Tradition and the Contemporary Talent

The first page (in the original Latin) of Polish historian Wincenty Kadłubek’s History of Poland (13th c.) The first printed edition by Jan Szczęsny Herbur (1612) was reprinted without changes by Heinrich Huysen in 1712, as reproduced above. Courtesy of the Woodson Research Center at Rice University. Photo by Philip Montgomery.
From the Editor

Professor Domański’s article about thirteenth-century Polish historian Wincenty Kadłubek prompts two reflections. First, the term national character, so frowned upon in academia, has more gravitas than scholars are willing to admit. Propped by its literary and intellectual heritage, it handily condenses the self-image of a nation and the perceived continuity of its value system. In his delineation of virtues appropriate for a ruler, Kadłubek assigned priority to mercy and charity, as do the subsequent Polish historians starting with Jan Długosz in the fifteenth century. Was not Sobieski’s charity toward fellow Catholics in Vienna (1683) a manifestation of Kadłubek’s recommendation? The ranking of virtues performed over and over by Polish historians, writers, theologians, and public figures was both didactic and reflective of reality.

Readers will doubtless note a difference between the writing style of Professors Domański and McQuillen. The first is pre-Enlightenment; it searches for sources, similarities, and background while skimping on conclusions, and it does not try to hide the imperfect seams of a scholar’s labor. The second seeks innovation in the work discussed, and the possibility of a new interpretation. Professor McQuillen’s analysis of Stanisław Wyspiański’s monumental play offers a nontraditional interpretation; mutatis mutandis, it plays the same role regarding that play that the hero of Gombrowicz’s Ferdydurke played with regard to Polish Romanticism.

During the process of translation and editing of Adam Mickiewicz’s First Lecture at Collège de France, it was discovered that in the edition of Mickiewicz’s Lectures published in Soviet-occupied Poland in 1974 several slight but significant changes were introduced. The “People’s Poland” text was compared with one edited by Professor Manfred Kridl and published in the Second Polish Republic in 1929. The readers of Sarmatian Review are receiving the adjusted text. Professor Bożena Shallcross, who translated the lecture, deserves our appreciation for making this text available in English for the first time.

A review by Japan’s leading Slavicist of a book by a leading Polish historian, Andrzej Nowak, demonstrates the necessity of making Polish scholarly works available to scholars worldwide, while at the same time presenting to American Slavists (as well as to Americans of Polish background) the image of Poland as perceived by a disinterested observer from a geographical distance.

Finally, James Reid’s review of the movie Katyn speaks of the consequences of the German attack on Poland in 1939—forty-five years of Soviet occupation, and lies about history and society that became standard fare in scholarly books and at universities, as well as in daily social life. Was it Joseph Goebbels
Sarmatian Review Data

**Hedge funds in 2008**
Number of hedge funds worldwide in 2008: about ten thousand.
Amount of capital they controlled: 200 billion dollars.
Percentage of hedge funds operating from London and New York (including its environs): 20 percent and 40 percent, respectively.
Difference between hedge funds and other investment funds: hedge funds are said to “enjoy lighter regulation and considerably greater freedom of action than the investment companies that advertise in the financial pages.”


**European economy in 2008 recession**
Fall of GNP in select EU countries in the fourth quarter of 2008: Germany, -2.1 percent (estimated loss for 2009, -3.6 percent); France, -1.2 percent; Italy, -1.8 percent; Holland, -0.9 percent; UK, -1.5 percent; Estonia, -9.4 percent; Czech Republic, -0.6 percent; Hungary, -1.0 percent (estimated drop in 2009: 3.5–5.0 percent).


**Poland is doing well in the crisis so far**
Increase in Polish GDP in the last quarter of 2008 (year-on-year): 3.1 percent.
Increase in car sales in Poland in February 2009: 13.3 percent in comparison to January 2009; 7.2 percent in comparison to February 2008.

Source: Eurostat, as reported by Michal Pawlak in *Donosy*, no. 4848 (6 March 2009).

**Is “New Europe” sovereign?**
Percentage of “emerging Europe” bank assets owned by Western European banks: 80 percent.

Source: Peter Attard Montalto in *Financial Times*, 16 February 2009.

**Global crisis and Russia**
Russian stock market losses in May and October 2008: 2,487 points and 550 points, respectively (a loss of approximately 80 percent).
Fall in Russian industrial production in November 2008: 8.7 percent in comparison to November 2007, 7.5 percent in comparison with October 2008.
Drop in standard of living in November 2008 in comparison to November 2007: 6.2 percent (2.9 percent in comparison to October 2008).


**Gazprom and the Russian budget**
Gazprom’s contribution to the Russian Federation’s budget in 2008: 20 percent, or 90 billion dollars.
Gazprom’s anticipated drop in profits due to the lower price for gas in 2009: 20 billion dollars.
Domestic prices for Gazprom gas in comparison to prices EU members pay for Russian gas: 15 to 20 percent of prices paid by Western European consumers.


**Economic crisis and the daily press**


**2008 changes in the Russian criminal code**
Change concerning trials by jury: they are forbidden not only in cases of terrorism, hostage taking, and attempts to overthrow the government (as the earlier code stated), but also in cases of “mass disturbances,” “diversions,” “treason,” and “espionage.”
Date when these changes were voted into law: 12 December 2008.

Source: *Kommersant* (Russia), 15 December 2008.
Standard of living in Poland under communism
Percentage of workers at the Warsaw Motorcycle Factory in 1957 who ate meat once a week or less: 23 percent.
Average consumption of meat per capita in 1957 and in 1963: 43.9 kg and 45.4 kg, respectively.
Ownership of clothing among workers in 1957: 0.51 wool suit per worker; 1.05 nonwool suit, 0.8 pair of wool trousers, 0.6 wool jacket per person.
Ownership of clothing among the poorest 20 percent of the families questioned: one wool suit per five workers.
Ownership of winter clothing: 0.15 wool overcoat, 0.12 overcoat containing a small percentage of wool, 0.2 wool top coat, and 0.5 top coat made of cloth containing a small percentage of wool.
Increase in real wages between 1960–1963: 4.5 percent.
Percentage of workers who had less than 3 square meters of living space per person: 10 percent.
Percentage of workers who had between 3 and 4 square meters per person: 10 percent; 4 to 5 square meters, 12 percent; 5 to 6 square meters, 13 percent.

Sources of gas supply in Poland
Russia, 43.5 percent; Poland, 35 percent; Germany, 5.5 percent; Central Asia, 16 percent.
Source: Lena Białywska in Donosy, no. 4814 (19 January 2009).

Polish demography
Number of persons registered for permanent residency in Poland in 2007: 38,115,967 (18,417,074 males and 19,698,893 females).
Place of residency: 23,254,482 in urban areas, 14,861,485 in rural areas.
Number of persons over 85 years of age: 395,074 (104,985 men and 290,089 women).

Comparative population data for select countries in 2008 and 1980
Ukraine: 45,994,288 (in 1980, 50,043,000).
Czech Republic: 10,220,911 (in 1980, 10,327,000).
Poland, 38,500,696 (in 1980, 35,478,000).
Hungary, 9,830,915 (in 1980, 10,711,000).

Catholic population data in 2000 and 2007
Number of Catholic priests in 2000 and 2007: 405,178 and 408,024.
Number of Catholics worldwide in 2000 and 2007: 1,147 billion, or 17.3 of the global population (unchanged).
Source: Vatican Statistical Yearbook, as reported by BBC News, 28 February 2009 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7916749.stm).

U.S. veterans, a Polish American, and the National Park Service
Number of homeless U.S. veterans on any given night in 2008: 200,000.
Cases of homelessness among veterans over the course of a year: 400,000.
Estimated percentage of veterans among America’s homeless: 23 percent.
Person who tries to raise awareness of this problem: a disabled Vietnam veteran John Miska.
Some of Miska’s methods: taking disabled vets to dinner; parading in uniform around the National Mall to hand out Buddy Poppies (carried out in a five-gallon plastic bucket) which are the official memorial flowers of the VFW. Collected donations are turned over to the VFW for support of veterans and their families.
“Reward” he receives from the National Park Service: harassment and threats of prosecution for accepting donations.
Toward victory: with the help of the Rutheford Institute, Mr. Miska filed a First Amendment lawsuit against the National Park Service.
Source: US Department of Veterans Affairs (for figures), as reported by John W. Whitehead, a constitutional attorney and president of the Rutheford Institute, in The Post Eagle (Clinton, NJ), 14 January 2009.
Justice and mercy 
in Wincenty Kadłubek’s system 
of political virtues

Juliusz Domański

When studies of the Polish past began to be written in partitioned Poland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the current historical methodologies such as scientism and positivism failed to provide tools to properly assess Wincenty Kadłubek’s Chronicles of the Kings and Princes of Poland, a thirteenth-century text. The failure of methodology was accompanied by insufficient knowledge of, and prejudice against, the Middle Ages. In his popular Historical Sketches of the Eleventh Century, historian Tadeusz Wojciechowski coined the contemptuous term “Kadłubek’s tribe” to describe Kadłubek’s interpretation (later repeated by his followers) of the conflict between King Bolesław the Brave (1039–1081) and Bishop Stanisław Szczepanowski. Even though Wojciechowski was a learned man, his censorious and prejudicial attitude toward Kadłubek (who expressed sympathy for Bishop Szczepanowski) was all too obvious.

We have traveled far since that time, and we know much more than our predecessors about medieval literary culture and about Kadłubek’s mannerisms and ways of writing. We therefore can better assess his achievement as a chronicler and cultural historian. The state of available knowledge about the Middle Ages no longer permits the contemptuous references to the “Dark Ages”: indeed, such references are themselves manifestations of ignorance and prejudice regarding this intellectually remarkable period.

In the 1950s historian Aleksander Gieysztor (editor of Wojciechowski’s Historical Sketches) suggested that Kadłubek was one of the best-educated European intellectuals of his time. Even earlier, in the 1930s, Oswald Balzer’s Studying Kadłubek analyzed Kadłubek’s art of narration, replete with parables, anecdotes, and learned allusions. Three recently deceased scholars further enlarged our knowledge of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: medievalist and classicist Marian Plezia, who published an annotated edition of Kadłubek’s Chronicles; historian and translator Brygida Kürbis, who translated and annotated the Chronicles and wrote scholarly works about them; and historian of medieval philosophy Jerzy Bartłomiej Korolec, who studied the philosophical sources of Kadłubek’s reflections on the ideal ruler and his role in the medieval world. My study follows Korolec’s and Kürbis’s work, as well as my own immersion into sources. I am particularly interested in Kadłubek’s mental formation and intellectual personality which has not yet been sufficiently studied. Kadłubek’s device of fictitious narrators in the first three books of his monumental tome also deserves attention.

It should be noted that Kadłubek’s work was preceded by the Chronicle of Gallus Anonymous who wrote several generations earlier and limited himself to the description of deeds (gesta) of the ruler, with an introduction detailing the history of nation and country. Kadłubek’s work is richer: he does not limit himself to chronicling events, but also weaves into his narrative a moral tale based on events and illustrated by them. He brings to bear the legal categories (Oswald Balzer suggested that Kadłubek was a lawyer by profession), and occasionally provides an intricate framework of moral and political philosophy for the events he records. It has to be said right at the beginning, however, that Kadłubek’s grasp of philosophical problems is less impressive than his excellent knowledge of twelfth-century canon law. He often quotes the Bible and comments on theological issues although his knowledge of theology, like his knowledge of philosophy, is somewhat less detailed than his knowledge of canon law. Still, some of his conclusions are original and they carry implications relevant to our times.

Virtue is a habit of mind in which both nature and reason are in agreement.

Cicero

Kadłubek’s combination of factual narrative and moralistic commentary involves the use of parables and sententious expressions, some of which border on fictional narratives. This is not unusual if one takes into account functions played by chroniclers in the Middle Ages. Such scholars as Laetitia Boehm, Bernard Guenée, and Bogdan Lapis agree that at that time the writing of history was treated as a literary genre similar to the fairy tale, yet different because it was “a story about what really happened”; however, it was assumed that the narrative should contain stylistic, moral, and educational instruction for readers. Historical texts were meant to provide not only factual knowledge but also moral instruction and recognition of God’s intervention in history. In addition to conforming to these standard requirements, Kadłubek’s
Kadłubek spends much time discussing virtues and their taxonomy, a topic that usually plays an ancillary role in chronicles and historical narratives. He begins by providing anecdotal illustrations of a number of virtues, then goes on to a more fundamental definition of virtue per se. What is virtue and why is it important to use this concept in human discourse? In chapter 24 of the second book, Bishop Matthew outlines the contrast between Prince Władysław Herman’s two sons: the older Zbigniew, who in spite of his obnoxiousness and obstinacy is favored by his father, and the younger Bolesław Krzywousty, dedicated to his father and extremely intelligent (he brought to naught the plot organized by Voivoda Sieciech against his father and himself)—but not valued enough in spite of his virtues.[4] Bolesław excelled in love of country and love of his father, and Kadłubek uses him to show what virtue is. According to Kadłubek’s narrative, Bolesław wore a chain on his neck on which he hung a tablet with his father’s name. This tablet was meant “to remind him that he should speak and behave in such a way as to not be ashamed of himself before his father... For it is not appropriate to say silly things or to act dishonestly when one’s father is present,” Kadłubek writes. “Bolesław became so accustomed to behaving in a way that would find his father’s approval that it seemed that he honored not the father but some kind of superior spirit ... Having acquired the habit of probity, he treated his brother in a noble way, even though Zbigniew was a rascal by inclination. Bolesław never complained about his brother even though he knew that Zbigniew was looking for an excuse to destroy him.”

Scholars have pointed out that Kadłubek’s description of virtue is not entirely original. It is similar to those articulated by other twelfth-century writers who in turn were indebted to the writings of the Roman stoics. Specifically, Kadłubek’s definition virtus est habitus mentis bene constitutae (virtue is a properly structured habit of mind), with an additional comment on the term “habit” (habitus vero qualitas est difficile mobilis), derives from De virtutibus, vitis et donis Spiritus Sancti by Alan from Lille (ca. 1170).[5] Even earlier, Anselm from Laon and his school maintained that virtus est quaedam qualitas mentis rationi undique consentientis. It should be noted that both definitions lead us to Cicero’s widely used textbook Rhetorica vetus: De inventione (II, 53, 159), where they are considered as part of a disputation about the meaning of “honestum”: virtus est animi habitus naturae modo atque rationi consentaneus (virtue is a habit of mind in which both nature and reason are in agreement). This leads us directly to Stoicism. It is possible that Kadłubek did not himself read Seneca and got his ideas from some obscure author of the early Middle Ages, but the fact is that a certain passage in Seneca’s Letters contains an interesting hint about the definitions of virtue discussed above—and it should be noted that according to a legend popular in the Middle Ages, Seneca corresponded with St. Paul himself.

Seneca states that one way to acquire virtue is to constantly imagine some wise and noble person observing us and our actions:

Epicure says (and permit me to quote him here): “Do everything in such a way as if Epicure were looking at you all the time. It is extremely useful to set up a guardian for oneself, someone to look up to and about whom you assume that he knows everything about you. And while it is praiseworthy to live as if some noble and omnipresent individual were looking at you, it sometimes is sufficient to live as if someone of a lesser status were observing you. It is solitude that breeds evil thoughts and deeds in us. When you reach the point where you can always bear an imaginary person watching you, you will be in a position to give up having a guardian. Until that time, let the gravitas of others guard you. You can imagine yourself being guarded by Cato, or Scipio, or Lelius, or someone else whose very presence restrains evil people. Persist in imagining this until you yourself become the sort of person in whose presence you would not dare to act dishonorably.

Professor Marian Plezia identified twelve borrowings from Seneca’s Letters in Kadłubek’s work.[6] It is thus likely that the form that Kadłubek chose to foreground Bolesław Krzywousty’s desire to be virtuous and to please his father comes from Seneca as well. Krzywousty chose his father as the guardian of his conscience; the tablet on his chest foregrounded Krzywousty’s devotion to his father. While Bolesław Krzywousty’s desire to be an upright man has been confirmed by other sources, the existence of the tablet has not.

However, it should be noted that to this point Krzywousty had not yet become king, he only strove to acquire virtue in universali rather than possessing those specific virtues that become a politician. A general state of virtuousness is good, but in the case of a future ruler certain specific virtues have to be acquired. It is
highly instructive to see how Kadłubek approaches this subject and how he ranks the virtues.

Let us start with a look at the medieval intellectual formation’s influence on Kadłubek. In addition to the Stoicism of Seneca and Cicero, he was also exposed to two varieties of Neoplatonism: one represented by such writers of late antiquity as Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius and Martianus Capella (both of the fifth century), and the other modified by Christianity, as exemplified by the writings of St. Augustine and Dionysus Pseudo-Areopagite. In his study of Kadłubek, Professor Korolec argued that Aristotle’s definition of virtue as a rational and prudent choice between two extremes (both considered to be vices) was not Kadłubek’s choice. This definition is only superficially similar to the stoic one: they both stress reason, but in Stoicism it is “cosmic reason.” So to speak, whereas in Aristotle it is a practical and down-to-earth reason. This emphasis is placed on the hierarchy of virtues, while in Neoplatonism a similar hierarchy is assumed with regard to the various groups of virtues. Plato’s moral and political reflection produced the four virtues that were called “cardinal virtues”: prudence, moderation, courage, and justice. It is generally agreed on that Plato regarded justice as the chief virtue, treating the other three as elements of it. In contrast, while Aristotle too distinguished between the kinds of virtues and their relative importance and weight, he treated the intellectual or noetic virtues as superior to the moral ones. The classification of virtues and their gradation was common in ethical reflection in antiquity, the only exception being the Stoics who instead stressed the separate identity of various virtues and their synthesis in Virtue writ large.

In my opinion, these classifications and gradations play only a secondary role in Kadłubek’s Chronicles; however, the names of individual virtues and formulas according to which their gradation has been accomplished show Kadłubek’s indebtedness to Neoplatonic thought. While characterizing one of the main heroes of his Chronicles, Casimir the Just, Kadłubek brings to bear the Plotinian distinction between political and cathartic virtues. He may have learned it from Macrobius or from some other philosopher of the early Middle Ages. Professor Korolec believes that the source was Wilhelm from Auxerre’s work Summa aurea in quattuor libros Sententiarum, because both Kadłubek and Wilhelm classify virtues as external and internal, that is, those that are related to human nature and those issuing from God’s grace and bestowed on an individual. Wilhelm rather than Macrobius seems a more likely source, because Kadłubek does not pay attention to Neoplatonic “higher virtues” that supposedly can be acquired after an individual is “purified” by cathartic virtues. Also, the idea of competition between virtues is characteristic of Kadłubek; this idea relates to his parenetic and biography-oriented writing style. Thus while praising Bolesław Krzywousty’s son, Casimir the Just (1138–1194), as a virtuous statesman and unfolding before us an entire range of his virtues, Kadłubek addresses the two virtues of Neoplatonic parentage: “Who is this man who received so great a mind from nature and so much grace from God? At first sight, one cannot guess whether natural or spiritual virtues prevail in him. The two compete in a sisterly fashion, trying to outdo each other but without envy if the other wins. For it is nature that gave him political virtues, while God’s grace allowed him to excel in cathartic ones” (Book IV, 5, 4–5).

**Virtue is a properly structured habit of mind.**

*Wincenty Kadłubek*

Kadłubek’s eulogy then proceeds to the description of the four cardinal virtues as practiced by Casimir. For Kadłubek, all four are political virtues to which our hero was predisposed by nature. But the Platonic taxonomy according to which justice reigns above the other three cardinal virtues is transformed into a system in which the leading role is played by prudence (prudentia). Kadłubek even calls Casimir “Prudentia’s offspring” (IV, 5, 20). This is a major modification of the Platonic system and it leads Kadłubek toward Aristotle. Did he read Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*? It is unlikely, even though a translation into Latin by Wilhelm of Moerbeke already existed. But he certainly read Cicero, and it is in Cicero’s *De inventione* that similar views can be found. This treatise was a common medieval source of concepts concerning ethics and virtue (II, 53, 159–162). As mentioned before, Cicero took the four cardinal virtues as defined by the Stoics and divided them into practical and supernatural. Similarly, Kadłubek divides virtues into political (stemming from nature) and cathartic, the latter acquired through God’s grace acting upon an individual. Thus one can point to several possible sources of Kadłubek’s taxonomy and of his emphasis on prudence as the virtue essential for a politician.

Let us now analyze the consequences of assigning virtues in their plenitude to Casimir the Just. Is that important for the subsequent parts of the Chronicles? At first, it may appear that the Neoplatonic distinctions
concerning the various virtues and their distribution between grace and nature are simply a means of characterization with no further consequences. Kadlubek’s Chronicles is not a rigorous scholarly treatise but rather a narrative that combines elements of history and fiction, and the author may have abandoned some themes accidentally or deliberately. However, Kadlubek did not abandon this topic. I contend that this is Kadlubek’s original contribution to the classification of virtues, and that it created a pattern to be imitated in the future.

**Kadlubek’s thought combines Aristotelian and Neoplatonic approaches.**

Kadlubek first describes the advantages that accrue to a man who tries to maintain himself in good physical shape (IV, 5, 10–13), and then states that “a man is possessed of fortitude not so much because of his physical strength, but because of spiritual probity” (virum fortem non tam robur corporis quam animi commendat gravitas, IV, 6, 14). This leads him to the description of Casimir’s work at self-improvement: “Casimir valiantly struggled in his soul to conquer monsters resembling the wild beasts” (non minus pectoris monstra quam bestias studet Casimirus domuisse). In juxtaposing the external and the internal or the struggle to keep in good physical shape and one oriented toward spiritual matters, Kadlubek makes his contribution to the distinction between external, or nature-bound political virtues, and the internal and grace-bound cathartic ones. He does not elaborate on the concept of grace, but he stresses the importance of the concept of internal life. Prince Casimir’s internal life includes not only a struggle to conquer temptations, but also “an extraordinary generosity of spirit, great courage, and patience even in the greatest outbursts of courage” (cuius quanta sit magnanimitas, quanta constantia, quae animositas, que in ipsa etiam animositatis torrente patientia, non est promptum expedire).

The first virtue, the Aristotelean magnanimitas, is illustrated by the story of Prince Casimir playing a game of dice with a certain Jan (IV, 5, 15–20). Casimir’s win makes the defeated Jan furious; he attacks the prince. Not only does Casimir not punish the insolent partner, but he actually articulates a lesson for himself on the basis of this event. According to Kadlubek, he opines that “a ruler should not expose himself to a game of chance, but instead should remain steadfast and prudent.” He then thanks his adversary for teaching him a lesson, and even offers him a small gift. Kadlubek concludes by praising the patience and prudence of some strong men (O mira in viro forti tam patientiae constantia quam prudentiae industria), then offers an allegory about Prudence and its daughter Patience, as well as about Courage and its relative Stoutness:

The entire family of virtues, irrespective of duties they perform in the life of man, are obliged to submit themselves to the judgment of Prudence. For instance, Patience, who is the daughter of Stoutness, carries in her sack three loads: the load of tiredness, the load of labor, and the load of insults and injustices. Upon meeting her, Prudence asks: “Daughter, what do you carry in your sack?” Prudence answers: “Mother, help me carry these burdens! Your Sister asked me to bring this sack to you.” Prudence retorts: “I recognize my Sister. She tells us to serve her. I am sorry for you, Patience, hold on a while longer, and I’ll do what my Sister demands.” She throws the loads in Patience’s sack into the oven of desires, melts them, bends and tests them, and with her amazing artfulness creates ornaments made of gold. Thus Prudence’s mastery creates the masterpieces of Virtues out of the unwanted burden of misery. Prince Casimir of whom I write possesses the virtue of Prudence to the highest degree.

The above allegory as well as the narrative about Casimir illustrate the Prince’s prudence, patience, moderation, humility, mercy, and charity. Charity is not the same as the magnanimity shown to Jan after the game of dice, but sometimes both virtues seem to generate similar behavior.

Thus justice and mercy predominate in Kadlubek’s descriptions of past rulers of Poland. He describes in this way one of Poland’s great kings, Boleslaw Chrobry (967–1025): “[Boleslaw] selected for himself twelve advisors, so that he might be edified by their hearts and minds, and he treated them as if they were fonts of wisdom that he could use to his advantage (de quorum pectoribus velut divinis fontibus omnimoda virtutum elicebad rudimenta—II, 10, 5–6).” But [he] “also knew how to punish the guilty and how to restrain them by goodness; he was not so severe as to forget about mercy, nor so merciful as not to punish at all. He combined a sense of justice with gentleness (ex iustitia et mansuetudine); he emanated serenity to such a degree that his severity was not unbending while his gentleness was not a sign of weakness.”

In turn, Boleslaw Krzywousty, who fought the Pomeranians and defeated the rebellious city of Bialogard, faced the choice of either punishing the disobedient inhabitants of Bialogard or accepting their entreaties for mercy (III, 2, 6): “The kindness of the Prince spares all and forgives all; he decided that it is more righteous to show kindness and mercy to the
defeated than to treat them with strict justice (\textit{justiorem enim censuit piam humanitatis indulgentiam quam distictam iustitiae ulitionem}). This sentence is uttered by Bishop Matthew, one of Kadłubek’s interlocutors. The other bishop consents and answers as follows: “No one is truly charitable except the just ones, for justice without mercy is cruelty, whereas mercy without justice is stupidity (\textit{Nemo tamen misericos nisi iustus, nemo iustus nisi misericos. Nam iustitia sine misericordia crudelitas est et misericordia sine iustitia fatuitas, III, 3, 1}).”

In my earlier work published in 	extit{Studia Mediewistyczne} XXXIV-XXXV (2000), I called this last statement a paradox and sought a theological source confirming that justice and mercy are united and identical in the God of Christianity. Here I stress that one should not be excessively concerned with the accuracy of Kadłubek’s use of synonymous terms, such as \textit{misericordia/masuetude}, or \textit{misericordia/humanitas}, because on the side of justice, a similar reliance on synonyms takes place: justice/judgment, and even justice/truth: \textit{iustitia/iaudicium/veritas}, and not only in Kadłubek but also in the Latin version of the Bible, in the writings of St. Augustine, and in many theological reflections about the identity of the two concepts in God’s being. This is best expressed in St. Thomas’s \textit{Summa theologica}, I, q.21: \textit{necesse est, quod in quolibet opere Dei misericordia et veritas} [a synonym of \textit{iustitia}] inveniatur. . . . \textit{Opus autem divinae iustitiae semper praesuponit opus misericordiae}. In the same spirit, Kadłubek’s narrative about the three greatest rulers of eleventh- and twelfth-century Poland argues that each of them considered mercy/charity (\textit{misericordia}) to be the highest virtue. This is particularly true of Kadłubek’s favorite hero, Bolesław Krzywousty, who so well (according to Kadłubek) exemplified political virtues that originate in nature and cathartic virtues originating in grace. In accordance with this way of looking at justice and mercy, Kadłubek gave high praise to related virtues such as gentleness, patience, understanding, and generosity, hence his statement that nothing is more praiseworthy about the legendary primordial ruler of Poland, Grakch/Krak, than his effort to replace the earlier lawlessness (equal to servitude, said Kadłubek) and former laws that favored the weakest: \textit{ante hunc servitutii ancilliari libertas et aequitas pedissequari iussa est injuriae, eratque iustitia, quae plurimum prodesse ei, qui plurimum posset. . . extunc tamen violentiae deiit subsesse potestati et dicta est iustitia, quae plurimum prodesset ei, qui minimum potest (I, 5, 3)}.

Thus Kadłubek has done two things. First, he firmly asserts that mercy is the highest of virtues. Second, he points out that virtues that at first sight do not seem to be synonymous constitute a unity in God. Among the biblical texts, St. James’s \textit{Epistle} is closest to this point of view (I wrote about this in greater detail in the aforementioned article in 	extit{Studia Mediewistyczne}).

\textbf{Justice and mercy are joined together in Kadłubek’s description of Bolesław Chrobry: [Boleslaw] “emanated serenity to such a degree that his severity was not unbending while his gentleness was not a sign of weakness.”}

Other implications of Kadłubek’s explanation of the mercy-justice paradox are related to the characteristics of European thought in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. By taking great care to stress gentleness and charity as present in the eleventh- and twelfth-century rulers of Poland, Kadłubek showed himself to be a precursor of trends that were soon to overtake Europe. His academic education led him to take a stance regarding the change of emphasis in taxonomizing intellectual and moral issues. In the twelfth century and at the beginning of the thirteenth, literary culture that resulted from a symbiosis between the highly professional philosophizing of philosophical schools on the one hand, and on the other the incipient humanistic tendencies gradually began to shift from pure professionalism to a level accessible to nonprofessional literate people, without abandoning its philosophical and theological inspirations. The works of Pierre Abelard and John of Salisbury exemplify this tendency. An even better-known example of this tendency is \textit{Roman de la Rose} by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung. This poem justly has the reputation of belonging to the most popular level of medieval culture, if only because it was written in the vernacular. Here too the issue of justice and mercy and the “superiority” of mercy over justice (especially in the second part of the poem) is broached, and the author’s stance is similar to Kadłubek’s. The Polish translator of \textit{Roman de la Rose}, Malgorzata Frankowska-Terlecka, discussed it in “The Concept of philosophy in Jean de Meung: the second part of \textit{Roman de la Rose}.”[7] She points out that in \textit{Roman de la Rose} justice and mercy were interdependent, but at the same time mercy was implied to take precedence over justice. The second part of \textit{Roman de la Rose} was written in the mid-thirteenth century, or several decades after Wincenty Kadłubek’s death (1223). Jean de
Sanctity or Sanctimony in Stanisław Wyspiański’s Akropolis
On Boundary Oppositions, Subverted Expectations, and Irony

Colleen McQuillen

The theme of animation, which constitutes one of the essential elements of Stanisław Wyspiański’s (1869–1907) poetics, manifests itself in Akropolis through the multi-faceted story of resurrection. The story resonates on a complementary array of thematic and formal levels. First and foremost, the play opens on the Night of Resurrection and closes with the resurrection of Christ on Easter. Acts 1 and 4 take place between midnight and dawn on the night before Easter and tell the story of Wawel Cathedral’s statuary coming to life to demonstrate the resurrection of Christ, who in the play is called Salvador or Salvador-Apollo.[1] Commentators have repeatedly referred to the play’s allegorical meaning, one that rests on the idea of Poland as the Christ of Nations: like the suffering Christ, Poland will rise up and once again become a sovereign state. Resurrection, however, is just one aspect of the play; another is the problem of the liminal spaces created when opposing conditions, such as death and life, meet. This threshold is productive as a site of a new synthesis. In this article I argue that liminality constitutes the heart of Wyspiański’s cryptic play and is one of the reasons why the play has baffled critics and resisted stage performance over the past century.

On the formal level, the play (written in verse) challenges conventions of the dramatic genre. With the incursion of the fantastical and disconnected plots, Akropolis is what Martin Puchner would call an “exuberantly anti-theatrical” modernist play. Puchner explains that the modernists’ penchant for writing plays for the armchair reader rather than the theater spectator...
resulted in plays with an excessively strong focus on
the written attributes of the text. As Puchner puts it,
“The modernist closet dramas seek to undo the theater
and its human actors through programs that are best
described by terms such as literariness, écriture, and
writerliness” (18). By hovering in a liminal zone
between the genres of poetry and drama, and because
of the various thematic manifestations of liminality,
the play cannot be easily categorized or interpreted in
a consistent fashion. Furthermore, I will suggest that
the delicate boundary between sincere national piety
and self-referential irony that the play straddles allowed
Jerzy Grotowski to stage a performance in 1962 that
on the surface appeared antithetical to Wyspiański’s
original text. While his production was seemingly the
flip side of Wyspiański’s play, Grotowski only nudged
Wyspiański’s original concept out of the liminal space
and into definitive irony.

Wyspiański’s artistic output as a writer and painter
and his academic training as historian, art historian,
and philosopher make him one of the most fascinating
and celebrated figures of the Young Poland movement.
His work has frequently been likened to that of Hugo
von Hoffmannsthal and Henrik Ibsen, and his dramas
reflect some of the primary concerns of French and
Russian Symbolists. Writing at the fin de siècle, the
meeting of two centuries, the Russian Symbolists
expressed a certain centennial angst and apocalyptic
anxiety. This real-life liminality fueled their
investigations into the ontological ramifications of
boundary transgressions. Symbolist theatrical
experiments, with their overt attention to the fluidity
of both physical and metaphysical boundaries, often
used the actual and conceptual space between actor and
audience, creator and participant, art and life, as forums
for exploring boundaries and their transgression.

The Symbolists’ desire to remove the footlights
separating actor from audience stems from Nietzsche’s
theory that drama originated in ancient Dionysian
rituals. In ritual there is no distinction between audience
and actors: everyone participates in the performance. [2]
In The Birth of Tragedy Nietzsche argues that drama
grew out of the collective experience of the dithyrambic
chorus that sang and danced in obeisance to Dionysus.
He points to the work of Richard Wagner as a
contemporary example of such Dionysian ritual.
Wagner called his operas that exhibited the same all-
embracing esthetic experience of ancient Greek
ritual and drama Gesamtkunstwerk, or Total Art,
alluding to the fact that the performances appealed to
all the senses and united sound, image, and motion.

Such a totalizing experience is similar to what
Wyspiański described in his letters to fellow poet and
playwright Lucjan Rydel. The churches Wyspiański
visited in France and Germany in 1890 seemingly came
to life and performed before his eyes: statues in
Strasbourg swayed to organ music, faces in the friezes
at Reims ceased laughing when they were watched,
and all of Amiens itself became animated as if springing
to life (Taylor 199). For Wyspiański, it was not just the
church rituals that were performative; he experienced
the physical structure of the churches as if they were
performing.

The playwright’s vivification of these European
churches reveals early on the central role that animation
will come to play in his poetics, including the poetics
of stained glass. Two of Wyspiański’s most famous
stained-glass windows, “Lord God” (Pan Bóg) and
“Apollo” (completed at the Franciscan Church of
Kraków in 1904, the same year Akropolis appeared)
shimmer with the sun’s vital force, seeming to animate
the figures depicted.[3] “Lord God” is a particularly
pognant example: the window’s subtitle, “Stań się!”
meaning “Become!” or “Rise up!” plays out its own
command each morning with the rising of the sun. As
the sun and clouds move across the sky, the illumination
of “Lord God” changes in intensity and mood, and
produces the optical illusion that it is Lord God himself
rising up. The subject of Wyspiański’s other great
stained-glass window of 1904 likewise resonates with
the artistic medium: a stained-glass window is the
quintessential homage to Apollo, also known as
Phoebus, god of the sun.

Wyspiański’s fascination with boundary crossings
repeatedly manifests itself as the intrusion of the
fantastical into reality. In Akropolis the fantastical
consists not only of the miracle of Christ’s resurrection,
but also of the fact that statues and tapestry figures
come to life. The fantastic, as Tzvetan Todorov
suggests, depends on perceptual liminality, on what he
describes as “hesitation.” The fantastic transpires in
the moment when a character or reader must choose
whether the event experienced is an “illusion of the
senses. . . a product of imagination” or “an integral
part of reality” (25). Once it is decided one way or
another, the event in question falls into the genre of
the uncanny or the marvelous. For an event to be
fantastic, the reader must also consider it to be neither
poetic nor allegorical (33). It is impossible, therefore,
for us to consider the events of Akropolis fantastic in
the Todorovian sense because the allegorical readings
are too suggestive. Todorov’s definition of the fantasti
is nonetheless relevant, in part because of its insight that perception and cognition can be suspended between two explanations of events, one that complies with the laws of the natural world and one that does not. Along with the animated statuary, Wyspiański introduces another fantastical discursive space: the world of dreams in Acts 2 and 3. Dreams are connected to Todorov’s fantastic as they coincide with the hours of supernatural events. As a reminder of night’s dark possibilities, Todorov cites the words of Alfonso van Worden in Jan Potocki’s Saragossa Manuscript: “As everyone knows, ghosts have power only from midnight till cockcrow” (28).

Wyspiański’s treatment of time presents another challenge to boundaries. Akropolis subverts the notions of linearity and causality, and shatters the conventional dramatic unities of time, place, and action. Wyspiański situates the play’s four acts in different chronotopes ranging from the Trojan War to Old Testament Israel to contemporary Poland. While most dramas move forward, propelled by one unified plot line, Akropolis cycles through time and lacks one central motivating conflict.[4] Act 1 is continued in Act 4 but the plots of Acts 2 and 3 are discrete, albeit sequenced chronologically: Act 2 tells the story of Hector and Paris from The Iliad and Act 3 relates the tale of Jacob and Esau in Genesis.[5]

Time in also thematized through the Wawel complex (Cathedral and Castle), the setting of the play’s action. Wawel is a historical and cultural palimpsest, carrying the past into the present and future. As the former royal residence and as a necropolis housing the tombs of Polish kings and military heroes, Wawel is a monument to past imperial glory and serves as Poland’s national relic. As the quintessential religious and cultural symbol of Poland, Wawel bridges the sacred and the secular. It is a sanctified house of worship that also fulfills the role of national museum and mausoleum by housing the tombs of generations of Polish kings, military heroes, and poets. Wawel’s architectural and cultural memory animates cultural monuments to a theater, and she uses the phrase “theater of memory” as a metaphor for intertextuality. Her study of the role of cultural memory in modernism is relevant to a discussion of Akropolis because of the play’s deep engagement with monuments of Polish and, more broadly, Western culture. The “theater of memory” is an architectural space where texts of the past rise up and interact as if they were live beings, producing a densely coded synthesis. In reference to Russian Symbolist Andrei Bely’s Petersburg, Lachmann writes: “The cerebral game of memory calls up images from other literatures (with their respective spaces reserved for memory), images from other cultures, religions, and myths, giving them over to the reader who must decipher them” (68). The multiply coded correspondences of Bely’s memory theater are similar to those of Wyspiański in Akropolis, since their use of the city space as a cultural palimpsest and of dense intertextual allusions are clearly visible. In contrast to Bely, whose web of allusions pertains primarily to the Russian literary tradition, Wyspiański draws on the riches of Jewish, Christian, Greek, and Roman civilizations.

Just as one can speak of animating Wawel in the theater of memory, one can speak of animating the memorials that are part of Wawel (statuary and sculpture). The statues, monuments, and sculptures that come to life are integrally connected to Wawel; they are not merely fixtures, they are part of the structure and as such, metonymic extensions of the Cathedral. When the stone and marble statues awaken in Act 1, it is as if Wawel itself awakens. The animated statuary serves as a harbinger of Christ’s resurrection, which sets up the transitive association of Wawel with the body of Christ. This relationship directly recalls the New Testament’s association of Christ’s body with the Jerusalem temple. In Act 4 of Akropolis the words of the animated statue of King David to Salvador reference Jesus’ statement in John 2:19, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” Says David, “Before You the Church will fall as rubble onto the heads of my people. In three days a new one will rise through the great cry of Your Word” (211).[6] The Gospel clarifies that Christ was speaking of the metaphorical temple of his body, which did indeed rise from the dead after three days (Hayes 7).
This passage of Scripture highlights the fact that destruction precedes resurrection, that death is necessary for rebirth to occur—the essence of Easter. The martyred Christ of Act 1 whose “blood trickles from his hands and feet and face onto the altar” triumphantly rises up in the culminating scene of Act 4 (Wyspiański, Akropolis, 9). His resurrection (realized as the arrival of Salvador-Apollo at Wawel Cathedral) is immediately preceded by physical damage to Wawel, which serves as a demonstration of His might. The harpist King David calls on Salvador to tear off the harpie’s hooves and feet and face onto the altar.”

The centaurs’ hooves bang against the stone columns, and the walls of Wawel crumble and pour down as a demonstration of Salvador’s might (212). When Salvador arrives, a moment represented sonically by his booming voice and the roll of thunder as well as visually by the appearance of Apollo in his golden chariot pulled by white steeds, the silver coffin of Bishop Stanisław Szczepanowski, Poland’s patron saint, shatters to pieces.

This final scene is often read metaphorically as the shattering of Poland’s past political oppression: Poland’s military rising will enable it to emerge once again as an independent nation. The Polish Romantics, Mickiewicz in particular, articulated a national myth of Poland as the Christ of Nations in which they juxtaposed Christ’s two opposing roles as Martyr and Savior. They held that Poland’s suffering as a politically oppressed nation (the memories of the failed rising of 1830 were fresh) would ultimately lead to its deliverance. Like Christ, Poland would have to suffer and die in order to be reborn, and once resurrected, it would show the world the path to salvation (Miłosz 226). Wyspiański’s Akropolis stands out for its seeming optimism. The triumphant resurrection of Christ at the end of the play, read metaphorically as the successful political liberation of the Polish nation, presents a view of Poland’s potential for deliverance that is atypically messianic for the playwright. It has been suggested by scholars such as Tadeusz Sinko that Wyspiański’s attitude towards Poland’s liberation became increasingly optimistic over the period of time during which he wrote The Wedding, Liberation, and Akropolis (Romaska 5). He likens these plays to Dante’s Divine Comedy: Poland’s nationhood progresses from hell to purgatory to heaven. Does this hopeful ending represent an evolution in Wyspiański’s thinking, or does it
represent a new artistic strategy, namely one that relies on irony to convey his skepticism?

On the surface the triumphant return of Salvador seemingly expresses optimism regarding Poland’s national revival. Akropolis culminates in Salvador’s dramatic arrival from on high: the Sun-Christ crashes onto stage in his luminous chariot pulled by white steeds. Salvador’s rapturous, grandiose deus-ex-machina arrival is showy and stagy in a naive way that recalls medieval miracle plays. Such spectacular exuberance and artifice of art, far from the realism of nineteenth-century social criticism, suggests an ironic ending. The deus ex machina tradition so vividly evoked in this scene symbolizes a simplistic solution to an intractable problem: the Polish nation will overcome its oppression by means of a miracle. While deus ex machina, literally “god in a machine,” referred in ancient Greek drama to the lowering and raising of an actor on stage by mechanical means such as a pulley or crane, over time it has acquired a more generalized meaning relating to its role as a device of artistic convenience. Greek tragedians like Euripides used this device to resolve impossible or hopeless situations, earning the ire of Aristotle who believed that a plot should be resolved naturally through its internal logic rather than though a convenient device. In Akropolis the coming of the Savior, a providential intercession, is a convenient end to a play that has no consistent plotline and that consequently lacks the potential for a logical denouement. The contrived convenience of this ending suggests a corollary of political skepticism. Rather than intending Salvador’s showy arrival as an unabashed declaration of Poland’s special status as a chosen nation, Wyspianski may be expressing doubt in such a convenient answer.

The staginess of Salvador-Apollo’s entrance is echoed by the ascension of King David on stage. In Act 4, scene 6 David physically rises on stage in a similar deus ex machina fashion, his head and harp bathed in the dawn’s light, at precisely the moment of Salvador-Apollo’s arrival, suggesting his own parallel role as savior. Among the many doublings and allegorical correspondences in Akropolis (Wawel as Jerusalem temple as Christ’s body; the river Wisię as Skamander as the River Jordan), Wyspianski sets up the correspondence of the Polish Savior (Christ) with the Greek Savior (Apollo) and King David, savior of the Israelites.[11] Like Apollo-Phoebus and the Sun-Christ of Słowacki, the gilded sculptural figure of David in Wawel emits a golden luminosity. David acknowledges his chosen status, singing, “You gave me a golden garment so that I would be exalted” (192).

In keeping with his biblical character, King David is celebrated as a harpist and singer in the play. His creative capacity is that of a poet, suggesting on the level of a national metaphor that it will be the poet’s duty to lead his people and to catalyze the miracle of liberation. The power of the poet’s word to create is demonstrated in King David’s invocation of Salvador-Apollo as well as in the dialogic nature of Wyspianski’s poetic drama. Drama relies on dialogic exchange, a synthetic act of negotiating meaning that is rooted in dialectics. This dialogic-synthetic creative process is seen in Act 4, scene 6: the exchange between the harpist and Salvador sounds like an incantation, the generative power of which calls forth and affirms the existence and immediate presence of Salvador.[12] In response to Salvador’s declarations “I am!” and “Strength, power!” the harpist replies, “Come”; this exchange is repeated three times, a number that signifies the Holy Trinity and also has mystical significance in pagan cultures (as demonstrated by the fact that both Christian Salvador and pagan Apollo arrive).[13] While powerful as a creative force, dialogue doesn’t necessarily result in synthesis: sometimes it occupies a middle ground between speakers. As Jan Swearingen has suggested, dialog is “programmatically liminal: interstructural, between two states or conditions, essentially unstructured rather than structured by contradictions”(47). As Akropolis explores the tensions and moments of intersection between opposing existential states (living versus dead, waking versus dreaming, past versus future), Wyspianski’s choice of the dramatic genre can thus be seen to complement his probing of liminal spaces.

As I have already suggested, it is difficult to know whether to read Akropolis as ironic or sincere. The drama walks a tightrope between these modes of expression and creates hesitation in the reader/viewer similar to what one experiences when confronting a fantastic experience. Does it express patriotic optimism, or does it mock Polish writers’ propensity toward messianism? Does the staginess and overwrought spectacle undermine the otherwise pious and uplifting view of Poland’s political destiny in Europe and its cultural position in Western civilization? In a play that engages to such a high degree the question of existential and perceptual oppositions and the liminal spaces between them, it is not surprising that irony should win out. After all, the interplay of opposite meanings is the very definition of irony: in the words of the Oxford
English Dictionary irony is “a figure of speech in which the intended meaning is the opposite of that expressed by the words used.”

In Act 1 the conflict of oppositions already appears in a surprising and potentially blasphemous way, indicating that the sanctity of what transpires is threatened. The act equates lusty passion with vitality and interposes worldly love and bodily pleasures into the realm of the sacred on the Night of Resurrection, which compromises the solemn sanctity of Easter. The four angels supporting the silver sarcophagus of St. Stanislaw in Wawel Cathedral feel the return of power (moc) and strength (sila) as “the blood flows into their silver bodies” (12).[14] Once invigorated, the angels seduce and express their love for the stone statues in the cathedral, thereby bringing them back to life as in scene 3 between the Second Angel and Cupid:[15]

Second Angel:
Sumptuous am I, and abundant!
Embrace my waist.
I want to feel your hands
Near my chest
And your face before mine.

Cupid:
Fire is burning in your eyes.
The heat in your eyes is glowing.

Second Angel:
I am in love.—

Cupid:
You are beautiful, oh lily!
Why are those garments covering you?
Those silver raiments, the clinging cloth.

Second Angel:
Your chest is bared;
Hold me to your bosom;
O joy, in your eyes is the sun (27-8).

This scene associates the reawakening of the life force among the statuary with the quickened pulse of romance, and emphasizes the statuary’s return to flesh as the figures crave the intimacy of kisses and caresses. The sexual impulses that motivate several scenes in Act 1 seem oddly dissonant with the solemnity of Easter, the holiday celebrating the resurrection of Christ, son of the Virgin Mary. The torments of Christ’s Passion are jarringly opposed to the pleasure of carnal earthly passions; the crucified Christ on the cathedral’s great altar terrifies the angels.

The dissonance of these scenes in Act 1 is not of the same magnitude as that which separates Wyspiański’s ostensibly pious and seemingly optimistic play and Grotowski’s 1962 production of it. Grotowski undermined Akropolis’s life-affirming Catholic vision by presenting the contrasting Jewish experience of the Holocaust: in contrast to Poland, which the play ironically predicts will find salvation, twentieth-century history proved that the Jews will find no such salvation. Grotowski replaced Wyspiański’s focus on life, love, and creativity with death, destruction, and stasis by relocating the play’s scene of action from Wawel to a Nazi concentration camp, and by having the actors-prisoners build their own crematorium in front of the audience during the performance. The crematorium is built out into the audience, as shown in James MacTaggart’s 1968 video recording. The audience becomes trapped in the performance, thereby suggesting the complicity of idle spectators from abroad. Grotowski’s interpretation of the play shocked viewers both because of its raw depiction of camp life and because it seemed antithetical to Wyspiański’s Easter parable. Whatever the merits of Grotowski’s interpretation, it strongly suggests that the play’s cargo of irony and ambiguity is substantial.

Wyspiański’s play exists outside of chronological time, inhabiting instead the time of imagination and cultural memory. The playwright’s palimpsestual layering of historical epochs contrasts with the way Grotowski traps Akropolis in the concrete historical moment of the Second World War. Wyspiański’s acropolis becomes Grotowski’s necropolis as the latter reduces the stage to a cemetery when the actors climb into one large black box at center stage that represents a mass grave, and the play ends with complete silence and emptiness. In the twentieth century Poland’s savior never materialized, and no modern-day King David appeared to save the Jews. In this way Grotowski cynically points out that Wyspiański’s uplifting vision of a universally liberated Poland was one of historically unjustified optimism. The baroque monuments and elaborate sarcophagi of Wawel that are celebrated in Wyspiański’s Akropolis stand in contrast to the mass graves of the Holocaust’s victims.

Grotowski used Akropolis to present his own version of events. While the subtext of Wyspiański’s script can be and frequently is viewed as a political allegory, the plot contains no such explicit agenda. The original play’s fantastical content and unconventional structure make it an unwieldy instrument of social criticism. The disconnect between the likely political agenda and the
unlikely experimental modernist packaging, viewed together with the other oppositions and dissonances already discussed, points to the possibility of reading Akropolis with a sense of irony, an approach that has sometimes been discounted because of Wyspiański’s abiding love and respect for culture. However, Liberation, written and published just one year before Akropolis, ironically treats the messianic vision of Poland as the Christ of Nations articulated by the Romantics. Scholars such as Wilhelm Barbasz have attempted to reconcile the antimessianic satire of Liberation with the triumphant arrival of the Savior at the end of Akropolis by suggesting that Wyspiański had no interest in the martyred Christ, and for him Poland was not a victim. Barbasz argues instead that Wyspiański departed from Romantic messianism in his view of Poland as capable of rising up without first having to suffer as the martyr. Barbasz’s reading, however, does not address the play’s hyperbolically stagy ending.

By recognizing that the play’s pathos and sublimity are actually subverted by its outsized staginess, and that Wyspiański’s vision for Akropolis was actually more cynical than Dante’s Paradiso, one begins to see that Grotowski’s Teatr Laboratorium staging of Akropolis was not so shockingly iconoclastic as might appear at first. Grotowski expressed in bolder and more contemporary terms Wyspiański’s own ironic stance toward national salvation. Rather than being reversed in Akropolis, the playwright’s skeptical view of Poland’s readiness for deliverance that emerges in The Wedding and Liberation finds here a more complicated expression. Perhaps instead of interpreting Grotowski’s production as a radical departure from the playwright’s original vision and intention, we should commend him for his insight.

NOTES
1. Meaning savior in Spanish, Salvador is a name commonly used in reference to the resurrected Christ.
3. Wyspiański submitted a series of sketches for stained glass windows to be included in the renovation of Wawel, which was begun in the 1890s. His sketches were rejected in favor of the plan proposed by Sławomir Odrzywolski.
4. The absence of a discernible logical sequence between Acts 1, 2, and 3 reflects the influence of the Polish folk theater (szopka) on Wyspiański. The szopka (Christmas crèche) has multiple levels on which puppets can play out different stories simultaneously. Barbara Niemczyk has stated that such structural qualities in Liberation suggest the influence of the szopka. The szopka was highly influential in the Kraków cabaret “Green Balloon” hosted by Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński and frequented by many Young Poland artists. See also Mark F. Tattenbaum, “A Good Show: Traditional and Nontraditional Puppet Theater in Poland,” Sarmatian Review, vol. XXVII, no. 1 (January 2007), 1257–61 (http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~sarmatia/107/271tatten.html).
5. These two middle acts are based on seventeenth-century Flemish tapestries that hung in Wawel, the figures from which come to life in Akropolis in what seems to be a dream. The tapestries are called “The Trojan War” and “The History of Jacob.”
6. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. Ewa Miodońska-Brookes pointed out the allusions to the New Testament in her extensive annotation to Akropolis.
7. Along with satyrs, bacchantes, and maenads, centaurs are mythological figures associated with the orgiastic celebrations of Dionysus. The Dionysian motif recalls Russian Symbolist Vyacheslav Ivanov’s theorization of a Dionysian Christ. Whereas Nietzsche had completely estheticized the complementary roles of Apollo and Dionysus, stripping them of their early cultic significance, Ivanov sought to revive the religious aspect of Dionysus and to reconcile the ancient Greek rites with those of Christianity. Holding that Nietzsche had wrongly reduced Dionysus to a symbol for unbridled excess, Ivanov sought to balance the figure of Dionysus by calling to attention his experience of suffering. Ivanov found in the ancient pagan rituals of the cult of Dionysus (and specifically his torment and resurrection) the prefiguration of the story of Christ.
8. Wyspiański’s reiteration of the Romantic myth of the Sun-Christ is embodied in the appearance of Apollo at precisely the moment Salvador arrives. He emphasizes Apollo’s connection to the sun by identifying him as a double of Phoebus, whom Aurora, the personification of dawn, calls her lover. In Act 4 Apollo-Phoebus arrives in a golden chariot pulled by white steeds, ushering in Day and alluding to nature’s cycles of light and dark, life and death, to accentuate the theme of resurrection. Thus while Wyspiański does not conflate Apollo and Salvador/Christ into one Sun God, he clearly draws on the parallels between them, such as their images as radiant sources of light and the fact that Apollo was also called Savior in ancient Greece. As Wyspiański would have known, Polish Romantic poet Juliusz Słowacki also used the metaphor of the sun to present Christ. Słowacki presented Christ as the ideal manifestation of the King-Spirit (Król-Duch). His unfinished poem King-Spirit (Król-Duch, Part 1, ‘Rhapsody,’ 1847) describes how the divine Spirit roams the earth and inspires its chosen hosts, who have included leaders, kings, and saints from different ages. The King-Spirit had two missions: first, to guide earthly spirits to their final goal; and second, to serve as a model towards which they could strive (Barbasz 377). Słowacki’s Sun-Christ (Chrystus Słoneczny) was in turn influenced by Polish scholar Karol Dupuis whose 1794 work The Origin of All The Cults contained the chapter “An explanation of the myth of the Sun, Celebrated under the name of Christ”

Akropolis. Sarcophagus. was likely not of interest to Wyspiański except for his to the Bride" (Miodońska-Brookes n.174, p.14). Ankwicz hand holds an extinguished torch—an attribute of death—boyish angel in a crown of small flowers and who with one

Niewiasta (Bride) and Amor (Cupid). Cupid is the "naked Salvador proclaims the same words (power [moc] and strength [silâl]), as he rides into Wawel Cathedral in Act 4, echoing the angels’ erotic awakening and thus infusing Salvador’s holy resurrection (his return from the Passion) with the memory of profane earthly passion.

15. On the sarcophagus of Count Stanisław Aleksander Ankwicz (d.1840) are two figures Wyspiański has named: Niewiasta (Bride) and Amor (Cupid). Cupid is the “naked boyish angel in a crown of small flowers and who with one hand holds an extinguished torch—an attribute of death—and with the other hand he makes a gesture of consolation to the Bride” (Miodońska-Brookes n.174, p.14). Ankwicz was likely not of interest to Wyspiański except for his sarcophagus.

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Adam Mickiewicz’s First Lecture
in Collège de France
1840–1844 [1]

Transcribed and annotated by Bożena Shallcross

Translator’s Introduction (2008)
During the time he lived in Western Europe as an émigré poet, Adam Mickiewicz was twice invited to serve as professor of literature at institutions of higher learning. In 1839–40 at the University of Lausanne he lectured on Latin literature. In 1840 he accepted the Chair of Slavic Literatures at the prestigious Collège de France. Supported by the French government, this was the first Slavic Literatures professorship in Western Europe. Mickiewicz began teaching there on December 22, 1840 and delivered his last lecture on May 28, 1844. In his inaugural lecture he defined his teaching objectives and emphatically articulated several tangential themes including his concern about speaking in a foreign language and, on a different level, his desire for the unity of European nations.

Conceived as a historical survey of all Slavic cultures, Mickiewicz’s lectures collected and taxonomized a great deal of information about them. Although some of his data and notions turned out to be inaccurate, the lectures attracted the attention of a wide group of French scholars and artists from Jules Michelet to George Sand and Edgar Quinet, and, of course, émigré Poles. Mickiewicz’s teaching style was based on improvisation; often he did not even prepare lecture notes. His lectures were recorded by a number of dedicated listeners and are known today in this mediated form. As Mickiewicz put it in his introduction to the German edition of his Slavic Literature, he authored these lectures although he did not write them (Literatura słowiańska, 5). This improvisational technique went hand in hand with the poet’s increasingly pronounced prophetic tone and political intensity.[1] Alarmed by Mickiewicz’s ideological vision, the administration of the Collège de France eventually decided to remove him from the Chair.

Manfred Kridl’s Introduction (1929)
This edition is based on the third edition of Feliks Wrotnowski’s translation of Mickiewicz’s Lectures (Poznań, 1865), which is the best of all available translations so far. However, it should be mentioned than neither the French original of Adam Mickiewicz’s Lectures nor the Polish translations have been fully analyzed by philologists.

It should also be remembered that these Lectures were delivered almost a century ago. Since that time archaeology, history, literary studies, and philology have moved forward. Some of Mickiewicz’s comments reflect the state of historical and literary knowledge in his age, and may seem out of date today. But the prevailing majority of Mickiewicz’s historical outlines; literary analyses; and descriptions of persons, epochs, and trends continue to remain valid and enlightening.

Lecture 1 (Tuesday, December 22, 1840)
Outline: 1. The difficulty of my position. The Slavic peoples’ moral leaning toward the West. France and Paris as the center of the drawing power. Geographical vastness of the Slavic lands. The Slavic tribe and its peoples; their languages and dialects. Possible reasons for the West’s interest in studying the North. Ancient conflicts between the West and the Slavs; the continuation of this conflict in modern times. Scientific discoveries: Zalusanski, Cicłek, Copernicus.

Gentlemen!

The signals of sympathy from the audience—composed in part by my compatriots, among whom I see many friends—are precious to me. I do not, however, harbor any illusions regarding their true meaning; they demonstrate to me that you, gentlemen, know how to encourage me and that you feel the difficulty of my situation. Indeed, it is a risky one. For even if you could forget the impression made on you by the lectures of the famous professors at this institution of learning; even if I were oblivious to the difficulties inherent in the subject about which I will speak before you, it would be impossible for me to rid myself of the sense of a certain disadvantage.

I am a foreigner. I must speak a language that has nothing to do with the language that usually serves as the tool for my thoughts; nothing in common with its origin, neither in form nor in flow. This pertains not only to the translation of my thoughts and emotions into a foreign tongue here before you; I will have to transform each thought, each emotion entirely and extemporaneously. This strenuous inner labor is indispensable in lecturing about literature. In such lectures one cannot go in the direction indicated by a known and accepted scholarly method; one cannot lean on formulas that allow the expression of one’s thought without concern for style, as is the case in exact sciences. After leaving the boundaries of grammar and philology, I will have to show you the literary monuments and works of art in such a way as to make you feel the ardor that created them. Would preparatory research, even if we had time for it, give us the power to unearth from a masterpiece this latent life—hidden in its bosom—that constitutes the mystery of art? No; to have this life spring up from the word created by an artist, a creative word has to be spoken, and such a
word cannot be uttered if one does not possess all the mysteries of the language in which the work was written. Would a foreigner ever enact the masterful might of the alien word? Even if he were able to do so, he would face another and equally difficult task. He would have to recreate the external form, the inherent and often essential part of a work of art. Sometimes one incorrect word, ill-chosen or mispronounced, can destroy the work’s form.

I am familiar with all these difficulties; with each motion, with each movement of my thoughts I feel the weight of this chain, just as you hear its clamor. If I only listened to the prompting of my self-love; if I only cared for my artistic and personal prestige (it is humiliating to undertake public efforts if one does not have this strength, which comes with fluency and charm), I would assuredly renounce the dangerous honor of speaking to you from this place. However, very important considerations compelled me to accept this duty. I was called to speak on behalf of the literature of the peoples with which my nation, past and future, is closely connected: [to speak] at this moment, when words weigh a great deal, and in this city, which is the capital of the word. I could not refuse.

One of our epoch’s characteristics is a tendency of peoples to seek rapprochement and contact. It is well known that Paris is the center, the mainspring and tool of these relations, that through the mediation of Paris European peoples learn about each other and, occasionally, even about themselves. It is one of France’s glories that it possesses this ability to attract; it testifies to the advances France has made for the ability to attract is always a function of spiritual activity, its stock of light and internal warmth. France’s superiority as the oldest daughter of the Church and as the nurse of artistic inspirations, skills, art, and literature is so noble that other peoples cannot consider it humiliating, in this respect, to accept her sovereignty.

On the other hand, nowhere is the willingness to approach Europe and to create a closer relationship with the peoples of the West as alive and widespread as it is among the Slavic peoples. These peoples shared a border with the Frankish empire during two epochs, that of Charlemagne and that of Napoleon. A part of their territory was subjugated to your capitulars and a region is still subjugated to the Napoleonic codex. These peoples took from Europe religion, military organization, arts and crafts; through their material strength they, in turn, impacted the West, but today they are virtually unknown in the West. The European spirit keeps them, I might say, at a certain distance and excludes them from the Christian community. Do they indeed lack their own civilizational element? Have they contributed nothing to the intellectual richness and moral good of Christianity? Such questions seem offensive to them; eager to prove their right to belong to the Christian community, they try to speak for themselves, to write in your language, and to find in their own works a road toward your literature. These attempts, often undertaken for personal reasons or from a factional point of view, have not succeeded. It was finally understood that in order to gain the attention of Western nations, shaken by so many problems and tormented by so many difficult concerns, it was not enough to show them several bright spots within the domain of Slavdom; it was necessary to unveil in full grandeur the entire Slavic world. It was necessary to bring the magnitude of its literatures closer to the West. The French government realized the wish of the Slavic peoples in setting up this Slavic chair; I could not but blame myself if I did not agree to participate in it. I also believe that certain past events in my life make me an appropriate person to undertake this task. My long residence in various Slavic countries, the kindness that I encountered there, and the remaining memories have inculcated in me, in a manner stronger than any theory, a sense of our kin’s unity. The origins of the Slavic discord and the potential foundations of Slavic reconciliation are of keen interest to me.

Thus the plan for my course presented itself. I presume that it will be easier for me than for any other Slavic person to protect myself from the influence of all passion, from all narrow particularity. Such one-sidedness would oppose the pursuit of the well-being of our [Polish] national affairs, and it would not be in keeping with the intention of the administration that endowed this chair.

As I have already mentioned, gentlemen, the most astonishing aspect of Slavic literatures is their geographical magnitude and the numerosity of works. From the most objective and—according to the usual perception—all truly objective point of view, from the point of view of population and space, the Slavic speech bears enormous importance: over seventy million people speak in its languages. It occupies one half of Europe and one-third of Asia. Drawing the line from the Venetian Bay to the delta of the Elbe, we find behind this line and along its entire length relics of the people pushed to the north by Germanic and Roman tribes. The posthumous existence of these settlements already belongs to history, but moving toward the Carpathian Mountains, that eternal stronghold of
Slavdom, we see on both sides, on both edges of Europe, Slavic settlements engaged in fierce fighting. At the Adriatic Sea they defend their own existence against Islam; at the Baltic, first conquered by a foreign tribe, they are gaining the upper hand. In the center of this territory Slavdom manifests itself in its whole might. From there, along one of its sides Slavdom moves to America and on the other, through the Mongolian and Caucasian people it reaches China and Persia, gaining the territories it has lost in Europe.

These Slavic nations enclose within themselves all manner of religious and political structures present in both ancient and modern history. We have there an ancient tribe of Montenegrins whose customs are similar to those of the Scottish highlanders; however, more fortunate than the latter, they managed to defend their independence against the Ottoman, Greek, German, and Frankish empires and, most likely, in antiquity, also from the Roman Empire. We have the city of Ragusa[3]—the Slavic Venice and a longtime competitor of Venice—which, by the way, also owes its origin to the Slavs. Further, ancient Illyria,[4] Bosnia, Herzegovina, the Czech kingdom, the Slavic part of the Hungarian kingdom—all these peoples constitute half of the Austrian empire. Finally, the Russian Empire and the entire former Polish Kingdom. If we add the duchy of Serbia, Bulgaria, and the Slavic component of Romania (in Wallachia[5] and Moldavia), we have an image of the territory or, rather, the continent of the Slavs.

The language of these numerous peoples is divided into many subgroups that, having developed independently of each other, preserve signs of unity. It is one speech, manifesting itself in all forms and at different levels of growth. In the old Slavonic it shows itself as a dead language, a religious language; as a language of state administration and state orders in Russia; as a language of literature and conversation in Poland; as a language of skills in the Czech lands; while in Illyria, Montenegro, and Bosnia it remains in the primordial state as the language of poetry and music. Thus a Russian scholar who deals with the workings of the law—that, through their weight and breadth seem to belong to the time of Emperor Justinian—can encounter a Ukrainian poet, whom one could take for a contemporary of the Greek lyricists because he possesses their inspiration, luminosity, and art and has succeeded in expressing the national past in a fiery way. Everyone can guess that I am talking about our poet Bohdan Zaleski.[6]

At the same time, Czech scholars are undertaking and accomplishing a work[7] that can be compared to those of the Alexandrian school, if it weren’t for the fact that they have a character of their own and are inspired by a patriotic ardor almost equal to the religious enthusiasm of the ancient commentators of the Holy Scripture. In this assembly we shall also put the Illyrian or Serbian poet, an old blind man singing rhapsodies accompanied by the guštal[8] that inspired such critics as Grimm[9] and Eckstein,[10] and whom Herder and Goethe gladly translated.[11]

We see various functions and diverse tasks fulfilled by different ancient and modern languages—Sanskrit, Arabic, Turkish, Persian—but here they are divided among dialects of one and the same language. This is an unusual and unique situation. From research of this mega-language one can extricate a new light, capable of illuminating very important questions of philology, philosophy, and history, the questions of the lineage of languages and peoples, the core and true meaning of dialects, the development of ideas inherent in speech.

Wouldn’t it be a wonderful discovery if a student of biology found an organic entity that, traversing through all of the lower stages of life, preserved together within itself vegetable, animal and human forms of life, and each of them evolved to its fullness and wholeness? Therefore the lectures about Slavdom will not aim at acquainting you, gentlemen, with an unknown dialect, will not add a new chapter to a universal grammar, will not enrich the linguistic museum with a new sample. Their goal is to let you learn about this entire family of languages, a new genus and a new species.

Before approaching literature itself, let me point out some results of the skills one can gain from our research; these results are not indifferent to the history of nations, the history of science, nor to the moral and political issues. I have mentioned that Slavic nations have frequently influenced Europe. As the Czech poet Ján Kollár said: “All nations have already spoken their last word; now it is time for the Slavs to speak.”[12] I think that these peoples have already spoken many times, have spoken in their own manner, with the blows of lances and canon fire. It would be valuable to understand what they have been saying. These peoples are becoming a considerable force in political calculations; to defeat such a force in order to give it a direction, it would be reasonable to know its point of origin; to measure its previous course in order to estimate its intensity and divine its goal; at the very least, to do in the face of this new political force what astronomers never fail to do when they notice a new...
comet or meteorite. Numerous observations, the consideration of which would be highly useful, are written on the pages of history. It is known to you, gentlemen, that one cannot learn the history of a people without descending into the depths of its literature.

The enlightened nations have a certain duty toward posterity to pass on their achievements to the darker areas of the world. The Greeks and the Romans are our only sources of information about the peoples that used to be called barbarians. Specifically, Tacitus briefly dealt with the Germanic tribes, and his words became for us the precious source of information about these tribes. Tacitus’s brief comments produced an entire library of commentaries and dissertations in later times.[13] We, the Slavs, replaced the barbarians in contemporary historiography; we blame the Greeks and the Romans for saying so little about us in their works, and we do not want the situation to repeat itself in our time.

There is one more reason to study countries other than the Western European centers. Scholars conjecture that the planets closest to the sun will eventually merge with it. The Slavs have always leaned toward the West. It is from the presently Slavic lands that the hordes came that destroyed Rome, who refused to acquire knowledge about them while they had always been eager to learn what was going on in Rome.

[During the height of the Roman Empire, a famous writer, in his kindness, dedicated a few pages to a description of the barbaric countries and tribes. Despite Tacitus’s fame, his work on the Germans (Teutons) did not, apparently, enjoy great popularity. His contemporaries did not quote it; it was seldom copied, and only a few of these copies have survived. However, in our time Tacitus’s work is frequently commented upon because each of its sentences possesses almost the weight of an article of future law; very much like each tribe that Tacitus described, each contends within itself the nucleus of a future kingdom or empire.] [14]

Modern Slavic history is closely related to the history of Western European nations. Not long ago, a Slavic army, the Russian army, was seen on all the battlefields and in all the capitals of Europe. Wherever it went, this army was certain to meet another Slavic army, like a vengeful shadow. The Polish army stood up against the Russians in Italy; it pursued them from the River Niemen to Moscow; it disrupted the Russian crossing of the Berezin River; it even stood up against the Russians at the gates of Paris. Then, after the hero of our time [Napoleon] was defeated, when everything calmed down and the Russian army returned to its den, all of a sudden the Polish army appears and conducts a mortal fight, wakes up the world, shakes both brotherly and foreign peoples, inflames them with intense dislike and even more intense sympathy, and in the end it disappears, leaving behind a long echo of pain and glory. The Russian eagle meets the Polish one everywhere, the Russian hurrah is followed by the Polish battle cry. If we strain our ears, we shall hear the echoes of the same struggle in the past. Often the two adversaries did not wear their own colors and fought over matters seemingly unimportant to either of them; they could still recognize each other by the power of their mutual blows. The Russian poet Pyotr Vyazemsky[15] called this struggle the eternal Thebaid.[16]

What is the real objective of this struggle and who will win it? The future will tell. We cannot occupy ourselves with political matters here. However, the interest of the West should be raised not only by the military deeds of Slavs, their barbaric forays in the pagan days, their subsequent Christian service in defense of Europe and, lately, their strong impact on political affairs. The West treasures the illusion that it is the source of all the enlightenment among the Slavs; it is not so. While many Western seeds have sprouted in these northeastern lands, many a discovery was first made here even though the West considers them its own. Our own botanist, Adam Załużański,[17] observed the hermaphroditic nature of plants one hundred and fifty years before Linneus. In Linneus’s Methodus rei herbariae published in Prague in 1592, we find obvious proof that the Swedish botanist knew Załużański’s work, although Linneus does not mention its author. Another Slav, Erazm Ciołek, also known as Vitellion[18], was the first to employ mathematics to explain the phenomenon of optical illusion and in doing so he founded the science of optics. To conclude, I will mention the most famous Slavic scientist, the only one known in Europe: Mikołaj Kopernik (Copernicus).

In what manner did these people, whose nations were not highly educated, elevate themselves to such an intensity of mind? How did it happen that outcomes that are elsewhere usually the consequence of long labor, that lie at the end of lengthy investigations, here seem to be an unveiling (odgadnienie) and rise of the dawn of skills?

In these agricultural countries, perhaps, botany had to preoccupy the human mind and develop as a repository of information in common circulation. In the introduction to his work Vitellion claims that he thought of the first of his ideas during leisure time in
the countryside, while watching the play of light on the river waves beside his house. The opinion of some French writers that Copernicus found some concepts for his astronomical system in the Bible is not entirely ungrounded. But a certain compatriot of ours, speaking about Copernicus, observed that he discovered a system of the physical world that, like the Polish nation, “foresaw the essential movement of the moral world.”[19] Copernicus destroyed old superstitions by pointing to the sun as the center of all the planets; the Polish nation pushed its homeland into the race around the center of a great whole. By the same inspiration, Copernicus was a philosopher and the Polish nation “the Copernicus of the moral world.”

All these circumstances deserve the attention of foreigners and may awaken in them a curiosity about the eastern peoples that have not been known well, especially that these peoples are slowly developing a conviction that their role in the future of Europe will be substantial. I have shown you some vignettes, I asked a few questions that have to remain unanswered for the time being. I have to use the shortest and most direct route: the road of literature.

Literature is a place to which all Slavic nations bring their intellectual and moral achievements without resentment and without trying to outshine one another. May this peaceful encounter on the beautiful literary stage become a symbol of their getting together in another sphere as well.

NOTES
1. The present translation is based on Adam Mickiewicz, Dziela, vol. 8 (Literatura słowiańska. Kurs pierwszy, półrocze 1), translated from German by Leon Płoszewski (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1955), 13–23; and Dziela, vols.11–12, edited by Manfred Kröll (Literatura słowiańska. Rok pierwszy, 1840–1841), translated from French by Feliks Wrotnowski (Warsaw: Biblioteka Arcydzieł Literatury, 1929), 9–17. Professor Shalcross originally translated from the Płoszewski text; corrections based on the Wrotnowski text were later introduced.
3. The poet refers here to the Croatian Dubrovnik, which used to be called Ragusa.
4. Illyria, an ancient name of the region in the Balkans along the Adriatic coast, inhabited by the Illyrians, an Indo-European people. Some scholars believe that the Albanian language is a descendant of Illyrian.
5. Wallachia is located north of the Danube and south of the Carpathians.
6. Józef Bohdan Zaleski (1802–1886), a Polish Romantic poet and a friend of Mickiewicz, known for his folklore-inspired dumas. Zaleski is a major representative of the so-called “Ukrainian school” in Polish Romanticism.
7. Mickiewicz’s complement is addressed to the Czech founding fathers of Slavic philology such as Josef Dobrovsky (1753–1829), a Bohemian philologist and historian.
8. Gašla, a bowed string instrument of the Balkans.
9. The brothers Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm and Wilhelm Carl Grimm collected and published folk songs and folktales; their most famous collection is Grimm’s Fairy Tales (1812–1822).
11. Between 1814–1834 several collections of Serbian folk poetry, folktales, and proverbs compiled by Vuk Karadžić appeared in German translations, causing a long-lived fascination with Serbian folklore among the leading German poets and intellectuals including the Grimm brothers, Goethe, and Herder.
12. In fact, Ján Kollár (1793–1852) was a Slovak poet, a proponent of Pan-Slavism, and a professor at the University of Vienna.
13. Publius Cornelius Tacitus (ca. 59–ca.117), a senator and historian of the Roman Empire, De origine et situ Germanorum (Germania, 98).
14. This paragraph is missing in the Wrotnowski translation from French. It is taken from the German text that was probably translated from another set of notes. See Note 1.
15. Prince Pyotr Andreyevich Vyazemsky (1792–1878), Russian critic, poet, translator, archivist, and a friend of Mickiewicz.
16. Thebais or Thebaid, which derives from The Thebaid, an epic Latin poem by Publius Papinius Statius (ca. 45–96 AD), is used here as a symbol of fraternal strife.
17. Adam Zaluszński de Zaluszan was a sixteenth-century Czech physician and botanist. Mickiewicz used the Polish spelling of his name.
18. Erazm Ciolek (ca.1230–1280 or 1314), known as Vitello, was a Polish monk, physicist, and mathematician who created the foundations for the psychology of visual perception in his Perspectivorum libri decem. This treatise on optics was an influential work, known by Leonardo da Vinci and Copernicus.


Polish deportees of late nineteenth century established a village in Siberia. Virtually all males from that village were shot on NKVD orders in the 1930s.
BOOKS Books and Periodicals Received


In his lifetime Henryk Sienkiewicz wrote about 150,000 letters to some 450 recipients. Maria Bokszcznan’s magnificent edition of his correspondence (Part 1 was published in 1977, Part 2 in 1996), culminates in Part 3 that contains about 800 communications to 180 addressees, written between 1876 and 1916. This is confusing; one wishes the editors numbered their volumes in a way that reflects familiarity with world editorial practices. The present collection constitutes an integral part of Sienkiewicz’s art and throws new light on him as a man, writer, and public figure, as well as telling us a great deal about his times. Many of these letters appear in print for the first time. The letters in volume 3 (that itself consists of two volumes) are addressed to writers, such as Maria Konopnicka, J. I. Kraszewski, and Romain Rolland; artists such as Ignacy Paderewski and Henryk Siemiradzki; translators such as Bronisław Kozakiewicz in France and Alfred Jensen in Sweden; scholars such as Jan Aleksander Karłowicz, Bronisław Morawski, and Karol Potkański; journalists and publishers such as Adam Krechowiecki of Gazeta Lwowska and Edward Leo of Gazeta Polska; actors and directors such as Józef Kotarbiński and Józef Mikulski; politicians such as Gabriel Narutowicz and Eustachy Sanguszko; and friends and doctors (Sienkiewicz often complained about his health). A separate category is formed by his personal letters to his youthful love Maria Kellerówna, and Maria Radziejowska, his late object of affection.

This collection is meticulously researched and supported by an elaborate editorial apparatus. Preceded by an introduction and followed by the editor’s note, Part 3 contains biographies of the addressees, exhaustive footnotes, illustrations, and indices. As is the case with the two previous parts, these letters show Sienkiewicz as a true patriot and consummate artist. Parts 4 and 5 are forthcoming. (MJM)


A magnificent first translation of Żeromski’s masterpiece Przedwiośnie. Those who saw the movie will surely want to buy this book. A review to follow.

**History and Geopolitics**

**A contest for Eastern Europe**


Kimitaka Matsuzato

“‘The end of history’ after the cold war should have been followed by the end of geopolitics. Neither has happened, however. China and Russia are reemerging as regional powers that openly criticize the “double standards” inherent in Euro-Atlantic democracy. Europe’s near rejection of Turkey’s sincere desire for EU accession has hardly discouraged Turkey from intensifying its petit-imperial activities in the Caucasus and Central Asia, with the help of its Islamic and ethnic network. As Andrzej Nowak remarks, it is difficult even for Poland to become a peripheral servant of the EU by forsaking its traditional Romantic and messianic attitude toward its Eastern hinterlands, as exemplified by Poland’s active intervention in the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. In fact, Poland has much in common with Turkey, displaying a similar petit-imperial syndrome in the periphery of Europe. If Poland is less imperial than Turkey, it may be due to Stalin’s “exchange of population” after the Second World War that drastically decreased the number of Poles in the former eastern peripheries of Rzeczpospolita (Polish Commonwealth). In contrast, Turkey continues to be concerned about the fate of the Turks’ coethnics (Azerbaijanis and Turkmen) in the Caucasus and the Near East. Another reason for Poland’s lesser imperialism seems to be the smaller responsibility that the Polish navy bears for the security of the Baltic Sea in comparison with that borne by Turkey in the Black Sea. Nowak’s book is quite timely, however, considering the fact that Russia’s military action in South Ossetia split Ukraine’s elites and public opinion instead of provoking anti-Russian solidarity of this nation. If the latter had been the case, people would merely read Nowak’s book as a warning against reimperializing Russia, rather than an attempt to understand empires and imperialism objectively.

The book examines the geopolitical competition between two influential powers in modern Eastern Europe, Russia and Poland. Its author is a historian from Kraków, renowned as editor-in-chief of the
bimonthly Arcana and professor at Jagiellonian University and the Polish Academy of Sciences. He is one of the leading historians in the booming studies of empires, particularly the Russian and Polish, although he does not regard the Polish Commonwealth as an empire. The history of western (i.e., Polish) peripheries of the Russian empire has been tangibly studied more deeply than other regional history of this empire; therefore the book under review addresses many issues also present in other recent publications on this topic.[1]

Nowak first provides an overview of imperial histories of Russia and Poland. After the Mongolian invasion, Moscow principality was born in the very spot where peripheries of three traditions—Kyivan Rus, Qipchak, and the Byzantine Commonwealth (or the jurisdiction of the Constantinople Ecumenical Church)—overlapped (16–18). This extraordinary location blessed the Moscow principality not only with the opportunities to expand and incorporate these historical zones, but also with the discourse to justify this expansion as a “recovery” of lost lands (in the case of the former Kyivan Rus and Qipchak), or “succession” of declining authorities (regarding the Constantinople Church).[2] The war with Napoleon resulted in a significant step forward for this traditional triad of expansion by putting an end to the Russian elites’ Enlightenment discourse and popularizing instead a self-identification as the antipode of revolutionarizing Europe. Nowak traces this change in Russian political thought from Nikolai Karamzin to Petr Struve (chapters 1 and 11). On the other hand, Nowak repeats his controversial view that the Polish Commonwealth was not an empire, since it lacked the hegemonic relations between the core and peripheries.[3] Moreover, the Commonwealth was bilateral or supra-confessional: a significant portion of its Lithuanian nobility was Orthodox; they competed with Moscow for recognition by the Constantinople Church throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and continued to be granted the same privileges that the Catholic nobility enjoyed until the seventeenth century (chapter 2). In the waning years of the Commonwealth, particularly facing the Partitions and the Napoleonic War, this purely republican structure changed, however. Ideologically, Poland ceased to be a self-sufficient entity and began to perceive itself as an outpost of Western European values in Eastern Europe, whose independence seemed possible only by popularizing liberation ideas among Poland’s eastern neighbors who were oppressed, as were the Poles, by the Russian Empire. Thus something akin to communist internationalism, or imperialism labeled “liberation,” took shape in Polish political thought (chapters 3–5). As mentioned before, during the same period Russia ceased to regard Europe as a model for its modernization (understandably, technical and engineering borrowings were an exception) and began to view Poland as a dangerous puppet of Europe. Bringing to bear materials from the declassified Russian archives, Nowak discerns the centuries-long undercurrent of Russia’s diplomacy to contain Poland with the help of Germany (a Chinese proverb calls this “Ally the Far, Beat the Near”), a strategy that started with Nikita Panin in the 1760s, was continued by Vladimir Lenin, culminated in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939), and perhaps was revived in the Schröder-Putin agreement on the Baltic pipeline in 2005.[4] Chapter 6, dedicated to Lenin’s attempt to contain Poland during the Civil War, seems to be the most impressive chapter of this book from the empirical or fact-finding point of view. In an unfriendly international context, confederative and nonimperial reunification of Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine was inconceivable, and therefore Józef Piłsudski’s republic emerged as a unitary state (chapter 7).

Critical assessments of the political behavior of the Polish szlachta (nobility), its messianism and megalomania, have become conventional in historical science,[5] and such historians as John Peter LeDonne and Orest Subtelny brilliantly described how cleverly the Russian Empire used for its own expansion the social/class contradictions in the surrounding empires.[6] Considering these tendencies, Nowak’s somewhat outmoded interpretation of modern Poland might seem strange.[7] However, we should take it as an attempt to revise the revisionist historiography rather than as mere conservatism. First, Nowak tries to contextualize the behavior of the Polish elites taking into account the recent studies of republican undercurrents in European thoughts.[8] Second, cognitive crafting appears more relevant to Nowak’s geopolitics than so-called real politics. If Nowak’s focus is cognitive crafting, however, his relative indifference to Christianity seems strange. Nowak maintains that not only the Commonwealth but even the Second Republic was suprareligious because of the significant portion of Orthodox believers in their eastern borderlands, and he argues that only in socialist Poland (forced to move westward and streamlined as primarily a Catholic country) did Catholicism become a decisive factor in integrating the nation (189). I find this assertion questionable.
Nowak’s understanding of the notion of the Third Rome as an unhistorical driving force behind Russia’s expansion appears even more problematic. Orthodoxy’s “mental geography” has a strict hierarchy, putting the ancient Pentarchy at its top, the Apostolic churches (such as Georgian and Cyprian) on the second level, and locating other churches largely according to the antiquity of their autocephalization. Prince Vladimir’s conversion in the tenth century implies that the Russian Church was located at a significant distance from the Apostles. Perhaps the Orthodox world needed a consensus that Constantinople’s Ecumenical Church was suffering a serious deviation (in the fifteenth century when it was ready to be integrated into the Roman Catholic Church to be saved from Ottoman assaults) or crisis (in the nineteenth century when it became obvious that it would share the dismal fate of its patron, the Ottoman Empire), in order for the Russian Church to be arrogant enough to request recognition as the Third Rome, despite its unprivileged status in Orthodoxy.[9] Nowak writes that the alleged harassment of Christians in the Ottoman Empire consolidated the Russian Church’s pretension to Third Rome status. In fact, however, the Third Rome notion was practically shelved for three centuries because Constantinople’s Ecumenical Church experienced a revival due to the Ottoman Empire’s protection.[10] Needless to say, a group of previous studies on which Nowak relies is to blame here.

Nowak’s book represents a theoretical point of view accepted in the newest imperial studies that regards individual empires as no more than constituents of a transnational imperial mega-system. Nowak supplements this view with his conviction that empires can be vigorous and attractive when they challenge previous empires or the larger imperial system to which they belong (198–200). As a whole, Nowak’s book combines academic strictness with the author’s civic sense of responsibility, an approach that also characterizes the editorial strategy of the Kraków journal Arcana for which he is responsible. This appears yet another proof that Polishness, be it national or imperial, is an identity that cannot be satisfied unless it questions what it can do for mankind.

NOTES
2. The situation was similar to the emergence of the Qing Empire born exactly in the spot where the Tibetan Buddhist, Sino-Confucian, and Great Yuan traditions overlapped. This location enabled the Manchurians to vigorously absorb these historical zones.
3. He presented this view earlier as well: Andrzej Nowak, “Between Imperial Temptation and Anti-Imperial Function in Eastern European Politics: Poland from the Eighteenth to Twenty-First Century,” Emerging Meso-Areas in the Former Socialist Countries: Histories Revived or Improvised? edited by K. Matussato (Sapporo: SRC, 2005), 247–284. See also his dialogue with Roman Szpulk in Ab Imperio, no. 1 (2007).
4. When this agreement was signed Polish mass media identified it as a replay of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: Jerzy Nowakowski and Piotr Woźniak, “Gazowe okrążenia Polski,” Wprost, 2005, Nr 27 (July 2005), 84–89. This line of argument eventually evoked protests from the German authorities.
5. Łukowski and Zawadzki, op. cit.
7. For example, he does not take seriously Aleksandr Pushkin’s criticism of Polish magnates, who could be crueler vis-à-vis serfs than the autocratic authorities (83).
8. See, for example, Quentin Skinner, Liberty before Liberalism (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998).

Katyn

A film directed and written by Andrzej Wajda.
Based on the novel Post Mortem by Andrzej Mularczyk. In Polish, Russian, and German, with English subtitles. With archival black and white film footage. Running time: 2:01 hours.

James E. Reid

In a forest near Katyn and elsewhere (Mednoe and Kharkiv) in 1940, Poland’s Soviet “allies” murdered
21,857 Polish officers and bulldozed their bodies into a mass grave. Until the late 1980s the government of Soviet-occupied Poland claimed that the German army had carried out the massacre in 1943 when they controlled that area of Poland. Katyn, Andrzej Wajda’s latest film, opens with grey clouds drifting across the screen. They obscure and then part to reveal the title and the opening credits. For the next two hours the film pierces the fog of war and lies surrounding Katyn. Wajda was thirteen when his father was killed there. After making over four dozen films, he waited until he was eighty-two to make Katyn. One of his primary concerns was to examine how this massive lie contaminated Polish life for as long as it did.

Katyn opens early in the war with a scene on a long bridge. Polish refugees running from the Russian invasion from the east encounter Polish families escaping from the German army’s advance from the west. The disbelief and confusion of the men, women, and children prefigures the confusion of the half century of lies that descended on Poland after the war. A period so dark that throughout the film a number of characters declare with certainty, “There will never be a free Poland.” Overcast and cold hard light falls on the country in these decades, without a clear blue sky in sight.

The movie Katyn is less the story of the murders of the Polish officers than the story of how the lie of Katyn poisoned the lives and hopes of Polish citizens for decades. A lie this big produces many descendants.

Wajda assumes a familiarity with this period of Polish history as his film cuts across the years. As the truth of the Soviet occupation of Poland unfolds, more and more people are filled with disbelief at what is happening. After Poland comes under complete Soviet domination, the Russians spread the lie that the German army killed the officers at Katyn in 1943. It becomes a necessary lie for those who want to thrive under the Soviet occupation. The lie continues as Polish satraps raise their faces from the Russian bootstraps and become the new leaders of the country. During these transitions the viewer must be attentive to shifts in location and time, as Wajda follows the Katyn lie that metastasizes rapidly throughout the body politic of Poland.

Katyn is often less the story of the murders of the Polish officers than the story of how the lie of Katyn poisoned the lives and hopes of Polish citizens for decades. A lie this big produces many descendants. Those who accept the lies receive the rewards of position, power, and the good life—all the perquisites of self-abasement.

Those who refuse face a varying but certain fate. After the Second World War, the student applicant who refuses to state on his CV that his father died in 1943 at Katyn is refused admission to college. During the war university professors who believe that logic, reason, and solidarity with the chancellor will prevail with the occupying German army are shipped immediately to a concentration camp. The Polish lieutenant who thought he could live with his small wartime betrayal during the years after the war ends kills himself after getting drunk and trying to bring the lie out in the open in a crowded bar, as he shouts, “It’s a lie. You all know it’s a lie,” and no one responds. The confusion and deception that twist this lieutenant’s heart are convincingly portrayed by Andrzej Chyra.

Wajda populates the screen with telling and sometimes fleeting details. A young woman leaves a theater to purchase a gravestone with the date of her father’s death in 1940 at Katyn. She refuses to accept the 1943 lie. As she exits the theater for her fate a performance notice appears briefly behind her, advertising that Sophocles’ Antigone will be mounted soon. For carrying out forbidden funeral rites for her brother, Antigone was condemned to be buried alive. This young woman is turned away from consecrated ground by the church, and then cast into an underground prison merely for having 1940 carved into her father’s gravestone. Before she is imprisoned, a friend questions her about the wisdom of this contemporary Antigone’s dangerous choice. She replies, “I choose the murdered, not the murderers.”

The convincing portrayals of grief and desperation in Katyn make it a difficult film to watch. It is, however, leavened by grim humor. An army chaplain is imprisoned with Polish officers early in the film. As he takes an officer’s confession, a Russian guard opens the door suddenly. Just as suddenly, the chaplain picks up a newspaper to shield the penitent, and begins to read it studiously. In another scene, a Russian captain is billeted with a family, one of whose members is a Polish officer. When Russian soldiers arrive to round up these family members, he conceals a mother and her little girl. At the last minute, he sees the girl’s teddy bear on the floor and hides it under his clothes.

Many of the actors appear to have waited their whole lives to present the truth. In the decades after the war, in what passes for peacetime, a character asks, “Why live with so much evil around?” Even though we live far from that terrible time, it is a question we must ask.
ourselves. Andrzej Wajda’s testament of Katyń, late in life, replies to this question with a resounding affirmation.

**American Betrayal**

Franklin Roosevelt Casts Poland into Communist Captivity


Theresa Kurk McGinley

Col. Kajencki (U.S. Army, retired) passed away on July 18, 2008, at the age of ninety. He was born in Erie, Pennsylvania in 1918, graduated from West Point Academy and became a commissioned second lieutenant. He served in the Pacific theater of the Second World War, and after retiring from the army wrote six books on American history including *Thaddeus Kosciuszko: Military Engineer of the American Revolution* (1998), and *Casimir Pulaski: Cavalry Commander of the American Revolution*. *American Betrayal* is his last book.

The book does not pull any punches. It clearly states from the onset the direction and moral perspective of the work. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt is accused of betraying Poland and casting her into a fifty-year sentence of communism. This fact remained an emotional subject for many thousands of Polish Americans since hope for a free and independent Poland was shattered after 1945. The argument presented is that the United States and England should have and could have acted to roll back the Soviet domination of Poland, but instead did nothing. The Second World War began in Poland, a fact that should have made patriotic Americans realize that Poland was a balance point between the free world and tyranny: if Poland fell, freedom would suffer worldwide. But even for more pragmatic reasons Poland could have expected Western loyalty. Despite having a government-in-exile, despite military leadership and successes on the battlefield, despite diplomacy, despite the principle of self-determination espoused by President Woodrow Wilson, the Poles remained trapped until 1989. Two opportunistic invaders, Hitler and Stalin, committed the geopolitical rape of an independent neighbor. Historians debate whether Roosevelt was actually naive in his dealings with Stalin, or whether, because of illness, he was physically and mentally unfit to make decisions at the important crossroads in Teheran and Yalta. Accounts of the massacre at Katyń under orders of the Soviet command and the coverup that followed should be required reading by any student of the Second World War. Soviet deception trumped allied idealism. Diplomacy sought to maintain a balance of power, but did not stand a chance against deception. Poland became a sacrifice of war.

The second half of the book focuses exclusively on the Katyń Forest Massacre, including documentation. It contains a chapter titled “U. S. Congress finds Russia guilty.” The suppression of information and the Nuremberg Court debacle are spelled out in great detail. A lengthy Appendice to the book is devoted to the erection of a National Katyń Memorial in Baltimore, Maryland, the details concerning that memorial, and biographical sketches of two Polish American military veterans directly involved in the war.

A book now needs to be written that focuses on how Poland managed to preserve its identity despite fifty years of communist oppression, and why it was Poland and not another country that was the first of the Soviet satellites to break free. Undoubtedly Pope John Paul II and the Catholic Church played a role, in defiance of those who try to convince the world that religion pushes people backward and not forward. In 1980 in the shipyards of Gdansk Solidarity emerged despite the iron fist of the regime. The modern history of Poland can be seen as a remarkable story of victory, and new historical works should capture this perspective. Entrance into NATO would constitute the last chapter of such a book. On the other hand, the vaguely familiar bombastic beating of the chest by the Russian military inclines one to caution. What will be the response of the United States with a new president at the helm?

**From the Editor**

(Continued from page 1460)

who said, “If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it”? It is one of the ironies of history that this German master of lies proposed a rule in the lies game that was later applied by the Russian masters of lies.

The lie that Germans killed Poles at Katyń was typical of the masters of deceit who engineered the Soviet educational policy. The Russian military Internet sites still repeat that lie today.
About the Authors
Juliusz Domański is Professor of classical philology at the University of Warsaw and Professor of philosophy at the Polish Academy of Sciences. His books include *La Philosophie, Théorie ou Manière de Vivre: Les Controverses de L’antiquité à la Renaissance* (Editions Universitaires, 1996) and *Zdawnym rozwiazań o marności i podgadzie świata oraz nędzy i godności człowieka* (Polish Academy of Sciences, 1997).
Kimitaka Matsuzato is Director of the Slavic Research Center at Hokkaido University, Japan.
Theresa McGinley is Professor of History at North Harris County College in Houston, Texas.
Colleen McQuillen is Assistant Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Illinois-Chicago.
Michael J. Mikoś is Professor of Polish at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
James E. Reid is a Canadian writer.
Bożena Shallcross is Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Chicago.

Thank You Note
We would like to thank the following persons for their generous donations to the *Sarmatian Review* Publication Fund:
Professor Ralph Frankowski; Ms. Jadwiga Henderson; Mr. Walter Kuskowski; Professor Bogna Lorence-Kot; Ms. Elżbieta Sepich; Ms. Joanne F. Winetzki.

Announcements and Notes
Electronic (and scholarly) Polish library
Look up <http://www.ibuk.pl> for the book in Polish you cannot obtain otherwise. This is an electronic book site created by Polish scholarly publishers. Instead of buying the book at <merlin.pl> or some other Polish internet bookstore, you can have it instantly, and the fees are lower than for print editions.

Summer study in Poland
Catholic University of Lublin will host a Polish language and culture group of students July 4–August 10, 2009. Five weeks in Lublin, up to 6 credits. The study tour will be led by Professor Michael Mikoś of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Price: $2,515 for five weeks, $1,457 for two. If interested: mikos@uwm.edu.