiuk's character does not, however, succeed in obtaining the desirable diagnosis; he is instead pronounced a deserter and sent to prison. Marianna's (*Absolute Amnesia*) high school teacher feigns a mental disorder and finds peace of mind in a psychiatric facility. The juvenile protagonist's comment about the event is that "I would do the same; however, madness requires a certain firmness and stubbornness and perhaps even premeditation. And I am constantly carried away." [19] Jaś (*Sergeant Pepper's Children*) represents the opposite case. He is a genuine schizophrenic, but he believes he is feigning it and generously invites his friends to refer to him in case something bad happens.

Little Marian (*Airplanes*) falls so deeply into the habit of daydreaming as a coping strategy that as time goes by it becomes more and more difficult for him to distinguish between dream and reality. Adam from *A Pilgrimage to the Tomb of the Miraculous Brigitte Bardot* experiences the same ontological confusion. The fictional hotel where the action of his book takes place is an ambiguous space. First it is a retreat, where he (or his protagonist) socializes with his favorite celebrities, thus escaping the hostile environment; it next appears as a symbol of the disintegration of communist Poland. Adam's attempt at resurrecting his fragmented self in fiction fails as he in fact recreates the prison he cannot escape in real life.

Despite their efforts to not surrender to social pressure, almost all of the young protagonists have moments of self-questioning depression during which they blame themselves for not fitting into the mainstream. Mikołaj, the narrator and a main character in *Sergeant Pepper's Children*, reveals his struggle with depression: "He would start delicately with a cursory balance. Who was he? What did he represent, what could he do, what capacities did he possess? Zero, ladies and gentlemen, a round zero with a hole in the middle. What then was he supposed to do with himself?"

One has to do something in life, find a place for oneself. However, Mikolaj was incompatible with the world or it could be as well that the world was not compatible with Mikolaj.”

Adam (*A Pilgrimage*) experiences feelings of chaos and fragmentary existence as well as an inability to distinguish between dream and reality: “Because I cannot find unconditional values, I do not have measures, proportions, parameters, and I do not believe in relative ones. . . . The mode of my existence is non-existence.”

The sense of incoherence that the main character experiences is reflected in the fragmented narrative of the novel. The text shares some of the formal features of postmodern discourse, but it should not be completely identified with the latter. Unlike the postmodern hero who programmatically denies a transcendent and unified self, the characters in the Polish novels under discussion desperately aim at achieving a coherent and autonomous subjectivity. The inability to attain a harmonious state of mind leads them to various forms of self-denial.

Some of the younger protagonists declare their desire to disappear unnoticed or never to grow up. A child’s imagination is governed by different rules than that of an adolescent or adult. Little Bolek, for example, believes that closing his eyes will make himself and the whole world disappear. Tadzio realizes later in life that his “desire to run away, slip out on tiptoe without being noticed”^[20] was fueled by his fear of the real world. Marianna (*Absolute Amnesia*) senses what awaits her and makes the decision that “until she finds more convincing arguments to join the adult world, it would be better if she stays little forever. . . . Sometimes adults make her laugh, at other times she is ashamed of them, and even in moments of weakness when she would start dreaming about the privileges promised as she grows up, she would come quickly to her senses.”^[21] This links her intertextually with another child-protagonist, Oskar Matzerath from Günther Grass’s novel *Tin Drum* [1959]. Both Marianna and Oscar are citizens of Danzig and share the same desire not to grow up, not to enter the hypocritical adult world. Adam (*A Pilgrimage*) is worried about the fact that he is not maturing: “I delay my development, I withhold time (which does not exist), I am still a son. Not a husband, not a father. Eternal childhood.”^[22] Adam’s worries convey the psychological stress of living without the ability to create a coherent self and achieve social maturity.

The obvious reason for these writers to adopt the child’s perspective on everyday life under communism

is to present the point of view of a true outsider who has not yet been corrupted by the system, thus achieving a defamiliarization effect and enhancing the authenticity of the narrative. But behind the obvious reason for choosing this particular perspective lies a second, more powerful, ideological reason. Adam’s perception of his eternal childhood, for example, suggests that he is in fact modeling the consequences of communist state policy toward its citizens. By monopolizing the patriarchal role and turning motherhood into a state duty, the party legitimizes its intervention in the private sphere and frees men and women from their traditional obligations to one another so that they can fully devote themselves and their work to the communist idea. The parent-child relationship is adversely affected as communist rule assumes the main responsibility for the upbringing of new generations of faithful communists. By depriving its citizens of private spaces and the possibility of developing decision-making and responsibility-taking skills, the communist state in fact destines them for perpetual immaturity.

This “unbearable lightness of being” leads some of the more sensitive protagonists to self-destruction, as the human body remains the only private zone over which an individual allegedly maintains full control.^[23] The more extreme cases of the denial of self are found in the characters who have suicidal thoughts, attempt suicide, or succeed in taking their own lives. The black statistic in these representative novels is that four of the adolescent protagonists try to commit suicide and one dies during his attempt to flee to America. “In the 1980s,” confesses Leszek (*Drift*), “I made three attempts at suicide . . . and thought three hundred and thirty three thousand times that I did not want to live.”^[24] Bolek (*Possible Dreams*) is even more extreme in his rejection of the life he is destined to live: “If it was up to me, I would have been stillborn. Because life is not worth living at all. . . . I will imagine for myself a peace of mind, because that is what I like the most. One need not take part in life, get engaged in people’s businesses, participate in anything external. I will imagine somebody else who would live my restless, wounded, meaningless, chaotic, and accidental life for me.”^[25]

IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Such self-reflections return us to the question of survival. Most of the juvenile characters physically survive communist reality, but they emerge from their personal and lonely battle with the regime with

damaged psyches and fragmented identities, uncertain about the purpose of their own existence, trying to mask their crippling insecurity with cynicism. All of the described examples of internal struggle point to the impossibility of a natural process of socialization. When the aggressive, depersonalizing social pressure of the regime collides with the stubborn nonconformity of the teenage protagonists, the only possible compromise seems to be voluntary exile (internal or external). However, total liberation from social ties is untenable, even in theory.

The growing uncertainty and need for protection lead the young protagonists to peer groups with similar alternative thinking. These groups provide temporary relief, but in the long term prove to be an insufficient form of social interaction and a limited source of social affirmation. Sometimes they even become a source of anxiety, as the young protagonists observe the reflection of their own social drama in their peers' conduct. As minority structures, such groups are probably more visible in the dominant culture, and they experience constant pressure from mainstream society to blend in. Furthermore, the ideological platform of these minority structures is based entirely on the rejection and eventually demolition of the existing order, and that is not what most of the protagonists are looking for, consciously or subconsciously. They seek a neutral space and freedom to establish their own identities; they long for positive values to identify with, and they expect acknowledgment of their social utility. Only two of the characters, Tadzio and Bolek, realize these aspirations by discovering love and assuming the responsibilities of husband and father; nevertheless, they continue their refusal to participate in any social structures that might compromise their integrity. Finding a *modus vivendi* in which both the society and the individual have at least some of their rights respected represents the final point of the maturation process and attainment of adulthood in *Tadzio* and *Possible Dreams*. More to the point, however, is the fact that the only protagonists who achieve partial socialization become fathers of adopted children. This symbolically marks the end of the communist treatment of fatherhood as a biological act and rehabilitates the importance and complexity of the paternal role. It also resacralizes family as a private space in which human subjectivity is formed and protected.

The genre of the bildungsroman was born in late eighteenth-century Germany in the age of Enlightenment. Its emergence coincided with the

process of nation formation and sounded "the humanistic concern for the whole man unfolding organically in all his complexity and richness." [26] The classical *Bildungsromane* embody the dialectic of the infinite realm of individual potentiality and the finite realm of social practicality by sketching the general processes of acculturation and selfhood formation within a defined social order. The Polish post-communist accounts of childhood subvert the conventions of the bildungsroman (as viewed by Wilhelm Dilthey, who introduced the term into common usage [27]) as they tell the story of failed social initiation. In novel after novel, the children-protagonists fail to mature and to become useful and satisfied citizens; the expected integration into an affirmative society is replaced by alienation from an unacceptable reality.

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By monopolizing the patriarchal role and turning motherhood into a state duty, the communist party legitimizes its intervention in the private sphere and "frees" men and women from their traditional obligations to one another so that they can fully devote themselves and their work to the communist idea.

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In *Deserters and Soldiers* [28] Maciej Urbanowski notes the emergence of a new type of hero (or rather antihero) in contemporary Polish literature, the deserter. His characterization perfectly describes the collective image of the juvenile protagonists in post-1989 Polish initiation novels. The deserter, claims Urbanowski, is a specific type of rebel who refuses to serve any social cause or idea. He is an anarchist and loner by choice. The deserter prefers to be invisible to the world and typically lives on the margins of society. He is an eternal fugitive; if captured he would not fight back since it would mean entering the game, playing by "their" rules.

Thus, unlike the classical bildungsroman that is meant to validate the existing structures of power and valorize the prevailing models of socialization, the Polish postcommunist version of the genre indicates an axiological crisis, a society gone wrong. Initiation into mature adulthood is impossible in the postcommunist novels because the adolescent protagonists seek their identities in a milieu that is threatening, alienating, and lacking in stability and consistency. What is left is fragmentation and incompleteness. This raises the question of to what extent the failed initiations affected the functioning of the communist political system. In "Assumptions about

the Learning of Political Values,” Roberta Siegel stresses the importance of citizens’ political socialization for the well-being of the state organism and the far-reaching consequences of the disrupted symbiosis: “The stability of a political system depends in no small measure on the political socialization of its members. A well-functioning citizen is one who accepts (internalizes) society’s political norms and who will then transmit them to future generations. Without a body politic so in harmony with the ongoing political values, a political system would have trouble functioning smoothly and perpetuating itself safely.” [29]

It can thus be inferred from the novels under discussion that communist Poland collapsed because it had lost the approval and support of its citizens. The fathers did not transmit the communist political norms to their sons and daughters. In turn, this younger generation celebrated by the communist regime as the builders and beneficiaries of the bright future, in fact became its gravediggers.

In her study of three African postcolonial initiation novels, Wangari wa Nyatetu-Waigwa borrows the concept of liminality from anthropological theories and coins the term “liminal novel” to account for a specific type of initiation trajectory that significantly digresses from the linear maturation process in the classical bildungsroman. Nyatetu-Waigwa argues that if liminality is the middle phase in the pattern of the rite of passage, “the liminal novel. . . is a novel of coming-of-age in which the rite of passage. . . remains suspended in the middle stage. At the close of the novel the protagonist is still in the middle of the quest, either still moving towards what supposedly constitutes the final stage in that quest or having consciously suspended the adoption of a final stance. This suspension results not from the hero’s desire to take up residence forever in the blessed isle of the unchanging Goddess of Immortal Being but from his inability to complete the quest under his present circumstances.” [30]

The genre of the bildungsroman has been appropriated many times beyond its traditional realm to fit different historical, political, and cultural contexts. Two of its recent variations, postcolonial and postcommunist initiation novels, exhibit remarkable similarities. They both explore how colonialism/communist totalitarianism impaired the developing personalities of the younger generation that eventually resulted in the destruction of the indigenous/national identity and culture. They both tell the stories of

characters caught between their colonized/communist past and postmodern present who struggle to reimagine their new selves. Personal accounts allude to a similar process on a communal level—the establishment of a new national identity that explains the emergence of the bildungsroman trend in the postcolonial and postcommunist literatures. Przemysław Czapliński argues that in every transitional period the genre of the “initiation novel” occupies a privileged position alongside parody and pastiche as it facilitates the transformation of the dominant aesthetic conventions. It also frees its readers from the deposed dominant worldview by shifting to a new view of history and knowledge about the world, and finally, it offers an innocent re-discovery of reality.[31]

What is the future of the Polish postcommunist initiation novels? Dariusz Nowacki suggests that the vitality and attraction of the theme will soon wear out as a new generation of writers steps onto the Polish literary stage. For this new generation, the “People’s Republic of Poland” will be a phenomenon known exclusively from history textbooks. Perhaps we should be more optimistic (or more pessimistic!) than Nowacki and believe in the longevity of this topic. Polish society has by no means come to terms with its communist past. Not even one generation has passed since the Soviet army moved out of Poland. The past and its issues are tenaciously enduring in Polish culture. The Soviet communist occupation and its visible and invisible marks will continue to absorb people’s minds for years to come. ▲

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NOTES

1. The terms “initiation novel,” “bildungsroman,” and “coming-of-age novel” will be used interchangeably further in the text.
2. Przemysław Czapliński, “Wobec biografii. Nowa proza-rytuały inicjacji” in *Ślady przelomu. O prozie polskiej 1976–1996* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1997), 63–85.
3. Dariusz Nowacki, “Widokówki z tamtego świata” *Znak* 7, (2000): 28–47.
4. Jurek Zielonka, *Tadzio* (Kraków: Znak, 2000), 22.
5. The injury was caused by a cruel sergeant Fonfary who was constantly picking on Tadzio’s father because of his guttural French “r.” Fonfary associated this articulation problem with bourgeois degeneracy and effeminacy, and was merciless towards people having it. The irony and misfortune was that the sergeant himself suffered from the same speech impairment and was very ashamed of it. He never doubted that Tadzio’s father was making fun of him.

6. Jolanta Stefko, *Możliwe sny* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2003), 124.
7. Lech Majewski, *Pielgrzymka do grobu Brigitte Bardot Cudownej* (Kraków: Universitas, 1996), 64.
8. Ryszard Sadaj, *Ławka pod kasztanem* (Kraków: Znak, 2000), 78.
9. Julian Kornhauser, *Dom, sen i gry dziecięce: Opowieść sentymentalna* (Kraków: Znak, 1995), 104.
10. Quoted by Aleksandra Bault, "Jak korzystać z wolności? O sytuacji młodego bohatera w prozie lat 90" in *Literatura polska 1990–2000*, vol. 2, edited by Tomasz Cieślak and Krystyna Pietrych (Kraków: Zielona Sowa, 2003), 131. For Goffman's essay see <www.diligio.com/goffman.htm>.
11. Jan Sobczak, *Dryf* (Czarne: Czarne, 1999), 5.
12. Zielonka, 7–8.
13. Sobczak, 10.
14. Marek Stokowski, *Samo-loty* (Warszawa: Jacek Santorski & Co, 2005), 44.
15. Sobczak, 43.
16. Andrzej Stasiuk, *Jak zostałem pisarzem (Próba autobiografii intelektualnej)* (Gładyszów: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 1998), 18.
17. Sobczak, 8.
18. Sobczak, 14.
19. Izabela Filipiak, *Absolutna amnezja* (Warszawa: Tchu, 2006), 188. This issue of sanity/insanity and incarceration in psychiatric facilities in communist countries is an enormous topic with many ramifications: personal, political, cultural, scientific, and literary.
20. Zielonka, 7.
21. Filipiak, 15.
22. Majewski, 251.
23. Monika Brzóstowicz, "Pod presją ideologii," in: *Wizerunek rodziny w polskiej prozie współczesnej*, 99–132 (Poznań: Biblioteka Literacka Poznańskich Studiów Polonistycznych, vol. 8, 1998).
24. Sobczak, 10.
25. Stefko, 5–6.
26. Martin Swales, *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 14.
27. The hero of the classical bildungsroman engages in the double task of self-integration and integration into society. Under ideal conditions, the first implies the second: the mature hero becomes a useful and satisfied citizen. Viewed in this way, the bildungsroman is a fundamentally affirmative, conservative genre, confident in the validity of the society it depicts, and anxious to lead both hero and reader toward a productive place within the world. Quoted by Todd Kontje, *Private Lives in the Public Sphere: The German Bildungsroman as Metafiction* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 12.
28. Maciej Urbanowski, "RP Dezerterzy," in *Dezerterzy i żołnierze. Szkice o literaturze polskiej 1991–2006* (Kraków: Arcana, 2007), 31–34.
29. Roberta Siegel, "Assumptions about the Learning of Political Values," *Annals of the American Academy of*

Political and Social Science, 361(1965):1.

30 Wangari wa Nyatetu-Waigwa, *The Liminal Novel. Studies in the Francophone-African Novel as Bildungsroman* (New York, Washington D.C./Baltimore, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Vienna, Paris: Peter Lang, 1996), 3. "Wobec biografii: Kryzys autentyczności i sylwy" in *Ślady przelomu. O prozie polskiej 1976–1996* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1997), 192–224.

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North of the Port

Stories

By **Anthony Bukoski**. Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist Univ. Press (ggoodwin@smu.edu, or PO Box 750415 Dallas, TX 75275-0415), 2008. 176 pages. ISBN 978-0-97074-521-8. \$22.50. Hardcover.

Mary Ann Furno

“This collection of stories is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author’s imagination or are used fictitiously.” These words are written in fine print on the reverse side of the title page of Bukoski’s collection of stories. Curiously, on reading each of the twelve stories, one wonders wherein lies the fiction.

Summer, 1950. Is fiction found in the East End of Superior, Wisconsin, with Magda Podgorak who “was always looking for [the suffering, wounded] Jesus. . . . His image in mirrors” (2), and who as a “victim soul” (8), a “noble soul” (4) makes the “sacrificial flight for Poland” (8) leaving a love-stricken nineteen-year-old Andrzej Iwanowski “coming to understand mysteries hinting at a larger mystery inhabited by the people here”(12)? Does fiction lie with eighteen-year-old Leszyk Iwanowski, “displaced after the war. . . a good writer. . . strange for drawing pictures of flowers and birds” (17), whose self-identity precariously coalesces as a self-declared “out of place. . . the displaced person,” (17) and who “will ride through East End with a Polish count who is coming to America” (28). Do we recognize it between father and son—Al Dziedzic, “frozen in time” (41), and twenty-two-year-old Pete, embattled in an unarticulated past that reappears as “shadows” (46–51)? Do we find it in St. Adalbert’s substitute priest, Father Hemerling, whose belly hunger foreshadows “more” dislocation, “who’s so big he blocks the view of the tabernacle” (58). Is it with Bożena Iwanowski—“one of them that arrived from Poland” (62); a family outcast, reappearing at different intervals and places, and in different guises, a “lost nature” (73) in liaison with marginalized figures? “No one in any country has cried so hard. . . . Bożena with no Poland” (68, 69).

It is 1954. Is fiction realized inside the adolescent Tadek Ostrowski, who “write(s) and write(s) about it all. . . all the time of his observations” (89) living in the East End, where the “wand of youth” (87) mobilizes

his coming-of-age as a “noble Pole” (96). It is 1998; is fiction closer to an aging Antoni Kosmatka, “Guardian of the Sick,” in search of “recovering vitality” (120) and restoring order to The Kosciuszko Lodge whose breakdown is a “shame” (117)? A “vitality” of a noble order is awakened in lieu of instinct, an illusory adventure of “never loving the old country so much” (125), and “a knight of King Boleslaw if there ever was one” (132) emerges instead “when wrestling with his demons” (131). Is it written in Ed Cieslicki’s (stage name: Wally Na Zdrowie) letter to his son, Tadeusz, “living far away” (134)? Sentiments unfettered, he writes about “everything closing, not much opening” (139); and “I can’t go on without them. . . career of laboring at a hardboard plant” (138); and the accordion—for sale (maybe)—“with acid . . . the keys will get clean of the discoloration caused by the fingertips” (138). Would fiction even touch the Kalinowski family in the person of seventeen-year-old daughter Catherine, and Grandfather whose “dreams would vanish without me to share them” and who like “this ancient sailor hid in [their] house from the seas of disappointment”(144)? And her Polish sailor, Stanislaus Piotrowski—“almost as old as my parents. . . he had blond hair. Tall, handsome. . . I think he must have been a nobleman in Poland” (154); a phantasm presenting himself in “whispers” (151), “unraveling [an old] seaman’s life” (160) with a young girl’s dreams.

Curiously, on the last page of this story a transparent, rectangular box with its lid opened and raised is drawn—the “box of ancestry” (175)—along with the question: “How many ways does the box open?” I find four ways, no, “four thousand or more” (175). *North of the Port* concludes with this title story, leaving us with “the best thing was for me to tell the story in writing. You look at this story. . . . I wrote these pages . . . for love, though [anyone] might not believe that this could happen in the East End of Superior, Wisconsin — signed Catherine Kalinowski” (176). It seems the author reveals *his* hand in this final note. What is the incredulous “this” that writing as fiction affixes as true?

To claim Polish émigrés within the genre of fiction is to admit them to the theater of living expression. “You don’t read about them much like you do about the others. No one cares about the Poles” (175). *North of the Port* seems to draw its impetus from this truth that, finally, is released from “the box of ancestry” into characters whom Bukoski has “compete with life”—

to borrow an expression from Henry James's *The Art of Fiction*.

The larger story that is Poland's history pervades *North of the Port*. It "slips through" mirrors; reflections of glass and windows, whispers, shadows, hunger, wounds, and breathing by characters who speak ambiguously in non-sequiturs, exhibit word slippage, and engage in fantasy and illusion. These émigrés realize their experience in a language inclusive of Poland's history of subjugation. Bukoski distinguishes a "language of dislocation" as one that admits reality. It is a language that "extends" the boundaries of time, and place, facilitating "flight" to Poland, and reincorporation of its noble heritage. The attempts of these émigrés to "salvage" (11) ethos and nobility in environs that reflect degradation and shame, produce a parody of dislocation, vividly portrayed in "foolish" (132) Antoni Kosmatka. Parody runs deep in *North of the Port*. A "mind is funny" (49), "something in [Magda Podgorak's] mind" (2), Al Dziedzic's "mental problems" (30), and strange adolescents underscore the aberration of dislocation. The "lung troubles" (10), the iron ore docks, coal yards, flour mills, and cement plants preoccupy these émigrés less than "what they remember from Poland" (57): "breathing as a bird getting loose" (10), hunger of ancestors' "holy bread" (59), the Eucharist (57), "bread and sausage" (56), wounds with "IHS—I Have Suffered" (11), the "scarred Madonna" (49, 94). With suffering in identification with Jesus hovering over these men and women, we ponder that, perhaps, the language of displaced persons in *North of the Port* points to their spirit that hungers, is wounded, and cannot breathe. The character Božena lives this out most dramatically.

As the demise of Polish institutions and establishments hastens displacement—"everything sacred and holy has been moved out" (135)—the inevitable rise of mechanization and bureaucratization drives to the hearth: "'H for Hot Dish' features Mrs. Agnes Cieslicki cooking 'Baked Noodle Ring' (135) in the television studio, and the supermarket is 'Home to Award Winning Sausage' (134).

"How many ways does the box open?" Countless ways for the characters in *North of the Port* where these "displaced ones" find a home in fiction. Each of the stories is abundant with allusions and associations that take the reader in too many directions—but, then again, anything can happen when "writing. . . on nights of heavy seas and lightning" (176). To "compete with life" is to believe that all *this* could happen in the East End of Superior, Wisconsin. ▲

Twelve Below Zero

By Anthony Bukoski. Second expanded edition. Preface by Barton Sutter. Duluth, MN: Holy Cow! Press (www.holycowpress.org), 2008. 161 pages. ISBN 978-0-9779458-7-0. Paper. \$14.95.

Sally Boss

The place of action is the far north, the Lake Superior area to be exact. The time? Sometimes it is the present, at other times it is the 1950s when one could still find the kind of wilderness that seems to have now disappeared, conquered by tourist motels and vacation homes around the Great Lakes. Or perhaps the time of action is anytime, and northern cottages and saloons are conjured up by the writer's imagination and placed casually in the "anywhere, anytime" space of magic realism. Sometimes it seems that the story takes place in the nineteenth century, except that some of the characters occasionally drive trucks. The title story locates the time of action in the 1950s. The author intimates that at that time such places as End-of-the-Line Café or Two Heart settlement existed.

Bukoski has been called "a sure-handed, lyrical writer" by the *New York Times Book Review*. As Barton Sutter put it, his primary theme is heartache. Many of his stories are about Polish Americans, and he is primarily known for his heartbreaking narratives about retired or fired factory workers who eke out a living in the dying little towns of northern Wisconsin. But this collection of stories—some of which had been published before in a volume under the same title—is different from the rest of Bukoski's work. It focuses primarily on Scandinavian Americans and their settlements in Wisconsin and Minnesota. These are tough people; more often than not, they live in cottages and cabins deep in the northern forest and come to town to drink and be rowdy in the town's saloon. While Polish Americans huddle together and attend the Kosciuszko Lodge meetings, these Swedes and Norwegians nurse family tragedies and psychological scars in deep isolation. Sometimes they commit suicide (Polish Americans rarely do); at other times they live on, enveloped in tragedies we learn about from the narrator's discrete hints. Also unlike Polish Americans, they engage in violence. The best stories in the collection, "Hello from Ture" and "Ice Days," are examples. Bukoski must have been raised somewhere

in-between the Polish and Scandinavian communities in Wisconsin, because his ability to capture the dark Scandinavian moods is nearly perfect. Or perhaps he imbibed this dark atmosphere from the works of August Strindberg or Henrik Ibsen, or he traveled in Sweden and Norway and visited Nasjonalmonumentet «Bukkerittet» in Rondablikk that shows Peer Gynt's impossible longings and his crazy flight. I was struck by Bukoski's knowledge of Scandinavian detail. In "Ice Days" the mother remembers licking her husband's sick eyes; in Sigrid Undset's *Kristin Lavransdatter*, Kristin licks the sick eyes of her second son, who suffered from bad sight since babyhood and eventually became blind. In the medieval north licking was the only remedy mothers had at their disposal.

There is one story in the collection that differs from others: "The Pulaski Guards." It deals with the narrator's grandmother, who came to America from Poland at age ten. We encounter her as she lies dying in a nursing home, abandoned by all but one of her numerous children and grandchildren. The tenderness and gentleness of this story differentiate it from William Faulkner's "As I Lay Dying," even though both stories adumbrate the misery of dying in solitude and the poignancy of the injustices of fate.

These are not stories for ladies who lunch. They are about lonely men, occasionally women, who live on the edge. Their heroes or heroines live in rented rooms or in cabins far away from town. They have few friends. Whenever they have a couple of dollars they go to places where they can buy company while drinking and eating. Family life eludes them, but sex does not. They settle in inhospitable places, away from big towns where opportunity beckons. They do not eat a healthy diet and do not count calories or drinks, do not ponder how to adopt a healthier lifestyle so as to live longer. They treat their lives as if they were disposable paper plates. In the northern wilderness (twelve below zero!) where they were discovered by the narrator, there is little to entertain them: no television in this pretelevision age, no football, not even movie theaters because the settlements are small. No buses to take them home—they have to walk home in the cold and dark every single day. Their occupations as lumberjacks, loggers, hunters, trappers, mill workers and traveling handymen are not conducive to having wives and children: money is scarce, and they are often away from home. The atmosphere of Bukoski's saloons is that of the frontier; as recently as a half-century ago one could live a frontierlike life in some parts of the United States.

The men are desperately lonely. By the standards of middle-class society, their lives are worthless. This is the material, one suspects, of which much of the armed forces and jail populations are composed. The reader sees these men as if through a veil that shields the coarseness and brutality of their lives and infuses them with melancholy, sadness, and delicacy. The title story narrates the life of a lonely workman who once kissed a much younger man in a bar. To avenge herself on him, the younger man's wife wounds him and leaves him to freeze in subzero weather. The poignancy of a wasted life, and similar lives surrounding it, is almost palpable.

There is a profound difference between these stories and those about Polish Americans in Bukoski's other collections. Polish Americans are mild and invisible; Scandinavian Americans are loud and noticeable. Yes, Poles too went to Vietnam and served in other wars, and sometimes did heroic things, but upon return they blended into the grey life of their communities rather than trying to be remembered. They are losers, in the common sense of the word. They fail to keep up with the Joneses. The local papers forget about them and the national papers never got a clue. Scandinavian Americans at least rebel against the injustices of fate. They are loud and their fists are heavy; they depart this world not with a whimper but with a bang. They kill each other when their wives are unfaithful, or just because they bear a grudge against someone. Poles do not do such things in Bukoski's stories or in real life. Have you noticed that all the stories about bizarre crimes from the Chicago area usually concern non-Polish neighborhoods? Bukoski's characters reflect these trends. They are dreamers, but while Polish dreamers end their lives in obscurity, Scandinavian dreamers usually manage to express their displeasure with life.

Bukoski may well be the best American storyteller alive. Sherwood Anderson has been invoked by critics for comparison; but the author of *Winesburg, Ohio* is now read mostly in English literature courses. Bukoski is with us here and now, bringing us people who act out life's most important moments. The measure of a life's importance is not how well that person succeeded in keeping up with the Joneses, but how deeply he or she felt and understood what life is all about.

Apart from Anderson, there are echoes of Flannery O'Connor here, as horrible things happen to ordinary people and are narrated in whispers and understatement. Another feature that connects Bukoski to Flannery O'Connor is an awareness that there may

be something bigger and more important than individual characters, something they grope for, unaware that it even exists. The works of many Catholic writers share this undertone. Finally, Bukoski's technique owes something to the magical realism of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and also to William Faulkner's novels, with their layers of narration from diverse characters and from the narrator himself. Speaking of writers, Huysmans's *À rebours* crops up in one story, horribly misspelled; I was not sure whether the misspellings were intentional or accidental.

Bukoski writes about outsiders, *schlemiels*, marginal people whose histories do not appear in newspapers unless one of them dies a spectacularly grim death. He makes us understand that such people sometimes best exemplify the puzzles of life. The inch-deep culture of American suburbia hides the tragedies that misery etches clearly on the outcasts' faces. Bukoski recovers the human story and presents it to us. This recovery and presentation give his books the kind of authenticity that is missing all too often in fiction published by magazines with politically correct zip codes. ▲

Travel Notes

By Stefan Nesterowicz. Translated from Polish by Elżbieta Szczepaniak McNeilly, edited by Teana Sechelski and Virginia Felchak Hill. Houston: Polish Genealogical Society of Texas, www.pgst.org, 2007). xxii + 150 pages. ISBN 978-0-9798204-1-0. Paper. \$23.95 including postage.

Patricia A. Gajda

Stefan and Melanja Nesterowicz, an educated and accomplished couple, left their Polish home for Brazil, where they lived for some years among other Polish immigrants before moving to the United States and accepting employment at a Polish-language newspaper, *Echoes of America*, in Toledo, Ohio. It was for this paper that Stefan undertook an arduous journey in 1909 to visit and write about the Poles who had immigrated to the rural American South, their role in society, their travails and successes, and their devotion to the Catholic Church. These articles were later compiled into a book, *Notatki z podróży* (Toledo: A. A. Paryski, 1910). An English translation was published in 1969. When both of these were out of print and no longer available, the Polish Genealogical Society of Texas undertook the current project and

sponsored a new translation. Remaining faithful to the original manuscript, the new PGST volume includes only those photographs that appeared in the original Polish edition. Some of them were enhanced with current technology, and provide corrections of names and other data confirmed by recent research in documentary sources, but set off in brackets to distinguish them from the original text.

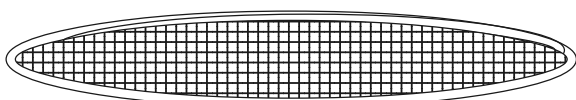
Nesterowicz briefly takes the reader to Polish settlements in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, but devotes fully two-thirds of the book to those in Texas. His focus is on the immigrant families (some of whom were subscribers of his newspaper), their expressions of Polish cultural identity, and their social and economic contributions to their communities. In this, he followed another traveler, Frederick Law Olmsted, who likewise described Texas through which he traveled. Long before he became the great planner and landscape architect, Olmsted traveled through the south, particularly Texas, in the 1850s and indulged what biographer Witold Rybczyński (*A Clearing in the Distance*, Scribners, 1999) described as his "passion" for detailed observation. Olmsted recorded his visits, viewed through the lens of antislavery, with brilliant descriptions of the land and the people, and remarkable insights into the social-economic realm. Nesterowicz, too, reliably describes the land, its cost, farm methods and crops, as well as the income they provide. Like Olmsted, he is acutely aware of the geographic context within which people live, sensitive to the many injustices they face, and admiring of their many virtues.

The lens through which he writes is one of sympathy and generosity of spirit. He reports facts, but he also examines relationships among the various ethnic groups, often observing the demeaning manner "Americans" use when dealing with "blacks." Even he, however, unconsciously assumes prevailing stereotypes of happy dancing folk and undependable workers who spend all their money as soon as it is earned, unlike the hard-working and thrifty Poles. He is always focused on the Polish immigrants; the partition of the former Poland from which they came; and the relationships they maintained not only among themselves but also with their neighbors, often Germans, Jews, Czechs, Italians, or Moravians. In one long commentary, he dwells on the sometimes unhappy relationship between "Poles" and "Jews" following the time of the "kind-hearted" King Kazimierz the Great, a passage interesting as a measure of the sympathetic attitude toward Jews he articulated in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Nesterowicz's writing style is more spare than elegant, but it shines with an intelligence, honesty, and insight that make his observations a valuable record for scholars of history and the social sciences, genealogists, and readers interested in learning about immigrant rural communities as they were a century ago at the height of immigration to America from central and eastern Europe.

Nesterowicz demonstrates a good understanding of many facets of agriculture, social relations, and the economy, but especially of Polish identity. Many times he equates the depth of a person's sense of that identity with the "purity" of Polish spoken. He observes that although they integrated well with other Americans and learned English, Poles in the rural south retained the purity of their mother tongue and knowledge of their national history and literature better than those who settled in urban communities, especially in the North, where Poles tended to pepper their language with ever-increasing numbers of English words. He notes the attempts made in places such as Houston to preserve the Polish language and provide English translations of Polish literature. He meticulously lists names of Catholic parishes and priests who served in the communities where the Poles lived, sometimes Poles who had been brought from Europe, other times priests who either learned some Polish in the course of their ministry or provided parish schools with Polish-speaking, teaching nuns.

At first this book appears to consist of simply expressed, factual observations, barely vignettes, one after another in a long string, organized conveniently by town or settlement that made up Nesterowicz's itinerary. Before long, however, other facets of the book become apparent. A moment in the life of each settlement, frozen in time, becomes part of a larger portrait. The vignettes of Polish founders of these communities, statistics showing the prosperity of many Poles not only in agriculture but also in commerce, and the history of Polish Catholic churches and schools unfold with great clarity. Sometimes Nesterowicz himself becomes a character, as he complains about the inadequate train service and the discomfort of his journey on bad roads. Finally, what shines through is the author's concern for justice, his appreciation of people of all strata of society, and his charm. ▲



Powstanie Warszawskie 1944 w dokumentach. Z archiwów służb specjalnych/Varshavskoe vosstanie 1944 v dokumentakh. Iz arkhivov spetssluzhb

Edited by Piotr Mirecki and Vasilii Khristoforov. Warsaw-Moscow: Institute of National Memory et al., 2007. 1377 pages + 104 photos. Notes, index, list of abbreviations, photocopies of documents. ISBN 978-83-60464-32-8. Hardcover. \$235.00 (much less if purchased in Poland). Bilingual in Polish and Russian.

Anna Muller

The Warsaw Rising of 1944—a sixty-three-day struggle undertaken by the Polish Underground Resistance Movement (Armia Krajowa, AK, or the Home Army) to liberate Warsaw from Nazi occupation during the Second World War—occupies a special place in both Polish history and national collective memory. Since its outbreak, the Rising had stirred disputes regarding the right of its leaders to risk the lives of insurgents and civilians in this unequal battle, and the plausibility of achieving its goals.[1] Was it possible to free the city from Nazi occupation, reinstall the prewar authorities, and at the same time avoid Soviet intervention in the Polish postwar order?

Despite these questions, the collective memory of the Rising '44 functions as a symbol of a lonely and and heroic struggle, during which insurgents and civilians showed enormous courage and dedication to the Polish nation in the face of Nazi hostilities, very limited support from Western allies, and no support from the Soviets. Consequently, Polish historiography concerning the Warsaw Rising is vast. The first accounts of the event appeared in the 1950s. One of the most significant books about the Rising was published in Poland on the sixtieth anniversary of the event, authored by British historian Norman Davies. The English original of this work appeared a year earlier.[2] The number of published memoirs and recollections related to the Uprising continues to grow.[3] Equally increasing are collections of documents regarding the Rising, one of which is the volume under review.

This collection is the third volume of documents in a series resulting from the cooperative effort of Polish and Russian historians, namely Instytut Pamięci

Narodowej (IPN, the Institute of National Memory), Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration), Archives of the Federalnaia Sluzhba Bezopasnosti (FSB, Federal Security Services of the Russian Federation), and the Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences.[4] The volume contains 149 documents: mostly reports, interrogation protocols, and the transcripts from the court hearings of members who fought against the Nazis but were charged and sentenced by the authorities in Soviet-occupied Poland for being anti-Soviet. All documents are published in Russian and Polish. The documents are supplemented with over one hundred photos and illustrations from the IPN and FSB archives, as well as from private collections. Every document has footnotes providing further details about people mentioned in it, the places and events of the Rising, and the administrative apparatus of the Thurd Reich and the Soviet Union.

The documents are organized chronologically and divided into three parts. The first part contains the operational documents of the Wehrmacht and German secret police pertaining to the Rising. These mainly report on the people arrested and executed; the situation in various parts of the city—including, for example, details about the location of the makeshift hospitals and city canals where insurgents were hiding (doc. 21); and the deteriorating attitudes among civilians toward the insurgents, due to a lack of food and the growing difficulties of surviving in the city (doc. 25). The second part mainly includes the transcripts from interrogations of insurgents and a couple of reports from Nazi informants that contain, for example, information about the location of shelters where civilians could survive the bombardments (doc. 51). All documents in this section were created during the Rising.

The third and longest part contains documents related to the IPN investigation of Nazi and Soviet crimes in Poland after the war. Most of the documents in this section are transcripts of communist interrogations of the Rising's leaders and participants conducted between February 1945 and March 1967 in Soviet-occupied Poland. Also enclosed are documents from the interrogation of the last commander of the AK, General Leopold Okulicki, and of Col. Jan Mazurkiewicz. Both were captured by the Soviets. Okulicki's interrogation took place in Moscow in April 1945, Mazurkiewicz's in Warsaw in 1949. Okulicki was murdered in Moscow's Butyrki prison in 1946, while Mazurkiewicz spent seven years in prison and was released in 1956. This section also provides the protocols from the

interrogation, as well as trial hearings, of two of Hitler's underlings: Ludwig Fischer, governor of the Warsaw district, and Paul Geibel, head of the police in the Warsaw district. Among the documents provided by the FSB are materials regarding Reiner Stahel, who between July 27 and August 25, 1944 was the war commandant of Warsaw and one of the Nazi leaders responsible for the German onslaught against the insurgents. Captured in Romania in 1944, Stahel was taken to Moscow and imprisoned. He died in the Gulag.

The published documents, the interrogation transcripts, and the trial hearings do not present the entire cases of individuals or groups of people. Rather, documents were selected from cases of various people, either German Nazi criminals or Polish anti-Nazi insurgents, primarily in order to offer insight into the ways that Germans dealt with the Polish Rising, the kind of information they attempted to obtain from the captured civilians and insurgents, and the strategies they undertook to fight against the Poles. Second, the collection provides a perspective on how the Soviets dealt with the Rising's participants after the end of the war: accusing them of crimes against the nation, the destruction of Warsaw, the suffering of civilians, and, of course, being anti-Soviet. The captured participants were subjected to brutal interrogations, and many were executed or died in prison. The Polish and Russian consensus today is that these insurgents were trying to liberate Warsaw before the Soviets captured it.

According to the editors of the volume, because the Germans were not interested in the names or personal data of insurgents, many of those interrogated gave false names, military ranks, or even nicknames. At the same time, the Nazi police had no time to verify information or prepare confrontations among captives in order to cross-check their testimonies.[5] The editors also turn our attention to the fact that while some of the informants claimed that insurgents used terror toward civilians (doc. 68 and 77), these claims have not been corroborated. Especially with regard to documents produced by the postwar communist secret police one needs to obtain such corroboration since the police could have withheld or fabricated vital information, using provocateurs, intimidation, or torture.

The documents included in this volume are vital to any scholarly discussion of the Rising, particularly in conjunction with other documents. ▲

NOTES

1. An estimated 150,000 civilians and 10,000 fighters lost their lives. Marek Getter, "Straty ludzkie i materialne w

Powstaniu Warszawskim,” *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, 8/9 (2004): 70.

2. Norman Davies, *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw* (London: Penguin Viking, 2003); Polish translation, *Powstanie '44* (Kraków: Znak, 2004).

3. Jan M. Ciechanowski, *The Warsaw Rising of 1944* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1974); Janusz K. Zawodny, *Nothing but honour: the story of the Warsaw Uprising, 1944* (Stanford-Hoover Institution Press, 1944); Joanna Hanson, *The civilian population and the Warsaw Uprising of 1944* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982). Polish-language works include *Pamiętniki żołnierzy baonu Zośka* edited by Tadeusz Sumiński (Warsaw: Nasza Księgarnia, 1957); *Dziennik powstańca*, by Zbigniew Czajkowski-Dębczyński (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1969); *Ludność cywilna w Powstaniu Warszawskim*, edited by Czesław Madajczyk, vol. 1 [Pamiętniki, relacje, zeznania] (Warsaw: PIW, 1974); *Powrót do wspomnień*, by Barbara Kaczyńska-Januszkiewicz, Hanna Sygietyńska-Kwoczyńska, and Mieczysław Chackiewicz (Warsaw: Nowy Świat, 2004). Other academic publications include J. Franecki and H. Kisiel, “Raporty i meldunki niemieckiej policji o Powstaniu Warszawskim 1944 roku,” *Teki Archiwalne*, 17 (1978): 75–105; *Powstanie Warszawskie 1944. Wybór dokumentów*, edited by Piotr Matusiak, vols. 1–4 (Warsaw: Egros, 1997–2004); *Żołnierze Powstania Warszawskiego. Dokumenty z archiwum PCK*, vols. 1–3, edited by Robert Bielecki (Warsaw: Neriton, 1995–97). Even though it deals with the period prior to Rising '44, Aleksander Kamiński's *Kamienie na szaniec* [1944] is perhaps the most popular account of the attitudes and actions that led to that event.

4. The two preceding volumes are *Polskie podziemie na terenach Zachodniej Ukrainy i Zachodniej Białorusi w latach 1939–1941* (Warsaw-Moscow 2001), and *Deportacje obywateli polskich z Zachodniej Ukrainy i Zachodniej Białorusi w 1940 roku*, edited by Viktor Komogorov (Warsaw-Moscow, 2003).

5. “Wstęp,” *Powstanie Warszawskie 1944 w dokumentach*, 45.

Churchill, Hitler, and the Unnecessary War How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World

By **Patrick J. Buchanan**. New York: Crown Publishers, 2008. xxi + 518 pages. Index, footnotes, illustrations. ISBN 978-0-307-40515-9. Hardcover. \$29.95.

James R. Thompson

Patrick Buchanan has undertaken to write a critique of the life of Winston Churchill. In many ways, it

could be argued that he has done little more than update and coarsen the earlier works of the late A. J. P. Taylor. The book may come as a shock to American readers who have been raised on the idea that Churchill was the Man of the Twentieth Century. However, outside the United States, England, and Israel, Churchill generally has a bad reputation as a treacherous imperialist and a man of limited insight as a military strategist or diplomat. There can be no doubt that he was ready to fight to the last Pole, Australian, Canadian Sikh, Rajput, or American in order to advance his goal of saving the British Empire. His bloodthirsty brutality in war rivaled that of his First World War associate Lord Kitchener, who had starved Boer women and children in concentration camps as a successful attempt to terrorize their menfolk into submission (with the assured long-term demographic destruction of the Boers in South Africa). _____

When it comes to Machiavellian Realpolitik, Buchanan is closer to Churchillian ethics that he realizes. _____

In the First World War, Churchill designed the harebrained Gallipoli campaign that was both inept and wasteful of Australian and New Zealander (Anzac) lives. He promoted starvation as a weapon to force the Germans into total capitulation after the Armistice of 1918, and he firebombed German civilian centers into oblivion during the Second World War (35 percent of civilian dwellings in Germany were destroyed). In the Second World War, when the Australians on their way to Suez asked to turn their troop ships (commanded by the Royal Navy) around to defend Australia following the attack of the Japanese, Churchill refused. Finally, he organized a strategy, ostensibly based on defense treaties with Poland, which insured that that poor country would suffer fifty years of occupation by a power whose brutality has not yet sunk in with the American public. Without intending to do so, Churchill made Stalin the big winner of the Second World War.

For all these reasons, it is hard to fault Buchanan in his attacks on Churchill. But, like the barroom brawler he has often appeared to be, Buchanan reaches out for his barstool to strike at innocent persons and nations almost casually and *en passant*. He particularly does not like the Poles.

In a “quote of a quote,” he gives the description of Polish foreign minister Józef Beck as having “the sort of face you might see in a French newspaper as that of a ravisher of little girls.” This is the kind of low

journalese worthy of Julius Streicher and his crack reporters from *Der Stürmer*.

Buchanan argues that the Anglo-French pledge to attack Germany on the fifteenth day after any attack on Poland was preposterous, because there was no way to put British or French troops on the Baltic coast or bring them in through Romania. The fact is that at that time, the German western front was defended by ten divisions of First World War reservists. The Anglo-French had more than fifty divisions ready to go against this force. It was not silly for Beck to believe the British and French had the power to fulfill their obligations; it was apparently naive that he believed that they would do so.

Buchanan chides the Poles for not being willing to surrender control of Danzig/Gdańsk to Berlin. But Piłsudski and Beck both recalled that, twenty years earlier, when it looked as though Poland would lose the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1920, Ludendorff offered to bring the *Frei Korps* to Poland's aid only if the Poles would give Poznań to Germany. Inviting a German incursion that could be a dagger against Polish control of its Baltic coast was not a good option in 1920, nor subsequently, for Poland.

—

Without intending to do so, Churchill made Stalin the big winner of the Second World War.

—

Buchanan then blames the Poles for not joining Germany's Anti-Comintern Pact, which would have developed into a two-pronged attack on the Soviet Union with the Germans, Poles, and Hungarians attacking from the west and the Japanese from the east. Had Beck known that Poland's alliance (an alliance that had not been sought by the Poles but was proffered by the English and French) was an empty letter, perhaps he might have shaken hands with the German devil and signed the pact. But this is speculation. What Beck knew at that time was that in 1914 Britain had the record of honoring its commitment to defend little Belgium from attack. In the more remote past, Wellington had taken up the seemingly impossible task of saving Portugal and Spain from Napoleon's grasp. "Perfidious Albion" had historically not always been perfidious. Between trusting the British and French or trusting Nazi Germany, Beck picked the more civilized side. It proved disastrous for the British and French that Great Britain and France did not honor the alliance in the time frame they had set, allowing the Germans to deal with their opponents one at a time.

But the most disastrous consequences of the Anglo-British "alliance" with the Poles were suffered by the

Poles. In 1914 the British diplomat Sir Edward Grey stated, "The lamps are going out all over Europe; and we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime." Whereas this was an overstatement for the British in 1914, for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 1939, it was on target. The Polonophobe Jan Tomasz Gross gives statistics in the first edition of *Revolution from Abroad* that indicate being under Soviet control was incredibly worse for Polish Catholics than being under German control (229), and Soviet control lasted for fifty years. In 1939 adults in Poland generally did not live to see the rebirth of freedom that occurred on June 4, 1989. Fifty years of wasted lives.

The slogan "For your freedom and for ours," stated by the author of America's victory at Saratoga, Thaddeus Kosciuszko, and repeated by Woodrow Wilson and Ronald Wilson Reagan, rings hollow to Buchanan's ears, but it is one of the richest parts of Poland's heritage, stretching back even before King Jan Sobieski's 1683 defeat of the Muslim invasion of Austria. It is a part of America's heritage as well. One remembers that it was the American aviators M. C. Cooper and Cedric Fauntleroy who founded the Polish Air Force in 1919 and stopped the juncture between Tukhachevsky and Budienny at the Battle of Warsaw in 1920.

When it comes to Machiavellian *Realpolitik*, Buchanan is closer to Churchillian ethics than he realizes. ▲

Stalinism as a Way of Life

A Narrative in Documents

By Lewis Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov. Documents compiled by Ludmila Kosheleva, Larisa Rogovaia, Lewis Siegelbaum, Andrei Sokolov, Vladimir Telpukhovskiy, and Sergei Zhuravlev. Text preparation and commentary by Lewis Siegelbaum, Andrei Sokolov, and Sergei Zhuravlev. Translated from the Russian by Thomas Hoisington and Steven Shabad. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000. xvii + 460 pages. Index of documents, general index. ISBN 0-300-08480-3. Hardcover.

Bożena Karwowska

The opening of *some* Soviet archives to Russian and Western scholars in the 1990s resulted in a number of new books. Access to new documents facilitated discussions about the nature of the Soviet state and the

Soviet regime: not entirely surprisingly, it also reopened the discussion about the sources and nature of power and politics in general. Is politics made “from above,” as the old school of Soviet specialists believed, or “from below,” as the “revisionist” school argued? As Lewis Siegelbaum aptly notices in his introduction to the volume under review, both schools of thought formed their views and produced their most prominent scholarship *before* they could access Soviet archives. After the archives were opened, each school focused on different kinds of documents. Siegelbaum believes that access to the documents marks a breakthrough in this traditional division and promotes new ways of looking at Soviet society under Stalin.

The book’s original Russian title (this volume was published in Russia in 1998) is *Obshchestvo i vlast’ 1930-e gody: Povestvovanie v dokumentakh*. Accordingly, it presents a variety of documents. The differences between them show the diversity of Soviet society at that time as it emerged from the chaos of the first decades of the twentieth century, deprived of the traditional intelligentsia and opening the door to literacy to the previously underprivileged social groups and classes. The authors use a thematic key to divide the documents into groups. In spite of these thematic differences, Soviet society is presented as nationally homogeneous and consisting exclusively of Russians. In fact, approximately half of the Soviet citizens at the time were Russians. One therefore notes the lack of voices of the Soviet minority groups in both the sources and the editors’ critical commentaries.

Lewis Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov group the documents together in six chapters (plus an introduction and conclusion), with titles not only describing the content of each but also showing the editors’ ironic view of the presented material. The book begins with “the socialist offensive” of the late 1920s and early ’30s, and its various “izations” (collectivization, industrialization, mechanization, proletarianization) implemented according to the rules of military operations. Chapter 2 (named after Stalin’s famous slogan “Cadres decide everything”) presents documents relating to “the multitudinous and often mutually contradictory tasks assigned to party and state functionaries,” (7) and thus sheds light on the question of why they were performed so badly. Chapter 3 is devoted to the draft of the Stalin Constitution of 1936 and to what the editors call a process “akin to a national referendum on the Stalinist version of socialism” (7). The discussion provided an opportunity to various groups in society to present some of their own ideas

and hopes. The documents project a variety of resentments, misunderstandings, and worries of members of Soviet society, thus providing a glimpse into the mentalities of Russians at that time.

The next chapter, somewhat ironically titled “Love and plenty,” consists of texts pointing to the official propaganda of happiness and a growing gap between consumers’ expectations and the everyday experiences of citizens. It is, though, not only the fact that the gap was constantly growing, but also the reaction of society and the bewilderment, unhappiness, denunciation, and repression. The countryside, with forced collectivization, is the main focus of the fifth chapter. The last chapter is devoted to the young generation, or children born after 1917, whose childhood was “happy by decree,” and the question of how they perceived their country and the great privilege of living in the best country in the world.

Soviet society is presented as nationally homogeneous, and one notes the lack of voices of the Soviet minority groups in both the sources and the editors’ critical commentaries.

The sources collected in the volume are heterogeneous. The book includes letters to the editors of various newspapers containing complaints, advice, confessions, denunciations, and petitions. Some are anonymous; other are signed by individuals and groups. Some are written in the language of the Soviet “newspeak” and many are full of grammatical mistakes, as their authors have just learned how to write. There is correspondence between the prominent figures of Soviet politics, summary reports prepared by special departments of the party, secret police, and newspapers, many of which bear the “secret” sign and are not intended to be “leaked” to the more general public. There are also formal reports prepared by middle-ranking officials. The works of the translators, Thomas Hoisington and Steven Shabad, deserves high praise; they succeed in rendering a variety of language levels and styles.

The documents were selected with the apparent intention of showing the mentality of their authors and familiarizing the reader with the situation of ordinary Soviet Russians under Stalin. However, the editors—especially Lewis Siegelbaum who was responsible for the English-language version of the book—insert their own interpretations a bit too obviously. This is apparent not only from the introduction, but also from the fact that the selection criteria have not been outlined. The

editors' choices of documents to be included in the book have never been explained.

The most interesting aspect of the book is its attempt to show the emergence of dissidence in the USSR. "On the basis of recent archival research, it has become clear that practically every major state initiative of the 1930s was accompanied by some form of popular resistance," writes Siegelbaum. The documents show the details of this resistance, as it relates to the people's perception of tradition versus modernization and the weaknesses and strengths of the Soviet state. However, this is a *sui generis* resistance. The reader is led to understand that the traditional forms of resistance were not used, e.g., humor traditionally used in folk culture was seldom employed by Soviet peasants during the times of collectivization.

While new information about purges and the Soviet penal system is still coming out, there is also plenty of evidence about Russians expressing their support for the Soviet past, the communist party, and the memory of Stalin. Russian citizens cannot claim a lack of knowledge about the methods used by the Soviet state to control its citizens, yet they express nostalgia for the system that had total control over their lives and minds. This collection is thus not only a source of documents indispensable for scholars who study society and politics of the early years of the USSR, but also a fair read for people interested in the social dynamics of the post-Soviet Russian state. ▲

I Wrote Stone

The Selected Poetry of Ryszard Kapuściński

Translated by Diana Kuprel and Marek Kusiba. Windsor, Canada: Biblioasis, 2008. 91 pages. ISBN 978-1-897231-37-1. Paper. \$16.95.

In Praise of the Unfinished

Selected Poems

By **Julia Hartwig**. Translated by John and Bogdana Carpenter. New York: Knopf., 2008 160 pages. ISBN 978-0307267207. Hardcover. \$25.00.

James E. Reid

Ryszard Kapuściński and Julia Hartwig both share the capacity to regard what is terrible, and what redeems us, with a clear eye. There is a chilling moment in Kapuściński's recollection (*Paris Review*, Spring

2007) of a day when he was caught in the open in one of the world's forgotten and continuing genocides, in the Congo. Armed to the teeth, two men approached him. He describes them as "dehumanized creatures" who could kill him without another thought. In French, one of the men asks Kapuściński for a cigarette. In a small human gesture, he gives the men his pack of cigarettes—and lives to write another day.

I Wrote Stone is the first collection of Kapuściński's poetry to appear in English. It exhibits his need to bear witness. The book draws from two books of his poetry and some of his later poems, written over the course of 60 years. His commitment to look at the world and not look away is clear in these poems. An early poem from *Notebook* echoes the incident in the Congo. In "Nights in Africa," set in the neighboring Central African Republic, a pair of eyes approach in the darkness. Kapuściński wonders whose eyes they are, "God forbid—an assassin from Bokassa's guard," before seeing a young girl appear, to his great relief.

In "Language," the poet is invited by a high-ranking Polish official to become part of the endemic betrayals under the Soviet occupation. The betrayals are disguised in language that describes a form of wrestling. With excessive bonhomie, the official jokes about his own decision to take up wrestling himself, along with other "decent guys who deserve a life." Kapuściński's risky refusal to reply indicates his refusal to comply.

The poems in *I Wrote Stone* strengthen as the book proceeds. There is great tenderness in "Dispatch from the Other World," when the poet discovers he is reading a notice about the unexpected death of a friend he still assumes is alive, and recalls their recent agreement to meet, "How happy I am, she'd said." Kapuściński's "Biblical Parable" about our everyday experience manages to breathe powerful new meaning into the hoary old question about "a mote/in your brother's eye," and rejuvenates its wisdom about forgiveness, self awareness, and judging others. The second to last poem in the book, "You'll never make up," is a small jewel of equanimity and acceptance. If only there was more of Kapuściński's poetry.

A small cavil about one poem in each of these fine collections. Lists are a challenge in poetry. When they work they can shift the reader to sudden and unexpected places. When a list doesn't work, the poem falters. Kapuściński's "How Many More Worlds" begins with God, and sweeps through Homer, Mozart, Bosch and Chagall, among others. Short on specifics and long on famous names, the central idea in the poem fades instead of resolving. The same problem arises in

Hartwig's "Transfer of Power." Eight artists who painted trees, from Sisley to Watteau, appear in ten lines of poetry. The roster of names overwhelms her sweet suggestions about the magic of trees. In contrast, Zbigniew Herbert's lists are bold but effective—so inventive and tangible that the quotidian approaches the mildly vertiginous. Look at his poem "Request" from *Elegy for the Departed*. The dozen jumbled discoveries in a small casket are vivid.

Cavil aside, Julia Hartwig's volume is a welcome collection. In a world of increasingly disposable books, the textured dust jacket, fine page paper, and pleasing type face are a pleasure. There are many lyric poems and elegies here that sometimes unfold in surprising ways. "Winds" dwells on the variety of winds that sweep over the earth, but concludes as a reverie about the experience of not being able to travel, or the limits imposed by aging. "There Are Poems" concludes with an unexpected homage to the Polish Romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz, now rubbing shoulders with Dante. "Meditation (on Czesław Miłosz)" defends him against unnamed detractors (perhaps Herbert among them), and appreciates what is best in his work. The penultimate poem in the book recalls Joseph Brodsky's capacity to continue to hear his muse, in spite of "the flatterers and slanderers."

During the Soviet occupation of Poland writers faced difficult choices. One choice was to write poetry so obscure that it befuddled the censors, and went right over their heads. Political poetry suffered. Hartwig's political themes are presented with the quiet power that is often most effective for writing that reclaims a lost history of brutal rule. "Speak To Us" responds to the horror of Katyn. It opens with a call to "respect the differences of others," and moves on to deal with the nightmares that followed the massacre. The poem concludes with these lines, "Lord we aren't the only nation tormented this way/don't let us take pride in it." Her moving "Lublin Elegy" is immediately followed by the painful experience in "Victoria." It speaks of the wartime joy and confusion of welcoming liberators who brought four decades of oppression:

Why was I fated to be on the main street of Lublin
watching regiments with red stars enter the city
crying with joy I would no longer hear the hated
Raus! and *Halt!*

Why? In order to praise the unfinished, and what it is to be human.

In Praise of the Unfinished is the first book of Hartwig's poetry translated into English. The

translation by John and Bogdana Carpenter is so fluid and thoughtful that you are unaware that you are reading a translation. The collection demonstrates the truth of Ryszard Kapuściński's description of Hartwig: "She is one of the foremost Polish poets of the twentieth century." ▲

BOOKS and Periodicals Received

Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej (Bulletins of the Institute of National Memory), nos. 7–12 (75–83), 2007; nos. 1–9 (84–92), 2008. Warsaw: Institute of National Memory; current. In Polish.

This monthly periodical publishes documents and scholarly works on the Second World War and the Soviet occupation of Poland (1945–1989). It is a treasure trove of historical documentation; we shall return to it in the forthcoming reviews. Some issues have not yet been assigned to reviewers. We welcome queries about reviewing issues dealing with the following: the creation of KOR, *Solidarność Walcząca*, and SKS; the forbidden and promoted holidays in the People's Republic of Poland; the nationalist movement; the Bolshevik fight against the Catholic Church; March '68; *Wolność i Niepodległość* formation; free labor unions; Józef Piłsudski.

Other Books Received:

***Poland: An Illustrated History*, by Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski.** New York: Hippocrene Books (www.hippocrenebooks.com), 2008. Third printing. 282 pages. Index, photographs, maps. ISBN-13: 978-0-7818-1200-9. Hardcover. \$19.95.

When it comes to short-and-handly English-language histories of Poland, this one beats many others. Pogonowski is an experienced writer who has generated both admiration and controversy. His profound knowledge of Polish history and his love of Polish identity make his books a joy to read. Readers respond by buying them: have you ever looked up his Amazon.com rankings? Do not look for postmodern interpretations and approaches in Pogonowski's books, however.

***Cage: Poetry*, by Astrid Cabral.** Translated from the Portuguese by Alexis Levitin. Austin, Texas: Host Publications, 2008. 91 pages. ISBN 13:978-0-924047-44-2. Paper.

Poems about the deaths of animals and birds, mostly. They will wake up the insensitive, but they will do little for those who are already sensitive to these things.

***Plundered and Rebuilt/Ograbione muzeum*, by Roman Matuszewski and Jolanta Kozimor.** Warsaw: Polish War Museum, 2007. 256 pages (folio) plus a CD. Numerous photographs. ISBN 978-83-11-10880-6. Softcover. In Polish and English.

A bilingual and well-intentioned volume outlining the plunder and destruction by Germans and Russians of the Polish War Museum during the Second World War and afterwards. About the only thing that the book really says is that German Nazis and Soviet Russians were plunderers and destroyers. A redeeming feature of this book is its impeccable English, courtesy of translator Ted Mirecki. The volume contains dozens of pictures of objects lost and never recovered; objects whose present location has not been determined; and objects that were lost due to bombings and fires during the war. There are also some photos of the items currently exhibited. The tome has been lavishly printed. One wonders, however, about its intended audience. It is not scholarly enough to attract researchers, and the audience that like pretty pictures of hussars and horses and (sic) the former museum employees have been extinct for some time now.

Poetry

Adam Mickiewicz, *Four Sonnets (from The Crimean Sonnets, 1826)*

The Akkerman Steppe

I launch myself across the dry and open narrows,
My carriage plunging into green as if a ketch,
Floundering through the meadow flowers in the stretch.
I pass an archipelago of coral yarrows.

It's dusk now, not a road in sight, nor ancient barrows.
I look up at the sky and look for stars to catch.
There distant clouds glintòthere tomorrow starts to etch;
The Dnieper glimmers; Akkerman's lamp shines and harrows.

I stand in stillness, hear the migratory cranes,
Their necks and wings beyond the reach of preying hawks;
Hear where the glow-worms glide across the plains,

Where on its slippy underside a viper writhes through stalks.

Amid the hush I lean my ears down grassy lanes
And listen for a voice from home. Nobody talks.

The Calm of the Sea

The pennant at the crow's nest rises with the breeze,
Shafts of sunlight play upon the water's breast
As on a bride-to-be who wakes to sigh and rest,
And wakes again and sighs for dreams that better please.

On naked spars the banner-shaped sails hang at ease.
The vessel is in chains now, leese side facing west,
Lulled by slow rocking. Passengers lampoon in jest,
Swabbies sigh to one another, slapping knees.

Blithe Sea! Among your jolly living creatures is
The polyp, sleeping in your depths when dark clouds swarm,
Wielding longish arms amid each starfish grave.

Sweet dreams! Below, a hydra of remembrances
Sleeps in the middle of mishaps and raging storm,
And when the heart is calm, its pincers flash and wave.

Chatyr Dah

The trembling Muslims kiss your foot and pray out loud,
O mast of the Crimean tall ship Chatyr Dah,
Minaret amid the hills and Padishah!
You, having fled above the cliffs into a cloud,

Stand at the gates of heaven, humbling the crowd,
And, like great Gabriel, guard lost Eden's house, your shaw
Of trees a cloak where janissaries keep the law,
Your turban thunderbolts and lightning for the proud.

And yet sun scolds our brows and fog obscures our ways,
Locusts poach our crops and Gavur burn our homes,
Always, Chatyr Dah, as motionless as domes

In Mecca, you remain indifferent to our days,
Creation's dragoman to what below you roams
Who only hears whatever God to nature says.

The Castle Ruins at Balaklava

These castles, whose remains are strewn in heaps for miles,
Once graced and guarded you, Crimea the ungrateful!
Today they sit upon the hills, each like a great skull
In which reptiles reside or men worse than reptiles.

Let's climb a tower, search for crests upon worn tiles,
For an inscription or a hero's name, the fateful
Bane of armies now forgotten by the faithful,
A wizened beetle wrapped in vines below the aisles.

Here Greeks wrought Attic ornaments upon the walls,
From which Italians would cast Mongols into chains,
And where the Mecca-bound once stopped to pray and beg.

Today above the tombs the shadow of night falls,
The black-winged buzzards fly like pennants over plains,
As if towards a city ever touched by plague.

Translated by Leo Yankevich

**Jerzy Harasymowicz, *Four Poems*****The Empty Little Church**

The painter speaks to a candle
and you can hear the sizzling of existence
Iconostasis is dying out in the emptiness
and faces of saints are turning violet

Everything is reduced
to blue windows of sky
inserted into the wood of centuries

To golden foundations of church – made of wax
of prayers

To figure of God
in a lonely suit

The Church I Was Given

There is no moon
but the church shines like a moon
I have never seen a roof
with the tin so silver
no tower
with a dome so twisted

by the gale of faith
and I have seen no landscape
with greenness so full of hope
for the resurrection of a work

And maybe I should ask the Master
maybe it is a locomotive
maybe – and it's running
leaving clouds of green flora behind
And I believe too

The Airport

The aircraft walks slowly
like a butterfly on a table
there is no-one inside
in the cabin of light
by the wheel
sits only a new vision
of itself and the tail
Crashes are unknown
everything is remote controlled
by the painterly instinct
and lasts all year
the inspired green
of the airport

The Synthetic Landscape

Field of lupine summer
- golden object
with a red point
Loneliness
- blue object
God
blue object
under the porch
instead of mountains
- quiet blocks
of silence

(1961–1962)

Authorized translation by Ewa Stańczyk and Ian Pople

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Sally Boss is one of the founders of *Sarmatian Review*.

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Jerzy Harasymowicz (1933–1999) was a Polish poet known for his folklore-influenced and neologism-prone language. Bożena Karwowska is Associate Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of British Columbia.

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Thank You Note

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NOTES

Conference on Polish Literature

Institute of Polish Literature and the School of Polish Language and Culture at the University of Silesia announce a conference on Polish Literature in World Context. The conference will take place 8–10 June, 2009, in Cieszyn, a resort town on the Polish-Czech border. Topics include the new ways of interpreting Polish literature abroad, comparative studies, textbooks of Polish literature written by persons from other cultural milieux, translations, and influences.

Those interested should contact the organizers by 28 February 2009: cudak@plusnet.pl or szkola@homer.fil.us.edu.pl

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